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CONSPIRACY AND REVOLUTIONARY DICTATORSHIP IN  
THE IDEOLOGY OF RUSSIAN POPULISM 1861-1881

by \_\_\_\_\_

Pamela Pfaff

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Submitted as an Honors Paper  
in the  
Department of History

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at Greensboro  
1964-65

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Approved by

... conclusion is in direct contradiction  
... with which I started. ...  
I arrive at unlimited cooperation....  
... solution of the problem to divide humanity into two unequal  
parts. ...  
... unrestricted powers over the  
... must give up their individuality  
... like a herd, and by their herdish  
... of regeneration attain a state of  
... thing like the original paradise. They  
... however... What I'm offering you is  
... paradise, paradise on earth; for  
... the earth.

Jordan E. Kuroland  
Director

Examining Committee

John Beecher  
Edwin J. ...  
John ...

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...My conclusion is in direct contradiction to the original idea with which I started. Starting from unlimited freedom, I arrived at unlimited despotism.... (I) propose as a final solution of the problem to divide humanity into two unequal parts. One-tenth is to be granted absolute freedom and unrestricted powers over the remaining nine-tenths. Those must give up their individuality and be turned into something like a herd, and by their boundless obedience will by a series of regenerations attain a state of primeval innocence, something like the original paradise. They will have to work, however.... What I'm offering you is not odious suggestions, but paradise, paradise on earth; for there can be no other one on earth.

Shigalyov  
 in  
The Devils  
 by  
 Fyodor Dostoyevsky

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Revolutionary conspiracies, abortive and successful, have stirred man's mind since the beginnings of governments. Theorizing on the nature of political dictatorship goes back at least to Plato. It is the ideological linking of these two activities--the plot of a "revolutionary" party to overthrow an existing government, and the establishment of a "dictatorship" by that party in the aftermath of the revolution--within the framework of the revolutionary Socialist movement in Russia in the 1850's and 1860's that constitutes the thesis of this paper.

The French Revolution, with its Jacobin terror (1793-4) and the "Conspiracy of Equals" (1796), offers the most convenient starting point for modern historical research into revolutionary dictatorships and secret society activity. It is conclusively established by the writings of Russian revolutionary figures that the revolutionary events in France in the 1790's, 1830's, and 1840's share priority with the Russian peasant rebellions of Stepan Razin (1670-1) and Semyon Pugachev (1773-5) in the influence exerted upon the young radicals of nineteenth century Russia.<sup>1</sup>

These influences, at any rate, served as a body of accessible source material for the Russian student generally interested in revolutionary ideologies. It is one definite strain of the French revolutionary tradition, however, that the theory and tactics of revolutionary

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<sup>1</sup>It is curious to equate these two influences, but inasmuch as Socialism in Russia prior to the 1890's came under the epithet of "peasant socialism," it was fitting that the purely peasant uprisings took their place beside the purely proletarian movements of Western socialism. Pugachev's rebellion, especially, received much attention, even from the Russian "Westernizers;" Bakunin used him in his pamphlet

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dictatorship took shape for a few of the extreme left Russian radicals. Auguste Blanqui (1805-81) a French carbonarist and a leading participant in the revolutions of 1830, 1848, and the Commune of 1871, who spent over half his life in French prisons, gave his name to a political idea which has survived within the ranks of the French left wing until the present.<sup>2</sup> "Blanquism" is, as V. Varlamov quotes from the Istoriya S.S.S.R.: (History of the U.S.S.R), Moscow, 1949, "'a conspiracy by a revolutionary minority with the aim of seizing power.'"<sup>3</sup> Blanqui himself in 1848 called it a "Parisian dictatorship," emphasizing the necessity for powerful centralization in Paris as the only answer for the danger threatening the Republic; as such, it was in direct contradiction to the democratic method of universal suffrage, which Blanqui felt would permit the reactionary peasants to destroy the Republic.<sup>4</sup> Harking back to the Jacobins and the Babouvists, Blanqui adopted their method of forceful action by a minority to liberate and guide the majority. It is this special adaptation of Jacobin tactics coupled with a great deal of Babouvist theory that forms the core of Blanquism as it was adopted by Russian revolutionaries in the 1860's and 1870's. Max

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The People's Cause: Romanov, Pugachev, or Pestel? (1862) to demonstrate the constant readiness of the peasant to revolt against the government. The fact that Pugachev posed as a pretender-tsar in order to appeal to the peasants is also significant, since it portrays the stubborn loyalty of the peasant for the "Little Father."

<sup>2</sup>Alan B. Spitzer. The Revolutionary Theories of Louis Auguste Blanqui, Columbia University Press, New York, 1957, p. 15.

<sup>3</sup>V. Varlamov. Bakunin and the Russian Jacobins and Blanquists as Evaluated by Soviet Historiography, Research Program on the U.S.S.R., New York, 1955, p. 15.

<sup>4</sup>Max Nomad. Apostles of Revolution, Collier Books, New York, 1961, p. 40.

Nomad speaks of Blanqui's "Parisian dictatorship" and "that idea to which Marx largely owes his concept of the 'proletarian dictatorship,' and which was later to find concrete realization in the reign of Lenin and of his successors."<sup>5</sup>

Some distinction here between the terms "Blanquism" and "Jacobinism" may be helpful. Varlamov duly notes the confusion and quotes the Malaya Sovetskaya Entsiklopediya (Small Soviet Encyclopedia), Moscow, 1931, on its explanation of the Jacobins: "'representatives of the petit-bourgeois, mass revolutionary movement, who did not stop short of employing firm measures, including even terror, in their struggle against the haute bourgeoisie.'"<sup>6</sup> In comparison with the previously quoted definition of Blanquism, Jacobinism, in the Soviet evaluation, seems to refer solely to the first or bourgeois revolution, modelled after that of Robespierre and the Convention, including the year of the Terror, while Blanquism is reserved for the exalted plum of socialist revolution, including the secret society activity preceding it and the bloody movement of forceful turnover by an organized elite of revolutionaries. Franco Venturi, who in his 11 Populismo Russo (Roots of Revolution) has written probably the most outstanding Western European work on Russian populism, uses only the term Jacobinism to describe the concept of revolutionary dictatorship in relation to the ideas of Pyotr Zaichnevsky and Pyotr Tkachev, the two most outstanding theorists of Russian Blanquism. Michael Karpovich also calls Tkachev a Jacobin, "which in the revolutionary vernacular of the time meant an advocate of a political overturn effected by a revolutionary minority without

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 40.

<sup>6</sup>Varlamov, pp. 14, 15.



any participation on the part of the popular masses."<sup>7</sup> I shall employ the term Blanquism as defined by the Soviets, reminding the reader that in most cases the sources consulted make use of these two terms indiscriminately.

There is nothing implied in either of the Soviet definitions as to the form that the government ought to take after the socialist revolution. It is a noteworthy fact of Russian revolutionary history in the nineteenth century that relatively few of the Russian revolutionaries in the generations following the Decembrist revolt in 1825, when "Constantine and Constitution" were called for blindly by the enlisted Russian soldiers, formulated detailed plans for the political society of the future. In the tradition of Herzen, the first noted protagonist of the struggle for the establishment of a hierarchial communal system based upon the ancient peasant obshchina, the revolutionary luminaries of Russia seemed to accept unquestioned this vaguely defined federalistic structure, only to shelve it in the background of their plans, while plunging headlong into the dual battle of convincing the peasants of the feasibility of revolution and socialism and of organizing all forces for the destruction of the autocracy.

This is a very important point, one which I intend to discuss in more detail in the body of this paper. The sudden transition from pre-revolutionary illegality to revolutionary and post-revolutionary legality was a potential problem underestimated in its shock and import by the theoreticians and tacticians of rebellion. The 1830's, 40's, and

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<sup>7</sup>"A Forerunner of Lenin: P. N. Tkachev," The Review of Politics, VI (July, 1944), p. 545.



'50's were spent in sifting out the most palatable Western ideas and adapting them to the uniquely Russian situation. The '60's witnessed a further solidification of theory plus a smattering of activity-- student demonstrations, propaganda leaflets, illegal circles and printing presses, communal experiments--culminating in the Karakozov attempt upon the life of Alexander II in 1866, which precipitated a violent repression of all anti-government thought and activity. The '70's saw a genuine flowering of propaganda and agitation efforts, then disillusionment with the futility of attempting to preach social revolution in the midst of a political lockout, and finally the frantic efforts to kill a tsar, ending in the assassination of Alexander II on March 1, 1881.

During these years of frenzied activity, there was no time to plan a future society, chapter and verse. Herzen's "commune of communes," an essentially ambiguous organization, was embellished with talk of a Zemsky Sobor--a National Assembly elected by the people to coordinate a federal state. But even that bit of parliamentarianism was a question for the distant future. The Soviets call the pre-Leninist Russian revolutionaries "utopian" socialists; even Tkachev, who comes closest to the claim of a Leninist prototype, is placed in this utopian category because he did not recognize the revolutionary significance of the proletariat. N. N. Baturin, Soviet historian writing in the 1930's after the elimination of the Pokrovsky historical school, (which briefly championed the strong influence of Russian Jacobinism and Blanquism upon Bolshevism in terms like these: "'A Jacobin is an empirical forerunner of Bolshevism, and a Bolshevik is someone who deepens the theoretical content of Jacobinism'"<sup>8</sup>), classified the theories of the Russian Jacobins as:

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<sup>8</sup>Quoted in Varlamov, p. 24.

...the ideas not of the October Revolution but of the Great French Revolution, and none of the truly revolutionary elements in the ideas of the Russian Jacobins went beyond the ideas of the French Revolution. The revolutionary ideas of Zaichnevski and Tkachov are not the roots of Bolshevism at all, but the last blossoms of the Great French Revolution on the unreceptive Russian soil.... We find absolutely no elements of proletarian socialism in the social programs of Zaichnevski and Tkachov. Instead we find in them all the marks of petit bourgeois social utopias. Between these reactionary utopias and Bolshevism it is impossible not only to place an equal sign, but also to deduce any kind of analogy whatsoever.<sup>9</sup>

The point is clear; utopian socialists have no prominent place in the genealogy of Russian Bolshevism. Zaichnevsky and Tkachev remain outside the Pale.

But why are they, and two entire generations of Russian revolutionaries, considered utopian by the Soviets? The obvious answer is their pre-occupation with the peasant commune. It was this question, i.e., the possibility of transforming the peasant obshchina into a socialist groundwork, thereby skipping the capitalist stage with all its inherent evils, that motivated Russian populists and socialists in pre-Leninist history. It was primarily a social and economic revolution for which they longed and schemed, and secondarily a political revolution, eliminating autocracy and instituting democracy, as the necessary means of establishing the socialist society of the future. There was no suspicion that these two goals might be mutually antagonistic, that a social revolution might preclude the feasibility of universal suffrage and free speech, and vice versa. It was only when the methods of attaining these goals were under discussion that the dichotomy of political and social revolution became apparent, a fact most sorely felt by the "Narodnaya Volya" (People's Will) Party and later by Lenin and Trotsky

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<sup>9</sup>Varlamov, p. 28

after the October Revolution.

The Russian Blanquists were the only radical thinkers who faced this problem squarely. The revolutionary dictatorship would guide the people toward socialism by maintaining power until the goal was reached; then a republic, its form undelineated by them, would immediately follow henceforth and forevermore. Bakunin and the anarchists were the most flagrant side-steppers on this question of the future society; their energies were concentrated upon the destruction of the old tsarist administration, while the building of a new political form, preferably as limited and temporary as possible, would be left to the machinations of a new generation. Blanqui himself, when questioned as to his program for the future society, said once, "My program? I do not know it will be; I do not know what I will do; I will act according to circumstances."<sup>10</sup> In this sense, he was more anarchist than communist; his faith in a slow progression channelled by a new generation, after the dictatorship has accomplished the revolution and a thoroughgoing socialism and then abrogated itself, mirrors almost exactly the sentiments of Bakunin on the same subject. The long-range goal was utopian, but the short-range goal, overturn of the autocracy, was realistically practical.

Zaichnevsky and Tkachev spoke openly in terms of dictatorship, as the French Blanquists had done and as the Russian situation--masses of ignorant and reactionary peasants--demanded. Bakunin and Nechaev, less overtly, claimed a temporary period of power for their secret revolutionary parties. It was the Narodnaya Volya members who from the beginning

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<sup>10</sup>Quoted in Max Nomad, Apostles of Revolution, pp. 80,81.

claimed precedence for their party only in the immediate convocation of a Constituent Assembly; the rest was up to the Russian people. Even this magnanimity sounded utopian and impractical, particularly in view of the strictly disciplined membership and secretly organized maneuvers of the party dedicated to the assassination of the tsar.

But all these revolutionary factions shared one trait. Franco Venturi assesses that common strain in these words:

Both Populism and Jacobinism sprang out of the revolutionary movement of the 'sixties. Young Russia (Zaichnevsky's leaflet) merely proposed a ruthless political method for bringing into effect a programme which was common to all the Populists: communal ownership of the land with redistribution laid down by general rules and carried out by village assemblies. The aim of this Jacobinism was not, in fact, democracy but peasant Socialism.<sup>11</sup>

For the sake of a social revolution, the means necessary to achieve it was left sufficiently ambiguous in order to justify any tactics.

In pursuing this dual question of the nature of the disciplined elite in precipitating the revolution and of the political dictatorship in accomplishing the revolution, I shall focus upon the political dictatorship in 1861-1881 because it was the most fruitful period of revolutionary theory and activity in pre-Leninist Russia. The preparation of a revolutionary awareness for Lenin's ideas and activities in these two areas will be made manifest in the course of what follows. The period has well-defined boundaries, beginning with February 19, 1861, the date of the emancipation of the serfs and the first step on the way to socialism and democracy in the minds of the Russian radicals, and ending with March 1, 1881, the date of the assassination of Alexander II

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<sup>11</sup>Roots of Revolution, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, Ltd., London, 1960, p. 297.

and the ~~last~~ magnificent effort of Russian Populism to precipitate its revolutionary utopian goal.

I have divided the thesis of <sup>conspiracy and</sup> revolutionary dictatorship into two parts: its exegesis and its application. The first part delves into the period preceding 1861, for it deals with the views of Herzen and Bakunin on the efficacy of manipulation of power by a minority. Included in this phase are Pyotr Zaichnevsky and Pyotr Tkachev, full-fledged Russian Blanquists in theory. The second part begins with a group known as the "Organization," whose leader was Nikolai Ishutin and whose claim to importance rests with the attempt on the tsar's life in 1866 by Karakozov, an "Organization" member. The other two "applicators" of revolutionary elitism included in this section are Sergei Nechaev, that terrible proponent of secret cell activity, and the "Narodnaya Volya" Party, whose genesis, activity, and fate mark the closing phase of the period considered. This division is not strict, for there is a time overlap between the two areas and a confusion in some cases between Blanquist, the theorist, and Blanquist, the activist. Yet, for the thesis outlined, it is, in my mind, the most convenient distinction between the two sets of Russian revolutionaries dedicated to the concept of Blanquist elitism in pre- and ~~a~~post-revolutionary politics.



PART I

THE EXEGESIS OF THE THEORY



At first glance it appears strange to connect a discussion of secret terrorist activities and revolutionary relationships in nineteenth century Russia with the theories of Alexander Herzen, the most outstanding writer for overt peaceful propaganda and a federal structure characteristic of democratic government. Herzen, after a flirtation in his younger days with the extreme left of revolutionary theory, did in fact battle even in a responsible position for the forces of moderation and peaceful reform. His incessant attacks in *Pravda* upon any form of extreme Jacobinism, anarchism, nihilism, terrorism, Bakuninism—from the 1830's until his death in 1870, place him irrevocably in the ranks of the idealistic constitutional reformers. But it is with the years 1846-9 in Herzen's intellectual development that this paper is concerned, for that period marks his brief entertainment of the theory of revolutionary destruction.

Alexander Herzen: Creative Destruction I

Alexander Herzen was born in Moscow on March 25, 1812. Committed to the revolutionary cause since the Decembrist revolt of 1825, which inspired the oath made by Herzen and his friend Nikolai Ogarev (1813-77) "to sacrifice our lives to the struggle for free independence,"<sup>1</sup> Herzen earned a degree at Moscow University in the early 1830's dedicated to the study of French utopian socialists, particularly Saint-Simon. Arrested in 1834 as "a daring freethinker, extremely dangerous to society,"<sup>2</sup> he was exiled to Perm, then Vyatka and Vladimir for six years; he married Natalya Leharina in 1836. In 1841 in St. Petersburg, he was again

1. I. Gorkov. *Ispravneniye i zhizn' Aleksandra Herzena*. Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk, Moscow, 1976, 4. VIII, p. 81.

2. Lempert. *Studies in Rebellion*, Frederick A. Praeger, New York, 1957, p. 176.

At first glance it appears strange to commence a discussion of secret terrorist activities and revolutionary dictatorships in nineteenth century Russia with the theories of Alexander Herzen, the most outstanding battler for overt peaceful propaganda and a federal structure characteristic of democratic government. Herzen, after a flirtation in his younger days with the extreme left of revolutionary theory, did in fact settle down to a respectable admiration for the forces of moderation and peaceful reform. His incessant attacks in Kolokol upon any form of extremism--Jacobinism, anarchism, nihilism, terrorism, Bakuninism--from the 1850's until his death in 1870, place him irrevocably in the ranks of the idealistic constitutional reformers. But it is with the years 1848-49 in Herzen's intellectual development that this paper is concerned, for that period marks his brief entertainment of the theory of revolutionary dictatorship as the most efficient means of conducting a social revolution.

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<sup>1</sup>A. I. Gertsen. Sobranie Sochineniy v tridtsat' tomakh, Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk, Moscow, 1956, vol. VIII, p. 81.

<sup>2</sup>E. Lampert. Studies in Rebellion, Frederick A. Praeger, New York, 1957, p. 176.

arrested, and exiled to Novgorod. Back in Moscow in 1842, Herzen spent the next six years writing critical articles, studying Hegelianism and applying for an exit permit. The year 1847 marked his departure from Russia, never to return. Living in Rome, Herzen viewed with joy the February Revolution in Paris, whither he moved in May, 1848, only to receive a rude awakening in the massacres of the June Days and the counterrevolutionary repression. Quickly disillusioned with the superficial efforts to maintain a democratic republic in France and with the apparent decadence of Western European civilization, Herzen left France, and finally settled in London in 1852. Maintaining his faith in a Socialist revolution as the only means to check the decay of a dying Europe, Herzen, in the Polarnaya Zvezda (Polar Star) began to formulate his special brand of Socialism, a peasant-oriented, in fact Russian-peasant-oriented one, initiated by himself and Ogarev. He saw in his native country the saving power for Europe, and the agent of that power was the Russian peasant in his ancient obshchina or rural commune. Coupling this faith in the peasant with a desire to picture his Russia in a favorable light before the eyes of critical Europeans, Herzen launched a vigorous attack in his writings against Tsar Nicholas I, and directed his readers' eyes to the virtues of the peasant and his inherent bent toward a communal socialistic existence. Upon Nicholas' death in 1855, Herzen rejoiced and in 1857 channelled his publicist activities with the help of Ogarev into a new journal, Kolokol (The Bell), with the purpose of convincing the new tsar to reform Russia into socialism, the first step to be the emancipation of the serfs. Gone was Herzen's

pre-1848 fervor for revolution; all his efforts were now absorbed in the battle for a legal evolution toward the desired goal.

Kolokol was instantly popular in Russian circles, including the official ones. Herzen became the recognized leader of the press agitation for emancipation; radicals, liberals, and even some conservatives rallied to the cause. February 19, 1861 saw the emancipation of the serfs, but it was a Pyrrhic victory for Herzen in view of the oppressive redemption dues and the miniscule grants of land to the "freed" peasants. Discouraged by these facts and the new repressive measures of the tsarist army in Poland, Herzen pressed harder for reform and struck out defensively at the radicals who threatened by their student riots and secret societies to stifle the faint strains of tsarist benevolence.

This period marks the renewal of his stormy friendship with Mikhail Bakunin, recent escapee from exile in Siberia. Pressured by Bakunin, Herzen, grudgingly, gave Kolokol's support to the "Zemlyai Voliya" (Land and Freedom) secret society in 1861-62 and the Polish rebellion in 1863. Attacked by patriotic liberals for his endorsement of the latter and by the radicals for not urging uncompromising support of the revolution, Herzen fell into the "has-been" category of Russian revolutionism in the minds of the new generation of "critical realists," materialists, and potential terrorists. Herzen stood staunchly, consistently, in favor of a social revolution and did not wish to endanger that goal with futile efforts at political turnover through individual terrorism; his disillusionment with democracy, faith in the possibility of peasant socialism, and love for the individuality of

man forced him to compromise with the former enemy in order to squeeze more concessions out of him.

His revolutionary role, however, had already been usurped by the radicals; students began to look to non-emigrant sources of revolutionary strength, and Kolokol ceased publication in 1867 for lack of circulation. After four years spent in Geneva, Herzen died in Paris on January 9, 1870. He stands as a thoroughgoing individualist and utopian socialist of the Saint-Simonian variety, but he has the misfortune to be classified often as a muddle-headed liberal and weak-kneed constitutional reformer simply because he chose the gradual and peaceful road of moderation in quest of his carefully conceived destination.

Franco Venturi ends his chapter on Herzen with these words:

The fundamental elements of Russian Populism--distrust of all democracy; belief in a possible autonomous development of Socialism in Russia; faith in the future possibilities of the obshchina; the need to create revolutionaries who could dedicate themselves to the people--these were the principles Herzen clung to after his experiences in 1848, the ideals he had created for the next generation.<sup>5</sup>

It was with the failure of the revolutions of 1848, as he watched the French Republic succumb to the power of a Cavaignac and then a Louis Napoleon, that Herzen became disillusioned with the trappings of democratic government. More important, the year 1848 marked intense preoccupation with the question of political revolution, a break between his Saint-Simonian socialism of the 1830's and 40's and his peasant socialism of the 1850's and 60's.

The political battle on May 15, 1848, between the extreme revolutionaries under Blanqui and the Constituent Assembly under Lamartine was followed

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<sup>5</sup>Venturi, p. 35.



by the bloody June Days during which the workers inspired by socialist slogans struggled to initiate social reforms by force. The socialists were defeated both times. Herzen was in Paris for both events and evaluated them in the light of his own socialist goals. He admired Blanqui and the extremists for their valiant attempt to carry the revolution beyond the bourgeois regimes of Robespierre and Lamartine to a genuine republic with a socialist orientation, yet their very movement against the nationally elected Assembly attracted conservatives and liberals alike to the opposite side in defense of an Assembly that could be easily undermined and transformed into a monarchy once again. The battle lay not between two groups of politicians, but between two concepts of political structure--one, the traditional French centralism; and

on the other side was the Republic, not of Lamartine but of Blanqui; a Republic not of words but of deeds; universal suffrage not merely applied pettily and stupidly for the election of a despotic Assembly, but for the whole administration; the liberation of man, the commune and the department from submission to a strong government using bullets and chains as methods of persuasion.<sup>4</sup>

This letter side made the mistake of mixing republicanism with socialism without sufficient preparation, thereby introducing brusquely into French awareness two entirely new concepts with no fitting receptacle in which to store them safely. New wine sours in old bottles.

Thus, incompetent leaders and lack of preparation on the part of the leaders and the led were the reasons in Herzen's mind for the double failure. Yet, Herzen never lost faith in the goal <sup>of</sup> the French proletariat,

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<sup>4</sup>Venturi, p. 28.



The revolution must be social and total. It was only the tactics that needed drastic revision. He turned briefly, in 1848, to Blanqui's idea of a revolutionary dictatorship as an interim government between the monarchy and the republic; he admired Blanqui's thoroughgoing passion for destruction of the old in order to make way for the new: "Blanqui is the revolutionary of our time. He has understood that nothing can be merely readjusted, but that the primary task is to pull down the existing structure." <sup>5</sup> A genuine republic was possible only after

...a revolutionary dictatorship, which must not invent new civil codes or create a new order, but must smash all monarchist relics in the Commune, the Department, the Tribunals, and the Army. It will unmask all the actors of the old order, will strip them of their cloaks, their uniforms, and their epaulettes, of all the symbols of power which moves people so intensely. <sup>6</sup>

This destruction, which resembles a somewhat moderated Jacobin Terror, only this time directed against all the opponents of socialism, would resemble more closely a state of anarchism than a Blanquist revolutionary dictatorship. Herzen sympathized deeply with Proudhon, even financed and collaborated with him on La Voix du Peuple in 1849, <sup>7</sup> and he was more influenced by Proudhon's anti-democratic, anti-Louis Napoleon polemics than by any theories of anarchism in the Bakunin style. Martin Malia makes this comparison of Proudhonist and Blanquist influence upon Herzen at this time:

Herzen had no doubt fallen into contradiction in accepting simultaneously (and even confusing) Proudhon's grass-roots anarchism and Blanqui's 'communist' dictatorship of the proletarian minority, a policy which could only produce authoritarian results.

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<sup>5</sup>Venturi, p. 30.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 32, 33.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 30.

But this advocacy of 'communism' was no more than a temporary exaggeration of Herzen's thought, and a measure of his fury against the 'old world'; rather than a real adherence to 'Blanquist' methods. In reality, Blanqui, like Proudhon, meant for Herzen not the positive authority of dictatorship but the negative force of destruction.<sup>8</sup>

Herzen championed the individualist revolt against state centralism and the socialist revolt against bourgeois capitalism, and both revolts led him to entertain briefly the idea that revolutionary dictatorship must destroy the old and prepare for the new society, since the old democratic forms were impractical in the transition stage when none were prepared sufficiently for a shift. He sensed an usurpation of power following the Jacobin tradition of Robespierre, in the French Republic and in the universally elected Louis Napoleon, and he was wary of a state which always exercised the privilege of initiating a "democratic orthodoxy."<sup>9</sup> Deploring a state modelled after the Jacobin model, Herzen claimed (quoted by Venturi):

Government is not an end, but a necessity; not a sacrosanct institution to be served by Levites, but a bank, a chancellery of the nation's affairs!--in other words, the maximum of freedom, the minimum of Napoleonic centralization.<sup>10</sup>

Herzen clung to the idea of an interim dictatorship, but only a temporary one. Since its function was mere destruction, and "every destruction is a kind of creation,"<sup>11</sup> then the temporary dictators must yield to the true republicans to channel the new forces of creation. There is no indication that he feared in 1848-49 that such an elite might be reluctant to hand over its hard-won power to a baby-republic

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<sup>8</sup>Alexander Herzen and the Birth of Russian Socialism, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1961, p. 378.

<sup>9</sup>Venturi, p. 32.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>11</sup>Alexander Herzen. Selected Philosophical Works, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1956, p. 405.

(the same ideological oversight committed by Trotsky seventy years later). Perhaps in his contempt for the republicans "in-words-only" of the 1848 revolution, Herzen assumed that a group disciplined in the art of ~~de~~struction would harbor such a genuine love for the welfare of the workers as to make them a gift of a government and an economy. Yet Herzen, in speaking of creative destruction, makes these prophetic statements, probably unwittingly: "Man cannot be content with destruction alone. It is against his creative nature."<sup>12</sup> Powerful forces of destruction will never give up willingly their source of ~~power~~; the executor must be executed himself before he will cease his lucrative, perhaps even pleasurable, activity. Of this particular fact, Herzen had some conception when it was a question of assessing the character of counterrevolutionaries; however, he completely neglected to foresee this in his socialist forces. There is a good reason for this oversight, but even this reason would not justify Herzen's claim to realism on the question of revolutionary tactics. It is that Herzen believed naively, idealistically, that it was the preparation for the revolution that was so difficult; the revolution itself and the reconstruction of society would be easy and simple, because the old was bad, ugly, inhuman, false, while the new was good, beautiful, human, true. The former would automatically yield before the latter, and the latter would flourish in its own right. It was a common error of judgment among revolutionaries in Russia at this time. Bakunin, especially, believed the new society would spring up of its own accord, once the old forms had been destroyed. Even the so-called realists

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<sup>12</sup>Herzen, p. 405.

had dreams of seeing a socialist Russia within their lifetimes. Dreams are fine, even necessary, but often, and Herzen is a case in point, they cloud the facts.

Herzen's own struggle to accept the coldblooded totality of revolutionary method affected him so deeply that he concluded irrationally that every young radical must experience the same battle within himself before he can genuinely desire and work for a revolution. These are some of his thoughts in From the Other Shore on the necessity for total destruction of old forms:

Man houses a permanent, revolutionary tribunal within himself, an implacable Fouquier-Tinville, and, even a guillotine. Sometimes judges fall asleep, the guillotine rusts, the false nations, outdated, romantic and feeble, come to life and make themselves at home when all of a sudden some terrific blow rouses the heedless judge and the dozing executioner, and then comes the savage retribution, for the slightest concession, the slightest mercy or pity shown leads back to the past and leaves the chains intact. There is no choice: either execute and go forward, or grant a reprieve and stop midway.... People are afraid of their logic and, having rashly summoned to court the church, the state, the family and morality, good, and evil, they endeavor to save some scraps, fragments of the old.... In passing from the old world to the new, one can take nothing along.... We are to be executors of the past.<sup>13</sup>

The special brand of revolutionary who could stomach such destruction was rare indeed. Herzen raged at the bourgeois republicans of 1848 who let the guillotine rust and who, in an effort to preserve order and civilization, forced the revolution to its doom.

And there you have the crusaders for freedom, the privileged liberators of mankind! Freedom is the very thing they dread: they must have authority because they do not trust themselves.<sup>14</sup>

Again and again Herzen's declarations can be read as very prophetic statements concerning the power struggle in revolutionary situations, yet ignoring these conclusions in his formulations for a revolution

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<sup>13</sup>Selected Philosophical Works, pp. 373-375.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 451

borne by the Russian peasant, untrammelled by what to him was the disgusting degradation and treachery of Western revolutionary socialists. The bitterness revealed in the above quotation from Herzen rankled in this consciousness, fed by the swift success of the counterrevolution of Cavaignac, the strong man, the trustworthy authority, and finally by the coup d'état of December, 1851.

In the transition period before his formulation of peasant socialism, Herzen fell into a morbid depression during which he denounced revolution, constitutionalism, and parliamentarianism indiscriminately. Byron's Lucifer in Cain assumed major importance in Herzen's disillusioned mind as an advocate of individual crime and of the murder of those who blocked the revolutionary momentum. Herzen's hatred of a mankind that will allow events such as occurred in Paris in 1848 drove him to this amorality, but as Thomas Masaryk observes in his analysis of Herzen's psyche at this stage:

To one who thinks clearly and pursues his thoughts to their logical conclusion, revolution, the revolution of 1848, signifies crime and murder among other things. Must we then choose between crime and crime, between murder and murder?

In 1848, as an actual fact, Herzen expressed his opposition to the revolution; and his Byronic mood of that epoch, his decision in favor of murder, was but moral window-dressing.<sup>15</sup>

Masaryk goes on to explain that 1848 marked Herzen's firm opposition to revolution, which in turn led to his polemics against all terrorism and secret revolutionary activity. His strong attacks in the 1860's against the new generation of Chernyshevsky's "new men," Pisarev's nihilists

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<sup>15</sup>The Spirit of Russia. George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., London, 1919, vol. I, p. 403.



and the Blanquist conspirators of Young Russia certainly suggest that his own ideas of dictatorship and Byronic crime are effusions of a freak period in his otherwise consistent struggle toward individual freedom and a socialist republic.

Herzen's later work which most revealed the bitter conclusions drawn from this significant shift in ideology was his "Letters to an Old Comrade,"<sup>16</sup> written in 1869 to Bakunin. In these letters, Herzen takes it upon himself to oppose Bakunin's theories of violent revolution and the immediate destruction of the State. Recalling the events of 1848, Herzen assessed twenty years of changes in economic and social questions, which called for a reorientation in tactics for achieving socialism:

The minority marching in the vanguard has not arrived at manifest truths, at practical means, at complete formulas of the future economic life. The majority who suffered most endeavors through one group of its urban workers to throw off this state but is restrained by the old, traditional outlook of the other, more numerous group [peasantry]. Knowledge and understanding are not to be acquired by any coup d'etat, not by a coup de tete. The sluggishness, incoherence of the historical course of understanding exasperates and depresses us; we find it intolerable and many of us, against our better judgement, hurry ourselves and others. Is that good or bad? That is the question. Should we exert external pressure on the natural course of events in order to hasten the internal process which is in evidence? Certainly a midwife can hasten lighten, eliminate the difficulties of travail, but only within certain limits which are difficult to ascertain and dangerous to exceed.... Peter I and the Convention taught us to march in seven-league boots, to pass directly from the first month of pregnancy to the ninth and destroy, without discrimination, everything is our way. Die zerstorende Lust ist eine schaffende Lust<sup>17</sup>--and forward we dashed in the steps of the unknown god-destroyer, stumbling on broken treasures intermingled with all kinds of rubbish and refuse.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Selected Philosophical Works, pp. 576-595.

<sup>17</sup>"The destructive passion is a creative passion."

<sup>18</sup>Selected Philosophical Works, pp. 576-577.



Violent revolution bent upon pan-destruction, Bakunin's favorite doctrine, threatens to destroy even the original distinctive factors of economic and cultural progress. The economic revolution has a stronger foundation than a political or religious revolution; it tends to depend upon gradual transition and the maturity of the majority.

The term 'gradual progress' holds no terrors for me, discredited though it is by the vacillations and mistakes of diverse reformers. 'Gradual progress,' like continuity, is an inalienable part of every process of understanding....<sup>19</sup> The people are conservative by instinct and because they know nothing else. They have no ideals outside the conditions that exist.... The forms of the state, the church and the court fill up the chasm between the incomprehension of the masses and the one-sided civilization of the summits. Their power and extent are in direct proportion to their ignorance. It is impossible to overcome ignorance by force. Neither the republic of Robespierre, nor that of Anacharsis Cloots, left to themselves, could maintain themselves while Vendeeism took years to extirpate. Terror is as little effective in wiping out prejudices as conquest is in annihilating a nation.<sup>20</sup>

There stands Herzen's most determined condemnation of revolutionary conspiracy, political revolution, terroristic pan-destruction, and the immediate establishment of an anarchistic society. With his move away from advocacy of destruction, the need for a revolutionary dictatorship to wield that force was automatically cancelled. Some of his later writings assess revolutionary conspiracies aimed at the establishment of a dictatorship (such as the Babouvist Conspiracy of Equals) as "tyrannical and statist."<sup>21</sup> This is an indication of Herzen's mature appreciation for the dangers inherent in the concentration of revolutionary power in the hands of a minority elite, though here again Herzen is on

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<sup>19</sup>Selected Philosophical Works, pp. 584-20, 591.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., pp. 590-591.

<sup>21</sup>Venturi, p. 297.

one side of the fence, condemning the other side and overlooking the faults in his own backyard.

Herzen's view of the Russian peasant and the type of society that peasants would inhabit eventually was idealistic and utopian; yet, his appreciation for the drawbacks to an immediate, forceful revolution in the face of the traditional ignorance of that peasant was a tribute to the profound penetration and realism of his insight. Soviet evaluation finds Herzen almost without blemish; it has a tendency to glorify Herzen the peasant socialist, the profound intellectual, the brilliant author, the revolutionary democrat, the untiring polemicist, and to ignore entirely or invent rational explanations for Herzen the constitutional monarchist and the parliamentary reformer. Floating somewhere near the heart of this two-headed Herzen, the outburst of revolutionary passion of the year 1848 divorced him almost completely from the sentiments he had known and was destined to know. Zaichnevsky saw the 1848 revolution through Herzen's eyes and picked up from him the feasibility of a centralized seizure of power. The favorite Soviet epithet for Herzen is "revolutionary democrat," probably one of the most non-committal terms in political terminology, and yet appropriate for the ideologue, who was more of a democrat in theory than a revolutionary in action.

Ernest's report to the tactic of revolutionary destruction was a passing phase in his intellectual development. This concept had a more lasting source of propagation in the figure of Mikhail Bakunin. One introduced into Bakunin's theoretical framework with all the force of his revolutionary passion, this tactic of revolution, established by the doctrine of secret alliances and terrorism, flourished and unfolded primarily in the realm of nineteenth century Russian revolutionary theory. From this situation it will become clear that the Bakuninist form of anarchism had a natural relationship with the Marxist concept of revolutionary dictatorship.

Bakunin was born on the estate of Pruzhansky in Tyur province on May 18, 1814. Entering the artillery cadet school in Petersburg in 1834, he was promoted to officer status and served in the war for two years.

Mikhail Bakunin: Creative Destruction II

In the next few years, a high school such figures as Solov'yev, Gorky, and others, Bakunin ran the gauntlet of the Russian Revolution from West to East. Fleeing Russia in 1849 after fierce arguments with Herzen, Solov'yev, Karamzin, and his family, Bakunin studied in Berlin and Frankfurt, where in 1842 he wrote his famous article "Revolution in Germany" for the *Deutschland* journal under the editorship of Arnold Ruge. This article was the first indication of left Hegelianism in Bakunin's ideology; it was a call for social revolution based upon Hegelian dialectics. In Berlin in 1845 Bakunin met Wilhelm Weitling, the German Communist, from whom he absorbed a more intense interest in the socialist-anarchist current. Deported by the Prussian Third Section for conspiracy

Herzen's resort to the tactic of revolutionary dictatorship was a passing phase in his intellectual development. This concept had a more lasting source of propagation in the figure of Mikhail Bakunin. Once introduced into Bakunin's theoretical framework with all the force of his revolutionary passion, this tactic of revolution, embellished by the concepts of secret alliances and anarchism, flourished and achieved grandeur in the realm of nineteenth century Russian revolutionary theory. From this discussion it will become clear that the Bakuninist form of anarchism has a natural relationship with the Blanquist concept of revolutionary dictatorship.

Bakunin was born on the family estate of Pryamukhino in Tver province on May 18, 1814. Entering the artillery cadet school in Petersburg in 1828, he was promoted to officer status and served in the army for one year. Returning in 1835 to Moscow, where he participated in the Stankevich circle, which included such figures as Belinsky, Botkin, and Katkov, Bakunin ran the gamut of the German idealist from Kant to Hegel. Fleeing Russia in 1840 after fierce arguments with Herzen, Belinsky, Katkov, and his family, Bakunin studied in Berlin and Dresden, where in 1842 he wrote his famous article "Reaction In Germany" for the Deutsche Jahrbücher under the editorship of Arnold Ruge. This article was the first indication of left Hegelianism in Bakunin's ideology; it was a call for social revolution based upon Hegelian negation. In Zurich in 1843 Bakunin met Wilhelm Weitling, the German Communist, from whom he absorbed a more intense interest in the socialist-anarchist current. Pursued by the Russian Third Section for compulsory

return to Russia, where he had been condemned by Nicholas I to exile in Siberia, Bakunin fled to Brussels, then to Paris in 1844 where he became acquainted with Marx, Engels, Proudhon, and a group of emigré Polish revolutionaries. Attracted especially by Proudhonian anarchism and the Slav nationalism of the Poles, Bakunin began to consolidate his ideas on violent revolution and the non-governmental, federal society of the future.

Present in Paris for the February revolution, 1848, Bakunin soon tired of the French cause and, financed by the new French Provisional Government, and the Poles, he hastened to Prague to participate in the Slav Congress. Motivated equally by his newfound love for all Slavs and his hatred of Austria and Germany, Bakunin hoped to unite all Slavs, including the Poles and the Russians, in a federation dedicated to revolt against their many oppressors. Participating in the insurrection, the repression of which eventually broke up the conference, he traveled in Germany trying to promote rebellions. Generally, these revolts assumed a national and/or republican, rather than a socialist, character, and Bakunin took advantage of this nationalist sentiment to activate rebellious feelings.

In Dresden, May, 1849, Bakunin rejoiced to find the rudiments of a genuine socialist democratic revolution, but the swift reprisal by the Saxon king meant the death of the republic and Bakunin's hopes. Arrested May 9, condemned by a Saxon court to death, the sentence later commuted to life imprisonment, Bakunin was extradited to Austria



in 1850, again condemned to death for his participation in the Prague insurrection, then another commutation followed by another extradition, this time to Russia. After six years spent in the Schlüsselberg Fortress, during which he wrote his famous Confession to Nicholas I with no result, Bakunin was exiled to Siberia in 1857 by Alexander II. At Tomsk, where he was married in 1858, Bakunin met Governor-General Muraviev, a distant relation, and in the course of their discussions offered him the role of revolutionary dictator over the Slav peoples, thereby repeating the offer made to Nicholas I in the Confession. Escaping in 1861 to the United States, Bakunin burst in upon Herzen's peaceful existence in London in December, 1861.

The returned exile's first contribution to Kolokol was his open letter "To Russian, Polish, and All Slavic Friends" in the edition of February 15, 1862. This article was to be the first in a series, but, as Bakunin became more and more absorbed in the new developments of the Russian revolutionary movement, the international Slav movement suffered in his attention. The years 1862-63 marked Bakunin's intense involvement in a progression of developments in the Russian situation: first, the "Zemlyai Volya" (Land and Freedom) agitation for constitutional reform; then, the "Old Believer" incident, in which Bakunin attempted to solicit help for the revolution from the traditionally anti-tsarist religious schismatics in Russia; then the encounter with the emigre peasant Martyanov, in whose honor Bakunin produced the pamphlet The People's Cause: Romanov, Fugachev, or Pestel?, his famous appeal to Alexander II to lead the peaceful revolution toward socialism; and

finally the Polish rebellion of 1863, which inspired Bakunin's notorious ride on the ship Ward Jackson with the goal of assisting the desperate Polish revolutionaries. All four incidents<sup>1</sup> ended unsuccessfully and even tragically for those in Russia and Poland caught up in the repressive measures of the tsarist forces.

Moving to Italy in 1864, Bakunin met Garibaldi and flirted briefly with Italian nationalism. But the dire need for social reform in Italy soured him on the purity of Italian revolutionarianism and nationalism, and he turned instead to the ideas publicized by Marx, whom he had run into on the way to Italy. Inspired by the International Workingmen's Association, Bakunin organized the first of his many secret "Brotherhoods" in Florence, supposedly as an adjunct to the European Association. His main functions as leader of the Brotherhood seemed to be limited to making impassioned speeches for proletarian solidarity and collecting funds for "expenses" --as it turned out, his own rather than the Brotherhood's. The Brotherhood collapsed when he moved to Naples, but he managed to attract a Russian emigre following to the formation of a new Brotherhood.

In the Revolutionary Catechism,<sup>2</sup> the statutes of the new organization, Bakunin made his first systematic appeal for the "annihilation, dissolution, and moral, political, judicial, bureaucratic, and financial bankruptcy of the tutelary, transcendental, centralized State, the twin partner of the Church and, as such, the permanent source of pauperization, deception, and enslavement of the peoples."<sup>3</sup> This is the creed of

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<sup>1</sup>Related penetratingly by E.H. Carr in Michael Bakunin, pp. 268-301.

<sup>2</sup>This catechism, written in 1866, is to be distinguished from the Catechism of the Revolutionary, written in 1869 by Bakunin and Nechnev. Hereafter the 1866 document will be referred to as the Revolutionary Catechism and the 1869 document as the Catechism of the Revolutionary.

<sup>3</sup>Quoted in Carr, Michael Bakunin, p. 334.

destructive anarchism, the culmination of a sentiment rankling in Bakunin's soul since the explanation of his leftist Hegelian attitude in the article "Reaction in Germany" (1842), where he had declared: "'Let us put our trust in the external spirit which destroys and annihilates only because it is the unsearchable and eternally creative source of all life. The passion for destruction is also a creative passion!'"<sup>4</sup> From that inauspicious beginning, Bakunin's "passion for destruction," nurtured by Weitling's Blanquist-inspired communism and anarchism, by years of participation in secret societies and revolutions dedicated to the overthrow of oppressive governments, flowered into an indiscriminate pan-destruction of all existing forms that threaten the freedom of man. It is a fantastic doctrine, one dedicated in Bakunin's consistent conception to the liberation of the individual human being, yet one employing any known means for achieving that exalted goal--a revolutionary Machievellianism in its most dangerous dress.

Yet, Bakunin in 1866 hesitated to carry his formal denunciation of the State a step further to its practical application. Thoroughly disgusted with Italian nationalism at this point and perhaps drawing upon his own bitter experience with nationalist revolutions in 1848, Bakunin denied nationalism as an efficient revolutionary agent, but maintained its temporary necessity for the sake of the thoroughness of the revolution. National parliaments representing a federation of autonomous communes were to be represented in turn by an international federation of

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<sup>4</sup>Michael Bakunin, pp. 115, 116.

socialist countries.<sup>5</sup> The federated units possessed all the characteristics of Marxian communist societies, and the international coalition was Herzen's "commune of communes" carried one step further. At any rate, Bakunin's nationalist phase came to an end with this new conception of internationalism, inspired this time, not by ideas of a Slav federation, but by the communistic theories of Bakunin's potential enemy, Karl Marx. By 1869, this concession to the temporary maintenance of statist forms has fallen by the wayside in the attack upon Marxist centralism, but Bakunin~~se~~ obviously allowed it to influence his private views on the necessary means to conduct the revolution.

The last ten years of Bakunin's life can be summed up in his encounters with two revolutionary "greats," Karl Marx and Sergei Nechaev --as different as Hegelian antitheses, yet appealing in equally significant respects to Bakunin's revolutionary soul. His battle with Marx dates from the formation of the League of Peace and Freedom at Geneva in 1867, which Bakunin used to ingratiate himself with the First International, of which he became a member in 1868, thus precipitating a clash with the moderate forces of the League over the socialist threat to destroy capitalism, mercilessly, in toto. The League lost its founder, but Bakunin had squeezed out of it all that he wanted, by using it as a sounding board for his public opposition to Marx on the question of communist concentration of power. Communist power meant a powerfully centralized State and, as such, a threat to individual freedom;

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<sup>5</sup>Carr, Bakunin, p. 334.

Bakunin called himself a "collectivist" in favor of the abolition of the State and of personal inherited property.<sup>6</sup>

From the League, Bakunin turned to the International and the formation of his own International Social-Democratic Alliance, which was to infiltrate and seize control of the former. From this initial threat of usurpation of Marx' leadership, it was a short road to the Hague Congress in 1872, when Bakunin was ousted from the International. That road was marked by the following events: Bakunin's publication of, then loss of, the Narodnoe Delo (People's Cause) journal; the forced dissolution of the Alliance by the International, only to see the formation of the Geneva section of the Alliance, inspired by Bakunin, and duly voted into membership in the International; the Bâle Congress of the International in 1869, where Bakunin battled for a declaration of the abolition of inheritance, while Marx wanted simply to abolish private property in one general sweep, both proposals failing to pass the Congress, and Bakunin by this move assuming added stature as a threat to Marx; Bakunin's participation in the abortive socialist upheaval at Lyons in the wake of the Commune of 1871, which in turn precipitated his polemic against both German and Russian autocracies entitled the The Knouto-Germanic Empire and the Social Revolution; and finally the Nechaev episode, 1869-70, during which Bakunin briefly re-established what he thought was a vital relation with the Russian revolutionaries. The aspects of this last episode pertinent to the thesis of this paper will be discussed in the chapter on Nechaev.

The next four years were spent in abortive attempts to promote

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 356.



Bakuninist alliances with the Bulgarians and Poles and in a farcical play at revolution in Bologna in 1874. Bakunin died in Berne on July 1, 1876. It was the death of a man who left little behind in the sense of systematic revolutionary theory and who had nothing to show in the area of accomplished revolution, but who gave the impetus to a whole generation of revolutionaries in Russia and in Western Europe.

Bakunin's views on revolutionary dictatorship in the tactics of revolt can be divided into two distinct areas: his three specific appeals to official leaders to assume such a dictatorship, and his theories on the relationship of pre-revolutionary secret society activity to the administration of the future society. Of his three appeals in the first area, to Nicholas I, to Muraviev, and to Alexander II, the appeals to the tsars share the most publicity, due to two of Bakunin's written works, the Confession (1852) and 'The People's Cause: Romanov, Pugachev, or Pestel?' (1862) respectively.

The Confession, written to Nicholas I in 1852 in the hopes of receiving a pardon from the Schlüsselberg confinement, is a remarkably conciliatory message from the intransigent rebel. Signed "the repentant sinner,"<sup>7</sup> the appeal abounds in, what Paulette Brupbacher, the French translator of the Confession, calls a "tone of submission," a "superfluity of humility" and "praises directed to the 'glorious tsar,'" as well as an attitude of sincere repentance for his revolutionary crimes.<sup>8</sup> All of these accusations can be explained away by the dissipation of energy

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(Michel Bakounine, Confession, Les Editions Rieder, Paris, 1932, p. 283.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., pp. 35, 36.

and will from years of disease and prison confinement, but the contradiction of this attitude with that of the free Bakunin before and after his imprisonment tempers the veracity of his penitent behavior sufficiently enough to discredit them. It is significant that all three appeals made by Bakunin are, clouded by this desire to ingratiate himself, dangerous revolutionary that he was, with those in power (Nicholas and Muraviev) on with those whom he simply wanted to impress and solicit for his revolutionary organizations (Martyanov, the peasant).

In the Confession Bakunin outlines his "crimes against the State" for Nicholas, refusing to mention other names, but uncannily honest as to his desires for revolution in Russia. He discusses two topics for Nicholas' benefit: advocacy of a Slav federation and his entertainment of ideas on the course of a purely Russian revolution. In the former Bakunin makes the most open appeal to Nicholas to take up the banner of Pan-Slavism and lead all the Slavs against the decadent governments which oppress them. Pressing honesty to its very limit, Bakunin reveals the words he spoke at the Prague Congress against those who looked to a reconstituted Slav State within the Austrian Empire and especially against those who placed their hope in the Russian tsar to restore an independent Slavic power. The tsar was now allied with Austria to subdue by force the Slav revolutionaries. "The Emperor Nicholas loves neither mass freedom nor constitutions."<sup>9</sup> The two empires thus discredited, Bakunin calls for a self-governing Slav federation, much in the vein of the international federation he postulated twenty

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<sup>9</sup>Bakounine, Confession, p. 140.

years later. He then swears to Nicholas that he had in mind the complete destruction of the **Austrian Empire**, and beyond that, "my other goal, the most important, was to find in that Slav Union the point of departure for a grand revolutionary propaganda campaign in Russia with the view of instigating a struggle against you, Sire."<sup>10</sup> At that point, he wanted **To** avoid a European war of Germans against Russians, and he proclaimed his hatred for the Germans and wariness of the Polish nationalist revolutionaries.

Then, after, analyzing the course of the proposed revolution in Russian, Bakunin boldly, as if to demonstrate his thoroughgoing shame and repentance at these insults to the tsar, reverses the coin and declares that the Poles became so disgusted with the French revolutionary government and the German rebels that they felt there was but one resource left them: "to have recourse to the protection of the Russian Emperor and to entreat him to incorporate into the Russian State all the Polish provinces dominated by Austria and Prussia."<sup>11</sup> This was exactly what Bakunin had previously indicated he had warned against! But his next words state his firm conviction that, if Nicholas had taken up the Slav banner and sent out the call to all Slavs, they would have flocked to him to fight against Germany, and even the whole of Western Europe.

Then follows the most astonishing statement of all; Bakunin claims that at that point, at the end of the Slav Congress at Prague, the idea came to him to write a letter to Nicholas, in which he confessed his sins and begged for forgiveness; finally, *he concluded with these words:*

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<sup>10</sup>Bakounine, Confession, p. 143.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 184.

"I implore you, Sire, in the name of the oppressed Slavs, to come to their aid, to offer them your powerful protection, to be their Saviour and their father, and, after having proclaimed yourself the Tsar of all the Slavs, to raise the Slav standard in Western Europe, for the destruction of the Germans and all the other oppressors and enemies of the Slav people!"<sup>12</sup> (translation mine)

Bakunin then declares that he destroyed the letter because he feared that the tsar would think it presumptuous of a mere subject and political criminal to dare to counsel His Majesty and to suggest that he modify his politics. Indeed, Nicholas' reaction to this brazen suggestion is captured in this sarcastic marginal note: "I do not doubt it--it is to say that I would place myself at the head of the revolution--in somewhat the manner of a Slav Masaniello, thank you!"<sup>13</sup> It would require only a Bakunin, anxious to flatter the tsar who might pardon him and willing to employ any means to achieve his high-flown goal, to conceive of a revolutionary leader in the most reactionary of Russian tsars.

- Certainly more consistent with Bakunin's life long political philosophy was his treatment of the planned revolution for his fatherland. Analyzing the corruption of the Russian bureaucracy and the poverty of the peasants, Bakunin states his well-defined aspirations for the type of society best adapted to the solution of those problems, a republic to be established by a violent revolution:

I wanted the Republic. But what type of Republic? I did not want a parliamentary republic. The representative government, the constitutional forms, the parliamentary aristocracy and its so-called equilibrium of powers where all the agitation forces are so cunningly counter-balanced that none of them can act, in a word, all the crafty, confined, changeable

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<sup>12</sup>Bakounine, Confession, p. 185.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 184.

political catechism of the Western liberals was never an object of my adoration, nor of my sympathy, nor even of my esteem....I believe that in Russia, moreover, a strong dictatorial power is compulsory, a power that will be exclusively preoccupied with the elevation and the instruction of the masses; a power free in character and spirit, but without parliamentary forms; printing books of free content, but without freedom of the press; a power surrounded by partisans, enlightened by their counsels, strengthened by their free collaboration, but which will be limited by nothing or no one. I would say that the difference between this dictatorship and monarchist power would consist only in the fact that the first, according to the spirit of its principles, must intend to render superfluous its own existence, because it would have no other goal but the liberty, the independence and the progressive maturity of the people, while the monarchial power, on the contrary, endeavoring always to render its own existence indispensable, is consequently obliged to maintain its subjects in a perpetual state of infancy.<sup>14</sup> (translation mine)

Concerning the question of what will succeed the described "enlightened" dictatorship, Bakunin humbly expresses his ignorance, totally bent as he is upon the destructive process, but he further claims that no one could or would dare to predict so far into the future. Moving to a discussion of who would serve as the temporary dictator, Bakunin immediately, and vehemently denies his own competence for such an exalted role, and claims touchingly his conviction that he would fall victim in the unequal struggle to precipitate the revolution. Bakunin's answer to the question of the leader's identity is anti-climactic after this humble self-effacement, but this explanation is couched within a classic statement of his vision of the role of the revolutionary:

Very often I have said to Germans and Poles, when they were discussing in my presence future forms of government: 'Our mission is to destroy and not to construct; there are other men who will construct, better than we, more intelligent and fresher! I had the same hope for Russia; I thought that the revolutionary movement would arouse some more vigorous, younger

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<sup>14</sup>Bakounine, Confession, pp. 168-170.



men who would take hold of the revolution and conduct it to its goal.<sup>15</sup> (translation mine)

It is the statement of an anarchist, fifteen years before Bakunin's systematic political philosophy had matured to that point.

It would be difficult to reconcile this call for violent, revolution, destroying the tsardom in Russia in order to replace it with a "republican" dictatorship, then <sup>an</sup> unknown type of government led by a younger generation, with Bakunin's magnificent offer of revolutionary Pan-Slav leadership to Nicholas I. Yet, Bakunin's Machiavellianism in the realm of tactics might permit even such a glaring contradiction in the same letter.

Again, at Tomsk, in 1858, the indomitable tactician flattered the vanity of his second cousin Nicholas Muraviev, Governor and veritable despot of Eastern Siberia, by offering him the same revolutionary leadership of the Pan-Slav movement that Nicholas had received from the same source. E.H. Carr attributes this extraordinary offer to "the political circumstances of the times" (the Slav patriotism generated by the Russo-Turkish War) and the "temperamental impulsiveness common to both of them."<sup>16</sup> Muraviev enjoyed such an arbitrarily powerful position in Siberia that he fancied himself a god-like protector of all his subjects, including the political exiles. Professing a liberal and violently patriotic attitude, Muraviev appealed to the same sentiments in Bakunin's mind and inspired the fantastic offer and the glowing letters Bakunin wrote back to Herzen. Carr treats this Muraviev episode as

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<sup>15</sup>Bakounine, Confession, p. 174.

<sup>16</sup>Carr, Bakunin, p/ 241.

an important influence in the consolidation of Bakunin's political ideology. According to Bakunin,

~~in Bakunin's words, "According to Bakunin,~~

Muraviev was the predestined savior not only of Russia but of Europe. Uniting the Slav peoples under his command, he would march against the hated Austrian and the hated Turk. He would have no truck with 'a constitution and a talkative parliament of the nobility.' His instrument would be a 'temporary iron dictatorship'--a 'rational dictatorship which, according to his convictions, can alone save Russia.' Such was the extraordinary shape now assumed by Bakunin's revolutionary dreams. He had rejected forever the Western conception of parliamentary democracy. Revolutionary dictatorship, curiously blended with pan-Slav fanaticism, took its place in his program.<sup>17</sup>

The prisoner's plans were cut short by his escape, but the essentially reactionary Muraviev had served well the development of the cause of Bakuninist revolutionary mentality.

Once more, in 1862, Bakunin expressed his approval of a revolutionary dictatorship wielded by a tsar. Martynov, a former serf freed by his own savings only to be cheated by his former master in the transaction, had emigrated in 1861 to London, where Bakunin met him and enthusiastically began to support his cause. Martynov had written a letter to the tsar in April, 1862, later published in Kolokol, spelling out his grievance, asserting his loyalty to the "Tsar of the Russian Nation," and appealing to Alexander to call a Zemsky Sobor.<sup>18</sup> Anxious to utilize the traditional sentiments of this remarkable peasant, Bakunin wrote his pamphlet "The People's Cause: Romanov, Pugachev, of Pestel?", originally intended for Kolokol, but, because of the nature of the contents, refused by Herzen and Ogarev and printed separately as a

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<sup>17</sup>Carr, Bakunin, pp. 242, 243.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 277.

pamphlet. Analyzing the three figures, Bakunin refused to entertain the idea of a Pestel, a bourgeois intellectual (one of the leaders of the Decembrist Revolt, 1825), leading a Russian revolution. A peasant revolt under a new Pugachev was not foreign to Bakunin's mind, for back in 1849, as he had confessed so candidly to Nicholas I, he had planned by propoganda in the villages to attract the Bohemian peasants to the revolutionary cause and had entertained the same objective in his proposed rebellion in Russia.

But now Bakunin was dealing with a loyal subject of the tsar, not a bourgeois anti-monarchist nor even a peasant proclaiming to be tsar. The only course was a revolutionary dictatorship for the reforming tsar, Alexander II:

We will speak the truth. We should most gladly of all follow Romanov, if Romanov could and would transform himself from a Petersburg Emperor into a National Tsar. We should gladly enroll under his standard, because the Russian people still recognizes him, and because his strength is concentrated, ready to act, and might become an irresistible strength if only he would give it a popular baptism. We would follow him because he alone could carry out and complete a great, peaceful revolution without shedding one drop of Russian or Slav blood.<sup>19</sup>

In spite of the call to peaceful revolution, Herzen, by now a convinced constitutional monarchist and removed from his own flirtation with revolutionary dictatorship, mistrusted Bakunin's idea of a non-parliamentary Zemsky Sobor and called the article "a medley of Bakunist demagogy," seconded by Ogarev's assessment: "confused Tsarism."<sup>20</sup> The call went unheeded; Martyanov returned to Russia, only to be arrested

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<sup>19</sup>Quoted in Carr, Bakunin, p. 278.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 278.

and exiled to Siberia, where he died in 1866.

If consistency of ideology be judged merely by repetition, an assessment of Bakunin's real sympathies would be polarized inconclusively between tsarist and anti-tsarist revolutionary dictatorship. Any remains of his Pan-Slavist hopes were crushed with the repression of the Polish Rebellion of 1863. This time it was an anti-tsarist movement, and thereafter Bakunin's course lay along this path. Yet, there remained two steadfast facts of revolution which stand as Bakunin's most consistent contributions to revolutionary theory: anarchistic pan-destruction and its inseparable partner, a temporary revolutionary dictatorship.

Bakunin's penchant for anarchism based upon total destruction of old forms oppressive to the people has been noted in the Confession and his Revolutionary Catechism of 1866. His hatred for parliamentary forms and his advocacy of a temporary dictatorship bent on total destruction both in Bohemia and in Russia, to be superseded by he knew not what, were also emphasized.<sup>21</sup> It is in the Confession also that Bakunin's version of the structure of the revolutionary secret society is laid out in a detailed fashion in his discussion of the plans for the Bohemian revolution in 1848-49:

The society was to be composed of three separate groups, independent of and unacquainted with each other: one for the petty bourgeoisie, another for the youth, and a third for the villages. Each of these groups was to be submitted to a severe hierarchy and absolute discipline, but they would adapt themselves, in details and forms, to the character and activity of the corresponding class. These groups were to be limited to a small number of persons, but to comprise as far as possible within their

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<sup>21</sup>Venturi chooses to call Bakunin's programme for revolutionary dictatorship in Bohemia a "Blanquist rather than anarchist" one. (Roots of Revolution, p. 58.)

midst all the men of talent, wisdom, energy, and influence who, obeying the direction of the center, would act in their turn on the masses, so to speak invisibly. These three groups were to be linked together by a Central Committee composed of three, or, at the most, five members....The revolution accomplished, my secret society was not to be dispersed, but on the contrary to be strengthened, expanded, and joined by vigorous and really strong elements, and little by little, it would encompass all the Slav territories; I hoped that it would furnish equally the men necessary for the different tasks of the revolutionary hierarchy. (1852)<sup>22</sup> (translation mine)

It is no wonder that the Russian Third Section, educated in such a detailed fashion by the very patriarch of revolutionary secret societies, could infiltrate and destroy so successfully many such secret circles.

At any rate, this was the pattern that Bakunin was to use in the formation of all his later "Alliances." It is unnecessary to evaluate them all, similar as they are: a hierarchy of secret cells, many imaginary, but all obedient to the leader, Bakunin. The one such organization considered most dangerous by Marx to the revolutionary movement was Bakunin's International Social-Democratic Alliance, and the one feared so monstrously, yet so briefly, by the tsarist administration was the Bakunin-inspired Nechaev conspiracy.

The International-Social-Democratic Alliance was formed by Bakunin in 1868 in Geneva. It was inspired by the First International headed by Marx and into which Bakunin had just enrolled as a member. Encouraging his followers to join Marx' International, Bakunin whipped into shape his "Secret Alliance," the governing body of the International Social-Democratic Alliance. This secret organization was to serve as the "general staff of the revolution," the "invisible dictatorship"<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Bakounine, Confession, pp/ 222,223.

<sup>23</sup>Nomad, Apostles, p. 188.



which would infiltrate the First International and constitute the security organized left wing of that body, while maintaining at the same time its own independence. Its purpose was subversion, that is, to take possession of the International and direct the revolution in its name.<sup>24</sup>

Bakunin, already at odds with Marx over the question of the State and all its appurtenances, including the right of inheritance, versus the State ownership and control of all property, now took secret action in line with his defiant words. Allowing the "open" Alliance to State publicly his collectivist views as put forth in the Revolutionary Catechism of 1866, Bakunin drew up for the "Secret Alliance" his Program and Aim of the Revolutionary Organization of the International Brothers, in which the dual personalities of Bakunin the anarchist and Bakunin the revolutionist were in sharp conflict. Discussing the questions of tactics for agitating and arousing the revolutionary instincts of the masses through propaganda, for destroying the State, and for reorganizing society after the revolution, the Program hit vigorously at those "'Jacobins ~~of~~ Blanquists' who opted for 'dictatorship' and 'state centralization.'"<sup>25</sup> It is the beginning of the bitter Bakunin-Marx war, but more important it is Bakunin's first recognizable break, in theory with the Blanquist tradition. The course of revolutionary dictatorship, travelled straightway for twenty years, suddenly veers off to the left as Bakunin, firmly entrenched in his special brand of anarchism, grabs the reins from the former *driver* and assumes control of the new momentum.

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<sup>24</sup>Thus, we have presumably the complicated hierarchy of Bakunin, commending his followers from the former Italian Brotherhoods, who in turn direct the "Secret Alliance," which in turn governs the "open" Alliance, which in turn is to usurp and control the First International!

<sup>25</sup>Nomad, Apostles, pp. 189, 190.

This so-called break must be carefully analyzed, however, for there is none of Herzen's backsliding here. Bakunin, drunk with the elixir of power, with the opportunity of manipulating a secret society in the revolutionary struggle against the whole of Europe, felt, according to Max Nordau, the need to develop the trappings of a new theory for his society to propagate.<sup>26</sup> Wishing to discredit the Marxists who blocked his path to supreme power, he was forced to tag them with some derogatory epithet. He chose Blanquism and Jacobinism for it seemed to him that the genuine freedom and equality of the masses were threatened by Marx' strategy to seize political control of the State and use it to direct the socialist revolution.

The Communists believe they must organise the workers' forces to take possession of the political power of the State. The Revolutionary Socialists organise with a view to the destruction,, or if you prefer a politer word, the liquidation of the State. The Communists are the upholders of the principle and practice of authority, the Revolutionary Socialists have confidence only in liberty. Both equally supporters of that science which must kill superstition and replace faith, the former would wish to impose it; the latter will exert themselves to propagate it so that groups of human beings, convinced, will organise themselves and will federate spontaneously, freely, from below upwards, by their own movement and conformably to their real interests, but never after a plan traced in advance and imposed on the 'ignorant masses' by some superior intellects....The Revolutionary Socialists think...that the human race has let itself long enough, too long, be governed, and that the source of its misfortunes does not lie in such or such form of government, but in the very principle and fact of government, of whatever type it may be.<sup>27</sup> (1871)

Revolutionaries in the past, wrote Bakunin, have failed because they wanted to create the Revolution themselves, by their own authority

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<sup>26</sup> Apostles, pp. 191, 192.

<sup>27</sup> Bakunin, Marxism, Freedom and the State, (1871, Freedom Press, London, 1959, K. J. Denafick, ed., pp. 18, 19.

and by their own power....by revolutionary decrees, by imposing this task upon the masses; rather their aim should be that of provoking the masses to action."<sup>28</sup> Marx is making the same mistake, with the aim of facilitating the socialist revolution, but in reality exchanging the old despotism for a new dictatorship. Revolution with the intention of capturing the forms of the State for the so-called liberation of the masses from political and economic bondage "would lead to political dictatorship, to the re-emergence of the State, of privileges, of inequalities, of all the oppression of the State--that is, it would lead in a round about but logical way toward re-establishment of political, social, and economic slavery of the masses of people."<sup>29</sup> A Marxist "dictatorship of the proletariat" will not be able to escape this inevitable law of political behavior: "We believe power corrupts those who wield it as much as those who are forced to obey it. Under its corrosive influence, some become greedy and ambitious tyrants, exploiting society in their own interest, or in that of their class, while others are turned into abject slaves." (1869)<sup>30</sup>

Eschewing a revolutionary dictatorship in the Communist style (contrary to his sentiments of 1848-49), and a Constituent Assembly smacking of bourgeois hesitation and potential counterrevolution (consistent with his sentiments of 1848-49), Bakunin threw the revolution into the hands of the masses, especially the peasants, a class mistrusted by the Marxists. Supposedly seething with revolutionary instincts deep

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<sup>28</sup>G. P. Maximoff, ed., The Political Philosophy of Bakunin, pp. 397-399.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 298.

<sup>30</sup>Bakunin in Isaiah Berlin, Karl Marx: His Life and Environment, Oxford University Press, London, 1963, p. 233

within their souls, the oppressed masses represented to Bakunin a vital force in the conduct of the revolution. He saw them spontaneously organizing themselves into groups, inspired by revolutionary leaders, and rising up to assert their freedom against oppressive government:

"The only army is the people, the whole people, in both the cities and the country."<sup>31</sup> Any and every government would be oppressive to them; therefore, the violence of the revolution must be total and universal, destroying all the artificial forms of society which have served to exploit, disable, and kill the people. The instinct toward freedom will be satisfied, and the new society will be one of the greatest possible freedom and equality.

A discussion of Bakunin's concept of freedom and equality, the interaction and conflict between the two in political philosophy, will not be attempted here. Suffice it to say that he thought in terms of pure concepts, and his vision of the future society was no less utopian: where man was to be free without restraints and equal without domination. The nature of that society was to be Proudhonian, a "no-government" or an-archic system or "the republic as a commune, the republic as a federation, a Socialist and a genuine people's republic-- the system of Anarchism."<sup>32</sup> Bakunin proceeded to outline a program for that future society, the last point of which was the

Organizing of a society by means of a free federation from below upward, of worker's associations, industrial as well as agricultural, scientific as well as literary associations-- first into a commune, then a federation of communes into regions, of regions into nations, and of nations into an international fraternal association. (1867)<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>Maximoff, p. 380.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 297.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 298.

What is this but a State in disguise directed by the conveniently unmentioned revolutionary leaders? Max Nomad remarks upon Bakunin's contradictory use of the word "State" even within the Program; in one section the Program speaks of the necessity of the total destruction of "the State and all State institutions," while in another section it refers to "the new and revolutionary State."<sup>34</sup> Here Bakunin the anarchist meets headlong Bakunin the revolutionist; Max Nomad further describes this furious antithesis:

The philosopher in Bakunin, his quest for the 'absolute,' made him absorb Proudhon's political idea of 'Anarchy' in the meaning of 'No-government,' that is to say, the greatest possible realization of human freedom. But the man of action, the noble adventurer, the practical revolutionist, who was out for concrete achievements, forced him to contradict and confound the unearthly dreamer. Subsequently a verbal compromise was effected whereby a decentralized, democratic government, managed from behind the curtains by an invisible revolutionary oligarchy, was declared to be identical with 'An-archy!'<sup>35</sup>

But which one was the real Bakunin? The years between 1848 and 1868 saw Bakunin's development toward a systematic theory of anarchism, the final acceptance of which is attributed both to his disgust with Italian nationalism and the challenge presented by Marx and his State centralism. Yet he never discarded his passion for destruction and, though his attempts to define the future society in 1868 were more detailed and more assertive than his humble refusal to speculate in 1852, his words are sufficiently ambiguous to admit of his dispassion and almost unconcern for the creative phase as compared to his intense

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<sup>34</sup>Apostles, p. 190.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid.



concentration on the destructive phase of the revolution. Several fragments from Bakunin's works indicate that this failure to plan for the future was a deliberate strategy of Bakunist revolutionary Ideology:

We frankly refuse to work out plans for future conditions, because this does not coincide with our activity, and therefore we consider the purely theoretical work of reasoning as useless....No one can aim at destruction without having at least a remote conception, whether true or false, of the new order....(because) the more vividly the future is visualized, the more powerful is the force of destruction.... For those who are already committed to the cause of revolution, all talk about the distant future is criminal because it hinders pure destruction and staves the tide of revolution. (1873)<sup>36</sup>

This is the same Bakunin, a little bolder perhaps, of the Confession. The activist believed in "revolution now," but <sup>the</sup> dreamer believed in the beautiful society later, probably after his own death and perhaps whole generations later.

All of these inconsistencies only emphasize the fact that Bakunin's violent polemics against the Blanquism of Marx and against the possibility of such an authoritarian "withering away" into the classless, completely free society of pure Communism were an indirect condemnation of his own revolutionary tactics and dreams. The tight discipline, unquestioning obedience, and utter secrecy of his organized society belie his statements concerning the necessity for the absolute freedom and equality of the masses. Max Nomad, in his penetrating analysis of this contradiction in Bakunin's ideology and tactics, speaks of several incidents within the Alliance itself that betrayed his own personal dictatorship within the society. In 1869 a group of the members acted on their own

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<sup>36</sup>Eugene Fyziur, The Doctrine of Anarchism of Michael A. Bakunin, Marquette University Press, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1955, pp. 113, 114.

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<sup>36</sup>Eugene Fyzia, The Doctrine of Anarchism of Michael A. Bakunin, Marquette University Press, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1955, pp. 113, 114.

initiative and convened a meeting without Bakunin's knowledge, the result of which was an accusation from the Brothers against Bakunin's authoritarianism, answered by Bakunin's indignant "To All These Gentlemen," denying the charge and resigning his leadership position. The fact that the executive committee was rendered helpless by his resignation was perhaps sufficient proof of the charge.

Truly, it was a sort of one-man conspiracy....Yet it was done in the name of anarchism, the supposed antithesis of authoritarianism....In his letter 'To All These Gentlemen,' Bakunin stated as his 'innermost conviction' 'that man is and always will be, the dictator, not juridically but actually, who acts, and only in so far as he acts in the spirit and in the interests of the society.' Was there ever a dictator who did not make the same claim?"<sup>37</sup>

Surely, Bakunin used different criteria to assess his activities and those of other revolutionaries. Could he possibly, in all his fearful insight into the danger of the Communist "dictatorship of the proletariat" turning into a dictatorship over the proletariat, have overlooked the same danger within his own ranks? Max Nomad again pinpoints a fitting answer to this rhetorical question:

...Bakunin's anarchy--in the sense of no-government--was merely a fancy-dress term for his antipathy to any dictatorship other than his own....<sup>38</sup>In one of his whimsical moods Alexander Herzen called his friend Bakunin a Columbus without America....Bakunin thought he had found the road to the heavenly Utopia of An-archy. What he actually discovered was the path to the infernal reality of Dictatorship.<sup>39</sup>

Two other telling indications of Bakunin's consistent belief in the efficacy of a dictatorship in revolutionary tactics concern his

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<sup>37</sup>Max Nomad, Apostles, pp. 193, 194.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 194

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 213.

unqualified support of two of his disciples, who put into flagrant practice the most despicable aspects of secret society authoritarianism: Sergei Nechaev and Michael Sazhin. The Nechaev episode will be discussed in more detail in the second part of this paper, but it is fitting to note here that the Catechism of the Revolutionary, rules for Nechaev's organization of a revolutionary society based on strict secrecy and severe punishment for disobedient and traitorous members, if not actually written by Bakunin, was at least collaborated in and approved enthusiastically by him. The Ivanov murder and the ensuing sordid actions of Nechaev in Geneva were later denounced vehemently by Bakunin, but it would be interesting to know what Bakunin's attitude would have been toward Nechaev and his activities, had there not also been personal animosities between the two men. At any rate, Nechaev fooled Bakunin for a considerably long time and the latter was entranced with this walking, talking, acting embodiment of the ideal revolutionary à la Bakunin. Sazhin was not as flamboyant, but Bakunin approved of his authoritarian stance within the revolutionary movement, particularly as Sazhin echoed Bakunin's words faithfully and supported his mentor in everything, though it is true that the young man treated Bakunin most disrespectfully in later years, deserting him in Bologna in 1874 and acting disloyally in the Barona affair.<sup>40</sup>

Bakunin's theories on revolutionary authoritarianism can be judged further by the use his followers in Russia made of them. Whereas the

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<sup>40</sup>See the references to Sazhin in Carr, Bakunin.

Russian Bakuninists took relatively little interest in his concern over the manipulation of power by a minority and its temporary or permanent character, they did find in Bakunin's references to the nascent revolutionary instincts of the peasants a ground for agitating among them for a spontaneous revolt. The abortive Chigerin conspiracy of 1877, in which the peasants were appealed to in the name of the Tsar to rise up and destroy their landlord-oppressors, was instigated by a group of Bakuninist "rebels" and is a fitting sequel to Bakunin's own appeals to the tsars to take up revolutionary dictatorships. Particularly in southern Russia around Odessa and Kiev, a group of these "rebels" in the 1870's agitated among the workers and peasants, seeking to arouse a series of spontaneous revolts and even participating in terrorist activities, including assassination, against government officials. Many of them later joined the "Narodnaya Volya" party and participated in the attempts against the Tsar. Bakunin never condoned terror, per se, though he would have permitted it in the destructive period of the revolution as long as it was directed against traitors to the revolutionary cause. The Bakuninists were concerned with immediate action as opposed to the Lavrovist propagandists, who foresaw a long period of propaganda in preparation for the revolt. Their approach was typically Bakuninist, that is, living among the masses, adapting to their custom, and developing the instinct to revolt imperceptibly by their covert propaganda. Imbued with the passion for destruction, these Bakuninist disciples can be said to have concentrated solely



upon the destructive phase as opposed to the creative stage. In this sense, they were purer anarchists than Bakunin himself.

One other figure, partially influenced by Bakunin, should be mentioned here in connection with the thesis of this paper. Prince Peter Kropotkin, noted Russian anarchist and former propagandist in the Chaikovsky Circle in St. Petersburg, 1872-74, publicized more systematically and more eloquently than Bakunin the creed of anarchism. In a pamphlet entitled "Revolutionary Government," written in 1880, Kropotkin denounced equally the reliance upon parliamentary forms and upon a revolutionary dictatorship to accomplish revolutionary goals. Convinced of the necessity of a violent revolution for accelerating the Socialist Society of the future and even of the rightness of assassination, particularly of the Tsar, if the victim's death would contribute to the coming revolution, Kropotkin echoes Bakunin in his hatred of bourgeois parliamentary forms which abort the establishment of a socialist republic. He then takes up the battle against those who wish to conduct the revolution by means of a dictatorship:

For us anarchists the dictatorship of an individual or of a party (at bottom the very same thing) has been finally condemned. We know that revolution and government are incompatible. One must destroy the other no matter what name is given to government, whether dictatorship, royalty, or parliament.<sup>41</sup>

Kropotkin is more hesitant than Bakunin about besmirching the name of Blanqui, and he hints at his purely anarchistic tendencies:

The man who more than any other was the incarnation of this system of conspiracy, the man who by a life spent in prison paid for his devotion to this system on the eve of his death uttered these words, which of themselves make an entire program - 'Neither God nor Master!'<sup>42</sup>

<sup>41</sup>Peter Kropotkin, Kropotkin's Revolutionary Pamphlets, Vanguard Press, New York, 1927, Roger N. Baldwin, ed., p. 243.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 246. (Ni Dieu ni Maître was the name of the Blanquist journal).

But even Blanqui in September, 1870, was not the force that felled the Republic; rather, it was the masses of Paris spontaneously rising up against Napoleon III:

For it is not secret societies nor even revolutionary organizations that can give the finishing blow to governments. Their function, their historic mission is to prepare men's minds for the revolution, and then when men's minds are prepared and external circumstances are favorable, the final rush is made, not by the group that initiated the movement, but by the mass of the people altogether outside of the society.<sup>43</sup>

The secret society must abrogate its power and content itself with helping to organize the autonomous workers' and peasants' associations. The new society will be a federation of these autonomous organizations, in short a "no-government," An-archic society. The eloquence and consistency of Kropotkin's anarchic thought, in comparison with the contradiction and rambling of Bakunin's works merely reflects the fact that the former was never faced with the problems of the latter in translating his theory into revolutionary action.

Finally, what has been the Soviet treatment of the man who preached and attempted to practice methods used by the Bolsheviks themselves in capturing and conducting the revolution. Varlamov indicates that, at first, Bakunin was in high repute as a revolutionary great. Yuri Steklov, Bakunin's most famous Soviet biographer, stated in 1920 in the first volume of his biography that Bakunin was "the founder of the concept of Soviet power, the political form of the dictatorship of the proletariat."<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>Kropotkin, p. 246.

<sup>44</sup>Varlamov, p. 6.

Max Nomad partially seconds this opinion with the quip: "By an ironic twist of personal evolution, the most famous Russian Marxist, the ex-Bakuninist Plekhanov, opposed the Bolshevik Revolution, while Plekhanov's

most famous Marxist disciple, Lenin, reverted to many of Bakunin's concepts which he passed as Marxism."<sup>45</sup> This is all rather strange in view of Bakunin's bitter attacks upon Marx and his "dictatorship of the proletariat," and particularly in reference to a pamphlet "On the Eve of October" written by Lenin in 1917, in which he attacked those opportunists, especially Bernstein, who accused Marxism of Blanquism, denying the charge and emphasizing the urgent necessity to save the revolution by a violent seizure of power by a disciplined revolutionary elite, reiterating his sentiments of What is to be done? (1902).

Calling the Bolshevik-Marxist tactics for an uprising an art, Lenin contrasted their art with the impracticality of a Blanquist seizure.<sup>46</sup> The distinction is not clear, but logically speaking Lenin and his predecessors should have included Bakunin with those denouncers of Marxism. Perhaps it speaks for the obvious similarity in the final analysis, between Marxist and Bakuninist tactics; or more likely, certain phases of Bakunin's ideology were conveniently overlooked by the Soviet interpreters.

At any rate, Steklov's classification of Bakunin in the Soviet genealogy in 1920 was modified by him in 1926, when he noted publicly Bakunin's failure to appreciate the significance of the proletariat

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<sup>45</sup> Apostles, p. 213.

<sup>46</sup> Quoted partially in Hans Kohn, The Mind of Modern Russia, Harper and Brothers, New York, 1955, pp. 242-245.

as a revolutionary force. At this time, Steklov called him still, however, a pupil of Marx and a forerunner of Lenin because of his revolutionary, as opposed to opportunist, socialism and his treatment of the nationality problem.<sup>47</sup> Another Soviet historian Vyacheslav Polovski, in 1926, attacked this view of Bakunin's fathering the Bolshevik ideology:

'Bakunin was not the founder of the concept of Soviet power, if only for the reason that in his projects there is not the slightest trace of similarity to the Soviet power....(yet) in appraising Bakunin, we must recognize that he is the greatest revolutionary figure in Russian history of the last century.... In his real practical revolutionary struggle, Bakunin actually introduced into his organizational work all those basic conceptions which have entered into the armoury of revolutionary struggle of every truly revolutionary party, including the Communist Party. In this sense, Bakunin is one of the greatest revolutionaries of the past, and we Communists are realizing, by other ways and methods, the dreams which Bakunin could not bring to realization.... We revere Bakunin as our forerunner and as our predecessor. And the struggle which was waged so furiously in the First International is for us history which we try to analyze dispassionately!'<sup>48</sup>

In the period 1940-1950, Bakunin was in disrepute, condemned by the Soviets for everything from the "cowardice" of his Confession and letters of appeals to Alexander II to the "Jesuitism" of his collaboration with Nechaev. It is only necessary to note the accusation dating from this period against Bakunin's disruptive and even traitorous behavior in the First International and his failure to heed the Marxist emphasis upon the urban working class, and the about-face of the Soviet treatment of Bakunin will be obvious. Regardless of that fact, Bakunin's theories and personal life are vulnerable to this sort of treatment; his own shifts in mid-stream

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<sup>47</sup>Varlamov, p. 7.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p. 8-10.

were notorious, particularly when, as in the case of the concentration of power in the hands of a minority, he was committing the same crime he was condemning.

Perhaps Bakunin recognized the potential danger of his own revolutionary authoritarianism, but it is more likely that his "creative destruction" was motivated by such genuinely lofty ideals of human freedom and equality that his Machiavellian methods were obscured and practically discounted in his mind for the sake of the realization of that utopian goal. Even as an emigré, his theories were felt more intensely for a longer period of time by a greater number of radical figures in Russia than those of any other revolutionary leader, excepting only Marx and Lenin.



The first organized party within Russia to adopt as its official program the acquisition of power by a revolutionary dictatorship for the purpose of accomplishing the socialist revolution occupies a very short chapter in the story of post-emancipation revolutionary Russia. Young Russia, an illegal revolutionary leaflet, began to appear in St. Petersburg in May, 1882. It was distributed by a group under the auspices of two men, Pyotr Zaichnevsky and Petriline Argirovich, both of whom lay in a short prison for wantonly circulating forbidden books, and ceased with Argirovich's death from typhus in December, 1882 and Zaichnevsky's exile to Siberia in January, 1883. More than a year later, Zaichnevsky's group was a class in the pan, but it exercised a great influence upon the well noted Russian advocate of revolutionary dictatorship, Pyotr Zhebrak, and therefore, a place in the theoretical framework of Russian Marxism.

#### Pyotr Zaichnevsky and Young Russia: The Inception of the Idea in Russia

Pyotr Zaichnevsky was born in 1859, where he studied mathematics and engaged in the clandestine printing of pamphlets publicizing the Socialist-materialist views of Lyssakov, Herzen, Blaud, Laroux, Proudhon, Bakunin, and Rodin. In 1880, Zaichnevsky became interested in the "Library of Legal Studies," a secret organization of students dedicated to the spirit of the Socialist revolution, but in 1881, he and his old friend Argirovich founded a new society called "The Society of Communists," in which Zaichnevsky worked on organization while Argirovich handled the editorial side. After successfully lithographing many editions and conducting their society on an experimental material basis, Zaichnevsky and Argirovich soon founded a real secret printing press, "The First Free Russian Press." Meanwhile Zaichnevsky was becoming involved in the Polish revolutionary cause, for the sake of which he delivered a speech on the steps of the Catholic Church in Moscow on February 17, 1881,

The first organized party within Russia to adopt as its official program the assumption of power by a revolutionary dictatorship for the purpose of accomplishing the socialist revolution occupies a very short chapter in the story of post-emancipation revolutionary Russia. Young Russia, an illegal revolutionary leaflet, began to appear in St. Petersburg in May, 1862. It was distributed by a group under the auspices of two men, Pyotr Zaichnevsky and Perikles Argiropulo, both of whom lay in a Moscow prison for clandestinely circulating forbidden books, and ceased with Argiropulo's death from typhus in December, 1862 and Zaichnevsky's exile to Siberia in January, 1863. More Blanquist than anarchist, Zaichnevsky's group was a flash in the pan, but it exercised a great influence upon the most noted Russian advocate of revolutionary dictatorship, Pyotr Tkachev, and deserves, therefore, a place in the theoretical framework of Russian Blanquism.

Zaichnevsky was born in Orel province on October 18, 1842, and entered Moscow University in 1859, where he studied mathematics and engaged in the clandestine printing of pamphlets publicizing the socialist-materialist views of Oyarzov, Herzen, Blanc, Leroux, Proudhon, Feuerbach, and Buchner. In 1860, Zaichnevsky became interested in the "Library of Kazan Students," a secret organization of students dedicated to the Spirit of the Socialist Revolution, but in 1861, he and his new friend Argiropulo founded a new Society called "The Society of Communists," in which Zaichnevsky worked on organization while Argiropulo handled the editorial side. After successfully lithographing many editions and conducting their society on an experimental communal basis, Zaichnevsky and Argiropulo soon founded a real secret printing press, "The First Free Russian Press." Meanwhile Zaichnevsky was becoming involved in the Polish revolutionary cause, for the sake of which he delivered a speech on the steps of the Catholic Church in Moscow on February 17, 1861,

to the students who had attended a requiem mass for the Poles killed in a demonstration in Warsaw on February 15. Zaichnevsky called for the uniting of Russians and Poles under " 'the common banner, red for Socialism and black for the Proletariat,' " <sup>1</sup> or in other words a Socialist Poland, which was far from the desires of the majority of Polish revolutionaries who wished only liberation from the Russian yoke.

Disappointed in the Polish cause, Zaichnevsky turned to the Sunday--schools then popular in Moscow for the instruction of the illiterate workers. The Third Section, fearing the consequences of private instruction of the peasants by revolutionary-minded students shut down the schools almost from their inception. In May, 1861, the undaunted Zaichnevsky left Moscow to travel in the south, spreading propaganda leaflets among the peasants. Encouraged by a number of spontaneous peasant revolts, particularly the one led by Anton Petrov in Begdna, Zaichnevsky began to write open letters espousing his socialist ideas. It was at this time that he came particularly under the influence of Mazzini and his "Young Italy" society. Quoting Mazzini's " 'Now and always,' " <sup>2</sup> Zaichnevsky explained to his friends his fervent desire to conduct propaganda openly and continuously. It was his encouragement of an armed peasant revolt that finally attracted the attention of the officials, and he and Argiropulo were arrested in June, 1861. Exactly one year later, Young Russia began to appear, Zaichnevsky assuming the role as editor from his prison cell. The police never discovered the source of the leaflet, because the articles were smuggled out of the prison to the printing press, hidden in Ryazan province, and the literature was then distributed in St. Petersburg to take suspicion away from Moscow, where Zaichnevsky was imprisoned.

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<sup>1</sup>Venturi, p. 287.

<sup>2</sup>Venturi, p. 289.

Ignorant of his authorship of Young Russia, the commission sentenced him to two years and eight months in Siberia for his agitation as "a preacher and confessor of Socialism."<sup>3</sup> Zaichnevsky lived in Siberia until 1869, then moved to Penza department, where he organized a new group of "conspirators" from some sympathetic students and soldiers. Moved by the police to several new areas, he reached Orel in 1872, where he became the center of the new revolutionary generation, and in 1875 he established relations with Tkachev and his followers in Europe. Insisting always upon organization and opposing terrorism and demonstrations, Zaichnevsky participated in the demonstration before the Cathedral of Our Lady of Kazan in St. Petersburg, for which action he was again exiled to Siberia in 1880. He returned in 1885, settled again in Orel, and set up a new conspiratorial society, which lasted until 1889, when Zaichnevsky was again arrested, tried two years later, and exiled again to Siberia for another five years. Returning to Smolensk in 1896, he died there on March 19.

To understand the content of Zaichnevsky's theory and activity, it is important to know a little of the background of revolutionary activity in 1861-62 in Russia, for Young Russia was merely a printed version of many currents present in Russian revolutionary society at that time. This is the era of Nikolai Chernyshevsky, (1828-89) and his "new men" and Dmitri Pisarev (1840-68) and his "critical realists," or "nihilists," and both revolutionary publicists added a little to the development of thought on the subject of the revolutionary minority. Chernyshevsky's most famous description of his "new men" is found in his novel. What is to be done?, in which men and women create a very productive communal association and a new morality in marriage. The motivating factor is self-interest, moral

<sup>3</sup>Ibid, p. 301.



self-improvement for the purpose of serving in the best possible fashion the interests of the people. Those rare ones who can express the highest moral qualities within themselves become a moral elite, propagating the new morality for the new society. They are the new men, the giants who function as the head, brains, eyes, and ears of the societal organism. They serve as the vanguard of the onward march of nature, directing the spontaneous movement of the masses toward improvement of society, "by their superior knowledge of moral and material reality."<sup>4</sup> Rakhmetov in What is to be done? is one of these giants, morally impeccable, physically strong, and intellectually superior:

They are few in number, but through them the life of all mankind expands; without them it would have been stifled. They are few in number, but they put others in a position to breathe, who without them would have been suffocated. Great is the mass of good and honest men, but Rakhmetovs are rare. They are the best among the best, they are the movers of the movers, they are the salt of the salt of the earth.<sup>5</sup>

If the new men are to channel the material forces of history, what is their relation to the masses? Will they in fact constitute an oligarchy dictating to the people? Herbert Bowman answers by emphasizing the elitism as opposed to the aristocratism of Chernyshevsky's "new men":

It is not the function of an elite to impose preconceived ideas or ideals, but, on the contrary to elucidate the self-interest of the unenlightened masses, whom historical events are moving in directions which they, in their relative blindness, are unable to observe<sup>6</sup>. . . His (Chernyshevsky's) elite are not the bearers of a noble mission but the purveyors of scientific truth and historical necessity--realists and enlighteners, not crusaders and exhorters.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Herbert Bowman, "Revolutionary Elitism in Chernyshevsky," American Slavic and East European Review, 13, (April, 1954), p. 195.

<sup>5</sup>Nikolai Chernyshevsky, What is to be done?, Random House, New York, 1961, p. 241.

<sup>6</sup>Bowman, "Revolutionary Elitism in Chernyshevsky," p. 196.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid, p. 198.



Wielding the revolutionary weapon of true knowledge, the new man can transform society in this realistic image. It is obvious that Chernyshevsky was not concerned here with political tactics, but with the philosophical justification for a revolutionary elite.

Dmitri Pisarev, inspired by these ideas of Chernyshevsky, embellished upon them and came up with another epithet for the "new men"--"critical realists," popularly known as "nihilists." Called by Saltykov-Shchedrin the "enfants terribles" of Populism in the 1860's<sup>8</sup>, the Nihilists through their pamphlet Russkoe Slovo (The Russian Word) expounded the necessity of individual emancipation as opposed to social liberation. Revolution lay at the end of the road along which materialist, technical, scientific knowledge travelled. Denying all traditional elements of society which could not be proven empirically valid and useful to its inhabitants, these "thinking egoists" called for a critical re-evaluation of a society that foundered an ignorance and the continuing submission of the masses, in spite of the emancipation. Pisarev was arrested in July, 1862, and did not emerge from prison until November, 1866, dying only two years later by drowning in the Baltic. But his thoughts and ideas affected deeply the dissatisfied students and intelligents throughout Russia in the mid-1860's. Venturi sees in Pisarev's "nihilism" the roots of both Russian Bakuninism and Russian Jacobinism:

If we put the emphasis on individual revolt and personal 'refractoriness,' we arrive at anarchism; if on the other hand we stress the political function of an enlightened and decided minority, we arrive at Jacobinism and the theory of a revolutionary elite.<sup>9</sup>

Pisarev was solely a theorist, but his words and epithets carried inspiration for a later generation of activists.

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<sup>8</sup>Venturi, p. 325.

<sup>9</sup>Venturi, p. 330.

This, then, was the intellectual climate in which Zaichnevsky began his short career as a political leader in the revolutionary movement of that period. His political orientation up to the time of his own personal movement "to the people" in May, 1861, was a general socialist and revolutionary tendency, marked by its extremism, as was noted in his Polish speech in February, 1861. The Sunday-schools brought him closed to the people and the problems of educating them both to revolt and to accept the Socialist organization of the future society. Up to that time a mere propagandist through his illegal printing activities, Zaichnevsky caught the Populist bug and left the city to agitate among the peasant masses. Inspired by Anton Petrov's peasant revolt and thrilled at the eagerness with which the peasants listened to him, Zaichnevsky told his land-hungry audiences that the land was theirs if they would but renounce the traitorous tsar and obtain arms for a violent rebellion against the landlords.

Faced with the problem of organizing the amorphous peasant discontent, Zaichnevsky looked to the slogans and construction of Mazzini's secret societies. It was Mazzini's fiery "now and always" attitude, as well as the careful organization of "Young Italy" that influenced the naming of this later pamphlet. Beyond the propaganda, which must include a manifesto distributed to the village revealing the truth about the tsar and the emancipation, there had to be a group of leaders who could prepare for immediate action and recognize the right moment for revolt. In an open letter to a friend, Zaichnevsky revealed the first definite indication of his Jacobin tendencies:

There are two different ways of putting oneself at the head of the people's movement; either, like Louis Blanc, by infiltrating into the masses, spreading pamphlets among the workers, denouncing competition, business and everything that both physically and morally oppresses and kills the workers: or, like Barbes, by putting oneself at the head of every movement and making one's name the name of every

popular party, so that in time of need the people would turn to us as the men who have prepared the ground. With us in Russia at the present moment Louis Blanc's method is not feasible. That leaves the way chosen by Barbes. It is true that it demands many sacrifices. It demands that those who share these ideas should always be ready for any action, however dangerous. But it is the only way possible, the only way that can lead to victory.<sup>10</sup>

This boldness placed Zaichnevsky in prison, but it also electrified the young revolutionaries who read Young Russia one year later, and terrified the conservatives and moderates of official Russia. Zaichnevsky, a mere nineteen years of age in May, 1862, was responsible for that first article in Young Russia which began with the ominous words: " 'Russia. . . is entering the revolutionary period of its existence.' "<sup>11</sup> This was a jolting revelation to those elements, including "Zemlya i Volya," which hoped for the middle way of constitutional reform. Zaichnevsky was taking the hard line leading to

. . . a revolution, a bloody and pitiless revolution, a revolution which must change everything down to the very roots, utterly overthrowing all the foundations of present society and bringing about the ruin of all who support the present order<sup>12</sup>. . . We are not afraid of it, although we know that a river of blood will flow and that innocent victims will perish; we greet its coming, we are prepared to lay down our lives for the sake of it, the long desired.<sup>13</sup>

This is Bakuninist anarchism in its most violent form, as if the excitement aroused in him by the peasants had festered within him for a year and then burst out into the open with redoubled strength.

Speaking in the name of the "Central Revolutionary Committee"--obviously Zaichnevsky and his circle of revolutionary propagandists--, Young Russia in a more rational and practical frame of mind considered the tactics of such

<sup>10</sup>Quoted in Venturi, p. 290.

<sup>11</sup>Avrahm Yarmolinsky, Road to Revolution, Collier Books, New York, 1962, p. 114.

<sup>12</sup>Venturi, p. 292.

<sup>13</sup>Yarmolinsky, p. 114.

an "implacable" revolution, and in so doing, suffered the same vulnerability to accusations of inconsistency, as Bakunin, the same conflict between dreams and action. Boldly, Zaichnevsky discusses in the leaflet the utopian society that will follow the total destruction of the revolution and the type of government that can most efficiently effect the revolution. The future society would be a federal republic governed by national and regional assemblies elected by universal suffrage. Property will be socialized, women emancipated, monasteries closed. Further details would be worked out by the people themselves in a National Assembly. The elements of the population to be relied upon most heavily in destroying the old and constructing the new were to be the peasants, Raskolniki <sup>(religious dissenters)</sup> ~~(classless citizens)~~, disgruntled army officers, and especially the young students and intellectuals. Associations of workers and peasants would run the factories and farms. Poland and Lithuania must be granted complete independence, and all other regions of Russia must have the right of self-determination in deciding whether or not to join the Russian Federal Republic.<sup>14</sup> It is a strong radical program, one whose general goals would appeal to almost all revolutionary theorists in the period under consideration.

In the next breath, however, Zaichnevsky accepts the difficulties in achieving such a utopia and in his characteristically candid manner makes a practical evaluation of the methods necessary to assume in the face of those difficulties:

We know that it will not be possible to carry out this part of our programme at once. We are indeed firmly convinced that the revolutionary party, which (if the movement is successful) will be at the head of the government, will have to retain for a time the present system of centralization. This will certainly be necessary as regards politics, if not the administration, in order to be able to introduce as quickly as possible the new foundations of society and

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<sup>14</sup>Venturi, pp. 294-295.



the economy. It will have to take the dictatorship into its own hands and stop at nothing. The elections for the National Assembly will have to be carried out under the influence of the Government, which must at once make sure that the supporters of the present regime do not take part--that is, if any of them are still alive. The French National Assembly of 1848 has shown what happens when the revolutionary government does not interfere in the elections; it led to the destruction of the Republic and the election of Louis Napoleon as Emperor.<sup>15</sup>

Though obviously reflecting the Mazzinian viewpoint, this remarkable bit of revolutionary theory possesses all the reckless honesty of a Bakuninist statement in the Confession or a Herzenist reflection in From the Other Shore. It speaks with their disgust of parliamentary forms saturated with counter-revolutionary tendencies, as if this young firebrand had actually participated with them in the events of 1848, instead of merely reading at second-hand their reactions to that unsuccessful revolution. All of the consequences of that failure are present in this powerful statement of a Blanquist and anarchist ideology adapted to the Russian situation. It is free of the middle-aged caution of Herzen and the tactical restraint of Bakunin, then locked in mortal combat with Marx. It is the first uncorrupted statement of Russian Jacobinism (as Zaichnevsky himself called it after a careful study of European revolutionary politics) by a new generation of Russian radicalism, as filtered through the writings of the two famous Russian emigres.

Their reactions to this bastard child of their own illicit revolutionary love affairs are a very interesting expose of their own revolutionary fervor in the summer of 1862. Bakunin answered the new Russian Jacobinism in The People's Cause: Romanov, Pugachev or Pestel? in September, 1862:

They shout and decide questions as if the entire people stood behind them. But the people are still on the other side of the abyss, and not only do not want to listen to us but are ready to knock us down at the first sign from the Tsar. . . I accuse the writers of Young Russia of two crimes. First of a mad and really doctrinaire

<sup>15</sup>Ibid, p. 295.



scorn for the people; and secondly of an attitude which is utterly devoid of tact and which is quite frivolous in face of the great cause of emancipation, for whose success they say they are ready to sacrifice their lives. They are so little used to real action that they move in a world of abstractions.<sup>16</sup>

This last criticism is a valid one, in view of the absence of a party capable of pursuing the action described in the leaflet, and especially in view of the lunacy of a suggestion by Zaichnevsky that the revolutionary party take their axes and murder the imperial family, and if necessary, the entire imperial party also. But it must be remembered also that Bakunin was writing this particular pamphlet in an anxious attempt to appease the loyal Russian peasantry through its representative Martyanov and was so afraid that the honest Machiavellianism of Zaichnevsky might frighten them that he ignored all the implications in the leaflet identical to his own sentiments. He later praised Young Russia for its honest appraisal of revolutionary necessity, but claimed always that this organization ignored the peasant masses and differed, therefore, from his own strong populist tendency.

Other expressions of disapproval came from Chernyshevsky, who had helped to found the printing press, but who thought the sentiments expressed in the leaflet "inopportune." Zaichnevsky harbored a mild contempt for Chernyshevsky, though he admired him greatly, and called <sup>him</sup> sarcastically a "man of learning" and a mere theorist, overlooking the fact that he was vulnerable to the same criticism. "Zemlya i Volya" moderates, attempting at this time to appeal to the educated liberals for a bit of opportunistic collaboration for the sake of the convening of a Zemsky Sobor, reflected the firm opposition of Herzen to the Young Russia stand:

A revolutionary party by itself never has the strength to overturn the State. . . . Revolutions are made by the people. . . . We are Revolutionaries; this does not mean men who make revolutions, but

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<sup>16</sup>Quoted in Venturi, p. 298.

men who love the people so much that they do not abandon them when (under no pressure from us) they fling themselves into the fight. . .<sup>17</sup>

This program of mere distrust of the State and waiting for the revolution in order to channel it and reduce its violence, as opposed to Zaichvensky's program of contemptuous hatred of the State and forcibly unleashing the instinct for its violent destruction, became the battle of the Lavrovists against the Bakuninists and partially of the "Chernyi Peredel" (Black Earth Partition) against the "Narodnaya Volya" in the 1870's.

Finally, there is Herzen's reaction against this radical group of Russian Jacobins. Zaichnevsky in his first article had duly noted his debt to Herzen for his advocacy of socialism and revolutionary dictatorship in 1849, but he condemned the former revolutionary for his backsliding into the camp of liberal constitutionalism and reformism. And that same Herzen, who had criticized the moderates of 1848 for failing to demonstrate enough extremism in order to assume the necessary dictatorship, now condemned the radicalism of this Russian group, which had sworn to go beyond the extremists of 1793-4 and 1848, in two scathing articles in Kolokol, 15 July and 15 August, 1862. The first article, entitled "Old and Young Russia," opened with a blanket condemnation of terror, an attack forced upon Herzen by the groundless accusations from all sides against him, "Zemlya i Volya," and Young Russia, for starting the fires that plagued Petersburg in May, 1862. Though he blames agents provocateurs working at the behest of the Third Section for the deed, Herzen takes this opportunity to voice his opinion of the blind recklessness of the "terrorists" and to lament the passing of the liberal era. Young Russia is described in a dialogue in a most derogatory fashion, as if it were childishly nihilist:

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<sup>17</sup>A clandestine reply to Young Russia from Zemlya i Volya, partially quoted in Venturi, pp. 298-299.

"Just what is this 'Young Russia' "? "O this is a terrible Russia. You know, the negation of everything. Nothing is sacred, nothing at all, neither property nor family nor authority. . ."<sup>18</sup> 'Young Russia' appears to me a two-fold mistake. In the first place it is not at all Russian; it is one of those variations on the theme of Western socialism, the metaphysics of the French Revolution, socio-political desiderata, by means of which a form of challenge was added to the call to arms. The second mistake is its inopportuneness--the chance coincidence with the fires has aggravated the situation. It is clear that the young people who wrote it lived more in the world of comrades and books than in the world of facts; more in the algebra of ideas, with its superficial and general formulas and conclusions, than in the workshop, where the friction and temperature, bad temper and blisters change the simplicity of mechanical law and impede its fast course. Their speech has appeared in such a way; in it there is none of that inner restraint which would demonstrate its experience or the order of an organized party.<sup>19</sup> (translation mine)

Herzen then attacks the content of Young Russia's program with a note of marked incredulity:

But is there really a shade of probability that the Russian people will rise up in the name of Blanquist Socialism, filling the air with shouts of four words (Long Live the "Russian Democratic Socialist Republic"), three of which they do not understand?<sup>20</sup> (translation mine)

Herzen repudiates the Jacobins over the two points to which he now stands most determinedly opposed in his own mind: forcible revolution and the centralization of power in the hands of a minority. The latter point particularly threatened to divorce this party from all contact with the people, a neglect which Herzen, the peasant Socialist, the reformer, could not permit in any attempt at revolution in his beloved Russia. The people (this was also Bakunin's point) must be appealed to on familiar terms of land reorganization; communal associations, decentralization of authority. Venturi cites this attack by Herzen upon the Young Russia advocates as the first conspicuous "division, which was apparent at its birth, between Populism and Russian Jacobinism."<sup>21</sup> His next article on Young Russia

<sup>18</sup>Gertsen and Ogarev, Kalokol (Vol. 5, 1862, London), Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, Moscow, p. 1149.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid, p. 1150.

<sup>20</sup>Gertsen, Kalokol, Vol. 5, p. 1151.

<sup>21</sup>Venturi, p. 297.

appeared in the August 15 edition of Kolokol, under the title "Journalists and Terrorists." In it Herzen answered the charges of Young Russia which accused him of having "lost all faith in forceful revolution, . . . We have lost not our faith in it, but our love for it."<sup>22</sup> Again he deplores the rash youths who take pleasure in terror and counsels moderation and appropriate propaganda as the order of the day. Most of all, he is concerned with the threat of centralization of power, whether tsarist or revolutionary, in Moscow or Petersburg, and again advocates the decentralization of authority. If Zaichnevsky had been able to read these issues of Kolokol, he would have stigmatized Herzen with the same epithet he had given Chernyshevsky: "man of learning," harmless, cautious, non-activist.

Though there was widespread fear and even contempt for this new revolutionary group, in Petersburg a group under the direction of Leonid Olshevsky and Pyotr Tkachev began to propagate the ideas put forth by Zaichnevsky: elimination of the autocracy and a violent revolution. Their most interesting pamphlet was one entitled "To the Russian People (A Tale by Uncle Kuzmich)," which was a popularly-written version of Young Russia. Zaichnevsky himself never lost the purity of his ideas, though he never had the chance to translate them into action, and Venturi calls him "the Jacobin, who spent all his life trying to turn himself into a professional revolutionary."<sup>23</sup> His followers had learned their lessons well, for some joined the Narodnaya Volya, some the Socialist Revolutionary Party, some the Social Democratic Party and beyond that the Bolshevik Party, one of whose members is supposed to have influenced Lenin "to accept the idea that the seizure of political

<sup>22</sup>Gertsen, Kolokol, Vol. 5, no. 141, p. 1165.

<sup>23</sup>Venturi, p. 298.



power by a revolutionary party was both feasible and desirable."<sup>24</sup> Indeed, Varlomov quotes M. N. Pokrovsky's statement in an article in 1924 which calls Zaichnevsky's Young Russia " 'the first Bolshevik document in our history.' "<sup>25</sup> Pokrovsky, in a speech at a memorial meeting immediately after Lenin's death in 1924, also took note publicly of elements of Jacobinism in Leninism, and attributed to Zaichnevsky and Tkachev the first formulation of the concepts of a secret conspiratorial party seizing power and conducting the revolution. But he was cautious with his linking of the two "isms":

I again disavow the thought. . . that Lenin did not arrive at these ideas himself, under the influence of the objective conditions of the revolutionary movement, that he was the pupil of Tkachov and Zaichnevsky (of whom he probably never even heard). This would be a completely absurd statement. But if one must not say that the ocean depends on those rivers which flow into it, nevertheless, it is a fact that these rivers flow into the ocean and nowhere else. From this point of view there is no need to deny that several elements in the Russian revolutionary movement of the 1860's and 1870's flowed into Lenin's tactics, were accepted by him, independent of the fact that well-known objective conditions moved him along this path.<sup>26</sup>

Pokrovsky's school was liquidated in the 1930's upon Stalinist orders to disavow all non-Marxist roots of Leninism, and the Russian Blanquists, Zaichnevsky and Tkachev, suffered a sharp decline in popularity and prestige among Soviet historians. Since Stalin, their return to favor has been only partial.

Zaichnevsky's startling flash upon the revolutionary horizon in the summer of 1862 can be attributed partially to the prevailing ferment of the society which both fostered it and viewed it with alarm, and partially to Zaichnevsky's youthful, bold, and dedicated revolutionary character.

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<sup>24</sup>Yarmolinsky, p. 116.

<sup>25</sup>Varlanov, p. 14.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid, pp. 20-21.



The shooting star trailed away in the darkness of Siberia, but the consistency of his ideas managed to shine continuously through the remaining years of his life. This purity of ideology was probably facilitated by the absence of an opportunity to smudge it with the dirt of translating it into practical activity, but it testified even more to the clarity of the mind that contained it. Zaichnevsky was destined to remain on the theoretical side of revolution, but the current generated by his ideas struck a willing chord in the minds of the later activists of Ishutin's "Organization," the Nechaev conspiracy, and "Narodnaya Volya."

Pyotr Nikitich Tkachev, the most outstanding theorist of Russian  
Nihilism, was born in 1844 in the Velikiye Laki district. Influenced at  
a young age by the writings of Chernyshevsky, Petrashevich, and Herzen, Tkachev  
came to Petersburg in 1861 to enter the university, where he soon became  
involved in student disturbances and was arrested in October, 1861. Freed  
two months later, he joined the Glubovskiy Circle and fell under the influ-  
ence of Zaitchnevsky's ideas. Arrested with Glubovskiy in the summer of  
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**Pyotr Tkachev: The Grand Old Man of Russian Blanquism**

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Pyotr Nikitich Tkachev, the most outstanding theorist of Russian Blanquism, was born in 1844 in the Velikiye Luki district. Influenced as a youth by the writings of Chernyshevsky, Dobrolyubov, and Pisarev, Tkachev came to Petersburg in 1861 to enter the university, where he soon became involved in student disturbances and was arrested in October, 1861. Freed two months later, he joined the Olshevsky Circle and fell under the influence of Zaichnevsky's ideas. Arrested with Olshevsky in the summer of 1862, Tkachev spent three years in the fortress. In 1865 he was arrested again for participation in a student demonstration at a theater showing a play laughing at the nihilists, and in 1866 he was caught up in the wide police dragnet following Karokozov's attempt on the life of the Tsar, with which Tkachev had nothing to do. He was released again in 1867, and then associated himself with the underground remainder of the Karokozovtzi, banded together in the Smorgon Academy, and during the years 1867-9 constituted, with Sergei Nechaev, the extreme left of the student movement. His apartment became the center of student meetings, and his articles in the Russkoe Slovo (Russian Word) and Delo (Cause) were read avidly by the radical youth.

In March, 1869, Tkachev was arrested for the fifth time since 1861, and waited in prison two years before he was tried and found guilty of authoring the inflammatory proclamation "To Society." Following an imprisonment of one year and four months, he was exiled to his home in Velikiye Luki escaping from there to Western Europe in December, 1873. At that point Tkachev found it difficult to adjust to the new vogue coming to dominate revolutionary thought. His years in Petersburg had been filled with illegal propaganda and the organization of secret societies. Now, in 1874, Pyotr Lavrov was attracting notice in his review Vpered (Forward), which had inherited

the work of the Chaikovsky Circle in Petersburg and appealed to a new generation of young people anxious to go "to the people" to preach socialism and prepare them for the "sometime" revolution. They were propagandists, not interested in tight organization and secret activity; Nechaev had been caught, tried, and put away; revolutionary activity had suddenly stepped out into the open after years of underground work. The activity of the Chaikovtzi among the workers (1870-73) and the movement "to the people," that is, to the peasants in the villages, in the summer of 1874, were open, ill-organized, and almost spontaneous revolutionary maneuvers on the part of a group of "repentant" gentry and students, who felt the need to repay a debt to the Russian masses. This refreshing return to the boldness of the 60's, yet in a much less explosive manner, suffered the same severe repression from the autocracy, and the revolutionary movement crept underground once more, its lesson learned bitterly but well.

Tkachev in Zurich in 1874 was attracted briefly by Lavrov's appeal for the establishment of the new socialist society, but upon closer examination of the watchful waiting tactics of the propagandists, he launched a vigorous attack against Lavrov in his famous pamphlet "The Aims of Revolutionary Propaganda in Russia" (1874). Insisting upon forcible revolution and a conspiratorial organization, Tkachev was attracted to a group of Russian and Polish emigrés, gathered together in The "Slav Circle," who professed the same ideas. Coming more and more into contact with the French Blanquist writings, the Russian Jacobinist elaborated upon his experience in the 60's and began to systematize his philosophy of revolution in accordance with the Blanquist ideology. A friendship struck up with the Poles Kaspar Tursky and Karl Yavitsky in the Slav Circle followed Tkachev into his Orthodox



Blanquist stage, and with their collaboration he set up in 1875 in Geneva his own organ entitled Nabat (The Tocsin): "Organ of the Russian Revolutionaries." Tkachev attacked both the "peaceful progress" of the Lavrovists and the disorganized agitation of the Bakuninists, writing his articles, not for the masses, but for the revolutionary minority, upon whom the program of Nabat was based. Proclaiming the necessity for organized conspiracy and a dictatorship to establish the new society from above, Tkachev continued to seek unity in the revolutionary movement by appealing to anarchists and populists to adopt his program for the future society.

Though an emigré doomed to perpetual exile from his native land, Tkachev remained closely oriented toward the planning of a Russian revolution. He kept in contact with the second Zemlya i Volya and the Narodnaya Volya, even ascending to the terrorism of the latter, a policy which was foreign to his Blanquist mentality which saw in terrorism only disorganized and unproductive attempts against individuals as opposed to the efficiently organized seizure of total power at the center. Tkachev's last attempts to link up with the remnants of Zaichnevsky's Blanquist following in Russia were his formation of "The Society for the Liberation of the People" in 1877, a small group which never penetrated significantly either in form or content into Russia itself, and also an abortive effort in 1880 to move the printing press of Nabat into Russia, the result being the loss of the printing press and the termination of Nabat. He then moved to Paris, where he collaborated with Blanqui in his journal Ni dieu, ni maître, his most significant article being a tribute paid to Blanqui upon his death in 1881. From 1882 to 1886, Tkachev lay in a lunatic asylum, where he died on January 4, 1886.

Tkachev's career as a revolutionary publicist can be described in terms of his positive ideas on the nature and tactics of revolution, and on the



relationship of capitalism to the Russian economy, and also his polemics against the followers of Lavrov and Bakunin. His prolific writings of the years 1867-9, when he basked in the carried-over influence of Zaichnevsky and in his collaboration with the extreme radical Nechaev, mark his first plunge into revolutionary propaganda for the Russian Jacobin cause. His ideology was strictly Russian-oriented, for he had not yet met with the Blanquist current of Western Europe. Venturi says of this phase in Tkachev's revolutionary mentality; "The Russian Jacobinism of Zaichnevsky and Tkachev is a political phenomenon born of the discussions of the sixties which only later in the 'seventies joined hands with the movement in Western Europe. . . Tkachev. . . was a Russian Jacobin before becoming an exiled Blanquist."<sup>1</sup> His early articles never mention Blanqui's name, though this could be attributed to the Russian censorship. Tursky, one of Tkachev's Blanquist friends in Geneva, later said after the death of Blanqui: " 'It is just because the tsarist government understood the universal significance of the principles represented so eminently by Auguste Blanqui that it had forbidden his name to be spoken in Russia. . . ' "<sup>2</sup> It seems obvious, however, that Tkachev had only a general picture of Western European revolutionary tactics and in the main evolved his Jacobin ideas independently of them.

"A Programme of Revolutionary Activity" dates from the Nechaev-Tkachev period of collaboration, and Kozmin, Tkachev's Soviet interpreter, sees this pamphlet as the inspiration for the program of Nabat in the 1870's.<sup>3</sup> The "Programme" was formulated in the hopes of a general uprising occurring on February 19, 1870, the ninth anniversary of the emancipation of the serfs. The foremost task of the revolutionary party was to be the " 'annihilation

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<sup>1</sup>Venturi, p. 403.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid, p. 778n.

<sup>3</sup>P. N. Tkachev. Izbranniye Sochineniya na Sotsialno-Politicheskiye Temi v Chetirekh tomakh, Izdatel'stvo Vsesoyuznogo Obshchestva Politkatorzhan i Ssilno-Poselentsev, Moscow, 1932 (B. P. Kozmin, ed.) vol. 1, p. 18. (Hereafter referred to as Tkachev, Izbranniye Sochineniya.)

of the nest of existing power,' that is, political revolution, since a radical reconstruction of social and economic relations was impossible under the existing political system". . . 'Thus, social revolution, as our final goal.' <sup>4</sup> The revolutionaries, however, were faced with an ignorant mass of peasants, unaware of the necessity of the revolution; therefore, in order that this blind mass could be depended upon as a revolutionary force, it was the duty of the revolutionary party to "hasten their awareness, to prepare it, to attempt to act upon their minds in such a way as to assure that this awareness would appear to them unexpected, that they might act consciously, if possible calmly, and not under the influence of fear, their eyes filled with blood."<sup>5</sup> All important to this task was the creation of a high-quality revolutionary party, whose activity would consist in the "distribution of proclamations, the collection of revolutionary funds, the establishment of ties with the European revolutionary organizations, and the organization of demonstrations and 'private protests.'" <sup>6</sup> The rebellion for 1870 did not materialize, due to Tkachev's arrest in March, 1869, but the guidelines of Nechaev's subsequent activities and of Tkachev's progression toward Blanquism were already manifest.

In other articles written during this period, couched in literary reviews, Tkachev's language assumed its most radical flavor. The bold egalitarianism of his days with the Olshevsky Circle was made more sophisticated by Proudhonian anarchism and the socialism of Louis Blanc. In an article entitled "Men of the Future and Heroes of the Bourgeoisie" (1868), Tkachev described, in the tradition of Chernyshevsky and Pisarev, the new men of the future, the thinking elite:

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid, p. 18.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid, p. 19.

<sup>6</sup>Tkachev, Izbranniye Sochineniya, vol. 1, p. 19.

The distinctive sign of the men of the future consists in the fact that all their activity, even their entire manner of living is determined by one wish, one passionate idea--to make the majority of people happy and to invite as many participants as possible to the banquet of life. The realization of this idea becomes the only goal of their activity, because this idea is completely identified with their understanding of personal happiness. And everything is subordinated to this idea, everything yielded to it in sacrifice--if indeed one may speak here of sacrifice<sup>7</sup>. . . Thus, the men of the future--neither ascetics, now egoists, nor heroes--are ordinary men, yet their excellent ideas, which they have adopted and which rule over them, place them in such sharp opposition to all those who surround them, that the heroes of the bourgeoisie can really take them for extraordinary men. These excellent ideas, which constitute the inevitable, fatal result of our intellectual civilization, demand for their realization, first, an intense fight, second, a very lively, varied and not always safe activity.<sup>8</sup> (translation mine)

Chernyshevsky's Rakhmetov was one of these new men, completely wrapped up in his idea and his dedication to the happiness of mankind. From this thinking realist, it was but one step to Tkachev's revolutionary minority and the program of Nabat.

Nabat began publication in 1875; its distribution remained small because there were few Tkachev supporters either abroad or in Russia to insure its passage over the border. The paucity of supporters was attributable to two factors: the dominant stature of Bakunin and Lavrov in emigré circles, and the disaffectation of almost all the radical youth in the Russia of the early 1870's with the call for political turnover before social upheaval and the manipulation of power by a revolutionary party before, during, and after that political revolution. Sergei Kravchinsky, a member of the second "Zemlya i Volya," said on the appearance of Nabat: " 'Tkachev is publishing a journal under the name of Nabat. In essence its program will be an abomination-- political revolution, but cloaked, of course, by social revolution. . . In a revolution all genres are good except Jacobins and autocrats.' "<sup>9</sup> Tkachev himself in some of his last writings justified both the program and the limited distribution of his newspaper:

<sup>7</sup>Ibid, p. 174.

<sup>8</sup>Tkachev, Izbrannye Sochineniya, vol. 1, p. 181.

<sup>9</sup>Quoted by Kozmin, ibid, p. 26.

'I never gave particular importance to the distribution of Nabat in Russia. . . Nabat was not an agitational revolutionary pamphlet; its purpose consisted only in turning revolutionaries to the only practically valid ideas and principles of revolutionary activity, from which they, under the influence of the reaction and of the anarchist and Lavrist gibberish, began to disown. These ideas and influences included nothing new, but were to remind them (i.e., revolutionaries) that they were not evil. And Nabat could fulfil (and actually did fulfil) this task, in spite of not being distributed in Russia. It was enough that only a few revolutionary activists became acquainted with its program and basic principles, so that among them it aroused talk and activity; it was enough to remind a small number of revolutionaries of forgotten ideas, and then revolutionary activity would not be slow to prove the wisdom and feasibility of these ideas and to cause their distribution among the majority of revolutionaries. I know very well that in Russia there are few who have Nabat in their hands, but its existence, its program, its principles were well known in almost all the revolutionary circles.<sup>10</sup> (translation mine)

Tkachev was certainly overly optimistic concerning the attitude with which these revolutionary circles viewed what they knew of Nabat's program, but Kozmin commends him for the consistent propagation of his unpopular theories, in contrast to those revolutionary leaders (for instance, Bakunin) who hid their centralizing tactics behind broad statements of human equality and freedom in order to please the idealism of their disciples in Russia.<sup>11</sup> These latter, disillusioned in the advisability of a secret revolutionary elite by Nechaev, eschewed both authority and internal discipline, struggling to reinstate the principles of loose federation and individual self-determination in their organizations. Tkachev condemned this mentality, seeing in its uncoordinated activity an incapability of reaching quick decisions and pursuing strong action against the formidable, organized autocracy. Their emphasis upon the bourgeois concept of individualism,

<sup>10</sup>Quoted by Kozmin in Tkachev, Izbranniye Sochineniya, vol. 1, pp. 26-27.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid, p. 52.



this " 'placing of personality higher than the common element, singularity higher than the whole, egoism higher than selflessness,' "12 left them vulnerable to vascillation and compromise, counter-revolution and defeat. To Tkachev the question of unified strength was a question of life or death.

The success of the revolution. . . is possible only with the creation of an organization, uniting all the uncoordinated revolutionary elements in one active body, acting on one common plan, subordinating itself to one common leadership--an organization based on the centralization of power and the decentralization of function.<sup>13</sup>

The creators of this organization must come from the raznochintsi, the intelligentsia rising from the lower classes to positions of importance as scholars and publicists of revolutionary propaganda. Their qualifications are twofold: " 'This part of the intelligentsia, on the one hand, know well the people's misfortunes and understand the urgent hopes of the people, and, on the other hand, they have mastered the theories expounded by the best critical minds of the West. This gives them the right to assume leadership of the social revolution.' "14

This description touches upon the controversial question of the relationship of the revolutionary minority to the masses of the people. Tkachev was constantly under fire for his apparent discounting of the masses as a significant revolutionary force, as evidenced by Kravchinsky's remark derogating Tkachev's "Jacobinism," and in line with the above mentioned definition by Karpovich of a Jacobin, i.e., an advocate of political revolution by an elite minus popular help.<sup>15</sup> Yet, Kozmin indicated that this attack on Tkachev was unjustified, quoting his statement " 'The attack upon the center of power and its seizure by revolutionary hands, if not accompanied by a

<sup>12</sup>Ibid, p. 52.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid, p. 52.

<sup>14</sup>Quoted by Kozmin in Tkachev, Izbranniye Sochineniya, vol. 1, p. 51.

<sup>15</sup>See above, p.



popular upheaval (even if only local), can lead, only under extremely favorable circumstances, to any sort of positive, durable results.'<sup>16</sup> In support of this justification, Kozmin in a footnote quotes this evaluation of Tkachev by I. A. Teodorovich, another Soviet historian.

'It never occurred to Tkachev to ask himself: how can one connect the one belief--that without the people it is impossible to seize power, with the other belief--that without propaganda among the people, i.e., without the people, it is possible to effect a forceful revolution.'<sup>17</sup>

And Kozmin concludes:

Actually, Tkachev did not give much importance to propaganda, considering that it by itself could not convert the masses into a revolutionary force. For the achievement of the revolution, not propaganda is necessary, but the creation of such conditions that the people would feel that behind them stood strength and that this strength was fully capable of supporting them. The people will rise up, in Tkachev's opinion, when fear of the existing power is extinguished in them, and they are convinced that this power in reality is not as strong as it appears. . . . Only this belief can unite them; once having united, they will feel strength even in themselves. . . . Only then can the people be converted from a potential, into an actual, revolutionary force.<sup>18</sup> (translation mine)

Revolutionary propaganda, then, is pre-empted in its revolutionary significance for Tkachev by the organized activity of the elite at the head of the people.

In this connection, Tkachev elaborated his view of the people as instinctive revolutionaries in their looting, burning, and killing of their landlord's property and person, and almost in the words of Bakunin, whom he later criticized for his anarchistic views, Tkachev classified the upheaval of the people in the revolution led by the elite as an essentially destructive one, since the people are only capable of destruction:

<sup>16</sup>Tkachev, Izbranniye Sochineniya, vol. 1, p. 48.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid, p. 48n.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid, p. 48n.

'The relation of the revolutionary minority to the people and the participation of the latter in the revolution perhaps is secured in the following manner: the revolutionary minority, having freed the people from the yoke oppressing them by fear and terror before the powers that be, opens up for them the possibility of manifesting its destructive revolutionary strength, and, operating from this strength, shrewdly directing it toward the annihilation of the immediate enemies of the revolution, the revolutionary minority destroys their (i.e., enemies of the revolution) guarded strongholds and robs them of every means to resistance and opposition. Then, using its strength and authority, it introduces new, progressively communistic elements into the fabric of the people's life.'<sup>19</sup> (1875) (translation mine)

It is upon these three basic points of Tkachev's political philosophy--

"The recognition of the tremendous importance of the conspiratorial organization of the revolutionary minority. . .the instructions on the necessity of the seizure, by this minority, of the governmental power with the purpose of the reconstruction of life on new socialistic bases. . .the recognition of the dictatorship of the revolutionary minority as the most realistic means for accomplishing this reconstruction,"<sup>20</sup>--that Kozmin bases his assessment of Tkachev as a spokesman of Blanquism: "The influence of Blanqui on Tkachev stands beyond doubt."<sup>21</sup>

Tkachev's attempt to translate his extremely well-organized theories into meaningful action resulted in ignominious failure, due to mistiming and to the lack of supporters in Russia. The "Society for the Liberation of the People" was formed in 1877 on the guidelines Tkachev had laid out, reminiscent of the "Programme" formulated by him in collaboration with Nechaev in 1869. Its purpose was to link up with the only Blanquist organization in Russia at that time, Zaichnevsky's Orel circle; but by 1877 that circle

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<sup>19</sup>Tkachev, Izbranniye Sochineniya, vol. 1, p. 51.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid, p. 51.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid, p. 31

was defunct, and Zaichnevsky had been transferred to another province. The character of the "Society" was ultra-conspiratorial, with the members sworn to keep secret both the existence of the organization and his membership in it. Much in the tradition of Bakunin's "Secret Alliance," the "Society" functioned under strict discipline and a hierarchial framework, and its members were permitted to join other revolutionary organizations only with the purpose of usurping their power structure and subordinating them ultimately to the influence of the "Society." Though the "Society" claimed ties with some of the activists in southern Russia, including I. M. Kovalsky (who was actually a member and who was executed at Odessa in 1878 for resisting arrest), the membership was limited almost entirely to the "Nabatovtsi."<sup>22</sup> The true Blanquists, Zaichnevsky and Tkachev, were destined to do the thinking and talking, while others held the real reins of revolutionary power.

Concerning the methods of precipitating revolt, Tkachev stood in firm opposition to the doctrines of both Lavrov and Bakunin. From 1874, when he published his "Tasks of Revolutionary Propaganda in Russia," attacking Lavrov's "peaceful progress" toward revolution, Tkachev was engaged in the battle with both these revolutionary tacticians. Yet, several of his articles in the 1868-9 period set the stage for his more specific polemics in the Nabat period. In preparing the groundwork for his Blanquist tactics, Tkachev in his article "Jaded Illusions" (1869) discussed contemptuously the two views of revolutionary agitation and propaganda, which, he claimed, shared an illusory idealization of the common masses. Tkachev deviated from the populist ideology in his objective criticism of the ignorance and reactionariness of the peasants, though we have seen he was willing to work through them in their capacity as destructive agents manipulated by the

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<sup>22</sup>Tkachev, Izbranniye Sochineniya, vol. 1, p. 28.

revolutionary minority. In 1869, as in his later writings, he consistently held to this critically realistic view of the peasant and denounced any tendency to see in the peasant anything resembling a trained revolutionary. The two opposing tendencies which he attacked in 1869 were the roots of Lavrovist and Bakuninist ideologies in the 1870's; his penetrating analysis of these currents reveals the weak points in the populist fabric and explains his own courageous stand on the necessity for a political revolution preceding the social revolution:

The idealization of the uncivilized masses--this is one of the most dangerous and most widespread illusions. It appears in two views, apparently in opposition, but in reality arising from one and the same source and leading to one and the same result. In the opinion of some, the uncivilized masses are still so coarse, ignorant, and so poorly conscious of their situation that it is premature to call them to action, that it is necessary to wait until they grow wiser, until they are fully emancipated from their environment, that they will emerge from themselves and will know how to get what they want. In the opinion of other, on the contrary, the uncivilized masses, by their own spontaneous purity, stand incomparably higher than the civilized crowd; in them is hidden the embryo of all glory and greatness; it is not necessary to teach them, but to learn from them, and in them the civilized people ought to search for a renewal of their strength; to impose upon them the ideals they would not have worked out for themselves, to push them along the path they would not have chosen for themselves--this means to perpetrate a great crime, to encroach upon their common sense and freedom. . . The popular spirit, popular soul, popular origins--these are holy things, which the civilized crowd dare not touch with its unclean hands nor analyze or criticize with its evil mind. . . In such a manner, both views idealize reality; one attributes to the people those ideal traits which they do not have at all; the other, however, does not idealize the masses, but those conditions of life in which they are immersed. . . One view says to the civilized people: wait, do not interfere in this matter; you are to do nothing in this situation for the uncivilized masses, while they grow wise enough, mature enough on their own. The other view says: wait, do not seek to be a teacher or leader of those whom you are unworthy of liberating, you who are merely straps from their boots, but attempt to merge with the uncivilized masses, to become imbued with their spirit, their origins, their soul and move together with them along that path, down which they will move toward you. . . In such a manner, both these illusions--the illusion of the people's self-development and the illusion of the people's soul--lead finally to one and the same result: to passive immobility, to the soothing persuasion that it is not necessary to do anything, while they do everything for themselves.<sup>23</sup> (translation mine)

<sup>23</sup> Tkachev, Izbranniye Sochineniya, vol. 1, pp. 326-327.



Both these methods involved beginning at the wrong end; Tkachev's answer was immediate revolution by a revolutionary minority, who by demonstrating its strength and authority would discredit the tsarist government in the eyes of the peasants and attract them to the destructive battle. His later polemics against the Lavrovist "propagandists" (people's self-development) and the Bakuninist "rebels" (people's soul) elaborated upon this initial statement of his revolutionary philosophy. In his "Tasks of Revolutionary Propaganda in Russia" (1874), Tkachev repeated these arguments and ended by saying " ' . . .we cannot wait. . .We assert that the revolution in Russia is urgently essential, and essential at this very time. . .It is now or very remote, perhaps never!' "24 In the first issue of Nabat (1875) was added this statement: " 'A revolutionary doesn't prepare a revolution, he 'makes' it. Do this! Do it quickly! Any irresolution, any delay, is criminal. . .!' "25

What is the reason for this urgency in Tkachev's call to revolution? The answer can be found in his copious analytical studies of the economic and political situation in Russia. As early as 1864, Tkachev was writing articles demonstrating his economic materialist leanings, and influenced by Proudhon, Louis Blanc, and particularly Marx, whom he quoted at length in his writings, he was persuaded of the necessity of a socialist rearrangement of Russian society. Western socialist theory, however, could not be transferred in toto to Russia for immediate application. What pertinence did a "dictatorship of the proletariat" and the war against bourgeois capitalism have to Russia, where the urban working class was a small minority

<sup>24</sup>Robert V. Daniels, "Lenin and the Russian Revolutionary Tradition," Harvard Slavic Studies, Mouton and Co., The Hague, The Netherlands, 1957, vol. IV, pp. 343-344.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid, p. 344. Daniels, in attempting to link the ideas of Tkachev and Lenin, quotes the latter as saying in October, 1917: " 'The Bolsheviks. . . must take power immediately. . .To hesitate is a crime. . .It is my deepest conviction that if we "await" the Congress of Soviets and let the present moment pass, we ruin the revolution.' " (p. 344)



and the entrepreneurial class even fewer? It was Herzen, then, who spoke to Tkachev with his "peasant socialism," with his concept of the direct transition from the peasant obshchina to the socialist society of the future, thereby skipping the capitalist stage of development. Tkachev, having imbibed the Marxian ideology and hatred for the bourgeois mentality, and fired with a passionate contempt for liberal attempts at reform and parliamentary democracy in general, assessed the situation particular to Russia--and denied the necessity for the development and subsequent decline of capitalism in Russia. Considering the nature of the Russian autocracy, Tkachev concluded that nothing good for the people could possibly emerge from its unequal social system and tight political control; therefore, the development of capitalism, besides being alien to the predominantly peasant Russian society, would serve only to support and strengthen the oppressors of the people. Socialism and the complete equality of the people must be established as soon as possible; any capitalistic encroachments upon the Russian society must be destroyed before it became permanently entrenched. This destruction cannot be done peacefully, for the autocracy and capitalism in Russia are blood brothers and inseparable; no socialist reforms can be expected from a privileged tyrannical power. The peasant class is the closest to the Marxian proletariat; it must be galvanized into action immediately--now or never--by the revolutionary minority for the destruction of capitalist remains in Russia. Only then could a truly egalitarian socialism be established by a dictatorship of the revolutionary minority. Tkachev, in an effort to justify ideologically this obvious deviation from orthodox Marxism, formulated his theory of historical "jumps."

In a review of Ernst Becher's Labor Problem (1869), Tkachev attacked the author's belief in reform within a capitalist state, called for a workers'

state, and noted the necessity of political turnover in order to accomplish an economic reorientation. It was a vicious circle: no material betterment without political control, and no political control without economic independence. Thus, he stated the necessity for a violent transition, a "jump" from subordination to landlord, bourgeois capitalists to the egalitarianism and freedom of socialism:

'Under the normal order of things political control belongs to those classes who dominate the economic sphere. . . But the normal order can be temporarily interrupted, . . . and then the vicious circle can be broken. . . It is absurd to expect a natural transition from the old regime to the new one, because the two are based on diametrically opposed principles. . . Everybody ought to know that this transition requires a certain jump, and everybody must prepare for it.'<sup>26</sup>

Tkachev in an earlier series of articles (1867-8), gave his theory legitimacy by providing it with both an historical basis and historical continuity. Analyzing the German Peasant Wars in the sixteenth century, he attributed the peasants' defeat, not to the prematureness of their revolt or to the utopian character of their demands, but rather to the hesitation of their leaders and their bourgeois allies to go along with the radical demands of the peasants. These demands were more practical than the moderate ones, for the simple reason that they were geared to the establishment of an entirely new social order. By emphasizing this point, Tkachev denounced those "historian-gradualists" who stated the necessity of society's hierarchially developing, slowly from lower to higher stage, and he added new fuel to the fire of his historical "jumps."<sup>27</sup>

With these "interruptious" in natural development and the Herzen-inspired principle of an immediate shift from pre-capitalism to post-capitalism, using the peasant as the revolutionary force, Tkachev was forced into the opposition

<sup>26</sup>Karpovich, "A Forerunner of Lenin: P. N. Tkachev," pp. 338-339.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid, p. 339-340.

ranks against Marxism. It is important to note, however, that Tkachev, unlike Herzen, never entertained the idea of avoiding industrialization entirely. He had been influenced enough by Marxism to appreciate the significance of the development of industry and a strong working class under the auspices of a socialist system. However, to him the peculiar conditions of Russia demanded that the revolution be conducted on the basis of the agricultural laborer and the prevention of a full-fledged capitalist system. Kozmin makes this concession to Tkachev, when, after condemning him for his deviations from orthodox Marxism, he explains the reasons behind them:

The economic backwardness of Russia, the weak development of its factory industry, the paucity and weakness of its working class--these are the reasons why Tkachev was not given the chance to adopt the Marxist theory in its complete view, to understand it as the class doctrine of an industrial proletariat, and to construct the plan of his revolutionary activity in conformity with it. This is why those who are ready to recognize Tkachev as the "first Russian Marxist" make a serious mistake. But a great mistake is made also by those who, in speaking of the ideological predecessors of Marxism in Russia and counting in these ranks not only Chernyshevsky but even partly Herzen, mention not a word about Tkachev. If Tkachev was not a Marxist, then no one in the Russia of his time perceived as strongly and as deeply the teachings of Marx as he, excepting perhaps N. N. Ziber, the immediate predecessor of the legal Marxists of the 1890's, who was significantly better than Tkachev in analyzing the economic teachings of the author of Kapital, but not in understanding the militant class character of Marxism. Where in the revolutionary attitude of Tkachev ended the influence of Marx, there began his Blanquism, his Jacobinism.<sup>28</sup> (translation mine)

With this discussion of the motivation of Tkachev's "now or never" revolutionary attitude and the previous one concerning his views on revolutionary methods, Tkachev's Blanquism appears almost complete. There is one ingredient lacking, however, and that one is certainly the most significant of all, for it distinguished Tkachev from all the other Russian radicals of his time in revolutionary honesty and consistency of thought. That ingredient is the dictatorship of the revolutionary minority after the overthrow of the tsarist government.

<sup>28</sup>Tkachev, Izbranniye Sochineniya, vol. 1, pp. 46-47.

This element of revolutionary expediency was based on Tkachev's view of the peasant, as discussed above. Assessing this peasant as a purely destructive force, Tkachev was deeply concerned over the creation of the new egalitarian, socialist society after the coup d'état. The revolutionary minority, conveniently holding the reins of power in its hand, was the only capable body for assuring the success of both the destructive and constructive phases of the revolution. In this concept, as much as in the theory of revolutionary conspiracy, Tkachev was inspired by Blanqui; it was the "Parisian dictatorship" translated into a "Petersburg dictatorship." Consistently propagating such an overt manipulation of centralized power, Tkachev could not fail to come into conflict with Bakunin and the anarchists. Their dream of the future society, shared by Herzen, and Lavrov, was a loose federation of free, autonomous societies. Needless to say, this was Tkachev's dream also, egalitarian and socialist as he consistently was, but it was in the means of achieving that society that he differed from Bakunin. The anarchist believed that all phases of the autocratic system, and especially the government, were intrinsically evil, and therefore must be destroyed immediately, totally, in order to liberate the masses. His vision clouded by a utopian fog, Bakunin saw the spontaneous establishment of the new system by the instinctively socialistic peasants.

Tkachev maintained a more practical view of the length of time required for instituting the principles of Socialism in a country newly freed from centuries of autocratic rule and the exploitation of landlordism. The social overthrow must be thorough; it must reconstruct not only institutions, but attitudes, ideals, morals to fit the new system. Such a revolution, in Tkachev's words, " 'will not be accomplished in one or two years, . . .it will require the work of a whole generation, . . .it appears not ex abrupto,



but is prepared and brought to life slowly, gradually, step by step.<sup>29</sup> At the same time, Tkachev warned of the folly of believing that any revolution, even the most violent, can destroy at one blow all the enemies of the revolution. They will constantly be organizing counter-revolutionary efforts, which the new society must combat in order to survive. Such a dual battle--the creation of a completely new society and the destruction of the enemies of the revolution--must be conducted by a body possessing great strength, which implies in turn the power of manipulation.

But power--as Kozmin interprets Tkachev's opinions--is durable and mighty only when it is well-organized, and that is attainable only under the centralization of every separate function of power and the differentiation of these functions. And power organized in such a manner is that which one chooses to call government. This is why, rather than destroy the governmental apparatus, the revolutionaries, in Tkachev's opinion, ought to use it in the achievement of the social revolution.<sup>30</sup> (translation mine)

In this connection, Tkachev again took up the battle against the anarchism of Bakunin and Lavrov. The anarchists thought that government is evil, but Tkachev maintained that government was not the source, but the consequence of evil. Evil was equated in his mind with inequality; as long as inequality existed, government was necessary to protect the weak, exploited classes. A condition of no-government or anarchy was inconceivable without the previous establishment of brotherhood and equality:

Thus, in Tkachev's opinion, government becomes unnecessary and abdicates only after complete equality exists among the people, that is, when the beginning of communism is established. In the transition period, the governmental power--is an indispensable weapon in the hands of the revolutionary party.<sup>31</sup> (translation mine)

Thus, Tkachev, the practical revolutionary tactician, cognizant of the pitfalls of idealism in the realm of activity and of the impossibility of

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<sup>29</sup>Tkachev, Izbranniye Sochineniya, vol. 1, p. 53.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid, p. 53.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid, p. 54.



establishing immediate anarchy, committed the same fallacy for the sake of his own ideal-egalitarianism; in short, he failed, like Herzen, to make the logical conclusion of his ideas on revolutionary dictatorship and to heed the warnings of Bakunin on the danger of passing from an old tsarist dictatorship to a new socialist dictatorship of the revolutionary minority. Kozmin, naturally, writing in 1932 in the very midst of a Stalinist dictatorial government, was cautious with his praise of Tkachev as a Leninist prototype. He emphasized clearly his subject's theories on the necessity for dictatorial power in the transition period, without at the same time mentioning the danger of Tkachev's temporary dictatorship becoming a permanent institution. Stalin was the logical conclusion of Tkachev's theories, though the latter would have shuddered at the unnecessary ruthlessness of the former.

Thus, Kozmin takes issue with those who criticize Tkachev for his anarchism, beginning with Engels, who treated Tkachev as an adherent of Bakunin. Tkachev's "Open Letter" to Engels in 1870 gave the latter grounds for this belief, but Engels was not reading this letter in context with Tkachev's earlier polemics against Bakunin and Lavrov. Kozmin sees in Tkachev's wish for destruction of the tsarist power and the eventual abdication of the revolutionary government something very different from anarchism. It was more similar to the Marxist "dictatorship of the proletariat" than to Bakuninist pan-destructive anarchism. He paraphrases Lenin's The State and the Revolution, inspired by Marx and Engels of course, on the differentiation between anarchists and socialists:

. . .the difference between the anarchists and socialists comes not to the fact that the first negate the state while the second accept it, but to the fact that the socialists, in opposition to the anarchists, in the first place, recognize governmental power as an indispensable weapon in the course of the transition period for the reconstruction of society on the roots of communism, and in the second place, they

consider that the government renders itself unnecessary and abdicates only when the reconstruction of society is finished. Therefore, Tkachev's conviction that in the future, government is destined to disappear still does not justify calling him an anarchist.<sup>32</sup>

Kozmin also sees the justification of Tkachev's Blanquist principles in the degree with which they were adopted by revolutionary activists after the failure of the "to the people" movement in 1874. The second "Zemlya i Volya," formed in 1876, based its party structure upon centralized authority and internal discipline in a genuine adaptation of Tkachev's conspiratorial principles, and the organ of "Narodnaya Volya" proclaimed both orthodox populist ideas and the Blanquist views of Nabat on the necessity for the preparation for the seizure of power by a revolutionary party--in other words, political revolution before social revolution. Kozmin fails to observe, however, that the goal of "Narodnaya Volya" was not a Blanquist dictatorship, but the immediate convocation of a Constituent Assembly, in the election of which the revolutionary party would campaign legally for its program. This point will be discussed in the forthcoming chapter on "Narodnaya Volya."

It is in connection with this latter organization, however, that an interesting epilogue to Tkachev's revolutionary tactics occurred. "Narodnaya Volya," though proclaiming socialist goals, had chosen to conduct a political revolution in order to reach those goals quickly and efficiently, and the principle element of its attack upon the tsarist government was in its use of terror or assassination against government officials. Tkachev and the "Nabatovts" were opposed to individual terror, for these uncoordinated acts led, in their opinion, only to the dispersion and weakening of the strength of the revolutionary party. His fears were realized for "Narodnaya Volya,"

<sup>32</sup>Tkachev, Izbranniye Sochineniya, vol. 1, pp. 54-55.

when in the repression after each assassination, their force was depleted drastically, culminating in the complete destruction of the party in the aftermath of the assassination of Alexander II. In only one respect did Tkachev agree to the application of terror--against government spies.

In the spring of 1880, however, two members of the Executive Committee of "Narodnaya Volya," N. A. Morozov and Gerasim Romanenko, appeared before Tkachev and suggested an alliance between their organization and the "Society for the Liberation of the People." Tkachev grasped the idea enthusiastically; here was another opportunity to link up with the Russian revolutionaries, with the most significant and most active revolutionary party in Russia at that time. The "Society" offered money and a printing press, but it was soon discovered that Morozov and Romanenko were leftist deviationists from the views of the Executive Committee, with which they had argued and indeed severed all relations. The "Narodovoltsi" shunned any agreement with Tkachev and the "Nabatovtsi," prejudiced as they were against his ideas on dictatorship, though making use of Blanquist tactics in their conspiracy. The two deviationists began to function separately as "socialist-terrorists," publishing two pamphlets in Geneva advocating terror and "disorganization" to force the government to make concessions. Kozmin speaks of the reaction of the "Nabatovtsi" to this propaganda:

To the adherents of a conspiratorial organization with the goal of the seizure of power--the "Nabatovtsi"--the thought of the limitation of the task of the revolutionaries to one terroristic activity was completely alien. There was not a single sympathizer among the "Nabatovtsi" with the idea of the advisability of terror as the means for conducting the political struggle.<sup>33</sup>

It seems clear that not only Tkachev but the whole of his Nabat following was opposed to the idea of terror. Yet, there is a curious inconsistency here, concerning an incident which is supposed to have occurred two years before.

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<sup>33</sup>Tkachev, Izbranniye Sochineniya, vol. 1, p. 29.

Kaspar Tursky, Tkachev's Polish collaborator on the publication of Nabat, was an advocate of terror, according to Kozmin, and during the course of 1877-8, he wrote several articles calling for mass terror against all supporters of the old regime in Russia. Tkachev attacked his articles and refused to print them, but Tursky gathered together his supporters from the "Nabatovtsi" and delivered an ultimatum to Tkachev: either print the articles, and thereby recognize the use of terror, or leave Nabat. Tkachev, faced with this threat of his expulsion from the only sounding board for his Blanquist views, gave in to the majority and thereby relinquished his position as leader of the "Nabatovtsi."<sup>34</sup> Either Kozmin is mistaken in his description ~~of the earlier incident~~ of the earlier incident, or by the spring of 1880, Tursky and the "Nabatovtsi" had become disenchanted with the idea of terror, which fact seems highly unlikely.

At any rate, Tkachev's consistent opposition to the use of terror is made clear by these two incidents, in spite of the common and false accusation against all orthodox Blanquists for their advocacy of terror. Kozmin is obviously anxious to absolve Tkachev of this stigma, much in the orthodox Leninist line, for in What is to be done? (1902), Lenin makes a curious reference to the "terrorism" of Tkachev. Anxious to discredit Nadezhdin (who in Rabocheye Delo (The Workers' Cause) in April, 1901, had sounded a passionate call for attack against the tsarist government with a flagrant lack of planning), Lenin differentiated between Tkachev's and Nadezhdin's "terror":

It is said that history does not repeat itself. But Nadezhdin exerts every effort to cause it to repeat itself and he zealously imitates Tkachov in strongly condemning "revolutionary culturism," in shouting about "sounding the tocsin and about a special "eve-of-the-revolution point of view," etc. Apparently, he had forgotten

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid, p. 29.



the well-known maxim that while an original historical event represents a tragedy, its replica is merely a farce. The attempt to seize power, which was prepared by the preaching of Tkachov and carried out by means of the "terrifying" terror that did really terrify, had grandeur, but the "excitative" terror of a Tkachov the Little is simply ludicrous, particularly so when it is supplemented with the idea of an organization of average people.<sup>35</sup>

Obviously, the Tkachev-inspired "terrifying" terror referred to by Lenin possesses a more exalted and justifiable character than the individual terror of Tursky, Morozov, and Romanenko and the "excitative" terror of Nadezhdin. It is a question of terror or revolutionary activity conducted with planning and organization, with the power to back up inflammatory words with decisive action. Lenin's What is to be done? could very well have been partially inspired by Tkachev, though there is no other direct reference to the latter in the pamphlet besides the one mentioned above. Lenin's elite of professional conspiratorial revolutionaries, his insistence upon the necessity of a seizure of power by that elite, and the bold assertion that the elite must then use its power to reeducate the masses to the socialist faith are all echoes of Tkachev. Michael Karpovich, in his article comparing the tactics of Tkachev and Lenin, makes this evaluation:

When some of his Menshevik critics accused Lenin of going back to the conspiratorial methods of the terrorists of the 1870's, he accepted the challenge and boldly asserted that what was needed was a 'Social Democratic Zheliabov.' (one of leaders of "Narodnaya Volya") With an equal right he could have spoken of a 'Social Democratic Tkachev.'<sup>36</sup>

Kozmin does not emphasize the connection between Tkachev and Lenin, writing as he did under a Stalinist interdict upon all non-Marxist roots of Lenin and the Soviets and after the elimination of the Pokrovsky School, the foremost propagators of the Russian Blanquists. But the implications of

<sup>35</sup>V. I. Lenin, Collected Works, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1961, vol. 5, pp. 510-511.

<sup>36</sup>"A Forerunner of Lenin: P. N. Tkachev," p. 347.



influence are clear, and Kozmin is emphatic on the necessity of including Tkachev among the Russian revolutionary "greats."

Certainly the most outstanding contribution of Tkachev's career as a revolutionary publicist and tactician lies in the purity and remarkable consistency of his ideas. Such a passionate concern for the equality and freedom of the masses and the clear statement of motivation, tactics, and goals could not have failed to attract the mind and heart of Lenin. That such a pure mind and passion should have been so ill-respected by his contemporaries is inconceivable; the Russian revolutionaries of the 1860's and 1870's were nurtured by and functioned only under exalted ideals. However, Tkachev's honesty sounded foreign to them, especially since the only other prominent Russian figure who propagated ideas similar to Tkachev's was Nechaev, who besmirched the purity of Blanquist theory with his ruthless actions. "Blanquist" became a dirty word to the revolutionaries, and the heritage of Tkachev lay in the dust, to be revived only in the twentieth century by Lenin. Tkachev, the grand old man of Russian Blanquism, destined to be misunderstood by his contemporaries, was thus somewhat of an intellectual martyr to the Russian revolutionary cause, a man who regarded the compromise of his theories as inconceivable.

PART II

THE APPLICATION OF THE THEORY

With Herzen, Bakunin, and Tschekov destined to play the role of permanent exiles abroad, communicating with Russian revolutionaries only through the illegal press, and Zaitchewsky persecuted by the Third Section into relatively useless activity in the provinces, the instrument of revolutionary power passed into the hands of figures less significant in their contributions to theory but more successful in organizing radical forces for revolutionary action. Chernyshevsky's and Pisarev's "new man" received and modified the heritage of the "raznochintai," the uprooted intellectuals of the 1840's and 1850's, and, allied with a sense of revolutionary urgency, this heritage passed on to a new generation of activists.

The "Organization" and "Hell": Immature Devils

Counting of themselves the most ruthless and most precious sacrifice--their very lives.

From the remnants of "Zemlya i Volga," dead since 1863, arose a new secret society called the "Organization." Its founder Nikolai Iabutin was born in Saratov on April 3, 1840, and entered Moscow University in 1863. Iabutin idolized Chernyshevsky: "There have been three great men in the world...Jesus Christ, Paul the Apostle, and Chernyshevsky." Modeling himself after the heroes of What is to be done?, Iabutin fell into that anti-intellectualism which superficially appeared to be inspired by Pisarev's nihilism, but which in reality harbored an inherent popular distrust of the isolation and bourgeois mentality of the university-educated Russian. Iabutin attracted similar young radicals, who also had made the "voluntary sacrifice" of their schooling and even of their moral

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From the remnants of "Zemlya i Volga," dead since 1863, arose a new secret society called the "Organization." Its founder Nikolai Ishutin was born in Serdovsk on April 3, 1840, and entered Moscow University in 1863. Ishutin idolized Chernyshevsky: "'There have been three great men in the world...Jesus Christ, Paul the Apostle, and Chernyshevsky.'"<sup>1</sup> Modelling himself after the heroes of What is to be done?, Ishutin fell into that anti-intellectualism which superficially appeared to be inspired by Pisarev's nihilism, but which in reality harbored an inherent popular distrust of the isolation and bourgeois mentality of the university-educated Russian. Ishutin attracted similar young radicals, who also had made the "voluntary sacrifice" of their schooling and even of their normal

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted in Venturi, p. 331.

living comforts, and he soon made up for his lack of superior intellectual ability and publicist talent, in leadership qualities. His group, fired with an intense desire to meet and aid the oppressed people, founded Chernyshevskian cooperative associations among the students, workers, and artisans, and even formulated schemes for running small factories in order to finance the revolutionary cause and for creating Owenite colonies in Siberia. Ishutin, unprepossessing, hunchbacked, "nicknamed 'the General',"<sup>2</sup> became interested particularly in the factory workers of Moscow, encouraging the formation of a workers' cooperative, enhanced by a labor exchange and a professional school for training sons of members. His every attempt to organize these deprived masses, either for agitation through demonstrations or for peaceful communal experiments, was stymied by some legal technicality.

Frustrated by this failure to reach the people through legal organization, these ascetic anti-intellectuals turned to propaganda in the area potentially most dangerous to the State--elementary education. Dismissing contemptuously the normal "culturizing" curriculum, Ishutin helped to organize a boys' school in the slums of Moscow with the purpose of instilling discontent in the young minds:

Here a slanted variety of elementary instruction was offered. Thus, the teacher, after pointing out that the eagle was a bird of prey, would observe that a government flaunting the eagle on its coat of arms (Russia was, of course, such a one) only proved thereby that it was as rapacious and blood-thirsty as that bird. The arithmetic teacher, having led his pupils to admit that one was less than seventy-two million, indeed, an insignificant quantity in comparison, would say: 'Well, we have one czar, but there are seventy-two million of us.' Ishutin is said to have remarked: 'We will make revolutionaries out of these boys.'<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Yarmolinsky, Road to Revolution, p. 136.

<sup>3</sup>Yarmolinsky, pp. 136-137.



It was merely a resuscitated "Sunday school," but the ideology of the future "Organization" lay nascent within it: hatred for the tsarist government and regicide.

The "Organization" came to life on this basis between 1865 and 1866. "The General" was its leader in Moscow, and it was linked with a similar group in Petersburg. Within the "Organization" itself functioned a smaller core of leaders, called "Hell" and admittedly a terrorist group. Both centers of the secret society proclaimed vague plans for the social revolution, but the Petersburg group, under the leadership of I. A. Khudyakov, placed its hopes in a political revolution from above and the establishment of an indispensable democracy, while Ishutin's terrorist group in Moscow denounced Western constitutionalism and never went far beyond planning the assassination of the Tsar. It was from within the Moscow group that Dmitri Karakozov arose and independently planned his attempt upon the Tsar's life.

Karakozov, Ishutin's cousin, born in the Saratov department on October 23, 1840, was "a morose, self-centred youth, deaf in one ear, whose grey eyes were set in a lean, sickly face"<sup>4</sup>... "a pale and tired face, hair flowing on to his shoulders; he was noticeable for the carelessness of his clothes."<sup>5</sup> After attending Kazan University, from which he was expelled in 1861 for participating in student riots, Karakozov came to Moscow in 1864, where he again was forced to leave the university, this time for lack of funds. He came under the influence of Ishutin, was briefly a master in one of the latter's schools, but, fired with an intense hatred of the aristocracy and an equally intense passion for the

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<sup>4</sup>Yarmolinsky, p. 138.

<sup>5</sup>Venturi, p. 344.

liberation of the masses, he was drawn more to "Hell" and to regicide plans. Yarmolinsky says of his presence at the meetings of the secret core group: "At the gatherings he listened carefully, but hardly ever opened his mouth. The talk of self-immolation, of daring action, fascinated him. He was a soul possessed. The cause of the common people was this ruling passion."<sup>6</sup> Seriously ill during the winter 1865-66, he was plagued with the thought of dying before he could contribute to the cause. Karakozov retired temporarily in February, 1866, to the monastery of the Trinity and Saint Sergius near Moscow, but then returned to the group and announced his decision to kill the Tsar personally.

"Hell" was nonplussed; the realization of their idle talk was a staggering thought. Although the others attempted to dissuade him, Karakozov left in March for Petersburg with a gun. Associating with students and workers, Karakozov wrote a manifesto "To Worker Friends," in which he foolishly explained in simple language his intention of killing the Tsar who was responsible for the sufferings of the people and who had betrayed them by his false reforms in 1861. It was an amateurish anarchistic polemic against the State, and as such it should have alarmed the Petersburg officials, who, however, ignored it as harmless.

Khudyakov, with whom Karakozov had come in contact, was naturally opposed to the assassination, for the program of the Petersburg group had been "long-term propaganda and infiltration among the people,"<sup>7</sup> a decidedly more propagandistic and, for that matter, more populist strategy. Karakozov's passionate dedication, however, could not fail to inspire the radicals, and their strategy-planning was transformed immediately into the

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<sup>6</sup>Yarmolinsky, p. 138.

<sup>7</sup>Venturi, p. 347.

formulation of tactics for the popular uprising to accompany Karakozov's act. The sense of immediacy clouded their perspective, and surprisingly they decided to attribute the assassination to the nobles who were dissatisfied with emancipation, thereby encouraging the peasants to rise up against the nobility. This attitude was exactly what "Narodnaya Valya" attempted to avoid in 1881, preferring their act to appear as the expression of a party of, by, and for the people. Peasants here and there in 1881 actually did blame the nobles for the death of the Tsar, but they did not rise up. The purity of Karakozov's motivation was thus fruitlessly sullied in a Machiavellian manner by the Petersburg group.

Khudyakov meanwhile went to Moscow and informed the "Hell" of Karakozov's activities, whereupon two Muscovites traveled to Petersburg to bid the aspiring assassin to return to Moscow. On March 25, 1866, he was in Moscow, being exhorted to give up his plan, but on March 29, he was back in Petersburg, where on April 4, he shot at and missed the Tsar in the Summer Garden. Caught by the police and members of the crowd, Karakozov is said to have shouted; "'Fools, I've done this for you;'" when asked later by the Tsar if he was a Pole, he said, "'Pure Russian;'" and when questioned for his reasons, he said, "'Look at the freedom you gave the peasants!'"<sup>8</sup> Though Ishutin, under intense interrogation, never revealed any names, his discovered papers led to the "Organization" in Petersburg and Moscow. Karakozov was obviously deranged, and he himself had addressed a plea for mercy to the Tsar, claiming the equivalent of temporary insanity; but his death sentence was not commuted, and he was hanged on October 3, 1866. Ishutin was condemned to death also, but his sentence was commuted to forced labor for life in Siberia, where he died

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 347.

of consumption on January 5, 1879. Khudyakov was banished to Siberia, where he died of mental illness on September 17, 1876. The aftermath of the attempt was a repressive "White Terror," during which all revolutionary societies were driven underground, the most significant group being the "Academy of Smorgon," which carried on the Chernyshevsky and Karakozov cults and whose leaders were arrested in November, 1869, reportedly for attempting to blow up the Tsar's train. Previously, they had made efforts in 1867 to establish contact with the "European Revolutionary Committee," which Ishutin had claimed was the "Organization"'s European counterpart, but the effort resulted only in the smuggling back into Russia of Bakunin's first issue of Narodnoe Delo (The People's Cause), which inspired the underground circles, but which resulted in the arrest of the smugglers.

Ishutin's "Organization" is treated only in passing by the Soviets, but the germs of Nechaev's secret society activities and the assassination attempts of "Narodnaya Volya" were obviously present in the brief and tragic existence of this group. Significantly, the strategy of a Beauquist dictatorship with the purpose of building the socialist society of the future is lacking in the ideology of this secret society. Rather, the tactics of organizing a secret society, based on authority, obedience, and discipline, with the goal of instigating a social revolution, were foremost in the minds of, at least, the Moscow radicals. It has already been mentioned that the two centers differed on political orientation. Khudyakov was a true populist, for he possessed a genuine love, almost idolization, of the peasant masses. His interests were ethnography and folklore, and he made use of fables and even Bible maxims in his propaganda to reach his ignorant readers. He favored political revolution, not in the sense of an authoritarian party overthrowing the Tsar and



dictating the measures necessary for achieving a socialist system, but in the sense of going among the people and agitating for a shift to democracy and socialism based on the peasant obshchina. His ideas were not well-defined, but perhaps this fact is attributable to his various methods for awakening the dormant desire for democratic government. In The Self-Teacher Khudyakov spoke of a democracy, believing it necessary for the advent of socialism, in spite of the evils inherent in Western-style democracies, and he idolized the government of the United States.<sup>9</sup> In For True Christians. A Work by Ignatius, he delivered these Bible maxims, doctored to suit his own sentiments:

'Any nation which does not elect its own officials and does not keep count of their activities, is the slave of its superiors'....'The Bible demands that Kings should be elected. They must be chosen by the people and their power must be limited'.. ..'The Lord, when he gave his people land in Palestine, ordered them to farm it collectively and divide it among themselves in equal parts.'<sup>10</sup>

In another instance, he addressed an appeal to the Tsar for continued reforms and the convocation of a Zemsky Sobor. His entire orientation was toward the peasant, his freedom, his obshchina, and for that reason it would be more correct to call him a peasant socialist in the Herzen tradition, with a penchant toward peaceful evolution from above by a constitutional monarchy, than to label him an advocate of violent revolution from below, destroying everything in its path. It is obvious that Khudyakov does not fit in the category of Russian Blanquists, in spite of the freak instance with Karakozov, in which he attempted to apply his idealistic propaganda in an uncharacteristic Machiavellian maneuver.

The Moscow "Organization" and its executive body "Hell," on the other

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<sup>9</sup>Venturi, p. 340.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 342.



hand, relied almost solely upon Machiavellian tactics. The goals of the larger body were moderate enough: a peasant revolution prepared by propaganda among the people by an organization based upon a central body instructing groups dispersed among the provinces, where the revolutionaries would build up libraries and societies of discontented peasants, artisans, students, and seminarists. Ishutin himself planned to go live among the Cossacks and workers, spreading revolutionary socialist propaganda. But the provincial groups never materialized, and Ishutin and his followers fell more and more into the role of revolutionary terrorists. Determined to promote a radical economic revolution, Ishutin scorned a political revolution from above based on liberal constitutional reforms and censured the State and liberalism as enemies of the people. From this point of view, it was but one step to advocacy of terrorism--"a compound of revolutionary Machiavellianism and extreme Populism. The killing of the Tsar was to be the shock which would incite a social revolution or would at least compel the government to make substantial concessions to the peasants."<sup>11</sup>

At this point in the development of his ideology, Ishutin encountered stiff opposition from members within his own "Organization." There were some who echoed the Petersburg group in their desire for long-term, peaceful propaganda, and there were a few extremists who, like Ishutin, "pleaded for 'bang, bang,' instead of talk."<sup>12</sup> The latter formed "Hell" as a terroristic band dedicated to such ventures as the planned escape of Chernyshevsky from Siberia, the blowing up of the Peter and Paul fortress, and finally the assassination of important State officials, including the

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<sup>11</sup>Venturi, p. 335.

<sup>12</sup>Yarmolinsky, p. 137.

Tsar. "Hell" was a secret commune of students, limited to thirty selected revolutionaries, whose purpose was to keep watch over the "Organization" and to infiltrate other revolutionary organizations in order to subordinate them to their control. Funds were to be obtained in a ruthless manner by individual expropriation: robbery of merchants, poisoning of parents to receive legacies earlier. "Hell" functioned under the severest discipline:

A member of "Hell" must live under a false name and break all family ties; he must not marry; he must give up his friends; and in general he must live with one single, exclusive aim: an infinite love and devotion for his country and its good. For his country he must give up all personal satisfaction and in exchange he must feel hatred for hatred, ill-will for ill-will, concentrating these emotions within himself. He must live by feeling satisfied with this aspect of his life.<sup>13</sup>

Disobedience or error justified the punishment of death. An assassin was to be chosen by lot, would employ any number of disguises and diversionary tactics to achieve his goal, would use chemicals to change his face to avoid recognition, would carry a manifesto in his pocket to explain the reasons for his action, and would poison himself after his attempt, yielding his place to another "Hell" member who would carry on his work. Later, Kravchinsky epitomized well the impact of such terrorists upon Russian society, when he said upon the appearance of "Narodnaya Volya":

Upon the horizon there appeared a gloomy form, illuminated by a light as of hell, who, with lofty bearing, and a look breathing forth hatred and defiance, made his way through the terrified crowd to enter with a firm step upon the scene of history. It was the Terrorist.<sup>14</sup>

Ishutin contributed to the mysterious aura surrounding this secret society by spreading rumors within the "Organization" that, upon elimination of the Urals garrisons, Siberia was geared to secede from the

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<sup>13</sup>Quoted in Venturi, p. 337.

<sup>14</sup>Sergei Kravchinsky, Underground Russia, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1883, pp. 28-29.

Empire and assume protectorate status under the United States, and that their society was affiliated with a European Revolutionary Committee dedicated to the assassination of European monarchs. Alexander II later discovered this rumor and communicated it to Bismarck with a request for police surveillance over Russian emigrés. This tactic on Ishutin's part sounds not unlike the maneuvers of Bakunin in connection with his own "Secret Alliance" and with Nechoev's secret cells.

The attempt to terrorize his own "Organization" in order to elicit fear and respect for "Hell" led Ishutin to a fierce internal struggle. The "peaceful" propagandists, fighting for their very lives, resorted to talk of physical violence and murder against the members of "Hell" in order to force them away from their terrorist activities into the propagandist camp, and "Hell" responded with similar threats. Venturi sees in this internal clash the germ of the propagandist-terrorist dichotomy within the ranks of "Zemlya i Volya" in 1879, leading to the schism into "Chernyi Peredel" and "Narodnaya Volya."<sup>15</sup>

On the question of the future society and its administration, Ishutin and "Hell" were even less specific than Khudyakov. The members of "Hell," assuming an outbreak of revolution following the death of the Tsar, planned to continue their terrorist activities against oppositional and unnecessary elements and to control absolutely the political forces instigating the revolution. Nothing was said about the political form that was to succeed the present government. Fired with a violent hatred for the tsarist State, these extremists were incapable of theorizing on any new administration. Venturi assesses this failing:

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<sup>15</sup>Venturi, p. 338.

It was both an act of extreme lack of confidence in the State and a confession that the revolutionaries themselves were too immature to replace it with an organization of their own. It was only when the theories and psychology of anarchism had been consolidated that this tacit confession of immaturity was countered with the declared intention of not wanting a substitute for the State. In other words the anarchists welcomed as an asset what was in fact a symptom of temporary weakness in a developing revolutionary movement.<sup>16</sup>

Zaichnevsky had been more mature, and Tkachev and the leaders of "Narodnaya Volya" were to be more realistic in their plans for the future.

These young extremists, whom Yarmolinsky, seconding Venturi, calls "an explosive mixture of irresponsible talk and adolescent thrill-seeking,"<sup>17</sup> were obsessed with the necessity for immediate action, action at the expense of theory, of preparedness. With their asceticism, their severe discipline, their utmost secrecy, and their amoral tactics, they speak loudest as revolutionary Machiavellians or even, for that matter, as revolutionary Jesuits. "Hell" inspired the temporary insanity of Karakozov and the permanent insanity of Khudyakov, and the entire Russian revolutionary movement felt the terrible repercussions of the government's answer to the assassination attempt. In the highest sense, their activity was purely destructive and tragic beyond their imagination, but their revolutionary urgency and organizational ability passed on to a more dispassionate generation. The "Organization" and "Hell" phase was the troubled childhood of the adult revolutionary movement in the Russia of the 1870's.

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<sup>16</sup>Venturi, p. 335.

<sup>17</sup>Yarmolinsky, p. 138.

...the children of the Russian revolutionary activity had passed in 1885 and his activity was destined for the decade of the 1890's, when the Nechaev conspiracy 1879-72 can only be termed the transitional adolescent period. In many ways Nechaev held dangerous to the laborer variety of revolutionary activity and expressed all the growing pains of the Russian movement. While most disill...

...of their customs and morality by living among them, Nechaev... with the... maintenance of terrorist activity...

**Sergei Nechaev: The Monster of Conspiracy**

Nechaev was born in Irkutsk on September 29, 1846, where he helped his father in house-painting, writing an article, and carrying messages for a factory. In order to escape from the boring loneliness of his surroundings Nechaev came to Moscow in 1863, and proceeded to take an examination for a scholasticship. Moving to Petersburg in April, 1866, he gained a position as instructor of religion in a parochial school. He enrolled at the university as an unclassified student, and became attracted to a radical group of students who were just beginning to function with the loss of the "White Guard." Student unrest was leading to demands for spiritual and political...

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If the childhood phase of Russian revolutionary activity had passed in 1866 and its maturity was destined for the decade of the 1870's, then the Nechaev conspiracy 1869-71 can only be termed the transitional adolescent period. In many ways Nechaev held desperately to the Ishutin variety of revolutionary activity and expressed all the growing pains of the Russian movement. While most disillusioned young radicals were beginning to seek peaceful means of communicating with the people through propaganda and a first-hand absorption of their customs and mentality by living among them, Nechaev and his small group of followers sought contact with the famous Russian emigre Bakunin and maintenance of terrorist activity.

Nechaev was born in Ivanovo on September 20, 1847, where he helped his father in house-painting, waiting on tables, and carrying messages for a factory. Anxious to escape from the boring lowliness of his surroundings, Nechaev came to Moscow in 1865, and proceeded to fail an examination for a schoolmastership. Moving to Petersburg in April, 1866, he gained a position as instructor of religion in a parochial school. He enrolled at the university as an unclassified student, and became attracted to a radical group of students who were just beginning to function with the losing of the "White Terror." Student unrest was leading to demands for mutual aid societies and

Material used by Spensky, *Letter to the Trial of Nechaev's*  
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cooperative dining rooms for the poor students, but such demonstrations were too mild for these extremists, determined to carry on the tradition of Karakozov. Nechaev, reading with them Buonarotti's The Conspiracy of Equals (on Gracchus Babeuf's movement) and the first issue of Bakunin's Narodnoe Delo smuggled into Russia in 1868, began to look upon Karakozov's act as the beginning of a new element in the revolutionary moment. This anarchist and Blanquist literature sounded a responding chord in Nechaev's peasant-like hatred for the existing system, for which his comrades accepted him willingly into their midst. Nechaev soon began to command the respect of his fellow students as a leader, not by pretty speeches, but by a certain character trait which distinguished him during this period and remained consistently with him throughout his remarkable career. Max Nomad epitomizes that trait in this description of the young peasant radical:

He was a slight youth, with thick blond hair and coarse but by no means repellent features; he was neither strong physically, nor brilliant in any respect, and his intellectual equipment was scant. Only later did his associates become aware of his tremendous energy which transformed his hatred into deeds, while they, for the most part, were content to dream, talk or write.<sup>1</sup>

This energy made him "a revolutionist of the deed and not of the word,"<sup>2</sup> and his few simple words at the gatherings took on a fanatic note as he simultaneously called for a break with the bourgeois system, a movement to and among the people, and the ruthless murder of all

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<sup>1</sup>Apostles of Revolution, p. 219.

<sup>2</sup>Statement made by Spasovich, lawyer in the trial of Nechaev's followers in 1871. Quoted in Apostles, p. 219.

enemies of the revolution. It was Bakunin and Blanqui with a special Nechaev twist.

These literary influences upon Nechaev were reinforced by personal friendships with the anarchist Vladimir Cherkezov and the Blanquist Tkachev. That the opposing ideologies of these two men worked a lasting synthesis in Nechaev's mind is testified to by both Nomad ("Nechayev...was forever to remain under the influence of the apparently contradictory ideologies of the two men."<sup>3</sup>) and Venturi ("Nechaev made a violent and primitive attempt to hold anarchism and Jacobinism in the same harness."<sup>4</sup>) Nechaev's collaboration with Tkachev led to the planning of the peasant revolt for February 14, 1870, to be directed by a "Committee of Action" (or the "Central Committee" or "The Committee of the Russian Revolutionary Party"), whose actual existence was questioned later by historians, but whose organization and goals were defined by Nechaev and Tkachev in A Programme for Revolutionary Action (1869). In the arrests of the leaders of this group in 1869, including Tkachev, Nechaev was the only one who escaped.

Arriving in Moscow, Nechaev left behind him the first in a long series of notorious events in his revolutionary career. In two cleverly written notes, winding up in the hands of Vera Zasulich, then a revolutionary acquaintance in Petersburg, Nechaev made her and

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 218.

<sup>4</sup>Venturi, p. 330.

<sup>5</sup>See above chapter 4, pp. 72-73.

a small circle of their friends believe that he had been arrested and taken to the Peter and Paul Fortress. Shortly after, he invented more stories to the effect that he had escaped from the Fortress (a virtually impossible feat) to Moscow where he had been arrested again and once more escaped, this time from several tall, strong Russian gendarmes (Nechaev being a frail youth of twenty-two). This tactic was one that Nechaev would use constantly in the remainder of his active career. The reason for it was simply that he had made the decision to become an exalted, courageous, glamorous leader in the Russian revolutionary movement, which was sadly lacking such a figure, and he needed a reputation of mystery and heroism in order to enhance his prestige and to elicit the respectful obedience of his followers.

Considering Bakunin the grand patriarch of the Russian revolutionary movement, Nechaev traveled to Geneva in March, 1869, to meet the author of Narodnoe Delo. Nechaev represented the defunct "Committee of Action" as a lively and extensive revolutionary organization in Russia, and he appealed to Bakunin with his attractive charm and indomitable energy, enhanced, naturally, by his spurious arrests and escapes. The aging Bakunin was flattered by Nechaev's attention and jumped at the chance to reestablish relations with the revolutionary movement in his beloved homeland. He began calling Nechaev affectionately "Boy" and "Tiger Cub," induced Ogarev to dedicate one of his poems to Nechaev, and inducted his young protégé into a completely non-existent alliance with a membership card dated May 12, 1869, reading:

The bearer of this certificate is one of the accredited representatives of the Russian section of the World Revolutionary Alliance. No. 2771.

Mikhail Bakunin<sup>6</sup>

It was not merely a Geneva or European Alliance, but a World Alliance, which Bakunin invented especially for Nechaev, implying that he was joined by 2770 other members all over the world. The certificate was stamped with a seal saying in French "European Revolutionary Alliance, General Committee," another fictitious body representing no one but Bakunin himself. It was a curious, and almost humorous, instance of one master-schemer matching wits with a worthy apprentice, with the result that both were fooled.

The most fruitful consequence of this strange collaboration was a series of eight publications, consisting of pamphlets, manifestoes, and the first issue of the organ of Nechaev's newly-formed revolutionary society, "Narodnaya Rasprava" (The People's Vengeance). Only three of the publications were signed, by Ogarev, Bakunin, and Nechaev respectively, leaving the authorship of the others in dispute. All of the publications had the same orientation: abandonment of studies; agitation among the people for immediate uprisings against the State; planning of the revolution which would be totally destructive ("Our task is terrible, total, universal and merciless destruction."<sup>7</sup>); hatred for reformism and the "Socialist-conspirators, young doctrinaires, bookish revolutionaries, arm-chair revolutionary-statesmen, and future dictators, who play at revolution but are incapable of

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<sup>6</sup>Quoted in Robert Payne, The Terrorists, Funk and Wagnalls Co., New York, 1957, p. 15.

<sup>7</sup>Payne, The Terrorists, p. 26.



making it";<sup>8</sup> and the advocacy of Bakunin's anarchism over Blanqui's revolutionary dictatorship in the administration of the future society ("By revolution,...we mean a radical upheaval...New forms of life can spring only from a complete amorphism."<sup>9</sup>) The most notorious of the works was The Catechism of the Revolutionary, a code of ethics for the professional revolutionary, which Nechaev carried back into Russia and which later was revealed at the trial of the "Nechaevists" in 1871 by the prosecuting lawyer, coming as a surprise to most of the defendants and weakening their morale. Its authorship is disputed, though Max Nomad claims that Michael Sazhin, Bakunin's young protege, revealed in his Reminiscences that he had seen the original in Bakunin's handwriting.<sup>10</sup> The Catechism is a description of the revolutionary prototype which Bakunin believed Nechaev to be, and which the latter likewise believed himself to be.

Nechaev, having written open letters to "friends" in Russia describing the frenzied activity of the "World Revolutionary Alliance", (thereby purposely compromising 387 people in Petersburg with the police), returned to Moscow in August, 1864, to build up the "Great Russian Section" of "Narodnaya Rasprava." All of the groups were organized in secret cells of five members, modelled after a plan inspired by Mazzini for the Polish revolutionary movement. Each cell was unaware of the content and purpose of the next highest group in the hierarchy, with the ultimate authority being vested in a fictitious

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<sup>8</sup>Venturi, p. 361.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 369.

<sup>10</sup>Apostles, p. 229.

"Committee", i.e., Nechaev himself. The young fanatic continued to build up the Nechaev cult by posing as Anton Petrov, a worker, and spreading fictitious tales of Nechaev's exploits in Siberia and even of his death. The result was immensely successful, as the self-proclaimed hero assumed mammoth prestige among the revolutionary circles. The goal of "Narodnaya Rasprava" was to prepare the masses for the social revolution but, in spite of its propaganda efforts, the "Nechaevtsi" never communicated with the people and were restricted almost solely to the Moscow area. On November 21, 1869, the beginning of the rapid decline of Nechaev's conspiracy was consummated in his personal assassination of Ivanov, one of the "Nechaevtsi," who had refused to post an inflammatory leaflet on the walls of the dining room of the Moscow School of Agriculture for fear the government would respond by shutting down the place. This disobedience evoked Nechaev's anger, and he promoted this internal assassination presumably as a means of asserting the "Committee's" authority, thereby assuring it of the fear and respect of its subordinates, and of binding the perpetrators in a compromising act, thus blackmailing them to maintain their silence.

Fleeing to Petersburg and finally to Switzerland in December, Nechaev left just in time to avoid the discovery of the body by the police and the subsequent mass arrests. The "tiger cub" renewed relations with Bakunin, managed to extort money, as he had also done on his previous trip, from the Bakhmetiev fund, (Left to Herzen and Ogarev by a rich young man who thus renounced his inheritance and emigrated to a South Seas island to set up an Owenite colony), revive Kolokol briefly with the help of Herzen's daughter Natalya, blackmail Bakunin and

others by stealing several of their compromising letters and documents, and spend an eventful winter (1870-1) in London, charming the ladies and gentlemen of the emigré revolutionary circles and publishing two issues of the communist-oriented Obshchina (The Commune). Meanwhile, Bakunin had discovered the news of the murder, realized he had been tricked, and wrote warning notes to his friends in London. Everywhere Nechaev began to be condemned as a common murderer, and the Swiss government on August 14, 1862, allowed him to be extradited as such by the Russian Third Section. The trial of the "Nechaevtsi" had already taken place in 1871, with the result that the fellow murderers had been condemned to several years' hard labor in Siberia, while peripheral elements of the conspiracy, obviously duped and manipulated opportunistically by Nechaev, received lighter sentences.

Nechaev was tried in January, 1873, and defended himself passionately by refusing to recognize the procedure against him as a common criminal and claiming the rights of a political prisoner. He was found guilty and sentenced to twenty years' hard labor and life-long exile in Siberia, but, following the official removal of his civil rights on January 25, he was secretly transferred to the Alexeyevsky Ravelin in the Peter and Paul Fortress, where he was placed in solitary confinement. His nine years in prison were fantastic ones. Scratching appeals to the Tsar on the walls with a spoon; slapping in the face a general who had been sent to question him; organizing and exercising control over the peasant guards in his section, to the point that they smuggled letters in and out for him; establishing contact with "Narodnaya Volya"; encouraging their work and planning his own escape and an accompanying

uprising within the Fortress; then supposedly sacrificing his own freedom for the sake of the assassination plot (though it is more probable that the "Executive Committee" never seriously entertained the thought of planning Nechaev's escape)--these remarkable activities of a man isolated in a cell and periodically deprived of books, writing materials, and even food speak more loudly than his earlier escapades for the self-sustaining energy and indomitable strength of will of this inveterate revolutionary. He demonstrated personally during these years the fanatic, ascetic characteristics of the revolutionary prototype described in the Catechism. His corruption of the guards discovered by a new management of the prison, Nechaev was placed on a starvation diet and died of scurvy on November 21, 1882.

It is difficult in many places to distinguish the anarchist from the Elanquist trends in Nechaev's ideas, for he equalled Bakunin in his spontaneous shifting from one orientation to its complete opposite, depending upon the facet of revolution under emphasis. His first introduction to revolutionary activity in Petersburg during the years 1868-9 was dominated by an anarchistic urge, and, surprising, in view of what was to come, A Programme for Revolutionary Action, co-authored by Tkachev and Nechaev, dwelt upon the necessity of keeping the revolutionary organization as decentralized as possible:

'It must be constructed in accordance with the spirit of decentralization and the law of movement, i.e. its members must change posts after given periods...Decentralization must be understood in the sense of a weakening of the centre and the granting of considerable scope for action to the provincial centres.'<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Quoted in Venturi, p. 362.

This statement is in complete contradiction to the stand taken by both Tkachev and Nechaev in their later writings, but it must be remembered that they were more concerned at this point in effecting a wide-spread peasant upheaval on February 19, 1870; therefore, they were cautious for fear of scaring away both the revolutionary prototypes who were to lead the revolution and the masses who were expected to participate.

The characteristics of revolutionary leaders outlined generally by Tkachev and Nechaev in the Programme, i.e., sacrifice of property, family ties, occupation, or anything that might hinder the cause, received more detailed treatment from the latter in his publications under Bakunin's influence in Geneva during the summer of 1869. The anarchistic element is prominent in all these works and tends to corroborate the evidence that Nechaev was attempting to ingratiate himself with the veteran revolutionary, who in turn was using the medium of Nechaev's energetic theories to further his own struggle against Marx. In an article signed by Bakunin, "Some Words to our Young Brothers in Russia," he urged students to leave their studies and go to the people:

'Learn from the people how to serve it, and how to conduct its cause to the best advantage. Remember, friends, that the educated youth ought not to be the teacher, the benefactor and the dictatorial leader of the people, but only a midwife for its self-emancipation, the unifier of its forces and of its efforts.'<sup>12</sup>

Later in "How the Revolutionary Question Presents Itself," unsigned, but obviously Bakuninist, the author emphasizes his hatred for liberal

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<sup>12</sup>Quoted in Apostles, p. 228.



reforms and the overriding necessity for the complete annihilation of the existing order. For this task, it was necessary to unify all the discontented and potentially revolutionary forces, and the ensuing discussion of the variety of these forces could only have been written by Bakunin:

'Brigandage is one of the most honored aspects of the people's life in Russia....The brigand is always the hero, the defender, the avenger of the people, the irreconcilable enemy of the entire State regime, both in its civil and its social aspects, the life and death fighter against our statist-aristocratic, official-clerical civilization....The brigand, in Russia, is the true and only revolutionary--the revolutionary without phrase-making and without bookish rhetoric. Popular revolution is born from the merging of the revolt of the brigand with that of the peasant....Such were the revolts of Stenka Razin and Pugachev....The world of brigands and the world of brigands alone has been in harmony with the revolution. The man who wants to make a serious conspiracy in Russia, who wants a popular revolution, must turn to that world and fling himself into it.<sup>13</sup>

The words may have been Bakunin's, but they suited well Nechaev's Ishutin-inspired tactic of taking opportunistic advantage of any group of dissatisfied people.

The article signed by Nechaev, "To the Students of the University, of the Academy, and of the Technological Institute," merely echoed Bakunin's similar appeal, and the two articles signed by "The Russian Revolutionary Committee" in the first issue of "Narodnaya Rasprava" were a variation upon the main theme of the unsigned "Principles of Revolution." This latter pamphlet was based upon the anarchism propounded in the other articles, but the methods of destructive revolution sounded a new note of ruthlessness, typical of Nechaev:

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<sup>13</sup>Quoted in Venturi, pp. 368-369.

'We recognize no other activity but the work of extermination, but we admit that the forms in which this activity will show itself will be extremely varied - poison, the knife, the rope, etc. In this struggle revolution sanctifies everything alike.'<sup>14</sup>

And it was Nechaev, not Bakunin, who endorsed terrorism by "sword and fire" as a means of preparing the revolution in Russia.

Yet, on the question of the future administration of the revolutionary society, it was Bakunin's ambiguous prophecies which set the mood of "Principles": "'It is our exclusive task to destroy the existing social system; to build up is not our task; it is up to those who will come after us.'<sup>15</sup> Since the revolution would be negative, the revolutionary generation would function under such an influence and could not be entrusted with reconstruction. Any attempt to plan that distant society was a "criminal" affront to the new creative generation. This idea was consistently Bakuninist, but it conveniently failed to express Bakunin's tacit recognition of the supreme authority of his own "Secret Alliance" before and during the revolution. As we have seen also, Bakunin was less reticent on both earlier and later occasions in formulating plans for the an-archist federated society of the future.

More important, for Nechaev it was Ishutin's immaturity all over again, the obsession with the organization of the secret society and the destructive overthrow of the old regime with no serious consideration of the practicality of abolishing all government in the wake of the revolution. Bakunin's oversight was perhaps more excusable, for all evidence seems to point to the fact that he actually believed in the

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<sup>14</sup>Quoted in Carr, Michael Bakunin, p. 395.

<sup>15</sup>Quoted in Apostles, p. 228.

spontaneous (though distant) and instinctive move of the people toward a condition of ultimate freedom and equality, i. e., a society minus the inherently evil State. Nechaev's horizon did not extend beyond the revolutionary organization,—secret, disciplined, omnipotent; the ~~part~~-destruction was a mere concomitant of that organization, a raison d'être manipulated in such a Machiavellian manner by Nechaev that it is difficult to determine whether the secret society existed for the sake of destruction or vice versa. Likewise, an-archism seemed a pretty conclusion and a fitting cover for his own "will to power" and Nechaev liked even better for these reasons the vagueness involved in a refusal to postulate upon the new forms. In addition, Bakunin's prestige had a great deal to do with Nechaev's temporary shelving of his developing Elanquist tendencies.

The most convincing proof of this phase of Nechaev's ideology can be found in The Catechism of the Revolutionary, the last in the series of publications dating from that summer of 1869. Max Nomad calls it "a code of ethics drawn from Machiavelli and the disciples of Loyola and Escobar,"<sup>16</sup> thus characterizing Tkachev as a Jesuit chieftain possessed of all the ascetic fanaticism notorious to that group. As a statement of rules by which a revolutionary must act, live, think, it was a phenomenal contribution to the history of revolution in human society and the human mind, and as such its composition attracted the passionate and undivided attention of Bakunin and Nechaev. In this ideal world of revolutionary ethics, both could escape the pretenses of living and battling against one's

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<sup>16</sup>Apostles, p. 214.

colleagues and opponents, and lose themselves in playing with revolutionary prototypes modelled ideally after their own personalities. Bakunin's dream never came true, at least not in his lifetime, but Nechaev's vision was destined to be born into the harsh light of reality, with Nechaev as midwife, only to die after taking its first gulping breath.

The Catechism<sup>17</sup> consists of twenty-six statutes divided into four sections: "The Duties of the Revolutionary toward Himself," "Relationship of the Revolutionary toward the Revolutionary Comrades," "Relationship of the Revolutionary toward Society," and "The Duties of our Society toward the People." The first section can be summarized in terms of the first paragraph: "The revolutionary is a dedicated man....Everything in him is subordinated towards a single exclusive attachment, a single thought and a single passion--the revolution." This revolutionary criterion separates the ethical from the unethical, i.e., what helps and what hinders the revolution. The revolutionary must sacrifice everything, including his life, for the sake of this Good.

In the second section, the revolution determines the friendship between members, expendable or inexpendable, and the final reliance upon the self in all matters. The paragraph explaining the motives to consider in seeking the rescue of comrades, i.e., whether he is useful and whether his rescue would further the cause, is interesting in the light of two incidents in Nechaev's career. In

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<sup>17</sup>See Appendix A

1872, when a group of Russian and Serbian revolutionaries wanted to free Nechaev forcibly from his captors, Bakunin stated that the sacrifice of life did not justify the action and quoted this paragraph of the Catechism;<sup>18</sup> and in 1881, when Nechaev had established contact with "Narodnaya Volya" and the possibility of their effecting his escape was raised, they, and possibly he himself, were forced to calculate impersonally the relative usefulness of a freed Nechaev versus an assassinated Alexander II: the latter won.

The third section of the Catechism defines categories of people external to the organization, from those who must be ruthlessly eliminated to further the cause to those liberals, doctrinaires, and women whose slogans and aid can be utilized temporarily and then cast aside. Paragraphs 19 and 20, describing this opportunism, are considered by Max Nomad as "the most harmful and the most dangerous... (since) they present the Scriptural sanction...of what was to become known and generally condemned in the Russian revolutionary movement as 'Nechayevshchina' (Nechaevism)--the method of Machiavellian and Jesuitic deception and double-crossing applied to everyone with whom a revolutionist comes into contact."<sup>19</sup> Ishutin had toyed with this idea in theory, and Lenin on occasion and Stalin as a matter of course did not scruple to employ this ruthless means of utilizing and then eliminating their opposition.

The last section returns to classic Bakuninism: the deprecation of Western-style political revolution, where one predatory bourgeois

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<sup>18</sup> Apostles, p. 232m.

<sup>19</sup> Apostles, p. 235.



State is replaced by an equally oppressive revolutionary government.

Paragraph 24 is particularly noteworthy in this respect:

The Association therefore does not intend to foist on the people any organization from above. The future organization will no doubt evolve out of the popular movement and out of life itself. But this is the business of future generations. Our business is destruction, terrible, complete, universal, and merciless.

With this remarkable code of revolutionary ethics implanted firmly in his mind and with these words from the first issue of Narodnaya Rasprava singing in his ears: "'Great is our work! Ishutin has taken the initiative. And now it is time for us to begin, before his hot tracks have cooled,'"<sup>20</sup> Nechaev returned to Russia to translate theory into action. The immediate goal of "Narodnaya Rasprava" was the preparation of that same peasant uprising on February 19, 1870, that he and Tkachev had envisioned. This point should be emphasized, because it was never an explicit task of Nechaev's conspiracy to assassinate the tsar or any other official. True, he had justified terrorism in "Principles of Revolution," but "Narodnaya Rasprava" was too short-lived to organize effectively for that purpose. Nechaev's dream remained in the realm of a general popular revolution aimed vaguely at the establishment of socialism, but paradoxically his activity focussed around the building of a powerful secret society isolated from the masses.

The organization of the society into groups of five has already been described. Its centers were in Moscow and Petersburg, though the former remained the most important since Nechaev constituted

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<sup>20</sup>Quoted in Venturi, p. 373.

the nucleus of that group. Bakunin later noted the hierarchical structure of the society, in which different elements were assigned superior and inferior status. It was never centralized in the formal sense, for the "Central Committee," which was to be selected by the various sections, never came into existence, and throughout its short career "Narodnaya Rasprava" functioned under the cleverly concealed directives of Nechaev himself. The society's chief task was to send its members among the workers, students, and peasants and propagandize for the coming revolution, but its one and only accomplished activity and claim to notoriety was the murder of Ivanov, and that was done by Nechaev himself, with a handful of his cohorts assisting.

It was this murder, its discovery, the subsequent trial of the "Nechaevtsi," and Nechaev's arrest and trial which inspired Dostoyevsky's novel The Devils (sometimes translated as The Possessed). In it, according to Michael Prawdín, a Nechaev biographer, Dostoyevsky "tried to solve the problem of how it came about that Nechaev could have been accepted with such readiness by the young intellectuals. He gave a biting picture of Russian society with all its emptiness, its false sentimentality and its aimless cynicism."<sup>21</sup> But more important was Dostoyevsky's description of the activity of the secret society and his striking characterization of Verkhovensky--Nechaev and Stavrogin--Bakunin. Stavrogin is the real hero, the young in-

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<sup>21</sup>Michael Prawdín, The Unmentionable Nechaev, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London, 1961, p. 71. Prawdín quotes Dostoyevsky's actual words from The Diary of a Writer on this matter: "The figure of my Nechaev has no similarity with the real Nechaev. I merely sought to raise the problem of what, in our astonishing and continually changing society, could not only produce a certain Nechaev but generally made

tellectual obsessed by his sin, the idealist disgusted with his own life and that of every human being, the man to whom Verkhovensky offers the role of pretender-tsar in his conspiracy, and the suicide who rids the world of his seemingly worthless presence. It is a fairly accurate picture of Bakunin, embellished with several lurid details to fit the situation; but it is in the figure Verkhovensky that Dostoyevsky captures the primitive violence and instinctively authoritarian character of Nechaev. The passage quoted at the beginning of this paper was the thesis of Shigalyov, the theorist of Verkhovensky's secret circle, and in the chapter where Verkhovensky expands upon this thesis, it is the heart and soul of Nechaev speaking:

'Listen, we'll create political disturbances....We shall create such an upheaval that the foundations of the State will be cracked wide open....Shigalyov is a genius!...He's invented "equality"!...He's got everything perfect in his notebook,...Spying. Every member of the society spies on the others, and he is obliged to inform against them. Everyone belongs to all the others, and all belong to everyone. All are slaves and equals in slavery. In extreme cases slander and murder, but, above all, equality.... Slaves must be equal: without despotism there has never been any freedom or equality, but in a herd there is bound to be equality--there's the Shigalyov doctrine for you!... To level the mountains is a good idea, not a ridiculous one. I'm for Shigalyov! We don't want education. We have had enough of science....The thing we want is obedience. The only thing that's wanting in the world is obedience. The desire for education is an aristocratic desire. The moment a man falls in love or has a family, he gets a desire for private property. We will destroy that desire; we'll resort to drunkenness, slander, denunciations; we'll resort to unheard-of depravity; we shall smother every genius in

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men like him at all possible; and how it could happen that these Nechaevs could win adherents. I myself am really an old Nechaevist, for I, too, have stood on the scaffold." As shall be seen shortly, it is my contention that, on the contrary, Dostoyevsky's Nechaev had a remarkable likeness to the real Nechaev, probably more so than Dostoyevsky himself could have imagined.

infancy. We shall reduce everything to one common denominator. Full equality....Only what is necessary is necessary; that's the motto of the whole world henceforth. But a shock, too, is necessary; we, the rulers, will take care of that. Slaves must have rulers. Complete obedience, complete loss of individuality, but once in thirty years Shigalyov resorts to a shock, and everyone at once starts devouring each other, up to a certain point, just as a measure against boredom. Boredom is an aristocratic sensation; in the Shigalyov system there will be no desires. Desire and suffering are for us; for the slaves--the Shigalyov system.<sup>22</sup>

It is a primitive communism, and Verkhovensky recognizes it as a distant ideal; therefore, he abruptly dismisses Shigalyov's doctrine as impractical for immediate activity and shifts priority to his secret society, ruled authoritatively by himself. In conjunction with the latter move, he surprisingly offers to make Stavrogin the leader of this destructive force in the role of Ivan the Crown Prince:

'We shall say that he is "in hiding"....Oh, what a wonderful legend one could spread! And the main thing is--a new force is coming. And that's what they want. That's what they are weeping for. After all, what does socialism amount to? It has destroyed the old forces, but hasn't put any new ones in their place. But here we have a force, a tremendous force, something unheard of. We need only one level to lift up the earth. Everything will rise up!...He is bearing a new truth and he is "in hiding"....Our small groups, our small groups of five--we don't need newspapers....And the whole earth will resound with the cry: "A new and righteous law is coming," and the sea will be in a turmoil and the whole trumpery show will crash to the ground, and then we shall consider how to erect an edifice of stone. For the first time: We shall build it, we, we alone!<sup>23</sup>

The "we" being Stavrogin and Verkhovensky, the latter is approaching dangerously close in these passionate words to the concept of Elanquist

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<sup>22</sup>Fyodor Dostoyevsky, The Devils, Penguin Books, Baltimore, Maryland, 1953, 1960, pp. 417-419. (tr. by David Magarshack)

<sup>23</sup>Dostoyevsky, The Devils, pp. 422-423.



dictatorship, whether by an Ivan the Crown Prince or a revolutionary society. In Verkhovensky's words can be seen an appreciation for the Russian peasant's ignorant, instinctive loyalty to the tsar, and his constant hoping for a new law from above. As such, Verkhovensky was a Nechaev completely divorced from Bakunin. It is at first glance curious that Dostoyevsky, an inveterate reactionary during this period, should have sensed so penetratingly the soul of Nechaev and his followers. But Dostoyevsky had a remarkable knack for dissecting the criminal soul, and in such a masterful way that his Devils emerge paradoxically as hero-like as Milton's Satan. And in the "Ivan the Crown Prince," maneuver, Dostoyevsky was not far off the mark, in spite of the fact that in the course of the trial there was no mention of such a plan. Rather, he had in mind probably the Pugachev rebellion and perhaps even Bakunin's appeals to Nicholas I and Alexander II.

At any rate, in the concept of an "Ivan the Crown Prince," i.e., an omnipotent revolutionary leader, Dostoyevsky prophesied uncannily the orientation of Nechaev's ideas in the period following the Ivanov murder. The germ of Elanquism was there in Nechaev's authoritarian leadership over "Narodnaya Rasprava" and in the threat to his supreme authority by the disobedient Ivanov.

Bakunin, horrified by the terrible incarnation of his own theories, noted these Elanquist tendencies in Nechaev in a letter written in 1871 to his friends in London, warning them of his former protégé's dangerous personality:

'Yet it remains true that he is one of the most active and energetic men whom I have ever met. When it is a question of serving what he calls "the cause," he does not hesitate or stop at anything and is as pitiless with himself as with everyone else. That is the exceptional quality that



attracted me and for long drove me to try and keep in touch with him. Some say that he is just an adventurer. That is not true. He is a fanatic, full of dedication, and at the same time an extremely dangerous fanatic. To join with him can only lead to results that are ruinous for all; and this is why: at first he joined a clandestine committee which really existed in Russia, but now this committee no longer exists, as all its members have been arrested. At the moment only Nechaev has remained, and he himself constitutes what he calls the committee. When the organization was destroyed he tried to create a new one abroad. All this would be absolutely natural and normal as well as extremely useful; but the methods he has used for this purpose deserve every censure. He was terribly affected by the catastrophe of the clandestine organization in Russia, and has gradually convinced himself that, to found a serious and indestructible society, it is essential to build it on Machiavelli's policies and adopt the Jesuit system. For the body--only violence; for the soul--lies. Truth, mutual trust, real solidarity exist only among a dozen people who make up the sancta sanctorum of the society. All the rest serve as a blind, soulless weapon in the hands of those dozen men who have reached an agreement among themselves. It is allowed, indeed it is even a duty, to cheat them, to compromise them, and in cases of necessity to have them killed...He is a fanatic, and fanaticism has made him change himself into a complete Jesuit, when he is not at certain moments merely stupid. His lying is often naive. But despite this he is very dangerous. He plays at being a Jesuit as others play at revolution.<sup>24</sup>

Here is contemporary evidence of Dostoyevsky's accuracy in assessing the personality of the real Nechaev. It would appear that Bakunin was very bitter about nurturing in his own bosom a viper that lashed out at his own person and brought out into the open the very dangers in his own theories he was attempting to ignore.

Fleeing to Switzerland in December, 1869, Nechaev began to turn out furiously a number of appeals to the army, the Ukrainians, the women, the peasants and workers, and even to the lower middle classes

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<sup>24</sup>Quoted in Venturi, p. 386.

of the cities and towns, begging for immediate and total destruction and the establishment of socialism. Bakunin, as noted above, had broken with Nechaev; now the latter felt free to expound the primitive communism and Blanquism budding in his active mind. In the article entitled "He Who Is Not With Us Is Against Us" in the second issue of Narodnaya Rasprava dated winter 1870, Nechaev described his propagandistic activity in Russia and invented his death as a result of betrayal by a liberal, "'a disciple of golden mediocrity.'"<sup>25</sup> Using this flagrant continuation of the Nechaev legend, the author warned all liberals either to become spies for the radical organization or suffer the certain vengeance of the people. In an attempt to justify the Ivanov murder, Nechaev renewed his insistence upon a powerful revolutionary organization and the necessity for eliminating anyone who threatened the efficiency of its activities. Finally, Nechaev committed anarchism to the winds and propounded openly for the first time the indispensability of the Revolutionary Committee of the secret organization maintaining absolute power, not only before and during the revolution, but, more important, after the revolution for the sake of establishing the ideal communist society.<sup>26</sup> This is indeed conclusive proof that Nechaev was a living Verkhovensky. Nechaev went on to explain his vision of the completely egalitarian and well-regulated Communist Society and referred blatantly to Marx' Communist Manifesto as the source of his ideas. The emphasis on primitive and violent Communism received further treatment in the two issues of Obshchina published by Nechaev in London in 1871.

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<sup>25</sup>Venturi, p. 383.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 383.

The Elanquist note was thus prominent in Nechaev's mind in 1870; an incident in 1881 proved that it continued to influence him throughout his imprisonment. In 1881, when Nechaev had established contact with the Executive Committee of "Narodnaya Volya" and suggested various impossible schemes for effecting his escape, he took the liberty of advising them on the most effective means of conducting the revolution. Nechaev insisted that the Executive Committee convert itself into a revolutionary dictatorship and nominated Zhelyabov, one of its leaders, as dictator. Power must be assumed over all elements of society and manifested in order to cow its enemies and demonstrate to the masses that the Committee was capable of supporting a popular uprising. This point was central to the Elanquist ideology of Tkachev, but it represents a conclusion drawn independently by a man cut off for eight years from any communication with even the Petersburg revolutionary circles, much less the emigre "Nabatovtsi." At that time, Nechaev was still capable of plotting opportunistic measures for lighting the spark of revolution; he suggested to the Executive Committee that they issue a series of spurious manifestoes: one in the name of the Tsar, restoring serfdom, prolonging military service, and destroying the churches of the Old Believers and other sects; another in the name of the Holy Synod, informing the clergy of the insanity of the tsar; still another (and the most outrageously false manifesto, in the light of Nechaev's own recommendation for a revolutionary dictatorship) in the name of the National Assembly, proclaiming the murder of the tsar, the insanity of the Crown Prince, the redistribution of the land, and the freeing of all soldiers from military service; and finally another

in the name of the National Assembly, urging the soldiers to revolt since the Tsarina and the country's generals were in opposition to the decrees of that body.<sup>27</sup> But the falsity was alien to both the tactics and philosophy of "Narodnaya Volya," for it is fair to say that, when they spoke of a Zemsky Sobor, they were in earnest. Consequently, they rejected Nechaev's advice for fear that such underhanded maneuvers might discredit their party and the entire revolutionary cause in the eyes of the people.

This mention of a Zemsky Sobor was not novel to Nechaev in 1881, for as far back as April-May, 1870, when he and Natalya Herzen revived Kolokol, Nechaev was writing in moderate terms, calling for more extensive propaganda, urging the necessity for united action by a coalition of forces "from the so-called constitutionalists to the Socialists,"<sup>28</sup> and proposing the idea of a Zemsky Sobor as a possible unifying slogan. At his trial in January, 1872, Nechaev was the picture of liberalism; his statements abounded in talk of a constitution, and when his sentence was read, he shouted to the court "Long live the Zemsky Sobor. Down with despotism!"<sup>29</sup> as he was being dragged from the room. Soon after, in a letter to the Chief of Police protesting his ill-treatment at the hands of the gendarmes, Nechaev's words assumed political overtones:

'Leaving aside dreamers and those who believe in Utopias, one must recognize that Russia is now on the eve of a political revolution...Like a child whose teeth have, have

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<sup>27</sup>Prawdin, The Unmentionable Nechaev, pp. 103-104.

<sup>28</sup>Quoted in Venturi, p. 385.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 386.

inevitably grown, Society, when it reaches a certain level of civilization, unfailingly feels the need for political rights. Russia is on the eve of a constitutional revolution....I leave for Siberia in the firm conviction that millions of voices will soon cry "Long live the Zemsky Sebor."<sup>30</sup>

It is difficult to determine the degree of sincerity in these liberal statements. Venturi feels that his unsuccessful experience in Russia and the newly discovered influence of Marxian Communism led Nechaev to the realization that more extensive propaganda efforts had to be made, that the masses must be included in a democratic movement, and that the social revolution could not be achieved until the political atmosphere had been changed radically.<sup>31</sup> These were the same problems that faced "Narodnaya Volya" ten years later and caused their decision to shift their orientation toward a political revolution with terrorism as its agent. But political revolution is a tricky word in revolutionary ideology because of the various methods of achieving it. The political revolution sought by Herzen throughout the 1860's and by Khudyakov in 1866 could better be termed an evolution toward democratic institutions within the realm of a constitutional monarchy, achieved by the self-imposed liberalization of the Tsar and long-term propaganda among the masses. This attitude is inconceivable in connection with Nechaev's ideology and activity, and particularly in view of the words shouted by him to the crowd on the occasion of his civil execution: "Before three years are over their heads will be hacked off on this very spot by the first Russian guillotine. Down

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<sup>30</sup>Quoted in Venturi, pp. 386-387.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 384.



with the Tsar! Long live freedom! Long live the free Russian people!"<sup>32</sup> This was an explicit call to terrorism. Perhaps Nechaev had vague sympathies for the concept of a National Assembly, but this idea would be highly inconsistent with his former anarchistic statements for destruction of all State forms and with his later appeal to "Narodnaya Volya" to establish a political dictatorship. This latter instance, coupled with his radical views on the establishment of a thorough going Communism, hinted at in The Devils and called by Engels, when he had read the details of Nechaev's plans in Obskchina, "Barrack-room Communism,"<sup>33</sup> seems to warrant a conclusion that political revolution to Nechaev had a Blanquist rather than a Herzenist orientation and rested upon the violent overthrow of the old regime by a powerful revolutionary organization which would continue to assert its power in the form of a dictatorship for the sake of the establishment of an ideal communistic society. The call for a Zemsky Sobor would seem to be, as it was in 1881, an opportunistic manipulation of a liberal slogan to appeal for a temporary alliance with the moderate forces, one of the salient points of the Catechism and a maneuver employed successfully by Lenin in October-November, 1917.

It would be futile to equate Marxist terminology such as the "dictatorship of the proletariat" or the "withering away of the state" with Nechaev's communistic statements, for he never reached that stage of maturity in his ideology. Obsessed, like the revolutionary prototype in the Catechism, with only one thought--the revolution--and the practical means of achieving it, Nechaev could not see the forest of

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 387.

<sup>33</sup>Prawdin, p. 191.

the consequences of his activity, Max Nomad, in his usual cryptic fashion, pinpoints this weakness in Nechaev's ideology:

It was Nechayev's personal tragedy that he was altogether uninhibited in the application of Machiavelli's precepts at a time when some discretion was still necessary. At the inception of the socialist movement, he acted as if it were on the point of seizing all the power and thus in a position to place itself "beyond good and evil"....Tragic as Nechayev's fate was, it is overshadowed by a tragedy of a much higher order: the essential contradiction in the very idea of revolutionary Machiavellianism as a weapon in the struggles of the toiling masses. For that unholy gospel implies the vesting of supreme leadership and unlimited power in the hands of a benevolent minority using the methods of deception for the benefit of the deceived. History knows of no such disinterested ruling minorities.<sup>34</sup>

It is only necessary to remind the reader that, while it may well be said that Nechaevism was Tkachev's Russian Elanquism in practice, Tkachev was circumspect enough to consider these difficulties, though his final goal was in certain respects as idealistic as that of Nechaev's concentration upon the activity of the clandestine revolutionary organization has attracted successive phases of praise and condemnation in Soviet historiography. Michael Prawdin bases his entire book upon the thesis that there is great significance in the comparison of Nechaev's and Lenin's methods in organizing a small, disciplined, centralized, conspiratorial group for the purpose of conducting the revolution. If the Bolsheviki were "Nechaevists and nevertheless insist(ed) on calling themselves Marxists, this (was) one of the subterfuges used by Lenin to create confusion in the ranks of his opponents.<sup>35</sup>...Nechaev's world order presumed a dictatorship.

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<sup>34</sup>Apostles, p. 256.

<sup>35</sup>Prawdin, p. 184.

Lenin called it 'democratic centralism'.<sup>36</sup> The first Soviet eulogist of Nechaev was Michael Kovalensky, who in 1923 said,

'What a grandiose figure on the road of the Russian revolution! Tremendous revolutionary energy, gigantic organizational talent, declaration of pitiless war against the whole old world, which is condemned to decline and disappear. Rejection of the supremacy of the old bourgeois morals, which will be replaced by a new ethic of revolution for the success of which all means are justified... With the thundering slogan "Everything for the revolution!" this super-revolutionary appears before us. With every means at their disposal his subsequent followers in the battle try to renounce him, but the men of "Land and Freedom" and of "People's Will" can do nothing else but follow his steps. The stamp of his genius impresses itself upon the whole of the Russian revolutionary movement.'<sup>37</sup>

The influential Pakrovsky continued the praise in 1926 by attributing Lenin's methodology to a plan which appeared first, "though still in a naive form, in Nechaev's circles," and which was later realized "word for word on October 25, 1917."<sup>38</sup> Alexander Gambarov, however, was the most enthusiastic eulogist of Nechaev, emphasizing in 1926 his hero's "undoubtedly brilliant anticipation of the character and content of the character and content of the contemporary Communist movement," and concluding that "history will not only rehabilitate him, but has already long since rehabilitated him, as a distant forerunner of Russian Bolshevism."<sup>39</sup> But Gambarov, supported by Yuri Steklov, Bakunin's biographer, attempted at the same time to gloss over the reprehensible methods used by Nechaev, and even to justify them as expedient in the name of the revolution.

Stalin's battle with Trotsky, and his ensuing struggle to achieve a dictatorship along his own lines in the name of Marx, precluded any

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 186.

<sup>37</sup> Quoted in Ibid., p. 188.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 187.

<sup>39</sup> Quoted in Varlamov, pp. 10-11.

such justification of similar methods on the part of Nechaev. The Pakrovsky school fell, and Nechaev was ousted from the Soviet genealogy. In 1932, Boris Kozmin returned cautiously to the subject of Nechaev, praising his energy and remarkable endurance while suffering in prison, but he condemned Gambarov's justification of his shortcomings, thereby assessing Nechaevism as morally dangerous and an abnormal form of revolutionary activity based upon the specific necessity of combatting hostile elements in the mentality of radical groups in the 1860's and 1870's.<sup>40</sup> Emigré Russian analysts did not suffer under the Stalinist restriction, however, and sharply condemned Bolshevism for its Nechaevist character. S. P. Melgunov, writing in Paris in 1929, pinpointed the Machiavellian and Jesuit elements in the Bolshevik revolution: "Notorious Leninism...is nothing more than old Russian Nechaevism, the particular Russian brand of Blanquism, modernized by Marxist terminology and deepened to incredible dimensions. This is the real origin of Bolshevism."<sup>41</sup> Melgunov goes on to accuse Lenin of borrowing from Nechaev's Catechism and blames both Nechaev and Lenin for demonstrating contempt for the masses by seeking to manipulate them at the will of the dictatorial party. Meanwhile, in the Soviet Union, as late as 1954, the article on Nechaev in the second edition of Great Soviet Encyclopedia is concluded with these words, quoted by Prawdin: "Nechaevism is a system of conspiracy, mutiny and unprincipled terrorism dictated by disbelief in the possibility of organizing the masses for the fight against Tsarism. It was sharply con-

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<sup>40</sup>Varlamov, pp. 11-14.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., pp. 22-23.

demned by Marx and Engels.'" And Prawdín bases his own conclusion on that Soviet definition: "Thus did the label of 'Nechaevism' become once again the traditional epithet of abuse, the mark distinguishing a pseudo-revolutionary from a true Leninist. Such official disparagement served to put an end to preoccupations with Nechaev in Russia."<sup>42</sup>

Thus suffered Nechaev in the opinions of his contemporaries and in the annals of Soviet historiography. The Blanquist element is clearly defined in Nechaev's ideology, but it becomes warped and loses its Tkachevist purity in the transition to practical activity. This is not surprising in view of Nechaev's monomania for the organization and destructive mission of "Narodnaya Rasprava"--the People's Vengeance. Nechaev had his dreams, but unfortunately they were not consistent with the demands of the revolutionary situation in Russia at that time. He was an inveterate activist at a time when Russia needed more theorists; thus, he suffered martyrdom at the hands of an irrevocable law that determines the metamorphosis of any theory into action. "Narodnaya Volya" was to suffer the same martyrdom; but theirs was a genuine product of the times, while Nechaev's was a case of hopeless, tragic mistiming. But the "Narodovoltsi," as well as many who condemned him then and have so done since, could not fail to admire the sheer strength of Nechaev's self-inspired and self-sustained energy and will throughout his revolutionary career.

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<sup>42</sup>Prawdín, p. 191.



In June, 1879, at Lipetsk gathered a small group of members of the secret revolutionary society "Zemlya i Volga." The purpose and objective of their forthcoming meeting became clear soon after the course of the general meeting of "Zemlya i Volga" at Voronezh. As a result of the Voronezh conference, the Lipetsk group formed a society named "Narodnaya Volya" (The People's Will), while its opponents concentrated themselves in a group known as "Chernyi Peredel" (The Black Earth Partition). The orientation of the latter was long-time propaganda based on the preparation of a social revolution redistributing the land to the peasants under a Socialist system, while the former was bent on the overthrow of the present tsarist regime in order to make use of political power in establishing the desired socialist society. It was within the membership of "Narodnaya Volya" that the Blanquist current of the 1870's was nurtured and embellished by the revolutionary activities of the 1870's.

The activities of "Zemlya i Volga" had been preceded by several years of "Blanquist" activity in the Russian revolutionary movement. The Blanquism spread among the workers in Petersburg (1871-2), and blossomed into the

**"Narodnaya Volya": Russian Blanquism in the Guise of**

**Political Terrorism**

... moment in the time of the... There then followed another underground period, during which propaganda was carried on successfully, secretly, but continuously, among the workers and peasants. Richard Pipes, in his article "Blanquism and the Russian Revolution," described this period as follows: "The Blanquist phase of revolutionary work... turned its back upon the program of social reform... the achievement of a social revolution for the people and through the people... This was the only way in which the revolution would justify itself... (Blanquism) itself... together to revolt (Blanquism), but also encourage their natural... by living among them in the guise of organizing their forces for

<sup>1</sup> "Blanquism and the Russian Revolution," *Slavic Review*, vol. 27, no. 1 (January, 1948), p. 44.

In June, 1879, at Lipetsk gathered a small group of members of the secret revolutionary society "Zemlya i Volya." The purpose and outcome of that portentous meeting became clear soon after the course of the general meeting of "Zemlya i Volya" at Voronezh. As a result of the Voronezh conference, the Lipetsk group formed a society named "Narodnaya Volya" (The People's Will), while its opponents concentrated themselves in a group known as "Chernyi Peredel" (The Black Earth Partition). The orientation of the latter was long-term propaganda based on the preparation of a social revolution redistributing the land to the peasants under a Socialist System, while the former was bent on the overthrow of the present tsarist regime in order to make use of political power in instituting the desired socialist society. It was within the conspiratorial framework of this last group that the Blanquist current of the 1860's was continued and embellished by the revolutionary activists of the 1870's.

This schism of "Zemlya i Volya" had been preceded by several years of frenzied activity in the Russian revolutionary moment. The Chaikovsky agitation among the workers in Petersburg, 1871-3, had blossomed into the spontaneous movement "to the people" in the summer of 1874, which had evoked the immediate response of the government to the tune of thousands of arrests. There then followed another underground period, during which propaganda was carried on carefully, secretly, but continuously, among the workers and peasants. Richard Pipes, in his article discussing the semantics of the word "populism" in Russia, describes this period 1874-8 as the truly Populist phase of revolutionary activity because it based itself upon the premises of this slogan: "the achievement of a social-economic revolution for the people and through the people. . .and in accord with its age-old and ardent wishes."<sup>1</sup> This meant simply that the propagandists would neither teach socialism to the peasants (Lavrovism) nor subordinate themselves entirely to the peasant instinct, thereby pushing them to revolt (Bakuninism), but would encourage their natural desires by living among them in the hopes of organizing their forces for

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<sup>1</sup>"Narodnichestvo: A Semantic Inquiry," Slavic Review, vol. XXIII, no. 3 (September, 1964), p. 444.

a spontaneous, but controlled peasant uprising. Disillusionment with this policy, caused by peasant mistrust of, and in many cases peasant reports to the police of the activities of the young propagandists, convinced the "populists" to change their tactics.

This change of tactics took many forms: the increased emphasis, particularly in the South, upon introducing terrorism against local officials and upon resisting arrest through violent means; the attempt by Alexander Solovev upon the Tsar's life in February, 1879; and finally the overwhelming desire to unite all forces in one single all-Russian organization for the sake of a more successful battle with the omnipotent tsarist government. This last attitude was by far the most important factor in the evolution of "Narodnaya Volya," for it shifted the entire orientation of the young radicals from social to political revolution. Vera Figner, a propagandist and later member of "Narodnaya Volya", in her memoirs expresses well the general conviction of the "populists" in 1878 on this point:

We already saw clearly that our work among the people was of no avail. In our persons the revolutionary party had suffered a second defeat, but not by any means through the inexperience of its members, not through the theoretical nature of its programme, not through a desire to propagate among the people aims foreign to it and ideals inaccessible to it, not through exaggerated hopes in the forces and the preparation of the popular masses; by no means. We had to leave the stage while fully aware that our programme was applicable to life, that its demands had a real foundation in national conditions, and<sup>2</sup> that the trouble was merely in the lack of political freedom.

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Vera Figner, Memoirs of a Revolutionist, International Publishers, New York, 1927, p. 63.

Faced with a system that allowed no popular participation in the law-making process, and denied even the right of popular petition for the redress of grievances, most of the radicals on the periphery began to gravitate toward Petersburg where they might consolidate their forces, while a few brave ones intensified what they considered the only means left them of convincing the system of the necessity for political and social reform: assassinations.

Since 1875, a unifying force had already been evident in Petersburg among the underground groups, and in December, 1876, it emerged as the motivating force of the demonstration in front the Kazan Cathedral, where the name of Chernyshevsky and other revolutionary martyrs was evoked and a red banner bearing the words "Land and Liberty" was waved. It was the beginning of "Zemlya i Volya" as an All-Russian revolutionary organization. Its program of 1877 revealed its essentially socio-economic orientation and its orthodox populist attitude; it demanded in the name of the existing desires of the peoples three basic objectives: the transferral of all the land into the hands of the peasants and its redistribution on the equal basis of the obshchinas; the self-determination of all nationalities within the Russian Empire; and the autonomy of the obshchinas. On this latter point, the authors of the program recognized that, since the people were morally and intellectually unprepared for such a move, a temporary and limited government, elected by the people, would be necessary. The program concluded with an explanation of its methods:

'Our demands can be brought about only by means of a violent revolution. The methods to prepare this and bring it about are, according to us: (1) Agitation-- to be carried out both by word and above all by deed-- aimed at organizing the revolutionary forces and

developing revolutionary feelings (revolts, strikes; in general, action is in itself the best way to organize revolutionary forces and developing revolutionary forces).  
(2) The disorganization of the State. This will give us some hope of victory, in view of the strong organization<sup>3</sup> which will be created by agitations in the early future.

The germs of a centralized organization and the use of **terrorism** were already evident in this program.

Gathering strength during 1877 in spite of frequent arrests, "Zemlya i Volya" managed to turn the government's maneuver to expose the horrors of the revolutionary circles by means of open trials into sounding boards for their humanitarian and egalitarian goals. The trials "of the fifty" and "of the 193" contributed greatly to the prestige of "Zemlya i Volya" through the fine speeches made by the defendants; particularly noteworthy was Ippolit Myshkin's speech in the latter trial. By 1878 the secret society had laid out its statutes for organization, chiefly under the authorship of A. D. Oboleshov and Alexander Mikhailov. The result was a widespread body consisting of a center in Petersburg and complementary regional bodies of professional revolutionaries, dedicated to the cause and obedient even in personal matters to a small executive committee elected by all the members. But the decentralization of function was predominant, and in actual practice the autonomy of the regional groups was exercised more often than the tightening of organizational ties to the central body, probably because there was considerable opposition to possibly Blanquist element.

Agitative propaganda continued apace, but gradually the "disorganization" function of "Zemlya i Volya" began to assume paramount importance as the government repression became more and more vigorous. "Disorganization"

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Quoted in Venturi, pp. 573-574.



included the liberation of fellow revolutionaries from prison, the destruction of informers, and above all the assassination of officials of the hated tsarist regime. These assassinations were not carried out upon directives from the central body; rather, they were independent, spontaneous acts of self-defense and revenge. Such was the attempt by Vera Zasulich against General Trepov, Chief of Police in Petersburg, on January 24, 1878; this act and the ensuing trial, which saw Zasulich acquitted by a jury of her peers, was considered the beginning of the nihilist-terrorist period of the 1870's by later evaluations, foremost among them being that of Kravchinsky, a terrorist himself: "This occurrence gave to the Terrorism a most powerful impulse. It illuminated it with its divine aureola, and gave to it the sanction of sacrifice and of public opinion."<sup>4</sup> Kravchinsky goes on to characterize the terrorist in these terms:

He is noble, terrible, irresistible, fascinating, for he combines in himself the two sublimities of human grandeur: the martyr and the hero. . . He has a powerful and distinctive individuality. . . He fights not only for the people, to render them the arbiters of their own destinies, not only for the whole nation stifling in this pestiferous atmosphere, but also for himself. . . He fights for himself. He has sworn to be free and he will be free, in defiance of everything.<sup>5</sup>

This was just this individual terror that was destroying the organization from within; uncoordinated acts, lacking accompanying security measures, were leaving the members increasingly vulnerable to arrests and executions.

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<sup>4</sup>Kravchinsky, Underground Russia, p. 36.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 39-42.

As "Zemlya i Volya" began to lose its members one by one to the police, its leaders, particularly Mikhailov, began to advocate the stricter centralization of the society for the sake of the most efficient coordination of these terrorist efforts. Much more was implied in this attempted tightening of party authority and discipline; terror was becoming the foremost tactic, and along with it emphasis was shifting from the social to the political revolution. Adding fuel to this flame, the discontented provincial propagandists began swarming into Petersburg, professing their belief in conducting the struggle for political rights. The result was a head-on collision between the political terrorists and the socio-economic propagandists, and it was at this time that terms such as Jacobinism and Blanquism began to be bandied about frequently in the revolutionary world.

From Vera Zasulich's attempt to the Lipetsk and Voronezh Congresses was a short year and a half, but the time was filled with battles between these two opposing forces. In one sense, they were similar, for the common goal was the establishment of a free, egalitarian, socialist society; and, since it was not likely that the tsarist government would make the necessary concessions from above, it was necessary to promote a violent revolution from below. But there the similarity ended. On one side were the orthodox populists, such as Dmitri Klements, Georgi Plekhanov (his conversion to Marxism was still five years away), and Sergei Kravchinsky, who were strictly apolitical, scorning the weak-kneed liberal attempts to extort constitutional reform from an autocrat committed to the uncompromising maintenance of his sole and supreme authority. Besides, the peasants were not morally or intellectually capable of understanding, much less participating in a democratic form of government. They must be prepared by propaganda they can understand,

i.e. promises of the redistribution of the land and self-government through the obshchina. On the other side were those called "renegades" by the orthodox populists (who were called in turn "peaceful loafers" and "ne'er-do-wells" by the terrorists); they considered it of utmost importance that the people be allowed to govern themselves and possess all the freedoms **guaranteed in a democratic society**. Therefore they sought a Zemsky **So**bor for the people; but, since the people were so ignorant and so oppressed, a conspiratorial party would have to do the preparatory work for them, taking care not to lose sight of the distant goal. Only a free people could enjoy the fruits of a socialist system; therefore, the party must first liberate the people from the yoke of tsardom and then start it on the path to socialism. Since legal means of conducting the fight were denied **them**, the conspirators were compelled to resort to terror against the State in order to force concessions from the Tsar, and organized, efficient terror demanded a strong, centralized conspiratorial society. The leaders of this "political" group were Alexander Mikhailov, Nikolai Morozov, Alexander Kviatkovsky, Nikolai Kolodkevich, Stepan Khalturin, Andrei Zhelyabov, Sophia Perovskaya, and Vera Figner (all later members of the Executive Committee of "Narodnaya Volya.")

Kravchinsky was the first to draw the difference between the two to a fine point. A terrorist himself, he was delighted at the news of the Zaslulich attempt, writing from abroad that it was time to strike out against the bourgeoisie and the rise of capitalism in Russia. Returning to Russia, Kravchinsky assassinated General Mezentsov, head of the Third Section, on August 4, 1878, after which he wrote the pamphlet "A Death for a Death," declaring that Mezentsov's death was an act of revenge for the execution of Kovalsky in Odessa two days before. He was careful to

explain that the assassination also had a deeper purpose: a threat to the bourgeoisie in the name of the approaching popular revolution, and, surprisingly enough, a somewhat naive warning to the government to remain neutral in the battle between the socialists and the bourgeois-capitalists.<sup>6</sup> This flagrant indifference to the existence of the tsarist government was typical of the orthodox populist mentality. While Nikolai Mikhailovsky and other moderates were calling for a Zemsky Sobor, Kravchinsky ignored the political question and addressed himself wholly to the socio-economic problem. His articles in Zemlya i Volya! were saturated with this sense of immediacy in promoting the revolution for the sake of preventing the further development of capitalism in Russia.

As mentioned above, Kravchinsky was a terrorist "loner," one who killed for the sake of justice and claimed the right of his own independent activity and individual freedom. When that freedom was threatened by the planned tightening of the secret organization, Kravchinsky balked like any moderate. He continually fought those who wished to use terrorism against the State and even the Tsar himself, claiming that a popular revolution was the foremost consideration, before whose power the Tsar would certainly grant concessions. Kravchinsky was afraid that the overthrow of the State and the Tsar would open the door to bourgeois constitutionalism, which would prevent the advent of Socialism. He accused the terrorists of Jacobin tendencies of seeking to conduct the revolution without the help of the masses: "This is not the way by which we will liberate the people. . . Against a class, only a class can rebel; only the

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<sup>6</sup>Venturi, pp. 610-611.

people can destroy a system."<sup>7</sup> He fought centralization and maintained that the terrorists must serve only as the instigators and protectors of the people. The political rights advocated by the terrorists that would not free the people, but rather their own instinct for freedom motivating them to revolt.

Paul Akselrod, writing from Switzerland in December, 1878, recognized this as a critical moment in the revolutionary development in Russia. He condemned Jacobinism for its failure to appreciate the revolutionary significance of the people and attributed its rise to the lack of preparedness both in the revolutionaries' and the people's mentality. Akselrod deplored the concentration upon the political struggle, but he recognized its inevitability in the existing Russian situation:

If we must, whether we want to or not, fight absolutism, and therefore, indirectly, win political rights for the bourgeoisie, we must none the less take every possible step to avoid being carried away from our Socialist course: for this would lead to the utter disintegration of such elements of Socialism as exist in Russia.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, the political struggle and socialism were supposedly contradictory; but meanwhile in Russia political assassinations in the name of Socialism were being stepped up, particularly in the South, and Morozov and Lev Tikhomirov, both supporters of terrorism, were putting out a special Listok (Bulletin) of Zemlya i Volya! claiming a "political assassination. . . is above all an act of revenge, the only means of defence in the existing situation, and at the same time one of the best weapons of

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<sup>7</sup>Quoted in Ibid., p. 621.

<sup>8</sup>Quoted in Venturi, p. 625.



agitation."<sup>9</sup> And on April 2, 1879, Alexander Solovev fired at and missed the Tsar, later justifying his decision "'because of the benefit it would bring to the peasants. . .I could think of no more powerful means of bringing the economic crisis to a head."<sup>10</sup> The attempt set off a furious battle within the ranks of "Zemlya i Volya"; Morozov, Mikhailov, and Tikhomirov had supported warmly Solovev's independent act, but others, including Plekhanov and M. R. Popov, had condemned it as rash and foolish. The final decision of the group was to allow individual collaboration in assassination attempts as long as the name of "Zemlya i Volya" was not involved, but the bitterness of the irreconcilably opposite views rankled in the minds of all present; the stage was laid for Lipetsk and Voronezh.

Soon after the Solovev controversy, the terrorist sympathizers, under the leadership of Morozov, Tikhomirov, but especially Stepan Shiryayev, formed a politically extremist group called "Liberty or Death!" within "Zemlya i Volya!" Its activity was more theoretical than practical, but its existence as a secret society within a secret society only contributed to the hostility between the two groups. Soon, rumors of an approaching general congress to decide the future of "Zemlya i Volya" were passed around, and the two opponents began gathering forces from all over the country to support their respective causes at the Congress. The political terrorists set the June, 1879 meeting at Lipetsk, and to it came all the Petersburg advocates and a new contingent of terrorist veterans from the South.

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 630.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 632.

Included in this latter group was a young revolutionary from Odessa, Andrei Zhelyabov. This young man, born a peasant in 1850 in the Podosia district, went to the university at Odessa, from which he was expelled for organizing a student protest against a certain intolerant professor. He then engaged in propaganda efforts on his own among the workers and was influenced simultaneously by constitutionalism and Ukrainian nationalism. Arrested in 1874 and released in 1875, he returned to Odessa, noting sadly the increasing isolation of the intellectuals from the revolutionary movement over two crucial questions: the autonomy or unity of the splinter groups, and political conspiracy versus socialist propaganda. A growing interest in the Balkan and Polish strivings for independence gradually turned him sour on a purely propagandistic approach. Nor did he approve of the instinctive approach of the Bakuninst "rebels," resulting in the uncoordinated terrorism of its southern representatives. Venturi states that "in his heart Zhelyabov decided for conspiracy, battle, and a centralized organization,"<sup>11</sup> yet the orthodox populist and the constitutionalist in him waged a strong battle with the terrorist principles implied in that decision. Arrested again in 1877 and acquitted in January, 1878, Zhelyabov emerged from that experience, firmly convinced of the evils of the existing political system and the necessity of overthrowing it by any means, including terror, so long as it was effectively organized. It is from this interim period of Zhelyabov's life (January, 1878, to June, 1879,) that David Footman, Zhelyabov's biographer, quotes a conversation that the future terrorist leader had with one of his radical friends. It is interesting because it reveals Zhelyabov's resolute choice to take the reins of action in his

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<sup>11</sup>Venturi, p. 646.

hands, and it sounds strangely like statements made later by both Lenin and Stalin:

'History,' said Zhelyabov, 'moves too slowly. It needs a push. Otherwise the whole nation will be rotten and gone to seed before the liberals get anything done.'  
'What about a constitution?'  
'All to the good.'  
'Well, what do you want--to work for a constitution, or to give history a push?'  
'I'm not joking. Just now we want to give history a push.'<sup>12</sup>

The impatient urge for action is there, and so is a disgust with liberal banter about constitutions. But this did not mean that Zhelyabov had foregone his populism and constitutionalism; indeed, he was firm in his agreement with the section in the program of "Narodnaya Volya" which mentioned the convocation of a Constituent Assembly; and when approached by a representative of the Petersburg terrorists, inviting him to Lipetsk, he agreed to participate in the systematic planning of a single coup, i. e. the assassination of the Tsar, provided he could be dismissed after that act so as to return to the orthodox populist fold. Zhelyabov always dreamed of a genuinely populist revolution, one granting equal political and economic rights to the people, but the nature of the autocracy turned him into a practical terrorist, the only agent considered capable of making those dreams come true.

The terrorists gathered at Lipetsk were of varied revolutionary backgrounds, but all agreed on their purpose for being there: to form a strong, conspiratorial organization aimed at eliminating by terror the political evils of the existing system. Zhelyabov distinguished him-

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<sup>12</sup>Red Prelude, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1945, pp. 86-87.

self at the policy session by a speech, condemning the impotent liberals and entrusting to a social revolutionary party the task of overthrowing the government and establishing a situation of political liberty where opposing ideologies could clash freely. He continued:

'We can only. . .attain our end by a resolute attack. . . A party must do all in its power. If it has the power to overthrow the despot by means of a revolution, it should do so. If it has only the power to carry out the death penalty on him personally, then it must do that. If even this is beyond its strength it must at least make a vigorous protest. But we shall have the strength--make no doubt about that--and the more resolutely we act the sooner we shall have it.'<sup>13</sup>

The speech showed a high potential of leadership, a role that Zhelyabov quickly assumed, yet strangely enough at the next session, concerning the party's constitution as a centralized body. Footman says Zhelyabov did not participate in the discussion and explains this silence by quoting Tikhomirov's statement: "'At Lipetsk. . .he was not yet a confirmed centralist.'"<sup>14</sup> What did "centralist" mean to the terrorists? In its statutes, the organization was centralized in a manner closely resembling the model conspiratorial groups of Zaichnevsky, Ishutin, and Tkachev. There was actually only one experience Blanquist in the entire group; Maria Oshanina had been a devoted follower of Zaichnevsky and was a "centralist," which word Venturi defines in the context of the times as "the word then used to describe those who were convinced that power would have to be seized by a conspiracy which would then make use of the machinery of the State to direct the social and political revolution from the centre."<sup>15</sup> Oshanina had forsaken the "perfect conspiracy" in order to join

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<sup>13</sup>Quoted in Footman, pp. 100-101.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 101.

<sup>15</sup>Venturi, p. 644.

"Zemlya i Volya," where the action was; now the opportunity was arising in which she might again function for the sake of such a conspiracy. She was the only formal Blanquist, but in sentiment there were others. Alexander Mikhailov had flirted with the ideas of a Russian Jacobin group in 1876, but found them lacking in strength and purpose and left them for more active areas. And Yarmolinsky includes this incident from the history of "Zemlya i Volya":

Late in 1878, at a conference of the editors of Land and Liberty, Morozov remarked that he intended to contribute an article to Nabat. A fellow editor recoiled in horror. 'There isn't a single revolutionary in Russia,' he cried, 'who would approve the seizure of the government by a group of conspirators.' Morozov ventured to doubt this, and justly. 'If there are such,' was the response, 'they are our enemies!'<sup>16</sup>

Yet, Vera Zasulich, Kravchinsky, and Yakov Stefanovich--all individual terrorists of "Zemlya i Volya"--denied any connection with the "Nabatovtsi," and, as we have seen in the chapter on Tkachev, the Executive Committee later scorned any association with the Tikhomirov's reference to Zhelyabov's reluctance to accept "centralism." The latter had been an orthodox populist until the influence of Morozov and others had turned him in the direction of political extremism; but he never lost that populist mentality and, through his role as theoretician of both "Zemlya i Volya" and "Narodnaya Volya," synthesized the populism terrorism of the former and the political-social revolutionary goals of the latter. In the case of the program for "Narodnaya Volya," Venturi claims that Tikhomirov "looked to Tkachev and the Jacobin tradition for the elements to make up this synthesis."<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Road to Revolution, p. 219.

<sup>17</sup>Venturi, p. 643.



Then, at least Morozov, Oshanina, and Tikhomirov are reported to have had "centralist" sympathies, and yet the Executive Committee of which they were a part repudiated Tkachev. This seems to be a strange contradiction, but upon closer examination it becomes less surprising in view of the circumstances surrounding it. Tkachev could advocate his strictly centralized partly and revolutionary dictatorship openly and boldly, for he was in exile and need not fear government repression. "Narodnoya Volya" was a genuinely Russian party, susceptible to the constant threat of arrest, but that consideration was obviously not as significant as others, for the organ of the party did call openly for the overthrow of the autocracy. Rather, the Executive Committee suffered limitation in its public statements because of possible repercussions from two groups, the masses and the other revolutionary circles, both of whose support "Narodnaya Volya" needed to continue its activities against the autocracy. Tkachev's theories on clandestine organization reminded the revolutionary intellectuals too much of the terrible methods of Nechaev--internal spying, strict discipline, and elimination of the disobedient. On the other hand, Tkachev's proposed seizure of power by a centralized conspiratorial party seemed to the "Narodovoltsi" to preclude the participation of the masses (though, as indicated in the discussion of Tkachev, this was an unfair interpretation of the latter's words), and this was alien to the continuing populist strains in the minds of the leaders of the Executive Committee. And Zhelyabov was one of those populists, though his ideas on seizure of political power were consistent with the Tkachevist ideology.

At Lipetsk, the emphasis was not so much upon the nature of the revolutionary government (through Mikhailov made a token reference to

Narodopravlenie, i. e. popular sovereignty) as upon the organization and tactics of the conspiratorial party. And, like it or not, the structure was definitely in the Blanquist tradition, due to the influence of Mikhailov, Morozov, and Tikhomirov. All of the members present were to form the Executive Committee, the arm of the party, while the brain of the party was to reside in the Directive Committee of three members elected by the body; actually the Directive Committee never functioned, so all power lay in the hands of the Executive Committee. Members were to dedicate themselves wholly to the cause and guard well the secret of the existence of the Executive Committee, though they might, if necessary, reveal themselves as mere agents of that body. Strict discipline and obedience to the will of the majority of the Committee were to be maintained, and all members were bound to irrevocable membership until the accomplishment of the party's goals. Candidates for admission to membership had to agree to the entire program of the party before acceptance and had to serve as second-class agents before admission to the Executive Committee. Recommendations for membership had to be submitted by five existing members of the Executive Committee and voted upon in an open count, where each negative vote equalled two positive ones. Morozov suggested a more simple process in practice: "When admitting anew member we never asked his views on socialism or anarchism. We asked, "Are you ready at once to offer your life, your personal freedom, and all that you have?" If he said yes, and if we believed him, we took him on."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Quoted in Footman, p. 102.

Beneath the Executive Committee existed a hierarchy of party agents, the lowest group being Grade I to avoid their knowledge of the total number of grades.

The conference ended with a discussion of tasks, and the one agreed upon in principle by all was the assassination of the Tsar. The unanimous decision of those present at Lipetsk had been to conduct a political struggle; with this in mind they confronted the remainder of "Zemlya i Volya" at Voronezh with the ultimatum either to join the Executive Committee or split up the organization. Plekhanov and the other orthodox populists were shocked at such a perversion of the socialist revolution, and, upon the silence of the group when he confronted them with a copy of Listok in which Morozov advocated political terrorism, Plekhanov left the conference. That left a few populist-socialists arrayed against a majority of terrorists of all descriptions. Deich, one of the former, divided the latter into three categories: terrorists for revenge purposes (Perovskaya); terrorists for sensational purposes (Morozov); and terrorists for political purposes (Zhelyabov and Mikhailov). His description of Zhelyabov at the Voronezh conference and at the side-line debates in Perovskaya's temporary residence is classic:

'Tall, magnificently built, broad and with strongly marked features, he was then not thirty but looked older. Just by his appearance he stood out from the rest of us. He was a man who compelled attention at the first glance. I first met him at Perovskaya's. There were ten of us altogether. There was a lovely and heated argument on terrorism. Zhelyabov and Plekhanov were the chief protagonists. Zhelyabov spoke quietly, in a low full bass, with determination and conviction, on the necessity of terror. He saw no immediate prospect of success by work among the peasants. He was for concentrating on the more progressive classes. He was all for fighting for political emancipation—a course to which we Narodniks were opposed.'<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Quoted in Footman, p. 106.

Again, Zhelyabov made a resounding speech, in which he shocked even his comrades on the Executive Committee by asking for a constitution for Russia:

'I know a number of peasants. . .with intelligence and energy and interested in village affairs. But as things are now they will never come out in the open. They know they cannot do any good and they do not want to make themselves martyrs for the sake of a dream. They are practical men; they refuse to risk all they have for a will-o'-the-wisp. A constitution would give them the chance to come out in the open--and they would take it. They would have some tangible objective to fight for; and they would be just as stubborn and just as persistent as any of our sectaries have<sup>20</sup> been. That is the way to build up a popular party.'

This speech provoked a new controversy between the politicals and socialists, and even the revenge-and sensation-seeking terrorists were afraid that a Constituent Assembly would be usurped by bourgeois politicians and financiers. Both the latter group and the propogandists preferred the free federation of autonomous peasant obshchinas so dear to Herzen and Bakunin. The terrorists, for the sake of unity, urged Zhelyabov to put the damper on his constitutional enthusiasm, but this attitude, born years earlier in Odessa, could not be repressed so easily; it was one of the chief points included in the later program of "Narodnaya Volya" and became its strongest defense against attacks accusing them of Jacobinism.

Once convinced of the necessity of including the convocation of a Constituent Assembly in its program, "Narodnaya Volya" utilized every possible instance to publicize this fact for the benefit of the people, as if to prove that their political terrorism did not divorce them from the genuine aspirations of the masses. On November 22, 1879, after the

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<sup>20</sup>Quoted in Footman, p. 104.

unsuccessful attempt to bomb the Tsar's train on the Moscow-Kursk railway, the Executive Committee issued its first manifesto to the Russian people, chiefly to inform them of the attempt and to use this chance to discredit the Tsar, but also to reassure the people that the Committee was acting in their best interests:

'We once more assert Alexander II to be the personification of arbitrary, cowardly, bloody, and ever more violent despotation. . . He has merited the death penalty by the pain he has caused and the blood he has shed. . . But our concern is not with him alone. Our aim is the freedom of the people and the good of the people. If Alexander were to recognize the evil he has done to Russia, if he were to hand over his power to a General Assembly chosen by the free vote of the people, then we for our part would leave him in peace and forgive his past misdeeds. But, till then, implacable war.'<sup>21</sup> (*italics mine*)

The part about "leaving Alexander in peace" and "forgiving" him sounds false, and indeed the last sentence indicates that the Committee considered a reform from above completely impossible; but the National Assembly idea is obviously there as an inseparable part of "Narodovoltsi" ideology.

In February, 1880, after the explosion in the Winter Palace set off by Khalturin, a member of the Executive Committee, Alexander II made a slight concession to the revolutionary movement by appointing Count Loris-Melikov as head of a special commission to restore order and investigate the possibility of reforms. This "Dictatorship of the Heart" marked a period of lull in the terrorist activities of the Executive Committee, for which Footman cites four reasons: the hope that a cessation of attacks might influence the Tsar to lessen the penalties of those "Narodovoltsi" awaiting trial; the difficulty of planning an attempt on the Tsar while

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid, p. 126.



he resided at his summer resort at Livadia; the necessity for a respite in order to attract new members and collect funds; and last, but not least, the belief that a let-up of pressure on Loris-Melikov might enhance the possibility of a constitution being granted. This latter hope is evidenced in a resolution, passed after heated discussion and signed by Zhelyabov and the other members of the Executive Committee:

'To avoid anarchy, no attempt whatsoever is to be made to overthrow or to undermine the authority of the Constituent Assembly. In consequence, should the Constituent Assembly decide to maintain the imperial regime, this regime is to be acknowledged and recognized on condition that the party be allowed to continue its propaganda by all normal methods.'<sup>22</sup>

Perhaps this was a stalling tactic and a bit of opportunistic publicity, for it is doubtful that the party actually would have accepted the maintenance of the imperial regime, as the resolution so magnanimously offered. Shortly thereafter the terrorist struggle was renewed, with intensified efforts to destroy the Tsar.

But the appeal for the convocation of a Constituent Assembly was one of the most consistent factors in the publicity surrounding "Narodnaya Volya," and theoretically, this constitutionalism disproves the Blanquist accusations directed against it. There is one instance where the repudiation of dictatorial seizure of power was not only theoretical, but actual. In early 1881, when Nechaev sought to induce the Executive Committee to assume a revolutionary dictatorship, with Zhelyabov as dictator, and thereafter to make a mockery of its basic constitutionalism, the Committee refused to entertain the idea for fear that it would discredit itself as a popular party and lose the support of the masses. The

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<sup>22</sup>Quoted in Footman, p. 157.

Constituent Assembly idea received its final and most eloquent expression in the ideology of "Narodnaya Volya" in the famous letter written by Tkhomirov in the name of the Executive Committee to Alexander III on March 10, 1881.<sup>23</sup> After asserting the continuation of its revolutionary strength and the consequent terrorism amnesty and the convocation of a National Assembly, it insisted upon the complete freedom of the election process and the granting of the political freedoms of press, speech, assembly, and electoral programs, and ended with these words:

This is the only way in which Russia can be restored to a course of normal and peaceful development. We solemnly declare before our native land and all the world, that our party will submit unconditionally to the decision of a Popular Assembly which shall have been chosen in accord with the above-mentioned conditions; and in the future we shall offer no armed resistance whatever to a government that has been sanctioned by the Popular Assembly. And so, your Majesty, decide. Before you are two courses. On you depends the choice; we can only ask Fate that your reason and conscience dictate to you a decision which will conform only to the good of Russia, to your own dignity, and to your duty to your native land.

Here again was the appeal to a reform from above, so inconsistent with the avowedly terrorist and conspiratorial orientation of "Narodnaya Volya." These were the brave and foolish words of a dying organization, written by a man who was more a theorist than a practitioner of terrorism and therefore less concerned with the practical necessities of its perpetration, and yet they express well the constant and uncorrupted idealism of all of the Committee members throughout their terrorist careers, even in the face of both the measures demanded of them for the sake of successful activity, and of their waiting martyrdom, which in spite of its honor and glory would signify also the final defeat of their cause.

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<sup>23</sup>See Appendix B.

The short year and a half from August 29, 1879, when the Executive Committee formally sentenced the tsar to death, to March 1, 1881, when the sentence was carried out, included seven tactical plans to assassinate Alexander II,<sup>24</sup> but it was marked by more than that. It was a time also of consolidation of ideology and strategy, prompted by the necessity of defending the very existence of such an organization against its opponents. Already in late summer, 1879, the shaky compromise, resulting from the Voronezh conference for the continuation of "Zemlya i Volya" upon the

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<sup>24</sup>The first three were unsuccessful attempts to blow up the Tsar's train: the first took place at Odessa in September, 1879, under the leadership of Kibalchich; the second, at Alexandrovsk in October, 1879, under the leadership of Zhelyabov, who posed as a tanner under the name of Cheremisov; the third, at Moscow in November, 1879, under the leadership of Alexander Mikhailov, who could boast only the destruction of the Tsar's baggage train. The people knew only of the last attempt, announced by the Executive Committee in a public manifesto on November 22, 1879. The fourth attempt occurred shortly after the Odessa failure; Zhelyabov organized a bomb attack on the Kamenni Bridge over the Ekaterinsky Canal in Petersburg, over which the Tsar would pass to the railroad station, but the bombs were never set off due to the tardiness of one of the participants. The fifth plan involved Khalturin, who posed as a repairman and set explosives in the dining room of the Winter Palace. On February 5, 1880, the spark was set; but the Tsar had been delayed in another room, and the "Narodnaya Volya" again failed. The sixth plan was set in a cheese shop on Malaya Sadovaya Street, where a tunnel was dug underground and explosives were placed exactly under the spot where Alexander II would ride on his way to military parades at the Manège. The seventh plan was an alternate to the sixth: two "Narodovoltzi" carrying bombs were to be stationed on another street in case the Tsar changed his route. Zhelyabov was in charge of this intricate plan, but he was arrested on the night of February 27, 1881. Thus, it was Perovskaya who watched carefully on March 1 and signalled the change of route to Rysakov and Grinevitsky, who threw their bombs, the second one being fatal to both Alexander II and Grinevitsky.

basis of mere recognition of the necessity of overthrowing the tsar, had been broken by the final schism into "Chernyi Peredel" (Black Earth Partition) and "Narodnaya Volya" (People's Will). According to Venturi, "it was said that of the old name, 'Zemlya i Volya,' the land remained with the first group, the freedom and will with the second."<sup>25</sup> The efforts of "Chernyi Peredel" to spread socialist propaganda among the workers and peasants suffered the same failure as those of "Zemlya i Volya," but Plekhanov made valiant efforts to justify his position in the few publications of Chernyi Peredel. He reasserted the orthodox populist stand on the necessity for conducting a long-term and systematic study of the genuine economic needs of the masses and for propagandizing for an agrarian revolution based on the equal redistribution of the land, which would lead in time to a thoroughgoing federalist-socialist society. Supported by Akselrod's pamphlets from Switzerland, he condemned the political stand of "Narodnaya Volya" and claimed that a Constituent Assembly would be threatened by bourgeois usurpation, thereby forcing the party to assume dictatorial control through the State and therefore to isolate itself even more from the people. Recognizing these adverse effects of a constitutional movement, Plekhanov also saw in it the possibility of awakening the real and widespread indignation of the people with all peaceful political forms, when faced with an overwhelming bourgeois reaction against the social-revolutionary program presented legally in the electoral campaign.<sup>26</sup> The failure of "Chernyi Peredel"

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<sup>25</sup>Venturi, p. 657. The Russian word "volya" can be translated as both "will" and "freedom."

<sup>26</sup>Venturi, pp. 658-664.

diverted Plekhanov to the road of Social Democracy.

Meanwhile, the necessity of gathering strength for the assault upon the Tsar and the political system he represented was diverting "Narodnaya Volya" imperceptibly to the road of Blanquism. Its charter of August 29, 1879, began with the words: "We are socialists and narodniki by conviction. . . The welfare of the nation and the popular will--these are our two sacred principles, never to be separated from one another."<sup>27</sup> The section on propaganda and agitation continued this definition of party orientation: "Our propaganda must aim to popularize among all classes the idea of a democratic political revolution by means of socialist reforms. . ."<sup>28</sup> Vera Figner has given a concise explanation of this highly significant wording:

From the very first we decided in our program on the definition: 'We are Populists-Socialists.' It emphasized our revolutionary past, the fact that we were a party not exclusively political; that political freedom was for us not an end, but the means of breaking our way through to the people, of opening up a broad path for their development. On the other hand, by combining the words 'socialist' and 'populist,' we indicated that, as socialists we pursued not the abstract, ultimate aims of the socialist teaching, but the attainment of those conscious needs and wants of the people, which in their essence included principles of socialism and freedom. Considering the incorporation of socialist ideals in life as a task of the more or less remote future, the new party placed as its nearest goal in the economic field the transfer of the chief instrument of production, the land, into the hands of the peasant commune; and in the political field, the substitution of the sovereignty of the entire people for the autocracy of one man. In other words, the establishment of such an order as would make the freely expressed popular will the highest and only orbiter of all social life. The most suitable means

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<sup>27</sup>Quoted in Payne, The Terrorists, p. 157.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 158.



which presented itself for the attainment of these aims was the removal of the existing organization of state power through a revolution.<sup>29</sup>

According to the charter, this revolution was to be instigated by a secret, centralized, conspiratorial organization using terror to demonstrate to the government the strength and tenacity of the party's struggle, to make the people believe in the party's capability of supporting a popular uprising (clearly a Tkachevist principle), and to develop strength for internal combat.<sup>30</sup> Needless to say, the Executive Committee's terror achieved not a single one of these goals. Alexander II, though conceding Loris-Melikov's "Dictatorship of the Heart" in 1880 and agreeing in March, 1881, to a constitution granting a limited consultative assembly to the people, never cowered before the strength of "Narodnaya Volya," and his tragic carelessness resulted in a more stringent repression of revolutionary activity by his reactionary successor. Though it was fully intended by the Executive Committee to maintain contact with and gather support from among the military, the workers, and the peasants, and though initially efforts were made in this direction, the party directed its main forces into the attempts upon the life of the Tsar and remained isolated from the people.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>Memoirs of a Revolutionist, p. 78.

<sup>30</sup>Payne, p. 159.

<sup>31</sup>There was one incident in the history of "Narodnaya Volya," however, which threatened to divert the energies of the party away from the assassination plans toward the organization of a peasant revolt. Zhelyabov called a meeting of the Executive Committee in November, 1880, to discuss the possibility of manipulating peasant discontent over the failure of the 1880 harvest to stir up a popular revolt. Zhelyabov said in that meeting: "I consider it essential not to lose the opportunity for action which these conditions offer us. I propose to go myself to the Volga provinces and place myself at the head of a peasant revolt. I am confident (and)

Rather than strengthening the internal power of the organization, terror depleted its force rapidly and drastically in the face of the numerous arrests and executions, prompting Zhelyabov's plaintive remark: "We are using up our capital." Tkachev opposed terror for its dissipating effects upon the strength of the revolutionary party, and his fears were realized in the total destruction of "Narodnaya Volya" because of its almost monomaniac insistence upon terror.

Zhelyabov, nevertheless, at his trial in late March, 1881, defended stubbornly both the terroristic methods and the centralized organization of the dying "Narodnaya Volya":

'According to the prosecutor the task we then set ourselves was to attempt to kill. This is untrue. The task we set ourselves was not so narrow. Our basic principle. . . was that the Social Revolutionary Party should bring about a revolution. To this end we were to organize revolutionary forces on the widest possible scale. Up till then I had not seen the necessity of organizing. Like other simple socialists, I had felt that certain matters, the supply of prohibited literature for instance, should be organized. Otherwise I had relied on individual initiative. But once we had set ourselves the task of carrying out an armed revolution it was obviously necessary to establish a strong, centralized machine, and we--myself included--devoted vastly more time and effort to this work than to preparing assassinations. After Lipetsk I became a member of the body at the head of which stands the Executive Committee, and I devoted all my powers to the creation of a strong centralized organization,

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that I possess the qualities necessary for carrying out this task. I have the firm hope that I shall at least succeed in forcing the Administration to recognise the people's right to relief.'" (Footman, pp. 169-170.) This incident shows the continuing populist strain in Zhelyabov's ideology; but the Executive Committee knew that it did not have the strength to carry on the battle on a double front. Zhelyabov's suggestion, to postpone the assassination attempt, might mean its complete cancellation; the idea of a peasant revolt was abandoned.

consisting of a number of semi-autonomous groups working on a common plan and inspired by a common idea. My personal task, the object of my life, had been to work for the common good. I tried first to do this by peaceful means. Later on I was forced to turn to violence.<sup>32</sup>

Yet, Zhelyabov, while admitting the terror and the obviously Blanquist structure of the party, was more reticent about revealing the party's vision of the political nature of the future society. Anxious to defend his organization against the prosecutor's charge of anarchism, he did say this much:

'I maintain that we are adherents of ordered government, not anarchists. It is an old story that we are anarchists. We affirm that as long as there are common interests it will be necessary to maintain a government. . . We are not anarchists. We stand for Federal Government. We advocate a Constituent Assembly. How can we then be regarded as anarchists.'<sup>33</sup>

He was but repeating the words of the charter which stated the firm belief of "Narodnaya Volya" in the necessity of maintaining the State, but transferring its power from the hands of the tsarist regime to the hands of a freely, universally elected Constituent Assembly, as the party had outlined its campaign program, very similar in its demands to Lenin's "April Theses"—popular sovereignty, local political and economic autonomy, popular ownership of the land and industry, the personal freedoms, an unrestricted electoral law, and the transformation of the army into a popular militia.<sup>34</sup>

This was a fitting response to the centralized tsarist government,

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<sup>32</sup>Quoted in Footman, pp. 232-233.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 228.

<sup>34</sup>payne, p. 158.

but there were several vital complications that rendered their constitutionalism a virtual dead-letter. Kravchinsky, who we have seen was apolitical in 1886, was in London to justify the "nihilist-terrorist" phase in the Russian revolutionary movement. Certainly, he was speaking for himself and the other apoliticals, but his words helped to harden the epithet of anarchism already levelled against the "Narodovoltzi" at their trial in 1881:

'We care nothing for forms of government. We don't object to monarchy, or even to the Tsar, by himself. What we want Popular Government for is that it may be a means to an end--that it may wake our people to a sense of their degradation, and of their natural rights. That done, any kind of government may arise that can. We are not seriously prejudiced in favor of any theory. . . Our first task is to destroy the tyranny.'

Already clearly Bakuninist, Kravchinsky confused the orthodox anarchist position by suggesting that the administration of the future society be vested in a federation of autonomous entities, modelled after the government of the United States.

This anarchist modification of the constitutionalism of "Narodnaya Volya" was matched by one of a diametrically opposite bent, that is, the Blanquist revolutionary dictatorship. It will be remembered that Kravchinsky had suggested in 1878 that the government remain neutral in the fight between the socialists and their bourgeois enemies and had warned the first articles in Narodnaya Volya repudiated Kravchinsky's first suggestion as impossible, since the government was the true enemy of the people, but the warning was considered carefully by the party members. Even in the charter, the Executive Committee modified its advocacy of a

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<sup>35</sup> W. Earl Hodgson, A Night with a Nihilist, Cupar-Fife: Fifeshire Journal Office, London, p. 9-11.

of a Constituent Assembly with these words: "Though this is far from being the ideal form by which the popular will may be manifested, it is at the present time the only possible and practical solution."<sup>36</sup> The succeeding articles in Narodnaya Volya recognized the bourgeois threat, since the people were unprepared politically to exercise their rights and render the Constituent Assembly full justice as a democratic body. There were two means of remedying this weakness: prepare the masses through propaganda on a long-term basis or strike against the State immediately in a thoroughgoing revolution in which power could be seized from the State and its bourgeois supporters. The Executive Committee chose the latter means, because, even if the people were not ready for revolution, the "Narodovoltsi" felt themselves fully prepared, and the urgency of the political situation demanded that decisive action be taken before "it is too late, while there is a real possibility that power can in fact pass to the people--Now or never; that is our dilemma."<sup>37</sup> Even the terminology is that of Zaichnevsky and Tkachev; convinced of the necessity of immediate revolution and yet faced with the implacable passivity of both peasants and intellectuals, the Executive Committee was forced into the Blanquist position condemned so bitterly by its leaders and ideologues: "The party must take the initiative of a political revolution on itself."<sup>38</sup>

By this decision "Narodnaya Volya" actually advocated a potential divorce from the masses, but this did not mean that they were ready to

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<sup>36</sup>Payne, p. 158.

<sup>37</sup>Quoted in Venturi, p. 671.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 673.



accept such a conclusion. After all, they had been just recently propagandists themselves, and the clash with Plekhanov and his associates was still too close to permit a scuttling of their populist beliefs. The more the struggle seemed to deepen between centralized State and centralized party, the more intensely the Executive Committee sought to maintain its ties with the people and the socio-economic goals stated in the party's program. The articles in Narodnaya Volya pictured the party as a hero waging battle alone against the enemies of the oppressed people, and significantly they returned again and again to the subject of political revolution necessarily preceding the socio-economic transformation. In the article "The Political Revolution and the Economic Problem," N. I. Kibalchich, Executive Committee member and explosives expert, evaluated the political position taken by the party:

'Together with our fundamental, socio-economic objective, we also have to assume that of destroying political despotism. In other words, we have to do what has already been done long everywhere else in Europe, not by Socialist parties, but by the bourgeoisie. For this reason there is not a single Socialist party in Europe which has to wage<sup>39</sup> so oppressive a war as we do and offer up so many victims.'

Tkachev would have been proud of such a conclusion, but Kibalchich was extremely careful to distinguish the simultaneous political-economic battle of "Narodnaya Volya" from both the exclusively political determinists, i. e. the dictatorial "Statists" influenced by Tkachev, and the exclusively economic determinists, i. e. the Plekhanovites influenced by Marx. "Narodnaya Volya" combined the best of these two worlds of thought:

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<sup>39</sup>Quoted in Venturi, p. 679.

'And finally, there is the synthesis of these two unilateral opinions. This recognizes the close link and reciprocal action of economic and political factors. It claims that the social revolution cannot be carried out without certain political transformations; nor, vice versa, can free political institutions be maintained without some historical preparation in the economic sphere.'<sup>40</sup>

Thus, the Executive Committee repudiated the two opposing currents in Western revolutionary thought and looked into its own backyard, Mother Russia, to discover the traditions of Stenka Razin and Pugachev--a truly popular revolt, led and supported by the social revolutionary party, so that it might strike at the focal point of its oppression: the tsarist State. This was Tkhomirov's main line, that strange combination of populism and politics, echoed by Alexander Mikhailov in a letter to his comrades just before his trial in February, 1882, when it was already too late: "'Do not be carried away by fine theories. There is only one theory in Russia: to acquire freedom to own the land;. . .there is only one way to do this: fire at the centre.'"<sup>41</sup>

But the Blanquist implications of their policy were clear, and the Executive Committee, sensitive to the repercussions that the epithets of purely political terrorism--"conspiracy," and a Blanquist revolutionary dictatorship--might have upon the people, sought to purge the semblance of these elements from their activity. Already, Morozov, whose emphasis upon sensational terrorism bore no real consideration of the social goals to accompany the seizure of political power, had antagonized his comrades and chose to emigrate to Geneva, where, as has been noted in the Tkachev chapter, he plagued briefly the "Nabatovtsi" with his pure terrorism.

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<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 679.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 708.

Treading cautiously, the party continued to proclaim the necessity of conspiratorial activities aimed at the "disorganization" of the State in order to force concessions from it, but it was more reticent on the nature of that "disorganization." Secretly, it was promoting the idea of a military coup d'état among the garrisons of Petersburg temporarily. Openly, these practical measures were tempered by the theory that such a seizure of power must ~~be only the first stage in an extensive popular revolution:~~

be only the first stage in an extensive popular revolution:

'Let us suppose, then, that the party has organized enough forces, and, anticipating a general movement of the people, has seized the central power. What must it then do? Create a new structure for the State and decree the reforms which are indispensable? We say no. Only in the most unfortunate case, only if the body of the people were to show not even a spark of life, could such a step be considered necessary. In normal times the party would be obliged to use the power and means it had won so as to upturn the whole of Russia and to appeal everywhere to the people to realize its century-old demands. It would have to help the people with all its forces and retain control of the central power only so as to help the people to organize itself.'<sup>42</sup>

Thus, though they bitterly attached the "despotic Utopia" of Tkachev's dictatorial revolution from above as a perversion of the popular revolution, the "Narodovoltsi" reserved to themselves virtually the same authoritiam power in order to orce the necessary transformation of social and economic institutions. But their inherent populist mentality would not allow them to discredit the possibility of the eventual awakening of the masses to the demands of the situation, upon which awareness the masses would spontaneously continue the revolution by assuming local power over obshchinas and factories. The revolutionary party would simultaneously

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<sup>42</sup>Quoted in Venturi, p. 674.

continue its own role as destroyers of the counter-revolutionary elements, supporting with its newfound strength the popular revolution in process.

If this view of the situation contained distinct populist elements, it still reflected a menacing note of Blanquist dictatorship. Reluctantly recognizing this, the "Narodovoltsi" desperately contrived to dispel such a derogatory image; they began to emphasize more and more the one facet of their policy that would disqualify them as pure Blanquists: a Constituent Assembly. In the later articles in Narodnaya Volya, the authors pounced upon this idea and proclaimed it with all the desperate force of revolutionary spirit:

'If circumstances should become less favorable, the provisional revolutionary government will carry out an economic revolution at the same time as it frees the people and creates new political institutions. It will do away with the right of private owners to the land and to the tools of heavy industry. And then the true representatives of the people, freed now of their political and economic bondage, will answer the summoning of the Zemsky Sobor. And the life of the people itself will be impregnably based on the will of the people.'<sup>43</sup>

The will of the people! It was a magnificent manipulation of their party's name in order to express their most basic sentiments on the goals of revolution. It was magnificent also in what it inherently repudiated: both the anarchy of Bakunin and the dictatorship of Tkachev. It smelled unmistakably Russian and populist.

But the "Narodovoltsi" were faced immediately with the question of the relationship of their party to this freely, universally elected body of the people. Could the strength and power of their revolutionary forces bow before the democratic procedure that this concept demanded? Bakunin had avoided the question with his spontaneously arising federation of autonomous obshchinas; Tkachev had refused even to entertain the impossible

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<sup>43</sup>Quoted in Venturi, p. 675.

idealism of such a body; Nechaev had sought to manipulate it as a front for the dictatorial power of the revolutionary elite; and Lenin in 1917 would activate this Nechaevist principle in the superficial convening of the Constituent Assembly, only to order its forceful dispersal when the Bolsheviki had commanded but a minority of representatives. However, the "Narodovoltzi" were still populists and therefore very idealistic; their charter boasted this paragraph:

'While wholly submitting ourselves to the will of the people, we nevertheless as a party believe it to be our duty to put forward a program for the benefit of the people. We intend to continue making propaganda for our program up to the outbreak of the revolution, we shall continue to recommend it during the electoral campaign and we shall defend it in the Constituent Assembly itself.'<sup>44</sup>

The letter to Alexander III repeated the same intention of the party's submission to the will of the Constituent Assembly, as if the "Narodovoltzi" would renounce their supreme authority and consent to serve merely as one more group of participants in the campaign and in the democratic government following the elections. Its plans were further elucidated in one of the last articles of Narodnaya Volya:

'In a constituent assembly, created autonomously or by a summons from the government, and supplied with the mandates of its electors. . . ninety per cent of the deputies will be peasants. And if we assume that the party acts cleverly enough they will belong to the same party. What will such an assembly decide? It is exceedingly likely that it will completely reverse the whole economic and governmental system.'<sup>45</sup>

But Venturi is convinced that the "Narodovoltzi" were fully aware of the opportunity which this assembly of the people offered them for the fulfillment

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<sup>44</sup>Quoted in Payne, p. 158.

<sup>45</sup>Quoted in Venturi, p. 676.



of their particular program without fear of defeat at the hands of other, possibly bourgeois, parties. The germ of his conclusion lies in this statement made by Kibalchich:

'When government centralization has been finally smashed by the wave of the popular movement, what social elements will show they they constitute real forces? Who will govern the course of events? Not the privileged classes, of course, for they are not united. Not the lawful parties, because they are disorganized. Only the people and the social revolutionary party will constitute those fundamental forces on which the social and State organization of the future will depend.'<sup>46</sup>

Venturi's words are significant in assessing the true character of "Narodnaya Volya" in this consistent appeal for a popular assembly: "Naturally this conception too had its Jacobin aspect: the Zemsky Sobor under discussion was really the Convention. The role to be played by the party in its relations with it was obviously that of the French Jacobins."<sup>47</sup>

Faced with the equally terrible consequences of its total attack upon the State--anarchy--and of its centralized conspiratorial power--Blanquist dictatorship--, "Narodnaya Volya" chose the safe middle road of a Constituent Assembly, which in any event was consistent with their populist ideals and which left them enough potential freedom to assert their power in the most advantageous manner.

Having justified their existence as the genuine instrument of the "will of the people," the "Narodovolts" continued their assassination attempts, and by so doing, isolated themselves further and further from

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 676-677.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 677.

the people and finally destroyed themselves entirely. Vera Figner attempted to justify this isolation by describing the policy of her party on the necessity of linking its activity with the "organization" of revolutionary sentiment among the soldiers, workers, and peasants. But her own analysis<sup>48</sup> of the aftermath of March 1, 1881, did more to condemn than to justify the monomaniac concentration of the "Narodovoltsi" upon the murder of the Tsar. The military revolt and the peasant uprising never materialized; the peasants believed, as Nechaev had predicted, that the reactionary landlords had killed the "Tsar-Reformer"; Zhelyabov, Perovskaya, Timofei, Mikhailov, Nikolai Rysakov, and Kibalchich were hanged on April 3, 1881; the rest of the Executive Committee dispersed forever; and rather than forcing the government to make concessions, the assassination provoked one of the most reactionary periods in Russian history. "Narodnaya Volya" died for an unreachable cause, never having made more than the slightest impact upon the people in whose name they had acted.

Lenin in What is to be done? (1902) defended the strong militant organization of the "Narodovoltsi," using it and the organization of "Zemlya i Volya" as a model for his own concept of a Social Democratic Party, against the Economists's derogatory charges against its failure to observe the basic ~~tenets~~ of democratic theory:

To regard a militant revolutionary organization as something specifically Narodnaya Volya in character is absurd. . . ; for no revolutionary trend, if it seriously thinks of struggle can dispense with such an organization. The mistake the Narodnaya Volya committed was not in striving to enlist all the discontented in the organization and to direct this

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<sup>48</sup> Memoirs of a Revolutionist, pp. 117-123.

organization to resolute struggle against the autocracy; on the contrary, that was its great historical merit. The mistake was in relying on a theory which in substance was not a revolutionary theory at all, and the Narodnaya Volya members either did not know how, or were unable to link their movement inseparably with the class struggle in the developing capitalist society.<sup>49</sup>

Naturally, Lenin was condemning that note of populist idealism which saw the peasant, rather than the worker, as the vital revolutionary force, but he glossed over the fact that any strong militant conspiratorial organization must suffer the fate of isolation from its so-called revolutionary forces, i. e. the people. Indicative of Lenin's opportunistic reference to only those parts of "Narodnaya Volya" which conformed to his own ideas was an incident in 1906, recalled later by Pokrovsky in his funeral speech on Lenin at the Socialist Academy in 1924, when Pokrovsky asked Lenin to mention the twenty-fifth anniversary of March 1, 1881, in Iskra (The Spark):

~ Lenin refused. 'Well and good, they died. Honor and glory to them, but why should we talk about it?' 'At that time,' said Pokrovsky, 'this seemed to me a sign of coldness, of a moral break with this preceding stage in the revolutionary movement. Now I understand that this was simply a reflection of a well-known tactic, a refusal at a time of sharp struggle, to give even posthumous compliments to terror.'<sup>50</sup>

It is just these two elements of "Narodnaya Volya"—terror and the failure to recognize the proletariat as a revolutionary force—that provoke the condemnation of the Soviet historians, but Lenin's reference to them in What is to be done? is enough to justify the conclusion that "Narodnaya Volya" exerted a great influence upon his own tactics.

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<sup>49</sup> Lenin, Collected Works, vol. 5, p. 474.

<sup>50</sup> Vorlamov, pp. 24-25.

The "Narodovoltsi" succeeded in only one aspect of their activity-- the destruction of one Tsar--, and this was merely the first step of their revolutionary plans. The hopes of forcing concessions from the new Tsar, of promoting a popular revolution, of secretly planning to seize power and convoke a Constituent Assembly were doomed to die with their leaders. Their failure rested in the complete contradiction between the practical measures taken to kill the Tsar and the idealism of their populist mentality; in this sense, they were a self-destructive phenomenon, wasting their energy on one aspect of "disorganization" and thus precluding their chances of carefully organizing the necessary revolutionary forces. Their direct heirs were the Social Revolutionaries, who also employed terror and who were successful enough to command a majority of the votes in the Constituent Assembly elections of 1917. The evaluation of the ideological struggles of the "Narodovoltsi" can only place them in three categories: political populists in theory; terrorists in the actual practice of conspiracy; and potential Blanquists in the event of revolutionary success. It was the unique mixture of these three elements that kept them functioning for a year and a half, but it was also the bitter consequences of the internal contradiction of these same factors that marked their swift and tragic disappearance from the revolutionary scene.

## CONCLUSION

By the 1930's in Russia, the fashionable term in revolutionary circles had become the "dictatorship of the proletariat," reflecting the development of Marxist ideology, and that other dictatorship, the Russian revolutionary dictatorship, had been discredited and relegated to a place in the annals of history. In retrospect, it would be apt to compare the two in many respects, for the Marxist dictatorial practice in the Soviet Union took on all the characteristics of a dictatorship over the proletariat. Khrushchev had readily expressed this comparison. Khrushchev himself expressed it in every theory but his own; Khrushchev and Zhdanov in 1957; Lenin and Khrushchev in 1958; and Khrushchev and Zhdanov in 1959. Lenin and Khrushchev attempted to score the spectra of it away from their ideology, and then reluctantly accepted it as a matter of necessity.

The very existence and consequences of dictatorship in any form have haunted Marxist historiography since its earliest post-revolutionary beginnings. Probably the first and most significant political battle took place in the immediate aftermath of the revolution between Karl Kautsky on one side and Lenin and Trotsky on the other. Kautsky, the most outstanding orthodox Marxist in the first two decades of the twentieth century, in his book The Dictatorship of the Proletariat (1918), defended Marx' use of the term "dictatorship" not in a literal sense, i.e., a form of government, but in the sense of a condition which must everywhere arise when the proletariat has conquered



## CONCLUSION

By the 1890's in Russia, the fashionable term in revolutionary circles had become the "dictatorship of the proletariat," reflecting the development of Marxist ideology, and that other dictatorship--the Blanquist revolutionary dictatorship--has been discredited and relegated to a pigeonhole in the annals of history. In retrospect, it would be apt to compare the two in many respects, for the Marxist slogan in practice in the Soviet Union took on all the characteristics of a dictatorship over the proletariat. Herzen had sadly foreseen this occurrence; Bakunin condemned it in every theory but his own; Tkachev and Zaichnevsky knew and accepted it; Ishutin and Nechaev ignored it; and "Narodnaya Volya" desperately attempted to scare the spectre of it away from their ideology, and then reluctantly accepted it as ultimate necessity.

The very existence and consequences of dictatorship in any form have haunted Soviet historiography since its earliest post-revolutionary beginnings. Probably the first and most significant polemical battle took place in the immediate aftermath of the revolution between Karl Kautsky on one side and Lenin and Trotsky on the other. Kautsky, the most outstanding orthodox Marxist in the first two decades of the twentieth century, in his book The Dictatorship of the Proletariat (1918), defended Marx' use of the term "dictatorship" not in a literal sense, i. e., a form of government, but in the sense "of a condition which must everywhere arise when the proletariat has conquered

political power,"<sup>1</sup> in other words, popular sovereignty. Kautsky did concede the necessity for a revolutionary minority to maintain political power temporarily in order to destroy the counterrevolutionary elements in civil war, but only if that revolutionary dictatorship would abrogate itself immediately upon its victory over those elements. Otherwise, "the dictatorship of the lower classes opens the way for the dictatorship of the sword"<sup>2</sup> or a minority rule that maintains itself against the will of the people by means of either "Jesuitism" or "Bonapartism." This condition, says Kautsky, is a perversion of what Marx meant by dictatorship of the proletariat: "By the dictatorship of the proletariat we are unable to understand anything else than its rule on the basis of democracy."<sup>3</sup> Kautsky accordingly viewed with alarm the forcible dissolution by the Bolsheviks of the Constituent Assembly, a truly democratic body, and interpreted it as a foreboding of the fate of democracy in the Russia of the future.

But Trotsky and Lenin were in the very throes of civil war, and to them the situation demanded a strong, unmitigating battle to the death with the enemies of the revolution. Kautsky's vague proclamation of democracy did not offer that strength, while the Bolshevik party, in the name of the dictatorship of the proletariat, had successfully seized power in Russia and was the only agent capable of using that power to save the revolution. Interpreting the dictatorship to fit his

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<sup>1</sup>The Dictatorship of the Proletariat, The University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 1964, p. 43.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid, p. 58.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid, p. 58.

own conception, Trotsky referred to the great masters, Marx and Engels, and particularly the latter's statement in 1891 that the dictatorship of the proletariat was "the sole form in which the proletariat can achieve control of the State."<sup>4</sup> Throwing back into Kautsky's face the fact that Kautsky himself had often repeated that very phrase, Trotsky ignored the distinction made by the latter between dictatorship as a form of government and as a condition, and accused his opponent of repudiating the very concept of "dictatorship of the proletariat". He further condemned Kautsky for theorizing in a vacuum and ignoring the vitally dangerous threat to the revolution and the proletarian dictatorship in Russia: "The contending forces are not proletarian and bourgeois mannikins produced in the retort of Wagner-Kautsky, but a real proletariat and a real bourgeoisie, as they have emerged from the last imperialist slaughter."<sup>5</sup> Violent measures were necessary to destroy the bourgeois threat in collaboration with the intervention of the imperialist countries; thus Trotsky justified both the terror and the proletarian dictatorship personified in the Bolshevik party.

By the end of the civil war in Russia, Kautsky's distinction between the popular sovereignty of a class and the authoritarian rule of a minority party had blurred and fallen by the wayside. By 1921, B. I. Gorev, a former Menshevik, was defending openly in his book on Auguste Blanqui the influence of Blanquism upon the Bolsheviks.

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<sup>4</sup>Terrorism and Communism, The University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 1961, p. 22.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 26.

Varlamov interprets Gorev's thesis in this way:

The essence of the argument about elements of Blanquism in Marxism boiled down to three basic organizational and tactical features: the conspiratorial party, the seizure of power and the dictatorship of the revolutionary vanguard after the seizure of power. Forev showed that all these constitute indubitable elements of Blanquism in the tactics and organization of the Bolsheviks.<sup>6</sup>

Later in 1923, in answer to a review of his book, Gorev renewed his denunciation of the Menshevik concept of revolution by proclaiming the proletarian dictatorship as the only possible form of rule in the revolution. But surprisingly, in an attempt to make his analysis as thoroughgoing as possible, Gorev did not fail to observe that this dictatorship, though depending on the masses, was really a dictatorship of the minority, "for the dictatorship of the majority is an internally contradictory concept."<sup>7</sup> Here was a resurrection of the Kautsky distinction, but this time it was stated, not in condemnation, but in support of the Bolshevik dictatorship. Thus, the dictatorship of a party in the approving eyes of all had replaced the dictatorship of a class, and within a dozen years a literal dictatorship of one man would be substituted and entrenched in the Soviet system. With the advent of that Stalinist autocracy, the brief decade of identification of Blanquist and Marxian-style dictatorships would pass into oblivion, along with the historical school which had constructed it, leaving behind a Stalinist perversion attributed openly to Marx, but possessing all the earmarks of the Blanquist-Tkachevist simultaneous destruction

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<sup>6</sup>Varlamov, p. 15.

<sup>7</sup>Varlamov, pp. 15-16n.

of revolutionary enemies and reconstruction of the socialist society.

Jan Kucharzewski, in his book The Origins of Modern Russia, devotes considerable space to a discussion of Jacobinism. In an excellent analysis of the loose interpretation of the term, resulting in its use as a condemnatory slogan on both sides of the fence, Kucharzewski begins his discussion with Plekhanov, whom we have seen was the staunch opponent of the political terrorism of "Narodnaya Valya." Yet, Plekhanov was "by no means a categorical opponent of terrorism."<sup>8</sup> The distinction in his mind lay between the Jacobin Terror of 1793, which was supported by the French masses, and the terror of the "Narodovoltsi," which was isolated from the Russian people. Thus, we see Plekhanov in the seemingly incredible role of defender of orthodox Jacobin dictatorship and terror as necessary measures in the battle between French socialists and French bourgeoisie. Kucharzewski emphasizes the fact that the focal point for Plekhanov was the mass support of terror, and points out that Plekhanov failed to observe the difference in the French and Russian terrors, i. e., that the former was instituted after the seizure of power as an act of revenge and the latter was directed against the State in the hopes of forcing concessions or even, if necessary, seizing power.<sup>9</sup> Plekhanov foresaw a period of "true" Jacobin terror in Russia after the fall of tsardom, and it was this opinion that prompted Lenin to call Plekhanov, approvingly, a Jacobin. But Plekhanov later denied this epithet, turning it against Lenin himself by labelling him an "ultra-Jacobin," while he (Plekhanov) remained a "half-Leninist," in the sense that

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<sup>8</sup>Kucharzewski, The Origins of Modern Russia, The Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences in America, New York, 1948, p. 452.



Lenin sought like Zhelyabov to "give history a push" without consideration for the necessary accompaniment of a popular uprising. Lenin himself approved of Flekhanov's definition of Jacobinism, and in 1904 he used that term to distinguish the Bolsheviks from the "Girondist" Mensheviks.<sup>10</sup> Beginning with Eduard Bernstein, the revisionary socialists began derogating the Bolsheviks with accusations of "Jacobinism" and "Blanquism," while Lenin accepted willingly the epithet and defended the conspiratorial organization of the latter as a necessary measure for consolidating strength for the overthrow of the tsarist government, as noted above in his discussion of "Narodnaya Volya" in What is to be done? Ostensibly, Lenin was a Marxian economic determinist, but the autocratic system in Russia demanded that he plot revolution on the model of the Jacobin-Blanquist seizure of political power.

Suffice it to say that the pre-Marxist Russian Jacobins, from Zaichnevsky to the "Narodovoltsi," were political determinists intent upon conspiratorial preparation for the seizure or manipulation of power for the sake of establishing the vaguely-conceived socialist society of the future. In that sense, they were true Blanquists depending upon the weight of emphasis given to each successive phase of the Blanquist tactic (using the three stages defined by Gorev). Theorizing in the Blanquist manner reached complex depths, but the practical results never reached beyond the conspiratorial organization stage. In theory, Zaichnevsky and Tkachev were the only Russians who preserved the total Blanquist ideology from conspiracy to revolutionary

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<sup>10</sup>Kucharzewski, p. 458.

dictatorship and who planned circumspectly for the structure of society to follow the dictatorship; their only fault (and it was not theirs alone, but rather a basic Blanquist misconception) lay in the failure to recognize that power is not easily abdicated, and their "benevolent" dictators were as remote as their egalitarian communist society. Herzen and Bakunin each penetrated to the heart of this concept of power, and while this insight prompted Herzen to renege on his brief and immature flirtation with revolutionary authoritarianism, on the other hand Bakunin preached one thing and practiced another. Swept up in a monomaniac concentration upon the conspiratorial society phase, Bakunin lost the perspective of the other two phases, simultaneously making a mockery of them in his fantastic proposals for tsarist revolutionary dictatorships and avoiding the question entirely by shucking them in favor of a conveniently ambiguous anarchism.

The three attempts to pursue Blanquist tactics in Russia itself were destined never to reach beyond the first phase, and even that meager activity was admirable in view of the idealistic vacillation among their emigré Mentors. Ishutin's "Organization" was carefully modelled after similar European societies, but the young fanatics of "Hell," personified by Karakozov, lacked the ability to look beyond their noses and, after last-minute misgivings, threw caution to the winds and stumbled into the abyss with Karakozov. Nechaev too managed to inspire a thoroughgoing conspiratorial organization, while the actual seizure of power and the nature of the revolutionary government receded into the background of his mind. Beyond a

primitive planning of the seizure of the Tula arsenal, the only activity of Nechaev's organization was the murder of one of its own members, and that incident marked the death knell of the conspiracy. Later, Nechaev was facile in his suggestion to the "Narodovoltsi" to seize power in the form of a revolutionary dictatorship, a point to which he had progressed in theory though he had virtually ignored it in his own activity. It is only fair to observe, however, that Nechaev seems not to have conceived of his own personal dictatorship, though his authoritarian position in the conspiratorial organization logically would have led to that. Finally, "Narodnaya Volya" suffered from the schizophrenia of theory versus action; it sought to maintain its populist-democratic ideals at the same time that it was forced to organize the centralized conspiratorial organization demanded by its terrorist activities and to entertain the thought of maintaining its power after the political turnover for the sake of continuing the socialist revolution. Seeking to escape this terrible internal schism, the "Narodovoltsi" killed a tsar and their own organization simultaneously, thus precluding any opportunity for either clarification of their ideology or actual proof of their good intentions.

It would be fair to conclude also, that none of these theorists and semi-activists of Blanquist tactics could have foreseen a Stalin, the ultimate perverted conclusion of their own activity, though Herzen and Bakunin perhaps came the closest of any of them in prophesying such an occurrence. This oversight can be considered unjustifiable, in view of the penetrating analysis of French historians on the subject of the consequences of the Jacobin Terror of 1793. Notable among these

is the conservative Hippolyte Taine, from whose book The Origins of Modern France (twenty-fourth edition, Paris 1904) Kucharzewski quotes at length on the subject of Jacobinism. A portion of that quotation is reproduced here, and, in particular, the sections which deal specifically with the political power manipulated by the revolutionary dictatorship:

'In the absence of a great mass which steps aside, a small group is on duty and seizes power. Due to the abdication of the majority, the minority becomes the sovereign, and the public cause, abandoned by the undecided, passive, absent masses, falls into the hands of the decided, active, present group which finds the time and which has the will to undertake this task.... With regard to building or destroying...his (the Jacobin's) straightforward action is the quickest and most energetic. For if long considerations are necessary to find out what is appropriate for twenty-six million living French people, a glance is sufficient to learn what abstract men of theory desire. Indeed, theory has cut them all to one measure and has left them only an elementary will; by force of decision, the philosophical automat wants freedom, equality, sovereignty of the people, rights of man...That suffices: from then on the will of the people is known beforehand; therefore, one may proceed without consulting the citizens; one is not obliged to wait for the vote. At any rate, approval on their part is certain; if by any chance it should not come, this would be ignorance, a mistake or malice on their part, and consequently their reply would deserve to be recognized as invalid....Thus everything belongs to him: by the mere fact that he is a Jacobin, he considers himself legally both Tsar and Pope....He alone is enlightened, he alone is a patriot, and consequently he alone is worthy to rule, while his conceit of power makes him believe that any resistance is a crime. When the majority protests, it does so because it is stupid or depraved; for these two reasons it deserves to be made powerless and it shall be made powerless...By instinct he always behaved like a ruler. He was one even when he was a common private man and club member; he does not cease to be one now when he has the legal power, all the more so, because when he weakens he feels lost and, in order to save himself from the scaffold, he has no other escape except dictatorship....Yesterday he extolled the rights of the governed, up to the abolition of the rights of the rulers, up to the abolition of the rights of the governed. According to his words, the people is the only authority, but he will treat the people as slaves. According to his words, the government is only a servant but he will give the government



the prerogatives of a Sultan. Only recently he condemned the smallest act of the public authority as a crime; now he will punish as a crime the smallest opposition to the public authority. What should he do to justify such an about-face and with what excuse will he renounce the principles on which he had based his own usurpation? He is careful not to renounce them; on the contrary, he proclaims them as loud as possible. Thanks to this manoeuvre the ignorant mass, seeing that the same flask continues to be given to it, imagines that the same potion is handed to it and it is made to drink tyranny under the label of freedom. During six months he will spread charlatan emblems, slogans, tirades and lies to camouflage the nature of his product; if in time the public will find it bitter, so much the worse for the public. Sooner or later it will swallow it voluntarily or under coercion, because in the meantime instruments will have been prepared that will force it down its throat.<sup>11</sup>

The relevance of Taine's observations to the Stalinist regime is obvious, and as such they serve as severe condemnation of the Russian Blanquists for their failure to analyze thoroughly the dangerous consequences of their adopted Jacobinism. The internally-destructive contradiction in the ideological structure of these Blanquist-oriented Russian revolutionaries is perhaps best expressed by Robespierre's classic contradictory statements: "'The revolutionary government is the despotism of freedom with regard to tyranny....' The essence of the republic is to destroy everything that opposes it."<sup>12</sup>

Finally, what were the tangible consequences of "conspiracy and revolutionary dictatorship in the ideology of Russian populism 1861-81"? Three lifelong banishments from the Russian soil, one life-long wandering in the provincial "deserts" within Russia, one attempted tsaricide, one accomplished tsaricide, and one "studenticide" and the consequent life imprisonment in a hole in the Peter and Paul Fortress

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<sup>11</sup>Kuchorzewski, pp. 459-461.

<sup>12</sup>Quoted in Kuchorzewski, p. 461.



of its perpetrator--these were the tragic results of all the fine theory and frenzied activity. Some refused to recognize their debt to the French masters; others extolled them befittingly--much as has been their fate at the hand of their Soviet heirs--; but they all suffered in one form or another the same martyrdom of Robespierre, Babeuf, Elanqui. The autocracy was too powerful and too entrenched; the masses were too ignorant and too reactionary; and they themselves were too premature in their activity, too idealistic in their dreams to bring about the right mixture of all ingredients for the precipitation of the revolutionary exploding. These Elanquist-oriented Russian revolutionaries of the 1860's and 1870's elaborated upon the conspiratorial activity of the French radicals and brought it to the point where Lenin and the Bolsheviks could seize upon their unsuccessful experience and transform it into the tools of a successful movement. Their failure to reach the phases of seizure of power and revolutionary dictatorship can be attributed to the unfavorable climate of the times, but their real tragedy rests in the fact that they demonstrated through their martyrdom the difficulty in allying the idealistic goals of the past with the tactical measures necessary for an immediate revolution in Russia. "Narodnaya Volya" was the supreme example of that uneasy alliance between Herzenist dreams of peasant socialism and Tkachevist tactics of forceful revolution from above; therefore, it was the fate of this populist-terrorist party to close the curtain on this long and prolific transitional period between the French and Russian revolutions, between Western-style socialism and Leninist Marxism. The great historical merit of the heroes of this

twenty-year period lies in the fact that they shaped an amorphous revolutionary ferment into active revolutionary tools, and that they, with their lives, made the downpayment on a risky, but potentially profitable investment.

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## APPENDICES

### THE DUTIES OF THE REVOLUTIONARY

#### The Duties of the Revolutionary towards Himself

1. The revolutionary is a dedicated man. He has no personal inclinations, no business affairs, no vacations, no attachments, no property and no name. Everything in him is subordinated towards a single goal, a single sentiment, a single thought and a single passion—the revolution.
2. In the very depths of his being, not only in words but also in deeds, he has torn himself away from the world which binds him to the social order and to the cultivated world, with all its laws, moralities and customs and with all its generally accepted conventions. He is their implacable enemy, and if he continues to live with them it is only in order to destroy them more quickly.
3. The revolutionary despises all dogmas and refuses to accept the modern sciences, leaving them for future generations. He knows only one science, the science of destruction. For this reason, not only for this reason, he will study mechanics, physics, chemistry, and perhaps medicine. But all day and night he studies the living habits of peoples, their characteristics and circumstances, and all the phenomena of the present social order. The object is the same: the prompt destruction of this filthy order.
4. The revolutionary despises public opinion. He despises and hates the existing social order in all its manifestations. For him, morality is everything which contributes to the triumph of the revolution. Inevitable and criminal is everything that stands in his way.

## APPENDICES

### A

#### THE CATECHISM OF THE REVOLUTIONARY

##### The Duties of the Revolutionary toward Himself

1. The revolutionary is a dedicated man. He has no personal inclinations, no business affairs, no emotions, no attachments, no property and no name. Everything in him is subordinated towards a single exclusive attachment, a single thought and a single passion--the revolution.
2. In the very depths of his being, not only in words but also in deeds, he has torn himself away from the bonds which tie him to the social order and to the cultivated world, with all its laws, moralities and customs and with all its generally accepted conventions. He is their implacable enemy, and if he continues to live with them it is only in order to destroy them more quickly.
3. The revolutionary despises all dogmas and refuses to accept the mundane sciences, leaving them for future generations. He knows only one science: the science of destruction. For this reason, and only for this reason, he will study mechanics, physics, chemistry, and perhaps medicine. But all day and night he studies the living science of peoples, their characteristics and circumstances, and all the phenomena of the present social order. The object is the same: the prompt destruction of this filthy order.
4. The revolutionary despises public opinion. He despises and hates the existing social order in all its manifestations. For him, morality is everything which contributes to the triumph of the revolution. Immoral and criminal is everything that stands in his way.

5. The revolutionary is a dedicated man, merciless toward the state and altogether merciless toward the educated classes; and he can expect no mercy from them. Between him and them there exists, declared or concealed, a continual and irreconcilable war "for life or for death." He must accustom himself to enduring torture.
6. Tyrannical toward himself, he must be tyrannical toward others. All the soft and tender affections arising from kinship, friendship and love, all gratitude and even all honor must be obliterated, and in their place there must be the cold and single-minded passion for the work of revolution. For him there exists only one pleasure, one consolation, one reward, one satisfaction--the success of the revolution. Night and day he must have but one thought, one aim--merciless destruction. Aiming cold-bloodedly and indefatigably toward this end, he must be ready to destroy himself and destroy with his own hands everyone who stands in his way.
7. The nature of the true revolutionary excludes all romanticism, all sensitivity, all exaltations and enthusiasms. He must also exclude private vendettas and personal hatred. The revolutionary passion, practiced at every moment of the day until it becomes a habit, is to be employed with cold calculation. At all times and in all places the revolutionary must refuse to allow himself to be guided by his personal impulses, but only by the total submergence of himself in the revolution.

Relationship of the Revolutionary toward the Revolutionary Comrades

8. The revolutionary can have no friendly feeling to anyone unless, like him, the other is dedicated to revolutionary affairs. His degree of



- friendship, devotion, and obligation towards a comrade must be determined only by the degree of the comrade's usefulness in the practical work of complete and destructive revolution.
9. It is superfluous to speak of solidarity among revolutionaries. The whole strength of the revolutionary work lies in this. Comrades who possess the same revolutionary passion should, as much as possible, deliberate all important matters together and come to unanimous conclusions. But the revolutionary, in accomplishing whatever plan is finally decided upon, must rely altogether on himself. The contract of revolutionary destruction demands that no comrades should come running up with advice and assistance if this detracts from the success of the plan.
  10. Each comrade should have under him several revolutionaries of the second or third rank, i.e. comrades who are not completely dedicated. These should be regarded as portions of a common fund of revolutionary capital, to be expended as he thinks fit. He should expend them as economically as possible, always attempting to derive the utmost possible use from them. He should regard himself as capital consecrated to the triumph of the revolution; and he must not be regarded as expendable without the entire agreement of the fully initiated comrades.
  11. When a comrade is caught in a dangerous extremity and the question arises whether he should be rescued or not rescued, the revolutionary must make his decision without recourse to personal feelings, but only in terms of the eventual success of the revolution. Therefore it is necessary to balance carefully the usefulness of the comrade in so far as it is a question of revolutionary strength, and the most careful consideration should be made to decide whether he is worth rescuing.

Relationship of the Revolutionary toward Society

12. Whether a new member, after giving proof of loyalty by word and deed, should be accepted is a matter to be decided only by unanimous agreement.
13. The revolutionary enters the world of the state, of the classes and of so-called culture, and he lives in this world only because he has faith in its speedy and total destruction. He is not a revolutionary if he feels any sympathy for this world. He must not hesitate to destroy any position, any place, or any man in this world--all must be equally detested by him. All the worse for him if he has parents, friends and loved ones; he is no longer a revolutionary if they can stay his hand.
14. Aiming at implacable destruction the revolutionary can and sometimes must live within society while pretending to be other than what he is. A revolutionary must penetrate everywhere, among the lowest and the middle classes and in the houses of commerce, in the churches, in the palaces of the aristocracy. He must know the world of the bureaucrats and of the military and of literature, and he must enter into the Third Division and even into the Winter Palace.
15. All the members of this filthy society can be split up into several categories: the first category comprises those to be condemned to death without delay. The comrades should compile a list of those to be condemned, weighing the relative gravity of their crimes against their value to the revolution; and the executions should be carried out according to the prepared order.
16. In the preparation of these lists and in placing the condemned according to the prepared order, no private sense of outrage should be considered, nor is it necessary to pay attention to the hatred provoked by these people among the comrades or the people. But hatred and the

sense of outrage must to some extent be made use of, because these things help to incite rebellion among the people. It is necessary to be guided only by the relative usefulness of these executions for the sake of the revolution. Above all those who are especially inimical to the revolutionary organization must be destroyed; their violent and sudden deaths will produce the utmost panic in the government, it will shake the foundations of government and deprive it of the services of its most intelligent and energetic agents.

17. The second group consists of those to whom we concede life provisionally in order that their bestial behavior shall drive the people to inevitable revolt.
18. The third category consists of a multitude of personages or animals distinguished neither for intelligence nor for energy: those who enjoy wealth, connections, influence, and power. These must be exploited in every possible way; they must be implicated and confused; as far as possible their dirty secrets should be found out, so that we can make them our slaves. Their power, influence, and connections, their riches and energy will form an inexhaustible treasure and a precious help in our various undertakings.
19. The fourth category is composed of ambitious people and liberals of various shades. We shall pretend we are following their ideas and give them cause to think we are blindly conspiring with them, while in fact we take them under our own control. We shall root out all their secrets and compromise them to the uttermost, so that there will be no way out for them and they can be used to create disorder in the state.
20. The fifth category consists of doctrinaires, conspirators, revolutionaries: all idle word-spillers who orate before meetings or in front

of a piece of paper. They must be constantly driven forward to make violent declarations carefully arranged to agree with our purpose. The majority of these will leave nothing behind but a vast ruin; from a few of them we shall attain real revolutionary gains.

21. The sixth category is especially important: women. They should be divided into three chief divisions. First: those frivolous, thoughtless and vapid women, whom we shall use as we use the third and fourth category of men. Second: women who are ardent, gifted and devoted, but do not belong to us because they have not yet achieved a passionless and austere revolutionary understanding: these must be used like the men of the fifth category. Finally there are the women who are completely on our side, i.e. those who are wholly dedicated and who have accepted our program in its entirety. We should regard these women as the most valuable of our treasures; without their help it would be impossible to succeed.

#### The Duties of our Society toward the People

22. The aims of our Society are none other than the entire emancipation and happiness of the people, i.e. the common laborers. Convinced that their emancipation and the achievement of this happiness is brought about only by means of an all-destroying popular revolt, we shall see that society will employ all its power, all its resources towards increasing and intensifying the calamities and evils until their patience is exhausted and they will break out in a levee-en-masse.
23. By a popular revolution, the Society does not mean a revolution tailored according to the classic western model, a pattern which is fundamentally restrained by the existence of property and the traditional social orders of so-called civilization and morality. Until now such a civilization

has cast down one political form only to substitute another, thereby attempting to bring about a so-called revolutionary state. The only salutary form of revolution is one which destroys the entire state to the roots and exterminates all imperial traditions, the whole social order and all the existing classes in Russia.

24. With this end in view the Society refuses to impose any new organization from above. Any future organization will doubtless work its way through the movement and life of the people; but this is a matter for future generations to decide. Our task is terrible, total, universal, and merciless destruction. (. . . strashnoe, polnoe, povsemestnoe i bezposhchadnoe razrusheniye.)
25. Therefore, in drawing closer to the people, we must above all unite with those elements of popular life which, from the very beginning of the imperial power of Muscovy, have never ceased to protest, not only in words but in deeds, against everything directly or indirectly connected with the State: against the nobility, against the bureaucracy, against the priests, against business, and against the tight fist of the extortioner. We must unite with the adventurous tribes of brigands, who are the only true revolutionaries of Russia.
26. To knit the people into a single force which is wholly destructive and wholly invincible--such is our organization, our conspiracy, and our task.



## APPENDICES

### B

#### THE LETTER OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF "NARODNAYA VOLYA" TO TSAR ALEXANDER III

Your Majesty:--

Fully comprehending the sorrow which you are experiencing during these present moments, the Executive Committee does not, however, feel it right to yield to the impulse of natural delicacy, which demands, perhaps, a certain interval of waiting before the following explanation should be made. There is something higher than the most legitimate emotions of a human being: that is one's duty to his native land, a duty for which every citizen is obliged to sacrifice himself and his own feelings, and even the feelings of others. In obedience to this primal duty, we have determined to address you at once, without any delay, since that historical process does not wait, which threatens us in the future with rivers of blood and the most violent convulsions.

The bloody tragedy which was played on the shores of the Ekaterininsky Canal, was not accidental, and surprised no one. After all that has passed in the course of the last decade, it was absolutely inevitable, and in this lies its profound meaning--a meaning which must be understood by the man whom fate has placed at the head of the state power. To interpret such facts as being the evil plots of separate individuals, or even of a bank of criminals, would be possible only to a man who was quite incapable of analysing the life of nations. In the course of ten years we have seen how, notwithstanding the most severe persecutions, notwithstanding the fact that the government of the late Emperor sacrificed everything, freedom, the interests

of all classes, the interests of industry and even its own dignity, everything, unconditionally, in its attempt to suppress the revolutionary movement, that movement has nevertheless tenaciously grown and spread, attracting to itself the best elements of the nation, the most energetic and self-denying people of Russia, and for three years now has engaged in desperate, partisan warfare with the government. You know well, your Majesty, that it is impossible to accuse the government of the late Emperor of lack of energy. They have hanged our followers, both guilty and innocent; they have filled the prisons and distant provinces with exiles. Whole dozens of our leaders have been seized and hanged. They have died with the courage and calmness of martyrs, but the movement has not been suppressed, it has grown and gained strength. Yes, your Majesty, the revolutionary movement is not such as to depend on individual personalities. It is a function of the national organism, and the gallows, erected to hang the most energetic exponents of that function, is as powerless to save this outworn order of life, as was the death of the Saviour on the cross, to save the corrupt, ancient world from the triumph of reforming Christianity.

Of course, the government may continue to arrest and hang a great multitude of separate individuals. It may destroy many revolutionary groups. Let us grant that it will destroy even the most important of the existing revolutionary organisations. This will not change the state of affairs in the least. The conditions under which we are living, the general dissatisfaction of the people, Russia's aspiration towards a new order of life, all these create revolutionists. You cannot exterminate the whole Russian people, you cannot therefore destroy its discontent by means of reprisals; on the contrary, discontent grows thereby. This is the reason that fresh individuals, still more incensed, still more energetic, are constantly arising from the

ranks of the people in great numbers to take the place of those who are being destroyed. These individuals, in the interests of the conflict, will of course organise themselves, having at hand the ready experience of their predecessors, and therefore the revolutionary movement in the course of time must grow stronger, both in quality and quantity. This we have actually seen in the last ten years. What did the death of the adherents of Dolgushin, Tchaikovsky, the agitators of the year 1874, avail the government? The far more determined populists arose to take their place. The terrible reprisals of the government called forth upon the stage the terrorists of '78 and '79. In vain did the government exterminate such men as the adherents Kovalsky, Dubrovin, Osinsky, and Lizogub; in vain did it destroy dozens of revolutionary circles. From those imperfect organisations, by the course of natural selection there developed still hardier forms. There appeared at last the Executive Committee, with which the government has not yet been able to cope.

Casting a dispassionate glance over the depressing decade through which we have lived, we can accurately foretell the future progress of the movement if the political tactics of the government do not change. The movement must go on growing, gaining strength; terroristic acts will be repeated in ever more alarming and intensified forms. A more perfect, stronger revolutionary organization will take the place of the groups that are wiped out. In the meantime, the number of malcontents in the land will increase, popular faith in the government will lapse, and the idea of revolution, of its possibility and inevitability, will take root and grow more and more rapidly in Russia. A terrible outburst, a bloody subversion, a violent revolutionary convulsion throughout all Russia, will complete the process of the overthrow of the old order.

What evokes this terrible perspective, what is responsible for it?  
Yes, your Majesty, a terrible and sad perspective. Do not take this for

a mere phrase. We understand better than any one else, how sad is the perishing of so much talent, such energy, in a labour of destruction, in bloody conflicts, when, under different conditions, these forces might be directly applied to creative work, to the progress of the people, the development of their minds, and the well-being of their national life. Whence comes this sad necessity for bloody strife?

From the fact, your Majesty, that there exists among us now no actual government, in the true meaning of the word. A government, according to its fundamental principle, should express only the aspirations of the people, should accomplish only the Will of the People. While in Russia, pardon us for the expression, the government has degenerated into a veritable camarilla, and deserves to be called a band of usurpers far more than does the Executive Committee.

Whatever may have been the intentions of the Sovereign, the acts of the government have had nothing in common with the popular welfare and desires. The Imperial Government has subjugated the people to the state of bondage, it has delivered the masses into the power of the nobility; and now it is openly creating a pernicious class of speculators and profiteers. All its reforms lead to but one result, that the people have sunk into ever greater slavery, into a state of more complete exploitation. It has brought Russia to such a point that at the present time the popular masses find themselves in a state of utter beggary and ruin, not free even at their own domestic firesides from the most insulting surveillance, powerless even in their own communal village affairs. Only the spoiler, the exploiter, is favoured by the protection of the law and the government. The most revolting depredations remain unpunished. But what a terrible fate awaits the man who sincerely thinks and plans for the public welfare! You know well, your



Majesty, that it is not only the socialists who are exiled and persecuted. What kind of a government is this, then, which protects such an "order"? Is it not rather a band of rascals, an absolute usurpation?

This is the reason why the Russian government has no moral influence, no support in the people; this is why Russia gives birth to so many revolutionists; this is why even such a fact as regicide awakens joy and sympathetic approval in an enormous part of the population. Yes, your Majesty, do not deceive yourself with the declarations of fawners and flatterers. Regicide is very popular in Russia.

There are two possible escapes from this situation; either a revolution, quite inevitable, which cannot be averted by any number of executions, or a voluntary turning to the people on the part of the Supreme Authority. In the interests of our native land, in the desire to avoid those terrible calamities which always accompany a revolution, the Executive Committee turns to your Majesty with the advice to choose the second course. Believe us that as soon as the Supreme Authority ceases to be arbitrary, as soon as it firmly determines to accomplish only the demands of the nation's consciousness and conscience, you may boldly drive out the spies who defile your government, send your convoys into their barracks, and burn the gallows which are degrading your people. The Executive Committee itself will cease its present activity, and the forces organised around it will disperse and consecrate themselves to cultural work for the benefit of their own people. A peaceful conflict of ideas will take the place of the violence which is more repugnant to us than to your servants, and which we practise only from sad necessity.

We turn to you casting aside all prejudices, stifling that distrust, which the age-long activity of the government has created. We forget that



you are the representative of that power which has so deceived the people, and done them so much harm. We address you as a citizen and an honourable man. We hope that the feeling of personal bitterness will not suppress in you the recognition of your duties, and the desire to know the truth. We too might be embittered. You have lost your father. We have lost not only our fathers, but also our brothers, our wives, our children, our best friends. But we are ready to suppress our personal feelings if the good of Russia demands it. And we expect the same from you also.

We do not lay conditions upon you. Do not be shocked by our proposition. The conditions which are indispensable in order that the revolutionary movement shall be transformed into peaceful activity, have been created, not by us, but by history. We do not impose them, we only recall them to your mind.

In our opinion there are two such conditions:

1. A general amnesty for all political crimes committed in the past, inasmuch as these were not crimes, but the fulfilment of a civic duty.

2. The convocation of an assembly of representatives of all the Russian people, for the purpose of examining the existing forms of our state and society, and revising them in accord with the desires of the people.

We consider it necessary to mention, however, that in order that the legality of the Supreme Authority may be confirmed by popular representation, the process of selecting delegates must be absolutely unrestricted. Therefore the elections must be held under the following conditions:

1. The deputies must be sent from all ranks and classes alike, and in numbers proportionate to the population.

2. There must be no restrictions imposed upon either the electors or the deputies.

3. Electioneering, and the elections themselves, must be carried out in complete freedom, and therefore the government must grant as a temporary measure, prior to the decision of the popular assembly:

- a. Complete freedom of the press,
- b. Complete freedom of speech,
- c. Complete freedom of assembly,
- d. Complete freedom of electoral programmes.

This is the only way in which Russia can be restored to a course of normal and peaceful development. We solemnly declare before our native land and all the world, that our party will submit unconditionally to the decision of a Popular Assembly which shall have been chosen in accord with the above-mentioned conditions; and in the future we shall offer no armed resistance whatever to a government that has been sanctioned by the Popular Assembly.

And so, your Majesty, decide. Before you are two courses. On you depends the choice; we can only ask Fate that your reason and conscience dictate to you a decision which will conform only to the good of Russia, to your own dignity, and to your duty to your native land.

(Signed) THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

March 10 (23), 1881.