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Time Horizon in Russian Literature

Introductory Remarks

The substantive portion of this paper is intended to be incorporated later into a comprehensive study of time horizon in economic history. Hence an elucidation of the concept and of its main aspects should precede the presentation and interpretation of the relevant material that has been drawn from a scrutiny of Russian literature in the nineteenth century, that is to say, from novels and plays. In this connection, it will have to be explained why belles-lettres can and should be regarded as one of the sources of insights into the problems involved.

Among the unexplored and undeservedly neglected problems in economic history, time horizon occupies a proud place. The importance of studying it in historical perspective is, or at least should be obvious. For the term time horizon refers to the distance at which men, in making economic decisions, are willing and able to look into the future and hence relates to their appraisal of the future as compared with the present. The range of questions that is raised by the concept of time horizon is wide indeed. It centers on but transcends the scope of men's economic calculations and expectations and therefore comprises fundamental concerns of human life, such as the attitude to death, to the length of the lifespan, and to progeny, and in this way to the broad problem of generations. These "philosophical" (in the common usage of the term) aspects also bear significantly upon economic decisions, as may be illustrated by an ancient Russian legend.

In olden times, we learn from the legend, things were different from what they are now at least in two respects. First of all, everybody all the time knew precisely the day and hour of *his* death. (Note that the Russian language through the use of a possessive pronoun can happily avoid all the clumsiness of the "his or her" problem.) And, secondly, in those faraway days Jesus Christ used to roam through the width and breadth of the sprawling plains of Russia and would stop to talk to the tillers of her soil. Thus it came to pass that once on a cold and rainy evening Christ arrived in a village, knocked at the window of a poor hut (for he had a divine bias in favor of the poor), and asked to be admitted for the night. The peasant gladly received him, gave him a piece of black bread, "steeply salted" as the expression went, and a glass of milk. Thereupon he lent his own bed to the high guest and bedded himself on the floor. But Jesus could not sleep because the roof of the hut was leaking

badly and large rain drops kept falling upon the bed. Jesus stood it for a while silently with true Christian patience, but eventually he became annoyed and spoke up: "For Christ's sake," he said, "why don't you repair this roof of yours?" "I ought to," the peasant replied, "but there is no point to doing that, because I know that I am to die tomorrow at vesper time." At that moment Christ understood that it was not good for man to know in advance the time of his death and he changed instantly an arrangement that so obviously interfered with proper investment and maintenance. And since that night people have no longer known when they will be called to their accounts. So far the legend with its suggestive economic implications.

But the economic historian does not deal in legends. What concerns him are the empirically ascertainable events and sequences of events of which the processes of long-term change are composed. And in these sequences the time horizon of economic agents and changes therein are bound to play a large role. The problem thus is twofold: (1) How to acquire knowledge about the time horizon? (2) And what ideas can be formed about its determinants?

Time horizon is essentially concerned with economic expectations and, in cases of a high time horizon, with *long-range* economic expectations. In other words, it deals with the thought processes in men's minds which determine their decisions which in turn determine their actions. What are the possible sources of information on things of this nature? The obvious answer is diaries, notebooks, memoirs, correspondence, in which people explained the reasons for their decisions. This is the proper information to possess in dealing with an *ex ante* phenomenon which incidentally may also depend on the information available to economic agents in the decision process (about this something more will be said later). Such subjective information at times may be hard to come by. But fortunately a substitute for the proper *ex ante* information are the inferences that can be made from actions and, more broadly, from objective *ex post* facts. The height of the rate of discount indicates the time preference which obviously is inverse to time horizon: A very high time preference is likely to lower, or to keep low, the time horizon. Similarly, the existence of large long-run investment is to testify to a relatively high time horizon. Such a substitution of *ex post* information for *ex ante* facts occurs frequently in economics. In theoretical models, the distinction between long-term and short-term capital exports, for instance, is based on the intentions of investors; but when those intentions are unknown, in practice the distinction is based arbitrarily either on the actual length of investment or on the type of instruments used. In a comprehensive study of time horizon all these different sources would have to be searched and researched. Yet, as indicated before, there is still an additional source on the subject of this paper. But first some general remarks—a number of supposi-

tions—on the historical determinants of our problem should be made in order to provide some broad framework and guideline for the subsequent discussion.

One may assume that historically the time horizon must have varied considerably *in any given period* with the nature and weight of various economic pursuits and *over time* with the stage of economic development in the course of which both its pursuits and the weight of individual pursuits within the economy were changing; and, finally, with the particular value system which may or may not have depended on the two factors (pursuit and stage) just mentioned. Very basic human attitudes, such as optimism and pessimism, may have roots that have little or nothing to do with economic situations, although they may influence the latter. A general expectation that doomsday is just around the corner will affect both momentary actions and the economic time horizon. But our concern here is entirely with basic economic conditions and changes therein.

Looking far back into the historical past and thinking of differences among the individual economic pursuits (that is to say, with the various branches of the economy), it may be said first that in traditional, pre-modern agriculture time horizon played a relatively small role and was on the whole low. And what is more, many decisions involving foresight (such as with regard to the extension of fallow) were taken automatically and at times under urgent biological pressure. Leaving aside the time span between planting and harvesting, after harvest there was the decision to keep a sufficient volume of seeds for next year's planting and the decision as to how many animals could be kept through the winter. The only decision which gave an occasion to lengthen or to heighten the time horizon referred to storage, no doubt a crucial problem in an extensive agriculture subject to frequent general and local crop failures which the poverty of communications could transform into major catastrophes. As will be shown later, conflicting group interests and irrationality of long-term storage policy could render nugatory such ideas about time horizon as may have been conceived.

As far as the pre-modern artisan economy of the towns was concerned, housing construction apart, the smallness of productive investment and the relatively short period of production kept the time horizon low and the need for long-term storage of raw materials was effectively counteracted by the specific provisions of town policies, such as the right of the staple, the right of the road, and the right of ban, all of them purporting to assure a steady supply of raw materials and foodstuffs. Perhaps it was with regard to the formation and maintenance of a skilled labor force (stipulations regarding apprentices, journeymen, and the achievement of master status) that a somewhat longer look into the future was an integral part of economic reality.

When it comes to merchants in pre-modern times, it may be assumed that in general the time horizon in mercantile pursuits should have been higher than that either in contemporaneous agriculture or handicraft. The growth of credit and the lengthening of its terms may have been one of the factors involved, albeit the rising importance of insurance, and particularly of marine insurance with the long sea voyages, must have been even more significant in this regard. The decline of the "bazaar psychology" with its fleeting momentary relations with the customers and the establishment of more stable and long-lasting connections with both the sellers and the buyers with the concomitant increases in the standards of commercial honesty should have raised the time horizon.

Finally, it should be clear that the spread of modern industrialism with the introduction of a large volume of machinery with an average lifespan of some twenty years brought about, and called for, decisions that implied a time horizon that could not have existed in men's minds in earlier epochs. Thus, mechanization, the enormous growth of credit, the spread of insurance and of insurance-mindedness down to the level of the average consumer, and the relative decline of branches of the economy with a traditionally low time horizon—they all meant that the height of time horizon is a function of stage of economic development which is likely to mean a function of an area's degree of economic backwardness. In other words, the greater the degree of economic backwardness of a given area, the lower the time horizon of economic agents acting within it.

The foregoing discussion of the time horizon in varying economic pursuits and the dynamic conclusion just reached may serve as a guiding beacon in exploring a further source of information on the problem of time horizon. To be sure, no information can be as satisfying as the direct confession-like statements of economic agents on their decisions. But the observation and intuition of creative writers may have penetrated the minds of the economic agents and revealed both their actions and the attitudes and the motivations that lay behind those actions. In this way, one may hope to gain important insights into the problem at hand.

In the following an attempt is made to scrutinize certain selected writings of Russian artistic prose in the nineteenth century. In pursuing this line one must remain aware both of the considerable backwardness of the Russian economy during the period *and* of the changes that took place in its course. In principle, it might be desirable at some later point of time to supplement the findings of the present paper by an analogous study of the belles-lettres of other and more developed countries. But for the moment it may suffice to say that Russian literature of the time because of its great interest in social

and economic problems lends itself particularly well, and possibly better than any other literature, to the elucidation of our problem.¹

An Interpretative Anthology

After what has been said in the preceding section it will not be surprising to find in Russian literature not only a number of references to the low level of time horizon in Russia, but to see those references conjoined with the intimations that a high time horizon is something that is downright un-Russian and by contrast fits the contemptible way of life of the German *Bürger*.

Here is how Gogol describes a certain Shiller, a German artisan in St. Petersburg.

Shiller was a perfect German in the full meaning of this word. Even when he was twenty, that is to say at that happy age, when the Russian lives *from the hand to the mouth*,² Shiller already had measured in advance all his future life, without allowing any deviation. . . . He laid it down for himself in the course of ten years to accumulate a capital of fifty thousands and from the beginning the program was as fixed and unchangeable as fate itself. . . . In no case would he increase his expenses, and if the price of potatoes rose too much against its normal level, he would not add a single kopek [to his budget] and even though feeling at times a bit hungry, he adjusted himself to it.³

Dostoevsky's Gambler states his *profession de foi* in similar, although much more elaborate terms. In support of his view that "the roulette has been specially created for Russians," he expostulates:

In the catechism of virtues of a civilized Western man historically and almost as the main point stands the ability of acquisition of capitals. But the Russian not only has no ability to acquire capitals, but even squanders them somehow pointlessly and disreputably. . . . But it is uncertain what is more revolting, Russian disreputability or the German

1. To provide further elucidation to the twin concepts of time preference and time horizon, let me refer to the recent book by John Hicks (*Capital and Time*, Oxford, 1973) where (on pp. 12-13) Sir John quotes delightfully from Boccaccio's introduction to *Decameron*. The impact of the Plague on the people of Florence, when everybody expected to be dead on the next day, resulted in wild consumption and complete neglect of investment. In other words, time preference tended to infinity and time horizon to zero.

2. The untranslatable phrase Gogol uses "to live on the *foo-foo*" either has the meaning shown in the text, or implies living on other people's money, and certainly without any plan.

3. N. V. Gogol', "Nevskii prospekt" in *Sochineniia v dvukh tomakh (Works in Two Volumes)*, vol. 1 (Moscow, 1971), pp. 455-56.

method of accumulation by honest work. . . . I shall not worship the German method of accumulation of riches. . . . I do not want such virtues. Everywhere here, in every house they have a *Vater*, who is terribly virtuous and unbelievably honest. So honest that one is afraid to approach him. I cannot stand such honest people. Every *Vater* has a family and in the evening they all read aloud educational books. Over the house rustle elms and chestnut trees, and there is a sunset and a stork on the roof. . . . And every such family here is completely enslaved by *Vater* and in full obedience to him. They all work like oxen and save money like Jews. Assume, *Vater* has saved so and so many florins and reckons to give over the handicraft shop or his land to the oldest son. Therefore, the daughter gets no dowry and must remain a spinster. The younger son is sold into slavery or to the army and monetary proceeds of the sale are added to capital. Yes, these things are done here. I have made my inquiries. All this is done only because of honesty, of reinforced honesty which goes so far that even the younger son, the one sold away, believes that he had been sold out of mere honesty. But the older son's life is not much better. He has a certain Amalchen whom he loves, but cannot marry, because as yet there are not enough florins saved. They, too, wait in decency and sincerity. Amalchen's cheeks are no longer fresh. Finally, after about twenty years the wealth has multiplied. The florins have been honestly and virtuously saved. *Vater* blesses his son who is forty and Amalchen who is thirty-five with her breast all dried out and her nose all red. *Vater* sheds some tears, preaches morality, and dies, and the eldest son becomes himself a virtuous *Vater* and the same story begins anew. After about fifty or seventy years the grandson of the first *Vater* has a very considerable capital, which he passes on to his son, who in turn, and so on. And after five or six generations there appears a Baron Rothschild or some Hoppe and Company, or the devil knows who. Is this not a majestic spectacle? Continuous work for a century or two, patience, intelligence, character, firmness, calculation . . . ! But I prefer to squander riotously *à la Russe* or to get rich through the roulette. I do not want to be Hoppe and Company after five generations. I need money for myself and I do not consider myself just a necessary appendix to capital.⁴

One might want to ignore this ignorant and emotional outburst with its juxtaposition of the two national characters. But there is enough in Russian folklore to support generalizations of this kind, for instance, in the proverbial

4. F. M. Dostoevskii, *Igrok* (*The Gambler*) in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v tridsati tomakh* (*Complete Collection of Works in Thirty Volumes*), vol. 5 (Leningrad, 1973), pp. 225–26.

insistence that “whatever is good for the Russian is death for the German.”⁵ And since time horizon and risk aversion are intimately interconnected, one must also think of the Russian *avos'*,⁶ which Pushkin in the tenth chapter of *Evgeniï Onegin* justly called “the national shibboleth” as a risk-worshipping and risk-adoring term, and as such the very denial of time horizon.

The points to be made here are positive rather than normative and do not center upon the ever mysterious entities such as national character. Surely, one did not have to be a Russian in order to have negative feelings about bourgeois thrift and bourgeois time horizon. John Galsworthy who claimed to be “a social critic by accident,” and anyhow was it by deed, in his *Man of Property* did not use the incoherent, bubbling, staccato style, affected by so many heroes of Dostoevsky, as it is in the previous monologue of the Gambler, but Galsworthy, too, was repelled by possessive instincts and the vicious virtue of accumulation, and it was not for nothing that he gave his individual and collective hero a family name that, even though disguised by spelling, is an integral part of time horizon.

The Russian satirist Saltykov-Shchedrin is a rather rich source on our subject, as will be shown presently in a somewhat different context. But at the moment a cold and rather matter-of-fact observation of his may be added to the two quotations from Gogol and Dostoevsky. Writing in Germany he referred to time horizon in Germany and Russia while speaking of exploitation of forests and prices of lumber. He said: “The mountains of Germany are covered by excellent forests. . . . And note that if nevertheless fuel prices are rather high here, this is so only because Germany in general is rather avaricious with those products of nature, the replenishment of which takes a rather long period of time. But let in here to operate freely a Russian forester together with two or three Russian timber managers. They would at once flood all markets by such masses of lumber that prices would immediately fall by one-half.”⁷

This once again demonstrates the same contrast between a high time horizon in Germany and its absence in Russia, where not roulette-addicts,

5. In general, with a few exceptions, the Germans were not treated well in Russian belles-lettres. The well-known exceptions are: Lemm in Turgenev's *Nest of Gentryfolk*, Karl Ivanych in Tolstoy's *Childhood*, and the anonymous virtuoso in Goncharov's *A Usual Story*. Shtolts in Goncharov's *Oblomov* may be added to the short list.

6. A profoundly idiomatic and hence untranslatable adverbial term, expressing the optimistic feeling that somehow things will work out very satisfactorily, as well as faith in one's good luck. (To do things *na avos'* means to do them without adequate preparation and certainly without any clear reckoning.)

7. N. Shchedrin [M. E. Saltykov], *Za rubezhom (Abroad)* in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii (Complete Collection of Works)*, vol. 14 (Leningrad, 1936), p. 69.

but economic agents were ready to squander future wealth for profits of the moment, just as the Gambler wishes to squander his prospective winnings.

The same Russo-German theme in an infinitely finer guise appears in Goncharov's chef-d'oeuvre *Oblomov*. The hero of the novel, the very incarnation of inactivity and inertia, deeply averse to any planning, to any looking ahead beyond the urgent call of the moment is counterposed by Shtolts, the Russified son of a German *Bürger*. It is the rigid and severe training which young Shtolts had received from his father (along with the gentle strains that came from the education by his Russian gentry mother) that makes Shtolts a *homo novus* within the Russian environment, that is dominated by the Oblomovs. Shtolts is profoundly fond of Oblomov and toward the very end of the book, finding his friend in physical and spiritual decline and after having rehabilitated Oblomov's declining country estate (Oblomovka), Shtolts even hesitates to disturb his friend by revealing to him the happy look into the future which is offered by the economic prospects for the estate: "There is no point anymore in telling you, that your Oblomovka is no longer lost in the wastes of Russia. At length it is its turn now. The rays of the sun have reached it! I shall not tell you that in some four years, Oblomovka will be a railroad station, that your muzhiks will have worked on the dam, and then the railroad will carry your grain to the river port. . . . And then—schools and literacy, and thereafter. . . . No, you would be only afraid of the dawn of new happinesses, which will hurt your eyes unaccustomed to the light."⁸

However significant may be the joint thrust of the foregone references, it would be premature and, in fact, mistaken to conclude that Russian belles-lettres had nothing to say of very indigenous processes of accumulation, that is, formation of large fortunes which in the course of their creation certainly required persistence and patience as well as some ability to look into the future. And yet as one scrutinizes the relevant material, one is struck by a number of specific features that are displayed in this connection. To list some of those, one would have to mention (1) dishonesty placed in the service of accumulation, (2) irrationality in the administration of wealth with blind avarice perversely conjoined with irrational consumption, and (3) the absence of an inherent sense of economic purpose, out of which emerged the curious and striking phenomenon of *samodur* (person) or *samodurstvo* (the qualities of the *samodur*),⁹ and, finally, (4) the air of stark unreality that hovers over

8. I. A. Goncharov, *Oblomov* (Moscow, 1947), p. 432.

9. These terms again defy the search for fairly equivalent English nouns. Hence a description of the connotations involved must substitute for a proper rendition. The *samodur* is above all a willful, arbitrary person for whom the assertion of his will, the *sic volo, sic iubeo, stat pro ratione voluntas*, is the overriding determinant of his action. It follows from the previous description that a *samodur* will act on the spur of the

some of the plans and cogitations and which at times is connected with astonishing stress on the Buddenbrooks motif, that is on the biological exhaustion of a family's stamina, the term degeneration being much in use in this regard.

The role of dishonesty in the process of accumulation is perhaps most clearly revealed in connection with the willful breach of the debtor's obligations, that is to say with fraudulent bankruptcy.

The novels by Mel'nikov provide much material on the mores of the Volga merchants in general, and on the problem at hand in particular. In his novel *On the Mountains* (meaning the high right bank of the Volga River) one Vedeneev, an educated merchant, a graduate of a commercial academy who has been on business trips to "Europe" initiates a younger inexperienced merchant to the arcana of bill-of-exchange-jobbery, and explains to him the concept and use of a "bronze bill of exchange."¹⁰ He lectures as follows: "To give you an example assume we two have agreed to obtain gratis twenty thousand rubles each. I have no cash worth mentioning and what I have in stock is hardly one thousand rubles worth. And you are in the same situation. And so we both draw on each other's bills of exchange for twenty thousand rubles each and perhaps for even higher sums. And if you and I have credit in the banks because of our acquaintance with the bank managers you discount my bill of exchange and I discount yours. And so after having had no cash at all, we suddenly dispose of twenty thousands each." The astonished student wonders: "And what shall I do when the bills fall due?" "You will pay" replies the teacher, and in reply to the next question: "And if I lack cash?" finally reaches the salient point of his lecture: "You will declare yourself insolvent. Except that for such a purpose you need more than twenty thousand and must try to get from banks and merchants the maximum of possible credit. Thereafter everything will go without hitch or snag—you go into receivership, trust, bankruptcy. Naturally your house and the movable property which has remained visible, will be sold and the banks and the creditors will get some kopeks per ruble. But as soon as your case is closed, you have all of the concealed capital and not a single kopek of debt. Then you may start again your mercantile operations and after say another five years or so draw again as many bronze bills of exchange as possible. . . . After three bankruptcies you will be a millionaire."¹¹

moment, unbothered by any previously conceived long-range plans. Considering the importance of the character in Russian belles-lettres and in Russian critical literature, it seems well-justified to use the Russian term in transliteration.

10. The German term for the operation is *Wechselreiterei*.

11. P. I. Mel'nikov, *Na gorakh (On the Mountains)*, vol. 1 (Moscow, 1958), pp. 196-97.

It should be added that this eloquent professor of deception claims to have seen dishonesty also in "Europe," but at the same time regards his method of accumulation as one to be particularly suited to Russian conditions. The Volga River merchants live and operate faraway from the country's centers, but in a play by Ostrovskii a very rich Moscow merchant marries his daughter to his manager, transfers all his property to the new son-in-law, declares himself insolvent, and expects to avoid criminal prosecution by paying off the creditors at ten kopeks per ruble. But creditors stubbornly refuse to accept less than twenty-five kopeks while the greedy *nouveau riche* son-in-law refuses to satisfy them, unmindful of the grim results of his refusal for the father-in-law.¹²

Dishonesty is dishonesty and fraudulent bankruptcy is fraudulent bankruptcy, whatever the geographic site. And yet in terms of our subject there are obvious differences between the precepts in one case and the practice in the other. Development in a backward country of a smoothly working reliable system of credit perforce means raising of time horizons in the economy of the country. The bill of exchange in its very nature is a short-term instrument of credit, but the protection afforded it by the law (the irrelevance of substantive objections once the validity of the signature is admitted) makes for speedy and effective protection of the creditors, and in this fashion the spreading use of the bill of exchange in principle places some restraints on commercial dishonesty—the sworn or "forsworn" enemy of economic predictabilities and by the same token of a high time horizon. It is another matter that as "the foregoing figures" show also the bill of exchange can become an instrument of deceit. Keeping all these things in mind, one still has to admit, however reluctantly, that the technique of successive bankruptcies spread over a period of a *lustrum* with the purpose of acquiring a very large fortune as a result, does involve a plan of action and a look into the future. It is again another matter that time horizons of this sort interfere with the establishment of a higher time horizon for the commercial economy as a whole.

The point, however, is that the case of the triste hero of Ostrovskii's play is very different. He is rich and his business is in quite satisfactory shape. Dishonesty is deeply ingrained in his way of doing business. He, too, is a preceptor, teaching his salesmen how to cheat the customers both on the quality and quantity of the wares they buy. That the cheated customer may never return to his shops does not bother him, precisely because his time horizon is low. But all those are, as it were, small dishonesties of a small man. They are a matter of acquisitive instinct rather than of rational calculation. But the

12. A. N. Ostrovskii, *Svoi liudi—sochtemsia* (*Being Relatives We Shall Settle Our Accounts*) in *Izbrannye sochineniia* (*Selected Works*) (Moscow-Leningrad, 1947), pp. 3–34.

surprising thing is that he embarks upon the big dishonesty of fraudulent bankruptcy without any long-range plan. A brain wave happened to have crossed his mind opening up to him pleasant opportunities, first of all to satisfy the mischievous desire to hurt his creditors and second to assert his *patria potestas* over his daughter by forcing her to marry his manager who—so the brain wave—is to play a decisive role in the scheme of robbing the creditors.

The whole proceeding, involving both personal and financial decisions, is a striking example of *samodurstvo* and as such perfectly irrational. The contemporaneous criticism in Russia interpreted the play precisely in these terms.¹³

Dishonesty and irrationality are thickly spread over nearly all of Ostrovskii's plays. Along with the dishonesty of civil service, deeply corrupted by graft, there is the dishonesty of lawyers who participate in forging documents (particularly last wills), a dishonesty that supports, and derives profits from, commercial dishonesty of merchants, and dishonesty of bookkeepers and accountants that exploits the incompetence and illiteracy of the merchants. And above it all is the sense of purposelessness of accumulated wealth¹⁴ that finds its outlet in puerile acts of absurd consumption (watering the garden path with champagne and others). The figures of solid merchants, not given to squandering the money in fantastic schemes, in wild luxury consumption, or in gambling over card games are hardly visible in the huge gallery of characters assembled by Ostrovskii. Curiously enough there are only two clearly rational figures, not submerged at all in this irrational whirlpool of what Ostrovskii called "mad money"—the wild spending.¹⁵ One of them is a non-Russian usurer, who adorned by the improbable name of Salai Saltanych is introduced as either a Turkish Jew or an Armenian Greek, at any rate as an "Oriental," an "Asian,"¹⁶ but in his cold, clear-minded rationality, his unperturbed stability, his biting contempt for the irrational gamblers and squanderers and in his amusingly faulty Russian is a caricature of Gogol's

13. An extended treatment of *samodurstvo* in Ostrovskii's plays is contained in the well-known series of articles by Dobroliubov. But Dobroliubov, even though his work evoked Karl Marx's friendly attention, confined himself to personal and social aspects of the phenomenon, mostly ignoring its weighty economic implications except for an occasional remark that the hero of the play under discussion in the text acts "against his own advantage" and some comments on the picayune character of the homespun Russian swindler. See N. A. Dobroliubov, "Temnoe tsarstvo" ("The Dark Realm") in *Literaturno-kriticheskie stat'i* (Moscow, 1937), pp. 80–283, and particularly pp. 148 and 162–63.

14. "Money is abundant, but life is boring" is a widespread complaint. For example, see A. N. Ostrovskii, *Goriachee serdtse* (*The Hot Heart*) in *Izbrannye sochineniia*, p. 250.

15. A. N. Ostrovskii, *Beshenye den'gi* (*Mad Money*), *ibid.*, pp. 285–323.

16. A. N. Ostrovskii, *Posledniaia zhertva* (*Last Sacrifice*), *ibid.*, p. 551.

unsuccessful attempt to create a modern rational entrepreneur in the person of the educated and completely Russified Greek Konstangioglo.¹⁷ By contrast the other “ray of light in the realm of darkness”¹⁸ is represented by a Russian shipowner of unusual background and derivation. A technically and linguistically educated provincial with provincial peculiarities of speech, dress, and behavior, Vasil'kov, trained in England, preaches the virtue of honest work and above all stresses and restresses the need to stay within his carefully drawn up *budget* (plan and time horizon!) and finally succeeds in converting the woman he loves (who had been addicted to “mad money”) to his rational code of principles and his well-calculated way of life.¹⁹

Vasil'kov does not more than adumbrate lightly the type of modern Western merchant in Russian literature that would appear in Russian literature decades later,²⁰ as will be mentioned further below. But in surveying Russian literature of the first three-quarters of the nineteenth century only one great entrepreneurial figure emerges, possessed of a bold plan which is conceived in such a way that its execution would require a fairly long time of persistent activity. Paradoxically, ironically, and at the same time very revealingly, this figure is no other than Pavel Ivanych Chichikov, the picaresque hero of Gogol's *Dead Souls*. He has indeed the entrepreneurial time horizon. That his projected enterprise is a thoroughly dishonest one is as significant as is the strain of morbid fantasy and unreality that selling and buying of corpses casts over the venture. Something more will be said presently about this last mentioned aspect. But first some additional evidence on the idiosyncratic connection of acquisitive processes with other elements. In this respect two books by Saltykov-Shchedrin—the novel called *The Golovlev Seigniors* and the half-memoir, half-chronicle called *Ancient Life in the Poshekhon'e Region*²¹—are relevant.

The central figure in either book is the mother of the family. Thrown as a young girl into an *Oblomovka*-like (see above) godforsaken village, she suddenly developed overpowering acquisitive instincts accompanied by extraordinary acquisitive energy and ability and succeeded over several decades to increase twenty-fold her fortune, still measured in terms of male serf “souls,” which grew from 150 to 3,000. No one will deny that the two heroines (or

17. See N. V. Gogol, *Dead Souls*.

18. To use Dobroliubov's celebrated phrase (N. A. Dobroliubov, p. 354). It is worth noting that because of the aforementioned limited interest of the critic in economic aspects the modest “ray” which is to be explained in the text was not recognized as such.

19. A. N. Ostrovskii, *Beshenye den'gi* in *Izbrannye sochineniia*, particularly pp. 291, 307, 321, 323 for the references to the budget.

20. Ostrovskii's play was written in 1869–70.

21. M. E. Saltykov-Shchedrin, *Gospoda Golovlevy* (Moscow, 1964) and *Poshekhonskaia starina* (Moscow, 1950).

are they actually identical?) proceed persistently in pursuit of their goal of continual expansion of their possessions. The process of acquisition is thoroughly rational, involving sharp calculations prior to successive purchases on auctions of additional estates and of additional land to round off the old estates and to improve their productivity.

And yet along with the grand and bold policy of rational acquisition goes an attitude of avarice that is apprehensive and thoroughly irrational. This is most clearly shown in Saltykov-Shchedrin's impressive description of the storage policy with long lines of cellars, barns, and sheds, all of them crammed full with stuff that no longer could be approached because of intolerable stench emitted by the masses of spoilt and rotten foodstuffs. The domestic economy is governed by the strictest thrift. The children are perpetually hungry and the numerous house serfs are fed from the rotten stores and regularly are sick afterwards.²² It is with a subtle reference to time horizon that Saltykov-Shchedrin describes this disastrous storage policy as being governed by "the greed of the future."²³

In further contrast to the long-run acquisition policy stands the day-to-day way of lording it over the serfs in the villages and in the house as well as over the children. This is characterized by an orgy of power exercise—vindictive, punitive, unpredictable, giving free reign to every mood and every sadistic urge. This is nothing new within the context of this paper. Again this is the *samodurstvo* of which the Ostrovskii plays about the merchants have had to say so much. What is different is the environment, that is to say, the ambiance of a gentry estate.²⁴ It should be clear that the Russian serfdom, which actually amounted to slavery with its nearly unlimited power of the lords, presented opportunities for the petty despotism of *samodurstvo* that could not be completely reproduced within any other institutional setting. If one considers, furthermore, that particularly after the emancipation of the early 1860s many a Russian merchant either had been a serf himself or at least a descendant from a former serf family and had experienced on his own person or on those of his family the despotism of the gentry, one may not go very wrong in surmising that the *samodurstvo* of the merchants was partly a replica of, and partly the revenge for, previously suffered offenses. If this supposition be at all correct, it would mean that serfdom had economic after-effects and particularly was to some extent responsible for the irrationality and the disastrously low time horizon that is implied in *samodurstvo*. In this

22. Golovlevy, p. 48; *Starina*, p. 12.

23. *Starina*, *ibid.*

24. Note, however, that Ostrovskii, too, has in his collection also a figure of a gentry *samodursha*. A. N. Ostrovskii, *Vospitamitsa (The Raised Girl)* in *Izbrannye sochineniia*, pp. 115–33.

sense Russian literature of the period not only points to an economically significant phenomenon, but at the same time is suggestive with regard to its historical derivation.

A sequence of this sort, it may be noted, is not entirely surprising in the light of certain situations in Western and particularly Central Europe. There, too, the relations between factory owners and industrial labor very often appeared to be formed in a guise that had some resemblance to the relation between the lord and the serf. The entrepreneur's "master-in-his-own-house" attitude no doubt could have certain common features with the Russian *samo-durstvo*, but the quantitative differences must have been enormous because of the fundamental differences in economic rationality and time horizon, quite apart from the equally enormous difference between serfdom in Russia and in the West.

There is, however, still more economic enlightenment that can be drawn from Saltykov-Shchedrin's books. As has been said before, the problem of time horizon naturally encompasses the problem of generations, and this in a double sense. The high time horizon of the previous generation may include the needs and activities of its successor as a motivation or goal. But differentials in the time horizon as between the two generations may either impart enhanced meaning to the time horizon of the predecessor or, on the contrary, render it nugatory. The continuity in time horizon over the generations may thus be an important economic phenomenon, affecting the continuity of economic activities over time, and as such become an integral part of the concept of a sustained rate of economic development. Here again one will not be surprised to find fairly pronounced differences between areas of varying degree of economic backwardness.

To put it simply and concretely, the question is what does the next generation actually inherit in the two books of Saltykov-Shchedrin? Naturally, they—the children—inherit various portions of the accumulated wealth—all of it in the form of serf-populated estates. But what about the qualities transmitted? Saltykov-Shchedrin deals at length with the problem in his impressive treatment of the favorite son of the Great Mother. He certainly continues in an even wildly exaggerated fashion the tradition of avarice with its peculiar irrationality. He continues the great interest in accumulation—in the further increase of wealth. But here is the rub. What in the hands of the Mother was feverish activity both in the management of the estates and their continual acquisition still dominates the *mind* of the son, but not his action. In fact, it becomes purely spiritual. He does not occupy himself with actual management and has no knowledge of what goes on in his estates. By contrast, he spends most of his time on calculations of *imaginary* situations and opportunities. He assumes that all cows in the region, except his own, had fallen victim to an

epidemic and calculates what would happen to the price of milk under the circumstances and computes laboriously the profits that would be his as the result. Alternatively, he imagines himself to roam through his lands, accompanied by a forester who had been dead for many years and comes over a large wood of magnificent construction timber. He carefully estimates the area of the wood, the number of trees per square yard, (using in fact a Russian measure that had become archaic even in his time), carries out the multiplications, bargains with an imaginary buyer about the selling price, and once it is determined, he computes the total value and the profit of the sale. He remembers that some of the trees in the wood might be felled by poaching peasants and accordingly deducts the value of the trees lost, but does not forget to add the amount of fines that he will impose on the delinquent peasants. After having covered sheafs of paper by his computations, he looks with great satisfaction on the resulting figure and muses: "Figures, numbers—there is something holy about them. They do not lie."

All these idle computations, all this daydreaming with its distinct nightmarish quality could be brushed aside as the working of a disturbed mind, but that hardly would do justice to what we have been shown. For the false rationality of these precise calculations is another form of the irrationality that is conjoined with and follows rational actions in a backward economy. And this is not a specific phenomenon of a diseased brain, but a general phenomenon of a backward economy where rationality and irrationality, reality and unreality are so closely connected.²⁵ In addition, another broader problem presents itself from the foregoing case. In dealing not just with all the descendants of the Great Mother, Saltykov-Shchedrin no doubt wished to present the case of a degeneration of a gentry family. And it is surprising how often this problem appears in Russian literature, and not only with reference to the gentry.

Cases of degeneration in the ranks of *dvorianstvo* (gentry) are rather frequent in Russian literature, but one of them in which the economic implications of the phenomenon are stressed deserves to be mentioned. Boborykin cannot be counted among the great figures of Russian literature. But this very prolific novelist, once widely read, was a sharp and knowledgeable observer of things, and his novels must be regarded as a contribution to the economic and social history of the last decades of the nineteenth century in Russia. In one

25. For the preceding references to Saltykov-Shchedrin, see *Golovlevy*, pp. 119, 243–57. The author equips his loathsome hero with the quality of almost unbelievable hypocrisy which is something that, of course, touches on the reality-unreality problem. And it is interesting that in characterizing the hero the author explicitly says of him: "He is neither a Tartuffe, nor a contemporary French Bourgeois, but a purely Russian hypocrite." Indeed, the whole figure is "purely Russian" and hence of particular interest.

of them, the hero, a *dvorianin*, much concerned with his financial success complains in an intimate conversation: "The parents transmit to us by heredity not reserves of spiritual health, but often nothing but degeneration."²⁶

A few decades later, P. B. Struve coined his celebrated phrase about Russia's need to go "*Na vyuchki k kapitalizmu*" (that is, study in the school of capitalism). Interestingly, this pronouncement was anticipated by the selfsame hero of Boborykin who insists that the members of the gentry should "go for apprenticeship to the merchants . . . to learn from them about work, calculating reason, and the ability to produce values."²⁷ Therein he claims lies "the only salvation." For "without economic influence we have no future." Nevertheless his enthusiasm for "the world of values and production" is limited. He is shocked by the dishonesty that surrounds him. "All around grab, thief, embezzle, even lose all conscience of the difference between their own property and the property of others. Now since he has entered this world of jobbery, he has come to understand the foundations of any Russian business." And what about the prospective "teachers"? There are some exceptions: "Only in *some* merchants' families there is still some economic honesty, even though even this is of oppressive [*kulak*] nature."²⁸ The last statement, well-restrained as it is, is not very believable in the light of descriptions of mercantile mores provided by Ostrovskii's plays and other sources.²⁹

Everything, of course, is relative, and by comparison the merchants may indeed seem to show fewer signs of degeneration than the gentry. But the difference must not be exaggerated. It is good to refer in this connection to the novels of Mamin-Sibiriak, a novelist who with regard to artistic value and contents of his works has some similarity to Boborykin, except that while Boborykin's world centered on Moscow, Mamin's novels all play in the iron and steel mills and the gold fields of his native Urals. What he describes most impressively is the enormous energy and vitality and ruthlessness with which the ancestors had built magnificent enterprises, and accumulated huge wealth and power, possessed by the idea of sons and grandsons who would take over and administer what the forefathers had created. But the hopes and the

26. P. D. Boborykin, *Kitai-Gorod* (a mercantile sector of the city of Moscow) (Moscow, 1947), p. 181. The novel was published in 1882.

27. Boborykin, *ibid.*, pp. 178 and 181.

28. Boborykin, *ibid.*, pp. 179 and 243.

29. Although also some curiosities in this respect must be noted: In Count Sollogub's well-known story, for instance, the observation is made that Russian merchants think nothing of breaking obligations made out in writing, but consider it a matter of honor to fulfill oral promises and obligations. See V. A. Sollogub, "Tarantas" in *Povesti i rasskazy* (*Stories and Tales*) (Moscow-Leningrad, 1962), pp. 233-36. Interestingly, along with the transmittal of a large sum of money without receipt, the merchants involved discuss approvingly a drastic case of cheating coarsely a buyer of flour.

expectations remained unredeemed. This is so for various reasons. There were chinks in the armor of the ancestors. Men of overpowering strength, they were also men of enormous appetites, without any puritan inhibitions that might be a restraining disciplining force on their ministering to their instincts. Wild excesses with sex and wine were costly and, but more importantly, they affected the physical and spiritual forces of their offsprings. The entrepreneurial vigor was gone. Even if not afflicted by actual ailments, the knowledge of iniquities under which their wealth had been acquired weighed heavily upon the minds of the young. The brazen appropriation of the lands of the native nomads and ruthless exploitation of the peasant serf-labor attached to mines and mills was regarded by the sons—the “repentant industrialists”—as a “historical debt” that had to be repaid just as the very real debt left by the dissipations of the fathers. But the weakened blood—it was always blood that was talked about—failed to supply the energy required to move from pious wishes to action and improve the impaired productivity of the enterprises.³⁰ In view of the preceding it would not be surprising that Mamin throughout his life was greatly impressed by the basic conception of the *Rougon-Macquart*, a circumstance frequently mentioned by Russian contemporary critics.³¹

Within the context of this paper this stress on degeneration is significant because the phenomenon renders nugatory such time horizon across generations as may have existed. And to the extent that it is dissipations of the fathers that ruin the sons, the peculiar destruction of time horizon, even though unwittingly done, must be regarded as man-made.³²

It should be noted, however, that whatever the truth about the biological aspect of the entrepreneurial decline, in Russia the phenomenon was no doubt reinforced by the “guilt complexes” of the sons and their disgust with the hopeless viciousness of the social environment. In this sense, these specific failures of the time horizon, too, must be attributed to the backwardness of the country. And it may be no accident that Mamin found the Urals—a backward region within a backward country—particularly illuminating for the development of his thesis.

The 1870s in Russia were marked by a fever not dissimilar to the *Gruenderfieber* in the West. Railroad companies, banks, joint stock companies were established. The period found proper and highly unsympathetic reflection

30. See particularly D. N. Mamin-Sibiriak, *Privalovskie milliony* (*The Millions of the Privalovs*) in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (*Complete Collection of Works*), vol. 1 (Petrograd, 1915).

31. Mamin-Sibiriak, *ibid.*, pp. xxiii and xxix.

32. To some extent, degeneration in merchant families is at least hinted at in Gorky's *Foma Gordeev*, a novel that must be presently referred to in a different context.

in Russian literature. Dostoevsky was quick to note in his *Diary of a Writer* the arrival in Russia of the "European speculator" (unknown before) and of the stock exchange gambler.³³ Therewith waves of xenophobia swept the literature. The anti-Semitic strain so strong in Dostoevsky spread to the normally much less hospitable pages of Nekrasov, where in coarse satires of speech, accent, morals, and actions the newcomers (Jews and Greeks), who knew how to utilize the government's "guarantees and subsidies," bribed and bought high civil servants and even Marx-quoting professors; the plutocrats, idealizing the "transatlantic" brother whose god, too, was the dollar, except that the American god was obtained by work while the Russian "dollar" was a "stolen dollar,"³⁴ were painted in the darkest colors. The previously mentioned Boborykin composed a two volume novel, called *The Jobbers*³⁵ where, too, the dishonesties and the various deceptions of the period are described, and no one had any plans except quick profit.

But perhaps the most curious reflection of the economy of the period in a Russian novel can be found again in Dostoevsky's *The Youngster* where the unhappy and humiliated young man decides to embark on a plan of accumulation through "persistent and uninterrupted thrift," firmly resolved not to be deflected from the path of his long-term project by any momentary advantages, even if they promise a gain of 100 percent. And that, he argues, is the fatal error of all those stock exchange gamblers that they cannot resist such temptations; and he mentions by name the three famous entrepreneurs of the period. This is relevant within the present context, because the young author of the project obviously has a high time horizon, motivated as he is by the desire eventually to acquire the power of a Rothschild.³⁶ Dostoevsky's young hero is probably unfair to the heroes of the *Gruenderjahre* (Kokorev, Gubonin, and Poliakov) because some of their railroad constructions no doubt did involve long-term plans and by the same token, high time horizons,

33. F. M. Dostoevskii, *Dnevnik pisatel'ia: 1876* (Paris: YMCA-Press, n.d.), p. 408.

34. For all this see N. A. Nekrasov, "Sovremenniki" ("The Contemporaries") in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem* (*Complete Collection of Works and Letters*), vol. 3 (Moscow, 1949), particularly pp. 107-41.

35. P. D. Boborykin, *Del'tsy* in *Sochineniia* (*Works*), vols. 7 and 8 (St. Petersburg-Moscow, 1885-86). The rendition of the title is difficult. In German "*Gerschaeftemacher*" would be a fair translation. "Men of business" would be a possibility, but since the author of the novel treats mainly the shady dealings and the shady connections of the government officials with the *Gruender* types, the rendition "The Jobbers" may be preferable since one of the definitions of the term is "one who improperly uses a public office, trust, or service for private gain or party advantage" (*Oxford Universal Dictionary*, fifth meaning). The novel plays in the first half of the 1870s.

36. F. M. Dostoevskii, *Podrostok* (*The Youngster*) (Moscow, 1955), p. 83. This novel, too, was written in 1875.

except that the government's shouldering of risk made the individual achievement a good deal less admirable.

But the literature no doubt caught right this chase after quick and disreputable profits in the general atmosphere of dishonesty, where time horizon of the *Geschaeftemacher*, be they public or private, was certainly extremely low.

As the nineteenth century drew to its close, the Russian economy was no longer quite what it had been in the earlier parts of the century. Between 1885 and 1900 the economy had gone through a mighty spurt of industrial development. There is little doubt that as a result the backwardness of the country was diminished. By the same token one must suppose that some heightening of time horizon had occurred.

Was it reflected in Russian literature? Both Gorky and Chekhov show traces of the fact. In the previously mentioned novel by Gorky, it is curiously not the man by whose name the novel is known, but his godfather and mentor, Iakov Maiakin, who is the central figure, at least with regard to the problem that is of main relevance within the present context. It is in the speeches of the verbose Maiakin that can be found the very first explicit reference to time horizon. In speaking to the young Foma Gordeev about the latter's deceased father, a powerful entrepreneurial figure and Maiakin's great friend, Maiakin says: "Your Father was a considerable figure. . . . *But he did not look far ahead into the future*, and he did not know how to listen to me."³⁷ And it is not only with respect to economic decisions that Maiakin, the merchant, looks far into the future. He has a philosophy of history according to which ever since the days of Peter the Great the merchants appear as the creative force in society—"the builders of life," and in his eloquent encomium of the merchant he demands freedom for the merchants to acquire power and to erect a creative society to be ruled by the merchants. Thus, economic and political time horizons are happily conjoined.³⁸

But even more impressive and even more directly bearing on our subject is the figure of a young merchant, Maiakin's prospective son-in-law, who has returned from four years of marketing studies in the West with a well-documented plan for a "model factory" to produce "model products" for the markets of Europe. And to the old man's question: "What rate of profit are you dreaming of?" the young man gives a severe riposte: "I am not dreaming. I *calculate* with all the *precision* that is possible in our Russian conditions," and goes on to stress the need for strictest rationality in economic

37. M. Gor'kii, *Foma Gordeev in Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 2 (Moscow, 1938), p. 162. Italics supplied.

38. *Ibid.*, pp. 272–73, 340–41.

matters, based on the economic information he had collected.³⁹ Thus, this novel written and published in the very last years of the century contains tones, accents, and views that one would have been looking for in vain in what after all is a rich crop of Russian belles-lettres on the problems concerned. And for similar reasons Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard* deserves very much to be mentioned in this connection. Here, too, the central figure for our purpose, though not necessarily for Chekhov's, is none of the owners of the cherry orchard, the decadent bankrupt members of the gentry, nor the idealistic "eternal student," but Lopakhin, the rich merchant, the son of a village storekeeper who, as the son remembers him, was actually still a muzhik. And it is *Lopakhin* who buys the cherry orchard—the estate where his ancestors used to be slaves—and will destroy its age-old genteel beauty by cutting down the trees, and dividing the huge grounds (more than sixty-thousand acres) into small lots to be leased to summer residents, yielding immediately large rents which will further grow *over the next twenty years*. This is indeed a well-thought-out plan with a high time horizon explicitly built into it.⁴⁰

The Cherry Orchard was the last of Chekhov's plays, written in the first years of the new century and finished in 1903. It is tempting, as was done before in the case of Gorky's novel, to relate the figure of Lopakhin to the economic conditions of the country at the turn of the century and at any rate to the great transformation that had taken place since the emancipation of the 1860s. And there is probably nothing wrong with succumbing to this temptation, except, that is, for a small reservation that may be made explicitly.

The point is that a hint of the theme of Chekhov's play is contained in Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*. In part 6 (chapter 29) of Tolstoy's novel, the hero, Konstantin Levin, has an accidental conversation with an anonymous estate owner of the old school. Both complain that they are managing their respective estates at a loss, partly because of some restraining traditional sentiments. In the course of the conversation, the old man tells a little story: "The other day a merchant from the neighborhood came to visit me. We took a walk through the estate and through the park. And the merchant said: 'Everything on your estate is in perfect order, but the park is neglected.' But

39. *Ibid.*, pp. 305–6. As was mentioned before, availability of extensive economic information is inherent in the concept of a high time horizon. It might be added at this point, that even in earlier Russian literature a Volga merchant uses his knowledge of the prospective arrival in St. Petersburg of boats from Liverpool carrying American cotton for giving much appreciated advice to a mercantile friend with regard to the expected decline of cotton prices. But this involves merely a rational calculation for the next business deal rather than a plan for the future. See P. I. Mel'nikov, *Na gorakh*, p. 159.

40. A. P. Chekhov, *Vishnevyyi sad (The Cherry Orchard)* in *P'esy* (Moscow-Leningrad, 1947), pp. 227–28. Italics supplied.

my park, too, is in very good order. . . . And yet the merchant continued: 'But I should have felled those linden trees. Should only have waited for the sap. You have one thousand linden trees here. Each of them would yield two basts. And bast fetches a high price nowadays, and in addition you would get some timber to sell.' " "And with the proceeds," remarked Levin, "he would have bought cattle or land for a song and then leased them to the peasants. . . . And your merchant will make a fortune for himself, while we—you and I—must thank God if we can retain and leave to our children what we have now."⁴¹

There is no intention here to suggest that Chekhov received the idea of his cherry orchard from *Anna Karenina*. Not only that the author of this paper has never seen the least indication of such a connection, which would be quite irrelevant for his purpose anyway. But it is striking that the theme of *The Cherry Orchard* should have appeared in a novel written a quarter of a century earlier. It should be noted, however, that Tolstoy's story refers to a sharp calculating merchant without any specific reference to a long glance into the future, as is remarkable in the case of Lopakhin. Thus, only a modest reasonable conclusion can be drawn from the preceding, that is that the story of the cherry orchard must have been very much in the air of the period; in other words that Chekhov wrote with considerable knowledge and understanding of the contemporaneous environment.

It is, however, important to distinguish what is new and what is not new in *The Cherry Orchard*. For decades after the Emancipation, Russian merchants had been buying up *na srub* (to be felled) the orchards and the parks (to say nothing of the forests) of the gentry. And the latter were quite unreluctant to sell them. This happened in the course of the momentous process of impoverishment of the gentry. After having wasted the redemption payments, received from the government, and in addition the sums subsequently obtained from mortgaging the estates, and after the unsuccessful attempts to introduce what was called a "rational economy," the gentry found themselves in dire momentary need of money and proceeded to sell portions of the estates, often foolishly and irresponsibly, as does Prince Obolenskii in *Anna Karenina* to Levin's (his brother-in-law) acute displeasure. The whole process did not elude the Russian belles-lettres and was minutely and ably described by S. Atava⁴² in his collection of *oчерki*, called *Impoverishment*. Here it must be added that Russian belles-lettres include an interesting, albeit somewhat

41. L. N. Tolstoi, *Sobranie khudozhestvennykh proizvedenii* (Collection of Artistic Works), vol. 8 (Moscow, 1948), p. 203.

42. S. Atava [S. N. Terpigorev], *Oskudenie* (Impoverishment), vol. 1 (Moscow, 1958), pp. 32, 120, 126. Atava may be considered as having walked in the footsteps of Saltykov-Shchedrin.

peripheral, category, called *ocherk* which again is a term difficult to translate since neither *Sketches* nor *Notes* yield a satisfactory rendition. Turgenev's *Notes of a Hunter*, some of Goncharov, much of Saltykov-Shchedrin's and Gleb Uspenskii's work belong to the genre which has survived to be well represented in current Soviet literature. In fact, it might be argued that the existence and popularity of the genre affected pure Russian belles-lettres and enhanced their realistic character.

Still, in all that earlier literature where one can find plenty on the economic irrationality and the low time horizon of the gentry, the high time horizon implicit in the merchants' calculations must be merely assumed. It is not explicitly stated, as, by contrast, is the case in Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard*.⁴³

Conclusions

In the introductory remarks to this paper it was surmised that economic backwardness and time horizon were inversely related, so that a backward country such as Russia would have a rather low time horizon. The scrutiny in the preceding anthology doubly supports this supposition in the explicit references to both the low time horizon, or the absence of any time horizon, in Russia and the high time horizon in the more advanced countries of Western Europe.

Furthermore, a high time horizon presupposes a well-functioning system of credit and therewith more than just a modicum of commercial honesty. The literature is full of references to the frightening amount of dishonesty at all levels and on all scales, from cheating the buyer of five yards of cloth by false measuring to forgeries of documents and fraudulent bankruptcy, to say

43. This is glaringly true of the article by Andrei Donskov, "Predvestniki *Vishnevogo sada*," *The New Review*, 112 (1973): 93-99. In this article Mr. Donskov, without mentioning *Anna Karenina*, discussed some similarities between *The Cherry Orchard* and the following two plays: a play by N. Ia. Solov'ev and A. N. Ostrovskii (*Svetit da ne greet* in A. N. Ostrovskii, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 9 [Moscow, 1960], pp. 305-73) and a play written by Solov'ev alone (*Likvidatsiia in Teatr* [Moscow-St. Petersburg, 1883]). The former play was written in 1880 and the latter two years later. In either play there is as a background the theme of the inefficiency and impoverishment of the gentry estates and their sale to enriched peasants. But the theme is entirely overshadowed by two love stories, and the alleged similarities, influences, and imitations in Chekhov's play are too trifling for words. From a literary point of view, one may suggest that if Mr. Donskov had read with the attention and comprehension they deserve Anatole France's two brilliant articles "Apologie pour le plagiat" (Anatole France, *La vie littéraire*, vol. 4 [Paris, n.d.], pp. 156-65, 166-76), he probably would have abstained from publishing his piece. From the point of view of economic history, which alone matters in the present context, it is significant that in neither play reviewed by Mr. Donskov is there a shadow to suggest a high time horizon on the part of the prospective buyers of the two estates.

nothing of cheating the prospective son-in-law out of the promised dowry. That long-term plans for fraudulent bankruptcy were at times inherent in the process of accumulation of riches and did involve a relatively high time horizon was a caricature thereof and at any rate conducive to the destruction of time horizon for the economy as a whole.

Finally, a high time horizon is likely to require an *economic man*, motivated essentially by economic goals and using economic calculations in the pursuit of those goals. But in the unsound social atmosphere of Russia of the period, economic agents were burdened with all sorts of power complexes, some of which derived from the habit of lording it over the peasants or from memories of the humiliations received from those in power. An atmosphere of fears and insecurities, resentments and hatreds was the natural result. These emanations of serfdom—which were perhaps the clearest testimony for the economic and social backwardness of the country—created the curious phenomenon of *samodurstvo*, with its willful arbitrary decisions on the spur of the moment which often interfered with the men's—and women's—own economic interest and made persistent action upon long-range plans all but impossible. Thus economic and social history appeared inseparably inter-related and both militated against a high time horizon. And it is in this connection that one must see the pervasive talk of the “deterioration of the blood,” the biological weakening of the stamina from generation to generation and the lack of energy and clarity of the mind on the part of heirs; who had been previously oppressed by the paternal (and maternal) exercise of *potestas* and later tried to escape into a world of fantasy and unreality which defied all rational calculations.

But there is more than can be learned from Russian belles-lettres. For toward the end of the century one begins to receive intimations of figures of merchants and industrialists that do betray an interest in looking far ahead into the future and stress the rationality of their decisions. This is a fact of no mean importance. Such a change in attitudes must be seen as the result of the great spurt of industrialization that occurred in Russia in the last fifteen, and particularly the last ten, years of the century. There is no doubt that Russia in 1900, while still a very backward country if compared with countries in western or central Europe, was a good deal less backward than the country had been in the earlier decades of the century. Thus, the supposition of inverse relationship between time horizon and backwardness is dynamically confirmed, supplying, as it were, historically a causal twist to the supposition.

All this makes it possible to conclude on a rather optimistic note with regard to the use of Russian belles-lettres as a source of information on time horizon. Even from this rapid survey, tentative and preliminary as it is, a

fairly rich harvest of both information and, above all, of points of view has been gleaned. It is likely that further probing into the writings of dimmer stars on the firmament of Russian belles-lettres will produce more information and perhaps additional angles from which the problem may be considered.

But the reader should be again reminded of the highly partial character of the present paper and should keep in mind that the intention is to extend the study of time horizon to cover a great variety of sources and by no means to confine it to a single country. That the problem at large has remained ignored in professional literature has provided an impetus to present here at least a small segment thereon to public attention and, one might hope, for public discussion.