

has been guilty of slavery, extravagance and oppression, it has had a real hold on the Russian people and at times was the only unifying force left in the nation.

The history of Russia for a thousand years has been that of poverty and oppression for the people, and extravagance on the part of the ruling powers, very few, if any of whom, were of full Russian blood. I am inclined to believe that negro slavery in America never reduced its subjects to the depths to which the serfs of Russia were submerged. The nation was always trying to advance its interests by taking part in the wars of other nations, and the weight of it all fell upon the peasant class, which furnished the men for the ranks, the food for soldiers, and bore the expense in taxes, impossible for them to meet.

It would appear that the serfs were always strong enough to have overwhelmed their masters, but they were densely ignorant, unorganized, hopeless and helpless. For a thousand years no one ever showed them a real kindness. They fought wars in which they had no interest and between times they were ravished by the Cossacks or some other group. They were devoid of both leadership and courage.

Strong;-they must have been strong physically, for no one but the strong could have survived. Rugged;-Yes, they had to be, to stand the bitter cold and to get together enough to keep them from starving. When famine and pestilence prevailed, they died by the thousands. Courage;-None. There seemed to be no way out. Occasionally a ruler would favor the encouragement of education, but it was for the ruling classes and gentry only. The masses did not count and were left in utter ignorance. True, serfdom was abolished in 1858 and in 1861, but little was done to improve the conditions of the masses.