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By

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Committee in charge:

Professor Victoria Frede-Montemayor, Chair
Professor Yuri Slezkine
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Abstract

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In the nineteenth century, Russian radicals imagined how they could become "new people." Inspired by Nikolai Chernyshevskii's 1863 novel *What Is To Be Done?*, among other theorists, they sought to reorganize their lives around socialist values. These radicals believed that in order to bring about a revolution that would transform society, they must first apply ideals of egalitarianism and justice in their everyday lives. In debating what it meant to be a revolutionary, and in struggling to give up their own private interests to serve a greater cause, these radicals expressed a vision of a new way to live.

This dissertation explores how the Russian revolutionary Populists of the 1870s implemented socialist ideals in their everyday lives. It asks how these radicals developed senses of themselves as revolutionaries connected to a larger community and dedicated to transforming the political and social order. By looking at the intersection of values and daily life, this work hopes to illuminate a hitherto overlooked dimension of the Populists' story and better understand the Russian revolutionary tradition.

Chapter 1 examines conversion to the revolutionary cause. It investigates why young people chose to leave their families and careers to join a community tied together by ideas and values different from those of the surrounding society. It goes beyond intellectual influences to look at the interplay between radicals' deeply personal sense of self and the social world of groups and connections that they inhabited. Chapter 2 looks at one aspect of how radicals began to live a new kind of life based on new values in the revolutionary community: romance. Many radicals believed that devoting oneself to the public good required giving up one's personal life, and this chapter examines the tension between ascetic ideals and the reality of love and marriage between radicals. Chapter 3 is on the "going to the people" movement of the mid-1870s, when Populists left the cities and went into the countryside to spread propaganda among the peasants in order to spark an uprising. These students took on the everyday lives of peasants, dressing in their clothing, eating their food, and working at their trades. This chapter analyzes how their experiences altered radicals' identities as revolutionaries and the values that defined them as a community. Hundreds of participants in the "going to the people movement" were arrested and imprisoned, some for decades. Chapter 4 looks at how radicals confronted life in prison. It examines how revolutionaries maintained their sense of identity when unable to engage in political work, and how they maintained their connections to the revolutionary community while isolated in solitary confinement. Together, these chapters show how individuals shaped and reshaped their identities, even as they subordinated themselves to a collective cause.

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Introduction

In 1881, Sergei Kravchinskii published a book in Milan on the contemporary Russian revolutionary movement, *Underground Russia*. Writing in Italian under his literary pseudonym "Stepniak" ("of the steppe"), he sought to justify the revolutionaries' goals and terrorist tactics to the public of Western Europe. The book contains a brief history of the movement and episodes from Kravchinskii's life in the underground that draw the reader into the experience of revolutionary life, portrayed as an adventure of braving dangers while serving an all-important cause greater than yourself. The heart of the book consists of biographical sketches of some of Kravchinskii's revolutionary comrades, in which he tries to put a human face on a movement often caricatured in the West. Some of his heroes were already well known. He described the iron-willed and beautiful Sof'ia Perovskaia, who was an "inspired priestess" of the terrorists of *Narodnaia Volia* (The People's Will). Prince Petr Kropotkin was descended from an older noble family than the Romanovs, and was groomed from childhood for the highest offices of state, but gave it up to agitate among the workers of St. Petersburg, ending up in the dungeons of the Peter and Paul fortress. The book also introduced lesser-known figures to the public, such as "the warrior" Valerian Osinskii, a courageous and chivalrous man of action who always carried a revolver and died on the scaffold; or Dmitrii Lizogub, "the saint," who wore thin, threadbare clothes through the Russian winter despite having a fortune of millions of rubles—he saved every ruble for the cause.[1]

In order to elicit sympathy for the revolutionaries, Kravchinskii introduced his readers to revolutionaries who were individuals with names, physical descriptions, personality quirks and anecdotes in order to personalize a movement often thought of by outsiders in abstract and menacing terms. He used these biographical sketches to showcase revolutionary virtues: sympathy for the common people, propagandistic ardor, sincerity to one's comrades, courage, even the modest hard work he attributed to Gesia Gel'fman, which, he said, poets do not praise, but which is essential to any movement. All of these revolutionary values were one form or another of self-sacrifice, and for Kravchinskii true revolutionaries would renounce their own comforts and interests in order to serve their comrades, the people, and the cause of social and political change. In ascribing ideal revolutionary virtues to flesh-and-blood individuals, Kravchinskii walks a literary line between, on the one hand, sacrificing realism to create a one-dimensional heroic image, and, on the other, admitting to imperfections in his protagonists (he usually errs in the former direction). If Kravchinskii's writing of *Underground Russia* struggled to reconcile revolutionary ideals with human particularities, it is natural to ask how his actual comrades dealt with this problem. How did they see themselves as revolutionaries? What values guided them? And how did they apply these ideals in their everyday lives?

This dissertation examines how Russian revolutionaries in the 1870s sought to live according to socialist ideas, and, in the process, developed a revolutionary identity that they rooted in their daily interactions with other members of the radical community. This work takes as its starting place the assertion that socialist ethical values were at the heart of what it meant for them to be revolutionaries, applied not only in their commitment to reform society as a whole,

[1] Sergei Stepniak-Kravchinskii ("Stepniak"), *Underground Russia: Revolutionary Profiles and Sketches from Life* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1883).

and in conversation with peasants and workers, but to themselves and one another. Kravchinskii's comrade, the Populist Lev Shishko, echoes an idea shared by most veterans of the movement when he recalled that in the revolutionary groups of the 1870s "ethical motives played an exclusive role. People joined together mainly as a result of the intensity of their subjective state of mind and not out of loyalty to this or that revolutionary doctrine."[2] This emphasis on character and morality translated into the formulation of other important commitments, notably the idea held by many radicals that the educated classes owed a debt to the common people that they must repay. My work asks how radicals developed their revolutionary identity—at once deeply personal and rooted in a community of their comrades—and how they maintained it over the course of their careers as they faced different challenges in conducting their everyday lives in a revolutionary way.

The Russian radicals who came of age in the 1870s, generally referred to as the Populists, are a particularly important generation in the history of the Russian revolutionary movement. The 1870s saw the revolutionary movement become a truly mass movement for the first time in Russian history. The central propagandistic endeavor of the decade, the "Going to the People" movement, saw several thousand students and young radicals leave the cities and travel into the countryside to live among and spread socialist ideas to the peasants. Concentrated around the "mad summer" of 1874, these forays into the peasants' world did not bring about the revolution radicals envisioned, leading instead to mass arrests and years of incarceration and exile. Yet their failure underscores the importance of the participants' moral commitments: on a personal level, the decision to become involved and the personal sacrifice it entailed was significant in a way that the political outcome was not.

What did these radicals believe? The radicals of the 1870s were influenced by a wide array of thinkers, beginning with the Westernizers and socialists Aleksandr Herzen and Mikhail Bakunin, to the materialists Nikolai Chernyshevskii and Nikolai Dobroliubov, to the nihilist Dmitrii Pisarev. During the late 1860s and 1870s, a younger generation would pen new treatises reflecting new priorities. Populists believed that political change in Russia must be rooted in the peasantry with its institution of the peasant commune—a homegrown socialist collective. The writer and publicist Vasilii Bervi-Flerovskii bemoaned the economic conditions of the peasants and advocated socialist solutions in his *The Situation of the Working Class in Russia* (1869) and *The Alphabet of the Social Sciences* (1871). In his influential essay "What Is Progress?", Nikolai Mikhailovskii argued that Russia need not follow the Western European capitalist model of development. Petr Lavrov, in his *Historical Letters* (1868-69), championed the ideal of individual moral and intellectual development as a means to social activism. He maintained that the intelligentsia had incurred a moral debt to the people by cultivating arts and letters while the peasants toiled in the fields to support them. Perhaps more than all others, this idea became central to the ethos of the Populists. One radical cited Lavrov at the "trial of the 193": "We have no right *to study at the expense of the people*."[3] While these radicals differed in to what extent they should humbly learn from the common people or use their superior education to guide them towards revolution, a moral responsibility towards the people, particularly the peasants, lay at the core of their beliefs. This sense of responsibility led radicals to become morally conscientious

[2] L. Shishko, *Sergei Mikhailovich Kravchinskii i kruzhok chaikovtsev (Iz vospominanii I zametok starogo narodnika)* (St. Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo Vl. Raspopova, 1906), 13.
[3] P. L. Lavrov, *Narodniki-Propagandisty 1873-78 godov* (St. Petersburg: Izdanie I. M. Rozenfel'da, 1907), 185. Emphasis in original.

individuals, examining the comrades' conduct as well as their own and holding themselves to the high standards aspired to by the radical community.

Because the Populist movement of the 1870s brought a greater number of people into revolutionary activity than ever before, radicals were required to work out what it meant to be a revolutionary in new ways. Women were more prominent in the revolutionary movement than ever before, and in greater numbers. This gave new importance to questions of interaction between the genders, as male and female radicals worked out the implications of what it meant to be comrades cooperating to advance the cause. While many radicals felt that differences in gender should be ignored, others tried to reconcile revolutionary values with romance and marriage between radicals. The dynamism of the revolutionary community also expressed itself in radicals' literary output. During and after their years of revolutionary activity, radicals produced personal documents such as memoirs and letters that give invaluable windows into their social and cultural world. While earlier figures of the Russian revolutionary tradition, such as Herzen, Bakunin, and Chernyshevksii, produced copious autobiographical documentation, the number of Populists actively involved in the same intersecting circles in the 1870s allowed for the creation of a literature of personal documents that provides more distinct yet interconnected viewpoints on what it meant to be a revolutionary.

To briefly note how I characterize this community, I use the term "radicalism" to refer generally to the Russian revolutionary movement of the 1870s, emphasizing its commonalities. The revolutionaries of this period were not united by strict ideological conformity—while most were socialists of various persuasions, some embraced anarchism and other beliefs, while some supported parliamentary democracy. Some focused their propaganda efforts on urban workers, while others concentrated on the peasantry. In addition, radicals lacked an institutional framework, meeting in small groups, such as the famous *kruzhki* (circles) that variously formed in schools, universities, and private apartments, in urban capitals and provincial towns, whether at home or in exile. Even prisons could become sites for the formation of these discussion groups. These groups remained fluid, shifting and replacing one another as different ideological questions became dominant and certain personalities rose to prominence or left the scene due to emigration or arrest. These discussion circles were most influential in the early part of the decade, most notably the *Chaikovtsy*, then more structured organizations, like *Zemlia i volia* and *Narodnaia volia* became dominant. My use of the word "radicalism" is inclusive, synonymous with the broader use of the term "Populist," denoting not just a particular ideological strand in the 1870s opposed to others, but to a broad and dynamic intellectual camp advocating social transformation on behalf of the people.[4] When revolutionaries of the period referred to themselves as radicals, they were referring less to an ideological position than to an ethos of personal action based on self-sacrifice. When one newcomer to the Chaikovskii circle inquired about their ideological affiliation, their answer—"We're radicals"—meant that, unlike the liberals, they were willing to sacrifice themselves in order to bring about the change they desired in society.[5]

[4] On definitions of "Populism," see Andrzej Walicki, *A History of Russian Thought from the Enlightenment to Marxism,* trans. Hilda Andrews-Rusiecka (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1979), 222-23; Richard Pipes, "Narodnichestvo: A Semantic Inquiry," *Slavic Review*, 23, no. 3 (Sept. 1964).
[5] Morozov, *Povesti moei zhizni*, I:73.

Historiography and Methods

Writings on the Russian Populists of the 1870s began as early as Kravchinskii's publication of *Underground Russia* in 1881.[6] These early assessments of the movement, often depicting it in heroic terms, blend into the literature of reminiscences of the Populists themselves, which will be discussed in more detail below. The first historian of Russian Populism, Vasilii Bogucharskii, focused on parsing its main ideological influences and noteworthy events, emphasizing, as many later historians were to do, the naivete of participants in the Going to the People movement.[7] Franco Venturi has provided the magisterial survey of the nineteenth-century revolutionary movement. His work informs my own by taking seriously the Populists' claims that they were motivated by particular ethical ideals rooted in their understanding of socialism, though I focus more on how they applied these ideals in everyday life.[8] While Soviet historians such as Boris Itenberg and Nikolai Troitskii have emphasized Populism's role in preparing the way for Marxism in the Russian revolutionary movement, they have nonetheless made major contributions to our understanding the radicals of the 1870s on their own terms.[9] During the Cold War, a strain of Western scholarship on Populism focused on its intellectual roots.[10] Historians who wrote about the movement's revolutionary activity focused on the Going to the People movement, which they generally considered to be a naïve crusade on the part of young idealists who lacked the necessary social and political experience.[11]

This study builds on Richard Wortman's insight that ideologically significant social bonds were central to the Populists' mentality. Wortman saw this connection as between the Populist and the peasants:

> "For the individual cut off from the tight bonds of Russian society and family, the alliance with the peasant had far more than mere political significance. It was a psychological necessity that gave him the emotional strength to assert his independence

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[6] Stepniak-Kravchinskii, *Underground Russia*.

[7] V. Bogucharskii, *Aktivnoe narodnichestvo semidesiatykh godov* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo M. i S. Sabashnikovykh, 1912).

[8] Franco Venturi, *Roots of Revolution: A History of the Populist and Socialist Movements in Nineteenth-Century Russia*, trans. Francis Haskell. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960). See especially pp. 471-72.

[9] B. S. Itenberg, *Dvizhenie revoliutionnogo narodnichestva. Narodnicheskie kruzhki i «khozhdenie v narod» v 70-kh godakh XIX v.* (Moscow: Nauka, 1965); see also B. S. Itenberg, ed. *Revoliutionnoe narodnichestvo 70-kh godov XIX veka*, 2 vols (Moscow: Nauka, 1964). While Troitskii's treatment of the Chaikovtsy and later Populists emphasizes their heroism, his mastery of the sources makes his works invaluable resources for the student of Populism. See N. A. Troitskii, *Pervye iz blestiashchei pleiady. Bol'shoe obshchestvo propagandy 1871-1874 gody* (Saratov: Izdatel'stvo Saratovskogo universiteta, 1991); N. A. Troitskii, *Bezumstvo khrabrykh. Russkie revoliutsionery i karatel'naia politika tsarizma. 1866-1882* (Moscow: Mysl', 1978); N. A. Troitskii, *Russkoe revoliutsionnoe narodnichestvo 1870-kh godov* (Saratov: Izdatel'stvo Saratovskogo universiteta, 2003). Additional Soviet works of note have focused on aspects of Populism and the Going to the People movement: R. V. Filippov, *Ideologiia Bol'shogo obshchestva propagandy (1869-1874)* (Petrozavodsk: Karel'skoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1963); R. V. Filippov, *Iz istorii narodnicheskogo dvizheniia na pervom etape "khozhdenie v narod" (1863-1874)* (Petrozavodsk: Karel'skoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1967); V. N. Ginev, *Narodnicheskoe dvizhenie v srednem povolzh'e. 70-e gody XIX veka* (Moscow: Nauka, 1966).

[10] James H. Billington, *Mikhailovsky and Russian Populism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958); Philip Pomper, *Peter Lavrov and the Russian Revolutionary Movement* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972).

[11] Avrahm Yarmolinsky, *Road to Revolution: A Century of Russian Radicalism* (New York: Macmillan, 1959); Philip Pomper, *The Russian Revolutionary Intelligentsia* (New York: Crowell, 1970); Adam B. Ulam, *In the Name of the People: Prophets and Conspirators in Prerevolutionary Russia* (New York: The Viking Press, 1977).

> of his rejected childhood self. It afforded him a mature identity he could respect and enabled him to conquer the anxiety and doubt attendant upon his renunciation of his old attitudes, feelings, and character traits."[12]

While Wortman emphasizes the role that contact with the people played in lending radicals a sense of existential security, my study argues that radicals' connection to the revolutionary community was central to their identity. It was by inventing this community, its customs, and its codes of interaction, that individuals defined the significance of the abstract values they adhered to, such as "justice," "equality," "sacrifice," and socialism itself. By interacting with other members of the community, they learned to see themselves as united representatives of the revolutionary cause.

My project combines the methods of cultural history with attention to intellectual developments and social phenomena. The theoretical approach I adopt is informed by cultural anthropology's attention to systems of meaning. This study aims to provide a "thick description" of how revolutionaries interpreted daily life and socialist values.[13] At the heart of my work is the troubled relationship between ideological expectations and the everyday, a dynamic that scholars have examined at different stages of the Russian revolutionary movement. Iurii Lotman pioneered the analysis of the cultural significance of the everyday in such semiotic studies as "The Decembrist in Everyday Life."[14] To understand the "men of the '40s," some historians turned to biography to find the social, cultural, and psychological roots of ideology.[15] In describing the nihilism of the 1860s, Irina Paperno examines the layers of meaning in everyday life in her *Chernyshevsky and the Age of Realism*, showing how personal experience and culture can intersect with literary creation.[16] In his recent work, Konstantine Klioutchkine looks at this dynamic from another angle, focusing on those behaviors that resist absorption into ideology—vices that cannot be reconciled with the moral code.[17]

This study's treatment of identity and values is informed by strands of the historiography that deal with gender and with self-fashioning. Inspired by the number and prominence of women in the Russian revolutionary movement, studies of women and gender, as well as critical

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[12] Richard Wortman, *The Crisis of Russian Populism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 32.

[13] On "thick description," see Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973). Historical studies particularly important to my work which apply methods of cultural analysis to imperial Russia are: Claudia Verhoeven, *The Odd Man Karakozov* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009);
Susan K. Morrissey, *Heralds of Revolution: Russian Students and the Mythologies of Radicalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); Joan Neuberger, *Hooliganism: Crime, Culture, and Power in St. Petersburg, 1900-1914* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1993).

[14] Jurij Lotman, "The Decembrist in Everyday Life," in *The Semiotics of Russian Culture*, ed. Ann Shukman (Ann Arbor: Michigan Slavic Contributions, 1984).

[15] Martin Malia, *Alexander Herzen and the Birth of Russian Socialism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961); Aileen Kelly, *Mikhail Bakunin: A Study in the Psychology and Politics of Utopianism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982). For an excellent study contextualizing the development of ideas in the private life of a family, see John Randolph, *The House in the Garden: The Bakunin Family and the Romance of Russian Idealism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007).

[16] Irina Paperno, *Chernyshevsky and the Age of Realism: A Study in the Semiotics of Behavior* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988).

[17] Konstantine Klioutchkine, "Between Sacrifice and Indulgence: Nikolai Nekrasov as a Model for the Intelligentsia," *Slavic Review* 66, no. 1 (Spring 2007): 45-62. See also "Between Ideology and Desire: Rhetoric of the Self in the Works of Nikolai Chernyshevskii and Nikolai Dobroliubov," *Slavic Review* 68, no. 2 (Summer 2009): 335-354.

biographies of female radicals have helped inform my work.[18] Scholars who have examined the fashioning of modern subjectivities in Russian history have helped focus the questions my work seeks to address. Igal Halfin and Jochen Hellbeck's work on "socialist subjectivity" in Soviet autobiographies and diaries informs my interrogation of revolutionary values and lived experience in Populist memoirs.[19] Laurie Manchester's study of self-fashioning among priests' sons has helped illuminate the intersection of community, values, and identity in the imperial Russian intelligentsia, and Claudia Verhoeven's *Odd Man Karazozov* shows the ideological dimension of everyday practice and material culture in the revolutionary movement.[20] The completion of this dissertation has been preceded by the publication of a valuable study by Tatiana Saburova and Ben Eklof of the Populist Nikolai Charushin. Writing as a part of the "new biographical history," they raise questions about the everyday lives of revolutionaries that inform my own work, and their study provides a model for the critical use of Populist memoirs as sources.[21]

Sources

This dissertation draws on various kinds of personal and officially-produced sources which offer windows into the lives of the Populists. The archival sources most useful to my work have been police reports detailing the surveillance of radicals, interrogations of them after arrest, and statements made preparatory to trial. Personal letters between radicals have also been a particularly useful archival resource, both those gathered in personal collections and those intercepted by the police and preserved in the files of official criminal investigations. Literary sources such as novels and poetry have been used selectively to give insights into radical values.

More than any other type of source, however, memoirs have been central to my efforts to examine the everyday lives of revolutionaries. The Populists of the 1870s left behind a rich collection of memoirs, most of them published in two broad waves. After the revolution of 1905 changed what it was possible to print in tsarist Russia, many reminiscences were published in thick journals such as *Byloe* ("The Past") and *Minuvshie gody* ("Years Gone By"), which sought to document the history of the revolutionary movement. Published on and off in Russia and

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[18] Of particular note are: Richard Stites, *The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia: Feminism, Nihilism, and Bolshevism 1860-1930* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978); as well as Barbara Alpern Engel, *Mothers and Daughters: Women of the Intelligentsia in Nineteenth-Century Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983). Biographies and other works include: Ann Hibner Koblitz, *A Convergence of Lives: Sofia Kovalevskaia: Scientist, Writer, Revolutionary* (Boston: Birkhauser, 1983); Ann Hibner Koblitz, *Science, Women and Revolution in Russia* (Amsterdam, Harwood Academic Publishers, 2000); Lynne Ann Hartnett, *The Defiant Life of Vera Figner: Surviving the Russian Revolution* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014); Ana Siljak, *Angel of Vengeance: The "Girl Assassin," the Governor of St. Petersburg, and Russia's Revolutionary World* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2008).

[19] Igal Halfin, *Terror in My Soul: Communist Autobiographies on Trial* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003); Jochen Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind: Writing a Diary Under Stalin* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

[20] Laurie Manchester, *Holy Fathers, Secular Sons: Clergy, Intelligentsia, and the Modern Self in Revolutionary Russia* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2008); Verhoeven, *The Odd Man Karakozov*.

[21] Tat'iana Saburova and Ben Eklof, *Druzhba, sem'ia, revoliutsia. Nikolai Charushin i pokolenie narodnikov 1870-kh godov* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2016). It was published in revised form in Englsh as: Ben Eklof and Tatiana Saburova, *A Generation of Revolutionaries: Nikolai Charushin and Russian Populism from the Great Reforms to Perestroika* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2017).

abroad, *Byloe* has a central place in the formation of revolutionary memory in this period. After the revolution of 1917, possibilities for publication opened up once again. In the 1920s the Soviet Union sought to preserve the revolutionary heritage of groups such as the Populists, and this period saw the publication of many of the richest memoirs used in this study. The *Obshchestvo Byvshikh Politkatorzhan i Ssyl'noposelentsev* (Society of Former Political Prisoners and Exiles) operated from 1921 to 1935, publishing the journal *Katorga i Ssyl'ka* ("Prison and Exile"), an important source for revolutionary reminiscences. Whether published in journals or independently, the memoirs produced in this period are a rich corpus of texts for the study Populism.

Written decades after the events they describe, memoirs are marked by the limitations of a retrospective genre in which the author's memories and opinions can shift over time. In addition, memoirs became a genre in their own right, inspiring others and influencing the manner in which they remembered their past. Last but not least, memoirs were self-consciously political, serving variously as an indictment of the autocratic state, or as an apology for membership in a movement—Populism—that ended on the losing side of history.[22] Nonetheless, the radical memoirs used in this study are among the most useful sources, as they alone shed light on day-to-day, mundane experiences that would not have been recorded in police interrogations. They reveal critical details that could not be shared in correspondence, such as the means of creating disguises, evading arrest, or covering for an accomplice. In addition, they shed a partial, if somewhat obscured light, on personal experiences, such as love and romance, hope and betrayal, which authors captured with varying degrees of plausibility. Last, but not least, they are uniquely placed to illuminate revolutionaries' efforts to fashion their identities as individuals in a community united by socialist values. Though Russian intelligentsia memoirs are a problematic source, more than one generation of historians have used them to positive effect, developing techniques to engage with them critically and consciously of specific formulas and conventions.[23]

Outline

I organize my chapters thematically around the career of a typical revolutionary. Each aims to capture a different facet of the relationship between individual radicals and the larger radical community, examining how that dynamic informed how they negotiated the tension between the ideal and the everyday in their identities as revolutionaries. Structured around the themes of conversion, romance, propaganda, and prison, the chapters examine how the individual radical joined a community of comrades, how the radical dealt with the limits of comradeship, how the radical sought to expand the community, and how the radical dealt with separation from the community.

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[22] On the Populists' collective production of memory, see Saburova and Eklof, *Druzhba, sem'ia, revoliutsia*.

[23] Classic studies of intelligentsia memoirs include Barbara Walker, "On Reading Soviet Memoirs: A History of the 'Contemporaries' Genre as an Institution of Russian Intelligentsia Culture from the 1790s to the 1970s," *Russian Review* 59 (July 2000): 327-52; Andrew Baruch Wachtel, *The Battle for Childhood: Creation of a Russian Myth* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990). Of particular usefulness for understanding Populist memoir conventions is Hilde Hoogenboom, "Vera Figner and Revolutionary Autobiographies: The Influence of Gender on Genre," in *Women in Russia and Ukraine*, ed. Rosalind Marsh (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

Chapter 1 begins with a radical's birth into the revolutionary world, examining how and why particular radicals converted to the revolutionary cause and created new communities of comrades who shared their values. In examining the reasons for the conversion of selected radicals, this chapter examines the various influences on such a resolution, including intellectual influences, educational institutions, personal experiences of social injustice, and argues that a crucial element in the conversion of many radicals was the dynamic between individuals developing their revolutionary identities and communities that aimed to embody radical values, providing a social space for debates about those values and their enactment in everyday life.

Chapter 2 probes the limits of the revolutionary community by examining love and marriage among radicals. For many, romantic relationships threatened the social foundation of communities built on the assumption that individual needs and desires must be subsumed in public activity, and on the goal of establishing new relations between the sexes. This chapter inquires whether and how radicals reconciled romance with the revolutionary identity they were fashioning for themselves. It examines how radicals negotiated the contradictions between an ethos of selflessness and a type of relationship which was commonly regarded as a selfish indulgence. While many radicals saw rejecting love and marriage as a necessary sacrifice for their revolutionary work, others developed romantic relationships. This chapter argues that romance and revolution were not irreconcilable for the Populists, and that some of these radicals were able to develop an understanding of romance as complementary to and intertwined with their revolutionary activity.

Chapter 3 looks at what for many radicals was their first experience of revolutionary activity: the Going to the People movement, in which young urban radicals went into the countryside in the mid-1870s to spread revolutionary propaganda to the peasants. Famously, the movement failed to spark a general uprising, and led to the arrest of many radicals. While scholars have addressed this movement as the dramatic if naïve crescendo of Populist propaganda efforts among the peasantry, this chapter argues that its importance transcends its immediate political results. As the first experience of revolutionary activity for many radicals, it shows that Going to the People was a formative experience for radicals forming their identity as revolutionaries. Populists felt that in order to effectively spread propaganda they had to appear to be peasants, and they donned peasant clothing, ate their food, and learned their trades. The chapter explores the contradiction of identity at the heart of this propagandistic endeavor: that in order to become true revolutionaries, these young men and women had to deceive the people they most wished to help.

Chapter 4 looks at how radicals dealt with the experience of prison. After being arrested—and few of the most active radicals escaped imprisonment—political prisoners were held in solitary confinement. This confronted them with a problem: how to be a revolutionary behind bars? On a practical level, they were now cut off from any opportunity to work for political change, and on a personal level, they now found themselves isolated from the community they had devoted their lives to. This chapter argues that radicals used a range of strategies to maintain their revolutionary identity in solitary confinement, from attempting escapes to communicating illicitly with their comrades and simply studying in order to prepare themselves to best serve the cause upon their release.

In sum, this work examines how Russian revolutionaries applied radical ideas to their everyday lives. Inspired by grand visions of social and political change, these radicals still had to deal with the mundane, and found that it was in the quotidian sphere that they were able to refine their values. Along the way, they discovered themselves. They fashioned their revolutionary

identities by entering the radical community and interacting with other radicals, together defining a social space founded on values of equality, liberty, and self-sacrifice. They attempted to implement these ideals in their own lives, to share them with others, and to live by them whether supported by their comrades or isolated from them. This work tells the story of these revolutionary lives.

Chapter One: Conversion

For the generation of revolutionaries who came of age in the 1870s, ideology was more than a blueprint for political and economic change, it was a guide for living one's life even in its intimate and incidental aspects. While the populists were not bound together by adherence to a doctrinaire set of ideas, although most shared broadly socialist views, they were united by an ethos that emphasized the moral values around which they would orient their lives. Egalitarian, they sought to create social communities in which men and women were treated as equals, as were individuals of differing social backgrounds. Ascetic, they attempted to cast off the luxuries associated with noble life, choosing modes of dress, nourishment, and habitation that tended to emphasize their rejection of fashion and their unwillingness to indulge. Most of all, they wished to demonstrate selfless devotion to a wider community which encapsulated their revolutionary hopes, including the narrower community of other radicals, as well as the wider community of Russia's peasants and workers. Any act of self-abnegation or sacrifice became important in demonstrating their identity as radicals. Accordingly, when radicals remembered their conversions to the revolutionary cause, either as described in memoirs, or as furnished in police testimonies, they would emphasize these characteristics about themselves.

In this chapter, I will examine accounts by three radical populists of the 1870s: Nikolai Morozov, Vera Figner, and Aleksandr Iartsev. While the first two were exemplary figures in the populist movement, whose memoirs were intended to commemorate great events and, at least in part, model standards of revolutionary virtue, Iartsev remained obscure, leaving behind only the testimony he offered to the Third Section before he took part in the Trial of the 193. Nevertheless, common patterns emerge in their self-representation. Most specifically, in accounting for their conversion to the radical movement, all believed that their interactions with others and their desire to sacrifice themselves for the common good were essential to becoming a revolutionary. These accounts had a circular quality: if conversion to radicalism entailed a commitment to self-sacrifice, then self-sacrifice was a necessary precondition for conversion.

Isolating these features of populist self-narratives, this chapter departs from standard secondary literature that has emphasized radicalization in university settings as key to revolutionary conversions, first-hand experience of social injustice, and the importance of exposure to Russian and Western writings on social questions.[24] While educational institutions and intellectual influences were important factors in young Russians' attraction to radicalism, these accounts indicate that social connections that reinforced a sense of one's own identity were a central factor in radicals' conversion to the revolutionary cause. Before and after their conversion, radicals developed a revolutionary subjectivity based on their identity in a community defined by a moral ethos as well as political views.

[24] Franco Venturi,. *Roots of Revolution: A History of the Populist and Socialist Movements in Nineteenth-Century Russia*, trans. Francis Haskell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960); Philip Pomper, *The Russian Revolutionary Intelligentsia* (New York: Crowell, 1970); Daniel R. Brower, *Training the Nihilists: Education and Radicalism in Tsarist Russia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975); Adam B. Ulam, *In the Name of the People: Prophets and Conspirators in Prerevolutionary Russia* (New York: Viking Press, 1977); N. A. Troitskii, *Pervye iz blestiashchei pleiady. Bol'shoe obshchestvo propagandy 1871-1874 gody* (Saratov: Izdatel'stvo Saratovskogo universiteta, 1991); Tatiana Saburova, and Ben Eklof, *Druzhba, sem'ia, revoliutsiia: Nikolai Charushin i pokolenie narodnikov 1870-kh godov* (Moscow: Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie, 2016).

An Empirical Mind: Nikolai Morozov

The experiences of Russian revolutionaries are available to us through written narratives, which at once served to justify their activities to outsiders, but also to make meaning of their own decisions, rendering their lives transparent to themselves. The memoir of Nikolai Morozov—a member of numerous revolutionary groups through the 1870s, from the Chaikovskii circle to *Narodnaia volia*, who has been called "in intellect and strength of character perhaps the outstanding figure in the whole Populist movement,"—is a document both typical and extraordinary.[25] It was the product of a conversation in December, 1902 between two revolutionaries confined in the Russian state's premier political prison, Shlissel'burg fortress, for their activity in the terrorist organization *Narodnaia volia*. Nikolai Morozov asked his friend Vera Figner what she wanted as a gift for the new year, and she replied: "Write something from your own life. I don't want anything else."[26]

In recounting this episode in the introduction to his memoir, Morozov declares his disappointment at the request, since he considered his scientific work of far greater value than anything he might write about his own biography. But out of a sense of friendship he obliged, producing the first hundred pages of what would become his memoir *Povesti moei zhizni*, the rest of which would be written in 1912. In order to get the manuscript out of Shlissel'burg, Figner rewrote it to disguise it as her own work so she could take it with her when her life sentence was commuted to exile. But the prison administration and Department of Police deemed that the work was politically unreliable and confiscated it. When Morozov was himself released in October, 1905, he had to smuggle the work out. Coating the manuscript draft in gelatin and using tools in the prison workshop, he compressed the pages into four pieces of dense cardboard. He sewed two of his (administration-approved) articles on physics into these cardboard covers, and successfully brought them out of the fortress. Once at liberty, Morozov soaked his prize in hot water over several days, separating the binding into still legible, hand-penciled pages.

Using this story of being encouraged to write by a friend, Morozov frames his work as the product of revolutionary selflessness, a personal sacrifice for a comrade, rather than one of egoistic self-aggrandizement. Selflessness was a particularly important value for the generation of Russian revolutionaries who came of age in the 1870s, and Morozov applied this idea to his literary output as well as to his everyday life, in this case suspending his scientific work to fulfill the request of his friend Figner for biographical material. Insofar as he was concerned with revolutionary codes of conduct anchored in self-renunciation, Morozov was typical of his comrades. His memoir, also typically for its genre, emphasizes the achievements of the revolutionary community as a whole over the merit of its individual author. Even the brief tale of his memoir's genesis in Shlissel'burg emphasizes how self-definition can be a collective endeavor: persuaded by a comrade to articulate his own life story, Morozov wrote a document that was in turn rewritten by that comrade; multiple individuals attempted to smuggle it out.

While typical of revolutionary memoirs in the ethos it conveys, Morozov's *Tales of My Life* is extraordinary in its extensive description of the author's internal development, perceptions and experiences. Composed from several sections written from 1902-1912, the book presents a

[25] Ulam, *In the Name of the People*, 228. On Morozov's biography, see V. A. Tvardovskaia, *N. A. Morozov v russkom osvoboditel'nom dvizhenii* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo "Nauka," 1983).
[26] Morozov, *Povesti moei zhizni*, I:24-25.

more detailed picture of its author than most—perhaps all—other contemporary revolutionary memoirs. Many similar works emphasize their authors' identity as an eyewitness of great political and social events, Morozov's narrative presents himself to the reader with a literary sophistication and wealth of detail that others lack. The Morozov who emerges from this account has psychological depth rooted in details of everyday life and the author's reflections on his inner life.

Even as Morozov's memoir is uniquely introspective, however, it again folds the narrator's experiences into a wider story: the unfolding of a communal ethos within the heart of the individual. The Morozov who emerges from this memoir not only deals with, but also personifies, a problem at the heart of how Russian radicals negotiated their everyday lives: how to assert their own identities as human beings and revolutionaries while adhering to the ethos of ascetic selflessness. That this issue existed on a literary critical level in the early 20th century and informed the writing not only of Morozov, but in one way or another all of the radical memoirists of his generation, whether they chose to play down their own roles in the historical narrative or give broad expression to their individuality, showing the lasting influence of the moral values of 1870s radicalism.

Nikolai Morozov's childhood gave him cause to reflect on questions of social injustice that would motivate him later in life. Born June 25th, 1854 in Mologskii *uezd*, Iaroslavskaia *guberniia*, Morozov was the illegitimate son of a gentry landowner and a peasant woman. He begins his memoir with the story of his paternal grandfather's death: he and his wife were blown up with a makeshift bomb by his valet. This attack was motivated by either a desire to avenge the local serf community for the elder Morozov forcing them to dig canals to drain a swamp, or because the nobleman had embarrassed the valet in front of a young lady with whom the latter was hopelessly in love. In either event, a dark and violent tale of class conflict is how Morozov chooses to introduce the story of his childhood, and no doubt the shadow of this event hung over his family. The unequal marriage of his parents made a more immediate impression on the young Morozov. His father, Petr Shchepochkin, met his future wife while traveling through one of his family's landholdings in Novgorod province, and struck by the young peasant woman's beauty, persisted in courting her over the opposition of both their families, eventually taking her to live with him on his estate in Iaroslav province. While Morozov's mother was from a well-off peasant family and boasted an excellent education by the standards of her estate, her position in the household was never legalized. She remained Shchepochkin's common-law wife, which Morozov recalls caused her great distress in his childhood, and roused his own sense of antipathy towards his father.[27]

Morozov's education sparked a strong interest in the natural sciences, literature, and history. He recalls asking as a child about the composition and origin of objects around him, the earliest manifestation of his inclination towards scientific inquiry, as well as a desire to establish personal connections with natural objects (he greeted the celestial bodies: "Hello moon, hello stars!"). As he grew older, he began to read through his father's library, finding natural processes explained in books he struggled through on biology and astronomy. During his years being educated in the gymnasium, he recalls reading Russian and Western literature, and had a passion for the novels of Friedrich Spielhagen, Victor Hugo, and Nikolai Chernyshevskii. Morozov's interest in the social sciences was political from the start. He was interested to learn there were political systems different from Russia's, reading about constitutional monarchies and republics.

[27] Morozov, *Povesti moei zhizni*, I:25-39.

He was especially curious about the French Revolution, the Decembrists' failed attempt to transform Russia, and other revolutionary movements. Still, during his teenage years, Morozov recalls, his interests were primarily scientific. The height of his amateur scientific career during this period was his founding of the "Society of Naturalists," composed of fellow students from the Moscow 2nd Gymnasium similarly interested in the natural sciences. The society's activities included mounting expeditions into the countryside to gather specimens of insects and minerals, and the presentation of scientific lectures by and for members of the group. It is noteworthy that Morozov emphasized the social significance of his scientific work, affirming at the inception of his student society that in science lay the hopes of all humanity—it was through the development of the sciences, he believed, that man would overcome his dependence on physical labor and begin to approach intellectual and moral perfection. Morozov writes that he and his associates pledged to dedicate themselves to this pursuit, "not sparing their lives." This episode in Morozov's memoir is of more than purely biographical interest. As he wished his readers to know, the gymnasium student who read about revolutionary change and founded a scientific society was already embracing skills that the revolutionary would later use in the service of the radical cause: organizing, embracing physical privation on his expeditions into the countryside, and espousing the rhetoric, at the very least, of devoting oneself to a cause that will save humanity, even at the cost of one's life.[28]

It was through his scientific society that Morozov came into contact with Moscow radical circles. Though he had assimilated radical ideas by his late teens—when he first read Dobroliubov and Pisarev he felt that they were expressing his own inner thoughts—he claims in his memoir that did not know that there were many others who held similar convictions. The first true radical he encountered was a young man named Mikhailov, who gave lessons to St. Petersburg workers in geography, history, and mathematics, but was not affiliated with other radical circles. Morozov admits that he was not immediately attracted to mundane work with the common masses, but entertained more romantic revolutionary dreams. He became connected with the Moscow radical community after giving a speech at a meeting of his "Society of Naturalists" which drew the attention of a like-minded student, who introduced him to a secret library, managed by the radical student Aleksandr Blinov. Morozov gained access to prohibited books, and was offered the opportunity to meet with a circle of dedicated radicals. After professing his own allegiance to the cause of revolution, Morozov recalls being ushered from apartment to apartment by different contacts in cloak-and-dagger fashion, finally arriving at a meeting of members of the Chaikovskii circle, where he was welcomed by the hostess, Olimpiada Alekseeva. If the story of his social integration into this new community is closely tied to his romantic feelings for Alekseeva, as I show in the following chapter, his introduction to that community, and conversion to the cause, depended on a host of intermediaries, particularly Alekseeva.

Nikolai Morozov's journey into the revolutionary movement had only begun, but he had already taken crucial first steps and committed to the cause. He had developed a deep-seated appreciation for issues of social injustice through his own family experience. In his wide reading he had assimilated the radical ideas of the time. Most of all, Morozov had developed a romantic sense of his own mission as a morally-driven protagonist in history. While, as we will see, the radical Vera Figner attributed her moral development more to activities such as comparing herself to role-models, critical feedback from others, and self-reflection, Morozov emphasized

[28] Morozov, *Povesti moei zhizni*, I:40-56.

reading literature, including revolutionary history, as well as practical activities, such as leading his "Society of Naturalists." Most important was his professed sense of dedication to a higher mission, initially, natural science, pledging himself with the same fervor as the protagonists of his books to the cause of science, which he saw as an enterprise to critically understand the causes of phenomena with a view to ultimately enacting social change and improving human lives. The next step, that of joining the Chaikovskii circle, required the intercession of intermediaries, whose trust he relied on to gain hold of further reading and new contacts. Once in the circle, he would continue to draw on ideas and practices in which he had already immersed himself.

A Moral Foundation: Vera Figner

Vera Figner's winding path to devoting herself to the revolutionary cause exemplifies themes that influenced many Russian radicals of the time. Active in the Fritsche Circle and *Narodnaia Volia*, and destined to serve long years imprisoned in Shlissel'burg fortress, Figner traced key events in a rich memoir that charts her personal and intellectual journey. Figner's narrative of her childhood and youthful development of her political views centers on the growth of her moral consciousness, which was informed by her readings, but most of all by the personal connections that would eventually lead her to join the revolutionary community. At nearly every turn, it is Figner's moral sense that determines her approach to deciding how to interpret her situation and direct her life, though she equally highlights the moral failings that marked her life prior to conversion. Among these, she focuses on her personal battle to overcome selfishness.[29]

Figner's memoir is itself a product of these values. A sense of duty to the radical community impelled Figner to begin a process of reflecting on and writing about her life in the years after she was released from prison. In exile in Switzerland in 1913, she began writing about her life because, she says, no direct revolutionary work was possible for her at that time.[30] This effort was interrupted by her arrest by Russian authorities in 1915. When the February 1917 revolution overthrew the tsar, she renewed her literary efforts, this time with the aid of a copy of her 1883 testimony to the police. At that time, Figner had offered an autobiographical confession, believing her life to be over; now it helped her reformulate her memories. She published the resulting work, *Zapechatlennyi trud*, in 1921-23. While she later published other autobiographical fragments, this work was to become her crowning literary achievement and a famed example of Populist memoirs.

Vera Figner was born in 1852 into a gentry family in Kazan province. She begins her memoir account of her childhood, after some brief biographical introductions to her family, by describing a world of fear. Her memories of her youngest years revolve around a home isolated in a landscape of forests. Largely because of her mother's fearfulness, she describes a household obsessed with the threat of the woods: brigands and bears potentially attacking from the night's darkness. But the women's and children's fears were suspended when Figner's father, who served in the forest service, came home from his journeys. Ironically, as the children grew older

[29] On Figner's autobiography, see Hilde Hoogenboom, "Vera Figner and Revolutionary Autobiographies: The Influence of Gender on Genre," in *Women in Russia and Ukraine*, ed. Rosalind Marsh (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Lynne Ann Hartnett, *The Defiant Life of Vera Figner: Surviving the Russian Revolution* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014); Saburova and Eklof. *Druzhba, sem'ia, revoliutsiia*, 11-17.
[30] Vera Figner, *Zapechatlennyi trud* (Moscow: Mysl', 1964), I:41.

and moved to their mother's estate of Khristoforovka in Tetiushskii district, their father—mythologized as a tamer of the forest's chaos—became a new source of fear for her: this time of a disciplinarian authoritarian proponent of extreme order. This is the backdrop to her story of developing a character strong enough to face external threats and restrictions on her moral autonomy.[31]

Figner dates the awakening of her childhood moral consciousness to a story involving a broken lock. She and her sister Lidiia, seven and five years old respectively, began playing with a brass padlock shaped like a lion that their mother had removed from a seldom-opened storage trunk. The girls passed the brass lion—complete with mane and tail—back and forth between them, opening and closing it. When the time came to shut up the trunk, their mother discovered that the lock had broken. When she confronted her daughters, Vera blamed her sister, saying that she had been holding it last. Lidiia was spanked. Figner recalls that her guilt at blaming her sister when she did not know who was at fault impressed itself in her memory: "I could not forget that shame, the first shame I had ever felt. It taught me a lifelong lesson."[32] Here, Figner establishes the dynamics of a moral sensibility that influenced her to join the revolutionary movement. While this incident showcases a perceived moral lapse, it motivated Figner to concentrate on building up strength of character to make autonomous moral decisions in the future when negotiating the situations of everyday life.

Figner's narrative shows how her moral education was based on observations of family and friends who possessed qualities the young woman wished to acquire or avoid. One of the negative examples she encountered was her distant relative Elizaveta Vasil'evna Bazhanova, depicted as a veritable personification of selfishness. Figner recalls that in the flat that Bazhanova shared with her aging mother, she took possession of both rooms, relegating her mother to sleep behind a screen in the entryway. While her mother supplemented her meager pension by giving music lessons and selling knit stockings, Elizaveta Vasil'evna refused to contribute in any way. When Bazhanova moved in for a time with Figner's family, the children—and occasionally their parents—poked fun at Bazhanova's lack of concern for those besides herself.[33] Since she considered selflessness to be at the heart of her later identity as a revolutionary, these early brushes with egoism proved influential for the young Figner, forming ideas about what kind of values to strive for, and which to avoid.

A young Figner's distrust of the Russian state may have begun to grow as a result of its persecution of her uncle, a figure whom she would remember as a moral example to be emulated. Figner's aunt, Elizaveta Khristoforovna Figner, had married the Polish nobleman Mecheslav Feditsianovich Golovin. In the wake of the 1863 Polish uprising, Golovin was briefly imprisoned and then banned from state service, losing his livelihood working for the forestry service. Biographers such as Lynne Ann Hartnett have emphasized that this incident impressed Vera with the capriciousness and cruelty of the Russian autocracy, planting a revolutionary seed.[34] But as she tells the story in her memoir, her uncle's change of fortune has as much, if not more, to do with her developing moral sense and ascetic sensibility as with politics. Her uncle and aunt, used to lives of privileged leisure, were forced to change their habits entirely and work a farm, he

[31] Richard Wortman cites Figner's memoir as evidence of the "fatherlessness" felt by of the populists, *Crisis of Russian Populism*, 4. Hartnett argues that Figner represented her father as symbolic of the Russian state, *Defiant Life*, 5-6.
[32] Figner, *Zapechatlennyi trud*, I:71.
[33] Figner, *Zapechatlennyi trud*, I:74-76.
[34] Hartnett, *Defiant Life*, 24.

toiling in the fields and she in the kitchen. In Figner's retelling, they made the transition serenely, if not happily. She emphasizes the importance of this event to her twelve-year-old self: "The moral transformation that took place in them before my eyes had an enormous significance for my psyche. They cheerfully, without self-pitying words, gave up all the conditions and comforts of their former existence and led such a hard-working, modest life that, knowing their past, it was impossible not to admire them."[35] It is not hard to imagine Figner picturing their example when herself choosing a lifestyle of work and privation.

In 1869, on her return home from the Rodionovskii Institute in Kazan, Figner recalls that a chance conversation led her to reassess the development of her character. Her uncle P. Kh. Kupriianov poked fun at Vera's penchant for stylish dresses and jewelry, asking her questions such as "How many *puds* of rye are hanging on your ears in the form of your earrings?"; "How many *puds* of oats are covering you in the form of that material?"[36] His recontextualization of her apparel into units of grain—produced by peasants and sold at the market—reflected his social awareness of their position vis-à-vis the peasantry. Figner described her uncle Kupriianov as holding views she would later characterize as "liberal-democrat." While her memoir suggests that she may only have been dimly aware of his political ideas at the time, she seems to have been impressed by his disapproval of her character. In Figner's telling, other family members held the same view of her, as reflected in one conversation between an aunt and a cousin that Figner happened to overhear late at night. Comparing her to her sister Lidiia, who they praised for being deep, they called Vera "a beautiful doll, like that cute raspberry lantern that hangs in the corner of her room. It looks pretty, but the side turned to the wall is empty."[37] Figner recalls that she cried herself to sleep and resolved to improve her character.

Vera Figner's first became acquainted with radical literature at the Rodionovksii Institute, where she studied from 1863 to 1869. She no doubt absorbed some political ideas of an older classmate whom she adored, Ol'ga Sidorova, whose father read *Kolokol* and had reputedly declared himself an atheist. Because extracurricular reading was not encouraged, Figner read secretly at night, kneeling before an icon of Christ in the corner of her room. When the dormitory monitor walked past, she concealed her book and pretended to be deep in prayer until she was again unobserved. [38] While her reading at this time was mainly literary, Figner had access to the contemporary thick journals when home at the family estate. Her mother and uncle had collections of *Otechestvennye zapiski*, *Sovremennik*, *Russkoe slovo*, *Slovo*, and *Delo*, and were apparently happy to share them with Vera.[39]

Figner recalls that one literary influence had a particularly profound influence on her fifteen-year-old self: "The human personality is usually formed through the influence of barely perceptible contributions made by people, books, and surrounding life. But it sometimes happens that one of these elements makes a deep impression in the soul and lays a new foundation for constructing one's personality." For her, Nekrasov's poem "Sasha" (1856) made such an impression. Identifying with the moral aspirations of the work's heroine, she contemplated its lesson: "The poem taught how to live and what to strive for. To harmonize word and deed is what the poem taught, to demand that harmony from yourself and from others. And that became

[35] Figner *Zapechatlennyi trud*, I:98.
[36] Figner, *Zapechatlennyi trud*, I:95-96.
[37] Figner, *Zapechatlennyi trud*, I:96.
[38] Figner, *Zapechatlennyi trud*, I:85, 89.
[39] Figner, *Zapechatlennyi trud*, I, 94, Hartnett, *Defiant Life*, 25-28.

the motto of my life."[40] At the same time, Figner recalls that the Gospels exerted a profound moral influence on her during her institute years. Seen as complementary to rather than conflicting with the social ideas of radical literature, Christ's example proved a formative inspiration for her own self-abnegating decisions.[41]

Figner's desire to live life as a harmonious whole influenced her desire to pursue a higher education and career. By her own account, she had wanted to become a teacher or an actress(!), she was attracted to medicine by reading about Nadezhda Suslova, who after being forbidden from studying at St. Petersburg Medical and Surgical Academy received a doctorate in medicine in 1867 from the University of Zurich and became Russia's first female doctor. Although in her memoir she says she had not yet been exposed to Populism's concept of the "repentant nobleman," she was motivated by a desire to be useful to humanity, particularly its less fortunate representatives in the peasant society surrounding her family estate. She believed that "a golden thread stretched from Suslova to me, and then went further, to the village and its inhabitants, so it could extend still further, to the people in general, to the motherland, and to humanity."[42]

Figner's pursuit of her professional aspirations was facilitated by her marriage in 1870. Significantly, her memoir describes her, prior to her marriage, developing a taste for the luxuries of elite sociability. After graduating from the Rodionovskii Institute, in December 1869 Figner went back to Kazan to debut on the social scene, attending theater and balls. No doubt conscious that a taste for the pleasures of society was at odds with the values of revolutionary selflessness of which her readers would be aware, she chooses this point in her narrative to reference her future digging dirt to tunnel into the Kherson treasury to steal millions of rubles for the cause—a literary opposition motivated by concerns of radical values. By contrast, as a debutante in Kazan, Figner began a courtship with a young, noble university graduate, Aleksei Viktorovich Filippov, which continued after she moved back to her family estate in Nikiforovo. The couple married on October 18, 1870.[43] In her memoir she says little about her personal relationship with her husband aside from asserting the importance of their intellectual and professional compatibility: "He shared my views and supported my plans. We read books together, and agreed that I would attend university."[44] Figner seems to have had considerable influence over her husband, who under Russian law replaced her father as her legal guardian. She convinced Filippov to abandon his course in law and join her in studying medicine at the University of Zurich. As the couple saved up for their move abroad, Vera attended medical lectures at the University of Kazan with her sister Lidiia, who had completed the Rodionovskii Institute and shared her interest in science.

In 1872, Figner left Russia for Switzerland with her husband and sister, Lidiia. Because the University of Zurich had been the first European university to admit women on the same basis as men, it had attracted international students from all over the continent.[45] Its Russian

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[40] Figner, *Zapechatlennyi trud*, I:91-92.

[41] Figner, *Studencheskie gody*, 92-95. On the influence of Christianity on many radical women, see Barbara Alpern Engel, *Mothers and Daughters: Women of the Intelligentsia in Nineteenth-Century Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

[42] Figner, *Zapechatlennyi trud*, I:102.

[43] On her relationship with her husband at this time, see Figner, *Zapechatlennyi trud*, I:103-105; Hartnett, *Defiant Life*, 31-34. Hartnett observes that Filippov is a secondary figure in Figner's memoir, which subordinates her private life to a biographical narrative emphasizing her public role.

[44] Figner, *Zapechatlennyi trud*, I:104.

[45] On the Russian émigré community in Zurich, see J. M. Meijer, *Knowledge and Revolution: The Russian Colony in Zuerich (1870-1873)* (Assen, Netherlands: Van Gorcum and Co., 1955); Ann Hibner Koblitz, *Science, Women and Revolution in Russia* (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 2000).

émigré community represented a broad range of political opinions, including liberal and radical circles. While Vera and her husband threw themselves into their medical courses and were slower to make new acquaintances, Lidiia started up friendships with some of the progressive Russian women in Zurich. It was she who introduced Vera to the radical circles that she settled into in the city. These freethinking students congregated in a Russian library that had been set up not long before, which held collections of Russian thick journals and books in several languages dealing with social questions. Members of this community sought to meld ideals and practices, for example by insisting that the library's policies reflect their egalitarian ideals. Those with "reader" status at the Russian library revolted at their subordination to the "members" who controlled the decision-making, and broke off to form a rival library. Unhappy with how men dominated the discussion meetings, a group of women decided to form a "women's union" which excluded men—only with the practice they could gain in a less inhibited space, they reasoned, could women gain talent at public speaking to rival their male acquaintances.[46]

A circle of female students formed in Zurich devoted to revolutionary ideas, the Fritschi, named after the landlady of the house where many of its members lived. While Figner initially kept her distance from the group, because her husband's moderate ideas caused tension with their radical ones, and she felt she was therefore unwelcome, an eventual conversation with the Fritschi member Sofiia Bardina led Figner to disclose that her own beliefs were closer to the other women's than to her husband's. From then on she frequented the group's meetings. Focused on studying and debating social questions, the group advised studying political thought from Thomas Moore to the present, focusing on socialism, political economy, the history of popular and revolutionary movements, and contemporary events relevant to socialism and the worker's movement.[47]

Figner claimed that her interactions with the Fritschi and other student groups and exposure to their ideas caused her to rethink her professional aspirations, recalling that what she had regarded as an end, gradually transformed into a means. She had already seen her medical career as desirable because of its usefulness to the Russian people, as a means to pay back a debt incurred through her privilege. Now her exposure to the Zurich emigres' discussions led her to reframe her career as a doctor in social, political, and economic terms: "We thought that however much you heal the people, however many medications and powders we give them, it will only be a temporary amelioration. The illnesses will not become less frequent while the environment—all the unhealthy conditions of housing, nutrition, clothing, etc.—remains the same."[48] This change in environment required broader action than palliative medical practice. It required, Figner believed, the spread of socialist ideas and the active struggle to put them into practice. This change in perspective brought about through the mediation of her radical friends led Figner to declare herself for the revolutionary cause.

In the summer of 1873, Figner traveled with her sister and the Fritschi to the village of Liutri on the shore of Lake Neuchatel. On a scenic evening walk, Lidiia asked her sister if she was willing to finally commit herself to the radical movement. In her memoir account of Lidiia's questions, Vera gives a sort of catechism for her conversion: "Had I decided to give all my strength to the revolutionary cause? Would I be willing to sever all ties with my husband if the situation called for it? Would I give up science and my career for the cause?"[49] Figner writes that

[46] Figner, *Zapechatlennyi trud*, I:114-19.
[47] Figner, *Zapechatlennyi trud*, I:119-22.
[48] Figner, *Zapechatlennyi trud*, I:122.
[49] Figner, *Zapechatlennyi trud*, I:124.

she replies enthusiastically in the affirmative. Lidiia revealed to her that the Fritschi had already voted their support for her inclusion into the group, and, after Vera understood and agreed with the organization's program, declared her an official member. Figner was twenty-one years old.

In detailing her own conversion to radicalism, and decision to join the radical movement, Figner assigned an important place to reading, though contacts with individuals, be it family members or fellow students, was no less important. Human beings functioned variously as role models, and also as interlocutors whose views she might not share, but whose questions nevertheless pushed her to draw particular conclusions. Notably missing, in her account, are direct experiences of injustice perpetrated against peasants or workers as a radicalizing moment.

In describing her commitment to the cause, the commitments to self-renunciation Figner includes are particularly noteworthy. Although still married to Fillipov, Vera had been exercising progressively more independence from her husband in socializing with the radical wing of the Russian emigre community. She would separate from him when she later travelled to Bern, and he back to Kazan. In 1876, they would officially dissolve their marriage, claiming sexual incapacity.[50] If Lidiia did in fact caution her sister that the moderate Fillipov could be an impediment to her revolutionary activity, it was prescient; formulated in those terms retrospectively by Vera, it was a moral commitment to asceticism. Additionally, her pursuit of medicine could be a distraction from, as well as a tool in the service of, revolutionary work. The Fritschi and Figner seem to have shared the view that in professional decisions personal fulfillment was to take a back seat to utility for the cause. In both marriage and career, Figner frames her conversion to revolutionary activity as involving a willingness to renounce personal happiness and professional development.[51]

While Figner portrays this moment as critical in her narrative, her subsequent stay in Switzerland suggests that she had yet to throw herself wholeheartedly into revolutionary activity. After the Russian state's May 1873 decree condemning the Russian female students in Zurich and urging them to leave the city, Figner joined those of the emigre community who decided to relocate within Europe rather than return to Russia. She traveled to Bern and continued her study of medicine for two years. While she maintained her ties to the radical community, providing financial aid to those in need, she did not immediately decide to return to Russia and effect change, as her sister Lidiia had done. In the fall of 1875, Vera received a visit from Mark Natanson, the founder of the Chaikovskii circle, who urged her to give up her studies and work for the cause in Russia. After a wave of arrests, he said, new blood was needed to strengthen the movement. Figner recalls that she was ashamed of her selfishness, putting her personal aspirations above what was needed for the people as a whole, and experienced a moral tension that only resolved itself when she decided to return to Russia and take part in revolutionary activity. The idea of being connected to other revolutionaries played a role in her decision: Figner imagines her comrades bound hand and foot in tsarist prisons, calling to her for help. Most of all, it was a sense of her own moral responsibility, which she ties to her upbringing and the example of Christ in the Gospels, that made Figner feel that she could not shirk her duty and let someone else do the work. This episode ties together threads running through her memoir: moral development, Christian ideals, social education through reading, and feelings of connection to a radical community. The combination of these led to the culminating decision of Vera Figner's commitment to the revolutionary cause, her decision to return to Russia.[52]

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[50] Hartnett, *Defiant Life*, 69-70.

[51] Hartnett, *Defiant Life*, 54-55. On Figner's evolving relationship with her husband, see Hartnett, 43-45, 55.

[52] Vera Figner, *Studencheskie gody* (Moscow: Golos Truda, 1924), 151-60; Hartnett, *Defiant Life*, 55-61.

Radical Friendship: Aleksandr Iartsev

To broaden our picture of radical visions of conversion, it is instructive to look beyond exemplary revolutionaries such as Morozov and Figner, who were at the heart of the Populist discussion circles in the early 1870s, and involved with organizations such as *Zemlia i volia* and *Narodnaia volia* thereafter. One figure who did not leave behind a memoir, but whose experiences are accessible through archival documents is Alekandr Iartsev. If Iartsev was not destined to go down in history in the canon of revolutionary heroes of the 1870s and early 1880s, his description of his conversion, offered in testimony to the police nevertheless illuminates his values and those of other radicals. Reading this description with the strong caveat that it was a police testimony, likely intended to diminish Iartsev's culpability in the eyes of his interrogators, some points of similarity with accounts by Morozov and Figner are striking. In particular, Iartsev's self-ascribed admiration for Populist self-abnegation, his own fraught attempts to put these values into practice, and the emphasis on the centrality of social connections are significant.

Aleksandr Viktorovich Iartsev was born in 1850 to a noble family in Tver guberniia. Educated in the 2nd St. Petersburg Military Gymnasium and the Mikhailovskii Artillery School, Iartsev resigned his post after four months of service and retired to manage the family estate in Novotvorzhskii *uezd*, which he rented from his mother. After three years on the estate, he left for Petersburg in November, 1872 and entered the Agricultural Institute in order to make the acquaintance of students there and learn more about farming techniques. Though he quickly dropped out for lack of funds, the episode testifies to his desire to make contact with Petersburg students. On a return trip to the capital in August, 1873, Iartsev again visited the Agricultural Institute, asking a certain Bolkhovskii to invite someone to travel to Novotvorzhskii *uezd* and assist in managing his country estate. One early September evening, when Iartsev had lain down to sleep for the night, he heard a knock on the door. His unexpected visitor proved to be the helper Bolkhovskii had promised: a certain Sergei Mikhailovich Kravchinskii.[53]

In return for free room and board, Kravchinskii assisted in managing the estate, overseeing field work and the sale of bricks and timber; in his spare time he pursued his translations from the German. But neither Kravchinskii nor Iartsev was content to simply act the landowner. They dressed up in peasant garb and worked alongside the peasants in the fields, asking them for instruction in how to gather in the harvest, and even sharing their humble meals. This is an early example of a radical donning peasant clothing and studying their work-techniques, a trend that would become widespread in the "Going to the People" movement a year later. Interestingly, while the Chaikovtsy are remembered as helping to spear-head the "Going to the People" movement, Kravchinskii may have followed Iartsev's lead in adopting peasant dress, instead of the other way around. When later interviewed by the gendarmes, the peasant Mitrofin Grigor'ev asserted that Iartsev's habit of wearing peasant dress and sharing meals with his peasants predated Kravchinskii's arrival to the estate. The view that Iartsev influenced Krachinskii is supported by the former's enthusiasm for spending time with his peasants, who in

[53] Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (GARF), f. 112, op. 1, d. 204, ll. 68-68 ob., 71.

turn saw him as a "very kind" master who was generous, approachable, and occasionally had tea with them.[54]

When not working on the estate, Iartsev and Kravchinskii discussed social and political questions. But Iartsev explained in his testimony that Kravchinskii "treated me with a certain disdain, as if doubting my capacity for any serious work. This hurt my pride so much that our conversations constantly ended in my displeasure."[55] It seems likely that the intellectual gap between the man of letters Kravchinskii and the less-educated Iartsev made fruitful intellectual exchange difficult. Iartsev suggests this when he faults Kravchinskii for his high-style speech—"I didn't notice him chatting with peasants, and he could hardly have really talked to them, since his speech was too civilized."[56] Of course, in his exchange with the gendarmes, Iartsev would have minimized his or his associate's contact with the peasantry, but the barb at his "too civilized" speech seems to support the idea that Iartsev felt intellectually inferior, and sought solace in the notion that he was closer to the peasants. Surely, he, who worked and ate with the peasants, would know how to properly speak to them. In a separate interrogation, Iartsev put the blame for their deteriorating relationship on Kravchinskii's deficiencies: "our relations began to worsen because he knew little about agriculture, and was not very useful," and again accused his guest of being "a poor interlocutor."[57]

If Kravchinskii did not prove to be the friend that Iartsev was searching for, he was a valuable contact in the world of revolutionary St. Petersburg. After a month and a half on the estate, Kravchinskii and Iartsev set out for the capital in late October, 1873. In the autobiographical "Confession" he later submitted to the gendarmes, Iartsev recounts what happened in St. Petersburg. After pressing him for introductions, Kravchinskii put Iartsev in contact with his friend and fellow member of the Chaikovskii circle, Sergei Sinegub.[58] At the latter's apartment Iartsev made the acquaintance of Sinegub, his wife, and the radical student Lev Tikhomirov. Although conversation was slow and pained at that first meeting, Iartsev announced that he would drop by in the future. In later meetings Sinegub told Iartsev that he taught literacy to workers, but avoided speaking openly about sensitive matters and confined himself to answering specific questions. But Iartsev's attempts to strike up a closer relationship encountered the same problem he had faced with Kravchinskii, namely that he encountered "the same disdain, if not more… in Sinegub." It seemed to him "as if he doesn't believe that I'm fit for something serious. He treated me like a landowner."[59] For his part, when Sinegub was asked about his interactions with Iartsev, he reported: "I didn't go out of my way to associate with him."[60] While Sinegub and most of the other Chaikovtsy were themselves gentry, and had no problem with sympathetic landowners who accepted radical ideas and supported the revolution, they might well disdain a landowner who seemed insufficiently intellectually developed and devoted to the cause.

For his part, Iartsev was attracted by Sinegub's selfless, ascetic lifestyle:

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[54] GARF, f. 112, op. 1, d. 204, ll. 40 ob.-41 ob., 42 ob., 44-44 ob. For Krachinsky and Iartsev working on the estate, see ll. 71-72. For the Chaikovtsy's role in the "going to the people" movement, see Troitskii, *Pervye iz blestiashchei pleiady*; Venturi, *Roots of Revolution*, 469-506.
[55] GARF, f. 112, op. 1, d. 207, l. 9.
[56] GARF, f. 112, op. 1, d. 207, l. 10.
[57] GARF, f. 112, op. 1, d. 204, l. 71 ob.
[58] GARF, f. 112, op. 1, d. 204, l. 172.
[59] GARF, f. 112, op. 1, d. 207, l. 10.
[60] GARF, f. 112, op. 1, d. 207, l. 143.

> "I told him that everyone should work for themselves. He rejected this, saying that it will be better when each person doesn't think of himself, but makes an effort for another. The thing about him that attracted me most was that he had no thought for himself, lived without any material comforts, ate very meagerly, and, as he said, wouldn't get drunk for months at a time. I wanted to get closer to him, but he didn't trust me—he still saw me as a lord (*barin*)."[61]

As a consequence of his new acquaintances keeping him at arm's length, Iartsev took to drink. "This insulted me deeply, and I experienced some painful moments," he wrote, "To ease them I began to spend time in taverns."[62] That drinking was Iartsev's response to rejected friendship is even clearer in his story of visiting the Chaikovskii circle member Leonid Shishko. One evening Iartsev arrived at Shishko's apartment; he was led in by a girl and seated in an empty room. While sitting alone, it gradually dawned on Iartsev that Shishko was not coming out to join him, but would remain, invisible but audibly pacing, in the adjacent room. Iartsev was so humiliated that he went out, bought a bottle of rum, and went to drink with a certain Nikolai Dubrovo.[63] While attracted to the abstemiousness of the Chaikovtsy, their rebuffs of his offers of friendship led Iartsev to embrace immoderation.

There was only one way to show that he was worthy of friendship with his Chaikovtsy acquaintances: to prove that he was not a traditional landowner but a radical. Iartsev reported in one interrogation that after returning from St. Petersburg to Novotvorzhskii *uezd* in late October, he decided to sell his estate to his peasants. He gives two reasons: to improve the well-being of his peasants, and, significantly, to raise himself in the opinion of his new acquaintances.[64] In this version of events, Iartsev implies that he came up with the plan himself, but in his "Confession," he recounts how Sinegub gave him the idea. The radical confronted him with the injustice of one man owning 150 desiatinas of land, asking if it wouldn't be more just to break up the holding and keep only a fraction. Iartsev wrote that, "I became ashamed, and said that I agreed, that I would sell the estate in just that way."[65] Iartsev would have known that membership in the Chaikovskii circle depended not only on being accepted by existing members, but on giving one's property to the service of the revolutionary cause. While there was little chance of his becoming a full-fledged member so soon, Iartsev would have understood that giving up his estate meant solidifying his radical credentials and strengthening ties with the group.

As Iartsev recounts in his "Confession," as soon as he returned to his estate, and sobered up, he proposed to give his estate to his peasants. His only conditions were that they pay off the 5,000 ruble debt he still owed his mother, and that they accept him into their society.[66] The debt was crucial. He had rented the estate from his mother since 1869, and then bought it outright in either 1870 or early 1873 (accounts differ) for a price of 8,000 rubles, of which 5,000 remained to be paid. Iartsev negotiated the terms with Klementii Panteleevich Ruchkin, the village elder (*starosta*) of Andriushino, where Iartsev's estate was located. They formulated the documents at

[61] GARF, f. 112, op. 1, d. 207, ll. 26-26 ob.
[62] GARF, f. 112, op. 1, d. 207, l. 26 ob.
[63] GARF, f. 112, op. 1, d. 207, l. 26 ob.
[64] GARF, f. 112, op. 1, d. 207, l. 10 ob.
[65] GARF, f. 112, op. 1, d. 204, l. 172 ob.
[66] GARF, f. 112, op. 1, d. 207, l. 27.

a local notary.[67] When Iartsev's mother came to visit and he informed her of his decision, she met the news "with complete disagreement." Her ladies in waiting laughed at the thought of selling the estate to the peasants, which irritated Iartsev, touchy as ever to personal slights.[68] In the end, his mother's opposition led Iartsev to change his mind and not sell the estate after all. Unsurprisingly, his announcement that he was rescinding the sale left the peasants resentful and put him "in an awkward position."[69]

Feeling cut off from the two communities of friends to which he had hoped to gain access—the revolutionary circle in St. Petersburg and the peasants of his home village of Andriushino—Iartsev became somewhat unhinged. He decided to escape his estate for a week-long trip to Tver. He went with his friend Rumiantsev, a peasant who had embraced education and become a librarian in Torzhok. Rumiantsev wished to become a teacher, but since he had few lessons at the moment, he agreed to assist Iartsev with some managerial tasks on his estate.[70] In Tver, the two of them "spent time in taverns, listened to harp-playing women, and generally went on a spree."[71] Iartsev's listlessness is also attested to by his second cousin Natal'ia Pavlova, who was later interviewed by the gendarmes. "He visited me in Torzhok, and I noticed a kind of sadness in him, a disappointment with life. I asked him why he was in such a mood, and even poked fun at him that he had fallen in love. But he gave me no explanation."[72] It is unclear whether this early-November visit to Torzhok took place before or after his decision not to sell the estate, or whether it was on the way to or from Tver, but Iartsev's sorrow at being cut off from a community of friends, at whatever particular moment, may not have been dissimilar from the love-sickness Pavlova suspected.

In mid-November, after his trip to Tver with Rumiantsev, Iartsev set out once more for St. Petersburg, saying that he wanted to cultivate himself intellectually and prove his worth to his revolutionary contacts. "I felt that I read little and wanted to study, as well as to meet with my new acquaintances. I hoped that if I proved to them in practice that I wanted to devote myself to propagandistic work, they would count me as one of their own."[73] Iartsev spread propaganda among the peasants around his Andriushino estate. In several conversations, he expounded on Russia's social and political ills, comparing it unfavorably with countries like America. As the peasant Timofei Arkhipov recalled, Iartsev "told stories about different peoples, about America, said that life's better there, that the people are richer and kinder… he showed us maps, charts of the earth… said that in one country there isn't a tsar, that everyone there lives in their own way."[74]

In fact, Iartsev seems to have seen joining the peasant community as an alternative to joining the revolutionary Chaikovskii circle. The peasant Kondratii Panarenko reported that before his November trip to St. Petersburg Iartsev had said, "if things don't work out for me [in the capital], I'll return to you, marry a peasant woman, and till the earth alongside you."[75] He had, in fact, approached *starosta* Ruchkin about the possibility of his legally changing his estate

[67] GARF, f. 112, op. 1, d. 204, ll. 42 ob.-44; Evgeniia Taratuta, *S. M. Stepniak-Kravchinskii—revoliutioner i pisatel'* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1973), 57.
[68] GARF, f. 112, op. 1, d. 207, l. 28.
[69] GARF, f. 112, op. 1, d. 204, l. 89, l.72.
[70] GARF, f. 112, op. 1, d. 204, l. 69.
[71] GARF, f. 112, op. 1, d. 207, l. 29.
[72] GARF, f. 112, op. 1, d. 204, ll. 129 ob.-130.
[73] GARF, f. 112, op. 1, d. 204, l. 175.
[74] GARF, f. 112, op. 1, d. 204, l. 232.
[75] GARF, f. 112, op. 1, d. 204, l. 2.

to become a peasant himself. He aimed to join the village assembly and be elected as the peasants' representative to the local zemstvo. When asked by the gendarmes why he wanted to change his status from a nobleman to a peasant, he insisted that it was only a "temporary fantasy," but admitted in the same breath that the thought had occurred to him often.[76]

In the end Iartsev failed to join the peasant community, and was arrested for spreading anti-government propaganda. He was interrogated by the Tver gendarmerie throughout December 1873 and remained imprisoned until he was judged as part of the "Trial of the 193." He pled guilty, was sentenced to time served, and was released in 1878.[77] While he did not develop the close bonds with the Chaikovtsy that he had desired, Iartsev's name was preserved in the list of defendants at the "Trial of the 193," and in this limited sense immortalized as part of a revolutionary community. He survived until 1919, but little is known about his later life.

Iartsev's experiences give us a glimpse into how some radicals, less intellectually inclined, but enthusiastic about changing society, responded to the social world of the radical circles. Evidently interested in radical ideas and uneasy with his noble landowner status, Iartsev attempted to reinvent himself through friendship. At times acting the peasant and working in the fields, at others cultivating links with educated revolutionaries in the capital, Iartsev struggled to become part of communities into which he did not really fit, but which appealed to his radical sensibilities. Kravchinsky's intellectualism and Sinegub's uncompromising asceticism prevented Iartev from developing closer relations with his acquaintances. Iartsev's story demonstrates how important personal friendship was to many radicals. Friendships within the Chaikovtsy community required adherence to particular ideological tenets, but these in turn were less important than a moral commitment to improve the lot of the people, and to cultivate oneself to that end. If his attempts at self-redefinition ended, as they began, in confusion, Iartsev's case nevertheless attests to the importance of personal bonds in navigating one's place in a social world shaped by radical ideas.

Conclusion

The stories of converting to the revolutionary cause told by Nikolai Morozov, Vera Figner, and Aleksandr Iartsev display both significant divergences as well as key commonalities in radical values. Populists belonged to a range of organizations and communities, and certain core beliefs could differ. While Morozov's commitment to natural science appears to have entailed a rejection of religious faith, Figner's commitment to natural science nevertheless permitted her to hold up Christ as an example of self-renunciation. For both, the study of the natural sciences served as a gateway to political activism: they shared a broad belief in the need for democratic, socialist change in Russia to improve the condition of the peasantry, and saw revolution as the necessary means. In addition, reading and cultivating an intellectual understanding of the world was necessary to gain an understanding of themselves as such. Iartsev, by contrast, was not much of an intellectual, and though he spent time at educational institutions, studying engineering and agronomy, his gateway to contemporary Populist ideas appears to have come through a need for personal connections with students, as well as with the peasants. Here, however, we see another important commonality: the emphasis on relationships

[76] GARF, f. 112, op. 1, d. 204, ll. 72-72 ob.
[77] Troitskii, *Pervye iz blestiashchei pleiady*, 276.

with family members, friends, and associates, who helped develop these radicals' senses of self, both in conversation and conflict.

Most importantly, however, "conversion" entailed a decision to devote oneself to be useful to the people, whether by working alongside them like Iartsev, or by working to bring about revolution, something that Iartsev seems to have wanted, and Morozov and Figner certainly did. Here, self-sacrifice was a crucial value that proved the test of conversion to the revolutionary cause. Iartsev was impressed by the abstemiousness of his radical acquaintances; they in turn may have been offended by some of his habits, such as his drinking. Morozov and Figner felt torn about whether to give up their chosen vocations, science and medicine, in order to devote themselves to the cause, but ultimately did. Figner upended her personal life, leaving a husband who did not share her radical worldview. The willingness to bear real-world costs for one's beliefs was at the heart of what it meant for these radicals to be a revolutionary. Conversion entailed an irrevocable commitment, one that was predicated on previous life experiences, but also involved casting away older aspects of the self. It was a decision to embrace self-sacrifice, confirmed by self-sacrificing acts.

Chapter Two: Romance

The Russian radicals of the 1870s believed that to be truly devoted to the cause of revolution you must give up your personal life. How could you truly sacrifice yourself for the people as a whole, they reasoned, if you were tied down by selfish attachments to particular individuals? This belief is widely reflected in the memoirs of that generation. Nikolai Morozov observes that the members of the Chaikovskii circle believed that "a personal life and personal love were not for those who had condemned themselves to death in the name of liberating their county."[78] The idea of being condemned, doomed, or already dead was often invoked.

As seen in the previous chapter, familial relations could prove problematic during the process of conversion to the revolutionary cause, as Alexander Iartsev's discovered when confronted by his mother over the sale of his estate. While Vera Figner's conversion to the revolutionary cause was encouraged by her relationship to her sister, she found, by contrast, that she could not balance loyalties between her moderate, liberal husband, and her new radical associates. Figner herself chose revolution over marriage. Others thought it wisest to avoid such entanglements in the first place. Having a family, loving, marrying, and having children was seen as part of the life that a revolutionary must leave behind to serve a greater cause. Sergei Kravchinskii wrote that "love for a person, however strong it may be, is always one of the islets on the river of our social life," impeding the flow of progress.[79] From Nikolai Chenyshevsky's fervently ascetic character Rakhmetov in *What Is To Be Done?* to Sergei Kravchinskii's hagiographic portrait-gallery of selfless revolutionary heroes in *Underground Russia*, sacrificing one's personal life for the greater good became part of the revolutionary myth in the 1860s and 1870s.[80]

Yet these stated ideals would be contradicted in reality, as these revolutionaries, who were often in their late teens at the time of conversion, did have personal lives, romantic relationships, marriages, and even children. The central St. Petersburg group of the Chaikovtsy, for example, included seven "married" couples in the early 1870s.[81] What are we to make of this contradiction? Did biological desires triumph over ideology? Was "nature," as Morozov muses in his memoir, fated to "sooner or later trump convictions"?[82] Or perhaps private life and the cause were not altogether antithetical. In a letter to Petr Lavrov, Kravchinskii himself acknowledges the value in relationships, albeit ones developed through service to the revolution: "Only by pursuing a common cause, in which people's qualities are revealed, in which a common joy, a common danger brings people together, is it possible for them to come together as closely as they must for further serious work. Otherwise it will be but an exchange… of bows and greetings. There will be no serious connection, as there has not been before now."[83] While he does not apply this observation to romantic relationships in particular, it was the experience of many radicals that comradely relations could develop into romantic attachments when personal

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[78] Morozov, *Povesti moei zhizni*, I:120.
[79] Quoted in M. Mogil'ner, *Mifologiia "Podpol'nogo cheloveka"* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 1999), 47.
[80] On the myth of the revolutionary hero, see Mogil'ner, *Mifologiia*, ch. 2; on the hero giving up personal life and love, see 53-54.
[81] Troitskii, *Pervye iz blestiashchei pleiady*, 85.
[82] Morozov, *Povesti moei zhizni*, I:83.
[83] GARF, f. 1762, op. 4, d. 425, l. 17 ob. The letter is undated.

sentiment came together with ideological conviction and illegal activity. This chapter examines how a generation of revolutionaries tried to reconcile the desire for a personal life with a revolutionary ideology that took little account of romance and marriage. In the absence of ideological guidance, it argues, radicals improvised ways to combine personal relationships with revolutionary devotion.

Scholars have not focused on the romantic lives of these Russian revolutionaries. The abundant secondary literature on the revolutionary movement has been primarily concerned with intellectual, organizational, and political history, not with the culture of everyday life surrounding romance and marriage.[84] Exceptions include Richard Stites' *The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia: Feminism, Nihilism, and Bolshevism 1860-1930*, which examines fictitious marriage and gender relations in the 1870s, and Irina Paperno's *Chernyshevsky and the Age of Realism: A Study in the Semiotics of Behavior*. But while a valuable guide to changing gender relations in Russia, Stites' study does examine romantic relations in the revolutionary milieu beyond the institution of fictitious marriage, and Paperno's thought-provoking analysis focuses on one individual, raising broader questions about the revolutionary culture of the 1870s which this chapter seeks to address.[85] This chapter builds on the work of Saburova and Eklof, who have used the lives of Nikolai Charushin and Anna Kuvshinskaia as a lens through which to view Populist attitudes towards gender, marriage, and family.[86]

The most prominent primary sources of the 1870s, too, tend to focus on ideology, organization, and political events. Most radical memoirists themselves give little attention to the details of personal relationships, focusing instead on watershed events such as the Chaikovskii circle's efforts to distribute illegal literature, the "going to the people" movement of 1874, the "trial of the 193," the Lipetsk conference, and attempts to assassinate Alexander II. For most radical memoirists, personal details are confined to brief character sketches. When these revolutionaries do mention romantic attachments, it is typically to emphasize their absence or minimize their significance. This may have been in part a reaction to the conservative view that nihilists and radicals were sexually debauched—a representation founded on radicals' rejection of church teachings and their habit of men and women living together in communes.[87] Whether in response to attacks from the right, or to conform their heroic narratives to ideas of revolutionary asceticism, memoirists typically skirted the issue of romantic attachments by asserting that any cohabitation was chaste and that the comrades' dedication to the cause left them uninterested in romantic relationships.

As with any rule, there were exceptions, including memoirs written by three leading participants in the Russian revolutionary movement in the 1870s, Ekaterina Breshko-Breshkovskaia, Sergei Sinegub, and Nikolai Morozov, whose autobiography was analyzed at length in the previous chapter. Following that chapter's methodology, this one acknowledges the limitations of these sources, written decades after the events they describe, reflecting memories

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[84] Notable representatives of this literature include Venturi, *Roots of Revolution*; Pomper, *Russian Revolutionary Intelligentsia*; Abbott Gleason, *Young Russia: The Genesis of Russian Radicalism in the 1860s* (New York: Viking Press, 1980); Anna Geifman, *Thou Shalt Kill: Revolutionary Terrorism in Russia, 1894-1917* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Norman M. Naimark, *Terrorists and Social Democrats: The Russian Revolutionary Movement Under Alexander III* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983).

[85] Stites, *Women's Liberation Movement*; Paperno, *Chernyshevsky and the Age of Realism*.

[86] Saburova and Eklof, *Druzhba, sem'ia, revoliutsia*, 81-119.

[87] On conservative portrayals of radicals in the Russian culture of the time, see Charles A. Moser, *Antinihilism in the the Russian Novel of the 1860s* (The Hague: Mouton, 1964).

and opinions that may have shifted over time, and seeks to balance them against other written accounts, here letters and novels. Still, for an investigation into topics as personal as romance and marriage, these exceptional memoirs provide the best glimpse into a sphere of life that was not at all exceptional, affecting in one way or another most of the young radicals who took part in the movement.

While for some devotion to the cause of revolution meant sacrificing love and marriage, others developed romantic relationships. I begin by looking at the problem of a revolutionary's private life as seen in the case of Ekaterina Breshko-Breshkovskaia. Like Vera Figner, she ultimately found herself unable to reconcile marriage and family with her devotion to the cause. By contrast, other radicals found that they could intertwine romance with radicalism, so that personal relations could even enhance their dedication to revolutionary activity. The romance between Nikolai Morozov and Olimpiada Alekseeva, is a case in point. Some revolutionaries, notably Sergei Sinegub and Larisa Chemodanova, were even able to build and sustain a revolutionary marriage—idiosyncratic in some respects while representative in others. These relationships were not only important because they posed potential challenges to the radicals' ethos of self-sacrifice, but also because they demanded that revolutionaries invent practices that would allow them to implement radical egalitarianism in the home. I conclude by reflecting on the revolutionary myth-maker Sergei Kravchinskii.

The Problem of a Personal Life: Ekaterina Breshko-Breshkovskaia

The case of Ekaterina Breshko-Breshkovskaia illustrates the difficulties of combining family life with dedication to the cause of revolution. Born Ekaterina Konstantinovna Verigo in Vitebsk province in 1844, she struggled with conflicts with her noble parents, as did many other budding revolutionaries. Breshkovskaia's accounts of her life were recorded by journalists and writers after oral conversations, compiled in *The Little Grandmother of the Russian Revolution*, edited by Alice Blackwell and published abroad in 1917, and in a posthumously published autobiographical sketch, "Rannie gody."[88] While differing in certain particulars, they share a basic story-line: the young Katia is shocked by the wealth that differentiates her family from the surrounding peasants and is led to question the social order, catalyzing a break with her parents.

She claimed to have once been struck, for example, by the appearance of an unwashed peasant boy, undernourished and wearing rags. She led the boy into her parents' manor house in order to clean and dress him, but her mother unceremoniously expelled the boy, seeing nothing unnatural in his condition.[89] Breshkovskaia recalled that she had an independent streak that led her to frequently run off on her own to the neighboring villages, where she noted the toil, poverty, and hunger of the peasantry. She was later to claim: "I was always a revolutionary from the youngest age. First I organized a revolution against my parents, then my family, then against everyone."[90] Breshkovskaia stressed that her instinctive sympathy for the subservient life of the

[88] Ekaterina Breshko-Breshkovskaia, *The Little Grandmother of the Russian Revolution: Reminiscences and Letters of Catherine Breshkovsky*, ed. Alice Stone Blackwell (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1917); E. K. Breshkovskaia, "Rannie gody E. K. Breshkovskoi," *Novyi Zhurnal*, vol. LX (1960).
[89] Breshkovskaia, *Little Grandmother*, 4-5.
[90] Breshkovskaia, "Rannie gody," 181.

family servants awoke her desire for social equality: "From the age of eight, how to find justice was the question that troubled me."[91]

Breshkovskaia traces her childhood desire for social justice in part to her parents' teaching. Breshkovskaia's mother, Olga Ivanovna Goremykina, an institute graduate from an aristocratic family, was a religious woman who read her children the Gospels and lives of the saints. The young Breshkovskaia was impressed by these saints' devotion to their faith and willingness to endure torture and death, noting that the story of the martyrdom of meek St. Barbara pierced her soul and remained with her for life.[92] She recalled that she tried to put the Gospels' ideals into practice by giving away her toys and clothes to peasant children. When rebuked by her mother she confronted her with a contradiction: "Mamma, you read to us from the gospel that if any one has two garments he should give one to the poor. Why are you angry if I do just what you read to us?"[93] Breshkovskaia's childhood religious sentiment was not atypical of those who would later join the revolutionary movement. Barbara Engel has shown the importance of religious feeling to female rebellion in Russia, particularly in familial situations in which the Orthodox values of humility and self-sacrifice allowed a woman in a subordinate role to gain a certain moral authority.[94] Richard Stites has suggested that many radical women possessed a religious sensitivity that led them to respond to experiences of social injustice by dreaming of a future realm of complete justice.[95] Vera Figner, as we have seen, highlighted the importance that Christ's example had for her as young student.

Breshkovskaia's father, Konstantin Mikhailovich Verigo, had been born of Polish aristocrats and given an education in languages and science from a French tutor who venerated the Enlightenment and French Revolution. Fond of reading Pushkin, the Decembrist poet K. F. Ryleev, and the Ukrainian poet T. G. Shevchenko, he was willing to entertain progressive ideas and criticize the tsar in the privacy of his own drawing room. He also developed a reputation for liberalism among the local landowners, who reputedly referred to his estate as a "republic," since he never flogged a serf.[96] Under Verigo's influence, Breshkovskaia began reading widely in history, geography, and philosophy, including the works of Voltaire, Rousseau, and Diderot, along with accounts of the French Revolution.[97] She became a vocal critic of unjust social relations, and while her mother accused her of going to extremes, her father largely kept silent, perhaps, Breshkovskaia later speculated, because of the discrepancy between his youthful beliefs and later lifestyle.[98]

Breshkovskaia claimed in her memoirs that the emancipation of the peasants in February, 1861 inspired her to improve the peasants' lot. Influenced by her father's new role advocating for the peasants as a local arbitrator (*mirovoi posrednik*), the seventeen-year-old Breshkovskaia persuaded her parents to allow her to open a primary school to teach the local peasant children literacy. She recalled that the peasants welcomed the idea, setting aside a spare hut, table, and benches for the purpose, but the overcrowding and poor conditions in the hut led Breshkovskaia

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[91] Breshkovskaia, *Little Grandmother*, 8.
[92] Breshkovskaia, "Rannie gody," 182.
[93] Breshkovksaia, *Little Grandmother*, 9.
[94] Engel, *Mothers and Daughters*, 4-5.
[95] Stites, *Women's Liberation Movement*, 150-51.
[96] Jane E. Good and David R. Jones, *Babushka: The Life of the Russian Revolutionary Ekaterina K. Breshko-Breshkovskaia (1844-1934)* (Newtonville, MA: Oriental Research Partners, 1991), 1, 8, 10-11.

[97] Good and Jones, *Babushka*, 11.
[98] Breshkovskaia, "Rannie gody," 189-90.

to abandon her school for a room in the manor house where she instructed a smaller, more select group of pupils. Despite pressure from her parents to cease her teaching, Breshkovskaia persisted in running her school on and off for almost ten years.[99]

In 1869, at the age of twenty five, Breshkovskaia married Nikolai Breshko-Breshkovskii, a liberally-inclined landowner who shared her enthusiasm for reform. In her memoirs Breshkovskaia says very little about her husband, aside from noting that he was a good, generous man and took an interest in the peasants. Breshkovskaia and he planned to improve the lot of the surrounding peasants; together they continued to run her school and founded a cooperative bank. The Breshkovskiis, Konstantin Verigo, and their friend Sergei Kovalik, who would later become active in the Chaikovskii circle, formed a nucleus of liberal landowners in the district who advocated for peasants' rights in the post-emancipation *zemstvo* system. Breshkovskaia later recalled that she was an effective speaker at political meetings, presenting her ideas to the peasants clearly and charismatically. This group of young liberals proved popular in the elections, and one of Breshkovskaia's brothers and Kovalik were chosen as judges. But they made enemies among several local landowners for adjudicating in favor of the peasants, according to Breshkovskaia. One of these landowners petitioned the Minister of the Interior to put a stop to what he portrayed as political agitation. As a result the judges were removed from their positions, an inquiry made into Breshkovskaia's speeches to the peasants, and the Verigo family put under police surveillance. Breshkovskaia later claimed that this failure to effect change within the system led her to embrace revolutionary methods.[100] As in many radical memoirs, the realization that reform was impossible is a key moment in the narrative of her turn to revolutionary life.

According to Breshkovskaia, this ideological decision changed her relationship with her husband. No longer able to cooperate as political partners working towards gradual reform, Breshkovskaia recalled that her newfound commitment to revolution precipitated a break with her husband. It was impossible for her to separate ideological convictions and the commitment to carry them out in practice, whatever the consequences, from her relationship with a man who was unwilling to follow her along the path of total resistance to the tsarist state. While codes of revolutionary asceticism made romance among fully-committed radicals problematic, romance or marriage with someone uncommitted to the cause of revolution was widely seen as an impossibility. Vera Figner described this dynamic in her memoir, but said little about the end of her marriage. The same was true of Breshkovskaia's break with Breshkovskii, and the details are not entirely clear. The most detailed account available, recounted by Blackwell from conversations with Breshkovskaia, is schematic at best:

> "To try to overthrow the autocracy was to face imprisonment, torture, exile, and death… Her husband, like herself, had a whole life before him. She felt that it was only fair to put the matter frankly before him. She asked him if he was ready to expose himself to these tremendous consequences. He answered that he was not. 'I am,' she said; and she started out upon the undertaking without him."[101]

In "Rannie gody," Breshkovskaia insists that she had fully informed Breshkovskii of her views before marriage: "And I married, having forewarned the man about my plans and aspirations."

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[99] Breshkovskaia, "Rannie gody," 190-92; Good and Jones, *Babushka*, 15-16.
[100] Breshkovskaia, *Little Grandmother*, 21-25; Good and Jones, *Babushka*, 20-23.
[101] Breshkovskaia, *Little Grandmother*, 25-26.

The context implies that she had told him of her devotion to revolution, rather than liberalism, since she says of her break with him that she "was at peace with these actions affecting someone previously informed about my views on life, on activism, and on the tasks and obligations of a conscious mind and conscientious heart."[102] But this contradicts her own lengthy narrative of her evolution from liberal to radical. Despite these discrepancies, Breshkovskaia emphasizes her honesty and straightforwardness, which were seen as essential values for radicals to apply to their relationships.

In 1873, at the age of 29, Breshkovskaia left her husband and family in the countryside to travel to Kiev. She moved into a commune with a group of radicals that included her friend Sergei Kovalik and Vladimir Debogorii-Mokrievich. But her revolutionary intentions were complicated when she realized that she was pregnant. While on a trip to St. Petersburg in early 1874 she gave birth to a son, whom she named Nikolai after his father. Breshkovskaia brought him back to Kiev when she returned there that spring, and they lived together in the commune. Beginning to have doubts about her ability to care for her infant son while pursuing revolutionary activity, Breshkovskaia recalled, she asked her sister-in-law Vera Verigo to come to Kiev to take care of Nikolai. Vera actively participated in commune life, but after a time fell ill and her husband came to bring her back home, suggesting that it would be better for all concerned if she rejoined her family and took Nikolai to the country. Breshkovskaia agonized over the decision to give up her son, but ultimately agreed to hand him over to Vera. After watching their coach drive off into the distance, Breshkovskaia says that her "heart felt torn into a thousand pieces." She recalled how family and friends had told her that a child would supplant her desire to work for the peasants,

> "And I gave birth to a little one. … The conflict between my love for the child and my love for the revolution and for the freedom of Russia robbed me of many a night's sleep. I knew that I could not be a mother and still be a revolutionist. Those were not two tasks to which it was possible to give a divided attention. Either the one or the other must absorb one's whole being, one's entire devotion. So I gave up my child to Vera and my brother, to be brought up as their own. I was not the only one called upon to make such a sacrifice. Among the women in the struggle for Russian freedom there were many who chose to be fighters for justice rather than mothers of the victims of tyranny."[103]

To pursue her revolutionary activity Breshkovskaia had left behind her parents, her husband, and her son. She would only meet her son again later in life, in 1896, when she returned from 22 years of prison and Siberian exile. Breshkovskaia only devotes a short paragraph in her memoir to their single interview. Nikolai had been told that his mother was dead and had been raised by his aunt and uncle, and had no sympathy for radical ideas. He immediately rejected his absentee mother, expressed scorn for her revolutionary project, and they agreed not to communicate in future. Later in life he wrote stories and articles with a conservative slant, perhaps in part to distance himself from his well-known mother.[104] In the opinion of some biographers, Breshkovskaia found a surrogate son not long after in the revolutionary Grigorii Gershuni, a revolutionary active in Minsk at the time and future Socialist

[102] Breshkovskaia, "Rannie gody," 194.
[103] Breshkovskaia, *Little Grandmother*, 39-40. On this episode in Breshkovskaia's life, see *Little Grandmother*, 26-40; Good and Jones, *Babushka*, 41-45.
[104] Breshkovskaia, *Little Grandmother*, 103-4; Good and Jones, *Babushka*, 73.

Revolutionary. The two agitated together among students and peasants and advocated terrorist methods in the emerging Socialist Revolutionary movement.[105]

As an elderly woman, Breshkovskaia became famous across America and Europe as a propagandist against the tsarist and Bolshevik governments, affectionately known as the "little grandmother" of the Russian revolution. But if her struggles with combining revolutionary activity with family life are in some ways unique, her experiences speak to a tension felt by nearly all of her contemporary revolutionaries, predicated on a dichotomy between living for yourself and those dear to you, and living for the cause. After trying to reconcile them, Breshkovskaia decided that marriage and family were incompatible with the revolutionary life she had chosen to lead. In doing so she embraced the radical value of self-abnegation, emulating in a secular way the Christian saints she had idolized in her youth.

Falling in Love with Revolution: Nikolai Morozov

Nikolai Morozov's memoir offers an exceptional glimpse into the private life of a revolutionary. Apologizing to his reader for the profusion of personal details, Morozov wrote: "I am relating all of my life here, with its joys and sorrows, it successes and failures, not because I attach a particularly important significance to it. I have another goal. I would like to describe the inner, intimate, idealistic side of the revolutionary movement in Russia and its romantic substratum."[106] His initiation into radical circles was detailed in the previous chapter on conversion. Here, the close ties he established in his memoir between that initiation and a rapidly developing romance will be highlighted. When a group of radicals, intrigued by his interest in illegal literature, first invited the student to one of their meetings, Morozov's attention was most of all directed towards a woman named Olimpiada (Lipa) Alekseeva. He claims in his memoir that he fell in love with her that very evening; the two ended up establishing a romantic relationship, becoming known among their comrades as "the affectionate couple." As Morozov represented it, this personal relationship enhanced, rather than competed with his dedication to revolutionary activity.

In his depiction of that first evening meeting with Moscow members of the Chaikovskii circle, in the winter of early 1874, Morozov portrays Alekseeva as negotiating the gap that separated him from his new acquaintances. First of all, Morozov's meeting was shrouded in secrecy. Though he owed his presence at that meeting to an acquaintance, Aleksandr Blinov, but his status as an outsider meant that the identities of the activists he met were to be kept entirely secret. On the night in question Morozov went to the address given him, and after his repeated assurances of confidentiality was taken to a large house in an unfamiliar part of Moscow. All present shook hands with him, but in the interest of anonymity did not offer their names. These secretive movements from place to place and emphasis on confidentiality contributed to Morozov's trepidation, distancing him in advance from those he was meeting.

The hostess Alekseeva broke the ice and restored the young man's confidence. Lipa Alekseeva sympathized with radicalism and held a salon in her house for the Chaikovtsy and others.[107] She was married to a wealthy Tambov landowner who suffered from mental illness and was institutionalized; she also had two small children. That evening Alekseeva greeted

[105] Good and Jones, *Babushka*, 74-77.
[106] Morozov, *Povesti moei zhizni*, I:84.
[107] Troitskii, *Pervye iz blestiashchei pleiady*, 68; Tvardovskaia, *N. A. Morozov*, 13.

Morozov before the others and expressed admiration for an article he had written. Morozov remembered his heart pounding with pleasure, no doubt in part as the praise was from a woman who was "wonderfully beautiful and very slender… about twenty two, in a red blouse with two enormous dark-red braids thrown over her shoulders and hanging down over her chest."[108] Then the discussion began. When Morozov objected to the speaker that the intelligentsia was not entirely worthless, despite the moral corruption engendered by its privileged position, and did in fact have something to offer the people, he worried that his disagreement would alienate his new acquaintances. Morozov recalls in his memoir that Alekseeva set him at ease once the conversation had died down, clearing up a misunderstanding over differing definitions of the word "science."[109]

Morozov was struck by Alekseeva as an aesthetic presence even more than as a hostess. As the conversation continued, Alekseeva sat down at the piano and began to sing. Following a strain of 1860s radical thought that condemned art as useless, Dmitrii Klements criticized their hostess' singing as a fruitless pursuit that did nothing to further the cause.[110] But Morozov was enchanted, seeing Alekseeva as an "embodiment of spiritual beauty."[111] The young man was particularly affected by her rendition of Schubert's haunting "Aufenthalt,"—"Бурный поток, / Чаща лесов, / Голые скалы,— / Вот мой приют!" ("A rushing stream, the depths of the forest, barren cliffs: that is my refuge!"). He felt that each intonation of her voice "breathed limitless enthusiasm and inspiration."[112] The songs mingled sentiments of fraternal community among those dedicated to the revolutionary cause with the determination to undergo any trial, as in one taken from the poet Mikhailov:

> "Крепко, дружно вас в объятья / Я бы, братья, заключил /
> И надежды и проклятья / Вместе с вами разделил! /
> Но тупая сила злобы / Вон из братского кружка /
> Гонит в снежные сугробы, / В тьму и голод рудника."[113]
>
> ("Brothers, I would embrace you in my arms, and share with you my hopes and curses alike. But the blind strength of malice drives me out of our fraternal circle into snowdrifts, and the darkness and hunger of the mines.")

Morozov attributed his enthusiasm—he felt transported to a "magical kingdom"—to the lyrics' ideological call to arms in the struggle for freedom. But he was equally influenced by the singer herself. Morozov recalls that at the height of his enthusiasm he walked over to the piano; both he and Alekseeva were in rapture. Gazing into his eyes with a "friendly smile" on her face, Alekseeva again sang of the revolutionary bond:

> "По чувствам братья мы с тобой: / Мы в искупленье верим оба... /
> И будем мы с тобой до гроба / Служить стране своей родной! /
> Любовью к истине святой / В тебе, я знаю, сердце бьется. /

[108] Morozov, *Povesti moei zhizni*, I:65.
[109] Morozov, *Povesti moei zhizni*, I:65-67.
[110] Tvardovskaia, *N. A. Morozov*, 14.
[111] Morozov, *Povesti moei zhizni*, I:69.
[112] Morozov, *Povesti moei zhizni*, I:68.
[113] Morozov, *Povesti moei zhizni*., I:69.

И верю я, что отзовется / Оно всегда на голос мой! /
Когда ж наступит грозный час, / Восстанут спящие народы— /
Святое воинство свободы / В своих рядах увидит нас!"[114]

("We are brothers through feeling, you and I. We both believe in redemption, and will serve our native land until the grave! I know your heart beats with love for sacred truth, and I believe it will always respond to my voice! When the terrible hour comes, the sleeping peoples will rise up; the holy warriors of freedom will see us in their ranks!")

This time, though, the bond was between two people ("both"), not many. Morozov may have identified with the one whose "heart beats with love for holy truth," and may have felt a romantic pang at the idea that his heart would "always respond" to the voice of the singer. For Morozov, the ideological commitment expressed in the lyrics was intertwined with the aesthetic experience of the music and his attraction to Alekseeva herself.

Morozov's first evening with the Moscow Chaikovtsy was only the beginning of his initiation into the life of the circle. His membership was debated and accepted by the others. Alekseeva had invited Morozov back to her home, which served as the circle's gathering place, but the young man had been hesitant to return the following day, afraid of appearing too eager and heedless of social decorum. When he appeared four days later, Morozov recalled Alekseeva's affectionate rebuke: "And we thought that you had completely forgotten about us!"[115] At her invitation he began to come every evening. Morozov became friendly with Sergei Kravchinskii, Lev Shishko, and others in the group, not to mention Alekseeva herself. Her personal influence on Morozov no doubt contributed to his desire to spend time with the Chaikovtsy.

When the movement to "go to the people" began to gain momentum in the spring of 1874, Morozov experienced a crisis of conscience. Alekseeva's apartment on Tverskaia served as a central hub for radical youths flowing through Moscow from St. Petersburg and dispersing into the villages to spread propaganda, and Morozov wondered if he too could sacrifice his current life in order to serve the cause.[116] He recalled in his memoir that for several days he hardly slept, lost weight, and began to appear sickly; he avoided the company of radical and non-radical friends in order to make a decision based only on his own counsel.

Morozov's first main hesitation for declaring himself wholeheartedly for the radical cause was family. He recalled reasoning that his father, who vehemently hated socialists, would allow pride to triumph over love, forbidding his son's name ever to be mentioned and gradually forgetting that he had ever existed. But his mother would not be able to escape the pain of the loss of her son, and this weighed on Morozov's conscience. His second hesitation concerned his scientific work. Just as Vera Figner debated whether she could give up her medical career, Morozov wondered if he could sacrifice the microscope, the collections of samples, and the scientific books that had helped give meaning to his life. Still, Morozov felt drawn towards the cause championed by his new-found radical friends. They too, he reasoned, had left behind their families and given up careers, and he would lose all self-respect if he watched them go to their destruction without being by their side. Morozov recounts in his memoir that while grappling

[114] Morozov, *Povesti moei zhizni*., I:70.
[115] Morozov, *Povesti moei zhizni*., I:71.
[116] Troitskii, *Pervye*, 235; Tvardovskaia, *N. A. Morozov*, 21; Morozov, *Povesti moei zhizni*, I:76-77.

with the dilemma he heard the voice of Alekseeva endlessly singing: "A rushing stream, the depths of the forest, barren cliffs: that is my refuge!" Whether or not Morozov actually recalled Alekseeva's song at this critical juncture, that he emphasized this connection with her when composing his memoir shows how closely Alekseeva was linked to the revolutionary cause in Morozov's imagination.

While Morozov's affection for Alekseeva helped draw him to the radical cause, personal feelings could still conflict with what he perceived to be his revolutionary duty. When Morozov decided to "go to the people," he gave away all of his possessions to friends, cut his hair and dressed in peasant fashion, and went to his Chaikovtsy friends to announce his plan. The others welcomed the news, but Alekseeva had reservations. Indeed, in his narrative, he attributed the same tension between personal feeling and moral obligation to her. At his announcement that "I too have decided to go to the people!", Morozov recalls that Alekseeva "gave me a strange glance, and it seemed to me that she looked frightened… But immediately remembering her convictions," she stood up and congratulated him on his decision.[117] While Morozov claimed that her gestures did not affect his resolve, such frank acknowledgements of the potential conflict between personal feelings and intellectual convictions are rare in a memoir literature that tends to be more hagiographic and less psychologically nuanced than Morozov's reminiscences.

Morozov's experience of "going to the people" also demonstrates the interactions that could take place between romance and revolutionary activity. In May, 1874, he travelled with Nikolai Sablin and Klements from Moscow to Danilovskii uezd, Iaroslavskaia guberniia, where the radical sympathizer A. I. Ivanchin-Pisarev had an estate. For a time Morozov apprenticed as a blacksmith in the nearby village of Koptevo and tried unsuccessfully to spread propaganda among the peasants. But his activity there was interrupted by a warning that arrest was imminent. Alekseeva, who had also decided to join the mission and had arrived not long before at the Pisarev estate, sent him a hastily-scrawled note via a trustworthy peasant messenger: "Run, run quickly! Everything is ruined…"[118] A local priest had informed the authorities of anti-government activities, leading to the arrest of the radicals Dobrovol'skii and Pototskaia; Pisarev, Sablin, and Klements had fled to the capital; Alekseeva was under house arrest on the estate with Pisarev's wife.[119] Influenced by personal affection as well as a sense of duty to the cause, Morozov decided to brave the threat of arrest by the gendarmes who guarded the house in order to save Alekseeva and Pisareva.

Morozov's account of his attempt to save Alekseeva from the gendarmes is more than an adventure tale of revolutionary bravery—and what might be termed the "escaping imminent arrest" episode is a common feature of revolutionaries' memoirs. As his first head-on confrontation with the police he would have seen it as a key event in his coming-of-age as a revolutionary. This trial allowed Morozov to act out a more complex identity for himself. Beyond his already multi-faceted identity as a revolutionary masquerading as a peasant, Morozov now imagined himself as an American Indian. Inspired by the novels of James Fenimore Cooper and Thomas Mayne Reid, Morozov had as a boy crawled low through the grass on his elbows and knees to sneak up on adults; he now decided to covertly approach the manor house in this way under cover of darkness. His imagined identity as a "redskin" was tied to his experiences not only as a reader but also as an amateur geologist. Interested from his childhood in scientific pursuits, Morozov had scoured the outskirts of Moscow for rock and

[117] Morozov, *Povesti moei zhizni*, I:81.
[118] Morozov, *Povesti moei zhizni*., I:101.
[119] Morozov, *Povesti moei zhizni*, I:100-101; Troitskii, *Pervye*, 245; Tvardovskaia, *N. A. Morozov*, 23.

sediment samples, spending days or weeks sleeping under the stars; he likened his closeness to nature to that of American Indians. His activity as a scientific researcher proved useful—he had discovered a route up and down the otherwise impassable ravine in the back of the manor while hunting for geological samples in the river, giving him access to an otherwise guarded house. Moreover, he could navigate the countryside at night with a compass that he had kept from his scientific expeditions. He combined these roles—revolutionary, faux-peasant, reader of novels, imagined American Indian, and geologist—in his narrative of his attempt to free Alekseeva, alongside, of course, the role of a romantic willing to risk himself for his beloved, a character type found in the Cooper and Mayne Reid novels, among others.[120]

The attempt to rescue Alekseeva went as planned, with Morozov creeping unseen into the house. But it turned out that rescue was unnecessary. Thanks to her quick thinking, Alekseeva had removed the cache of illegal literature before it was discovered by the gendarmes. Pisareva had connections which could protect her in case of further unpleasantness; Alekseeva was considered an innocent guest. Furthermore, Alekseeva had her two young children with her, whom she was not willing to abandon. But despite the fact that they aborted the rescue attempt, Morozov recalls that his bravery impressed Alekseeva. When they reunited several days later in Moscow each praised the other's exploits with sufficient ardor to earn them their reputation as an "affectionate couple."

After returning from his expedition into the countryside Morozov became fully initiated as a member of the revolutionary underground. Though formally, his "conversion" had already taken place, his altered status as a police suspect entailed the completion of a process of renunciation of his former life. His father, concerned about his disappearance, had initiated inquiries that put him on the police wanted list. "Now there is no shelter for me as well, save the 'thicket of trees' and 'bare cliffs," as Alekseeva sang," he thought to himself in his memoir narrative, linking her song to his revolutionary initiation for the third time. Morozov proudly announced to his comrades gathered at Alekseeva's that he was for the first time being sought by the authorities, which testified to his revolutionary commitment. The news evoked a warm response from Alekseeva, who, he recalls, "abruptly and heartily shook my hand when no one was looking; in a minute she sat down at the piano and sang, gazing joyfully at me like on the day of our first meeting."[121]

The days and weeks following represented an idyll for Morozov. Sitting hand in hand with Alekseeva, looking out over the city on a summer evening and experiencing intense happiness together, signified for him a union of personal and revolutionary fulfillment. Their willingness to sacrifice themselves for the people blended with each one's professed willingness to sacrifice themselves for the other. Morozov muses on the feeling:

> "What gave us then that limitless happiness? It was not only personal love, although we both knew that we would immediately have given our life for the other and made any sacrifice. But this was something else. We had willingly condemned ourselves to destruction in the name of the high, selfless ideals of brotherly love and equality, and it was just this surge of enthusiasm that made us so terribly happy."[122]

[120] Morozov, *Povesti moei zhizni*, I:102-109.
[121] Morozov, *Povesti moei zhizni*, I:116.
[122] Morozov, *Povesti moei zhizni*, I:118-19.

Notably, Morozov here signaled two forms of self-renunciation side by side: that for his beloved, and that for the people, attributing both to Alekseeva as well. But the idyll was soon shattered: a warning arrived that Alekseeva's apartment would be searched. Urged to flee, Alekseeva refused to abandon her children. Contrary to the sentiment that had reigned shortly before, Morozov was forced to admit "the validity of the opinion existing in our community that a personal life and personal love are not for those who condemn themselves to ruin in the name of liberating of their country."[123]

Morozov and Alekseeva fled Moscow to an estate owned by sympathizers in Kurskaia guberniia, then parted ways in August 1874; Morozov went to Moscow and Alekseeva went to her mother's estate in Tambovskaia guberniia. She was arrested there in June 1875, and spent months in prison. Facing the dilemma that Breshko-Breshkovskaia claimed to have anticipated, she made a different choice: to withdraw from the movement. How Alekseeva arrived at her decision is not known, since Alekseeva left no account of her own. All that is known is that Alekseeva was acquitted at the "trial of the 193" in 1878. Codefendants at the trial, this was the last time that Morozov and Alekseeva saw one another.[124]

Morozov's romance with Alekseeva shows how one Populist used radical values to shape his sense of himself as a romantic revolutionary. Looking back at his young years, he represented himself as a person eager to experience the romance of revolutionary life, in the sense of its dangers, thrills, and triumphs—akin to the protagonists of the novels he had read. Along the way he experienced a revolutionary romance of a different kind by falling in love with a woman who helped initiate him into the radical circles of Moscow and was present with him while "going to the people" in the countryside. The roles he played, informed by his reading, as he acted as a revolutionary, helped influence how he fashioned his self-image as a radical. Behind his story of adventure lies a radical value that Morozov took deadly seriously: the of ideal of self-sacrifice for the cause. He invoked this ideal when he decided to leave his scientific work and devote himself to revolution, risked arrest when trying to rescue Alekseeva, and presented his love for her as blended with the spirit of revolutionary self-sacrifice. Morozov felt that this value was of central importance to the revolutionary he wished to be. For him, it did not require ascetic renunciation of a private life, but became part of the bond between him and his love.

A Revolutionary Marriage: Sergei Sinegub and Larisa Chemodanova

In February 1872, Nikolai Apollonovich Charushin walked into the apartment where the St. Petersburg Chaikovtsy were gathered and made an announcement. Piercing the jovial atmosphere with his "conspiratorial eyes," shaded in classic nihilist fashion with blue-tinted glasses, Charushin declared that there was a young woman in Viatka who needed their help. His radical acquaintance Anna Dmitrievna Kuvshinskaia, who taught in the Viatka diocesan school, had learned that a talented, recently-graduated pupil was inspired by radical ideas and wished to continue her education in order to better the condition of the people. Her father, a village priest, responded with a regime of "cruel family despotism," prompting the girl to run away from home towards Kazan. The father pursued, caught her 80 versts away, and returned her home, where her movements were closely monitored and her books (doubtless the cause of this whole mess)

[123] Morozov, *Povesti moei zhizni*, I:120.
[124] Tvardovskaia, *N. A. Morozov*, 26-28; Troitskii, *Pervye*, 253, 263, 276.

removed. This young woman, Larisa Vasil'evna Chemodanova, had smuggled a letter to Kuvshinskaia saying that her parents would not succeed in forcing her to marry the local judge; she would take her own life if she could not escape, and the only possible escape was through a fictitious marriage. One of the radicals listening to this story, Sergei Silovich Sinegub, volunteered to marry her.[125]

Thus begins Sinegub's reminiscences of his life as a revolutionary. Published in the journals *Byloe* and *Russkaia Mysl'* in 1906-7, his memoir *Zapiski Chaikovtsa* (Notes of a Chaikovets) proceeds from this episode to recount his experiences liberating Chemodanova, and what happened thereafter. His narrative of his active career as a radical in the Chaikovskii circle, before his time in prison and Siberian exile, revolves around his fictitious marriage to Larisa Chemodanova. Beginning in the 1860s, young women used fictitious marriages as a means of escaping the parental home to pursue work or studies. Subject under Russian law to the authority of their fathers until marriage, then to their husbands, these women found radically-inclined youths willing to marry in name only in order to help their female comrades. After the wedding the husband would sign the documents necessary for his wife to live independently, and the two would go their separate ways without consummating the marriage. In another variant of the practice, the couple would live together, but with the understanding that the husband would not exercise his conjugal rights.[126]

The classic literary model of a fictitious marriage was found in Chernyshevsky's 1863 novel *What Is To Be Done?*. The heroine Vera Pavlovna contracts a fictitious marriage with her brother's tutor, Dmitrii Lopukhov, in order to escape her scheming mother's marital plans for her. The couple then lives together in rational harmony, scrupulously respecting each other's privacy, until on Vera's initiative they sexually consummate the marriage. Chernyshevsky's novel was seen in the 1860s and after as a handbook on how to live a rational life, and some radical couples followed the characters' example of a platonic friendship drifting into a romantic relationship. This tension in fictitious marriages between a platonic and a physical relationship was problematized by Chernyshevsky, but the individuals who followed his plot encountered the same challenge, as illustrated by the case of Sofia Kovalevskaia and Vladimir Kovalevskii. Kovalevskaia entered into a fictitious marriage in order to pursue her studies—she later became the first female professor in northern Europe. But while she expected her new husband to disappear from her life, Vladimir Kovalevskii expected their relationship to develop into a sexual one, as in Chernyshevsky's novel.[127] Although fictitious marriage was a core institution in the radical movement of the1860s and 1870s, its implementation in practice was often a complex affair.

In order to liberate Chemodanova through a fictitious marriage, Sinegub needed to negotiate effectively between fiction and reality. He needed to lie. Her family was on guard against any attempt to contract a fictitious marriage, since they had intercepted a letter from her to Kuvshinskaia discussing plans to do just that. To extract Chemodanova, Sinegub decided to masquerade as a beloved suitor who had known her for a significant time, leading the parents to think that the marriage was genuine. First of all, he had to have the right costume. Kuvshinskaia and other women in their circle borrowed clothes from "bourgeois" acquaintances so that

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[125] S. Sinegub, *Zapiski Chaikovtsa* (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1929), 18-19; N. A. Charushin, *O dalekom proshlom* (Moscow: Mysl', 1973), 133-5.

[126] On fictitious marriage, see Stites, *Women's Liberation Movement*, 105-107; Paperno, *Chernyshevsky*, 29-36, 133-41.

[127] Koblitz, *Science, Women and Revolution,* 63-66; Koblitz, *A Convergence of Lives*.

Sinegub could look like a wealthy landowner instead of a poor student, acquiring a starched shirt, dress boots, expensive pants, a frock coat, an eye-catching silver cigarette case, and a gold ladies' watch as a gift for the bride. As well as a costume, he would need a script. If Chemodanova—who had never laid eyes on Sinegub—reacted to him as to a stranger, their ruse would be discovered. Although it was no easy task, since her communications were closely monitored, Sinegub succeeded in smuggling Chemodanova a letter detailing the plan and informing her of the date of his arrival in her village.[128]

Even with the necessary preparations in place, two elements were essential to the performance's success. First, the presence of outsider witnesses to Sinegub's meeting with Chemodanova was desirable, since gossip about the young couple would quickly spread through the village, making marriage seem a more attractive option for the parents. This was in fact what occurred. After arriving at the inn and inquiring where the Chemodanov residence could be found, Sinegub bantered with the innkeeper and his wife about the purpose of his visit, playfully implying that he was Larisa's suitor. He arrived at the home and introduced himself to Chemodanova's father, Vasilii. While the two were talking, Chemodanova burst into the room per the prearranged script, crying "At last, Serezha, you (*ty*) have arrived!"[129] She threw herself onto his neck and passionately kissed him. A visitor in the house witnessed the scene as well as the mother and father, further ensuring gossip and social pressure on the parents.

Second, skillful acting was necessary for Sinegub to convince the parents that he was their daughter's long-time beloved. Charushin believed from the start that Sinegub would be an ideal candidate for this mission because of his natural ability to get along with and win over people.[130] In fact, he made a good initial impression on Father Vasilii and told a convincing story about how he and Chemodanova had met a year before in Viatka, fallen in love, and gotten engaged. But Father Vasilii had not forgotten his daughter's intercepted letter: "Good, if it is all true! But I am terribly afraid, you know, that this marriage may turn out to be fictitious."[131] Shaken by this comment, Sinegub maintained his composure; he took offense with such evident sincerity that the parents banished all suspicion from their minds. Thanks to his charisma, acting skill, and thorough preparation for the performance, by the end of their first meeting Sinegub had made a favorable impression on Father Vasilii and his wife.[132]

Sinegub recalls that he and Chemodanova had to continue playing their roles, improvising to deal with obstacles until the actual wedding ceremony could be performed and the couple could depart for St. Petersburg. The family insisted that they all travel to Viatka to ask for the blessing of the bishop, which was problematic. Sinegub's cover story was that he had lived in Viatka when he had begun his romance with Chemodanova. He had in fact never been to the city, and worried that he would betray himself through some ignorance of its landmarks or geography. To make things worse, Sinegub's brother was living as an exile in Viatka, a fact he had hidden from his prospective father-in-law. If Father Vasilii mentioned the name Sinegub to any number of people in the city, this unsavory connection would be discovered. In fact, this brother had married the daughter of a local customs official with whom Father Vasilii was

[128] See Sinegub, *Zapiski Chaikovtsa,* 13-124, for the full story of his marriage.
[129] Sinegub, *Zapiski Chaikovtsa*, 58.
[130] Charushin, *O dalekom proshlom*, 135.
[131] Sinegub, *Zapiski Chaikovtsa*, 61.
[132] Sinegub, *Zapiski Chaikovtsa*., 63.

acquainted—a conversation between the two of them could be disastrous. In the end, however, there were no unpleasant revelations.[133]

Father Vasilii also insisted on receiving a telegram from Sinegub's father giving his blessing to the union. Despite his assurances that his father approved, Sinegub was forced into sending a telegram. Since his father was on his estate in southern Russia and had no idea what his son was getting up to in a far-flung province, Sinegub, thinking quickly, dispatched a telegram to his brother's address in St. Petersburg under his father's name, asking for the paternal blessing. The brother realized that something was afoot, consulted with Sinegub's radical friends, and telegraphed back, giving the blessing in their father's name.[134]

The last obstacle that tested the couple's theatrical skills was personal rather than circumstantial. Sinegub's stay with the Chemodanovs had stretched from days into weeks, what with their trip to Viatka and the mother's insistence on sewing clothes for the bride. The young couple spent every day together, and Chemodanova's patience with constantly feigning affection for her fictitious fiancé was wearing thin. Sinegub, assuming part of the blame in his memoir, believed that the boredom of doing nothing in the Chemodanov house had led him to bother Larisa with jokes when she was trying to concentrate on her sewing. In response she avoided his company, spending all her time with her friend Tania, which elicited reproaches from her parents. Sinegub and Chemodanova compromised: they would spend an hour together each evening after the visitors left and they would be most conspicuous to the parents. When Sinegub noticed the mother or father through the crack in the door to the next room, he would loudly kiss his hand to advertise the young couple's affection, compensating for their cool relations during the day.[135]

The marriage took place on November 12, 1872. Sinegub was 21 years old, and his bride was not yet 17.[136] The couple left for St. Petersburg shortly thereafter without incident, aside from a few uncomfortable nights for the groom sleeping on a trunk in the newly-weds' room. He reunited Chemodanova with Kuvshinskaia in the women's commune on Baskov lane, and was hailed as a hero by the Chaikovtsy. But Sinegub recalls that he found himself wrestling with very real feelings for his fictitious wife. He had been struck by Chemodanova's exceptional beauty the first day he saw her and could not stop gazing at her.[137] By the time he arrived in St. Petersburg, Sinegub recalled: "My fictitious wife had created a sizeable hole in my heart. But to let her see it would have been a crime. Somehow I needed to patch up that hole, no matter what happened. My social work could help with that. I had to immerse myself in it so there would be no place for any foolishness."[138] Sinegub adhered to the conventions of fictitious marriage, in which it was dishonorable for the husband to show any feelings for his wife.

In February, 1873, Sinegub left St. Petersburg with Chemodanova to teach peasants in the village of Gubin-Ugol in Korchevskii uezd, Tverskaia guberniia. The fictitious couple's time there helps illustrate the interconnections that could exist between romance and work for the Chaikovtsy. While Sinegub originally saw his social activities as an escape from personal feelings, his work in the village brought him together with Chemodanova. They had been invited to the Old Believer, shoe-making village of Gubin-Ugol by Vasilii Fedorovich Martynov,

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[133] Sinegub, *Zapiski Chaikovtsa*., 67-68.
[134] Sinegub, *Zapiski Chaikovtsa*., 68-69, 71-72.
[135] Sinegub, *Zapiski Chaikovtsa*., 78-79.
[136] Sinegub, *Zapiski Chaikovtsa*, 63; Troitskii, *Pervye*, 288.
[137] Sinegub, *Zapiski Chaikovtsa*, 63.
[138] Sinegub, *Zapiski Chaikovtsa*., 83.

who wished to set up a school. By far the richest man among the surrounding villages, the peasant merchant Martynov sold the shoes produced in the village in his Apraksin Dvor shop in the capital. In Sinegub's view, his generosity towards his fellow villagers—he was known for buying cows and seed-corn for the poor, purchasing shoes regardless of market fluctuations, etc.—was tainted by his autocratic tendencies in what he regarded as his fiefdom. The Chaikovtsy decided to send two of their members to teach in the new school: Sinegub and a woman who would play the part of his wife. Anyone could volunteer and take on her new identity by switching papers with Chemodanova, but because all of the other women were studying in medical or midwife courses and could be useful to factory workers in the capital, Chemodanova agreed to go herself.

The fictitiously-married teachers moved into the living quarters of the newly-constructed school building, where Sinegub and Chemodanova each taught about 40 peasant children. They allowed any child who had learned the alphabet to take a book home to read, which intrigued the children and their parents. They organized adult classes for the peasants in which they raised questions about inequality, exploitation, heavy taxes and the like, even reading from radical pamphlets that they had included on a list of school supplies to be purchased by the unwitting Martynov. Chemodanova's success with propagandizing among the peasants brought her closer to Sinegub. He recalls in his memoir that when she returned one evening from a village gathering where her pamphlet readings had been warmly received, the joy shared by the fictitious couple from radical work well done broke the ice between them. Sharing nightly conversations about social and moral topics, plans for further activism, and dreams about the future happiness of the people brought the two together. One evening they touched on the topic of love, and Chemodanova suddenly confessed that she loved Sinegub and could hide it no longer. Sinegub recalled that he "almost lost [his] mind for happiness." As her fictitious husband he felt that it was his duty never to tell her of his love, but her declaration "destroyed the dam which had long held back a strained, living torrent of feeling."[139] This was the beginning of an actual marriage that Chemodanova would share with Sinegub until his death.

Sinegub's work for the cause in liberating an oppressed young woman had led to their meeting. Now their shared work propagandizing in the village allowed their fictitious marriage to develop into a real union. While Sinegub's memoir account gives the reader a rare chance to analyze a fictitious marriage in detail, his experience may not have been uncommon among the radicals of his generation. While the paucity of sources dealing with the question makes a definitive conclusion difficult, Morozov declared that after a few weeks of living together nearly all fictitious couples entered into actual marital relations.[140] Many Russian intellectuals influenced by Hegelianism from the 1840s to the 1860s had seen marriage as a necessary step towards social activity.[141] Although they did not formulate it in philosophical terms, the revolutionary actors of the 1870s seem to have experienced the reverse: shared social activism as a prerequisite for an authentic conjugal bond.

This tension in fictitious marriage mirrors a larger tension in revolutionaries' private life. The maxim on which all revolutionaries predicated their lives was that they would dedicate themselves, their every action, to the revolutionary cause. In this scheme, romance was at best a distraction. Family ties, especially when revolutionaries had children, could present immediate and tangible internal conflicts, as Breshko-Breshkovskaia noted, and as Morozov again

[139] Sinegub, *Zapiski Chaikovtsa*., 89-93.
[140] Morozov, *Povesti moei zhizni*, I:84.
[141] Paperno, *Chernyshevsky*, 55, 64-65, 90.

discovered in his relationship with Alekseeva. The affectionate mockery the latter encountered, their epithet as "the affectionate couple," is itself testimony to their peers' uncertainty as to how to assess their relationship. Ideological treatises--Chernyshevsky's *What is To Be Done?* being one well-known exception—offered few guidelines on how to deal with romance, leaving radicals to improvise ways to reconcile love with their convictions. The results could be idiosyncratic. Sinegub's account of his relationship with Chemodanova emphasizes precisely this element of improvisation, which entailed overcoming significant embarrassment, if not shame. Fundamentally, they testify to the difficulties entailed in the revolutionary demand that every action—and feeling—harmonize with radical convictions.

Epilogue: Kravchinskii's Puzzle

Sergei Kravchinskii took it upon himself to present the human face of the Russian revolutionary struggle to the world. In works like his 1882 set of biographical sketches, *Underground Russia*, and his 1889 novel *The Career of a Nihilist*, written in Italian and English, respectively, and published abroad, Kravchinskii sought to publicize the heroism of individual radicals. Both books celebrate the revolutionary movement as an adventure, delighting in the thrill of outwitting the gendarmes, escaping prison and exile, and steadfastly bearing all hardships. For Kravchinskii this involved acquainting his readers with particular revolutionaries, and he depicts his actual comrades and the fictional characters of his novel as unique, complex personalities. While *Underground Russia* does not examine the personal lives of revolutionaries, his novel does.

The revolutionary protagonists of *The Career of a Nihilist* find themselves in a classic love triangle. The hero Andrey and his comrade George both fall in love with Tania. In the end, Andrey and Tania are brought together through their common work for the cause, and they marry "by giving publicity to their intentions"—"no priest or policeman was requested to interfere."[142] Although revolutionary activity unites Andrey and Tania, Kravchinskii also suggests the tension between private life and devotion to the cause. The novel concludes with Andrey's attempt to shoot the tsar: distracted by the sight of two lovers whom he passes on his way to the tsar's parade ground—the young lady uncannily resembles his Tania—Andrey is emotionally shaken and fails in his assassination attempt. The centrality of romance in the work suggests that Kravchinskii's concern with love is more than a nod to the expectations of the novelistic genre. His meditation on the relationship between love and revolution is an attempt to come to terms with a problem which he grappled with in his own life

Reflecting on the memory of his friend Kravchinskii, Kropotkin wrote that, "We know the external occurrences in his life, we possess his works, but we know too little about his interior life: it slips away from us."[143] While his true interior life may be elusive, one document that helps shed light on Kravchinskii's personal life is a February 24, 1879 letter sent from Ol'ga Liubatovich in Geneva to Anna Makarevich in St. Petersburg. Intercepted by Third Section agents, it provides a glimpse into the life of the Russian exile community in Geneva, which at the time included Liubatovich, Vera Zasulich, and Kravchinskii himself. Kravchinskii, says Liubatovich,

[142] Sergei Stepniak-Kravchinskii ("Stepniak"), *The Career of a Nihilist* (New York: Harper, 1889), 207.
[143] Quoted in Charles A. Moser, "A Nihilist's Career: S. M. Stepniak-Kravchinskij," *American Slavic and East European Review* v. 20, no. 1 (Feb., 1961), 55.

> "has left behind his habit of stealing women's hearts and has become surprisingly staid. However, there are no young ladies here, so any temptation for him has been removed. Only sometimes, reminiscing about the past, he instructs us in the philosophy of love and teaches Vera [Zasulich] and me the wise rules of coquettishness that will allow you to force a person to fall hopelessly in love with you. But despite the talent of our professor, we remain the most unreceptive students; we even drive our professor to laughter. The theory of love is for him elevated into a system with various subdivisions, categories, etc., so that the result is something like a philosophical system. And sometimes we break out laughing listening to him. I am telling you in detail about Sergei from this point of view because I remember from my private conversations with you that you were very afraid for him in this respect. He said himself that the period has passed when he flitted like a butterfly from flower to flower. But this does not mean, however, that he has completely lost his ability to love."[144]

The letter presents two opposed approaches to romance. On the one hand, Liubatovich emphasizes her own modesty, distancing herself and Zasulich from Kravchinskii's tips on romance.[145] They are "unreceptive students," which is proven when their lack of facility with coquettishness elicits laughter from Kravchinskii, and they themselves laugh at his views on love.

On the other hand, Kravchinskii is not so bashful. Succumbing to the "temptation" of "young ladies," he has "flitted like a butterfly from flower to flower" in his romantic life. This was well-known to his friends and excited concern in radicals like Anna Makarevich. There are few sources available that allow one to reconstruct Kravchinskii's love life. The excellent biography of him by Evgeniia Taratuta gives us little information on his relations with women, aside from his 1878 marriage to Fanni Markovna Lichkus, and even she is less well documented than one might hope.[146] A Third Section report on the Geneva exiles dated February 6, 1879 notes that Tatiana Lebedeva was Kravchinskii's lover at the time, although this is unsubstantiated elsewhere.[147] Liubatovich's letter to him of May, 1879 testifies at the very least to Kravchinskii's ability to inspire strong emotions. Sent after he left Switzerland for St. Petersburg, it expresses Liubatovich's loneliness without him, unremedied by Stefanovich's attempt to cheer her up by taking her to a concert. She expresses regret that she had behaved coolly at their parting in an effort to hide her strong feelings for him.[148]

Liubatovich's February letter portrays Kravchinskii not only as an adept in love, teaching his female comrades from his presumably ample experience, but also as a theoretician. He has conceived of love as a "system with various subdivisions, categories, etc., so that the result is something like a philosophical system." One may suppose that he integrated his practical tips on gaining a person's affection—the "rules of coquettishness"—into abstract categories. Perhaps he was inspired by Charles Fourier, often read by radicals of the time, who believed that the social order should be transformed to accommodate people's natural passions, which could be rationally catalogued and harmonized. In any event, Kravchinskii's effort at systematization

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[144] GARF, f. 109, op. 1a, d. 863a, ll. 93 ob.-94 ob.
[145] On female modesty as a Populist value, see Saburova and Eklof, *Druzhba, sem'ia, revoliutsia*, 87.
[146] Taratuta, *S. M. Stepniak-Kravchinskii*, 170.
[147] GARF, f. 109 s/a, op. 1, d. 479, l. 7.
[148] GARF, f. 109, op. 1a, d. 863a, ll. 225.-226 ob.

seems to be an attempt to fill the void between a revolutionary ideology that offered little guidance for dealing with romantic relationships and the basic human desires for sex and love. Although no record survives of what Kravchinskii's philosophy of love might have looked like, his effort to create one illustrates how a revolutionary caught between ideology and everyday life could try to reconcile the two. It is significant that his efforts resulted in uncomfortable laughter.

Chapter Three: Going to the People

The "Going to the People" movement (*khozhdenie v narod*) was the first time that masses of young people participated in the Russian revolutionary movement. Thousands of students and other radicals, inspired by a brand of Russian socialism which emphasized the peasants' revolutionary potential, sought to experience the world of the peasants, learn about their needs, and persuade them to rise up against the state. In 1874 they began to travel en masse to the villages, mix with the peasants, and spread socialist propaganda. The movement ended in failure. While a few peasants responded sympathetically to the Populists' message, most were unreceptive to socialist ideas and reluctant to revolt; some denounced the radicals to the authorities. Thousands of the Populists were arrested, and hundreds imprisoned, most famously the defendants at the "trial of the 193" in 1878. The movement "to the people" is remembered as an explosion of youthful enthusiasm by the generation which came of age in the 1870s, an expression of naïve idealism ignorant of the actual situation of the peasants. While the going to the people movement was not a political success, it was a formative early experience of revolutionary activity for many newly converted radicals grappling with what it meant to devote their lives to the cause.

Historians have often focused on the going to the people movement within the broader context of nineteenth-century Russian Populism. Soviet scholarship on the going to the people movement was closely tied to Populism's perceived relationship to Marxism-Leninism. An outpouring of Populist memoir writings that were published post-1905 and in the 1920s and early 1930s in *Byloe*, *Katorga i ssylka*, and other journals came to an end when Stalin-era publications began portraying Populism as antagonistic to nineteenth-century Marxism. After de-Stalinization, Populism again became a reputable object of historical study, allowing for the publication of, among other works, Boris Itenberg's 1965 definitive account, *Dvizhenie revoliutionnogo narodnichestva. Narodnicheskie kruzhki i «khozhdenie v narod» v 70-kh godakh XIX v.*[149] Western scholarship on the going to the people movement was of limited significance until Franco Venturi's classic *Roots of Revolution: A History of the Populist and Socialist Movements in Nineteenth-Century Russia*, published in 1952 (English edition in 1960). The historiography from these seminal works to the present has been focused on the political and intellectual history of the movement. Political studies have been largely concerned with Populism's institutions, organization, and place in the Russian revolutionary tradition.[150] Works of intellectual history have debated the ideological influences on Populism, the relative prominence of particular Populist thinkers, and the problematic relationship between Populist myths and social realities.[151]

As these studies have shown, ideology was central to sparking the movement. Yet, Populism of the 1870s was less a systematic ideology than a mindset within which various intellectual positions were possible. It can be generally distinguished from the nihilism of the 1860s by its reversal of the relationship between the elite and the masses: while nihilism called

[149] See John E. Bachman, "Recent Soviet Historiography of Russian Revolutionary Populism," *Slavic Review* 29, No. 4 (Dec., 1970): 599-612.
[150] Venturi, *Roots of Revolution*; Itenberg, *Dvizhenie revoliutionnogo narodnichestva*; Pomper, *Russian Revolutionary Intelligentsia*; Troitskii, *Pervye iz blestiashchei pleiady.*
[151] Pomper, *Peter Lavrov*; Billington, *Mikhailovsky and Russian Populism*; Wortman, *Crisis of Russian Populism*.

for the intelligentsia to use reason and science to improve the lot of the people, Populism called for the intelligentsia to immerse itself in the peasantry and learn from the *narod*.

The radicals of the 1870s were influenced by a wide array of thinkers from Herzen, Chernyshevskii, Dobroliubov, and Pisarev to Mikhailovskii and Bervi-Flerovskii. But the Populists who went to the people were most inspired by the thought of Petr Lavrov and Mikhail Bakunin. In his *Historical Letters* (1868-69), Lavrov championed the ideal of individual moral and intellectual development as a means to social activism. He maintained that the intelligentsia had incurred a moral debt to the people by studying while the peasants toiled in the fields to support the upper classes. One Populist cited Lavrov at the "trial of the 193": "We have no right *to study at the expense of the people*."[152] Members of the elite could pay this debt by devoting themselves to the welfare of the masses—many radicals were inspired by Lavrov to work as teachers, doctors, or midwives in the villages. Bakunin's anarchism, in contrast, stressed the revolutionary potential of the common people, who were believed to be on the brink of a major uprising. While the Lavrovists went to the village to gradually open the peasants' eyes to the poverty and oppression around them, the Bakuninists sought to stir the peasants up into immediate revolt. Advocates of the two schools of thought were sometimes referred to as the "propagandists" and the "rebels." In fact, the two groups tended to shade into one another: most radicals in both groups relied on propaganda and aimed for revolution—the difference in practice was primarily one of temperament and tactics.

While studies of ideology help explain why the Populists went to the villages, they do not address the question of how the Populists actually interacted with the peasants. This interaction was the first experience of active revolutionary work for many radicals. It shaped their sense of revolutionary identity in a manner that relationships with other radicals in their tightly knit communities could not. "Going to the people" entailed a different mode of self-sacrifice, one that delineated the individual from society at large not by a shared sense of ideals, but by action and experience, often in confrontation with other individuals—peasants—who did not share radicals' beliefs.

The methods I use to examine these interactions are informed by scholarship on cross-class connections. Reginald Zelnik's work on contacts between *intelligenty* and urban workers in the Russian revolutionary movement is instructive in this regard, particularly his examination of "sociability," by which he means "the personal, human, perhaps psychological side" of their interactions, and its consequences for the identities of those involved.[153] Also useful is the literature on European and American "slumming" in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[154] Works such as Seth Koven's *Slumming: Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London* examine the complexities of crossing class boundaries, including how elite men wore working class dress to move incognito and how they aimed to establish bonds of trust across class lines.

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[152] Lavrov, *Narodniki-Propagandisty,* 185. Emphasis in original.

[153] Reginald E. Zelnik, "Workers and Intelligentsia in the 1870s: The Politics of Sociability," in *Workers and Intelligentsia in Late Imperial Russia: Realities, Representations, Reflections*, ed. Reginald E. Zelnik (Berkeley: International and Area Studies, University of California at Berkeley, 1999), 47.

[154] Seth Koven, *Slumming: Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); Robert M. Dowling, *Slumming in New York: From the Waterfront to Mythic Harlem* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007); Chad Heap, *Slumming: Sexual and Racial Encounters in American Nightlife, 1885-1940* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

This chapter argues that radicals attempted to reinvent themselves as revolutionaries during what, for nearly all of the participants of the going to the people movement, was their first experience of the most immediate form of revolutionary activity: fomenting rebellion among the masses. They did so while straddling class boundaries. Radicals believed that in order to preach socialist propaganda in the villages they had to appear to be peasants themselves, and donned their clothing, ate their food, and worked at their trades to gain their interlocutors' trust. In order to become true revolutionaries, these young radicals had to become false peasants. This malleability in self-representation, which set the revolutionaries apart from the radicals of earlier periods, offers valuable lessons both for thinking about the changing radical relationship to the state and the nature of radicalism itself.

This chapter, drawn principally from the memoirs of prominent participants in the going to the people movement, such as Ekaterina Breshko-Breshkovskaia, Lev Deich, Vladimir Debogorii-Mokrievich, and Nikolai Morozov, analyzes both the radicals' changing techniques of self-representation and the symbolic meanings they ascribed to those techniques.[155] Organized thematically, the chapter combines materials from memoirs with evidence from the archives of the Third Section, as well as revolutionary pamphlets produced by Populists.

One of the key radical techniques used in the Going to the People movement was mimicry. It was not immediately adopted, however, but became the preferred radical modus operandi over time. During the 1870s, the first few isolated forays into the Russian countryside were tentative attempts at reconnoitering the villages and concentrated not on rousing the peasants to revolt, as many later Populists attempted to do, but rather on learning something about an environment that seemed to a great extent alien. These pioneering Populists did not attempt to pass themselves off as peasants. When Sof'ia Perovskaia, a member of the Chaikovskii circle, traveled through Samarskaia *guberniia* in summer 1872, she did so as a smallpox vaccinator and teacher. Her comrades Sergei Sinegub and Larisa Chemodanova taught in a village school in Tverskaia *guberniia* between February and June 1872. Among the first to don peasant dress during a trip to the countryside was Sergei Kravchinskii in September 1873, who appears to have been introduced to the practice by his radically-inclined host, Aleksandr Iartsev.[156]

Propagandistic work began in the fall of 1873, when several members of the Dolgushinskii circle adopted a less gradualist approach and spread proclamations through the villages calling for revolt. An equally aggressive approach to propagandizing the peasants was taken by Kravchinskii and Dmitrii Rogachev on their visit to several villages in Tverskaia *guberniia* in November, 1873. Spreading propaganda under the guise of woodcutters, they were arrested on November 28 but soon after escaped from their guards and returned to Moscow to tell their tale. The radical youths who had been contemplating putting their Populist ideas into action were emboldened by Kravchinskii and Rogachev's somewhat exaggerated story of a peasantry receptive to their influence. The Populists were learning that revolutionary aims were often best served by traveling incognito and imitating the peasants.[157]

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[155] As in previous chapters, this one acknowledges the limitations of a retrospective genre in which the author's views and memories may have shifted over time. For a discussion of these limitations, see the introduction and Chapter 1.

[156] On Iartsev, see Chapter 1. On these first attempts to "go to the people," see Itenberg, *Dvizhenie revoliutionnogo narodnichestva*, 266-78.

[157] Troitskii, *Pervye iz blestiashchei pleiady*, 229-31; Itenberg, *Dvizhenie revoliutionnogo narodnichestva*, 271-78.

The movement "to the people" reached its crescendo in the "mad summer" of 1874, but can broadly be said to have lasted from 1873 to 1876. The Populists decided where to "go to the people" individually and in small groups; there was no central direction. But they tended to favor certain areas. Aside from those who simply travelled to villages near their urban starting points or those who had contacts in rural areas, usually landowners sympathetic to the cause, the Populists focused their efforts on the Don, Dnieper, and Volga river regions. They believed that the peasant populations of these areas were particularly inclined to rise up against the state, as evinced in the revolts of Stepan Razin and Pugachev. Additionally, there had been a famine in the Samara region in 1873-74, which gave the Populists hope that that area of the Volga might be particularly receptive to their propaganda.[158]

Kravchinskii and Rogachev were but two among some 2,000 to 3,000 total participants who traveled to the countryside in the mid-1870s. The best demographic data is provided by Boris Itenberg, the Soviet scholar who wrote the authoritative account of the movement.[159] The Populists who went to the people were predominantly young. According to the Third Section figures for 1665 participants, 27.5% were under the age of 21, 38.4% were from 21 to 25, and 21.3% from 25 to 30 years old. Thus 87.2% were under the age of 30. The going to the people movement failed to spark a general peasant uprising. The Populists were often denounced to the police, although scholars differ on the frequency with which they were denounced by peasants. Daniel Field argues that it was not the peasants but rather priests, merchants, and gentry who sounded the alarm.[160] In any event, by November 1874 around 1600 people had been arrested. These figures do not fully reflect the number of participants, since some arrestees were innocent, while many participants in the Going to the People movement avoided arrest. 770 radicals were initially arraigned, and the government spent the next three years preparing a case against 265 of them. Of this group, only 193 remained alive and sane when the trial began in 1878. The "trial of the 193" marked the legal conclusion of the going to the people movement, and the beginning of prison and exile for many radicals.[161]

Nearly all memoirists who remembered the movement stressed its spontaneity, and some denied any organization whatsoever. While it is true that the movement was not centralized, there were some loose organizational structures. The self-education circles of the early 1870s became centers for studying socialist literature and gaining practical skills in preparation for going to the people. The Chaikovskii circle, based in St. Petersburg but affiliated with student circles in Moscow, Kiev, Odessa, and Kharkhiv, played a leading role. As the going to the people movement picked up steam, radicals who had links to one of these circles could communicate with like-minded individuals and train in a trade to practice in the village, such as cobbling, carpentry, or dyeing. The circle that formed around Aleksandr Dolgushin also played a central role in preparing for and facilitating the movement. Originally created as a mutual aid society for Siberian students studying in St. Petersburg, the *Dolgushintsy* was among the first circles to send propagandists to the people. The *Dolgushintsy* were most influenced by Bakunin, advocating preaching immediate revolution among the peasants and adopting tactics of "flying propaganda," where the radicals moved quickly from settlement to settlement distributing

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[158] Venturi, *Roots of Revolution*, 504; Pomper, *Russian Revolutionary Intelligentsia*, 125; Troitskii, *Pervye iz blestiashchei pleiady*, 237.
[159] Itenberg, *Dvizhenie revoliutionnogo narodnichestva*, 373-77.
[160] Daniel Field, "Peasants and Propagandists in the Russian Movement to the People of 1874." *The Journal of Modern History* 59, no. 3 (Sept., 1987): 415-438.
[161] Itenberg, *Dvizhenie revoliutionnogo narodnichestva*, 373-74; Troitskii, *Pervye iz blestiashchei pleiady*, 263.

pamphlets. The *Chaikovtsy* were reputed to be more Lavrovist, and advocated "settled propaganda," where Populists would put down roots in one community and cultivate the inhabitants trust over the medium- or long-term while gradually exposing them to socialist ideas. In fact, by 1873-74 the *Chaikovtsy* were split between those inclined towards Bakuninist and Lavrovist solutions, and the lines between the two were often blurred.

Once in the countryside, Populists relied on a loose network of contacts for shelter and material support. Student apartments in the university cities and the estates of sympathetic landowners in rural areas served as way-stations for the Populists as they moved between regions and through the countryside. For example, the radical sympathizer Olimpiada Alekseeva used her Moscow home as a sort of transit hub for radicals coming from St. Petersburg through Moscow to the Volga and central Russian provinces. Aleksandr Ivanchin-Pisarev made his estate in Iaroslavskaia *guberniia* into a base of operations for propagandizing the surrounding districts. Most Populists attempted to keep up some kind of contact with their comrades who had stayed in the city; some of these latter became communication hubs for a given circle, receiving correspondence and relaying news about other Populists as it became available. Still, communication was difficult for the usually itinerant Populists, and it was common to hear nothing from someone until she returned to the city.

Preparation: Looking like a peasant

The radicals believed that the best way to establish a rapport with the peasantry and effectively spread revolutionary propaganda was to appear to be a peasant. Radicals donned peasant dress and cut their hair in a folk manner. They adopted some of the linguistic and cultural practices of the peasantry, albeit imperfectly, and often learned the rudiments of a trade such as cobbling or carpentry, which could provide a plausible pretext for their wandering from village to village. But the first impression a radical made on a peasant—superficial yet determinative—was through their physical appearance, particularly their clothing.

The use of clothing as a political signifier was not new in imperial Russia. Scholars have pointed out that Peter the Great's cultural revolution ushered in a period of "two sartorial systems," the Western and the traditional, which gave nineteenth-century Russians unprecedented autonomy in their choice of what to wear.[162] The nihilists of the 1860s famously used fashion to distinguish themselves from other social groups and to advertise their beliefs.[163] When the radicals of the 1870s put on peasant clothing they were also making an ideological statement, but one that was more dynamic. On the one hand, these Populists were identifying themselves with the people through their dress, much as the Slavophile Konstantin Aksakov and the ethnographer Pavel Iakushkin had done before them.[164] On the other hand, they could take off and put on peasant dress and drop peasant manners as the situation dictated without feeling that they were betraying their ideals, in a way that the nihilists of the 1860s could not. To the Populists clothing was both a badge of ideological affiliation—a visual reminder that they had

[162] Christine Ruane, "Subjects into Citizens: The Politics of Clothing in Imperial Russia" in *Fashioning the Body Politic: Dress, Gender, Citizenship*, ed. Wendy Parkins (Oxford: Berg, 2002).
[163] Stites, *Women's Liberation Movement*, 103-105; Paperno, *Chernyshevsky and the Age of Realism*, 17-18.
[164] Andrzej Walicki, *The Slavophile Controversy: History of a Conservative Utopia in Nineteenth-Century Russian Thought*, trans. Hilda Andrews-Rusiecka (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 238; Gleason, *Young Russia,* 226-89.

left the world of urban elites behind—and a way to travel incognito and attempt to gain the trust of the peasants.[165] In order to get a sense of how radicals attempted to pass themselves off as peasants, it is necessary to ask what clothing they wore.

Ekaterina Breshko-Breshkovsaia went to the people in July 1874, accompanied by Mariia Kolenkina and Iakov Stefanovich. The three took with them false passports, packs, and the tools for their trades as cobblers and dyers. They were also all dressed as peasants, and Breshko-Breshkovskaia's outfit gives a sense of the typical garb adopted by radicals going to the village. She wore "enormous bark shoes, a shirt of thick canvas, a skirt of coarse sacking, and a black jacket with a loose red belt."[166] The outfit of another radical and Chaikovets, Dmitrii Klements, also featured a red belt and coarse jacket. A report from the Moscow gendarmerie dated April 11th, 1874, describes the peasant dress which Klements had on when he returned from his travels in the countryside from the countryside. He wore "a shabby sheepskin jacket, old wool cap, a red paper peasant belt, shirts in the Russian style, and a small linen bag with a tie that served as a knapsack, like the ones peasants usually carry on their shoulders on the road."[167]

In the summer of 1876, Praskovia Ivanovskaia and Galina Cherniavskaia left Odessa to travel to an estate in Tavricheskaia guberniia where they were acquainted with the steward and hoped to find work. Ivanovskaia recalled in her memoir that the two prepared by gathering information about their route and equipped themselves with boots and felt for bedding. They researched what clothes they would need and settled on wearing coarse linens, sarafans, and cotton kerchiefs. Despite these efforts at practicality, Ivanovskaia was struck by an upper-class element to her companion's approach to dress: "I can remember the love and tenderness Galina devoted to buying, sewing, and fitting the clothes she would wear in the countryside. Born into a gentry family that had formerly been wealthy and influential, she had never experienced real need. Her upbringing had been delicate, and she knew nothing about the less attractive aspects of manual labor."[168] Ivanovskaia's observation highlights that markers of class were not only reflected in the clothes one wore, but could be manifested in a person's attitude and care towards dress. Yet, radical images of peasant dress also reflected their own ideological priorities. Appearing self-absorbed or too careful about one's clothing contravened radical codes of self-abnegation.

For Lev Deich, a Jew from Kiev, putting on peasant dress involved taking on a new national identity as well as a different class background. In his memoir Deich describes traveling with his comrade Iosif Shchepanskii through Kharkov on his way from Kiev to a Molokan village in the countryside. His acquaintance Glushkov put them up and helped them acquire provisions and clothing, which the men bartered for in local markets and second-hand stalls. Deich and Shchepanskii, of Polish petty gentry stock, aimed to transform themselves into "Great Russians." They cut their hair in the Russian style, by which Deich presumably meant the "bowl cut" characteristic of the peasantry and adopted by some other radicals going to the people. Deich and Shchepanskii wore classic Russian side-collar shirts (*kosovorotki*) of rough cotton

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[165] See Verhoeven, *Odd Man Karakozov*, 104-127, for Dmitrii Karakozov's use of peasant dress as urban camouflage. It is noteworthy to point out that while Karakozov adopted peasant dress to facilitate acts of terrorism, the Populists used it to establish bonds of trust. Saburova and Eklof note that radicals dressed in peasant clothing when going "to the people," and assert that it was part of a larger trend towards "democratization of dress" among radical youth. Saburova and Eklof, *Druzhba, sem'ia, revoliutsiia*, 89.

[166] Blackwell, *Little Grandmother*, 41-42.

[167] GARF f. 112, op. 1, d. 209, ll. 211-211 ob.

[168] Barbara Alpern Engel, Clifford N. Rosenthal, eds., trans., *Five Sisters: Women Against the Tsar* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1975), 105.

under long coats (*poddevki*). While saying farewell, Glushkov concluded that they looked "wholly satisfactory" as Russian peasants.[169] The imperial Russian state's attempts in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to force Jews to reject their traditional garb are thrown into ironic relief by Deich's *kosovorotka*. Rather than adopting the Western dress held up as the ideal of civilization since Peter the Great, Deich rejected his urban appearance for an outfit that to the elites would have seemed as uncivilized as traditional Jewish dress, if unquestionably more Russian.[170]

Vladimir Debogorii-Mokrievich recalled in his memoir that his Bakuninist comrades threw together their peasant costumes with great haste. Tired of endless talk of revolution without action, the group voted to go to the people and immediately flew into a whirl of activity. Debogorii-Mokrievich remembered that he and four of his radical comrades from Kiev, Stefanovich among them, went to the local second-hand market, where they purchased worn-out hats, *zipuny* (rough peasant kaftans), and short fur coats. It was early spring 1874, and the weather was still cold. They equipped themselves with counterfeit four-month passports, the cobbler's tools they would use to ply their trade, and liquidated their kruzhok's balance of six rubles, setting off by train from Kiev to Zhmerinka. After a period of working as train-loaders at the Zhmerinka station, the group navigated away from the railway from village to village, this time as painters instead of cobblers. Debogorii-Mokrievich recalled that they smeared their clothing and faces with paint to advertise their profession and bolster their working-class credentials. They could not resist laughing at each other's appearance. Whether their paint-smeared exteriors appeared natural to the peasants they passed on the road is not clear.[171]

The outfits that Debogorii-Mokrievich and his companions had chosen did little to facilitate trust. They travelled up to twenty versts a day, stopping at villages in the evenings to ask for shelter from the inhabitants. But they found that their shabby, tattered clothing made the peasants suspicious. Debogorii-Mokrievich recalled:

> "I have to admit that we did not expect this at all when we set out on our journey dressed as workers. We knew about the peasants' distrust of everyone wearing noble (*panskii*), that is, European dress, and supposed that the poorer our clothes, the more they would trust us. We were mistaken. Everywhere they met us with distrust and they were so unwilling to give us shelter—clearly afraid that we might steal something—that looking for the night's lodging became a true punishment for us. It happened that we could make the rounds of dozens of peasant huts and be rejected at each. We spent many nights under the open sky. Eventually the weather became rainy, and on many nights I sprung to my feet shivering with my whole body against the cold and the wet. Once or twice we had to sleep right in the rain and got soaked through."[172]

While it proved a mistake for Debogorii-Mokrievich and his comrades, it was common for radicals to wear the lowest-quality clothing in an effort to embrace the identity of a laborer to the fullest extent and compensate for their upper-class status. Even when it proved problematic in practice, shabby dress was an appealing aesthetic for many radicals because it played into the Lavrovist idea of rejecting privilege in order to take on the burdens of the people. At the same

[169] Lev Deich, *Za polveka* (Berlin: Grani, 1923), I:169.
[170] Eric Silverman, *A Cultural History of Jewish Dress* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 73-76.
[171] Vladimir Debogorii-Mokrievich, *Vospominaniia* (Paris: Imprimerie J. Allemane, 1894), 67-9.
[172] Debogorii-Mokrievich, *Vospominaniia*, 74.

time, it was adopted by Bakuninists eager to foment an uprising since it was seen—if mistakenly—as a way to gain the peasants' trust.

When he prepared to go to the people, Nikolai Morozov avoided wearing the cheapest, shabbiest dress. He recounts how he went with his friend Mokritskii to some Moscow shop stalls to purchase a set of peasant clothes. Morozov claims that he was first attracted to the coarsest specimens on offer, but heeded Mokritskii's advice to instead choose the highest-quality workers' costume in order to avoid too sharp a contrast between his dress and his refined physiognomy. He ended up choosing a "felt waistcoat, lined with two rows of small bells in place of buttons, which jingled cheerfully at every step, several printed cotton shirts and trousers, a black *chuika* [long kaftan of coarse cloth favored by townspeople and lesser merchants], a peaked cap, and polished boots in an unusually dandyish style: on the lacquered boot-tops circles and other designs were embroidered in blue and red thread."[173] If the experience of Debogorii-Mokrievich and his companions is any guide, Morozov may have been wise to avoid the cheapest clothing available. It is noteworthy, though, that he claimed in his memoir to have been first attracted to the shabbiest option. Whether or not the statement is factually accurate, it testifies to how the radical ascetic code was applied to the aesthetics of "going to the people." Without it, Morozov risks coming off as a bell-jingling fop insufficiently willing to leave behind his noble origins.

Clothing was not the only element of one's appearance that radicals sought to change. Having the correct hair-style was seen as nearly as important. Morozov, for one, enlisted his friend Mokritskii to cut his hair in the peasant "bowl cut" style: snipping it evenly in a circle around his head from the temple to the back. Mokritskii used his father's razor to shave off any hair below the line of this circle, and finished by greasing Morozov's hair with oil and parting it evenly down the middle. When Morozov visited his friends in their workshop and announced his intention to go to the people, they were impressed with his new appearance. Aleksandr Lukashevich studied Morozov's folk dress and hair with the eye of a connoisseur, declaring: "Devil knows what to make of it! Look from behind—a genuine worker; look from the front—an actress dressed up like a *muzhik*!" Doubtless Lukashevich was commenting on the contrast that Mokritskii had observed between folk dress and Morozov's refined physiognomy.[174]

As these criticisms of Morozov suggest, looking like a peasant was about more than one's clothing and hair-style. One's skin could be seen as a marker of class. When some peasant travelers noticed that Breshko-Breshkovskaia and her companion Mariia Kolenkina had soft hands, unused to manual labor, the pair had to claim that they had been employed as the domestic servants of a wealthy nobleman. Iakov Stefanovich, who was travelling with the pair, avoided suspicion; his regimen of manual labor had already given his hands the calloused appearance of a peasant's.[175] Morozov recalls in his memoir that he scraped his palms on the steps of Ivanchin-Pisarev's manor house to roughen up his hands and make them appear as a peasant's. While his companion Sablin laughed at this curious behavior, Morozov felt that Sablin was not serious enough about assimilating into the countryside.[176]

Some radicals even tried to change their faces in order to look more like peasants. On her steamboat trip from Odessa to Tavricheskaia guberniia, Praskovia Ivanovskaia noticed her friend Galina Cherniavskaia scooping up handfuls of river water from the Bug and wetting down her

[173] Morozov, *Povesti moei zhizni*, 1:80.
[174] Morozov, *Povesti moei zhizni*, 1:80-81.
[175] Blackwell, *Little Grandmother*, 43.
[176] Morozov, *Povesti moei zhizni*, 1:89.

face, then exposing it to the searing sun. She was trying to sunburn her skin to rid it of its delicate, white complexion.[177] Morozov used the same technique, wetting his face with water and basking in the sun to give it the peasants' sunburned complexion.[178] Ekaterina Breshkovskaia went further in order to make her face look like a peasant's. She did not feel that her transformation was complete when she donned her bark shoes, shirt and pants made of rough canvas, and a black peasant jacket tied with a red belt. In her reminiscences she states: "I used acid on my face and hands." Breshkovskaia presumably resorted to this method in order to give her skin the weather-beaten look of a worker who spends her days in the fields. Her false passport listed her as a forty-year-old, although she was only thirty at the time; perhaps she was trying to give her skin a more aged look. She gives no further explanation to this laconic comment, as if the use of acid was self-explanatory, but Breshkovskaia's remains the only recorded instance of a radical using acid to look more like a peasant.[179] Just as radicals felt that they had to reject quality clothing and wear rags, some believed that soft skin was a sign of privileged status and rough skin, earned by the peasants through years of exposure to the elements, and by the radicals at the cost of some physical pain, was a marker of one's identity with the *narod*.

While radicals generally thought that the best way to gain the peasants' trust was to appear to be one of them, sometimes the opposite proved more effective: social distinction rather than sameness was the best way to influence the peasants. This is what Morozov found when he and his comrade Nikolai Sablin travelled to Potapovo, the radical-sympathizer Ivanchin-Pisarev's estate in Iaroslavskaia *guberniia*. As Morozov recalls in his memoir, the pair had traveled by train from Moscow wearing workers' clothing and carrying counterfeit passports listing them as peasants. Morozov adjusted to introducing himself by his alias, "Semen Vakhrameev," and the pair generally got into the spirit of traveling incognito. Sablin amused fellow passengers with all manner of fictitious stories about the pair's lives as factory workers in Moscow. When they arrived at Ivanchin-Pisarev's estate, their host greeted them with pleasure and led them inside, but then laughed at their workers' outfits: "This won't do here, gentlemen! Everyone will recognize you at first glance, since many of my peasants have heard that students are going to the people. You'll have to change into some ordinary clothes!" Ivanchin-Pisarev insisted that it was not necessary to dress like a *muzhik* to work among the peasants: "…peasants only listen respectfully to old men and fathers of families. If a young, unmarried man, particularly one without a beard, tries to preach new ideas they'll only laugh at him and say, 'What does he know. The egg doesn't teach the chicken.' It's different when a person's social position is higher; then they'll listen attentively." Although it flew in the face of the theoretical discussions of propagandizing strategies then current in the capitals, Ivanchin-Pisarev's criticism carried the weight of the landowner's experience of over a year working among the people. Morozov and Sablin conceded its justice, changing into clothes borrowed from their host. Evidently not entirely satisfied with this arrangement, or swayed by utilitarian concerns, Morozov did occasionally change back into peasant clothes when he went out to work in the fields.[180]

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[177] Engel, *Five Sisters*, 105-6.
[178] Morozov, *Povesti moei zhizni*, 1:89.
[179] Breshko-Breshkovskaia, *Little Grandmother*, 41-42; Ernest Poole, "Katharine Breshkovsky: A Russian Revolutionist," *The Outlook* (April 29, 1905), 81.

[180] Morozov, *Povesti moei zhizni*, 1:85-86, 89.

In the Village: Acting Like a Peasant

While the radicals who went to the village felt that it was important to look like peasants, physical appearance was the first, but not the last impression they would make. In order to plausibly assimilate themselves to the village world for the purposes of propaganda, they had to act like peasants in a variety of situations, accustoming themselves to the food, housing, customs, and occupations of the people around them. Most immediate among these, after physical appearance itself, was language. However impeccable their peasant costumes may have been, as soon as they opened their mouths they risked having their geographic and class origins betrayed by their speech.

Many of the Populists, such as Sergei Kravchinskii and Aleksandr Lukashevich, were from noble families, while others, such as Nikolai Morozov, could be described as *raznochintsy* (people of various ranks). These were the two predominant social categories among the Populists. According to Third Section records on 1735 Populists whose estate was known, 28.2% were nobles, 33.3% were *raznochintsy*, 13.4% were *meshchane* (townspeople), and 13.5% were peasants. While Soviet scholars, following Lenin's periodization of the revolutionary movement, emphasized the role of the *raznochintsy* in this period, members of the nobility were a leading element in the movement. In terms of gender, it seems that about 20% of those who went to the people were women, many of whom were drawn from the students who had returned from Zurich and the Chaikovskii circle. Most of these Populists had some education. A significant number of the Populists listed in the Third Section files were students in institutions of higher education and gymnasiums: 27%. A few institutions contributed disproportionately to the movement: the Medico-Surgical Academy (St. Petersburg), the Technological Institute (St. Petersburg), St. Petersburg University, and the Petrovskii Agricultural Academy (Moscow), together contributed 14% of all participants in the movement.[181]

Education and social origins left traces in the radicals' speech that needed to be explained or concealed. Mimicking the local peasant dialect or having a convincing reason why one spoke differently was crucial to gaining the trust of one's peasant interlocutors, as Debogorii-Mokrievich, born into a noble family, found out the hard way. Wandering through the villages on the outskirts of Kiev on the left bank of the Dniepr, passing himself off as a carpenter seeking work, he came one night to the village of Bortnichi. Debogorii-Mokrievich recalled in his memoirs that he took shelter for the night with a peasant family. While eating supper he responded to the husband's inquiries about his origins, claiming to be from Verkievka, as his (false) passport listed him as from Verkievskaia volost', Nezhinskii uezd, north-east of Kiev. The thrust of his peasant host's persistent questioning became clear when he accused Debogorii-Mokrievich of lying about his origins. The host had spent time in Nezhin, and said that the traveler's accent did not match the region; instead he accused Debogorii-Mokrievich of being from "Poland," a local term for the Ukrainian lands west of the Dniepr. In fact, Debogorii-Mokrievich had grown up in Podol'skaia guberniia in western Ukraine. He offered his passport as proof, but the illiterate peasant waved it away; continued arguing proved fruitless, and he gave up the debate and ate his meal in silence. His suspicious host allowed him to stay the night, but

[181] Itenberg, *Dvizhenie revoliutionnogo narodnichestva*, 374-77; Stites, *Women's Liberation Movement*, 128.

warned him not to steal anything. Debogorii-Mokrievich concludes this episode in his memoir with the lesson he learned: never to claim to be from anywhere except Podol'skaia guberniia, except when traveling in his home guberniia itself, for which case he had a spare passport listing him as from elsewhere (doubtless to help mask his class, rather than geographical origins).[182]

Morozov, whose father was a nobleman and who had received an excellent education, encountered a similar situation when stopping for a night in a village on the road from Kursk to Voronezh. According to Morozov's memoir account, after asking the usual questions about the traveler's origins and destination, his peasant host questioned Morozov's accent, saying that it did not sound like he was from Kursk as he did not "speak cleanly." Morozov sidestepped the situation that had ensnared Debogorii-Mokrievich by saying that he spoke like they do in Moscow since he had worked in a factory there since the age of ten—inwardly smiling at the peasant's belief that his local hodge-podge of Russian and Ukrainian was the only "clean" language. This answer satisfied his host, and gave him the added benefit of a certain prestige, since, Morozov notes, workers from the cities were viewed as a higher class than those who toiled in the fields.[183]

Speech could signify a radical's education and class background as well as her geographical origin. Ekaterina Breshko-Breshkovskaia and her companions Mariia Kolenkina and Iakov Stefanovich did not need to imitate the local Great Russian dialect, since the large number of peasants crossing the countryside in 1874 in search of work made their travels seem plausible. While Breshkovskaia recalled fearing that her educated speech would give away her gentry origins, the local Ukranian peasant dialect differed so much from Breshkovskaia's speech that the locals took her as a peasant from another province rather than as an educated woman.[184]

Although it was easier to avoid the peasant dialect altogether, some radicals were given the opportunity to learn it. When Lukashevich worked as a member of a carpentry artel' in Pavlov in 1874, he was able to learn the local Great Russian dialect from a friendly and talkative 17-year-old named Iashka, with whom he spent his days planing boards. Still, in his memoirs he recalled that during his travels through the countryside it was a relief when he had a radical companion with whom he could speak naturally using educated language. Vocabulary in peasant speech could be linked to class status, making it all the more unfamiliar to non-peasant radicals seeking to adopt it. When Lukashevich and his companion David Aleksandrovich Aitov stopped in a village for the night on the road from Klin to Dmitrov, they were asked a puzzling question. "When we first heard the question," Lukashevich recalls, "constantly repeated thereafter, 'whose are you' (*ch'i budete*), we did not immediately understand, as if they were speaking to us in a foreign language. The word 'whose' sounded so strange, and seemed to be an unbelievable remnant from the time of slavery, when, perhaps, it was natural to ask serfs whose they were, that is, to which "lord" they belonged." Lukashevich realized that the question was meant in the sense of "where are you from?", to elicit one's home uezd or volost'.[185]

Even when radicals could negotiate differences in language, they still had to make peace with the basic fact that they were lying in their simplest conversations with the peasants around them. While they had come to the countryside in order to communicate a great truth—the injustice of the social order and imperative to rise up against it—the clothes they wore, the way

[182] Debogorii-Mokrievich, *Vospominaniia*, 82-84.
[183] Morozov, *Povesti moei zhizni*, 1:158-59.
[184] Breshko-Breshkovskaia, *Little Grandmother*, 42-43. Verhoeven points out the dissonance between Dmitrii Karakozov's peasant dress and educated speech and manners, *Odd Man Karakozov*, 121.
[185] A. O. Lukashevich, "V narod! (Iz vospominanii semidesiatnika)," *Byloe* 15 (March, 1907), 26, 14.

they spoke, and the claims they made about themselves were lies. The Chaikovskii circle member Aleksandr Lukashevich, for one, wrestled with this contradiction: "They write (in the socialist journals of that time) that one should never lie about anything to the people. But what were we doing today? We lied at every step and lied in the name of the truth that we have pledged to preserve. Is that not an obvious discrepancy between theory and practice?" He further reflected: "The need to lie at every step weighed on us heavily, especially on my comrade, who loathed any lies, even the most innocent. But all of this unpleasantness was but small thorns on roses. The consciousness of fulfilling a difficult obligation was constantly alive in us."[186]

This problem of lying was exacerbated when peasants questioned a radical's identity. While peasants could confront a radical at first sight by pointing out incongruent physical appearance, clothing, or speech, often doubts about a newcomer's identity would take time to surface. Deich found this out during the summer of 1874, which he spent doing agricultural work in the Molokan village of Astrakhanka. After living with the Firsov family there for months, he relates how he was accused by a neighbor of stealing his horse. This neighbor, Kalinin, believed Deich to be the culprit because he was a newcomer and made regular trips to the nearby town, where Kalinin suspected he communicated information about vulnerable horses to his accomplices. Deich denied the charge and Firsov stood up for his lodger, saying that he "relied on him like a son." The situation was complicated when Kalinin accused Deich of being a Jew. Deich recalls that he dodged the question, since admitting his Jewishness would cast doubt on the veracity of his passport, which listed him as Orthodox, and outright denial could prompt a thorough and revealing investigation. This horse theft accusation led to more doubt and more lies. Firsov's wife, who had known Deich for months, began to suppose that he was a noble in disguise: "You're not of the masses (*ne iz prostykh*), you don't look like a *muzhik*! Look what hands you have: so white and small, smaller than a girl's. … You're from the nobility!"[187] Although it pained Deich to deceive his hosts about his identity, for his own safety he lied to reinforce his cover story that he was an orphaned peasant who grew up working as a shop clerk. The last and most dangerous doubts were cast on Deich's identity by a peasant passing through Astrakhanka who happened to be from a village neighboring the one Deich claimed to be from. Introduced to Deich by Firsov, this peasant expressed surprise that he did not know Deich's family name, "Goleniuk," which had been invented by the counterfeiter and had no connection to the village in question. Deich struggled to converse about his friends and relatives in his home village, and went away believing that the man's suspicions had been aroused. As much as he wanted to remain in the village and continue his propaganda work, Deich decided that it was time to move on before questions about his identity attracted police attention.[188]

A radical going to the people had to worry about what went into his mouth as well as what came out of it: he was entering an alien world of food. Many radicals' first experience of eating the food of the masses came before leaving the city behind them. The Chaikovtsy frequented working-class eating-houses in St. Petersburg and Moscow in order to strike up

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[186] Lev Tikhomirov, *Zagovorshchiki i politsiia* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Vsesoiuznogo obshchestva politkatorzhan i ssyln'poselentsev, 1930), 44, 46. In his chapter "Bezumnoe leto," Tikhomirov presents the notes of an unnamed Populist currently in Siberian exile, which he has edited. Scholars have identified that Populist as Aleksandr Lukashevich, see the introduction, p. 4.

[187] Deich, *Za polveka*, I:199.

[188] Deich, *Za polveka*, I:197-204.

conversations with workers. Morozov recalls in his memoirs one such excursion when he and Kravchinskii visited an eating-house (*kharchevnia*) in a poor neighborhood on the outskirts of Moscow. Dressed in workers' clothing, they sat down at a dirty table among some cabmen and asked the proprietress what was available to eat. Faced with the choice of cabbage soup with corned beef or with *shchekovina*, Morozov hesitated at the unfamiliar word, but Kravchinskii ordered the mystery dish with a show of confidence. When the soup was served in a common bowl with two wooden spoons, they learned that they had ordered ox cheek. While their attempts at striking up propagandistic conversations with their fellow patrons did not meet with success, Morozov and Kravchinskii had begun to explore an unfamiliar world of food, words, and customs.[189]

Most radicals first tasted the food of the masses after they had left the cities behind them, and were traveling from village to village, seeking supper and shelter from peasant families in the evening. When stopping in villages on the road, in which they often took shelter in abandoned huts, Debogorii-Mokrievich and his companions ate buckwheat or millet porridge, or more often had to content themselves with bread and *salo*. The unfamiliar, rough food contributed, along with rough living and the disappointments in trying to spread propaganda, to their sense of fatigue and disillusionment.[190] Other radicals also had a difficult time adjusting to peasant fare. Breshko-Breshkovskaia recalled that when she and her companions Kolenkina and Stefanovich stopped in a village for the night, they were given barley buns by their hostess. Swallowing the foul-tasting, slippery buns outright proved impossible, and the three nibbled at them as best they could, while trying to inspire themselves with thoughts of the great men who had come from the peasantry and been raised on such comestibles.[191] Praskovia Ivanovskaia had difficulties adjusting to the food served on the estate where she took part in agricultural labor. "In the morning," she recalled, "they cooked us watery gruel made from wheat and water with a dose of salt, or buckwheat dumplings… The meal was poured into a wooden trough, from which you'd pull the dumplings with long, pointed splinters. We got the same modest fare for lunch and dinner. On religious fast days, they occasionally threw some salted fish into a borscht, but the fish was scrawny, not very fresh, and left an unpleasant taste in your mouth."[192]

If food in the countryside was not always to the liking of urban radicals, sitting down to a meal was an excellent occasion to interact with peasants and lead the conversation towards political topics. While working in the village of Kozii Iar, Deich struck up a political conversation with a peasant youth over a meal. His landlady had prepared a large bowl of cabbage soup, buckwheat porridge (*grechnevaia kasha*), and sour clotted milk (*prostokvasha*); this fare seems to have been fairly typical.[193] Breshko-Breshkovskaia recalled that when she and her comrades set out on their journey down the Dnieper they struck up conversation with some fellow travelers over a lunch of bread, dried fish, and cider.[194]

Eating with peasants did not always lead to establishing a rapport. While traveling from Kursk to Voronezh, Morozov learned something of the unfamiliar peasant customs surrounding food. As he wrote in his memoir, the peasant family that took him in one night sat him down for supper in the place of honor under the icons and laid the table with a large wooden bowl of soup

[189] Morozov, *Povesti moei zhizni*, 1:75-76.
[190] Debogorii-Mokrievich, *Vospominaniia*, 75.
[191] Breshko-Breshkovskaia, *Little Grandmother*, 45-46.
[192] Engel, *Five Sisters*, 107-8.
[193] Deich, *Za polveka*, I:176.
[194] Breshko-Breshkovskaia, *Little Grandmother*, 42.

with chunks of beef and a round loaf of bread. The patriarch cut a slice of bread for each present, then slowly took a spoonful of broth to his lips, set his spoon down on the table upside down, and motioned to his guest to do the same. Morozov took a spoonful from the bottom of the bowl, coming up with a piece of beef, which he ate slowly before replacing his spoon on the table, trying to imitate the patriarch in everything. But the embarrassed faces of those present suggested that he had made a terrible mistake. Morozov realized his error when he noticed that the rest of the family members took only spoonfuls of broth from the top of the bowl, leaving the beef untouched, until the patriarch himself took a chunk of meat. Morozov blushed with shame and tried to redeem himself in the eyes of his hosts by foregoing meat in the next two rounds of soup-eating.[195]

While most radicals struggled to adjust to peasant foods, some passionately embraced a spartan diet. Lukashevich writes in his memoir that for him and his comrade Aitov what to eat became one of the questions of everyday life that held moral significance. They strove to adhere to a "*vow*, which each of us had taken in the depths of his soul… a vow to *break* with civilization… forever."[196] This entailed living in the countryside and eschewing luxuries unavailable to the masses; even drinking tea in a village tavern seemed too tied to the civilization they had left behind. As an author looking back on his youth, Lukashevich acknowledged that their "extreme rigorism towards food at times attained the very heights of comedy," but that they nonetheless regarded the foodstuffs and goods on display at market-towns bazars as "sinful luxury" from which they must distance themselves. As their journey wore on, however, the young men's bodies began to rebel against the day-long treks fueled by little more than bread and the meatless cabbage soup they bought in the evenings for a few kopeks. Lukashevich and Aitov were sorely tempted by one luxury they felt was taboo: herring. Lukashevich recalls their resolve weakening: "And then once when we were resting on a heap of stones by the road the devil (*lukavyi*) decided to tempt us with a seductive vision of herring… And he won!" They bought a pair of herrings in a nearby village shop and feasted on them laughing. They reasoned that if herring was widely available in villages markets, the common people must eat them, and thus Lukashevich and Aitov could occasionally consume them as well. While Lukashevich the memoirist can laugh at his youthful self's rigorism, his use of religious language and apparent reference to Jesus being tempted in the desert suggests that he wanted to express the sacrality of the Populist cause.[197]

Housing could also be a hardship for the Populists. On the one hand, it was often difficult for traveling radicals to find shelter for the night. Lukashevich notes that travelers on foot were regarded with suspicion—their pleas for shelter were rejected by the better-off and accepted by the poorest peasants only after thorough interrogations about where the visitors were from, where they were going, and for what reason.[198] Debogorii-Mokrievich encountered this as well, as we have seen. The shabby clothes that he and his companions wore predisposed the villagers against them and made finding shelter doubly difficult. They slept many nights in the fields, sometimes soaked by rain. Breshko-Breshkovskaia and her comrades had a difficult time adjusting to their housing. In the village in which they had stopped to ply their trade as cobblers they had been offered an empty, broken down hut whose walls and floors were rotting and swarming with vermin. Breshko-Breshkovskaia recalled that they did their best to varnish the

[195] Morozov, *Povesti moei zhizni*, 1:160.
[196] Lukashevich, "V narod!," 15. Emphasis in original.
[197] Lukashevich, "V narod!," 15-16; Tikhomirov, *Zagovorshchiki i politsiia*, 46.
[198] Lukashevich, "V narod!," 14.

floor with a mixture of manure and lime, but when night fell "armies of bugs and insects swarmed out of hiding and attacked." The insects and mice tormented her till daybreak, and she did not get any rest. The three radicals did not stay in the village for long.[199] Not all references to housing are horror stories, however. When working among the Molokane, Deich and his comrade Iosef rented a corner of a peasant hut for three rubles a month; he did not complain about his living situation.[200]

Of all the hardships faced by radicals going to the people, manual labor was the most ideologically charged. Nearly all the radicals had read or assimilated Lavrov's *Historical Letters*, in which he called on the intelligentsia to pay back the debt it had incurred to the *narod*. Sharing the labors of the peasants provided a unique opportunity for redemption. By taking up the plow or the blacksmith's hammer radicals felt that they could identify themselves with the common people, taking a decisive step towards compensating for past abuses. Conversely, avoiding peasant labor was commonly seen as a betrayal of the mission. But the revolutionaries' experiences show that taking on peasant labor was a problematic and arduous endeavor.

First of all, finding work could be more difficult than radicals first imagined. When Lukashevich and his comrade Aitov crossed from Moskovskaia to Vladimirskaia guberniia, they reflected that in their not insignificant wanderings in central Russia they still had not succeeded in finding work. Lukashevich recalled that in the city before setting out: "we imagined that we would only have to want to work, and work would appear of its own accord. In practice it turned out otherwise."[201] Work was scarce in the areas they wandered through, and those peasants who worked in the cities were themselves returning home for the Easter holiday, making opportunities still scarcer. Only after Lukashevich returned to Moscow and set out on a later expedition did he find work with a carpentry *artel'* in Pavlov. He stayed with them for several months, rising before the sun and working until late in the evening. Lukashevich slept on a thin mat which he acquired used at a local market; when it quickly wore out he slept on bare boards. He proudly declares in his memoir: "in the 'rigorism' of my personal life I even surpassed [his fellow *artel'* workers], all because I did not want to lag behind them."[202] But this "spartan existence" seems to have satisfied his desire to break with the "civilized" world of his past: his second venture into the countryside proved to be his last.

Despite some successes, working among the peasants proved to be an extremely trying experience for radicals, and many were not able to handle it for more than a few days. Praskovia Ivanovskaia and Galina Cherniavskaia managed to cope with agricultural work for several months as they worked at an estate in Tavricheskaia guberniia in the summer of 1876. As Ivanovskaia recalls, the women were first assigned to the sheep-shearing shed, which proved thoroughly unpleasant, then sent to work in the open fields. While picturesque, field work proved taxing: they were awakened at four in the morning, endured cold before the sun rose, then searing heat later in the day; at the height of the season the steward could make them work sixteen-hour days, after which their "limbs shrieked with weariness."[203] When their overseer noticed how exhausted Ivanovskaia and Cherniavskaia were, he transferred them to the lighter task of weeding the melon fields. Toward the end of their summer contract, Ivanovskaia wrote,

[199] Breshko-Breshkovskaia, *Little Grandmother*, 46-47.
[200] Deich, *Za polveka*, I:175.
[201] Lukashevich, "V narod!," 15.
[202] Lukashevich, "V narod!," 27.
[203] Engel, *Five Sisters*, 110.

Cherniavskaia fell ill from exhaustion and left for Odessa. Ivanovskaia stayed out her contract and then returned to the city as well.[204]

When Morozov arrived from Moscow to Ivanchin-Pisarev's estate Potapovo, he was more interested in studying the peasantry than in preaching propaganda. He recalls in his memoir that he spent two days plowing the fields with the local peasants, after which his arm was so sore that he was forced to stop working the earth. Morozov did persist with lighter physical labor: he cut grass every day for the cows, chopped firewood for the kitchen, and thatched the roofs of peasant huts with straw (he enjoyed the feeling of being high up). While plowing proved too physically strenuous, Morozov proved more adapted to peasant tasks than many of the radicals who went to the people.[205]

When he worked at a black smith shop in the nearby village of Koptevo Morozov showed a zeal for his labor bordering on the fanatical. He attests that he was as serious about his work "as if [his] life depended on it." Spending his days making nails and working the bellows at the forge, Morozov gained a facility for the trade and earned the praise of his employer. He relates that one day while hammering at the block, a piece of red-hot iron the side of a large pea shot out and fell down his boot. "I felt a horrible pain in my leg," he recalls, "when it penetrated my flesh with a hiss, but my hand, at that moment striking with a five-pound hammer, did not make one flawed move. Only when all was finished did I quickly tear off my boot: the amazed blacksmith saw the burned indentation on my leg about half the size of a bean."[206] This episode not only illustrates Morozov and other radicals' enthusiasm for peasant work, but their pride in suffering itself, insofar as they were able to endure it in service to the cause.

Debogorii-Mokrievich and four of his comrades had their first experience of manual labor when they arrived at the town of Zhmerinka from Kiev in the spring of 1874. The group found work at the local railroad station loading ties into cars—four of the group would load while one stacked the ties inside the car. They worked in Zhmerinka for a week, received, their wages, and prepared to move deeper into the countryside. But one of their number wavered, whom Debogorii-Mokrievich refers to as "Sh." and seems to have been either S. Shneer or L. Shramkov.[207] "Sh." confessed that the physical labor was too much for him, and announced his attention to return to Kiev. His comrades did not respond sympathetically, going so far as to throw a line from the Gospels (Matthew 12:30) in his face:

> "We were terribly indignant. In vain Sh. tried to assure us that he could be useful doing other work in the city, and even asked that we keep in contact with him. We fanatically held our ground: 'he who is not with us is against us'—in other words, he who does not go to the people with us is our enemy. Remembering our parting with him now, I must confess that it was a sad and difficult scene. He listened to our biting remarks silently, with head lowered; when he said goodbye his hands were shaking, poor thing. Sh. departed."[208]

More than any other, this passage indicates the centrality of the Going to the People movement to Populist identity. As previous chapters showed, Populists regulated membership in their

[204] Engel, *Five Sisters*, 106-12.
[205] Morozov, *Povesti moei zhizni*, 1:89.
[206] Morozov, *Povesti moei zhizni*, 1: 95-96.
[207] Itenberg, *Dvizhenie revoliutsionnogo narodnichestva*, 322.
[208] Debogorii-Mokrievich, *Vospominaniia*, 68.

community rigorously and held numerous shared norms, which covered everything from reading habits to romantic relationships. Going to the people appears to have become an important marker of belonging. Activism in the city, as "Sh." found out, was not enough.

Near the start of their excursion to the people, Deich recalled that he and Shchepanskii stopped at the village of Kozii Iar to work for the railroad before going further. They were paid fifty kopecks a day as unskilled laborers to clean and turn around the locomotives. When their supervisor reproached them for idleness each time they took a break, drenched in sweat from their exertions, they consoled themselves with the thought that at least he did not suspect that they were from the privileged classes, totally unused to physical labor. But the work wore on Shchepanskii. As Deich recalls,

> "From the second day of work Iosef began to complain that it was too much for him. I tried to convince him to gather his strength and be patient, thinking that he would gradually get used to the job. But when he came home in the evening he was literally ready to drop from fatigue. Without washing or eating supper he threw himself down on his bunk and silently lay on his back, eyes fixed on a single point, until he fell asleep. He had no appetite and looked sickly. Setting out for work in the morning, he could hardly move his legs, as if he were a man who had just gotten up after a serious illness. It was painful to look at him."

Deich felt that Shchepanskii, outwardly silent, was fighting an internal battle; he "was deciding a question that then seemed to us to be the most important in the life of a conscious person: am I fit for activism among the people? And if not, what is the point of living at all?"[209] Three or four days later Shchepanskii announced that he could not take it any longer and was going back to Kiev. In view of his concern over his friend's health, Deich recalled, he did not try to talk Shchepanskii out of his decision.[210] Not all radicals were as vituperative as Debogorii-Mokrievich and his comrades had been toward "Sh.".

Indeed, Deich himself confessed to doubts about his capacity to carry on. Struggling with the railroad work's physical toll, he recalls that losing Shchepanskii threw him into a state of utter loneliness: "In completely unfamiliar surroundings, without any person close to me with whom I could exchange a few words, in a false position which forced me to be on my guard every minute so as not to give myself away and pass almost straight from the school bench to hard labor—all of this could drive one to despair."[211] Before leaving, Shchepanskii had urged Deich to return with him to Kiev, but Deich felt that this would be a betrayal of his decision to dedicate himself to the people and show them the way out of their dismal situation, something he held as sacred as Lukashevich did his vow to break with civilization. Nonetheless the labor was difficult for Deich: "At dawn, when I had to get up to go to work, it seemed I would not be able to stand. My limbs ached so much it was hard to move. But gradually I became convinced that despite these feelings my work was becoming more successful. Even exhaustion had its own sort of charm."[212] Deich recalls that within two or three weeks of Shchepanskii's departure, he felt confident that he would not abandon his work out of physical fatigue or, for that matter, loneliness. He began to spread propaganda among the peasants.

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[209] Deich, *Za polveka*, I:173.
[210] Deich, *Za polveka*, I:172-4.
[211] Deich, *Za polveka*, I:174.
[212] Deich, *Za polveka*, I:175.

Sheer exhaustion was not the only obstacle to radicals wishing to take on peasant labor. Lack of skill in agricultural work proved a prominent, if not insurmountable obstacle to these urbanites working in the fields. Deich recalls struggling with his complete lack of experience on his first day working for Ivan Firsov Mamontov in the Molokan village of Astrakhanka. On rising in the morning, Mamontov invited Deich to help him unload the hay cart. Unable to refuse, Deich nervously held a pitchfork for the first time and tried to scoop and toss the hay just like his host. His awkward movements with the novel implement earned the amazement of Mamontov and the laughter of his wife and children, who soon came out to watch. Either Deich would scoop up so much hay that he could not toss it off the cart or his pitchfork would retain only a humorously slight load. When this humiliation was finished, Deich went to work with Mamontov and his family mowing hay fifteen versts out in the steppe. Deich blundered with his scythe in uncontrolled movements that prompted Mamontov's intervention: "No… You'll ruin more than you'll mow, or else cut off someone's leg!"[213] Demoted to "women's work," raking up the hay behind the mowers with his host's nine-year-old and twelve-year-old daughters, Deich fared little better. His raking was slower and less accurate than that of the girls, who laughed at his inability: "What sort of worker is he? He can't mow, can't rake, can't do anything! He can't even do a woman's work, and won't earn his keep. What's the point of having him?"[214] Deich recalled that he was so ashamed that he resolved to leave the village that very night. In the end, however, Mamontov persuaded him to stay on as a laborer.[215]

Converting the Peasants

Most radicals did not launch into propaganda without first establishing a rapport with their peasant interlocutors.[216] Those who practiced what contemporaries termed "settled propaganda," more popular with those in the Lavrovist camp, could live in a community for weeks before broaching politically sensitive topics. The less patient Bakuninists who practiced "flying propaganda," ranging from village to village, still usually waited until they felt that they had established some sort of confidence with their peasant interlocutors before launching into politically sensitive topics. When did radicals feel that they had established a rapport with their peasant acquaintances?

The Populists disproportionally focused their propaganda efforts on communities of Old Believers and other schismatics, persuaded by writers like Afanasii Shchapov that these groups were hostile to the Russian state.[217] When radicals entered a community governed by unfamiliar customs, they could use conversations about religious sameness and difference to bridge the cultural gap between themselves and their interlocutors. Morozov, for one, made a pleasant impression on his peasant hosts when he crossed himself before their icon using two fingers, as they did, in the Old Believer manner.[218] Deich relied instead on distinguishing himself from the peasants around him. On his arrival in the Molokan village of Astrakhanka he established a

[213] Deich, *Za polveka*, I:188.
[214] Deich, *Za polveka*, I:188.
[215] Deich, *Za polveka*, I:184-89.
[216] Daniel Field, "Peasants and Propagandists," 434-5.
[217] Alexander Etkind, "Whirling with the Other: Russian Populism and Religious Sects," *Russian Review* 62, no. 4 (Oct. 2003): 573.
[218] Morozov, *Povesti moei zhizni*, 1:159.

rapport with his host Firsov through religious disputation. He recalled in his memoir that he feigned ignorance of Molokan customs and, pretending to be Orthodox, expressed his surprise that his hosts were not observing the Friday fast. Their resulting discussion of the differences between the Molokan sect and Russian Orthodoxy allowed Deich to show off his not inconsiderable knowledge of the scriptures, earning him the reputation of a religious man on his first night in the village. This may have been the reason Firsov chose to keep Deich on as a laborer despite his lack of facility with peasant work.[219]

Just as easily, radicals could commit errors of judgement which put their interlocutors on their guard. Peasants' suspicion was aroused, as we have seen, by incongruities of dress, language, manner, and other aspects of self-presentation. An episode recalled by Deich illustrates how differences in educational backgrounds could affect a radical's relationships with peasants. One day while taking a break from field work outside Astrakhanka, the patriarch Firsov asked Deich if it was true that the stars were larger than the earth. Enlivened by this opportunity for intellectual discourse, Deich explained that the stars appear to be small because of their distance from the earth, and went on to discuss the planets as well. Firsov interrupted, asking "how do you get to the village of Vasil'evka?" Deich answered: "How would I know… You know very well that I've never been there." "Well there you are," Firsov answered triumphantly, "Have you ever been in the heavens? You can't say how to get somewhere thirty versts away, and you're telling us how far to the stars, to the sun, to the moon?! You may read lots of books, but I see that there's no lack of foolishness in you!" Deich soon learned that word of this unfortunate conversation had spread throughout the settlement. He met two peasants who chuckled when he introduced himself: "So you're Ivan Firsov's laborer! … We know, we know, we've heard a lot about you! They say that you walk through the heavens better that you do on the earth." The conversation on Deich's "travels through the heavens" cemented his reputation as an "odd one" (*chudak*) in the village, but did not spoil his relationship with the benevolent Firsov.[220]

Once they had established a rapport with the peasants, whether by getting to know them over time or by trying to ingratiate themselves quickly, radicals could move on to the task of spreading propaganda itself. The desired conclusion of most radicals' discussions was to convince the peasants of the need for an insurrection against the tsarist government and restructuring of the socio-economic order. But they needed to guide their listeners gently towards that conclusion, in order to render the peasants more receptive to revolutionary ideas and to minimize the chance of being denounced and imprisoned by local authorities. What strategies did radicals use to shepherd their peasants towards radical ideas? What topics did they employ as conversation-starters?

Faced with the necessity of explaining his lack of facility with fieldwork, Deich spun a tale about his earlier life that led to a discussion of economic injustice. It was his first tentative attempt at propaganda among the Molokans. He recalls in his memoir that he told his host Firsov that he had been orphaned and from a young age brought up working as a shop clerk in a town, hence his clumsiness with agricultural work. Deich claimed reading books had led him to the conclusion that commerce was dishonest, since "if you don't deceive, you won't sell." He continued: "I wanted to live justly (*po pravde*), so I wandered seeking a just life. I've been to many places, but everywhere I've seen the same thing: the strong crush the weak, steal; everyone

[219] Deich, *Za polveka*, I:182-4.
[220] Deich, *Za polveka*, I:194-7.

tries to deceive and harm the poor." Deich's criticism of capitalism and social exploitation did not resonate with Firsov, who wondered that the young man would give up his relatively privileged position as a shop clerk to seek unskilled labor, concluding that Deich was "an odd one" (*chudak*). Whether in actual fact or in his retrospective retelling, it seems likely that Deich's story was influenced by one of the many Populist pamphlets used for propaganda among the masses. The motif of a seeker after justice wandering through Russia but finding only exploitation and dishonesty occurs often in these pamphlets.[221]

Communal organization was another topic that radicals brought up. When Firsov remarked enviously on his neighbor's expensive new mower (*kosil'naia mashina*), Deich took the opportunity to extol communal sharing of resources. Holding property like agricultural implements in common, he explained, would allow them to be used by different households for maximal effect and profit. But Firsov objected that a nearby village inhabited by the sect of "Sharers" (*obshchie*) did just that; they held their farm implements in common. He recalled in his memoir that Firsov and the other Molokane disdained the group, since the "Sharers" constantly argued over who worked more than his quota, was lazy, or pretended to be sick—the general opinion was that: "they therefore have constant disputes, poverty, and filth." Firsov rebutted Deich's attempt at propaganda by maintaining that Astrakhanka would go down the same road if it were to embrace communal ownership.[222]

Attempts at propaganda could be directly political and bolder in tone than Deich's conversational forays. If Morozov's account of his conversation with an Old Believer family who lived on the Kursk-Voronezh road is to be believed, he launched into propaganda with little preamble and no reason to think his listeners would be receptive.

> 'In the capitals,' I said to the patriarch, 'there have appeared people who stand for us, the workers and the peasants, and want all governmental affairs to be decided by those chosen by the people. That's how it's been done a long time in many foreign governments. All the bosses in the villages and towns and the police answer to the elected representatives of the people for their repressions, and that's why life is freer there than here. Everyone can go where they want without begging for a passport, and can write and speak what they think without being afraid of being thrown into prison. [These people] want to establish that here too.'

This is not without a layer of subtlety—Morozov distances himself from the ideas mentioned when he says "there have appeared people." Still, it is fairly bold. The patriarch sympathized but claimed that it was impossible to change the existing order. According to Morozov's account, he then retorted that there were thousands of simple folk for every boss, and that they could surely impose their will by force, the old man replied that the people were divided and could never prevail against authorities and soldiers who were united. He spoke about a neighboring village: "There beyond the river is a village where they revolted over land, and when the soldier broke them up they dispersed among the surrounding villages. But those villages were so afraid that they chased them from their homes so it wouldn't end badly for themselves, even though they wanted the same thing." Morozov replied that the people was

[221] Deich, *Za polveka*, I:185-6. Perhaps the most famous of these pamphlets is Lev Tikhomirov's Populist tale, "Gde luchshe? Skazka o chetyrekh brat'iakh i ob ikh prikliucheniiakh." See O. B. Alekseeva, ed., *Agitationnaia literatura russkikh revoliutsionnykh narodnikov. Potaennye proizvedeniia 1873-1875 gg.* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1970).
[222] Deich, *Za polveka*, I:191-2.

becoming ever more educated, which would lead to change; the patriarch doubted it. This episode from Morozov's memoir is a classic example of "flying propaganda." Without having put down any roots in a community, a radical preaches what ideas he or she can while passing quickly through. This may have encouraged Morozov to be more openly political, as the chances for denunciations would be reduced. Still, he softened the impact of potentially subversive ideas by highlighting the example of "many foreign governments." Variants on this phrase were commonly used to introduce radical ideas, with common appeals to the example of America, France, and other states, as we will see.[223]

Religion was another common topic of conversation that could lead to political discussion. Radicals believed that tapping into peasants' religiosity could lend force to their critiques; at the same time, they feared that questioning the tenets of Christianity would alienate their listeners, and usually presented themselves as devout believers. Lukashevich, for example, used a religious publication to raise political questions. He recalls in his memoir that while during the workweek his labor at the local black smith shop left him with little energy for propaganda, one Sunday he strolled over to a village book-stand and purchased a pamphlet, "The Saint's Life of Philip, Metropolitan of Moscow."[224] That evening he read to his peasant coworkers from the entirely legal, sacred publication and with only a few additions of his own used the story of Metropolitan Philip's martyrdom under Ivan the Terrible to electrify his listeners with a spirit of protest against tyranny. The blacksmith Filipp, namesake of the saint, was even moved to tears. Lukashevich took advantage of the mood to relate from memory the contents of two secular, illegal Populist pamphlets—"The Tale of the Four Brothers" and "The Clever Mechanic"—which illustrated the injustices of Russian society. By the end of the evening, Lukashevich claimed, his listeners were so riled up that they would have taken up arms against the state then and there. But this success left him at a loss: without a concrete plan of action he could only encourage them to wait for the coming revolution.[225] Using sacred discourse to get peasants' attention and then shifting to secular themes was a tactic employed by others as well. When Dmitrii Rogachev worked as a barge-hauler in the Volga region, he reportedly read the psalms to illiterate sectarians, switching into propaganda without his listeners noticing.[226]

Morozov recalled a religious discussion that took place one day while he was at work at the black smith shop in the Old Believer village of Koptevo. An elderly man struck up a conversation with him about a telegraph operator at a nearby railroad station who denied the existence of God:

> Very interested to hear what they themselves thought, I answered evasively: 'In Moscow they say that he doesn't exist, but I don't know what to think. They say that no one has ever seen him.' 'That's the truth,' answered the man, 'no one has ever seen him.' 'I think,' interjected an old woman, my hostess, who was also there for the conversation, 'that whether or not he exists you still have to pray to him like you're supposed to according to the rules. If he doesn't exist, you don't lose much time on prayers, and if he

[223] Morozov, *Povesti moei zhizni*, 1:160-1.
[224] On the popular "literature of the lubok," see Jeffrey Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read: Literacy and Popular Culture, 1861-1917* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985).
[225] Lukashevich, "V narod!," 34-35.
[226] B. Itenberg, *Dmitrii Rogachev, revoliutioner-narodnik* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo sotsial'no-ekonomicheskoi literatury, 1960), 48. See Etkind, "Whirling with the Other," 578.

does, he'll reward you a hundredfold.' Everyone immediately agreed with this opinion.[227]

In this case, the villagers' skepticism proved rigorous propaganda efforts unnecessary. If one suspects that Morozov may have taken some liberties by retrospectively attributing such a utilitarian view, Pascal's wager in all but name, to the peasant woman, it is worth keeping in mind that he was not alone in having his expectations of peasant (and particularly sectarian) religiosity baffled. Deich, for one, was impressed by the Molokans' practicality, but surprised at their relative indifference towards questions of religion; he had expected them to be more zealous about their beliefs and antagonistic towards the Orthodox.[228]

Anti-religious propaganda could take different forms. In his memoir Ivanchin-Pisarev relates the story of a literate peasant in Potapovo, a stove-maker he refers to as "Z.", who was inspired by atheist ideas to ridicule religiosity in his community. While the radical *inteligenty* avoided taking on peasant religious beliefs head on, seeing it as secondary to the cause of political change, this Z. proved a zealous convert to atheism. According to Ivanchin-Pisarev, he presided over a sort of *kruzhok* at his home where he discussed various biblical themes. He even kept a "zoological atlas," which he used to refute the story of Noah and the flood; he calculated that the amount of space required for the elephants, giraffes, and other large animals would exceed the ark's biblical dimensions. Z. was also a proponent of materialism. In a heated confrontation with an elderly peasant woman who reproached him with godlessness, he replied with a homespun credo of sorts: "And I'll tell you this about your cooking: toss some flour in your mixing bowl and stir it with a dry spoon. Recite whatever prayer you want, but you won't get dough. Pour in some water and you'll get bread without need of any "Our Fathers."[229]

Oral propaganda was often supplemented by the use of pamphlets. While the Populists used legal publications to spread potentially subversive ideas when possible, they could only directly illustrate the ills of the Russian political and socio-economic system and call for outright revolt in illegal documents not passed by the censor. Beginning in 1872 the Chaikovtsy operated a printing press in Geneva which they used to produce pamphlets to be smuggled back into Russia for consumption by workers and peasants; many of these were distributed during the Going to the People movement. Both in outward appearance and in language these pamphlets were designed to mimic the *lubok* publications already popular among the peasants, such as "The Saint's Life of Philip, Metropolitan of Moscow," which Lukashevich had used to stir up anti-tsarist sentiment. Written in simple, colloquial language, they most often took the form of stories taken from Russian history—the revolt of Stenka Razin was a popular topic—or were framed as folk-tales. The Populists' favorite from the latter category was "The Tale of the Four Brothers."[230]

Written by Lev Tikhomirov in 1873 and printed in Geneva, "The Tale of the Four Brothers" packaged radical ideas about the tsarist system as a folk-tale which would be familiar and appealing to a peasant audience.[231] As the story goes, four brothers grew up in a forest

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[227] Morozov, *Povesti moei zhizni*, 1:96-97.
[228] Deich, *Za polveka*, I:190-91.
[229] A. I. Ivanchin-Pisarev, *Iz vospominanii o "Khozhdenii v narod*" (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia B. M. Vol'fa, 1914), 8-10.
[230] V. F. Zakharina, *Golos revoliutionnoi Rossii. Literatura revoliutionnogo podpol'ia 70-kh godov XIX v.* (Moscow: Mysl', 1971), 46-79.
[231] For the text, see Alekseeva, *Agitationnaia literatura*, 267-95.

secluded from all mankind. When they ventured out and saw other people for the first time, they agreed to travel one in each direction in order to find out where it was best to live. The brothers everywhere discover social injustice as the masses are oppressed by landowners, factory owners, monks, and others.[232] Each clashes with the system, and the brothers reunite in a penal convoy on the way to Siberia. The story ends with the brothers escaping and ranging through Russia urging the common people to rise up against the state—an ending which Petr Kropotkin claimed that he added to Tikhomirov's text to clarify its call to action.[233] "The Tale of the Four Brothers" was a favorite propaganda pamphlet to distribute to the masses. In discussing the propaganda to Moscow workers in 1874-5, Lukashevich maintains that there was great demand for the story, and this seems to be the common view of contemporaries. Morozov dissents, though, claiming that the intelligentsia loved the story, but the peasants were largely neutral towards it. While not as flattering to the (folk) literary sensibilities of the radicals, he believed that direct proclamation-style exhortations were a more effective genre to reach the peasants.[234]

How were publications like "The Tale of the Four Brothers" and other pamphlets distributed in practice? Aleksandr Ivanchin-Pisarev, for one, manufactured and distributed propaganda on his estate in Potapovo, Iaroslavskaia *guberniia*. The landowner, who had close links to the Chaikovtsy, had propagated Populist ideas in the area since 1872, and in good radical fashion had established a school for peasant children and a carpentry workshop. Ivanchin-Pisarev boasted in his memoir that by 1874 the local peasants were so receptive to his propaganda that he could make inflammatory speeches at village gatherings or in crowded taverns without fear of any denunciation. Some among the literate peasants had assimilated his ideas to such as degree that they in turn had become active "independent agitators" (*samostoiatel'nye vnushiteli*). More significantly, Ivanchin-Pisarev arranged for an illegal printing press and type to be brought from Moscow to his estate in April, 1874 and hidden in the coach-house. After a denunciation—Ivanchin-Pisarev claims it originated from an untrustworthy (and obtuse) peasant who took literally a joke about stockpiling rifles and revolvers—attracted the attention of the gendarmes, he and some trusted peasants buried the printing press in the woods. When the danger had passed, they dug it up and put it into operation printing propaganda pamphlets around the time of Morozov and Sablin's arrival to the estate in May.[235] Morozov described how these pamphlets were distributed: of the ten or so peasants Ivanchin-Pisarev particularly trusted (presumably his "independent agitators"), one had obtained a permit to sell books in the surrounding villages. His book-seller's crate seemed to contain innocuous religious and devotional books, but hidden underneath were illegal pamphlets which he and others distributed. Morozov was particularly amused to find that the revolutionary publications bore the stamp "Approved by the censor" on their inner covers, while the pseudo-religious tracts were marked "With the blessing of the Most Holy Synod."[236]

Morozov provides an example of how these pamphlets were distributed in his memoir account of a night he spent on the hay in the yard of a peasant hut. His earlier attempts to bring the conversation around to political topics had failed, but one of his host's sons approached him

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[232] The literary device of using an innocent or naïve character for social criticism was used to great effect by Enlightenment philosophes. The "Tale" recalls Voltaire's *Candide* and *Ingenuous*, as well as Montesquieu's *Persian Letters*. I have not found any direct references by radicals to Enlightenment inspirations, however.
[233] Zakharina, *Golos revoliutionnoi Rossii*, 59-60.
[234] Lukashevich, "V narod!," 39-40; Morozov, *Povesti moei zhizni*, 1:90.
[235] Ivanchin-Pisarev, *Iz vospominanii*, 12-15; Tvardovskaia, *N. A. Morozov*, 21-22.
[236] Morozov, *Povesti moei zhizni*, 1:90-91.

in the night to ask about something Morozov had brought up earlier: the existence of people in the cities who wanted to transform society. Morozov replied that he was one of them, and gave him pamphlets to distribute, which the son promptly hid in the hay. The boy reported that there were no literate adults in the village, however, only a few children studying in a school run by the (presumably liberal-minded) landowner. Morozov recalls feeling elated with even this modest triumph of propaganda—his faith in the openness of the people to radical ideas was for a time restored.[237]

Morozov's experiences with distributing pamphlets did not always leave him so optimistic. On the road to Voronezh he fell in with a group of peasants, claiming that he was on a pilgrimage to pray to the saints there. The group stopped overnight by a river, at which time Morozov asked if they were literate and offered to give them copies of "The Tale of the Four Brothers," which he was carrying with him. The peasants were illiterate, but expressed enthusiasm for rolling the pamphlet pages into cigarettes. Morozov was shocked, but reluctantly gave a few pamphlets to one man who assured him that his literate son would read them. Morozov awoke the next day to find his companions smoking cigarettes of the same pink hue as "The Tale of the Four Brothers." When confronted, the peasants confessed their guilt, explaining that the temptation to smoke had been too great, especially given the fine quality of the pamphlet paper. Morozov recalled his guilt:

> "How many honest, good people are going to their deaths and have already died to introduce, in the form of these booklets, some light into the dark consciousness of these people. And the pamphlets are being used for cigarettes! I prized every copy of illegal literature, protected it like a sacred relic, always remembering and vividly feeling how dangerous the conditions of preserving them and distributing them to the people were. I could not understand how I could have been so thoughtless as to give him that pamphlet yesterday, already sensing what he would do with it."

Episodes like this one contribute to Morozov's narrative of gradual disillusionment with the possibility of a peasant uprising.[238]

Even when radicals did not have any pamphlets on hand, they were familiar enough with the most common of them to recite their contents. Deich recalls that one day when he and Firsov's son Vania were transporting a cart full of melons from the field, the young man asked him to tell a story. Pleased that a youth who had seemed uninterested in anything besides farm work had provided an opening for propaganda, Deich began to recite the contents of the Populist pamphlet "The Tale of the Four Brothers," and their wanderings through Russia seeking justice but instead finding oppression. As he was waxing dramatic at a turning point in the story, Deich felt Vania punch him in the side and cry: "Watch where you're going!" The horses had veered off to one side. Deich recalled: "I felt an inexpressible disappointment. It wasn't the entirely undeserved punch which upset me, but the consciousness weighing on me that this young man, who I had had such high hopes for, had destroyed them over nothing. It became clear to me that insignificant daily concerns were more important to Vania than any truth that I could impart to him." Although Vania pleaded for him to continue the story, Deich stubbornly refused, such was his disappointment at the failure of his first and last attempt to propagandize the youth of

[237] Morozov, *Povesti moei zhizni*, 1:166-67.
[238] Morozov, *Povesti moei zhizni*, 1:173, 176.

Astrakhanka. It is difficult for the reader of this episode to feel that Deich's touchy response to the danger of running the cart off the road was justified. Perhaps Deich the memoirist realized this; if so, he says nothing to explicitly distance himself from his younger self's reaction. At the very least, this seems to be an example of unrealistic expectations. Deich felt that Vania was representative of the young Molokan community as a whole, and should accept his propaganda on his terms. His lack of perspective, perhaps exacerbated by the fatigue of living and working for several months in Astrakhanka, lost him what seems a valid opportunity for spreading revolutionary ideas.[239]

How did the peasants respond to the Populists' propaganda efforts? One of the commonest responses to radical propaganda was for peasants to assert that the tsar was not to blame for the ills of the peasantry. Ekaterina Breshko-Breshkovskaia found this in the villages she passed through. In one, she recalled speaking to peasants who had no legal access to forests and stole their wood, for which they were severely punished. She wrote that they had no thought of blaming the tsar, and either blamed no one or faulted local officials, who they said oppressed the people without the tsar's knowledge. In another village, Breshko-Breshkovskaia spoke with a young man named Ivan about the injustice of the post-emancipation land settlement. He asserted that the tsar had no idea that the nobles were depriving the peasants of their land, since he would support the masses if he knew that they were being oppressed. At one village gathering, Breshko-Breshkovskaia objected to a peasant's shout that the solution to social injustice was to bring it to the attention of the tsar by saying that expecting justice from the tsar was akin to seeking salvation from the devil. This comparison caused the peasants to erupt in indignation, and the speaker was forced to leave. In sum, Breshko-Breshkovskaia's memoiries coincide with other radical accounts, which depict the peasants as adhering to an almost religious belief in the goodness and justice—if not the omniscience—of the tsar-*batiushka*, who was being subverted by insidious nobles and officials.[240]

Another common peasant response to radical propaganda was the assertion that the material ills of the people were not caused by external oppression but by the moral failures of the peasants themselves. Lukashevich's timid and unsuccessful attempts to enlighten his fellow-*artel'* workers in Pavlov ran up against this obstacle. Rejecting political and social explanations, his acquaintances objected that they "needed to suffer want, wrongs, and mistreatment because they were all to a man *drunkards and had forgotten God*." Lukashevich recalled that try as he might: "I could not budge my interlocutors from their position. I was disconcerted to see my powerlessness to change their minds…"[241] Deich had the same experience in Astrakhanka. His relatively prosperous interlocutors blamed poverty on drunkenness: "'Now look at the dissipation among us,' said the Molokans. 'Formerly there wasn't a trace of wine to be found, but now they've built a tavern. Some hardly leave it, and their farms are going to ruin.'" They credited their own prosperity to God's favor—"'God decided to give it! Look, it rains on one man's plot and doesn't touch another's. The Lord knows better than you how much to give to whom!'"[242]

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[239] Deich, *Za polveka*, I:206-9.
[240] Breshko-Breshkovskaia, *Little Grandmother*, 48-57. On this "myth of the tsar," see Daniel Field, *Rebels in the Name of the Tsar* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1976).
[241] Lukashevich, "V narod!," 28. Emphasis in the original.
[242] Deich, *Za polveka*, I:192-93.

One of the first exploratory trips "to the people" was made by Sergei Kravchinskii and Dmitrii Rogachev in November, 1873.[243] Their verbal account of their exploits to their comrades in Moscow on their return helped whip up enthusiasm for the venture which reached its crescendo in the "mad summer" of 1874. The police investigation of their activities involved interviewing many of the peasants that they spoke with in the village of Andriushino, Tverskaia *guberniia*, on the estate of their acquaintance Aleksandr Iartsev. Despite the limitations of these police reports—one assumes that the peasants being interviewed may have modulated their replies or outright played dumb in order to avoid implicating themselves—these records offer a glimpse into how the peasants perceived these strange newcomers and understood their ideas.

One night in particular interested the gendarmes. On the evening of November 24, Kravchinskii and Rogachev spoke to a group of peasants assembled at the dacha of Ivan Ponomarenko, who was temporarily employing the two as sawyers. One retired soldier present reported: "They spoke about God, about an election of the Tsar, referring to America and France. They told me that in America each person picks the president. … Then they said that in France they had chased away the Tsar and picked a president for themselves. They said about Russia that here it's different, but when we become educated it'll be the same way here. … They spoke well about God."[244] He added to the gendarme that there were about twenty people present for the readings; some listened while others dozed. Another peasant who heard them speak that night, a Mitrofan Grigor'ev, reported that: "they read stories, and tales about America. In one pamphlet it said that in America the villages are better than the towns are here. That there's no Tsar there and everyone is equal. They gather and talk among themselves about who to pick as President, like we do with the village elder (*starshina*)."[245] These witness accounts provide some insights into the radicals' propaganda strategies, showing how Kravchinskii and Rogachev situated Russia within a global context. Other radicals tended to talk about Russia in isolation, arguing from the facts of the peasants' poverty and social inequality that its political system was flawed and should be changed. Kravchinskii and Rogachev also eschewed abstract ideas about politics and focused on the concrete examples of America and France (or this, at least, is what the peasants retained and reported). The retired soldier's comment that the pair "spoke well about God" seems curious. Likely the atheist radicals used biblical examples to argue the need for social equality, which was a more or less common practice.

Iartsev himself used similar propaganda tactics, comparing Russia to America, but whether he did this prior to Kravchinskii and Rogachev's visit or was influenced by his guests is not clear. Timofei Arkhipov testified to the gendarmes about his conversations with the landowner, telling them that he and his friends Afanasii and Moisei often met with Iartsev in the evenings to talk. According to Arkhipov, Iartsev "talked about different peoples, about America, said that they live better there, that the people are richer and better. And here the crops don't grow. He showed us maps, charts of the earth, but I didn't hear anything from him about the Sovereign or foreign Tsars. He told us about one land where there is no Tsar and the people live on their own. … Before he left he gave me only pamphlets."[246] The gendarme report presents as a monologue what was evidently a two-sided conversation. When Arkhipov comments, "but I didn't hear anything from him about the Sovereign or foreign Tsars," or says Iartsev had left

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[243] See Taratuta, *S. M. Stepniak-Kravchinskii*, 54-63; Itenberg, *Dvizhenie revoliutionnogo narodnichestva*, 273-78; B. S. Itenberg, ed. *Revoliutionnoe narodnichestvo 70-kh godov XIX veka* (Moscow: Nauka, 1964), 1:318-26.
[244] GARF f. 112, op. 1, d. 204, ll. 39-39 ob.
[245] GARF f. 112, op. 1, d. 204, ll. 233 ob.
[246] GARF f. 112, op. 1, d. 204, ll. 231 ob.-232.

"only pamphlets," he is clearly responding to his police interlocutor's questions, evidently prompted by a direct inquiry. One imagines that these pamphlets seemed perfectly innocent to Arkhipov; less so to the gendarme. In terms of substance, Arkhipov's experience bears out the general trend that the radical propaganda focused on making political ideas concrete by situating Russia in a wider world and comparing it with countries like America.

The peasant Moisei Aber'iamov also testified that Iartsev unfavorably compared Russia with foreign lands. In the report, dated December 17, Aber'iamov claimed that Iartsev had said that in America,

> "the system (*poriadki*) is good, not like we have here. He abused our system and our Russia. He said that here the people are poor… that they don't understand anything, and that the Sovereign takes money from the peasants to no purpose. If He needs a cow or something else, he said, then let him demand what he needs. But the Tsar just spends the peasants' money on balls, and he dances at them… Iartsev came to my house before his departure and said many bad things about the Sovereign."[247]

It is probable that Iartsev, less versed in radical tactics than Kravchinskii and Rogachev, was less nuanced in his denunciation of the tsar. A report from Colonel Iakhontov of the Tver gendarmerie to the Third Section adds further details. According to the *starshina* of the village of Dmitrovskoe, Iartsev had said that while the people were oppressed by taxes, the tsar was spending the state coffers on "monuments which no one needs," and that "the tsar had killed a man while out hunting."[248]

Not all of the propaganda these peasants recalled to the gendarmes was as explicitly political as the oft-cited comparison of Russia with America and France. Several recall conversations about astronomical bodies. Twelve-year old Gavrila Vasil'ev recalled meeting Kravchinskii and Rogachev, who invited him to read pamphlets with them when they learned that he was literate. Vasil'ev stated: "I went to them and they made me read, and read to me, about the heavens, the earth, and the sun. I was with them for only two evenings, and after that they gave me this book as a gift. The next day they left; I don't know to where."[249] A certain Iakov Andreev was present at a reading on the same topic: "they read about the heavens, the earth, and the sun. Also something about Sashka, Duniashka, and Iashka, but what exactly I didn't understand."[250] Just as Iartsev used the same tactics as Kravchinskii and Rogachev when discussing the Russia's political system, he mirrored their astronomical discussions as well. Timofei Arkhipov recalled the landowner telling "various stories about the heavens and the earth…"[251] If these peasants detected a political or social message in these astronomical discussions, they gave no sign of it to their gendarme interlocutors. While they may have been inclined to downplay their connection to any subversive readings, it seems likely that there was a propagandistic point to the pamphlet that they simply did not understand. In his report to the Third Section on the propaganda of Kravchinskii, Rogachev, and Iartsev, the Tver gendarme Iakhontov stated that one of the pamphlets that they had read to the peasants was entitled "The

[247] GARF f. 112, op. 1, d. 204, ll. 186-186 ob.
[248] GARF f. 109, 3 eksp., 1873 g., d. 498, ll. 66-70. See Itenberg, *Revoliutionnoe narodnichestvo 70-kh godov*, 1:318-21.
[249] GARF f. 112, op. 1, d. 204, ll. 40.
[250] GARF f. 112, op. 1, d. 204, ll. 46 ob-47.
[251] GARF f. 112, op. 1, d. 204, ll. 231 ob.-232.

Heavens and the Earth" (*Nebo i zemlia*). While the contents of this pamphlet would shed light on the connection between discussions of the heavens, earth, and sun with social and political questions, the publication remains obscure. No such work is included in Alekseeva's collection of Populist pamphlets and poems, nor is one mentioned by Zakharina in her *Golos revoliutionnoi Rossii*, the main study of Populist propaganda.[252]

Conclusion

The Going to the People movement was a formative experience for the Populists of the 1870s. Although it did not result in a peasant uprising against the tsarist state, and thus failed in a political sense, the movement was many radicals' central experience of revolutionary activity in service of the peasants. The large numbers of young people involved was unprecedented. In planning and executing their venture into the countryside, they needed to develop new habits of everyday life. Such habits were intended to express their ideological commitments, but also constituted improvised responses to unforeseen conditions.

Radicals quickly came to the conclusion that they needed to pretend to be peasants in order to gain the rural masses' trust. They hid their class and geographic origins by dressing in peasant clothing and controlling or cleverly framing their speech. They took on the everyday life of peasants, insofar as they could, and ate peasant food and applied themselves to peasant work, from carpentry, painting, and blacksmithing, to agricultural labor in the fields, and, when possible, slept under peasant roofs. They attempted to use whatever rapport they could establish with peasants to share their socialist views on the need to overturn the current socio-political order. They used tactics such as basing their critiques on the everyday economic experience of the peasants themselves, or on Christian principles calculated to appeal to peasants' religious sensibilities. Though religion was anathema to most radicals themselves, employing religious rhetoric was not much of a stretch, since, as we have seen, radicals themselves drew time and time again on the Gospels when expressing their own devotion to the cause. They wrote their own folk tales to package socialist ideas in forms they thought would be familiar to the people, and distributed pamphlets to their literate interlocutors, aiming to maximize the possible political impact of any encounter.

Though radicals aimed at every moment to harmonize their everyday lives with their principles, many found themselves compromising these principles while in the fields. By pretending to be peasants themselves in order to gain the masses' trust, they were deceiving those people that they wanted to help, the people in whom their system of values was rooted. Lying was hardly the best way to fulfil their Lavrovist promise to pay back their debt to the people. Honesty was a radical value that this experience put to the test, and as their memoirs attest, the unease that dishonesty sowed remained with them for decades to come.

Even for the most sensitive and self-critical, however, going to the people was a transformative moment, which allowed them to fulfil the most fundamental radical demand, that they sacrifice themselves for the common good. By leaving the cities, adopting ways of life that were not their own, and living in rural poverty, they felt that they were purifying themselves and becoming true revolutionaries through self-abnegation. They struggled to eat peasant food, slept in poor conditions, or out in the rain, and exhausted themselves with heavy labor to which they

[252] Alekseeva, *Agitatsionnaia literatura*; V. F. Zakharina, *Golos revoliutionnoi Rossii*.

were wholly unaccustomed. Performing the ideal of selflessness for themselves and others was at the heart of how Populists sought to prove their revolutionary mettle, and the Going to the People movement. If conviviality among urban radicals, such as at Olimpiada Alekseeva's apartment, endowed radicals with a strong sense of community, then joining the hundreds who went into the countryside between 1873 and 1876 shaped an even more powerful sense of belonging. Those who went to the people may only have encountered a handful of other radicals on the roads and in the villages—if they recognized them—but the knowledge that others were somewhere out there transformed their understanding of their own task. The fact that so many were arrested, some known to them, others unknown, finalized their sense that their mission had indeed been one of sacrifice.

Chapter Four: Prison

Almost every Russian revolutionary active in the movements of the 1870s and early 1880s was at some point imprisoned, forcing each to face a question: how am I to continue to be a revolutionary behind bars? This question was not just a utilitarian one of how to serve the cause of social and political change, although it certainly was that. It was also a personal question of how individuals who had defined themselves throughout their adult lives as members of a revolutionary community could reimagine themselves when cut off from activity in that community. Put into solitary confinement in tsarist prisons, these revolutionaries were now alone, and had to face what that meant for how they saw themselves. This chapter shows how radicals sought to preserve their revolutionary identities by reaching out to form social connections in prison, preparing themselves for service to the revolutionary cause upon release, and, when in their direst straits, simply trying to remain sane.

Russian radicals in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century were essentially communitarians. Whether agitating among factory workers or conspiring to commit terrorist acts, they felt themselves to be part of a community unified through dedication to "the cause"—the overthrow of the unjust autocratic order. Radicals from the original members of the Chaikovskii circle, to those Populists who participated in the Going to the People movement, to the *Narodovol'tsy* (members of the organization *Narodnaia volia*), embraced ideologies that exalted the communal over the individual. They organized themselves into study circles and conspiratorial cells in which each person had to submit to the collective to avoid detection by the tsarist authorities and operate effectively. But these radical groups were continually being exposed and their members arrested, often for possession of illegal literature or simply for belonging to a revolutionary group. Those imprisoned were forced to rethink their identities when they found themselves in the belly of the beast: how could they remain revolutionaries when cut off from the struggle behind prison walls? They tried to do so by maintaining a sense of revolutionary community behind bars in the face of tsarist efforts to keep them isolated.

Solitary confinement had begun to be systematically introduced into the Russian penal system by Alexander II, who as part of his great reforms sought to modernize Russian prisons along Western lines. The tsar tasked the Ministry of Internal Affairs with reforming the empire's prisons, but its difficulties in doing so caused Alexander to transfer responsibility in 1872 to the first in a series of commissions which wrestled with the intractable problems of penal reform. The conclusions of the last of these, the Grot Commission, were signed into law in 1879. Its debates on the advisability of solitary confinement reveal the commissioners' mixed feelings. On the one hand, they believed that isolation alone could not reform criminals, European experience with solitary confinement over the past few decades had shown the dangers of its excessive use, and it was extremely costly to build prisons with solitary rather than communal cells. On the other hand, the commissioners agreed that isolation could prevent the traditional criminal societies in Russian prisons from contaminating newcomers and reduce disorders among inmates. In the end, the Grot Commission endorsed the partial adoption of solitary confinement, though for financial reasons isolation was applied slowly and unevenly in the Russian penal system.[253]

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[253] Bruce F Adams, *The Politics of Punishment: Prison Reform in Russia 1863-1917* (Dekalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1996). On the Grot Commission, see 97-120.

For political prisoners, however, solitary confinement was deemed essential. Isolating radicals in single cells seems to have been regarded as necessary to limit the spread of subversive ideas and restrict their access to the outside world. While revolutionaries were held in numerous prisons across the empire, usually for relatively short periods of time, the most important among them were transferred to the capitals for interrogation and imprisonment, often in places like the notorious Alekseevskii ravelin of the Peter and Paul Fortress. The state's desire to cut revolutionaries off from the world culminated in a plan for a model prison to house the most dangerous political undesirables. Shortly after ascending to the throne, Alexander III decided to reopen the prison in Shlissel'burg fortress, located on a small island at the mouth of the Neva on Lake Ladoga. The fortress had been on the island since the fourteenth century, and a prison there had functioned as recently as the 1860s, but had been closed down. Plans were implemented to renovate the old prison into a structure with ten cells, and build a new prison building alongside it in line with contemporary European theories of solitary confinement. Opening in 1884, the new prison contained forty cells on two floors; its yard was walled off into sections (dubbed by the prisoners "cages") so that inmates could walk outdoors without coming into contact with one another. Aside from a secure location to isolate undesirables, Shlissel'burg was also to serve as a place for executions to take place away from the public eye (the most famous of which was of Aleksandr Ul'ianov). The prison would house political prisoners, chiefly *Narodovol'tsy*, until the end of its heyday in the 1905 revolution.[254]

This was the world imprisoned revolutionaries entered, and in which they sought to create the conditions for bearable lives. Despite the solitary confinement regime, prisoners found methods of indirect communication, such as reading the same books in the prison library, as well as methods of direct communication, by leaving each other messages or by tapping out a kind of Morse code. Taking advantage of an environment where they had plenty of time to devote to reading—when books were available—political prisoners assisted each other in studying the social and economic conditions of their day, learning languages, and simply diverting themselves through literature. These communities of inmates constantly renewed their revolutionary identity by struggling against the prison administration. By insisting on better living conditions radicals could feel part of a united front against close-at-hand representatives of the tsarist autocracy. While individual tensions and struggles manifested themselves in forms unique to the prison environment, maintaining a sense of community was nevertheless of central importance for revolutionaries in penal isolation.

Arrest

During that fatal encounter with the authorities that would lead to imprisonment, revolutionaries had a degree of freedom in their interactions which would be reduced once behind bars. In revolutionary memoirs this critical moment of arrest was often an opportunity to showcase revolutionary virtues such as cleverness, self-sacrifice, and the defense of one's comrades. By advertising their resourcefulness prior to arrest, memoirists also dramatized the transition that was about to occur. Arrest entailed the most fundamental form of sacrifice

[254] M. N. Gernet, *Istoriia tsarskoi tiur'my*, (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo iuridicheskoi literatury, 1953), III:212-279.

available to them, namely loss of freedom, and sometimes, as they well knew, the subsequent loss of sanity or loss of life.

Late on the night of January 4, 1874, Nikolai Charushin left a covert meeting in Anna Kuvshinskaia's home in St. Petersurg to spend the night in the apartment of Bogomolov, a medical student involved in the organization. On entering through the door, he was grabbed by a group of gendarmes. Charushin had a few problems: first, that he was carrying an illegal copy of Bakunin's *State and Anarchy*; second, that he possessed a letter of reference from L. Shapiro that could incriminate the latter, and third, that he was carrying the passport of the merchant's son P. A. Shuravin, which would surely incriminate him. As in many arrest narratives, the first moments in police custody proved an opportunity to showcase revolutionary cleverness and virtue. Charushin had had the foresight to tear out Shapiro's name from his note, replacing it with his initials—letters the gendarmes took to refer to Leonid Shishko (then hiding in Moscow safe from detection). In his memoir, Charushin strikes a note of sang-froid as he shrugs off the threat of arrest for possessing an illegal volume of Bakunin: "Illegal books and brochures… did not worry me much. I was responsible for them alone, and it was not a great responsibility."[255] He states that his main concern was incriminating Shuravin, whose passport he claimed was his own. When they demanded he lead them to his address, he succeeded in delaying and frustrating the gendarmes through the oft-used tactic of taking them throughout the city to one false address after another. When this became clear to his captors, they took him to the Third Section. Whether his priorities were as self-less at the time as his memoir suggests, he felt it important to retrospectively stress his independent initiative as a revolutionary, including his capacity to take charge of a situation, even during his first hours in police custody.

A year later, in 1875, Nikolai Morozov and Nikolai Sablin were arrested as a result of their frugality with revolutionary funds. As they returned from Switzerland to their homeland, they opted to cross the border with a cheaper smuggler than those previously recommended to them, saving 15 rubles. He insisted that he could take them straight through the border crossing station, giving them false German documents. While at first things went smoothly, Morozov and Sablin—"Engel" and "Brandt"—aroused suspicion and were tracked into the village and arrested. As in many revolutionary narratives, Morozov showcases his quick thinking in the first moments of his detention. On their march back to the station he managed to destroy an incriminating letter from Vera Figner he was tasked with bringing to Moscow. Tearing it up piece by piece in his pants pocket, he swallowed each bit under cover of wiping his nose with his handkerchief. He again emphasizes cleverness when he describes how he spontaneously created a back-story explaining their facility with Russian: they grew up as German subjects in Moscow, and only recently returned to their homeland to receive their uncle's inheritance. Nevertheless, Morozov was detained for 5 days in an inn under constant guard. The customs commissar Smel'skii persistently badgered him to renounce the false name of Engel, adopting diverse interrogatory tactics which Morozov describes in theatrically comic terms. Finally, Morozov gave up and revealed his true identity. While the reader may suspect that exhaustion and hopelessness played key roles, Morozov attributes his surrender to noble self-sacrifice. Smel'skii had arrested the smuggler, and offered to free him in exchange for Morozov, a deal the revolutionary accepted in order to spare the man's innocent wife and children.[256] By

[255] Charushin, *O dalekom proshlom,* 219. On the Populists' experiences in prison and on Charushin in particular, see Saburova and Eklof, *Druzhva, sem'ia, revoliutsiia*, 120-164.
[256] Morozov, *Povesti moei zhizni*, II:5-26.

underscoring that he revealed his identity voluntarily, Morozov also underscored that he actively assented to his sacrifice. In memoirs, at least, arrest was no moment for passivity.

Life in the Cell

The physical surroundings of the cell became radical prisoners' everyday world, and time gave each object and surface increased significance. The angle of sunlight through the window in a cell could become a cause for tranquility or despair. The cell Charushin remembered upon his incarceration in the Peter and Paul fortress was larger than most, but typical in its furnishings. He recalled that it was nine to ten paces long and five to six paces wide, with high ceilings and an asphalt floor. It had a semi-circular window high up in the wall beneath the ceiling, covered with an iron grate, through which he could see the fortress wall and a bit of sky. There was a bed, a small table and stool, a washbasin, and a bucket to relieve oneself in; the walls were covered in wallpaper and felt to reduce the transmission of sound. The cell door had a slot through which meals could be passed, and a glass peephole at eye level. Guards would raise the wooden cover on the outside of the door to look in at the inmate. Surveillance through this *glazok* ("little eye") became a source of exasperation to many prisoners. When he was transferred to the House of Preliminary Detention, Charushin was oppressed by how much smaller his new cell was. It was crowded with a bed, a small table and stool fastened to the wall, and a washbasin and bucket. The small window of frosted glass, covered by two bars, was high up in the wall, and could be opened up a crack to let in some air if he stood on the stool to reach it. While in the fortress Charushin recalled that he could jog back and forth across his cell for exercise, in this smaller room that was impossible. His new home was "simply a stone grave."[257]

Liudmila Volkenshtein recalls that her first impression of her cell at Shlissel'burg was almost pleasant. The room was clean and dry, about seven paces long by five paces wide, with windows of frosted glass that obscured one's vision but let in the light. The sheets were clean, and there was a sink for washing and a bench. The bunk was fastened to the wall with hinges: the administration required that it be folded up and locked in place from six in the morning until eight in the evening. Without access to their bed during the day, prisoners frequently lay on the cold stone floor of the cell.[258]

When Mikhail Novorusskii was transferred to Shlissel'burg he was put in a cell in the old prison—larger than those in the new prison, but similar in its furnishings. Ten paces across by the diagonal, it contained a small wooden table, chair, sink, an iron stove, and an iron bedframe bolted to the wall on hinges with a mattress, sheets, and a dark-grey blanket with blue stripes. The walls of the cell were bleached with lime, and painted brown the first yard up from the floor. The floor was asphalt and in need of cleaning. The only other accoutrements were a copy of the rules of Shlissel'burg that hung on the wall, with set punishments and potential rewards for good behavior, and an icon fastened to the windowsill. The window itself was fairly large, of frosted glass, and let in too little light, making the cell dim and gloomy.[259]

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[257] Charushin, *O dalekom proshlom,* 236-37, 241-42.

[258] Liudmila Aleksandrovna Volkenshtein, *13 let v Shlissel'burgskoi kreposti* (Purleigh, Essex: A. Tchertkoff, 1900), 10-11, 13.

[259] M. V. Novorusskii, *Zapiski Shlissel'burgtsa, 1887-1905* (St. Petersburg: Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo, 1920), 30-31.

Novorusskii had been previously strip-searched and given prisoners' clothes: coarse undergarments, shoes, and an old prisoner's robe with a diamond-shaped patch on the back. Volkenshtein noted that the women also wore undergarments and prisoner's robes with diamond symbols on them, but were not issued the cloth pants given to the men. She recalled that the men's robes were made of half black and half grey fabric, complete with yellow diamond shapes that gave them, in her opinion, a jester-like appearance.[260] Clothing, previously selected by radicals to signal their political allegiances—in the form of "nihilist" dress—or to help them evade suspicion—in the form of peasant dress—now demarcated their status as state criminals.

Experiences with the quality and quantity of prison food could vary widely. Again, a substance through which radicals had once advertised a choice, to abide by an ascetic behavioral code, for example, became a ration imposed from outside, with very little room for individual decision-making. When Morozov was initially imprisoned in a holding cell in the Third Section, he was given tea and white bread in the morning, soup and a plate of hot food at midday, and white bread with tea and sugar in the evening. His victuals in the Peter and Paul Fortress were not so generous. Morozov recalled that each prisoner was given an allowance of ten kopecks a day from which to buy food—an entirely inadequate sum when one small loaf of white break costed five kopecks. He subsisted on a loaf of black bread each day and a meager slice of kolbasa or cod, but his hunger pains increased and he became convinced he was slowly starving. After two weeks the guards informed the prison administration of his loss of health, and an official inquired why his family did not send him extra money to supplement his diet. When Morozov replied that he was alienated from his family, and could not receive funds, the prison allowed him an extra bowl of cabbage soup each day taken from the guards' canteen. Even so, Morozov thought about food during his entire stay in the fortress. His most memorable meal occurred when one day his neighbor Kukushkin shared some of a family-sent care package containing ham, oranges, tea, and sugar.[261]

Volkenshtein remembers that when she arrived at Shlissel'burg in the 1880s prisoners were given cabbage soup and porridge, five times a week with small bits of beef, and twice a week without. This could feel like a starvation diet. Later, in the 1890s when Ivan Gangardt became warden (he occupied that post 1891-97), he gave the prisoners autonomy in managing their menus. They could decide how to spend the state's food allowance per prisoner and order the groceries they thought fit. And the prisoners supplemented these staples with produce from their gardens and greenhouse.[262] Agricultural labor, which had served participants in the Going to the People movement as a method of repaying their debt to the peasants, had become a humbler tactic of survival.

Escape

One way radicals preserved their revolutionary identity in prison and exercised a sense of agency was by opposing the authorities by plotting to escape. From the start of Morozov's detention in the Third Section prison in Moscow, he planned escape attempts. His guards at that time were superstitious in the extreme—believing that the politicals' pamphlets were spell books of black magic, and that they could conjure dark forces. In this connection, Morozov's memoirs

[260] Novorusskii, *Zapiski Shlissel'burgtsa*, 26, 28; Volkenshtein, *13 let*, 13.
[261] Morozov, *Povesti moei zhizni*, II:33, 55-58.
[262] Volkenshtein, *13 let*, 13, 29.

again advertised the inventiveness and cunning that he displayed during his arrest. Morozov planned to play on the guards' fears by reenacting a prank his friends used in childhood. Gripping a lighted match within his mouth by the teeth, he could appear to breathe fire in the night by inhaling and exhaling. Adorning himself with paper horns would complete his transformation into a devil, which he hoped would frighten his guards enough to allow him to run past once his cell door was opened. However, since the June nights were not sufficiently dark, he calculated that several months would have to pass before he could attempt this stratagem.[263]

When Morozov began receiving notes from his comrades on the outside, they proposed to help him escape. In his memoir he stresses that he felt others were worthier than himself to be the first beneficiary of such an attempt, again emphasizing that escape plans were a manifestation of choice and personal agency, while simultaneously exhibiting the ethics of revolutionary selflessness. Morozov communicated his priorities to his friends, but they insisted that he be first. The escape plan consisted of a hired cab driver waiting outside the prison gates for Morozov to dash out during one of his walks in the yard. The gates were kept open, but several sentries on guard would attempt to stop him. Morozov planned to throw tobacco powder—which he had stockpiled for some time although he did not smoke—in their faces to blind them. On the prearranged day Morozov waited until one of his comrades walked past the gates and shook her head in the negative; the plan was aborted because the cab driver had gotten cold feet. A similar plan was put in place some weeks later when Morozov could arrange a trip to a nearby banya. He even had been smuggled some morphine which he slipped into a beer he bought for his guard once at the bathhouse. But the guard refused to drink it, fearing being caught imbibing alcohol on duty. Morozov recalled contemplating fleeing from his captor into the streets, but restraining himself when his contact walked past and warned him in French to wait till the time was right. Morozov claimed that concern for the guards played a role in his thinking. He felt guilty that he would put guards who had established cordial relations with him in such a position, remembering that they would jovially remark to him: "We'd let you out right now if we wouldn't be put right into your empty cell!"[264]

Charushin took part in an escape attempt from the House of Preliminary Detention in March of 1867, along with Sergei Kovalik and Porfirii Voinaral'skii. In his memoir, Charushin considers it an ethical lapse, as escape involved abandoning his other comrades to rot in imprisonment, and excused himself by stressing that he did not think the matter through and was too strongly tempted by the possibility of freedom. Late on the appointed night, a complicit guard opened the three radicals' cells. They congregated in Voinaral'skii's, which overlooked the street, and commenced to pry off the window bars. The non-complicit guards had been drugged asleep, but the screech of metal from the bars awakened them, and set the prison into an uproar. Charushin maintains that in those moments perhaps one or two of them could have squeezed out, but that they decided not to for fear of the retribution that would be exacted on the complicit guards. When discovered, they struck a deal with the guards to pay them off in exchange for not being reported—both sides involved would suffer if the prison higher-ups heard of the attempt. Perhaps most curious is the revolutionary's purported sudden sense of responsibility for the fate of their co-conspiring guards. Had they not considered this possibility before? Is Charushin presenting a high-minded justification for failure when perhaps none of

[263] Morozov, II:70-71.
[264] Morozov, *Povesti moei zhizni*, II:73-81.

them would have had time to escape? In any event, Kovalik and Voinaral'skii tried to escape a second time. Charushin refused to take part, framing his motives in reference to the cause. He did not want to leave his comrades in prison, felt that his poor health would not allow him to be adequately useful to the revolutionary cause, and he did not desire to live abroad, a fate "worse than any *katorga*."[265] This second attempt also ended in failure: Kovalik and Voinaral'skii were returned to their cells, and the complicit guards were this time imprisoned in the very institution they had supervised.[266]

Community in Confinement

Even in solitary confinement, communication was usually possible. Exchanged messages permitted prisoners to alert others to their presence, as well as to plot joint actions, such as the escape attempts described above. The most sophisticated and versatile method of prison communication was tapping: words were spelled out letter by letter in a sort of Morse code, the so-called "prison alphabet." The basic idea was that a slightly shortened version of the Russian alphabet was arranged in six rows of five letters each. Two quick sequences of taps would indicate a letter, the first referring to the row, the second to the column. In this way prisoners could spell out words with taps that carried through the stone walls separating their cells. But there were a number of problems surrounding tapping, the first of which was teaching a new prisoner the alphabet. On hearing tapping the new prisoner quickly discerned the existence of some form of communication, but without any verbal instruction from other inmates, it often proved quite challenging to crack the code.

Figner had no exposure to the prison alphabet until her stay at Shlissel'burg. While in the Peter and Paul Fortress she had been held in total isolation, and she now had a neighbor who patiently tapped the same message over and over: "I am Morozov. Who are you?" Eventually she decoded the alphabet of five letters to each of six lines, and commenced communication with Morozov, and her other neighbor, Vasilii Pankratov. Her first message, banged out with a wooden spoon, was: "I am Vera."[267]

Morozov learned to tap through an intermediate system. In his memoir he reported that during his time of active involvement in the revolutionary movement, he had heard no descriptions of the common prison code, and was as much in the dark as most other radicals first thrust in to the tsarist prison system.[268] When Morozov was imprisoned in Kolomenskaia chast' in Peter and Paul Fortress, he heard tapping from a neighbor but had difficulty deciphering it. At first simply overjoyed at another sign of life, he interpreted the sounds as a sort of music. Because the walls in his section of the prison were covered in felt, the inmates were forced to tap by stomping their feet rather than tapping directly against the surface of the wall. Using their feet to make one stop for "a," two for "b," etc., Morozov and his neighbor communicated—the latter identifying himself as Kukushkin. While the number of stomps required to express the latter letters of the alphabet made this technique cumbersome, it allowed Kukushkin to teach Morozov the traditional grid code: six rows each containing five letters. One tap, one tap equaled "a;" two

[265] Charushin, *O dalekom proshlom,* 247.
[266] Charushin, *O dalekom proshlom,* 244-47.
[267] Figner, *Zapechatlennyi trud*, II:140.
[268] This "prison alphabet" seems to have been first invented by the Decembrist M. A. Bestuzhev while in Alekseevskii ravelin.

taps, one tap equaled "e," etc. After a bit of confusion over the "soft sign" and other difficult characters, the two perfected their technique: they paused between letters, and thumped between words. While most radical prisoners were entirely unable to communicate by tapping until assimilating the six-by-five grid wholesale, Morozov took advantageous of this logical but little-used intermediate method of assigning each letter one entire number.[269]

At Shlissel'burg, as in other prisons, tapping was officially prohibited. The extent to which this rule was enforced varied on the prison, the circumstances, and the choices of individual guards and administrators. Tapping's importance in creating community among the prisoners cannot be overestimated, as Figner emphasizes: "…and if a light tap on the wall had not eliminated the stone barrier separating human being from human being, the inmate would not have had the chance to save her life and her soul." For her as for others, tapping was a sign of life, a means of mutual affirmation, to confirm that others, too, were present and alive. Yet, tapping was also an important arena for struggle with the authorities. "Not for nothing," she writes, "is the fight for tapping the first battle the prisoner in solitary confinement wages with his jailors. It is plainly a struggle for existence, and anyone immured in a cell will grasp at it unconsciously, as at a straw."[270] Opposition to the authorities was as important as communicating with one's radial comrades to maintaining a sense of one's identity as a revolutionary.

While the administration of Shlissel'burg did not openly allow tapping, at least in its first years in the 1880s, overseers realized they did not have the power to stop it entirely, opening up a space for negotiations with individual radicals. For example, in1886 Figner asked the feared overseer Matvei Sokolov if she could take joint walks in the yard with Volkenshtein, who she knew had been recently transferred to Shlissel'burg. He responded by indicating that she had broken the rules by tapping, and was thus not eligible for the full privileges of a well-behaved inmate. Figner insisted that she hardly tapped at all. This negotiation ended in her being granted joint walks with Volkenstein. Some prisoners were more inclined towards protesting their right to tap by flouting the rules. Mikhail Popov rebelled against the strict implementation of the rules by engaging in various skirmishes with Sokolov, including over tapping. Popov was once sent to *kartser* (a punishment cell) on a diet of bread and water by Sokolov as punishment for tapping. But apparently the prisoner was enough of a thorn in the overseer's side that Sokolov made a deal with him: if Popov would only tap infrequently and quietly, they would declare a truce. According to Figner, this brief respite from conflict was broken by Sokolov, who two weeks later sent Popov and some other prisoners back to *kartser* for tapping. Nonetheless, tapping was so prevalent as to be impossible to eradicate. Under the more tolerant administration of warden Ivan Gangardt, tapping was done fully in the open.[271]

While communicating with fellow prisoners was important, maintaining connections with those on the outside was, when possible, a dramatic and fulfilling part of a radical prisoner's life. In some prisons visits from friends and family were allowed. While immensely gratifying for some, these visits could be emotionally trying. When Morozov told his cell-neighbor that his break with his family meant that they did not visit him, Kukushkin replied that he was lucky. Morozov recalls Kukushkin's description during a visit: "You should be glad that your father and mother don't come to see you! When they come to me twice a week they throw themselves down on their knees before me, begging me to fully repent, give up everyone, and ask for a pardon.

[269] Morozov, *Povesti moei zhizni*, II:49-53.
[270] Figner, *Zapechatlennyi trud*, II:26.
[271] Figner, *Zapechatlennyi trud*, II:25, 63.

There's no worse torture than these meetings with my family!" While pressure to name names from the authorities was commonplace, few radical memoirists recounted such intense family pressures.[272]

When visits were not allowed, letters to family and friends provided one of the only connections revolutionary prisoners had to the people closest to them in the outside world. In memoirs recalling the moment of conversion to the revolutionary movement, radicals often claimed awareness that their self-sacrifice to the cause would entail loss of contact with parents and siblings. In prison, the possibility of such contact, and strictures on it, became a source of tension and pain. In the first weeks and months after his arrest, Charushin chose not to write any letters. In his memoir he recalls worrying than news from him would only further hurt his mother, who was devastated by news of his arrest. He wished to console her and to explain why he had chosen to work for revolution, but believed that the differences between their worldviews would prevent her from comprehending his radicalism. Since that was so, he felt that silence from him would cause her the least pain: "Let her, I thought, forget me all the sooner and cross me off the list of the living." Charushin also admits that another consideration helped prevent him from writing; he was repelled by the idea that the gendarmes approving his letters for release would read his intimate thoughts and feelings. He states that for four years in pre-trial detention he did not write or receive letters.[273]

There was no right of correspondence in Shlissel'burg from when it was opened in 1884 until 1897. There In that year, prisoners began to be allowed to write and receive one letter every six months. While some complained about the limit on the number of letters, the event proved an emotionally significant one for prisoners now able to communicate with family members they had not heard from in years. Morozov began his first letter to his family, dated February 18, 1897, by trying to come to terms with the time that had passed:

> "Yesterday I was given permission to write you twice a year and to receive your letters in the original. If you only knew how joyful I was! We separated so long ago that I am afraid that you all, except for mother, will have almost forgotten me. It would be difficult not to forget. Over the course of these sixteen, or, more accurately, twenty-three years, you have had so many new experiences! The sisters, who were so little when I left, have grown up and long ago married. The brother who I remember as a boy—tiny Petia—is now married and has children of his own. A whole young generation of nephews and nieces has appeared, some of whom have already completed their courses of study in gymnasiums…"[274]

Morozov's text focuses on family matters, and frequently returns to the physical objects he has to remember them by: photographs. He speculates on how people have grown older since these were taken, and what the thoughts behind some of their expressions might portend. He is able to give voice for the first time to what have clearly been his long reflections on these images of home. While the distance separating him from his family is palpable, both geographically and in terms of the social worlds they inhabit, Morozov makes attempts to connect his environment in Shlissel'burg with theirs. In his fourth letter, dated July 12, 1899, he likens his imprisonment to his mother's increasing blindness:

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[272] Morozov, *Povesti moei zhizni*, II:55.
[273] Charushin, *O dalekom proshlom,* 234.
[274] Nikolai Morozov, *Pis'ma iz Shlissel'burgskoi kreposti* (St. Petersburg: S. M. Prokudin-Gorskii, 1910), 9-10.

> "Dear, poor Mama, I cannot think without pain in my heart of how difficult it is for you to be almost totally unable to see the surrounding world! It seems to me that the loss of vision is just as hard to adjust to as the loss of one's freedom, and therefore I can sympathize with you more than others. Neither of us can see far… And in that sense, I should be considered a blind man here."[275]

Writing letters to family could be a burden as well as a relief. Vera Figner recalls that having that connection with her family would have eased her suffering had she had it from the beginning of her stay in Shlissel'burg, but by 1897, after such a long time without any communication, she felt as if her relatives were in some sense dead to her. She likened her response to the emotional impact of receiving a letter to that of Goncharov's Oblomov: it threw the normal flow of life into disarray. In addition, the content of the correspondence left something to be desired. Figner regretted that the letters contained no political news from the outside world—all except the first letter from her sister Ol'ga were censored. For her part, she was prohibited from writing anything about the physical situation of the prison, her cell, her routines, or her fellow inmates. Unwilling to open up about her emotional struggles in a letter which would be read by a police censor, Figner found it impossible to write about either her external or internal circumstances. Nevertheless, she kept up her correspondence somehow, albeit in a tense, artificial style. She writes that the letters "were a burden, and not a joy;" if the officials had asked her beforehand whether to give her a right of correspondence, she asserts that she would have turned it down, and only asked that they not inform her mother of her decision. While her actual communication proved straining, Figner emphasizes her continued emotional connection with her mother when she speaks about the small porcelain icon her mother had given her at her trial. It had not been taken away during her stays in various prisons, and, like Morozov's photographs, remained a powerful physical incarnation of her connection to her family.[276]

Romance was possible, even in Shlissel'burg. According to Figner, the former artillery officer and academic, Nikolai Danilovich Potikhonov, lacked the asceticism necessary to a revolutionary vocation. She recalled that he lacked a firm character and was inclined towards epicureanism, too attached to "all of life's joys." Potikhonov had developed a fondness for Liudmila Volkenshtein, whom he sought to entertain with numerous projects, from small feasts to all manner of knickknacks he made in the carpentry workshop: boxes, shelves, chairs, and more. Although Figner does not say so, it seems that this was for the former officer an outlet for amorous feelings. And of the two women in Shlissel'burg, it is understandable that Potikhonov would have preferred the sociable, amiable Volkenshtein over the stern, reserved Figner.[277]

Revolutionary community could not only keep up the radicals' spirits through communication and socializing, but could also be commemorated through sharing food. Even when resources were scarce, the Shlissel'burg prisoners economized further in order to mark holidays with a relative feast. Here again, they chose to exercise agency in an area of their everyday lives where so few choices were available. Organized by the ever-chivalrous Potikhonov, the male inmates set aside money and rations for a few days before September 16th and 17th, the name days of Volkenshtein and Figner. They gathered sugar, butter, rice, herring,

[275] Morozov, *Pis'ma iz Shlissel'burgskoi kreposti*, 44.
[276] Figner, *Zapechatlennyi trud*, II:133-38, 78.
[277] Figner, *Zapechatlennyi trud*, II:91-92.

mushrooms and vegetables from the garden. Potikhonov wrote up an elaborate menu describing the meal's delicacies in French, decorated with drawings of cupids heralding the event. While Figner portrays these feasts as generally joyful events, her revolutionary asceticism comes to the fore when she sternly suspects that Potikhonov's familiarity with restaurant menus suggests that he had a practical as well as theoretical acquaintance with the genre. As radicals had experienced during the Going to the People movement, food could be a contentious issue when it brought up issues of what constituted luxurious self-indulgence.[278]

Volkenshtein remembered that some prisoners fashioned home-made candy to give to the sick. These could be as simple as icicles made out of sugar, or as labor-intensive as toffee made from milk and sugar, which involved standing with the milk over the cell lamp for three to four hours for it to thicken. She reports that one of the specialist confectioners could create sweets from turnips. Prisoners would hide or bury these goodies in the garden to be retrieved by their comrades, until the guards began noticing and combating the ruse. At a later time when the guards were more lenient, the prisoners would celebrate important occasions by serving tea and refreshments in courtyard cage number five, including treats prepared over cell lamps. On some occasions, at least, Volkenshtein reports that the guards laughed at the home-made delicacies, doubting their edibility.[279]

Revolutionary prisoners found meaningful community in their relationships with each other. But the society of inmates was opposed to another, sometimes friendly or neutral but in its essence antagonistic, that of the guards and prison higher-ups whose job was to ensure their incarceration and adherence to institutional discipline. Friendly relationships with guards were the exception rather than the norm, but there were instances of them. Morozov had friendly conversations with his two guards at the Third Section prison in Moscow, despite their limited education and salty language. He reported that they heavily peppered their speech with obscenities, and frequently discoursed with each other on pornographic subjects. Nonetheless, they cultivated a liking for Morozov, and expressed sympathy for his plight.

Inmates at Shlissel'burg did not have similar opportunities to cultivate relationships with guards, since the guards were strictly forbidden to speak to them. In fact, the system was set up so that no single guard would at any time be alone with a prisoner—a network of guards watching other guards ensured adherence to strict silence. The only one allowed to speak to prisoners, aside from the prison doctor and occasional high-ranking visitors from St. Petersburg, was the overseer, who acquired an outsized role as representative of the entire prison administration.

By all accounts the bane of the prisoners' early years in Shlissel'burg was the overseer M. E. Sokolov, dubbed "Herod" for his reputation for terrorizing the prisoners. He had transferred to Shlissel'burg from Alekseevskii ravelin, and in both places paid great attention to supervising every detail of the prison regime, evidently taking pleasure in tyrannizing over the inmates. When prisoners spoke up for the interests of the weak and sick prisoners, Volkenshtein recalls Sokolov foaming at the mouth and yelling 'Don't dare to speak about the others! It's none of your business—there are no others!' One Christmas he purposely chose the holiday to force the prisoners to change into new sets of clothes, unwashed and scratchy, while radiantly inquiring as to the prisoners' comfort. Sokolov's presence was particularly unpleasant for the female prisoners. Volkenstein remembers that every Saturday when she and Vera Figner were

[278] Figner II:92-93.
[279] Volkenshtein, *13 let*, 26, 31.

strip-searched by a female attendant, Sokolov would watch through the peep-hole. When they noticed and protested, the overseer showed no sign of shame and laughed: "As if I'd never seen a naked woman before! What nonsense!"[280]

Vera Figner remembers Sokolov as a man of medium height in his early 50's, stocky and broad-shouldered with a dark beard, grey eyes, and stern expression, a man "with an iron fist and an iron heart." She compared him to Cerberus, the dog that guarded the gates of Hades, evidence of how large he loomed large in the prisoners' imaginations. Perhaps the most generous assessment of his character acknowledged his dedication. Figner recalled: "He served not out of fear but out of conscience, and he loved his work—the odious trade of a heartless hangman." She heard that he had once summed up his view of his duty to Popov, with whom he had a long antagonistic relationship: "If they order me to call you 'your excellency,' I will call you 'your excellency.' If they order me to strangle you, I will strangle you." But his unthinking dedication to rules coexisted with petty grudges against insubordinate inmates. When prisoners sick with tuberculosis or scurvy were prescribed milk by the doctor, Sokolov would cut short these prescriptions without the doctor's knowledge, apparently deeming the diet too indulgent. He also oversaw beatings of prisoners. While Figner recalls that she and Volkenshtein were never touched, male prisoners who insulted Sokolov or got on his bad side were bound and beaten by guards at his behest. It was under his management that the *kartser* in the Old Prison gained a reputation for violence. Sokolov was eventually fired after Grachevskii's self-immolation in 1887.[281]

Reading and Study

Reading was a crucial way for these educated radicals to occupy themselves, at times replacing and supplementing human contact. At the best of times, reading could also provide a connection, however tenuous, to the revolutionary cause. When Charushin was imprisoned in Litovskii castle after his arrest, he spent his last pennies on a loaf of French bread, which was delivered to him wrapped in a discarded sheet of paper covered in lines of scrawl. He recalls in his memoir that "I greedily grabbed it and read it through several times, although it did not merit it. But for those two-to-three weeks I had been so starved for the written word that I was glad for that scrap of paper."[282] Reading anything, however meaningless, could become a significant event, but the longer radical prisoners were behind bars the more important it was for them to have access to quality books.

During the prisoners' first years at Shlissel'burg, the library there contained only about 160 books, most of a spiritual and moralistic bent, with the others almost exclusively aging volumes from the first half of the nineteenth century. Novorusskii recalls that he asked for a book on first being incarcerated in the old prison. The next day he was disappointed when he was given a copy of a religious work by Francois Guizot. After searching through the catalogue, he satisfied himself by beginning to read through Solov'ev's *History of the Russian State*.[283] Still, the limited library was quickly exhausted by the radicals, who languished from the lack of better

[280] Volkenstein, *13 let*, 14, 16, 17, 20.
[281] Figner, *Zapechatlennyi trud*, II:60-66.
[282] Charushin, *O dalekom proshlom,* 230-31.
[283] Novorusskii, *Zapiski Shlissel'burgtsa,* 42.

reading options. In 1894, Figner recalls that she approached Warden Gangardt with a long-shot request that the prisoners take out a subscription to a library in St. Petersburg so as to order books. Unexpectedly, Gandardt agreed. Figner remembers her first book brought from beyond the walls of Shlissel'burg: a book on England by Ekaterina Ianzhul. She was transported by news of the successes of English trade-unions, coal miner strikes, and public universities. Comparing the socially-conscious English of London, Manchester, and Liverpool to her zealous comrades in the 1870s, she says: "I forgot my prison, my inactivity, my individuality…"[284] This quote suggests how calcified and burdensome life came to seem to an inmate after long years, with books as a welcome escape. But when the Department of Police found out about this outside library subscription, they terminated the connection.

Even when access to books was freer, they still did not supply an immediate connection to the events unfolding in the outside world. Although they were rarely obtainable, newspapers could fill this gap, reminding prisoners that events in the world continued to go on outside their walls. Vera Figner recounts how one day in Shlissel'burg an officer set aside a newspaper in the workshop where some prisoners labored. Whether he did this on purpose or thoughtlessly, Figner did not know, but he paper was soon picked up by an inmate and covertly made the rounds of the whole prison. Their excitement could not be greater, as they were transported beyond the walls of their cells by reading about Fridtjof Nansen's North Pole expedition, and one of Henry Morton Stanley's expeditions through Africa. While Russian news was sterilized by the censor, the revolutionaries were exhilarated to read of the Social-Democratic movement's progress in Germany. "We rejoiced," recalls Figner, "the prison walls were thrown open for the first time and receded. For an instant a glimmering light appeared and brought us a glimpse of freedom."[285]

One of the most dramatic instances of communal protest at Shlissel'burg revolved around access to books. In the fall of 1889, the prisoners went on hunger strike. The cause was a periodic inspection of the prison from the administration's higher-ups at the Department of Police. In the cell of one prisoner, the delegation discovered a history of the French Revolution—which they confiscated. The trouble was that Shlissel'burg had allowed prisoners to enter with their own books, not listed on the official library catalogue approved in St. Petersburg, and the authorities now confiscated all of these volumes: the historical and political core of the modest library. The prisoners split into two camps on how to protest. The majority advocated refusing to go out on walks, a valuable privilege for the inmates. A minority, including Vera Figner, believed this was not enough to attract the attention of the central authorities in St. Petersburg and suggested that the only effective measure would be to go on hunger strike to the death. They could not reach an agreement, and the minority party, consisting of Figner, Popov, Fedor Iurkovskii, Nikolai Starodvorskii, and Kolinnik Martynov, decided to begin to hunger strike on their own. Reflecting on this in her memoir, Figner regrets this decision, saying that such a serious action should have been taken unanimously or not at all. Because the others would be pressured into joining the strike by the presence of their fasting comrades, it would amount to a kind of moral coercion. When on the ninth day Dmitrii Butsinskii vomited blood, and the others were severely weakened, the prisoners agreed to end the hunger strike. All but Figner and Iurkovskii, who lasted two more days. In her memoir Figner expresses her deep disappointment that her comrades did not live up to her iron-willed ideal revolutionary (who she says she

[284] Figner, *Zapechatlennyi trud*, II:81.
[285] Figner, *Zapechatlennyi trud*, II:79-80.

modeled on Andrei Zheliabov, Mikhail Frolenko, and other Narodnovol'tsy). How could they express their willingness to hunger strike to the death and not align their deeds with their words? Figner finally ate after her comrades Popov and Starodvorskii threatened to commit suicide if she died. Here Figner's indignation reaches its climax: she recalled that such interference in her personal commitment to see her intentions through amounted to an "attempt on the spiritual essence of a person," a kind of "moral violence that drove [her] to fury."[286] Additionally, Figner frames her rebuke of Popov and Starodvorskii in gendered terms: "These men who had earlier made an arrangement with me, and then gave up without even consulting me, now dare to demand the same from me! Their masculine pride cannot allow that a woman could be firmer and more consistent where they failed. They are ashamed and want to reduce me to their level: they did not want to die, so they force me to live!"[287] While revolutionary memoirs tend to de-gender their characters—all are alike as revolutionaries—this passage is an interesting exception. But its lack of empathy for human frailty is emphasized on every page of Figner's account of this episode. Every permutation of her comrades' reasoning is discussed (could they have not intended to die, but said so to convince the guards?), but the text contains no empathy for weakness. Significantly, Figner claims that during her days of fasting she did not suffer physically or mentally, as her comrades did; she lay on her bunk reading Moliere. The strike ended in defeat; the books were not returned. Figner announced that she would not take part in a collective protest again but would act according to her individual determination. If her account of her own behavior corresponds to the ideal of the ascetic revolutionary she invokes, most of her comrades are not so flattered. Ostensibly, refusal of food was one sphere left through which she could exert individual choices and decisions, and in which she could enforce conformity between words and deeds. In this instance, in contrast to many others, Figner condemned the influence of radical communitarianism in binding the individual will.[288]

Although books could be difficult to come by, Morozov found a novel way to facilitate intellectual endeavors. With the help of Doctor Bezrodnov, he found out about a museum in St. Petersburg willing to distribute educational aids and supplies for the study of the natural sciences. With the support of Warden Gangardt, Morozov petitioned the Department of Police that access to mineral samples was necessary for his continuing scientific work on the structure of the elements. Contrary to all expectations, permission was granted, and crates of rocks were brought to the prison. Every two weeks for a period of four years, Doctor Bezrodnov brought shipments back and forth that broadened to include all manner of books, as well as scientific samples in disciplines from geology to botany and entomology. While the most scientifically-inclined radicals were Morozov, Lukashevich, and Novorusskii, many inmates took part in projects, from creating herbariums to taking mineral, seed, and insect samples from all over the island. In fact, the museum eventually relied on the prisoners' labor for categorizing raw materials and organizing them into collections appropriate for distribution to local schools. Figner felt that: "Enriching the mobile museum through our labor gave us a link to the land of the living. It eased the pain of our consciousness of our uselessness and unproductiveness. The constant inconsolable grief that you are cut off forever from the world, that you have no social work…"[289]

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[286] Figner, *Zapechatlennyi trud*, II:73-4
[287] Figner, *Zapechatlennyi trud*, II:74
[288] Figner, *Zapechatlennyi trud*, II:67-77.
[289] Figner, *Zapechatlennyi trud*, II:81-84.

Inspired by an article she read in 1892 or 1893 about an American movement for adult education in Chautauqua, New York State, Figner resolved to brush up on her knowledge of the natural sciences. Reviewing and building on the medical education she had received in Zurich, she convinced Lukashevich to give regular scientific lectures. Morozov (a serious amateur student of the sciences), Novorusskii (a novice with only a clerical education), and others listened to these lectures in the yard. By this time rules against communicating had relaxed at Shlissel'burg, and while still separated into wooden pens in the yard, prisoners could in practice speak easily with those adjacent to them. When the prisoners began receiving shipments from the St. Petersburg mobile museum of education aids in 1896, they built on this theoretical foundation through practical projects, such as herbariums and mineral collections. Novorusskii even built a glass house for his insect collection subdivided into boxes to hold a male and female of each species, in isolation from the other types. Figner dubbed this glass box the "solitary confinement prison," and each box a "cell." The reputation of these collections apparently extended far enough beyond the prison walls that a visiting official once laconically asked Pankratov: "Insects?" The prisoner assumed at first that he was asking about vermin in his cell, but it was explained that he wished to admire the entomological collection. [290]

The Mind

Despite every attempt to communicate with one's comrades and spend time in study, prison and solitary confinement weighed on the radicals psychologically. Even under the laxer regimes, long periods of time were nevertheless spent isolated. Volkenshtein noted the burden of prison's monotonous routine:

> "The content and events of one's inner life is so impoverished. Tomorrow is the same as yesterday. You frequently think on waking in the morning: 'If only something new, even if it were worse,' and walk with disgust along the same path in the yard that you have walked for twelve or thirteen years, with the same two guards on either side who will not let you one step off the path. … During the day while you are occupied with books or some housework it is somewhat bearable. But how many torments you experience in the evening! Often you feel those same torments during the day, several days in a row. Now I understand that only people with strong wills can preserve the ability to live in prison. What becomes unbearable is the dead calm, the hopelessness, the inactivity."[291]

Radicals have reflected on how their minds perceived the passage of time differently in prison. Charushin inserted his thoughts on this into his narrative of the time spent in Litovskii castle. He had only been in prison a few months at that point, but of course when he penned the passage in the 1920s, he had had more experience of prison life before his eventual exile and release. He wrote:

> "Because of its tedious monotony prison time went on excruciatingly slowly. Although, on the other hand, it also seemed to fly by uncommonly quickly. After living in prison

[290] Figner, *Zapechatlennyi trud*, II:127-32, 162.
[291] Volkenshtein, *13 let*, 33.

> many months, that monotony makes it seem that you are only separated from life at liberty by a short span of time. But that free life has already been covered by some sort of fog, the colors have faded, and only occasionally does it stand before your eyes in all its fascinating charm. And then it feels more clearly and painfully like something far away and valuable, not meant for you."[292]

To those behind bars, "free life" could fade, be a charming fantasy, or even be a threat, insofar as it disrupted the emotional tranquility of prison routine. Charushin echoed this idea that life outside the prison had faded from memory when he spoke of the enveloping silence he experienced in the Peter and Paul fortress. The "murderous, deathly silence" was only challenged by dull, far-off sounds from the city and the noise of a guard making the rounds to check on prisoners through the peepholes. Every ten to fifteen minutes, Charushin recalled, the silence was broken by the noise of the guard's footsteps, then of him lifting the cover of the *glazok* to peer into the cell, which irritated him. Radicals often wrote that it was contrasts, such as silence and sudden noises, that most threatened their equilibrium. When Charushin was transferred to the House of Preliminary Detention, he enjoyed the fact that unlike in the fortress you could hear the sounds of the prison.[293]

As Vera Figner noted, prison's silence could acquire a malevolent presence. In the Peter and Paul fortress, the lack of opportunity to speak weakened both her physical vocal cords and her mental desire to converse: "I lost the inner impulse to speak without a necessary reason. I wanted to be silent, and when I had to communicate and say something it required an effort of will to overcome it."[294] More expressive on this topic than many other memoirists, she noted the pervasive psychological effect of silence during her stay in Shlissel'burg Fortress:

> "A new life began. A life in deathly silence—a silence that you always listen to, and that is always listening to you. A silence that little by little takes over you, envelops you, that penetrates into every pore of your body, your mind, your soul. How terrible it is in its muteness, how fearsome in its noiselessness and in its unexpected interruptions! Within it there gradually creeps towards you a feeling of closeness to a secret: everything becomes unusual, mysterious, as on a lonely moonlit night in the shadow of a silent forest. All is mysterious and incomprehensible. In this silence the real becomes vague and unreal; the imagined becomes real. Everything is confused, everything is intertwined. The long, grey day, exhausting in its idleness, is like a sleep without dreams… And at night you see dreams so searingly vivid, that you need to convince yourself that they are only visions. And so you live: dreams seem to be life, and life to be dreams."[295]

Figner noted that this silence wore down the mind: "The silence stood over and weighed down on everything. Not that silence of the living, that lets the nerves relax. No, it was the silence of the dead, that sinister silence that takes hold of a person when he lingers a while with a corpse. This silence remained quiet, but, while hushed, said something of what will be, instilling something, threatening something."[296]

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[292] Charushin, *O dalekom proshlom,* 235.
[293] Charushin, *O dalekom proshlom,* 237, 242.
[294] Figner, *Zapechatlennyi trud*, I:366.
[295] Figner, *Zapechatlennyi trud*, II:10.
[296] Figner, *Zapechatlennyi trud*, II:14.

Some radical prisoners sought to ease this mental burden by finding a sense of community with animals. During his time in the Peter and Paul fortress, Sergei Sinegub recalled that seeing living things helped ease his depression. He fed pigeons that build a nest on his windowsill, and developed a relationship with a mouse. He would put a small bit of food from his dinner on the floor in the corner of his cell and wait for his small "grey friend" to appear from its hole in the wall and scurry about his cell. When the mouse did not appear, he felt jealous that it was socializing with other prisoners instead. After keeping this pet for about three months, Sinegub recalled that it died one day while eating the food he had set out for it. The prisoner feared that his food was being poisoned, and confronted the authorities, dead mouse in hand as proof. It turned out, however, that they had simply spread mouse poison.[297]

Some prisoners in Shlissel'burg also expressed kindness towards animals or kept them as pets. Figner recalls that her friend Volkenstein had a particular rapport with other living things. She would carefully scan the path when they walked together in the yard to avoid stepping on an insect, a habit that at first confused and then amused her friend. "This terrorist," Figner writes, "noticing a crawling caterpillar or beetle, was afraid to crush an insect!" When Volkenshtein found a louse or other bug in her cell, she would carefully fold it up in paper and then release it into the yard on her next walk. She also brought bread crumbs for the pigeons, who would flock to her in the yard.[298] Petr Sergeevich Polivanov was also known for his affinity for birds. He let pigeons live in his cell and hatch their chicks, for which he was dubbed "Pierre l'oiseau." Polivanov requested oatmeal each evening instead of the usual supper, in order to better feed his hungry cell-mates. He even conversed with the pigeons, imitating their cooing, and insisted that he and the birds understood one another.[299]

Figner herself had a bird living in her cell, which amused her by sitting on her hand or shoulder, and splashing about in the sink. When it died, she felt immense sorrow, crying for two weeks. She asked the guards to be temporarily transferred to another cell she would not have to look at the nail it used to perch on. At the same time, when she received word that her uncle had died, the thirteen years' lack of correspondence had affected her emotional connection to family to such as degree that she did not shed a tear. Immediacy and distance affected the emotional bonds in prison.[300]

Some prisoners could not bear the psychological burden of prison, and went insane. One of these at Shlissel'burg was Potikhonov, whose descent into madness was painful for all those around him. Its beginnings over the previous year or so were obvious only in retrospect, recalls Figner: the normally mild-mannered and acquiescent Potikhonov became irritable and stubborn over the smallest things. In the summer of 1895 his mind showed plainer signs of degradation, when he began demonstrating mathematical proofs to his comrades that lacked any sense. Further, he gave an impassioned speech on economics that he parroted from an article eulogizing Sergei Witte; to his revolutionary comrades, this conservative position was incompatible with radical beliefs to the point of madness. Figner notes that he began to speak about spirits visiting him, including the ghost of his mother, but would suddenly realize that these were products of his imagination, and decline to speak further. His mental break came in September, when he began to rarely leave his cell. He stopped washing himself or his clothing, and neglected the kerosene for his burning lamp, so that his cell filled with smoke without him noticing, and he

[297] Sinegub, *Zapiski Chaikovtsa*, 152-55.
[298] Figner, *Zapechatlennyi trud*, II:30.
[299] Figner, *Zapechatlennyi trud*, II:143.
[300] Figner, *Zapechatlennyi trud*, II:137.

emerged with a face like a chimney sweep. Potikhonov banged carpentry tools around his cell, and would emerge with a pillowcase wrapped around his shoulders, advancing to each cell in turn and chanting like a beggar in an eerie monotone: "Give alms… alms… in the name of Christ." Needless to say, this exasperated his fellow inmates. He also sent unhinged notes to his comrades. Figner remembers Potikhonov bombarding her with fantastical schemes for raising billions of rubles for the revolutionary cause, one of which featured a stamp that would cut picture frames out of boards in one strike, producing limitless profits.

As Potikhonov's condition worsened, irritating inmates and staff alike, what to do with him became an ethical issue for the radicals. Warden Gangardt and Doctor Bezrodnov, who had reputations for kindness towards the prisoners, were willing to listen to the inmates' consensus in making this decision. While Potikhonov's continued presence in the main prison was unmanageable, his transfer to solitary confinement in the "old prison" (used for punishment cells and notorious for its beatings under previous wardens) was undesirable for the radicals since it was thought isolation would be inhumane in his condition, and the prisoners did not trust the guards stationed there to follow Gangardt's policy of not beating prisoners. A solution was reached through consultation between prisoners and staff whereby Potikhonov would be transferred to the old prison along with Iosif Lukashevich, whose good relationship with the patient, along with his patience and physical strength, were thought to make him a good companion. At the same time, he could stay in contact with the rest of the prison during their walks in the courtyard, and be able to communicate any misdeeds by the guards. While this arrangement seemed satisfactory, Potikhonov's condition worsened, and his religious delusions and suicide attempts became constant. Finally, in February 1896, Gangardt attained permission to transfer the sick man to a hospital in St. Peterburg. Understanding from his comrades that this was good news, Potikhonov interpreted it alternately as billions of rubles being given to the revolutionary cause, or as the coming of the kingdom of God. He was removed from Shlissel'burg twelve years after arriving as a vital young man, and died a year later in 1897.[301]

For some, the psychological reality of prison was distilled in their dreams. Volkenstein recalls that the most common dream was of escape, even after a prisoner spent years and decades behind bars. They would inevitably end in the individual's being caught.[302] During his time in Litovskii castle, Charushin once dreamt that he was back at gymnasium taking his examinations. He recalled vividly experiencing anxiety, particularly over being tested in his least favorite subjects. Upon awaking, he recalls ironically, but not without a hint of truth, how relieved he was to find himself in prison rather than at his exams.[303]

While being held in Moscow's Third Section prison, Morozov felt the lack of activity and reading material begin to detrimentally affect his mind. He began to fear he was going insane when one vivid nightmare plagued him. "A grey, thin, wrinkled old man crept up to my bed almost every night and flung himself to strangle me. Fighting back, I grabbed him by the throat and we rolled around the stone floor of my cell, each straining our powers to the utmost and unable to overcome the other, until I utterly exhausted myself and awoke…" With his heart pounding he glanced around his cell in a panic to see if the old man still stood there, or if his shadow had fled into the walls. Morozov reported that this dream recurred almost every night.[304]

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[301] Figner, *Zapechatlennyi trud*, II:91-99.
[302] Volkenshtein, *13 let*, 33.
[303] Charushin, *O dalekom proshlom,* 235.
[304] Morozov, *Povesti moei zhizni*, II:78-79.

Conclusion

For Russian radicals held in conditions of solitary confinement in tsarist prisons, preserving one's revolutionary identity depended on maintaining connections with one's comrades and practicing revolutionary values. Radicals took pride in their attempts to oppose the authorities, however constrained their position might have been, through attempting to protect their comrades still at liberty when they themselves were arrested, or by trying to escape prison itself. When incarcerated and unable to actively pursue revolutionary work, radicals preserved a sense of themselves by communicating with their comrades behind bars, and when possible maintaining links with those on the outside. If communication with one's own family could be problematic, as for Vera Figner, the revolutionary community acted as a kind of surrogate family for radicals anyhow. They tapped out the prison alphabet on cell walls and passed contraband behind the backs of the guards. If monotony was the rule, the radicals in Shlissel'burg could still celebrate special occasions, perhaps with a feast, exerting a measure of control over the oppressive flow of time. Guards and prison authorities could be tyrannical or humane, but they always represented the order that the Populists sought to overthrow, a society opposed to their community of revolutionary comrades.

Even when entirely alone, radicals found ways to maintain their sense of themselves, such as through reading and study. Some activities derived their value from future utility, such as when radicals honed skills they looked forward to applying in service of the revolutionary cause upon release. At other times, the prisoners focused on simply preserving their own bodies and minds as one instant followed another in dismal or excruciating succession. Morozov's nightmare of wrestling with the spectral old man could be a daily reality for radicals in prison. It seems that revolutionaries dealt with this reality by preserving their adherence to ideals such as self-sacrifice. Their arrest and imprisonment had, after all, constituted their greatest sacrifice for the cause. The most meaningful events for many prisoners were those moments when they confronted the authorities, and stood to lose something in the process. Yet, the most power radicals could wield behind bars was the hunger strike, when they slowly sacrificed their own bodies for their convictions.

Conclusion

The Populists of the 1870s had to wait until 1917 to see revolution topple the tsar and transform the social system in Russia, but they had already enacted a revolution in their everyday lives. They had striven to make themselves "new people," capable both of making the sacrifices necessary to bring about revolution to benefit the masses of peasants and workers, and of embodying the values of the socialist order that they wished to implement. Historians have demonstrated how important it was to members of the nineteenth-century Russian intelligentsia to implement their philosophical ideas in the social practice of their everyday lives.[305] How this was done depended on the views and experiences of individual radicals.

The ideal of becoming "new people" was most prominently popularized by Nikolai Chernyshevskii in his 1863 novel, *What Is To Be Done?*. Chenyshevskii set up his heroine Vera Pavlovna and her fellows as models of a new way to live life. When "new people" such as she base their actions on calculations of rational egoism, the novel promised, they will leave behind the corrupt practices of society that have become ossified in tradition and create a new world based on socialist principles of equality and brotherhood. Chernyshevskii's influence on the revolutionary movement would be difficult to overstate, and his novel was an inspiration to the radicals of the 1870s, among others.[306]

The morality and principles of the "new people" remained controversial, as evidenced by Sergei Nechaev, who was to exercise a different kind of influence on the Populists. Criss-crossing Russia and Europe in the late 1860s to put together a revolutionary organization capable of toppling the tsarist state, Nechaev advocated absolute submission of the individual to the revolutionary organization, ideas he articulated in the pamphlet, co-authored with Mikhail Bakunin, *Catechism of a Revolutionary*: "The revolutionary is a doomed man… He has no interests of his own, no affairs, no feelings, no attachments, no property, not even a name. Everything in him is absorbed by a single exclusive interest, a single thought, a single passion—the revolution."[307] Nechaev's reputation among Russian radicals became tied to a murder. In Moscow in November 1869, under circumstances which are still not entirely clear, Nechaev pressured several members of his revolutionary group to murder one of their own, the student Ivan Ivanov, whom he falsely accused of betraying their organization to the authorities. The resulting trial sensationalized the case throughout Russia (Dostoevsky famously took the episode as the inspiration for his novel *The Possessed*).

One of the many radicals who repudiated Nechaev's lack of moral compass was Mark Natanson, the principal founder of the Chaikovskii circle, the most important revolutionary group of the early-1870s. In large part in reaction to Nechaev, the Chaikovtsy—including such figures as Nikolai Morozov, Sergei Sinegub, and Nikolai Charushin—laid great emphasis on personal autonomy and adherence to moral values. While self-sacrifice for the revolution was at the heart of what it meant to be a true revolutionary, this sacrifice must come from deeply held moral ideals supported by a community of one's like-minded fellows, not from the orders of a

[305] Victoria Frede, *Doubt, Atheism, and the Nineteenth-Century Russian Intelligentsia* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2011). See esp., 210.
[306] Nikolai Chernyshevsky, *What Is To Be Done?*, trans. Michael Katz (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989); see, Paperno, *Chernyshevsky and the Age of Realism*.
[307] Quoted in Gleason, *Young Russia*, 359.

superior in the conspiratorial hierarchy, as Nechaev would have it.[308] These values would influence the Populist movement more broadly as its ethos spread and as core members of the circle would go on to play prominent roles in other radical organizations of the 1870s, such as *Zemlia i volia* and *Narodnaia volia*.

Individual revolutionaries' identities were tied to values shared by a community; the boundaries of that community were determined by those revolutionaries. This issue of belonging was discussed by the members of the Chaikovskii circle, and continued to be an issue in the years after. Organizationally, the original Chaikovskii circle was located in St. Petersburg, but maintained connections with affiliated discussion groups in Moscow, Odessa, and Kharkov. Natanson's group had merged with a women's self-education group spearheaded by Aleksandra Kornilova and Sof'ia Perovskaia. Other notable radical circles of the period included the Dolgushintsy in St. Petersburg and the Fritschi in Zurich.[309] Because ideological differences were not as divisive in the early 1870s as later on, membership was less based on ideological conformity than on commitment to moral purity and revolutionary activity. The Chaikovskii circle had a formal procedure for approval—they required a unanimous vote to include a new member, as Morozov found out when he joined. Not every group formulated such strong institutional protocols, but in each, membership in the community depended on bonds of trust between radicals who read the same books and could demonstrate the same desire to enact change. Once initiated into a group, members continued to scrutinize each other's behavior and associations in daily life: their apparel, forms of address, even romantic relationships. As memoirs attest, individuals engaged in constant introspection to measure their own behavior according to higher standards. These standards helped unite small networks of co-conspirators into a wider radical community, whose codes of comportment were recognizable to one another, even if they were not personally acquainted.

Devoted radicals further defined themselves in relation to a larger community: the *narod*, the peasants and workers that they wished to liberate. Populists wished to morally purify themselves by sharing the toil of the masses, connecting with them, and giving them the fruit of the education that they had received: a clear view of the inegalitarian, oppressive Russian system. At first this activity consisted of solitary forays by radicals into the working-class districts of St. Petersburg and Moscow, or out into the countryside. It culminated in the "Going to the People" movement of the mid-1870s, when radicals' notions of what it meant to be part of the revolutionary community and to live one's life according to socialist values encountered the rural masses face to face. Radicals deprived themselves of comforts and tried to embrace peasant customs. By donning peasant dress and mimicking peasant habits, radicals inserted themselves into the community of the *narod*, if only temporarily. Contrariwise, consorting with peasants, they hoped, would expand the radical community. If peasants could be educated enough to realize their own interests and rise up against the state, they would, in essence, be joining the revolutionary community rooted in urban radical circles. This effort to expand the revolutionary community to include the Russian masses in fact led to its shrinking: the arrested radicals were put into solitary confinement cells, where for all intents and purposes, they became communities of one. The tenuous ties between them were maintained by slow strings of words articulated tap

[308] On Natanson, Nechaev, and the founding of the Chaikovskii circle, see O. V. Aptekman, *Obshchestvo "Zemlia i volia" 70-kh gg. Po lichnym vospominaniiam* (Petrograd: Kolos, 1924), 66-69.
[309] For a survey of the Populist circles in the early 1870s, see Itenberg, *Dvizhenie revoliutionnogo narodnichestva*, 129-193.

by single tap. This period of collective silence—enforced by prison, exile, and censorship—ended in explosions of words.

After 1905 and 1917 many Populists again reached out to expand the community of those who shared their values, this time by reflecting on their lives and experiences, drawing their readers into sympathy with their ideals. In writing memoirs these radicals distilled their values into texts. They dwelled on moments when they felt they had lived their lives according to revolutionary ideals to highlight their own heroism and that of fellow radicals, though some went further, exposing their inner struggles as they wrestled with moral dilemmas. In this way, the problems entailed in the seamless equation between word and deed, principle and action, remained with them, even during the act of narration. Aleksandr Lukashevich debated whether to eat herring while traveling through the countryside to spread the word of socialism to the peasants. Sitting on a rock amidst the fields and sky, he felt that the devil was tempting him to give in to luxury. In Shlissel'burg prison, hemmed in by concrete walls, Vera Figner debated whether to break her hunger strike. She felt morally coerced by radical comrades who threatened their own suicide in an attempt to convince her to eat and save her life. For Figner, uncompromising adherence to one's principles was the heart of being a revolutionary, no matter the cost to oneself. Lukashevich compromised and ate herring, reasoning that if the common people ate it on occasion, a slight luxury would not sever the connection he was forging with the *narod*. Both revolutionaries were combating the tsarist order, through propaganda and through prison protest, but their true battles were inner struggles over the ideals that bound them to a community of comrades and gave meaning to their lives.

In order to smuggle his draft of *Tales of My Life* out of Schlissel'burg prison in 1905, Morozov treated and compressed the pages into cardboard. After his release, he soaked them in water until one page after another slowly floated to the surface, covered with his minute scrawlings. This study has aimed to provide the right soak to free the pages of these revolutionary lives, and to use their stories to discover the values, methods, and meanings that these radicals used to reinvent themselves.

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