

To the Editor:

It is not uncommon for an error, once committed to print, to be repeated by subsequent writers using the source in which the mistake first appeared. I have the dubious distinction of being the originator of such an error. The volume that repeats my error will have a far wider audience than the book in which the mistake first appeared. I bring this to the attention of the profession in the hope of preventing the further reproduction of my error.

Orlando Figes's *A People's Tragedy: A History of the Russian Revolution* (1997) quotes Nicholas II as saying in 1902: "I conceive of Russia as a landed estate of which the proprietor is the Tsar, the administrator is the nobility, and the workers are the peasantry" (35). Although Figes does not cite the source of the quotation, it is in fact an abbreviated version of a quotation I attributed to Nicholas in my *Nobility and Privilege in Late Imperial Russia* (1985, p. 64), a title included in Figes's bibliography. Figes follows the quotation with a comment that is a paraphrase of my own observation on Nicholas's words.

The problem is that the words are not Nicholas's, but those of Vladimir Paltov in his "*Vzgliad i nechto*" *o dvorianstve* (1904, p. 194). By using the first person (but without quotation marks, an omission I overlooked), Paltov was giving a not unreasonable interpretation of the thoughts in the emperor's mind as he addressed peasant elders in the Ukraine. Would that he had expressed his thoughts in words as striking as those Paltov invented for him. Unfortunately, Nicholas did not.

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