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THE POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE
RUSSIAN PEASANTRY:
A COMMENT ON GRAEME GILL'S
'THE MAINSPRINGS OF PEASANT ACTION IN 1917'

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GILL'S discussion of the traditional sources, determinants, and foci of Russian peasants' concerns and activities in the months between the February and October Revolutions effectively depicts the decay of the old order in the Russian countryside and contributes to our understanding of the general role played by the masses in setting the stage for the Bolshevik seizure of power. Having said that, I am at a loss to explain why the entire enterprise should have been left to the mercies of an entirely inappropriate and misleading conceptual framework which in the end subverts the author's purpose. Certainly it is praiseworthy that Gill has sought to transcend the merely descriptive level and attempts to use a concept such as 'political consciousness', drawn from comparative political theory, to analyse the peasants' role in the Revolution. There is indeed a need to make theoretical sense of historical phenomena, especially those as large-scale and complex as revolutions.

Gill's choice of the typology of political cultures developed by Almond and Verba in *The Civic Culture* and his use of their criteria to measure political consciousness is, however, most unfortunate.² He is led to misperceive and overemphasize the traditionalism of the peasants, while understating the level of their political awareness relative to that of the élites. Ironically, an article which seems to have as its main goal the explanation of the role of popular forces in the Russian Revolution is transformed by the imposition of the Almond-Verba framework into yet another example of what Teddy Uldricks has termed the 'élite perspective'.³

Gill presents his thesis on peasant political consciousness at the end of the introductory section:

The claim made by a recent author [William Rosenberg] that the Russian people 'were no longer passive peasants of Tsarist times, but a conscious political mass, infused with the concepts of radical political democracy and reaching for leadership' underestimates the continued strength of traditional factors.⁴

In the first place, this 'claim' is not made by Rosenberg; rather, as is quite clear, Rosenberg is paraphrasing the remarks made by Paul Milyukov at the May 1921 meeting of the Kadet Party Central Committee in Paris.⁵ It was Milyukov who made the claim, not Rosenberg. Secondly, it is not immediately apparent how the assertion actually 'underestimates the continued strength of traditional factors'. Gill's own evidence, as will be shown below, supports much of Milyukov's argument, and, moreover, there is no necessary contradiction between Milyukov and Gill. If I may take the liberty of reconstructing Gill's reasoning in forming his thesis, it would seem that he seized upon the term 'conscious political mass', rather mechanically equated this with the concept of 'political consciousness', and naively sought definition and counsel in Almond and Verba's *The Civic Culture*. Thus, I would gather, he wants to argue that the peasants were not a 'conscious political mass' because they remained traditionally and locally oriented, neither knowledgeable about nor concerned with the future of Russia at the national level. Gill attributes to the Petrograd élites a high level of political consciousness, one which 'approximated' the 'participant political culture' defined by Almond and Verba.⁶ In contrast, the peasants

... were motivated to act by anything but acutely-developed political awareness. They did not participate in the political debate in the capital, they were not guided by a comprehensive set of political principles, not did they perceive themselves to be playing a prominent role on the national political stage.⁷

Seeing that the peasants were nevertheless successful in achieving their basic aims, Gill concedes in the end that 'the level of political consciousness demonstrated by the peasants was low, but it was adequate for their purposes'.⁸ He concludes, harking back to Milyukov's claim, that 'it is therefore more useful to emphasize the traditional aspects of rural unrest than any notion of political consciousness in explaining developments in the countryside in 1917'.⁹ The problem here is that he has not used just *any* notion of political consciousness—he has used only *one*, the narrow and parochial rendering of *The Civic Culture*.

The model developed by Almond and Verba was designed for the study of political culture in representative democracies with established national political systems rooted in relatively stable, integrated, and modern societies.¹⁰ How accurately do those terms characterize mid-1917 Russia? Consider John Keep's observation, to cite just one example, that 'chaos and anarchy are the words which best describe the state of Russia during 1917'.¹¹ Or, for that matter, what significance should be attached to Gill's own statement that a 'deep chasm' existed

between the cities and the countryside, with Petrograd sitting 'in grand isolation' from the rest of the country?¹² Put simply, the Almond-Verba framework has little relevance to revolutionary situations. Empirical statements and comparisons based on it will be superficial and meaningless, and the norm of a 'participant' political culture will be reduced to a chimerical vision. Three points will suffice to illustrate my contention.

The Almond-Verba model is oriented towards the national level of politics and implicitly favours the modern state as a form of political organization. In most contexts of politics, i.e., established nation-states, this bias would not be consequential, nor would it have a distorting effect. But Russian politics in 1917 did revolve around the very basic questions of the proper level and form of political organization. A functioning national political system had virtually ceased to exist; not only was the nature of the regime in doubt, but the very form of the system itself was under attack. While the various élites argued constitutional and policy questions in the capital, the peasants were forming their own political order in the countryside in an act of the greatest political creativity. They repudiated the national level, and their alternative was something quite different from simply a new version of the modern, centralized state.¹³ Petrograd may well have constituted 'the centre of the national political stage',¹⁴ but the peasants were boycotting the play and writing the script for their own production.

Secondly, Gill misuses the theory in comparing the political consciousness of the Petrograd élite with that of the peasants, concluding that the consciousness of the former was 'high' and that of the latter was 'low'.¹⁵ *The Civic Culture* studies ordinary members of political systems, describing and prescribing their orientations towards élites and élite institutions. Yet Gill proceeds to use these criteria of mass consciousness and activity to assess the political consciousness of the élites! Is nothing more expected of them than of the ordinary citizen? Given the record of Russian élites after the February Revolution, one might indeed question how conscious they were of political realities in their own country and of the concerns and needs of its people. Really, the 'high' consciousness Gill attributes to them means nothing more than that they were conscious of what they *themselves* were doing. They were as parochial in their way as the peasants were in theirs, and the élites' game of politics—heavy on rhetoric and light on action and understanding—was as traditional for Russian intellectuals as rebellion was for the peasants.

Thirdly, Gill works with such a truncated version of the model that his discussion is scarcely more than a caricature. In the introductory section he puts sole emphasis on the peasants' knowledge of the national

political system and how they might have affected it, leaving aside their considerable knowledge of local politics and of the policies of the Provisional Government which had such a devastating impact on their lives. Moreover, Gill ignores the peasants' *feelings* and *judgements* about the national political system until the conclusion of the article, when he has to reconcile evidence leading in one direction with theoretically-derived presuppositions leading in the opposite direction.¹⁶ It was precisely the peasants' knowledge of the system's outputs, combined with their critical feelings and judgements about its performance, which led to the act of rejection Gill finally acknowledges when he states that 'the national level of politics became of only marginal concern'.¹⁷ It is, then, hardly surprising that the peasants did not become participants in national politics; this makes one wonder why the 'civic culture' model and its norms were ever introduced into the discussion in the first place.

Let us return to Milyukov's claim and examine it as it is instead of mistakenly translating it into the language of *The Civic Culture*. Were these 'no longer the passive peasants of Tsarist times, but a conscious political mass'? It is obvious from all accounts, Gill's included, that the peasants were acutely aware of their situation and of Russia's national crisis in so far as it affected them. They abandoned their former passivity and actively set about putting things right, taking full advantage of the opportunity afforded them to throw off the authorities they held responsible for their plight and to establish and elaborate their own institutions. Unless some fanciful definition is put upon the word 'conscious', this assertion must be allowed to stand. It is more problematical to deal with the contention that the rural masses were 'infused with the concepts of radical political democracy and reaching for leadership' because of the sheer fuzziness of the language. One may wonder which 'concepts' Milyukov was referring to. Granted that the peasants were not sophisticated in matters of theory, they had nevertheless been exposed to democratic ideas. More importantly, judging from their first reaction to the fall of tsardom, their basic impulses were profoundly democratic, and it can be argued that it was the failure of the élites to follow through and meet the peasants' expectations that led the latter to become alienated from the system. In any case, the elemental version of democracy practised in the countryside certainly qualifies as a 'radical' attempt to create responsive and responsible leadership institutions and to forge a democratic relationship between leaders and followers. Furthermore, Gill reads far too much into Milyukov's remarks, which were intended only to support the fairly mild, general proposition that 'the Russian people had developed politically . . . [and] there could be no victory without the support of the people.'¹⁸

Having argued that Gill's theoretical argument serves only to despatch a 'straw man' in the form of Almond and Verba's 'participant political culture', we must still tackle the question of the relationship between traditional and non-traditional factors in the countryside. Will it suffice to 'emphasize the traditional aspects of rural unrest' if we are to develop an accurate picture of peasant activities and their contribution to the revolutionary events of 1917? I think not, for Gill leads us to believe that the peasants were merely parochial rebels standing outside the mainstream of events, little affecting or affected by developments at the national level and carrying on a conventional peasant rebellion made possible by the disappearance of traditional restraints, while the Revolution was being made in the capital. A full argument against this lies beyond the scope of this comment, but a few suggestions may be made which reveal further limitations in Gill's approach and at least indicate the lines along which a counter-argument might proceed. Perhaps we will then be in a position to give proper recognition to traditional factors, yet focus on the elements which distinguish 1917 from the traditional pattern of peasant rebellions. Our task, after all, is to understand the Revolution and although it is *helpful* to see the similarities between 1917 and the past, it is *necessary* to perceive the differences.

In the first place, were peasant activities really as traditional as Gill argues? More attention must be given to what it means to label an attitude, practice or action as traditional: is it sufficient merely to relate it to some past precedent, as Gill typically does? If we do so, we risk confusing form and substance. On the matter of peasant organizations, for example, the local and volost *skhody* represent a resuscitation of traditional forms, but their content was drastically altered. As Gill himself points out, these now existed and operated in an authority vacuum—they were 'supreme in the countryside', free from domination by 'their traditional exploiters'.¹⁹ Secondly, although traditionally powerful local leaders may have remained in leadership positions, Gill also acknowledges that they

had to adjust to changed conditions; if they continued to try to operate as many of them had under tsarist rule, being more responsive to the whims of the landowners and the government officials than to the demands of the peasants, they were soon removed from the committees.

Can we simply label all this traditional and leave it at that? Hardly, for this has immediate relevance for political consciousness in as much as it is this very sense of self-efficacy manifested by the peasants in taking control of their lives that sets 1917 apart from the past.²¹ The distant

and perhaps even mythical images of the past which shaped their approach provided no precedent for their attempt to control the countryside on their own terms and to put a new socio-political order into place.

Inevitably, the peasantry did retain many traditional characteristics. In the Russian Revolution, as in all others, they were predominantly parochial actors on the political stage, and their primary interest was the fundamental task of restoring 'stable personal environments', to borrow a term from Robert Gamer.²² They rebelled against the disruption of their lives by outside forces over which they had little or no control, as well as against what they perceived as long-standing injustices. Their ideals were not abstract, they lacked intellectual sophistication and they were firmly oriented towards the individual, the family and the community rather than the nation as a whole. What should be recognized is that even restorationist goals of this nature may be revolutionary and make a critical contribution to broader revolutionary processes. Peasants themselves do not make revolutions, and in the Russian case it is clear that they did not provide the leadership necessary for its success. But they did provide, along with the workers and soldiers, the ideological programme for the Revolution in the form of the slogan 'Bread, Land and Peace!' and they generated mass mobilization pressures which pushed the élites into action.²³ Something, quite clearly, had happened.

To understand the significance of peasant actions, then, we must relate them to the broader context and, most importantly, see how their role complemented that of the revolutionary élites.²⁴ One cannot study a social class apart from the system in which it exists, especially a massive class like the peasantry, at a time when the political and social systems are being transformed. As Eric Wolf has stated:

... the peasant is an agent of forces larger than himself, forces produced by a disordered past as much as by a disordered present . . . [The] peasants rise to redress wrong; but the inequities against which they rebel are but, in turn, parochial manifestations of great social dislocations.²⁵

Peasant actions, whether traditional or modern or a mixture of both, must be seen against that backdrop: they were, again in Milyukov's words, 'clearly bound to Russia's social transformation'.²⁶ It is interesting and proper to note the traditionalism of the peasants as they entered into this transformation, but if we isolate and emphasize it we lose sight of the Revolution. Gill's abortive attempt to apply Almond and Verba's model is thus simply best forgotten, for it misleads us far more than it informs us.

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¹ Graeme J. Gill, 'The Mainsprings of Peasant Action in 1917', *Soviet Studies*, vol. XXX, no. 1 (January 1978), pp. 63-86.

² See *ibid.*, p. 63, note 1, and Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* (Princeton, 1963), p. 17. By measuring citizens' knowledge, feelings and evaluations concerning the political system and their own role in it, Almond and Verba define different types of political consciousness as 'parochial', 'subject', and 'participant'. Although their work constructs a *typology* as opposed to a *scale*, it is so imbued with the rhetoric of political modernization and progress that Gill is not altogether out of place in speaking of 'higher' and 'lower' levels of political awareness.

³ Teddy J. Uldricks, 'The "Crowd" in the Russian Revolution: Towards Reassessing the Nature of Revolutionary Leadership', *Politics and Society*, vol. IV (1974), no. 3, pp. 399-400.

⁴ Gill, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

⁵ William G. Rosenberg, *Liberals in the Russian Revolution: The Constitutional Democratic Party, 1917-1921* (Princeton, 1974), pp. 456-457.

⁶ Gill, *op. cit.*, p. 63, note 1.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ We are dealing, in other words, with a middle-range theory derived from and applicable to a particular context of politics, rather than a general theory of universal applicability. *The Civic Culture* begins with the words: 'This is a study of the political culture of democracy and of the social structures and processes that sustain it.' (p. 3). Also see chapter 15, where the authors state that the central question is how far political culture 'goes toward creating and maintaining stable and effective democracy' (p. 473). In other words, this is not merely a descriptive and analytical model but is prescriptive in a most thoroughgoing fashion.

¹¹ John L. H. Keep, *The Russian Revolution: A Study in Mass Mobilization* (New York, 1976), p. ix.

¹² Gill, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

¹³ See Keep, *op. cit.*, part III, 'The Countryside in Revolt', pp. 155-247; and Eric R. Wolf, *Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century* (New York, 1969), pp. 87 ff.

¹⁴ Gill, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 63-64, 86.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 85-86. The terms knowledge, feelings, and judgements denote respectively the 'cognitive', 'affective', and 'evaluative' orientations towards political objects defined by Almond and Verba, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

¹⁷ Gill, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

¹⁸ Rosenberg, *op. cit.*, p. 457. The problem for the old order, of course, was that the development of political consciousness and participation among the Russian masses far outran the capacity of existing political institutions to accommodate it. See Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven, 1968), p. 79, who states: 'Political stability . . . depends upon the ratio of institutionalization to participation. As political participation increases, the complexity, autonomy, adaptability, and coherence of the society's political institutions must also increase if political stability is to be maintained.'

¹⁹ Gill, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

²¹ See Almond and Verba, *op. cit.*, p. 17, on the concept of 'the self as a political actor'.

²² Robert E. Gamer, *The Developing Nations: A Comparative Perspective* (Boston, 1976), pp. 8-9, 173-174.

²³ Uldricks, *op. cit.*, p. 412.

²⁴ See Huntington, *op. cit.*, pp. 292-293, who describes the situation as follows: 'In a system in which political consciousness and political participation are broadening, the peasantry becomes the critical group. The basic political competition becomes the competition between the government and the urban revolutionary intelligentsia for the support of the peasantry. If the peasantry acquiesces in and identifies with the existing system, it furnishes that system with a stable foundation. If it actively opposes the system, it becomes the carrier of revolution.'

²⁵ Wolf, *op. cit.*, p. 301.

²⁶ Rosenberg, *op. cit.*, p. 457.

dicted in The Progress of Capitalism in Russia that the mir would collapse before the advance of industrialization and capitalization. To Lenin, the mir was a romantic fantasy and the Populists mere petty bourgeois ideologues.

The problem of the Russian mir has enormous significance for a proper understanding of dialectical materialism. Traditional interpreters of Marx¹ tend to view dialectical materialism as synonymous with a unilinear view of history. For them, dialectical materialism and economic determinism are the same. They interpret Marx as maintaining that history must move through necessary stages of societal evolution--feudalism to capitalism to communism. Europe was the first to pass through these stages; the rest of the globe must imitate this European development. History is a unilinear process which all societies must follow.

Newer interpretations of Marx,² revisionist interpretations, present Marx as a multilinearist. The revisionists maintain Marx believed each society was a unique structure, that each possessed unique conditions, and that each would advance in time in accordance with its own structure. Dialectical materialism, understood in these terms, emerges as a much more subtle, sensitive, and accurate method of social analysis, rather than as an indicator of social inevitability and macrocosmic determinism.³ Such an understanding opens up the possibility of interpreting different societies as developing along various lines. All societies need not follow the three-stage sequence, feudalism, capitalism, communism; the rest of the globe need not imitate Europe.

The question of the mir will be used in this paper as a case study to ascertain what Marx meant by dialectical materialism. If it can be shown that Marx believed the mir must and should succumb to the forces of capitalism, this would lend support to the argument that Marx maintained a unilinear view of history. If the mir must and should succumb, then capitalism was a necessary antecedent to communism. Then the industrial proletariat, bred in the womb of capitalist society, was the only class that could build a communist society. If capitalism and the proletariat were necessary preconditions for the triumph of a communist society, then Marx indeed thought history a unilinear process.

Conversely, if it can be shown that Marx believed the mir could act as the transition to communism, this would lend support to the argument that Marx maintained a multilinear view of history. If communism could evolve out of the mir, then Russian development might clearly differ from that of Western Europe. It might be the peasants, rather than the proletariat, who would build a communist society. Consequently, since capitalism and

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the proletariat were not necessary preconditions for communism, there existed no predetermined, necessary stages of societal evolution.

It is the intention of this paper to gain new insight into Marx's approach to the problem of the mir by examining the notes Marx took on his reading in early Russian, Asian and German institutions.⁴ These exzerpte do not contain direct, positive statements by Marx himself. Rather, the notes Marx took were almost uniformly quotes from the authors he was reading. Thus, while it is impossible to assert definitively on the basis of the exzerpte that Marx believed in a particular concept, it is nevertheless possible to see the kinds of information Marx was exposed to, the kinds of reading he selected, and, in terms of the quotes themselves, the kinds of data he found interesting. In short, the exzerpte do not tell us what Marx categorically believed. They do, however, acquaint us with the ideas which influenced him, the direction of his research, and the probable direction of his thinking.

The exzerpte document clearly that beginning in 1853, Marx grew increasingly interested in ancient Asian, Russian, and Germanic institutions. From 1843 until 1853, Marx read predominantly in political economy. His notebooks during this decade were filled with exzerpte from Smith, Ricardo, Malthus, the French Physiocrats, Sismondi, and List. There were also ample citations from books dealing with the history of trade, banking, agriculture, and industry. Clearly Marx was concentrating his major efforts during these ten years on the gathering of data for his attack upon English classical political economy and for his analysis of capitalism. The Critique of Political Economy was published in 1859.

In the notebooks of 1853, we find the first indication that Marx was reading in Asian history. In that year he read eight books on India, including such works as J.F. Royle's Essay on the Productive Resources of India and An Inquiry into the Causes of the long continued stationary condition of India, Thomas St. Raffles' The History of Java, and Robert Patton's The Principle of Asiatic Monarchies. In the same year Marx was also reading heavily in Russian history. There were eleven titles for this year.

Marx's interest in primitive Asian and Slavic institutions did not bear fruit only in his journalism of this time for the New York Daily Tribune. From 1857-58 Marx composed the Grundrisse der Kritik der Politischen Okonomie. One section of this work, the Formen die der Kapitalistischen Produktion vorhergehen dealt basically with ancient Oriental, Slavic, and Ger-

man communal forms of life.⁵ Clearly, much of the material Marx used in the Grundrisse was gathered from the reading on Asia and Russia which he began in 1853.

In 1868 Marx began his reading of G.L. von Maurer. In that year he read Maurer's Einleitung zur Geschichte der Mark, Hof, Dorf und Stadtverfassung. His reading in Maurer deepened, and during 1876 he read Maurer's Geschichte der Markenverfassung, Geschichte der Fronhufe, and Geschichte der Dorfverfassung in Deutschland. Marx's interest and involvement with ancient Slavic institutions continued throughout 1876 and 1878. In the former year he finished M. Utiesenovic's Die Hauskommunionen der Sudslaven, and in the latter year Haxthausen's Die landliche Verfassung Russlands.

In 1881 and 1882 Marx took up again his study of ancient institutions. Marx studied, in 1881, L.H. Morgan's Ancient Society, J.W.B. Money's Java, or how to manage a Colony, and H.J.S. Maine's Lectures on the Early History of Institutions. One year later Marx was to finish J. Lubbock's The Origin of Civilization and the Primitive Condition of Man, and D.M. Wallace's Russia.⁶

This listing of the books Marx studied serves two purposes. It tells us what Marx read, as well as what he did not read. After 1851 Marx's interest in economics waned. There were no more exzerpte from Smith, Ricardo, Malthus, or the French Physiocrats. There was no intensive or prolonged study of banking, trade, industry, or population. In terms of the study of society, Marx was increasingly drawn to anthropology. He was studying the ancient condition of man. This indicated a major shift in the direction of his thought. He was moving away from economics, away from English industrial problems, away from the nineteenth-century Western European world of Das Kapital. Increasingly he was scrutinizing world-wide pre-capitalist economic formations.

In chapter twenty-four of Book I of Das Kapital, Marx described the evolution of the capitalist mode of production from its feudal, agrarian antecedent. Marx's reading in ancient Asian, Russian, and Germanic history clearly documents that Marx's interest during the last half of his life was focusing on the problem of the breakdown of primitive, communal forms of social existence. Marx's exzerpte on anthropology show that there existed in his mind an outline, a tentative structure for a comparative study of the destruction of communal life and its supercession by a different form of society. In 1878 Marx started to read J.B. Jukes' Student Manual of Geology. In essence, Marx was involved with sociological geology. He was studying how one layer of

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human history had been destroyed by a new layer of human history, that is, how societies with different structures based on communal property were replaced by societies with different structures based on private property. Marx was dealing with sociological deposits, sociological ages, accepting all the while the unique structure of each society and its unique path of development.

It is abundantly clear from the books Marx selected to read, and from the passages Marx copied from these books, that he believed communal forms of property had been and were being destroyed on a world-wide basis. From his reading in G.L. von Maurer, he learned that the tribal communalism of the ancient Germans broke down as a result of their conquest of Roman territories. The acquisition of new land gave an opportunity, eagerly exploited, for the nobles of the tribe to acquire private property outside of the traditional cooperative possessions of the tribe.⁷ From his reading in M. Utiesenovic, he learned how the family communism of the South Slavs had been destroyed by the imposition of laws making it mandatory for property to be assigned to one male and his heirs.⁸ The books of Sir J. Phear, George Campbell, J.F. Royle, and George Patton on India all indicated that the Indian village commune was being dissolved under the impact of British imperialism.⁹ Furthermore, the research of Haxthausen and of D.M. Wallace on Russian village life indicated that the Russian mir was undergoing the same fate as the Indian commune. The emancipation act of 1861 did not afford freedom to the serfs, but dissolved their old village associations and placed them at the mercy of the capitalistic-minded landowners.¹⁰

In the 1870's, when the question was raised as to whether the Russian mir could serve as the point of transition to communism, Marx had before him a body of literature which depicted the overthrow of communal forms of life by capitalistic forms of life. According to historical precedent, the chances of communal mir expanding into communist society seemed slight. Thus in 1877 Marx wrote to the editor of the Russian journal Otycestvenniye Zapisky:

I have arrived at this conclusion: If Russia continues to pursue the path she has followed since 1861 she will lose the finest chance [of escaping capitalist development] ever offered by history to a nation, in order to undergo all the fatal vicissitudes of the capitalist regime.

If Russia is tending to become a capitalist nation after the example of the Western European countries, and during the last years she has been taking a lot of trouble in this direction--she will not succeed without having just transformed a good part of her peasants into proletarians; and after that, once taken to the bosom of the capitalist regime she will experience its pitiless law like other profane peoples. That is all.¹¹

Ever the realist, Marx understood that the mir was tending toward extinction. But the probability of destruction was not the same as the necessity of destruction. Although Marx was aware that the considerable powers of Russian Tzardom were moving for destruction, he never asserted that it was a necessary and inevitable historical law for the mir to be destroyed. In fact, Marx believed just the opposite. He believed that, left to itself, the mir could act as the transition point to communism. He believed that there were forces in the mir which, if allowed to develop, could transform Russia into a communist society. He did not think, in short, that it was an adamant law that Russia follow the exact path of evolution of Western Europe.

In order to prove these assertions it will be necessary to show: (1) that Marx was aware of at least one occasion in the past when different societies (for example, Western and Oriental society) took different paths of development; (2) that social forces which were non-industrial and non-capitalistic could, in themselves, create a communist consciousness; (3) that the peasants rather than the proletariat could act as a revolutionary class to bring communism into existence.

(1) In 1853 Marx read Robert Patton's The Principle of Asiatic Monarchies. To Patton it was clear that Europe and Asia had taken two different paths of social evolution. In the West the effect upon all the "pastoral tribes who subdued the agricultural provinces of the Roman Empire was to strengthen the tendency among them to form at least great land proprietors."¹² The communal basis of German tribal existence was destroyed by the conquest of new territories, giving rise to an independent nobility who could assert their authority against that of the crown. Later, the law of primogeniture was established among the European nobility, and thus the descent of private property in land was engrained in the essential social fabric of European civilization.

On the other hand, in Asia it was the sovereign who became the universal proprietor of the land. No independent nobility,

no center of social or political power, developed outside of the sovereign to contest or limit the absolute power of the monarch. Patton maintained that it was the need for irrigation in arid Asia which shifted to the monarch the predominance of economic and political power. The building, maintenance, and supervision of indispensable irrigation projects became the province of the crown and its bureaucracy. Taxing powers, in order to finance these projects, fell concomitantly to the sovereign. Thus the need for a socio-political power to ensure the existence of water for agriculture served as the foundation for Oriental despotism. Although local villages organized their land on a communal basis, ultimate ownership resided in the monarchical proprietor.¹³

At the end of 1880 Marx read H.J.S. Maine's Lectures on the Early History of Institutions. The major thrust of Maine's book was to trace the different forms of landed proprietorship which evolved in Europe, Brittany, England, and Ireland. While dealing basically with Western Europe, Maine could not help but be aware that other races (Oriental) had pursued a path of development different from the Germanic. Marx copied the following quote from Maine's monograph: "...modern research conveys a stronger impression than ever of the separation between the Aryan race and races of other stocks."¹⁴ For Maine, the breakdown of tribal communalism stemmed from two factors: (1) the disentanglement of individual rights from the collective rights of the tribe; (2) the "transmutation of the sovereignty of the tribal chief."¹⁵ It was evident to Maine that the feudal decentralization of Western Europe was a stark contrast to the hydraulic despotism of the Orient, which proved that different historical evolutions had led to a "separation between the Aryan races and races of other stocks."

Thus, when Marx was asked by Vera Zasoulich to comment on the course of Russian development, he was already acquainted with a scholarship which showed that East and West had taken different paths of development. On March 8, 1881 he wrote to Vera Zasoulich:

At the bottom of the capitalist system is, therefore, the radical separation of the producer from the means of production--The basis of this whole evolution is the expropriation of the peasants--It has been accomplished in a final form only in England--but all the other countries of Western Europe are going through the same movement.

The "historical necessity" of this movement is thus explicitly restricted to the countries of Western Europe.¹⁶

In short, Marx knew that East and West had evolved differently. Russia, therefore, could take a course of development different from that of the West. There was no macrocosmic deterministic law which necessitated that Russia follow the example of the West. The path of evolution which brought capitalism to the Occident was "explicitly restricted to the countries of Western Europe."

(2) For Marx the development of a communist consciousness was a necessary and irreplaceable step prior to the revolutionary establishment of a communist society. In the West, the proletariat must be aware that its interests would be better served in a communist society. The European proletariat must wish, must will, must act to achieve the victory of communism. Without this consciousness, this intention, communism would never prove triumphant.

Communist consciousness would be created in the Western proletariat, according to Marx, through their life experience in the industrial system. Factory life required cooperation; it illustrated clearly the dependence of one worker upon another. The production line was the prime example of the interrelatedness of industrial labor. Made conscious that cooperation was the basis of the industrial system, the European worker would subsequently become conscious that society in general should be organized as a cooperative system.

Western capitalism inadvertently produced the seeds of its own destruction. By imposing the system of industrial interdependence upon the worker, Western capitalism would unknowingly instill in that same worker the awareness that the total society should be interdependent. Such was the process by which communism would come in the West; this was how communism would have to evolve from the unique conditions and structures in Europe. This did not mean that communism could realize itself historically only in this way. It did not mean that communist or cooperative consciousness could develop only in the factory. It was possible for such a consciousness to develop from a different basis.

In early 1881 Marx finished Lewis Henry Morgan's book Ancient Society. In this work Morgan attempted to describe how primitive life, based on the gens, was destroyed. The gens was a primitive form of society in which kinship relationships determined economic and political structures. That is, property

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was distributed along family lines, rather than to individuals. Political representation was determined by family. In the European cases which Morgan studied, Rome and Greece, the acquisition of a territorial base for the tribe spelled the doom of the gens. That is, territorial considerations and rights soon superseded kinship considerations and rights. The important point in this context, however, was that for many centuries during man's tribal non-territorial condition, kinship relations were the dominant relations in the society. In other words, it was kinship relationships which determined property and productive relationships. Purely economic forces played a secondary role during the tribal stage of human evolution. The rights of the family were the primary determinant of the use and appropriation of the means of production. With these rights came communal ownership of the means of production.¹⁷

In 1882 Marx read J. Lubbock's The Origin of Civilization and the Primitive Condition of Man. Lubbock's work also acquainted Marx with the fact that in primitive society, kinship relationships were the dominant social forces and conditioned the use and distribution of productive materials. Furthermore, in his reading of H.J.S. Maine, Marx exposed himself to a similar opinion and supporting documentation. Lastly, in this particular case the exzerpte do contain marginal comments by Marx himself. It is one of the rare cases in the exzerpte when Marx spoke in the first person. In the Maine notes, Marx wrote: "...from the moment when a tribal community settles down finally land begins to be the base of society in place of kinship."¹⁸ In the Lubbock notes, Marx wrote: "(Lubb) has taken some of the following evidence from his [James McLennan's]¹⁹ valuable works, adding, however, (!) several additional cases. (great, greatest Lubb!)." ²⁰

What Marx learned from his reading in anthropology, and what he agreed with, was that kinship relationships had been and therefore could be determining social forces. The ancient gens were matriarchies. Kinship groups were therefore rather extensive. Because descent was traced through the mother, and no sons or daughters were excluded from the kin, property was shared communally by the gens. Communalism was a necessary outgrowth of a society where kinship relations were dominant social forces. Since all members were equal in the gens, property would belong to the gens collectively.

Most importantly, however, the gens already possessed a communist consciousness like that of the proletariat of the nineteenth century. In the German Ideology Marx did distinguish the communist consciousness of the tribe from that of the European

industrial worker.²¹ But the essential quality was present: the consciousness of cooperation. This consciousness of cooperation did not arise from an industrial environment. Therefore, it was not absolutely necessary to create an industrial environment in order to create a collectivist consciousness. The communist consciousness of the tribe arose from the social force of kin awareness. Therefore, it was possible to create a communist consciousness in any society where there is collective ownership of the means of production.

The question of a communist consciousness is inseparable from the problem of whether the mir could act as a transition point to communism. Did Marx think it possible to evolve from an agrarian society to a highly industrialized society organized on the basis of socialist principles? A close examination of Marx's exzerpte suggests that he did indeed think so. The collectivist consciousness of the mir could act as the organizing principle and the philosophical context and fiber around which industrial organization would be structured. The mir could be a transitional stage because it was historically possible for society to develop from agrarian feudalism to socialist industrialism. The crucial element, the core factor, was a communist consciousness, an intellectual structuring of social life on a collectivist and communal basis.

The argument that the mir could expand directly into socialism offers compelling evidence of Marx's multilinear view of history. In short, there were at least two possible paths to socialism. First, there was the path of Western Europe, a three-stage progression from feudalism to capitalism to communism. Second, there was the possible path of agrarian Russia, a two-stage sequence bypassing capitalism and developing directly from feudal agrarianism to communism. Societies, depending upon their own internal structure, could evolve along either of these two paths (or perhaps some alternative paths). The factor that was crucial was the fruition of communist consciousness, rather than some universally necessary stage of economic development.

Marx addressed many of these issues in a letter he sent to Vera Zasoulich on March 8, 1881. There were three drafts of this letter, and in the second one, which he did not mail, he wrote:

In appropriating the positive results of the capitalist mode of production, (Russia) is capable of developing and transforming the archaic form of its village community, instead of destroying. (I observe, by the way, that

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the form of community property in Russia is the most modern form of the archaic type, which in turn has passed through a number of evolutionary changes.)

The Russian village community belongs to the youngest type in this chain. Here the peasant cultivator already owns the house in which he lives and the garden belonging to it. Here we have the first dissolving element of the archaic formation unknown to older types. On the other hand all these are based on blood relationships between the members of the community while the type of which the Russian commune belongs, is already emancipated from these narrow bonds and is thus capable of greater evolution. The isolation of the village communities, the lack of links between their lines, this locally founded microcosm is not everywhere an immanent characteristic of the last of the primitive types. However, wherever it does occur, it permits the emergence of a central despotism above the communities. It seems to me that in Russia the original isolation caused by the vast extent of this territory is easily to be eliminated, once the fetters imposed by the government will have been burst.²²

Since a communist consciousness already existed, the mir did not have to be destroyed. Russia did not have to become capitalized and proletarianized. However, two other conditions were necessary in order to realize the potential of the mir, in order to give full expression to its generative forces. First, the mir must appropriate the industrial system. Second, Tzarism must be overthrown.

The appropriation of the industrial system by the mir means that cooperation becomes the determining social force of technological society. Clearly, advanced industrial society will destroy outmoded technological and economic features of agrarian and mir existence. But the modern economy will be organized in accordance with mir collectivist mentality. On the level of social meaning and interrelationship, the communist consciousness of the mir will not only be the structural essence of the modernized society, but also the ground of human behavior and interpersonal exchange. The collectivist principle of the mir will become the primary social ethic of the society as a whole. The

progressive and communal ethos of the mir will become the ground on which the materiality of advanced technology will be given meaning and social relevance.

The revolutionary overthrow of Tzarism would remove the political force which most hindered and retarded the generative power of the mir. Only when this hostile political barrier was removed could the mir reach its full potential. But there existed in the mir the vital factor: cooperative consciousness. All that was needed was to create the proper political environment so that the communist principles of the mir could readily extend their force to industrial society.

(3) Not only did Marx recognize the possibility of peasants building a communist society through the evolution of the mir, he also believed that the peasantry could become a revolutionary communist force. In short, the peasantry could be proletarianized; their proletarianization would make them a revolutionary force.

The proletarianized peasantry we are discussing here is the non-mir peasantry. The bulk of the Russian peasants were those who did not live in communal surroundings, who were impoverished, who either did not own or rent any land, who worked as agricultural wage-laborers, or who owned or rented such small parcels of land that they were unable to satisfy their basic needs. The problem we are addressing in this section is thus different from the problem of the peasantry in the mir. The mir peasants possessed a collectivist consciousness because of their collectivist environment. The problem for the non-mir peasantry was how they were going to develop a revolutionary consciousness. We are not concerned here with the question of communal behavior, but rather with the creation of a consciousness to fundamentally revolutionize society. The question that Marx had to face was whether it was possible for peasants living in a private-property environment to rise to the consciousness of revolutionizing society: not to provide the principles of the new, socialist society, but rather to overturn and topple an old society, to be the cadres of the revolutionary army.

In Western Europe, during the advent of capitalism, the peasantry had been almost completely destroyed. Chased from the land, the peasants had moved to the great industrial centers to become the exploited proletariat. For Marx, then, the proletariat was the revolutionary class in Western Europe. But this did not mean that only an industrial proletariat could be a communist revolutionary force. Other classes could fulfill this role. The crucial question was whether the social condition of a particular society produced in a class in that society a revolutionary consciousness, that is, the intent to reconstruct society at all

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costs. In the Occident, capitalist society had given the proletariat a revolutionary consciousness. However, Marx also believed it possible for the peasantry to acquire a revolutionary consciousness.

Marx held this opinion as early as 1844. In one of his early manuscripts entitled Rent of Land, Marx wrote:

Consequently, the agricultural workers are soon reduced to the minimum level of subsistence, and the farmer class establishes the power of industry and capital within landed property. Through competition with foreign countries the rent of land ceases, in the main, to constitute an independent source of income. A large section of the land-owners is obliged to take the place of the tenant farmers who sink in this way into the proletariat.²³

The theme of the proletarianization of the farmer was more fully developed in the third volume of Das Kapital. However, before the peasant could be transformed into a wage-laborer, it was necessary for capitalist practices to dominate agriculture. According to Marx, this was exactly what had happened in the European countryside:

We assume, then, that agriculture is dominated by the capitalist mode of production, just as manufacture is; in other words, that agriculture is carried on by capitalists who differ from other capitalists primarily in the manner in which their capital, and the wage-labor set in motion by this capital, are invested. So far as we are concerned, the farmer produces wheat, etc., in much the same way as the manufacturer produces yarn or machines....Just as the capitalist mode of production in general is based on the expropriation of the conditions of labor from the laborers, so does it in agriculture presuppose the expropriation of the rural laborers from the land and their subordination to a capitalist who carries on agriculture for the sake of profit.²⁴

The capitalization of the countryside meant that the peasant would suffer from the same alienation and dehumanization as the industrial wage-laborer. Confronted by the same conditions,

confronted by the same capitalist exploitation, peasant and proletarian would suffer the same degradation. Marx wrote:

It is true that the peasant for example, expends much labor on his small plot of land. But it is labor isolated from objective social and material conditions of productivity, labor robbed and stripped of these conditions.²⁵

Dehumanized, abandoned to the profit system, the peasant would suffer the same emiseration as the proletarian. The once independent peasant, unable to compete with the large capitalist landowning aristocracy, would gradually lose his land and his autonomy, and become a totally dependent wage-laborer.

Since the invasion of agriculture by the capitalist mode of production, transformation of independently producing peasants into wage-workers, is in fact the last conquest of this mode of production, these inequalities are greater here than in any other line of production.²⁶

Since the peasants could be proletarianized, they could be a revolutionary force. They could develop a communist consciousness, that is, because they faced social conditions in which their labor was expropriated; they would become aware that only the common ownership of the means of production would prevent further exploitation of their productive praxis. Peasant and industrial laborer worked in different environments, but their social conditions were the same: alienating and exploitative. The communist consciousness of both the proletarianized peasant and the proletarianized industrial laborer stemmed from similarly oppressive social conditions.

In the case of the mir, as we have seen, consciousness was already communistic by virtue of the cooperative relations of production. Collectivist practices themselves could produce among the members of the mir the awareness that all means of production should be organized on a collectivist basis. In the case of the non-mir peasant, its proletarianization could create a revolutionary consciousness like that of the industrial worker; the agrarian worker could also come to believe that society must be fundamentally reconstructed.

Marx then was not primarily concerned with developing a "historico-philosophical theory, of which the supreme virtue consists in its being suprahistorical, i.e., beyond the pale of his-

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tory,"²⁷ but rather with depicting the variety of concrete historical processes in which communist consciousness can arise. Marx was not a unilinear determinist. Rather, he understood that revolutionary praxis was needed to bring communism into history. In his frame of reference, the Russian mir and non-mir peasant were entirely equal to this challenge. From his perspective, the mir and non-mir peasant were social forces with enough potency to develop the socialist society.

Marx's own certainty about the revolutionary potential of the mir and the peasantry becomes even more clear from a close reading of the second and third drafts of his 1881 letter to Vera Zasoulich. The fact that Marx wrote three drafts of the same letter indicates that he experienced some difficulty in specifying his ideas in so short a form. Nevertheless, the letters illustrate that Marx had at his disposal a wealth of information concerning the primitive forms of communal ownership in Asia, Russia, and among the German tribes. Marx apparently had worked out a theory regarding the historical succession of the various communal forms.²⁸ The impact of Marx's reading in anthropology and ancient history is quite apparent. At the end of his life he had moved away from an almost exclusive concentration on depicting the origin and genesis of capitalism in the West, toward a study of the historical evolution of agrarian collectivist societies, basically in non-Western areas. Trying to relate his extensive scholarship on primitive communism to the question of the mir, Marx wrote:

I now come to the crux of the question. We cannot overlook the fact that the archaic type, to which the Russian commune belongs, conceals an internal dualism, which may under certain historic circumstances lead to its ruin. Property in land is communal, but each peasant cultivates and manages his plot on his own account, in a way recalling the small peasant of the West. Common ownership, divided petty cultivation: this combination which was useful in remoter periods, becomes dangerous in ours. On one hand mobile property, an element which plays an increasing part even in agriculture, gradually leads to differentiation of wealth among the members of the community, and therefore makes it possible for a conflict of interests to arise, particularly under the fiscal pressure of the state. On the other hand the economic superiority of communal

ownership, as the base of an operative and combined labor, is lost....²⁹

But does this mean that the historic career of the agricultural community must inevitably lead to this result? Certainly not. The dualism within it permits of an alternative: either the property element in it will overcome the collective element, or the other way round. Everything depends on the historical environment in which it occurs.³⁰

What Marx was saying was that the mir need not be destroyed. It could act as the transition to communism. The cooperative elements in it could serve as one of the origins for a general collectivization of society. On the other hand, the elements of private property which the mir also contained could serve as a decomposing force. If the course of development in Russia accentuated, selected, supported the private-propertied elements of the mir, it was doomed. If the mir was to survive, external forces must support its internal forces of collectivism. The potentiality for historically progressive communism already existed in the mir, but this was not sufficient in itself. Actual socio-political conditions must insure the future of the mir.

Dialectical materialism, then, is no dogma of historical inevitability. Marx never claimed to have discovered the macro-cosmic social laws which compelled all societies to move in a unilinear development. Dialectical materialism is rather an instrument for social analysis. It views all social formation as existing in a state of tension. In every socio-economic structure there exists a conflict between retrogressive and progressive forces. The ascendancy of one or the other is determined in large part by external factors. The support of retrogressive or progressive elements, and therefore the revolutionary potential of a given socio-economic structure, is determined by the external conditions in which that structure finds itself.

It is fair to say that, in Marx's understanding, the mir was not an orphan of history. Rather, it had direct revolutionary potential. Communism could evolve in Russia, with the mir as inspiration, without the capitalization of its society. I shall leave it to the historian of Russian social development to determine the extent to which the mir realized that potential. I have cited the mir in this paper with a view toward demonstrating that Marx's approach to history was multilinear, not unilinear.

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NOTES

1. Recent scholarship has begun to unravel the differences between Marx and Engels. Because the once assumed unanimity of view between the two men did not in fact exist, the paper deals solely with the work of Marx. On the relationship between Marx and Engels, see the following essays: Herman Bollnow, "Engels Auffassung von Revolution und Entwicklung in Seinen Grundsätzen des Kommunismus (1847)," Marxismusstudien (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1954), pp. 77-144; Ludwig Landgrede, "Das Problem der Dialektik," Ibid., 1960, pp. 1-65; Erhard Lucas, "Marx und Engels Auseinandersetzung Mit Darwin," Ibid., 1964, pp. 443-469; Thilo Ramm, "Die Künftige Gesellschaftsordnung Nach Theorie von Marx und Engels," Ibid., 1957, pp. 77-119; Erich Thier, "Etappen der Marx Interpretation," Ibid., 1954, pp. 1-38. Also the following book makes penetrating comments about the whole problem: Iring Fetscher, Karl Marx und der Marxismus (München: R. Piper, 1967).

2. On the newer interpretations of Marx's view of dialectical materialism see the following works: Henri LeFebvre, The Sociology of Marx, trans. Norbert Guterman (New York: Pantheon Books, 1968); Alfred Schmidt, Beiträge Zur Marxistischen Erkenntnistheorie (Frankfurt: Suttkecamp Verlag, 1969); Irving M. Zeitlin, Marxism: A Re-examination (Princeton: D. van Nostrand, 1967). For some revisionist classics see Georg Lukács, History and Class Consciousness, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge: M. I. T. Press, 1968); Antonio Gramsci, Prison Notebooks, trans. Quintin Hoare (New York: International Publishers, 1971).

3. On the question of Marx as a determinist, see my article "Humanism without Eschatology," Journal of the History of Ideas. (Jan-March, 1972).

4. The author acknowledges the support of the American Philosophical Society which allowed him to spend the summer of 1971 at the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam. The International Institute possesses the entire corpus of Marx's notebooks. All the information contained in this essay regarding Marx's exzerpte was obtained from the archives at the Institute.

5. Karl Marx, Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations, trans. by Jack Cohen (New York: International Publishers, 1965).

6. Exzerpte of Karl Marx, Vols. B65, B112, B162, International Institute of Social History, Archives, Amsterdam.

7. Marx, exzerpte on G.L. von Maurer, Einleitung zur Geschichte der Mark, Hof, Dorf und Stadtverfassung, Vol. B133, pp. 4-95.

8. Exzerpte on M. Utiesenovic, Die Hauskommunionen der Sudslaven, Vol. B137, pp. 18-45.
9. Exzerpte on Sir J. Phear, The Aryan Village in India and Ceylon, Vol. B162, pp. 131-157; George Campbell, Modern India, Vol. B65, pp. 12-24; J.F. Royle, An Inquiry into the causes of the long continued stationary condition of India, Vol. B65, p. 9; Robert Patton, The Principles of Asiatic Monarchies, Vol. B65, pp. 32-37.
10. Exzerpte on G. Haxthausen, Die landliche Verfassung Russland, Vol. B138, pp. 16-39; D.M. Wallace, Russia, Vol. B167, pp. 40-41.
11. Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels, Selected Correspondence (New York: International Publishers, 1964), pp. 353-354.
12. Exzerpte on Robert Patton, p. 32.
13. On the hydraulic basis of Oriental despotism see exzerpte on Robert Patton. Also see Karl Wittfogel, Oriental Despotism (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964).
14. Exzerpte on H.J.S. Maine, Lectures on the Early History of Institutions, Vol. B162, p. 164.
15. Ibid., p. 166.
16. Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels, The Russian Menace to Europe, ed. Paul W. Blackstock and Bert F. Hoselitz (Glencoe: Free Press, 1952), pp. 278-279.
17. Exzerpte on Lewis Morgan, Ancient Society, Vol. B162, pp. 4-101.
18. Exzerpte on H.J.S. Maine, Lectures on the Early History of Institutions, p. 163.
19. Brackets are mine. Reference is to James McLennan, Primitive Marriage (London: Lawrence Press, 1865).
20. Exzerpte on J. Lubbock, The Origin of Civilization and the Primitive Condition of Man, Vol. B168, p. 4.
21. Karl Marx, The German Ideology (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1965), pp. 29-49.
22. Marx, Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations, pp. 142-143.
23. Marx, Early Writings, trans. T.B. Bottomore (New York: McGraw-Hill & Co., 1963), pp. 142-143.
24. Marx, Capital (New York: International Publishers, 1967), pp. 614-615.
25. Ibid., p. 677.
26. Ibid., p. 650.
27. Marx, The Russian Menace to Europe, p. 218.
28. Marx, Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations, pp. 144-145.
29. Ibid., p. 143.
30. Ibid., p. 145.

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RUSSIA AND ASIA
Two Nineteenth-Century Russian Views

BY
NICHOLAS V. RIASANOVSKY

OUR TOPIC, "Russia and Asia," is of so great scope, richness, and variety that it could invite almost any kind of treatment. The purpose of this brief study is modest and simple: to relate, in their proper historical setting, opinions on and attitudes toward Asia of two important Russian intellectuals who became prominent in the first half of the nineteenth century, Count Serge Uvarov and Professor Michael Pogodin. The selection of these two men resulted from a detailed investigation of their ideas in a different connection, as leading exponents of the government doctrine of Official Nationality in the reign of Tsar Nicholas I, 1825-1855,¹ and the recognition of the fact that both possessed definite, and quite different, views on Asia. The difference seemed to be noteworthy because of fundamental ideological similarities of the two conservatives. Furthermore, Uvarov's and Pogodin's views reflected certain intellectual trends and attitudes in Russia and, beyond that, two main approaches toward Asia during the nineteenth century in Europe at large. Uvarov's interest in Asia, which he vaunted, has received some passing attention from scholars. Pogodin's references to the largest continent in the world, scattered in his voluminous writings, have been generally ignored.

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Count Sergey Semenovitch Uvarov had a brilliant career, and indeed careers, in the Russia of Alexander I and especially of his successor, Nicholas I. Born in 1786, he enjoyed the advantages of an aristocratic background and an excellent education augmented by much travel and many personal contacts with socially and intellectually prominent Europeans outside of Russian borders. Uvarov developed an interest in ancient Greece, and produced a series of short studies in Greek mythology, religion, and literature, which he liked to link to the Orient. In 1818 he became president of the Imperial Academy of Sciences, a position he held until his death in 1855. But Uvarov never chose scholarship as a profession. Instead he turned to the more lucrative and glamorous state service. After trying his hand in diplomacy and finance, this admirer of

This article is based on a paper prepared for the Sixth Annual Conference on Asian Affairs, held at St. Paul, Minnesota, October 11 and 12, 1957.

¹ See my book, *Nicholas I and Official Nationality in Russia, 1825-1855* (Univ. of California Press, 1959).

the classical world achieved lasting fame—or notoriety—in education. It was Uvarov, once a liberal, who coined the reactionary slogan and ideology of Nicholas I's reign, "Orthodoxy, autocracy, and nationality," and who, as the Tsar's minister of education for sixteen long years, from 1833 to 1849, tried to implement these principles in Russian schools and life.

Uvarov's persistent interest in Asia appears, however, to bear no intrinsic relationship either to his early vague liberalism or to his later comprehensive doctrine of Official Nationality. True, he would sometimes turn to the Orient to support his views in other fields, claiming, for instance, that recent advances in Hebrew studies gave unassailable confirmation to Biblical authority and the Christian tradition in general. And he pointed out repeatedly that a knowledge of Eastern languages represented a requirement in the empire of the tsars, which contained so many Eastern peoples, such great territories in Asia, and so long an Asiatic border. The utilitarian arguments, however, were by no means central in Uvarov's estimate of Asia and Asiatic cultures. In fact, they often produce the impression of a conscious defense of Asiatic studies, which Uvarov valued principally for other reasons. These reasons, difficult to state precisely and in proper measure, find their expression in the well-known phrase *Ex oriente lux*; for the Russian minister of education belonged to that group of European intellectuals who, early in the nineteenth century, at the bright dawn of Orientalism, saw answers to the riddles of human history, life, and thought in the temples of India, the writings of Palestine, or the pyramids of Egypt. One more factor has to be added: Uvarov's personality. It combined loud proclamation of principles and a certain brittleness and lack of conviction, dogmatism and skepticism, sophistication and search. It fell naturally under the spell of the newly discovered, intellectually fashionable, exotic, mysterious, and lavishly if vaguely promising cultures of the East.

Uvarov's most famous piece dealing with Asia is his "Project of an Asiatic Academy" which the young enthusiast presented in 1810 to Count A. Razumovsky, then the Russian minister of education. It began as follows:

There occurred during the last years of the eighteenth century a great revolution in all our ideas concerning the history of human civilization. The Orient, recently still abandoned to the lying tales of a few adventurers and the dusty works of a small number of scholars, has been unanimously recognized as the cradle of all civilization of the universe. The accidental causes of this *rehabilitation* have been the progress of the English in India, the conquest of the sacred language of the Brahmins, of the language of Zoroaster's writings, the works of German scholars dealing with the Bible, and the establishment of the Asiatic Society of Calcutta.

Now we have reached the stage which makes it impossible for us to deny that Asia is the central point from which all the rays of light scattered over the globe emanate. This magnificent hypothesis, which links itself admirably with all the sacred traditions, is the only one that can henceforth be considered as indisputable.

* And, indeed, it would be impossible to study attentively the vast history of the human spirit in terms of this marvelous system without seeing how parts which appeared at first glance most diverse fall into a successive pattern and represent nothing but an immense development of one and the same principle. And when one joins modern discoveries to ancient notions, when one goes back to the origin of the first philosophic and religious views, one is persuaded to the point of obviousness that it is to Asia that we owe the foundations of the great edifice of human civilization.²

The sages of Greece, Uvarov continued, went to study in India, whence they borrowed their learning, ethics, and philosophical systems. Greek religion with its many gods also came from the Orient, through Phoenicia and Egypt. The Romans inherited from the Greeks; and as Eastern ideas advanced westward in their Roman guise, "they often encountered in their advance already established ideas, equally Oriental in origin, which in unknown ways had become detached from their mother country."³

After mentioning the political impact of Asia on Europe, ranging from the Moslem conquest of Constantinople and of Spain to the profound repercussions of the European discovery of the maritime route to India, and after noting that Eastern peoples even in their present state of decline retained traces of their former achievements and deserved careful attention, not disdain, Uvarov turned to the proper role of Russia in the renaissance of Oriental studies. The empire of the tsars included all of northern Asia, possessed an enormously long Asiatic land frontier which "brought it into contact with almost all the peoples of the Orient,"⁴ and maintained very close relations with such states as Turkey, Persia, and China. Therefore, special political, as well as general intellectual and cultural, interests demanded that Russia learn more about Asia. In fact, "never before has the reason of state been so much in accord with the great moral interests of civilization."⁵ Yet Russia lagged behind all other

² S. Uvarov, "Projet d'une académie asiatique," in *Etudes de philologie et de critique* (Paris, 1845), pp. 1-48; quoted from pp. 3-4, italics in the original. Pages 49-66 contain a very interesting letter written by De Maistre to Uvarov in 1810 in criticism of the project. For the entire extant correspondence of De Maistre and Uvarov and a discussion of their relations see M. Stepanov and F. Vermale, "Žozef de Mestr v Rossii," in *Literaturnoe Nasedstvo*, Vol. 29/30 (Moscow, 1937), pp. 577-726. For Goethe's very favorable comments on the project see G. Schmid, ed., *Goethe und Uvarov und ihr Briefwechsel* (St. Petersburg, 1888), pp. 9-13. The volume illustrates well Uvarov's interest in Asia.

³ Uvarov, p. 5. As an example of such Eastern ideas and institutions that had been mysteriously transplanted to the West, Uvarov cited the Druids of Ireland, referring to Vallancey's account in Ouseley, *Oriental Collections* (*ibid.*, p. 5, n. 1).

⁴ Uvarov, p. 8.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

European countries in the study of the East.⁶ It was to remedy this deplorable situation that Uvarov proposed the creation of the Asiatic Academy.

It is time that the powerful protection bestowed by His Majesty Emperor ALEXANDER upon enlightenment be extended finally to Asia, and that Russia, having placed herself at a level with other countries, surpass them by the means which she has at her disposal and by the results which can be expected from them. For this purpose it would be necessary to establish an academy mediating between the civilization of Europe and the enlightenment of Asia, in which everything related to the study of the

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 8. Here Uvarov exaggerated the backwardness of his nation, even allowing for the fact that he did acknowledge in a footnote the works of a few scholars in the reign of Catherine the Great. Actually, Oriental studies in Russia began with Peter the Great and had considerable achievement to their credit by 1810 when Uvarov presented his project. The famous reformer saw the Russians' need of knowing the languages of their Asiatic neighbors, founding a school where Japanese, Chinese, and Mongolian were taught, and attaching young men to his embassies in Persia and Turkey to learn Persian, Turkish, and Tartar. In 1714 an Orthodox mission was sent to Peking. It was to become a permanent institution and to make a great contribution to the Russian study of the Chinese language and culture, as well as of Mongolia, Manchuria, and Tibet. Peter the Great also established close relations with several central Asiatic states. Both the great emperor and his eighteenth-century successors paid attention to their enormous Asiatic lands, boundaries, and sometimes, as in the Caucasus and central Asia, neighboring territories. The continuous activity of explorers and scholars included such highlights as V. Bering's passage of the straits between Asia and North America in 1728, the discovery of Alaska in 1732, the huge so-called First Academic Expedition into Siberia which lasted from 1733 to 1742 and involved some 570 participants, as well as subsequent expeditions sponsored by the Academy, notably those led by P. Pallas. While, as Uvarov pointed out, Russia had been interested primarily in her own Asiatic possessions, some valuable work which Uvarov failed to acknowledge had been done in other Oriental areas and fields of study. The Imperial Academy of Sciences had had an Oriental chair since its foundation in 1726. The first occupant was an eminent German specialist in Semitics, T. Bayer, who was succeeded by another prominent German scholar, an Arabist, G. Kehr. Incidentally, Kehr, who lived and worked in Russia from 1732 to 1740, presented the first project of an Oriental academy to be established in St. Petersburg. However, I know of no evidence indicating that Uvarov knew of Kehr's proposal, which was published for the first time only in 1856. The German scholar felt no special attraction for the mysterious wisdom of the East, stressing instead the needs and interests of Russian foreign policy. (See "Ker, Georgij Jakovlevič," in *Enciklopedičeskij Slovar*, published by F. Brockhaus and I. Efron, Vol. XV, St. Petersburg, 1895, p. 13. The project was reproduced in large part by the Orientalist P. Savel'ev, in *Zurnal Ministerstva Narodnogo Prosvěščeniya*, Vol. LXXXIX, 1856, Sec. III, pp. 27-36, where Savel'ev discussed Kehr's and Uvarov's plans for an Asiatic Academy: "Predloženiya ob učreždenii Vostočnoj Akademii v S. Peterburge, 1733 i 1810 gg." Cf. I. Kračkovskij, *Očerki po istorii russoj arabistiki*, Moscow-Leningrad, 1950, esp. pp. 47-48, 96-98.) Kehr, it may be noted, also made a collection of 137 alphabets, writing out the Lord's Prayer in each one of them. Later in the century Pallas edited *A Comparative Dictionary of All Languages and Dialects*. Its first edition, produced in the late seventeen-eighties, contained 200 languages, 51 European and 149 Asiatic. The second edition, that of 1791, added 79 more: 4 European, 23 Asiatic, 30 African, and 23 American. The already impressive scope of the Russian study of Asia was greatly enlarged when, by a provision in the university statute of 1805, Oriental chairs were established in all Russian universities, their number thus increasing from the single one at the Academy to five. Yet Uvarov was largely correct in pointing out that, until his time, Russian investigation of the East lacked continuity and depended overwhelmingly on a few scholars. Besides, even if he were to give full credit to the Russian reality, his vision had certainly outrun it.

Orient would be brought together. An institution given over to the teaching of Oriental languages, where one would see a *European critic* beside an *Asiatic lama*, would immortalize the benefactions of the monarch and assist his liberal and generous intentions.⁷

Having made his point, Uvarov proceeded to support and develop it in two ways: by describing fruitful fields of Oriental research and the successes already obtained in these fields, and by presenting, in the second and concluding part of his paper, detailed plans of activities for the projected academy. The most important works dealing with the East included Biblical exegesis, which, Uvarov asserted, resulted in a renewed recognition of the divine inspiration of Holy Writ and a defeat for the critics of this view. Linguistic studies proved hardly less significant. In particular, the discovery of Sanskrit overturned existing theories because it demonstrated that in terms of language man came closest to perfection at the beginning of his history, not at later stages. It confounded the materialists, with their doctrine of progress, and suggested, rather, a golden age when humanity possessed untarnished the divine gift of word and of simple moral truths, and the subsequent decline of man.

In the field of philosophy Europe owed an overwhelming debt to Asia from the days of Thales, Heraclitus, and Pythagoras, who took their ideas from the East, especially from India, to the age of scholasticism, which the Arabs made possible. But Oriental philosophy surely deserved attention also in its own right: it offered a marvelously rich fare, having produced a variety of schools and having evolved through such stages as emanationism and the connected belief in the transmigration of souls, astrology, materialism, dualism, and pantheism. Indeed, a full classification and reconstruction of Eastern thought would constitute a veritable "archeology of general metaphysics."⁸ Asia had also great gifts to offer in the domain of poetic literature, its contributions being marked by a dazzlingly fresh, youthful, and lush vision of the world, an effervescence of ideas and an opulence of words. Yet the West was barely beginning to appreciate, largely because of the discovery of the *Sakuntala*, the glories of Indian literature, such Persian masters as Hafiz and Firdausi, Arabian tales, or Chinese verse. In history, and other disciplines too, much remained to be learned about the Orient. Historians could profit especially from a study of the migrations of peoples: the key to these migrations rested in Asia, and without an understanding of them our knowledge of the evolution of Europe lacked foundation. Even the roots of such a

⁷ Uvarov, *op. cit.*, p. 9. Italics and roman capitals in the original.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

science as astronomy lay in the East, principally in India, spreading from that country to Chaldea, Egypt, and Persia.

Oriental studies, Uvarov insisted, in rounding off the first part of his paper, would provide proper employment for the restless intellectual energies of Europe and would, in the process, reveal to the West the genealogy of its own civilization. But, beyond that, acquaintance with Asia raised a larger hope for a tired and creatively declining Europe:

Once the knowledge of this vast and marvelous land is extended further, perhaps there will be found a thread in the labyrinth of the human spirit; perhaps there will be discovered sources, ancient, forgotten, buried in the debris, but which can give to the spirit of man new strength and freshness, those certain harbingers of the great ages which are immortalized by the presence and the works of genius.⁹

The second and concluding part of Uvarov's project dealt with the fields of learning to be developed in the new Academy and their organization. After declaring that language and literature should form the two distinct disciplines in each area of study, the author surveyed briefly, and with reference to his proposed program, a number of Asiatic cultures. Hebrew, Indian, Chinese, Manchu, Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Tartar, Armenian, Georgian, and Tibetan languages and literatures all fell within the purview of the Academy.¹⁰ A study of any of them would bring rich rewards, although Uvarov laid a characteristic emphasis on Indian literature, "the most ancient, the most interesting and the least known of all."¹¹ Even the peoples of northern Asia, without literature and almost without a written language, demanded attention. They had played an important part in the migrations of man, and they possessed the languages themselves, if little else, to satisfy the curiosity of the scholar. In fact, a thorough, scientific classification of all Asiatic languages would form one of the most worthwhile tasks for the Academy. Uvarov added to his paper four tables outlining the subject matter of the courses and the desiderata for research and publication in the major areas of activity of the future Academy.

While Uvarov's project of an Asiatic Academy contains the best general account of his appreciation of Asia as well as of the role which he wanted Russia to assume in regard to Asia, some of his other writings show, in a more limited context, the same fascination with the mysterious continent and its influence on Europe. For example, a brief study of the pre-Homeric age in Greece concludes that Hellenic priestly poetry came

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

¹⁰ Goethe criticized the omission of Siamese. (*Goethe und Uwarow und ihr Briefwechsel*, pp. 11-12.)

¹¹ Uvarov, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

from the Orient.¹² A longer investigation of the Eleusinian mysteries argues that they too originated in the East, in India to be exact, reaching Greece by way of Egypt.¹³ Everything considered, De Maistre had excellent reasons to write to Uvarov: "Let us render unto Asia what it deserves; but, I beg you, dear Sir, let us not lose our place."¹⁴

In 1833 Uvarov became Nicholas I's minister of education, holding this extremely important position until 1849. In spite of the burden of work and the pressure of many difficult problems, he did not forget the East. As Uvarov reported to the sovereign in 1843, summarizing his first ten years at the head of the ministry: "Russia, ruling over a considerable part of Asia and preserving under its scepter numerous and different Asiatic languages, is selected by destiny, in preference to all other enlightened peoples, to study the East, its dialects, its literatures, and the monuments of its history and its creeds."¹⁵ He then proceeded to describe the development of Oriental studies in Russia, noting in particular the role of the University of Kazan', situated on the Volga, near Asia, on the land won from the Tartars. "The Oriental department of the University of Kazan' offers the fullest course of subjects for studying the East. It includes Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Tartar, Chinese, Mongolian, Sanskrit, and Armenian languages and literatures. Of all European universities the University of Kazan' is the first in which a chair of the Mongolian language was established. In addition, it is planned to institute a Tibetan chair."¹⁶ Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Tartar, Mongolian, and Chinese were introduced even into the First Kazan' High School! In certain other high schools, in Kazan' and Astrakhan', in southern Russia, the Caucasus, and Siberia, Eastern languages were also taught, especially as they answered the needs of the local population or of trade with Asiatic neighbors. Indeed, many Asiatic tongues which could be considered as dead in the rest of Europe continued to live in the empire of the tsars.

Uvarov's pride in the progress of Oriental studies in Russia, and in his own contribution to this progress, had considerable justification. In addition to developing this field in certain universities, notably that of Kazan', and even in some high schools, the minister, in 1835, introduced a chair of comparative linguistics and Sanskrit in all Russian universi-

¹² "Ueber das Vorhomerische Zeitalter," in Uvarov, *op. cit.*, pp. 267-287.

¹³ "Essai sur les mystères d'Eleusis," in Uvarov, *op. cit.*, pp. 67-171. There is a separate English edition, *Essay on the Mysteries of Eleusis* (London, 1817).

¹⁴ Uvarov, *Etudes de philologie et de critique*, p. 65.

¹⁵ S. Uvarov, *Desjatiletie ministerstva narodnogo prosvěščenija, 1833-1843* (St. Petersburg, 1864), p. 23.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 24. Outside Uvarov's jurisdiction, Eastern studies developed in the Kazan' Theological Academy, which had a missionary department and offered Tartar, Turkish, Arabic, and Mongolian.

ties, thus realizing in part his dream of drinking at the Indian fountain of wisdom. He paid particular attention to the selection of teachers of Eastern subjects and to the sending of promising young Russian specialists in that area abroad for further training. Eminent Western Orientalists were invited to teach and work in the state of the Romanovs. More importantly, a new generation of gifted native scholars came into its own.

If the Asiatic Academy itself failed to become a reality, and if no regenerating light was brought from the East to illumine the West, at least much was accomplished in Russia in the field of Oriental studies, and a broad foundation was laid for their greater and more spectacular development in the second half of the nineteenth century.

II

Michael Pogodin's life, character, and achievements bore little resemblance to Uvarov's.¹⁷ Eventually a prominent Moscow University professor and a well-known public figure, Pogodin started from a plebeian background and forced his own way upward. Born in 1800, he showed an early intellectual curiosity and application, learning what he could at home and being further assisted by a friendly typographer and a helpful priest. In 1814 he had the good fortune to enter the First Moscow High School, and in 1818 the university in the same city. An intelligent, able, and tremendously hard-working and determined student, Pogodin chose Russian history as his specialty and went on to earn advanced degrees and to pursue a successful academic career which culminated in a full professorship at the University of Moscow. Concurrently the historian became a member and an officer of several learned societies, and, finally, in 1841, of the Imperial Academy of Sciences presided over by Uvarov. While Pogodin's research represented a significant contribution to the relatively new field of Russian history, the Moscow professor attracted more attention as an indefatigable publicist and intellectual leader of the Right. He became a leading exponent of Uvarov's doctrine of Official Nationality, interpreting it in the more romantic and radically nationalist sense. Devoted, sincere, and blunt as usual, he expanded this Russian nationalism into Pan Slavism, and demanded the reshaping of the world in accordance with his creed. Pogodin died in 1875.

In contrast to Uvarov, Pogodin showed no special interest in Asia, his

¹⁷ Materials about Pogodin are abundant. The two chief sources are his own voluminous writings, some of them personal, and N. Barsukov's enormous, unfinished 22-volume study of Pogodin's "life and works," *Žizn' i trudy Pogodina* (St. Petersburg, 1888-1910). The study contains hundreds of pages of excerpts from Pogodin's writings, many of them unpublished, including his diary.

comments on that subject being usually incidental and scattered in many volumes concerned with other things. Yet, drawn together, they constitute a definite and emphatic view of Asia and of the relationship of Russia to Asia. Furthermore, this view formed an integral part of the historian's general beliefs and mental outlook.

The most important point to note is that, on the world stage, Pogodin identified himself with the so-called white race in the same wholehearted and aggressive manner in which, in Europe, he pledged allegiance to Russia and Slavdom. Pogodin's devotion to "the tribe of Japheth," like most of his other loyalties, developed early and remained unshaken throughout a long life. As a young man he had already come to the conclusion that "It is impossible to educate Africa and Asia, except by fitting out an army from all of Europe and sending it on a crusade against them. Let Europeans occupy the thrones of the Ashantis, the Burmese, the Chinese, the Japanese, and let them establish there a European order of things. Then the fate of those countries will be decided. And why should this not be done? . . . The happiness of mankind depends on it."¹⁸

Pogodin retained this conviction steadfastly in later years, reacting to various political developments in terms of his basic belief. Highly characteristic was his response to the news of the Sepoy Mutiny. Pogodin explained that the first reports of the rebellion evoked joy in Russia, a fact easily understandable in the light of all the damage and injury done to Russia by England in recent years. A certain countess even promised to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Trinity Monastery on foot, just so the English would be made to suffer more. But, once detailed information from India reached Russia:

we forgot immediately that the English were our enemies, and saw in them only Europeans, Christians, sufferers; we saw in them an educated people threatened by barbarians—and a general compassion, a general sympathy expressed itself everywhere.¹⁹

From the point of view of humanity, as Europeans, as Christians, as an educated people, we wish success to the English, we wish that they would establish firmly their rule in India, and that they would extend it, as far as they can, in Asia, in Africa, and in America. We wish that the other European nations would succeed in exactly the same manner and would gain footholds more and more powerfully in the other continents which must take to their bosoms, in the form of numerous well-organized colonies, the overflow of European population, and thus rescue old Europe from the troubles, worries, and dangers which are caused by crowding, by pauperism, and by the proletariat. Shem and Ham, according to the word of the Scripture, must bow to Japheth.²⁰

¹⁸ Barsukov, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 17.

¹⁹ M. Pogodin, *Stal' i političeskie i polskij vopros, 1856-1867* (Moscow, 1876), pp. 14-24, quoted from p. 16.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

Africa and Asia, and in part even America, thus represented logical areas for European expansion which would both introduce modern civilization in these huge backward regions and solve some of the most difficult problems in Europe itself. As Pogodin observed concerning the dark continent: "To establish European influence in Africa—this is a success for enlightenment; and I shall be glad to see Spain acquire Fez and Morocco, France Tunisia and Tripoli, and England Sahara for that matter, where she will most likely find ways to create plantations."²¹ But, for this enlightenment to be fully effective, the Europeans must recognize the duties and the responsibilities of the white man's burden: government in colonial areas was to be guided by the true interests of the natives, not by motives of economic exploitation, as had too often been the case.²²

While Pogodin followed with sympathy the European penetration of Africa, he had a much more direct and immediate interest in Asia. For it was in Asia that Russia was destined to advance. In the black days of isolation and defeat in the Crimean War, the historian admonished his countrymen: "Leaving Europe alone, in expectation of more favorable circumstances, we must turn our entire attention to Asia, which we have almost entirely left out of our considerations although it is precisely Asia that is predestined primarily for us. And it is also into Asia that our enemies, following some blind instinct, although not with good intentions, want to hurl us! What would the English have done with our territorial and other connections with Asia!"²³ As the legendary Russian hero Dobrynja remarked long ago, one should go after tribute to peoples that wear bast shoes, not boots. The Europeans, Pogodin continued, wore not only boots, but lacquered boots! Russian rulers of the past, notably the

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

²² This point, not uncommon among proponents of colonial expansion, suited well Pogodin's moralistic temperament and outlook. He expressed it most eloquently in the above-mentioned discussion of the Sepoy Mutiny. "Wishing the English complete success in all the measures which they have undertaken, and the most rapid possible conclusion of the present internal war, we wish, together with that, moral, intellectual, and spiritual advance for those Eastern tribes which fate has brought under the rule of the English. We wish that the English should be able to place themselves in their position, and from their position, not from the English one, not in the English manner, devise for them a gradual progressive advance, with firm if slow steps. We condemn and curse, together with their own humane and impartial writers, authority that has as its sole purpose the desire to get rich at somebody else's expense, the exploitation in every respect of miserable natives, which, according to their own admission, has been heretofore generally the rule where the English have been concerned, and also other Europeans. We by no means place the entire guilt upon the English. We do not exclude the Dutch, or the Spaniards, or the Italians, or even the Russians. What have these Europeans done for their subject tribes in Africa, in America, or for the northern Finnish tribes?" (*Ibid.*, pp. 21-22).

²³ M. Pogodin, *Istoriko-političeskie pis'ma i zapiski vprodolženii Krymskoj Voiny, 1853-1856* (Moscow, 1874), p. 242. The article "About Russian Policy for the Future" ("O russkoj politike na buduščee vremja") occupies pages 231-244.

greatest of them, Peter the First, maintained relations with the East and took an interest in it. "And Peter? Peter thought about India, and about China, and about Persia, and about the island of Madagascar. Just recently an order of his was found to draft boys to study Japanese."²⁴

The reorientation of Russian policy in the direction of Asia could no longer be delayed. Political and cultural interests, natural links with Asiatic neighbors as well as immense trade advantages for Russia and the world, all pointed eastward. Pogodin's tone rose to a high pitch as he asserted in his customary dogmatic, blunt and direct manner: "Let the European peoples live as they best know how, and manage in their lands as they please; whereas to us belongs, in addition, half of Asia, China, Japan, Tibet, Bokhara, Khiva, Kokand, Persia, if we want to, and perhaps must, extend our possessions to spread the European element in Asia, so that Japheth may rise above his brothers."²⁵

III

Uvarov's and Pogodin's views on Asia are not difficult to recognize or classify. The minister, as has already been mentioned, belonged to that group of European intellectuals who, early in the nineteenth century, promoted or at least welcomed with extravagant hopes and unbridled enthusiasm the new advances of Oriental studies. Uvarov's fascination with India owed most to Friedrich Schlegel, whose book *Ueber die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier* Uvarov praised as by far the most remarkable work on the subject ever published.²⁶ But other writers and scholars of the minister's acquaintance, including Goethe to mention one great example,²⁷ paid a similar heady tribute to the mysterious peninsula. In dealing with Hebrew literature, Uvarov relied especially on another extremely prominent German, "the famous Herder," and his *Geist der hebraeischen Poesie*, which, in the opinion of the Russian enthusiast, seized

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 243. Pogodin idolized Peter the Great.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ F. Schlegel, *Ueber die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier* (Heidelberg, 1808). For the praise see Uvarov, *Etudes de philologie et de critique*, p. 31, n. 2. Uvarov met Schlegel in 1808 in Vienna.

²⁷ See especially Goethe's comments on Uvarov's project of the Asiatic Academy, where the German writer advises an even more emphatic stress on India. (*Goethe und Uvarov und ihr Briefwechsel*, pp. 12-13.) In some of his classical studies Uvarov argued against scholars who deduced everything from the East, leaving nothing to Greek creative genius. (E.g., in "Examen critique de la fable d'Hercule commentée par Dupuis" and in "Mémoire sur les tragiques grecs," *Etudes de philologie et de critique*, pp. 289-316 and 317-335, respectively.) The entire subject of Western fascination with Asia, India in particular, is interestingly discussed in R. Schwab, *La Renaissance orientale* (Paris, 1950). See also the conclusion of A. Reichwein's *China and Europe: Intellectual and Artistic Contacts in the Eighteenth Century* (New York, 1925) for the switch of European attention at the beginning of the nineteenth century from China to India.

best the essence and the import of Hebrew letters.²⁸ In other fields, too, Uvarov followed the lead of various Western specialists, particularly German, English, and French, as his own references and footnotes indicate. Indeed, as suggested earlier, the future minister of education was more conversant with scholarship abroad than in his native country. It may be added that Uvarov wrote his scholarly papers in French or German.

Pogodin's views on Asia and on the relationship of Russia to Asia were simpler and cruder than Uvarov's. They are also even easier to identify. For the Moscow professor stood squarely on the basic assumptions of modern colonialism and imperialism. In effect, he did little more than repeat with conviction the key slogans of that ideology, his thought on the matter lacking originality or depth. Pogodin's opinions on Asia are of interest nevertheless if taken in conjunction with his radical nationalism, his Pan Slavism, and indeed his total intellectual orientation. They can be seen then to form an organic part of integral nationalism and, beyond that, of racism, which rose in Europe, Russia included, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

In a sense, Uvarov and Pogodin, only fourteen years apart in age and both championing the doctrine of Official Nationality, represented two different worlds or rather two different stages of the same world in transition. Uvarov reflected an aristocratic society with its highly developed aesthetic tastes, its broad but vague intellectual interests, and its social and cultural exclusiveness. Pogodin, himself of low origin, exemplified the rise of the common man and the coming of a new era of simple and brutal principles, mass demagoguery, wholesale imperialism, and total war. Their contrasting views and attitudes toward Asia illustrate the historical evolution of the Russian Empire and even more so the evolution of Europe at large.

One more comment may be in order. The theory of Official Nationality emphasized the opposition of Russia, the Orthodox and autocratic East, to the liberal, revolutionary, and godless West. As between the two, it proclaimed division rather than unity, conflict rather than harmony, hate rather than love. Yet, once Uvarov and Pogodin, as well as other exponents of this creed, turned to Asia, they immediately, consistently, and without exception proceeded to consider themselves and their country as a part of the single body of Europe and European culture. Eurasian doctrines belonged to a later age.

²⁸ Uvarov, *Etudes de philologie et de critique*, pp. 34-35. De Maistre criticized Uvarov bitterly for praising Herder, whom the Catholic reactionary considered "one of the most dangerous enemies of Christianity." Uvarov, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

the emperor, but by his nobilitie, chief officers and souldiers. . . . Concerning the landes, goods, and other possessions of the commons, they answer the name—lie common indeed without any fence against the rapine and spoile, not only of the highest, but of his nobilitie, officers and souldiers.⁹ By Olearius' day the situation had become even worse: Masters dispose of their slaves as they do of any other moveable; nay, a father may sell his son, and alienate him, for his own advantage.¹⁰

However, these reports touched upon only one aspect of the problem, and could not convey the extremely complex and contradictory nature of the phenomenon of Russian serfdom. The serf became in actual fact little better than a chattel slave, yet he always remained a subject of the Tsar. The *pomeshchik*, however unlimited his authority, held only secondary rights to the person of his serf, rights that were derived from the primary owner, the State. He was at once proprietor and guardian of his serf. As such, he had to perform a variety of functions. In his capacity of slave-owner he alienated the serf's labour, and, if necessary, even his body for his own personal needs. In his capacity of guardian he simultaneously assumed the duties of government representative, exercising responsibility for, and control over the fulfilment by the serf of his State obligations; of magistrate, meting out justice to the serfs, and conveying their grievances to the appropriate governmental authorities; of police inspector, responsible for upholding law and order, and for the good behaviour of his serfs; and of tax-collector, charged with gathering the full amount of taxes assessed upon his serfs by the State, and with delivering it to the exchequer. Performing the manifold obligatory duties of his office, the landowner gradually developed into a State official, holding a key position in the country's administrative system. 'The landowning class,' says Kliuchevsky, 'became a nationwide police and fiscal agency of the state exchequer; from a rival it was transformed into an employee.'¹¹

Despite the extreme centralization of the Russian administrative system, it was able to operate with any degree of efficiency only by delegating some of its functions to non-professional (and non-voluntary) auxiliaries like the serving nobility, and to compulsory associations set up for the joint performance by groups of subjects of their duties towards the State. The most important of these associations was the village community, the *obshchina* or *mir*.

The village community occupies a very special place in Russian social history, not only for the great part it played in the everyday lives of the people, but because in the *Weltanschauung* of the nineteenth-century Russian intelligentsia, in the voluminous writings of their social and political thinkers, and in the theoretical projections of the revolutionary movements, it acquired a mystique and a significance entirely separate from its actual functioning. The community came to be exalted as the

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repository of the ancient democratic virtues and the innate socialistic tendencies of the Russian people, as a unique form of collective life that, having miraculously survived through the centuries, set them apart from other, less spiritual and more grossly materialistic nations. The reality, as established in the late nineteenth century by a number of brilliant Russian historians, beginning with Chicherin, was somewhat less exciting.

The *obshchina*, it transpired, did not go back into the hoary mists of antiquity, but was a comparatively recent institution, dating approximately from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It was a compulsory fiscal group, created, if not on the direct initiative of the State, then at least with its active encouragement, to ensure the orderly payment of *tyaglo* by its members. It was based upon the principle of the joint performance by its members of their tax-paying duty, on the collective responsibility, and indeed under the collective guarantee of the community as a whole. To cope with its task the *obshchina* gradually gained wide-ranging powers: it distributed the tax obligation among its members, enforced payment, prevented members from escaping (which would have meant a corresponding increase in the tax burden of the remaining peasants); later it became responsible for supplying recruits, administering punishments, exiling lazy or criminal members to Siberia, etc. Its most important function became the management of the village's economy, the provision of the wherewithal to pay tax by assigning each member a plot of land (itself called a *tyaglo*), roughly commensurate with the size of his family. The community periodically re-apportioned the land among its members, and it was this feature that, perhaps more than any other, fired the imagination of the early social scientists.

The Russian village community was a remarkable institution. It gave the wretched serf a certain feeling of security, it enabled him to cast off his individual identity (something he could hardly have had much use for), and blend into a tight circle of his fellows, indistinguishable one from the other, huddled together for warmth and protection, sharing a common fate. He called it the *mir*—the world, the universe—and that is exactly what it was for him. It was democratic in a primitive way—decisions were taken at general assemblies of all members—and Wittfogel has aptly called it a Beggars' Democracy, for it was the democracy of men who could not even call their bodies their own, and for whom it meant all the difference between brutish and degraded slavery, and a semblance of human dignity.

The *obshchina*, in short, constitutes another peculiarly Russian paradox. It was an autonomous peasant community, running its own affairs with no outside interference, on democratic and equalitarian lines, wielding considerable authority—but every single one of its members was the landowner's chattel, to be bartered or sold with impunity. The reason why

it could reconcile the seemingly irreconcilable, and endow a slave with the right to take independent decisions, was because in reality it represented the basic administrative unit of the country, the vital cog on which, in the final analysis, the Russian economic and financial system turned. The village community could lead an existence and play a part independent of the landowner, even though it was composed entirely of his bond slaves, because its principal function was service to the State, the common master of lord and serf alike. This has been admirably summed up by Miliukov: 'The Russian *obshchina* is a compulsory organization that imposes upon its members a collective responsibility for the regular discharge of the payments and obligations that have been placed upon them, and which achieves this regularity by adjusting each member's paying capacity to the obligations he carries.'¹² The *obshchina* was the agency through which the State could mobilize the energies and resources of the peasant serfs towards the solution of its tasks.

It was within the *obshchina* that the Russian serf's dual nature, at once the *pomeshchik's* slave and the Tsar's subject, was most clearly manifested. He was no less a slave for this—if anything, his load became even heavier—but he was not wholly his master's private property. Above them both towered the State. The paradoxes and contradictions of the Russian social structure all stemmed from the single, overriding, fact that this was a society, every class and every individual member of which was bound, in one form or another, in perpetual service to an all-powerful State.

Miliukov p.
I 255-6

CHAPTER 5

THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF THE AUTOCRACY

The institutions of the *pomestie* and of 'tax-paying slavery', or serfdom, were the twin levers by means of which Russia was transformed into a service-bound society. It was a long and painful process, which can be said, very roughly, to have taken place in three main stages. The first two were the reign of Ivan IV, in which the foundations of the system were laid down, and the Time of Troubles (1605-1613), when for a few fearful years it seemed as if the State itself had dissolved in chaos and anarchy. The third stage was one of reconstruction and completion: the pieces were picked up, sorted out, re-arranged, and assembled in a durable structure of society that was to last, with surprisingly little basic change, for more than two centuries. This was achieved in the reigns of the first two Tsars of the new Romanov dynasty, particularly in that of Alexei Mikhailovich (1645-1676); the system was reduced to order in the first Russian Code of Laws, or *Ulozhenie*, which was adopted in 1649 and remained in force until 1833.

The *Ulozhenie* was urgently needed. What little law there was had crumbled and disappeared in the whirlwind of the Time of Troubles. The election of a new dynasty had solved one crisis, but began another: continuity had been broken, the vitally important tradition according to which all Russia constituted the patrimony of the descendants of Rurik had been shattered, and this in turn had gravely undermined the principles of customary law. Moreover, Russia had embarked on a series of practically never-ending wars against her much more highly developed Western neighbours, which, coming so soon after the disasters of the beginning of the century, and added to her continued struggle against the emboldened

CHAPTER 15

GOING TO THE PEOPLE

Gradually the numbed survivors of the student crowds and of the wave of arrests that had followed the *Nechaevshchina* began to reassemble their scattered forces and to recover their sense of purpose. There would have to be a break with the past: new paths had to be found, new methods devised. The idea of accepting the existing social and political framework of society, of peaceful and useful activity towards its inevitable development into something better, never even entered their minds. The intelligentsia remained as irreconcilably opposed to society as it had been since its first appearance. It only sought new guidelines, new answers.

The radicals found their answers in the writings of a new prophet, Pyotr Lavrovich Lavrov. No longer a young man (he was born in 1823), Lavrov had taken a long time to arrive at revolution: an ex-artillery officer and professor at the Military Academy, he had dabbled in radical journalism and progressively become more involved in anti-government propaganda, until, inevitably, he was imprisoned and exiled in the wake of the Karakozov affair. In 1870 he came to Paris, and from then on until the end of his life (1900) conducted his revolutionary activities from abroad. Lavrov was dry, scholarly, reserved, rather pedantic, comfortable only among his books and manuscripts—in fact, totally unlike the popular image of a revolutionary leader. Apart from Herzen, he was probably the only important Russian radical ideologist whose ideas bore even a limited resemblance to Western concepts of liberalism and democracy. Perhaps that is why they left no lasting imprint on the Russian revolutionary movement, but it is also the reason why—for a brief and transient period, in the special circumstances of the post-Nechaev disillusionment—they enjoyed an overwhelming influence.

In 1868, before the debacle, Lavrov began the serialized publication,

272

in St Petersburg, of his *Historical Letters*. They were completed the next year, and appeared in book form (passed by the censor) in 1870. The book was as earnest and as dull as any of Chernyshevsky's writings. Nor was it very original: a general study of the laws of intellectual and social progress, based largely on the ideas of Comte, Spencer and Buckle. Yet to the intelligentsia it came as a blinding revelation, for the *Historical Letters* were a sustained and reasoned attack against the Nihilism of the Sixties, against Pisarev's vulgar idolization of science, against the amorality of the conspiratorial groups (without specifically mentioning any of these by name)—an attack, moreover, from the impeccable position of a dignified and ethical Socialism. Ethics, indeed, were at the heart of Lavrov's concepts of socialism and progress. Progress, he wrote, was the factor which united private ethics and public activity. There could be no progress without ethical values. The bearer of these ethical values was the 'critically-thinking individual', whose task it was to incorporate into society the 'ideal of true justice'. This was the meaning of progress—but it could only be achieved when the 'critically-thinking individual' (i.e. the revolutionary) had himself acquired the necessary moral and intellectual values. The key passage of Lavrov's book read:

*The physical, intellectual and ethical development of the individual, the materialization of truth and justice in social structures—such is the brief formula which, I believe, encompasses everything that can be regarded as progress.*¹

But the *Historical Letters* was no abstract theoretical work: Lavrov had set out to formulate the position of the intelligentsia in Russian society, and the tasks that confronted them. They owed their education and their privileges to the sacrifices of the long-suffering people, and it was their *moral* duty to repay this enormous debt. Understandably, he was less explicit as to how this was to be achieved, but, briefly put, the ponderous book's message was: improve yourselves—and then improve the people:

The time of unconscious sufferings and dreams has passed; the time of heroic activists and fanatical martyrs, of rash waste of forces and of useless sacrifices has passed. The time has arrived for calm and conscious workers, for calculated blows, for precise thinking, and for unremitting, patient activity.²

Not much of a revolutionary programme, one might think: in any Western country it would have been accepted as no more than a call for gradualist reform. But Lavrov left no shadow of a doubt that the 'unremitting, patient activity' was to be directed towards the total transformation of society and the achievement of Socialism. His book was received with unparalleled enthusiasm, greater than anything since *What Is to Be Done?* The radical youthful intelligentsia had always been conformist to an extraordinary degree: for all their rebelliousness, they always expected to

be told what to do, whether by Herzen, Chernyshevsky, Pisarev or Nechaev. Now, at last, their problems had once again been solved. The ardour with which radical youth seized upon Lavrov's teachings as their new creed is best conveyed by the words of one of the student activists of the time: 'The *Historical Letters* became not only the handbook of the youth of the seventies. No, it was our book of life, our revolutionary gospel, our philosophy of revolution!'³

The change in mood—like all changes in the Russian revolutionary movement—was startlingly rapid. No more conspiracies, no more talk of seizing power—the need now was to study, to discuss, to acquire knowledge, and then to pass it on to the people by means of *propaganda* (a new word that had suddenly sprung into vogue). Beginning from 1869 innumerable 'self-education circles' shot up in all the university cities. These were not just a means of study but a way of life; many of them became 'communes', with groups of young people of both sexes moving into ramshackle houses, holding what little property they had in common, and spending their time—over vast quantities of tea and black bread—in collectively reading and discussing Russian and Western progressive philosophical and sociological works (the fact that most were enrolled as students weighed little with them—by that time the 'eternal student' had become an accepted part of Russian life, and academic study was the last thing the authorities expected of them). The most famous of these communes was the 'Vulfovka', situated on Vulfovskaya Street in St Petersburg; most of the future active Populist revolutionaries passed through it at one time or another. Similar communes flourished in Moscow, Kiev and other centres. But the principal institutions through which students were speedily involved in 'self-improvement' (and, in many cases, eventually in revolutionary work), were the so-called *zemlyachestva*, or associations of students from the same province or town. In a situation where the intellectual needs of a gigantic empire, sprawling over two continents, were served by only six universities (excluding the German and Polish foundations in the Western non-Russian provinces)—those of Moscow, St Petersburg, Kiev, Kharkov, Kazan and Odessa—it was unavoidable that students from one and the same, frequently remote part of the country should group together for comfort and nostalgia. The authorities encouraged the formation of *zemlyachestva*, believing that they would protect the unspoilt provincials from subversive metropolitan influences. The actual result was usually the reverse: the *zemlyachestva* became hotbeds of radical activity. In many cases, indeed, they served as the nuclei for illegal circles. It should not be thought, of course, that all the participants in the hectic 'self-education' endeavours of the early 70s went on to become fully fledged revolutionaries. The great majority, having in due course achieved their degrees, left for quiet posts and uneventful lives in

the provinces; some became involved in local self-government *Zemstvo* work—while most remained disaffected and disgruntled *intelligenty*, contemptuous of their own 'petty-bourgeois' way of life, fondly cherishing and even passing on the youthful radical ideas they had retained, and applauding from afar the heroic revolutionary exploits of their former comrades. But a hard-core of what later came to be known as 'professional revolutionaries' soon graduated from these circles.

By far the most influential was the so-called 'Chaikovskist' circle. It was founded in St Petersburg in 1869 by Mark Natanson, Nechaev's sworn enemy, but acquired its name from its most prominent member, Nikolai Chaikovsky. Together with its affiliated groups the Chaikovskist circle came to include, during the four or five years of its existence, almost every leading revolutionary figure of the decade: Pyotr Kropotkin, Sergei Kravchinsky (Stepniak), Sergei Sinogub, Dmitry Rogachev in the capital; Lev Tikhomirov, Nikolai Morozov, Mikhail Frolenko, Nikolai Sablin in Moscow; Andrei Zhelyabov and Felix Volkhovsky in Odessa. The youngest of the Chaikovskists became Russia's most famous revolutionary heroine: Sofia Perovskaya, the organizer of the assassination of Alexander II in 1881.

At that early stage, however, the Chaikovskists were very far from thinking of assassinations or any other kinds of plot. They viewed the very idea with horror; as Kropotkin explained in his memoirs, the circle 'arose out of a desire to counter the Nechaevite methods'.⁴ It was deliberately meant to be a free and easy affair, a loose association of like-minded people, without discipline, without rules, without leaders. An active member of the circle wrote many years later: 'The circle, organized along lines completely opposite to those of Nechaev's organization, with no rules or statutes or other formalities, was based exclusively upon affinity of feelings and views concerning the main questions, upon nobility and firmness of moral principles and sincere devotion to the people's cause. This naturally led to mutual trust, respect and genuine affection for each other. A circle based on such solid foundations needed neither statutes nor generals—these latter, indeed, it would never have tolerated for a moment.'⁵

Certainly that was how it seemed at the time, in the first flush of newly discovered hope. Nor was there anything particularly subversive in the Chaikovskists' early efforts. Their primary concern was with what they called 'the book enterprise' (*knizhnoye delo*): the furtherance of self-education through the establishment of a network of students' libraries. To this end they purchased large quantities of legal radical publications at wholesale prices (many sympathetic publishers even offered them at half-price) and organized their distribution throughout the country. This perfectly licit enterprise soon put the Chaikovskists in touch with large

numbers of students and ex-students, mainly teachers, who were to be of great use in coming years. But the young revolutionaries' faith in tame philanthropic activity did not last long. They were not interested in education for the sake of education; from the very beginning their aim was the education of cadres for a future 'Revolutionary socialist' or 'Populist' party. After a while they began to slip illegal publications into the batches of books sent out to the provinces; then they went on, with indifferent success, to establish a printing-press abroad. Along with the circle's rapid expansion came a corresponding radicalization of its basic principles. In essence these became little more than a recapitulation of the traditional tenets of revolutionary Populism. Professor Franco Venturi rightly points to the Chaikovskists' 'unanimous, deeply felt and deliberate repudiation of any expression of constitutionalism. They held the typically Populist conviction that any concessions to freedom would only have made it still more difficult to effect the quick transformation of Russia along Socialist lines. It was not just faith in the *obshchina* and the Socialist development of peasant communities that held this movement together, but rather the translation of this faith into political terms, and its opposition to any liberal tendencies.'⁶ (Extraordinary though it may sound, the most distinguished Western student of Russian Populism regards this creed as an expression of the group's 'essential originality'—after two generations of radical intelligentsia had affirmed their undying devotion to the principles of anti-constitutionalism and anti-liberalism!)

Anyone untrained to differentiate between the subtle shadings of opinion within the Russian revolutionary movement might be led to conclude from this that the sole difference between extreme 'Jacobins' like Nechaev and 'moderate' anti-Nechaevites like the Chaikovskists lay in the timing and the means by which the revolution was to be attained: the final aim was more or less the same. Even as regards methods the distinctions were extremely delicate. The genuine divergence between the two factions concerned the question of centralized conspiratorial organization, espoused by the first and renounced by the second. As for the concept of *morality* accepted by *all* Russian revolutionary groups, its interpretation was somewhat dissimilar from the Western understanding of the term. The Chaikovskists, for instance, attached great importance to ethical considerations. Prince Kropotkin was to write of them in later years: 'Never in my life have I met a group of such ideally pure and morally impressive beings as the twenty or so people whom I met at the first session of the Chaikovskist circle.'⁷ Almost every memoir draws the same picture of sublime morality. Yet when it came to obtaining funds for the establishment of an illegal press the Chaikovskists (or some of them, at any rate), felt no qualms about getting a young girl, Pisarev's sister, to prostitute herself to an old man for the needed sum; soon afterwards, in 1875, the girl committed suicide.⁸

For every Russian revolutionary, in the final analysis, morality was subordinated to the 'people's cause'. Revolutionary ethics can cover a multitude of sins.

By the end of 1872 the Chaikovskists began to feel, not unreasonably, that they had already achieved creditable results: they had overcome the confusion and despair created by Nechaev, established a new system of revolutionary organization, rallied a substantial group of fresh and dedicated young people to the cause of liberation. It was time to move on from self-improvement to revolutionizing the people. Having discarded conspiracy, what they wanted most was a revolutionary journal: a new *Kolokol*, attuned to their sentiments, in touch with Russian developments, capable of supplying them, not with leadership—they rejected the very concept—but with instruction and guidance. After they failed to start a paper of their own they naturally turned for aid to Lavrov, who had been in constant contact with them throughout, and had followed their efforts with growing hope. Lavrov accepted their invitation, and in March 1873 the first issue of his journal appeared in Switzerland under the title of *Vperyod* [Forwards]. For a number of years it was to remain the leading Russian revolutionary organ, widely read inside the country, and exercising an influence second only to Herzen's old paper. *Vperyod* was in no sense a party organ; its views were not accepted as compulsory directives—but, by and large, it did for a time reflect the main current of Populist thought and action. Lavrov's platform was to provide the ideological inspiration for the momentous events of 1873–1875. It was set forth in the leading article of the first issue of *Vperyod*, called simply 'Our programme'.⁹

Lavrov began by tackling the vexed question of ends and means:

The propagation of the truth cannot be attained by means of falsehood; the implementation of justice cannot be achieved by means either of exploitation or of the authoritative rule of personalities; victory over indolent self-gratification cannot be brought about by means of violent seizure of unearned wealth or the reversion of the right to self-indulgence from one person to another.

Yet after this eminently moderate exposition Lavrov went on to stress that 'in certain circumstances' it would inevitably be necessary, 'temporarily', to use both falsehood and violence '*against enemies*'. Such methods, though, were unthinkable among comrades:

People who assert that *the end justifies the means* should always restrict this rule with a simple truism: *with the exception of means that undermine the end itself*. We unconditionally reject the use of *inexpedient* means.

No special analytical powers are required to see that Lavrov's formula was elastic to the point of double-talk: the end *does* justify the means—unless they happen to be inexpedient. Deceit and coercion can be used

against the enemy—but who is to define the 'enemy'? Nechaev, after all, had only murdered an 'enemy'. But the basic inconsistency of Lavrov's ethical position passed completely unnoticed: for a revolutionary *intelligent*, educated on Chernyshevsky, it marked the height of moderation and morality.

The central element of Lavrov's programme was the Socialist reconstruction of Russian society. Here his views, although following in the footsteps of earlier teachers, displayed an undoubted originality:

The *social* question is for us the primary question: the most important task of the present time, and the sole possibility for a better future . . . The *political* question is subordinated to the social and especially to the economic questions. States, *as they exist today*, are hostile to the working-class movement, and they will all have finally to disintegrate and be replaced by a new social system . . .

It was at this point that Lavrov diverged from classical Populist theory. Although, from Herzen and Chernyshevsky onwards, most Populist authors (except the 'Jacobins') had emphasized the paramountcy of the 'social question' and called for the eventual abolition of the State, they were basically *étatistes* who believed in social transformation by political means, and, in particular, by means of the apparatus of State. Unlike them, when Lavrov wrote of 'social revolution' he meant a Socialist transformation of society to be effected, not by political measures, but primarily by social developments. The *obshchina*—that miraculous, life-giving Russian institution—should be developed into the principal political and economical element of the social system; the country would be changed into a voluntary federation of small self-governing social units, of communes and associations. 'All existing centralizing political programmes are completely irreconcilable with our own.' Lavrov's beautiful vision of a free, Stateless Russia (perhaps the most unrealistic scheme ever hatched even by the proverbially impractical Russian intelligentsia), had many features in common with that of Bakunin. But the two prophets' paths sharply diverged when it came to the question of bringing about the ideal. Lavrov's concept of revolution was uncompromisingly opposed to Bakunin's (or to that of almost any other Populist ideologue):

Our prime postulate is that the reconstruction of Russian society should be carried out not only *with the aim* of the people's welfare, not only *for* the people, but also *by* the people. We believe that the modern Russian activist should renounce the obsolete conception that revolutionary ideas produced by a small but better educated minority group can be imposed upon the people—that the socialist-revolutionaries, having overthrown the central government by a well-timed onslaught, can then take its place and introduce a new system by legislative means, as a generous benefactor of the unprepared mass. We do not want any new coercive power in place of the old one, whatever the sources of this new power.

The future system, continued Lavrov, must be established in accordance with the conscious will of the majority. No minority, however civilized and well-meaning, has the right to enforce its concepts upon the people: all it can do is assist the people towards an understanding of their own interests and of the ways by which these can be realized. 'Only when the course of events will itself indicate the moment for revolution and the preparedness of the people—only then can one call upon the people to carry out this revolution.' But the only thing the intelligentsia can do to hasten that moment is to work, methodically and painstakingly, among the people, to gain the people's confidence, to understand the people's wishes, to establish a common classless language. A revolution is inevitable in Russia—but revolutions are not *made* artificially, they occur only as a result of complex historical processes. At the present time, concluded Lavrov, our mission is to *prepare* the revolution. How? The answer was ready:

A member of the civilized class, having armed himself with considerable knowledge and with an understanding of the people's needs, *can go to the people*. He will reject any participation in the present Russian state system; he will become an ordinary worker, one of those who suffer and struggle for their daily bread; and, if only he is capable of this, he will devote all his intellectual proficiency to the popular cause. (My italics.)

Go to the people, thundered Lavrov: tell them about their rights, show them how these rights are to be acquired, get them to understand that they possess the power to destroy the existing system and to establish a new social order.

At last the youthful intelligentsia, impatient for action, had received a slogan and a programme: go to the people! At last there was a practical job to be done, instead of just reading and trying to understand the ponderous and dreary works of Western philosophers and sociologists, none of whom seemed to have anything to say about the Russian peasant. 'Going to the people' was not an entirely novel idea—it had been put forward already by both Herzen and Bakunin—but it was Lavrov's message which got through. The effect was extraordinary: never before had a revolutionary slogan caught the imagination of practically the entire educated youth of the country. It inaugurated one of the most bizarre, and memorable, episodes of Russian revolutionary history.

Preparations for 'going to the people' got under way in the autumn of 1873. Students in the university cities struck up acquaintanceships with local factory-workers; not without difficulty, they began learning the language and the habits of the common people; the more conscientious even established workshops where they set out to master the crafts of carpenter, smith, wheelwright, etc. The most surprising feature of this

movement was its genuinely spontaneous nature: there was no directing centre, no organization, no general plan. The Chaikovskists, who might have introduced some elements of unity, had very little to do with the movement—most of their leading members were arrested that same autumn. The whole venture consisted of thousands of selfless young men and women, acting on their own, all suddenly seized by the electrifying idea of going to the people. They gathered in small groups to discuss plans, chart itineraries, arrange rendezvous, collect literature, and so on. That was about all the organization there was: inflamed with heady visions of finally meeting The People, those great natural socialists, and marching with them arm-in-arm towards a glorious future, they had no desire for any more formal arrangements. Nor can one speak of any ideological uniformity among those preparing to 'go to the people': the majority were 'Lavrovists' or 'propagandists', i.e. advocates of disseminating revolutionary knowledge among the people in preparation for the inevitable upheaval; some were 'Bakuninists' or 'agitators', who believed that a few inspired lectures would be enough to start off a *jacquerie* almost at once; others still were moved by no more than a vague feeling of guilt and a craving for good works. The one thing which united this motley assemblage was a boundless faith in the miraculous effects of 'going to the people'.

What, it is reasonable to ask, did they actually hope to achieve? A mixture of aims: to teach the people, to learn from the people, to find out how the people lived and what they thought, to share the sufferings of the people, to merge with the people and thereby acquire their trust, to make the people understand the full horror of their condition, to explain to the people the possibility of a better social order and the necessity of struggling to attain it, to galvanize the spontaneous revolutionary energies of the people and incite them to rebellion.

It was a beautiful dream, a fantasy born of the world of illusion created and inhabited by the intelligentsia. The dream was lived out—with disastrous consequences—in what came to be known as the Mad Summer of 1874.

Beginning in late spring, thousands of educated young men and women poured out of the cities to meet the people. They went alone or in small groups, making their way from village to village, with little bundles of books and belongings slung over their shoulders, walking or hitching rides in peasant carts, dressed in peasant clothes, doing their best to talk and act like peasants, yet also attempting to establish contact with local teachers and other potential sympathizers. They went, radiant with hope and joy, confident of a miracle; they were to preach the gospel of Socialism and Justice to the peasants who had awaited the message for so long, and the walls of tyranny would come tumbling down. It was not really a political movement at all, but another Children's Crusade. Many of its most

enthusiastic participants were to understand this in later and sadder years. In his memoirs Sergei Kravchinsky (Stepniak) conveys the full flavour of 'going to the people':

This movement can hardly be called political. It was, much rather, a kind of Crusade: infectious and all-absorbing, exactly like any *religious movement*. People were straining, not only to achieve certain practical aims, but also to fulfil a deeply felt need for *personal* moral purification . . . The propagandist of the Seventies was the type of person brought forth by *religious rather than revolutionary movements*. Socialism was his faith, the people—his god. However patently absurd this was, he firmly expected the revolution to take place at any moment—just as in the Middle Ages people would expect the Second Coming.¹⁰

Not since the great religious Schism of the seventeenth century had Russia witnessed a mass missionary campaign of such uncompromising faith, exaltation and ardour.

The disillusionment was speedy and shattering. After only a few weeks of work among 'the people' the student radicals were in complete despair. The peasants regarded them at best with incomprehension and suspicion, at worst with open hostility. All their cherished preconceptions had been proved wrong: they had 'gone to the people'—and the people had met them as unwanted interlopers. For the first time the intelligentsia realized that the abyss between them and the peasantry could not be bridged. Some, heartbroken, gave up after a month or so; others went on, trudging from village to village till the onset of autumn; a few stuck it out for nearly a year. But even the most innocent and ecstatic needed a very short time to arrive at the truth.

Innumerable letters sent during the summer of 1874 from various parts of the country all recounted the same tale of woe. Wherever they went they were faced with total lack of understanding, and, even more infuriating, with that curious mixture of obtuseness and cunning which the Russian peasant had evolved over the centuries for dealing with his social betters (the '*barin*' or 'master'). A young girl, Inna Ovchinnikova, wrote to a friend in August: 'Believe me, you can't even talk to them, all the time you feel you don't know enough to prove anything, even to refute their superstitions (and they are full of these), because they refer to facts which, they claim, they witnessed themselves, so there's nothing left to do but give up. . . . My pupils only like to listen to books about nature and dislike any works of fiction which touch upon social questions like factory life. They're interested only in the funny parts, and miss all the main things.'¹¹ A more experienced revolutionary, Solomon Aronzon, wrote in the same way: 'They listen all right, but they don't pass anything on, and talk remains talk. They don't take it to heart: it all goes in at one ear and out at the other.'¹²

Populist memoirs provide an inexhaustible fund of anecdotes illustrating the debacle of 'going to the people'. The passage of time had mellowed even the fiercest revolutionaries, and looking back at it they saw the comical aspects of the improbable encounter. Osip Aptekman, who had begun his revolutionary career, while a medical student, with the Chaikovskists, and then spent a year working (as a carpenter) 'among the people' describes a number of colourful and revealing episodes. He began his propaganda after spending several weeks innocuously working in a Ukrainian village. One evening he gave a group of peasants a popular account of the terrible fate of the English peasantry, of enclosures and pauperization. They listened with absorption, occasionally breaking in with surprised remarks about these unspeakable goings-on. Then the senior member of the gathering began to speak. 'Yes, they've ill-treated the people over there. Ruined them. This is all the lords' doing, they've taken all the land for themselves. They had the power because they run all the affairs there. The same thing would have happened here—but the Tsar didn't allow it. Of course, we don't have too much land either, hardly enough to feed a chicken. But the Tsar will give us the land. Of course he will: you can't get on without land, can you? Who will pay the taxes? Who'll fill the treasury? And without a treasury, how can you rule the country? We'll be given the land, and that's for sure.' A lively discussion followed, and all agreed that 'We're much better off with our Tsar than any of those other countries, where the lords run everything.' Aptekman makes no attempt to hide his astonishment at the way the illiterate peasants managed to transform all his subversive propaganda into arguments for autocracy.¹³

He had a lot to learn about peasant attitudes. Some time later, and more than a thousand miles away, he was holding forth to a peasant meeting on the beauties of the future socialist society, where all the land would belong to the people, when he was interrupted by a triumphant exclamation: 'Won't it just be lovely when we divide the land! I'll hire two labourers, and what a life I'll have!'¹⁴ On another occasion, when Aptekman read out an article from the radical journal *Fatherland Notes* (*Otechestvennye Zapiski*) on the growing class differentiation among the peasantry, he aroused a furious response: 'Lies, it's all lies you're reading! It's the masters up to their tricks again. I'm telling you the truth: it's all them! They're envious that the peasant has begun to improve his position, that's why they're inventing stories about him. . . . The masters would still like to return to the old days, but it's not in their power.'¹⁵

Needless to say, all this came as a startling revelation to the Populists. After years of discussing the 'people' from every possible angle, they did not have the faintest idea of what the real people were actually like. The idealized storybook vision of a nation of 'spontaneous socialists', ready at any moment to rise against the Tsar and all their other oppressors,

vanished (for a time, at least). Aptekman was lucky: he only found himself misunderstood. Many others were simply handed over to the police by the irate peasants. Such, for instance, was the fate of one of the movement's leaders, Porfiry Voinaralsky. At a peasant meeting in Samara Region he began by describing the government's misdeeds, and then went on to the solution: kill the authorities, the landowners and the priests, burn down the churches, throw out the Tsar, and take the land for your own. But what if the soldiers intervene, his listeners asked. They won't, he reassured them, because many of them support us. But, they went on, how can you exist without Tsar and authorities? For example, what if a bad man appears in the community: who will take care of him? The community can do it itself, he replied. But if there are ten or twenty bad men, the peasants persevered, then we won't be able to manage. At that point Voinaralsky lost his temper, called them a pack of fools, and explained that the French got along perfectly well without a Tsar. The peasants, their suspicions thoroughly aroused, began inquiring about his name and his papers. It was easy to get papers, he said airily, he had friends everywhere. The peasants sent for the police.¹⁶ The story would be funny had it not ended tragically: Voinaralsky spent the next ten years in prison, and another thirteen years in Siberian exile.

These experiences were fairly typical; wherever they went, the enthusiastic young Populists met with the same reception. The remnants of the Crusade straggled home deeply disillusioned. In the words of the future terrorist leader Mikhail Popov, 'the hope that our propaganda would arouse the village people to active struggle, or at least inspire the peasantry with faith in the beneficial results of such a struggle: this hope failed. The peasant listened to the revolutionary just as he listens to the priest preaching about the Kingdom of Heaven—and, after the sermon, as soon as he left the church he went on living in exactly the same way as before the sermon. Many of those who had gone to the people returned with this conviction.'¹⁷

The episode of 'going to the people' ended in more than a moral debacle: by the end of 1874 hundreds of active propagandists had been arrested. Some impression of the scope of the arrests, as well as of the extent of populist propaganda in the countryside in the 'Mad Summer', can be gained from the secret report compiled by the Minister of Justice, Count Pahlen, a copy of which was procured by the revolutionaries and published the next year in Geneva.¹⁸ Subversive propaganda had been exposed in 37 provinces (*gubernii*), i.e. in the greater part of European Russia; criminal proceedings had been instituted against 770 persons (including 158 women): of these 265 were already in prison, 452 were under police surveillance, and 53 had not yet been caught. What genuinely astonished the Minister of Justice was not the large number of participants—the police

had had a fairly good idea of what was going on in the universities—but the widespread support and sympathy they enjoyed among the upper reaches of society. For the first time the authorities began to realize that they were faced not simply with the impetuous actions of a few misguided youngsters but with the deep-rooted disaffection of the educated and privileged classes. Count Pahlen (contrary to the generally accepted idea of the intense stupidity of Tsarist officialdom) fully appreciated the implications of this development—certainly far better than the sophisticated supporters of revolutionary upheaval.

'The investigation has shown,' he wrote to the emperor, 'that many no longer young persons—fathers and mothers of families, well situated financially and holding honoured positions in society—not only failed to oppose [the young revolutionaries] but, on the contrary, offered them overt sympathy, aid and assistance. In their blind fanaticism they seem not to realize that the ultimate consequence of such actions would be the doom of society and of themselves.' The minister listed a whole catalogue of seemingly inexplicable follies: the wife of a colonel in the gendarmes helping her propagandist son with advice and information; a rich landowner and magistrate hiding one of the leading revolutionaries; a professor deliberately introducing a known propagandist to his students; the families of several State Councillors and generals (Perovskaya's family among them) warmly approving of their children's activities, etc. 'The propagandists' successes,' concluded the minister bitterly, 'are due not so much to their own efforts and actions as to the ease with which their teachings penetrate into certain sectors of society and to the sympathy they meet there.'

Count Pahlen's official report fully confirmed the mordant indictment of Russian educated society contained in *The Possessed*: estranged—and growing ever more estranged—from the State, permeated with revolutionary, subversive and progressive ideas, exultantly anticipating the downfall of the existing order. It was a bleak outlook.

But if the authorities were alarmed, the revolutionaries were positively despondent. They had played their trump card; they had staked all on a venture which, they had convinced themselves, would lead to swift success—and they had lost. Their best people were put out of action; many were to spend years in gaol, coming up before a court only in 1877–1888, at the so-called Trial of the 193. Worst of all, their whole concept of the revolution had collapsed: the peasants had simply refused to listen to them. Another half-hearted attempt at going to the people was made in 1875, but it soon petered out ingloriously. Clearly, all the ideas evolved in the preceding years would have to be scrapped and a completely new beginning made. Yet another radical break with the past was inevitable.

The propagandists returned to the cities; experiences were discussed,

the great debate was on. 'All of us,' wrote Aptekman, 'were tormented by the same problems, all sought some way out of this transitional stage.' It was amazing, he went on, how rapidly, without any pre-arrangement, people were coming to identical conclusions about the future forms of revolutionary work. 'It had become clear that the propaganda of socialism in its full form could not be successful at the present stage of the people's development. . . . It was necessary to change our revolutionary activity among the people as regards agitation and organization. To this end we would have to establish, within the intelligentsia itself, a "strong power", i.e. a firm and comprehensive organization. These two points summed up the essence of all our fiery debates as well as their final conclusion. Life itself had forced these two principles upon us.'¹⁹

There were very few dissenters, mainly from among the orthodox Lavrovists. But their day had passed. Lavrov himself went on, preaching his doctrine of gradualism and at the same time trying to adapt his views to the changed temper of the times, but now his voice carried little authority. His remedy had been tried and found wanting. His former followers now turned upon him with the same fury (if not the same outrageous insolence) which Herzen had had to experience a decade earlier. The disillusionment with peaceful propaganda, the shock of finding themselves rejected by the people, the pain caused by seeing their comrades fall into the hands of the police, the shaming feeling of having made fools of themselves—for nothing, absolutely nothing: all this welter of emotions was expressed, with passion and barely controlled rage, in a letter written to Lavrov early in 1876 by Sergei Kravchinsky (Stepniak), one of the most highly regarded 'practical workers' of Populism:

One must possess what is known as a revolutionary instinct: a quality that is not to be acquired by means of reason or logic . . . *In you this instinct is lacking.* You are a man of reason, not of passion. Well, that is insufficient . . .

You are awaiting the time when the Russian people will be capable of rising with a *clear and conscious* programme of faultless purity. You are also waiting for them to rise *throughout the whole of Russia*, for only under *both* these conditions is the revolution of which you speak possible . . .

What do you propose to do to bring this about? You advise us to go 'to the people', and propagandize, propagandize, propagandize—until finally a large enough part of the people has been won over by our propaganda to impart consciousness to the mass and provide leadership for the mass . . . Your universal panacea boils down to chatter . . .

We believe neither in the possibility nor in the necessity of the revolution that you are expecting. History provides no examples of a revolution beginning lucidly, consciously, 'scientifically'—as you expect of the greatest and most difficult of all: of the social revolution . . .

Otherwise, we believe neither in the possibility nor in the necessity of a gigantic

or all-Russian rebellion. Popular rebellions, with us as with other nations, have always begun from the rebellion of a small group, a small place . . .

Can propaganda create even a tiny revolutionary minority within the people? No, it is completely powerless to achieve this. It is ridiculous even to think of it. After all, we are but a tiny handful, while the people number 60 million. Our propaganda weapons are insignificant in the extreme, while our opponents' weapons of seduction are terrifying. We cannot change the thinking not only of one-sixtieth but even of one-six hundredth part of the mass . . .

And how long can we survive these terrible blood-lettings? We are already bankrupt. We have hardly anything left, we are playing our last cards. Today life is only just flickering; soon it will die out completely. Total reaction will follow. And this will drag on and on, until our youth becomes *embourgeoisé*, just as it became *embourgeoisé* in every other country where it was once revolutionary. And this is not too far off. The process is already taking place fairly rapidly, and only a *constitution* is missing for it to blossom out in full. And all the signs are that we won't have to wait too long for one . . .

That is what would inevitably happen were our intelligentsia to follow your organ: the revolution in Russia would be killed for several generations!

But this is not to be! The Russian intelligentsia is not following you. With great effort, feeling its way in the dark, it is discovering a new path, and the time is approaching when it will step onto it firmly, clearly and consciously . . .

Everyone will realize the necessity for *organization*. This is already beginning to be felt by all. Nobody will go to *disseminate propaganda* for a revolt—all will understand the absurdity of this. A revolt has to be organized. Such is the conclusion which I have arrived at by the hard way, together with many of my friends, who were themselves participants in the latest drama while it was still taking place in the towns and villages.²⁰

Kravchinsky was writing in his own name only, but he expressed the bitter mood of his whole generation of revolutionaries. Without realizing it, he was repeating, almost word for word, the tirade of Dostoevsky's Pyotr Verkhovensky. His conclusions were the conclusions reached by the Men of the Seventies after the fiasco of 'going to the people'. Many, of course, took much longer time to draw the lessons of 1874: it is always difficult to rid oneself of cherished illusions, and in this case the illusions were based on the main body of Populist doctrine as evolved over the years. Lavrov's influence did not disappear overnight; he continued to argue his case (albeit in a somewhat modified form), and people continued to read and ponder his advice. But the magic was shattered. 'Lavrovism' remained a subject for academic debate, but it had, to all intents and purposes, ceased to exist as a basis for practical activity by the end of the seventies.

CHAPTER 16

TKACHEV AND THE ROOTS OF LENINISM

The episode of 'going to the people' marked a decisive turning-point in the development of the revolutionary movement. For the first and only time the tradition founded by the Decembrists and fostered by Chernyshevsky and his disciples—the tradition of organized conspiracy, of élitist leadership, of political action, the tradition of anti-constitutionalism and anti-liberalism, the tradition of trying to prevent the country's peaceful, Western, 'capitalist' evolution—had been broken. The intelligentsia had tried to win over the people to their side by means of gentle propaganda. The experiment was never to be repeated. The wheel had come full circle: back to the idea of a tight-knit conspiracy and the seizure of power in the name of the people. The experience of 1874 was crucial because it proved convincingly (within the revolutionary frame of reference) that any other method was fruitless. Kravchinsky's letter, so typical of the disenchanting writings of dozens of his comrades, showed the traditional fear of constitutionalism, liberalism and capitalism reasserting its old grip. The forces of evil would have to be fought and destroyed—by planning, organization, discipline, guile and, above all, by force.

The man who gave these ideas their fullest expression, who fashioned a whole practical theory of revolution out of them, and who was to leave an indelible mark upon the future development of the Russian revolutionary movement, was Pyotr Nikitich Tkachev. His name is barely mentioned in Soviet Russia today (and is practically unknown in the West). For this there are excellent reasons: Tkachev was the essential link between Chernyshevsky and Lenin, the legatee of Populism and the precursor of Bolshevism, the man who distilled the experience of the past

becoming well known and acquiring considerable weight within Russia itself. Marx's influence on Lavrov, Tkachev and other Populist ideologists has already been discussed. His writings were also penetrating into the academic world, where their earliest propagator was Russia's leading economist, N. I. Ziber. The very first foreign edition of *Das Kapital* was the Russian translation prepared by two prominent Populists, German Lopatin and Nikolai Danielson, which appeared in March 1872. It was passed by the censors because, as they explained, while the author was undoubtedly a confirmed Socialist, 'his exposition is far from accessible to the general public' and was 'put forward in a strictly mathematical scientific form'. Although *Kapital* can hardly be called a runaway best-seller, the censors' judgment was badly at fault: the book had been printed in 3000 copies, of which 900 were sold in the first six weeks.⁴ (The original German edition of 1867 had been limited to 1000 copies and took five years to sell out.)

Naturally, Marx would have preferred to see his magnum opus published in the countries that really mattered (it only appeared in France in 1875 and in England in 1887), yet he was wryly amused by the book's success in Russia, of all places, and boasted about it self-deprecatingly to his friends. Not that this led to any revision of his general attitude towards Russia. Ever since the Crimean War had revealed Russia's deep-rooted weaknesses Marx was vaguely expecting a revolution to break out there at any time (his dread of Russia, however, remained undiminished). Since his own social theory so obviously did not apply to Russia, Marx gave little thought to the precise form which a revolution there might take; he spoke indiscriminately about a peasant uprising or a palace coup or a combination of both. What he utterly refused to acknowledge was the revolutionary potential of the intelligentsia and the significance of Populism, which he contemptuously dismissed out of hand. Its ideas about the *obshchina* were patently absurd, and its leaders, particularly Bakunin and Herzen, at best trouble-making intriguers, possibly even police agents.

Marx was almost invariably scornful of Russian Populist revolutionaries. Typical of his attitude was a reference, in a letter to Engels in February 1870, to 'the schoolboy nihilism which is today fashionable among Russian students'.⁵ Engels expressed himself even more strongly (and, in an odd way, presciently) on the subject, in a letter of 29 April 1870:

What a misfortune it would be for the world—were this not an incredible lie [of Bakunin's T.S.]—to have in Russia 40,000 revolutionary students, who lack the backing of a proletariat or even a revolutionary peasantry, and who cannot hope for any career except the choice between Siberia and emigration to Western Europe. If anything could ruin the West European movement then it would be the importation of these 40,000 more or less educated, ambitious and starving Russian nihilists. These are all candidates for officers' posts—only without an

army, and we would be expected to supply them with that. What a brilliant idea: to hand over the European proletariat under Russian command in order to establish unity in its ranks! But seriously, however much Bakunin may exaggerate, it is as clear as day that the danger exists. Holy Russia will annually spit out a certain number of these 'careerless' Russians, and they, under the pretext of *principe international*, will everywhere insinuate themselves among the workers, demand the leading position, introduce their personal intrigues—which are inevitable among Russians.⁶

This extremely hostile opinion can be partly explained by Marx's implacable hatred towards Bakunin and all those whom, rightly or wrongly, he regarded as Bakunin's allies. But Engels's theoretical broadside against Tkachev was not made in a fit of pique: it set forth a considered analysis (approved by Marx himself) of the future development of Russia and the Russian revolutionary movement, which left no room either for a conspiratorial coup d'état or for a short cut to socialism via the *obshchina*. Even in September 1877, after the open emergence of *Zemlya i Volya*, when Marx was hopefully diagnosing the 'complete disintegration' of all segments of Russian society, he could find words of praise only for the 'splendid Turks', and sneered that 'the foolish antics of the Russian students are mere symptoms, of no importance whatever in themselves'.⁷

Quite suddenly, a few months later, Marx came to reverse his entire attitude to the Russian revolution. From then on until Marx's death in 1883 (and in Engels's case, for several more years thereafter) the founders of Marxism consistently believed not only that the world revolution would begin in Russia, but also that it would be carried out by an élite conspiratorial organization, and that Russia had an excellent chance of by-passing the stage of capitalism and of achieving socialism earlier than any other country—thanks to the continued existence of the village commune! In other words, they had accepted practically the whole of the Populist case.

This extraordinary volte-face had not been preceded by any revision of the basic Marxist theoretical premise: its only explanation can be found in the changed state of Marx's mind, induced by a long period of bitter personal and political disappointment. The turning-point had come in 1871 with the tragic debacle of the Paris Commune. However hard Marx tried to keep up appearances, his spirit was broken. For 25 years Marx had lived in the expectation of a proletarian revolution; everything he did or wrote was directed towards its imminent arrival. At last, in March 1871, the prophecy was fulfilled: the working class of the capital of Europe's largest and most revolutionary country had seized power. Less than two months later it was all over; no one had supported the Commune—and it fell, disabled by its own follies, drowned in blood by the government of Versailles.

Marx could not have known that there were to be no more proletarian revolutions in the West but some premonition may have entered his mind,

for he never recovered from the blow. 'The Commune,' write the authors of a scholarly study of Marx's work in the International, 'marked a climax in Marx's life of which the last twelve years were strangely barren both in political activity and in theoretical work.'⁸ A curious lassitude settled upon Marx; throughout these years he lived what can only be described as the life of a gentleman of leisure (financed by Engels). In effect he retired from active politics: at the Hague congress of the First International in September 1872 he carried through a resolution to close down the organization by which he had once set such great store and ship off what remained to America. The thing had lost all point, he explained, and was riddled through and through with Bakuninites. Besides, at last he would be free to return to the theoretical research that was his real life work, and to complete the remaining two volumes of *Capital*. He went on endlessly complaining about the strain of overwork, but when after his death Engels, as Marx's literary executor, finally gained access to his manuscripts he discovered to his amazement that Marx had left only rough and fragmentary notes for volumes 2 and 3 of *Capital*, almost all of which dated from the 1860s. During the last ten years of his life, apart from letters, Marx wrote only two short articles, an epilogue to an earlier work, prefaces to new German and Russian editions of *The Communist Manifesto* (jointly with Engels), and his *Critique of the Gotha Programme* (not for publication). That was all. His heart was no longer in his work. 'He had lost none of his intellectual and political acumen, but something had gone. He no longer had the capacity for sustained creative work. He was only fifty-three when the Commune fell, but this was the turning point in his life. . . . Marx could not face the prospect of a long period of painfully slow development as he had faced it in his thirties.'⁹

There was little for Marx's comfort in the decade that followed the Commune. One by one the revolutionary lights went out in the West. The unification of Germany and Italy eliminated two great seed-beds of rebellion. Poland, too, remained quiescent, while Hungary achieved an accommodation with Austria. An unprecedented era of peace, prosperity and rising living standards had set in. Despite the depression of 1873, economic progress was gathering speed everywhere; industrialization, previously confined largely to Britain, was rapidly transforming Germany and the United States. But its social effects ran directly counter to all the Marxist assumptions: instead of increased impoverishment and sharper social strife the temperature of the class conflict was falling. Marx could find no consolation in any of the countries that had so recently seemed ripe for social revolution. After a short but savage period of counter-revolutionary terror the Third Republic in France settled down to a comfortably disreputable existence. The Fenian movement had been suppressed, and Marx gradually lost interest in Ireland: championship of the Irish cause,

he had realized, was not exactly the best way to win support among the English working class. The English workers were what mattered, but the state of their revolutionary class-consciousness was such as to drive any Marxist to despair: the parliamentary reform of 1867 and the great reforming Acts of the 1870s had created a new social climate; the trade-union movement was resolutely turning its back on the idea of revolutionary struggle; in an article on 'The British Elections' (March 1874) Engels despondently acknowledged that the wily bourgeoisie had taken over almost all the Chartists' demands, and bitterly reviled his erstwhile British comrades from the General Council of the International as paid agents of the capitalist class.

Nor was the situation better elsewhere. During and after the American Civil War Marx had placed great hopes on the United States; he was convinced that the war would lead to a profound social revolution. Instead the country was soon caught up in the money-making orgy of the 'Gilded Age'. Yet the cruellest blow of all was delivered by the workers of Marx's native land, Germany. For a short time Marx spoke hopefully of 'the centre of revolution' having moved eastward, from France to Germany. Things were indeed looking up: in 1874 seven socialists were elected to the Reichstag, and the next year in Gotha the two rival socialist factions united into a single party under Marxist leadership. Then calamity struck. In 1878 the Reichstag passed Bismarck's anti-socialist law banning practically every social-democratic activity. And—to quote Marx's own words when describing Cromwell's dissolution of the Rump of the Long Parliament—not a dog barked: the German workers accepted the measure with complete equanimity, consoled no doubt by rapidly rising real wages and by Bismarck's newly invented social security system.

The degree of Marx's disillusionment can be gauged by the fact that ten years after the Paris Commune he no longer believed that it had been a real proletarian revolution, and saw the episode only as a colossal waste of life and effort. In a letter to the Dutch revolutionary Domela Nieuwenhuis Marx wrote: 'The Paris Commune . . . was merely the rising of a city under exceptional conditions, and the majority of the Commune was in no sense socialist, nor could it be. However, with a small amount of common sense it could have reached a compromise with Versailles useful to the whole mass of the people—the only thing possible at that time.'¹⁰

One can hardly be surprised then that, coming when they did, the stirring items of news from Russia—the formation of a widespread illegal party, the involvement of workers in revolutionary activity, the gun battles, the strikes and demonstrations, the assassinations, the abject helplessness of the authorities—all the unmistakable signs of an imminent upheaval—should have pierced the atmosphere of unrelieved gloom like a brilliant ray of light. The old revolutionary's pulse quickened: once more

there was hope. Perhaps revolution would come from the East—from even further East than he had imagined. What matter that events were developing not in accordance with his own theories, that they were proving his ideological opponents right? All that counted was the Deed, the Revolution, and the Russians were achieving miraculous results with their methods, while others, ideologically purer, had got nowhere. Perhaps the Russians had been right all the time? Perhaps there was no real contradiction between Marxist theory and Populist practice, which might supply the missing ingredient necessary for a concrete revolutionary situation? Come to that, perhaps even the theoretical ramblings about the *obshchina* had been soundly based? Anyway, it did not really matter—things would sort themselves out; that was what the laws of history were for. The Jacobin soul that had lain dormant since the heady days of 1848–1850 once more awoke in Marx.

The first indication that Marx was revising his views on the village commune is found in a letter to Nikolai Mikhailovsky, then editor of the radical journal *Otechestvennye Zapiski*, written at the very end of 1877 but never posted (it was only discovered after Marx's death and first published, significantly, not by the Marxists but by the remnants of the *narodovoltsy*). Mikhailovsky had written that Marx's theory denied the possibility of Russia by-passing the capitalist stage, and of socialism growing directly out of the village commune. Marx strongly repudiated any such interpretation of his writings. Never, he went on, had he implied that Russia must inevitably go through the stage of capitalism, or that his theory need necessarily fit every nation of the world. The key passage read: 'I have come to the following conclusion: If Russia continues along the path she has followed since 1861 then she will let slip the finest opportunity that history has ever offered any nation and will experience all the disastrous afflictions of the capitalist system.'¹¹

The question of the *obshchina*, however, continued to bother Marx even after he had committed himself firmly—as will be shown further—to the cause of *Narodnaya Volya*. After all, it was a serious theoretical stumbling-block, and not a few would-be Russian followers were frightened away by his seemingly intransigent attitude towards their traditional sacred cow. In February 1881 Vera Zaslulich wrote to Marx asking him point-blank about his views on the subject. The poor woman, whose ability to grasp the finer doctrinal points had never been very great, was now utterly confused. Some Russian Marxists, she explained, were saying that all nations would have to pass through the stage of capitalist development and that therefore the village commune was doomed to destruction. If this really was the conclusion to be drawn from *Capital* then obviously there was no sense in trying to preserve the *obshchina* and working towards a speedy revolutionary transformation of society on its basis: all activity

should instead be concentrated on gaining influence among the working class, in the expectation of an eventual proletarian revolution after capitalism had had the time to develop fully. Would Citizen Marx please be so kind as to tell her how matters actually stood in this respect?¹²

Marx seized the opportunity. In his reply (8 March 1881) he did his best to dispel 'the misunderstanding with regard to my so-called theory'. Never, he wrote, had he suggested that his scheme of social development was universally applicable. The analysis in *Capital* showed that the 'historical inevitability' of the capitalist phase 'was precisely limited to the countries of Western Europe'. It did not relate to Russia because the development of capitalism meant 'the transformation of one form of private property into another form of private property, whereas in the case of the Russian peasants it would be necessary, on the contrary, to transform their common property into private property'. Although *Capital* contained no specific references to the Russian commune, 'the special research that I have carried out on material from primary sources has convinced me that this *obshchina* is the fulcrum for Russia's social regeneration. But in order that it may fulfil this role it is necessary first of all to eliminate the pernicious influences to which it is subjected, and then to assure it of normal conditions for untrammelled development.' In other words, to carry out a revolution.¹³ *Sochineniya XXVII. 1617-18 (1931)*

Marx's letter to Zaslulich was quite brief: some 400 words in all. But it was the product of strenuous work, of no less than four preliminary drafts which, taken together, are twenty times the length of the final text and represent the most detailed exposition of Marx's matured views on the *obshchina* and the future of Russia's revolutionary development. Marx devoted at least two weeks to the task: not so much composing a letter to an unfamiliar correspondent as working the problem out for himself, mulling over it, seeking an adequate solution to the very special case posed by Russia. It was the usual extremely thorough Marxian piece of work, a learned dissertation based on authorities from Tacitus to Sir Henry Maine. And, as usual, he found the answer—by skilfully incorporating the *obshchina* into his great vision of mankind's past, present and future.

Marx disowned the views attributed to him by followers of whom he had never heard. 'The process which I analysed . . . substituted one form of property for another. How could this be applied to Russia, where the land is not and never has been the husbandman's "private property"?' In Russia, unlike any Western country, 'common ownership of the land represents the natural basis for collective production and appropriation'. To be sure, similar agricultural communities had existed at a particular stage in the historical development of every society. But the Russian commune differed from them all in certain crucial respects; for one thing, it was not based on blood ties, and thus retained vitality and potential for

further growth. Everywhere else the 'archaic' agricultural community had disappeared. 'Why then should it escape this fate in Russia alone?' Because of an exceptional combination of circumstances: first, 'Russia is the only European country where the "agricultural commune" has survived to our day on a national scale,' and secondly, because the Russian communal system is not isolated artificially from the modern world (as, for example, in British India), and can thus adopt and utilize all the achievements of modern industry and technology. Of course, the *possibility* of a capitalist transformation should by no means be excluded. The commune, having maintained its vitality, continues to develop; at the present time it is approaching a crossroads. 'Either the element of private ownership that is contained within it overcomes the collective element, or the latter overcomes the former. It all depends upon the historical milieu.' But there is no *inevitability* about a capitalist development in Russia—rather, the contrary. In Russia's case the introduction of capitalism, far from being historically progressive, as everywhere else, would actually represent a retrograde step: 'It would mean the substitution of capitalist ownership for communist ownership.' Happily, Russia does not have to undergo the horrors of the capitalist system in order to enjoy the fruits of its development—any more than she would need to re-invent the machines, the railways, the banking and currency methods evolved in the West over the course of centuries. She can take over all the positive achievements of Western capitalism ready-made. But in her case—and only in her case—the capitalist system as such is uncalled-for.

Marx repeatedly drove home the central point of his argument: capitalism was an inevitable and necessary stage in the historical development of all civilized nations towards socialism—with the sole exception of Russia, which was in a unique position to bypass the stage of capitalism altogether and move directly into the socialist phase. The decisive factor that made this possible was the *obshchina*. 'It occupies a completely special place, unprecedented in history. Alone in Europe, it represents the organic, dominating form of village life of a vast empire. The common ownership of land is the natural basis for collective appropriation, while its historical milieu, namely the contemporaneous existence of capitalist production, provides it ready-made with the material means for organized wide-scale co-operative labour. It can therefore utilize all the positive attainments of the capitalist system without having to pass through its Caudine Forks.' Given the appropriate conditions, the *obshchina* 'could become the direct point of departure for the economic system towards which modern society is moving, without having had to commit suicide'. Marx was quite clear in his mind on the precondition for Russia's direct transition to socialism. 'What is needed to save the Russian *obshchina* is the Russian revolution. . . . If the revolution takes place at the proper time, if it concentrates all its

forces on assuring the untrammelled development of the village commune, then this latter would shortly become the basic feature of the re-birth of Russian society and the basic feature of its superiority to the countries that remain under the yoke of capitalism.'¹⁴ 1867-77

The above is a compression of Marx's somewhat diffuse, at times repetitive meditations on this central question of Russian revolutionary doctrine. Whatever the merit of his arguments, however Marxian the phraseology in which they were couched, one point is beyond honest dispute: they stood in direct contradiction of the Marxist theory of social development. Without acknowledging it in so many words, Marx had revoked everything he and Engels had said for thirty years in their polemic with Populism, and accepted all the ideas hitherto held up to scorn: Russia's special predestination, her advantage over the capitalist West, the possibility of a non-capitalist road to socialism, the glories of the *obshchina*—all of it, without reserve. No wonder this document—Marx's last original contribution to the theory that bears his name—has ever since caused acute embarrassment to every ideological variety of Marxist. It undermined the very foundation of their doctrinal certainty in a rigid set of rules determining, with scientific precision, the whole evolution of human society. Hardly any of the latter-day Marxists have been able to match the revolutionary pragmatism of a man ever ready to re-think his basic views in the light of practical developments. When Marx wrote, in his celebrated Eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach, that 'the philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways. The point, however, is to *change* it'—he meant exactly what he said. And he remained faithful to this principle all his life.

The revolutionary Populists were overjoyed at having their creed endorsed by the foremost Western socialist thinker. Marx and Engels made their changed attitude public early in 1882, in their Preface to a new Russian edition of *The Communist Manifesto*:

Now the question is: can the Russian *obshchina*, though greatly undermined, yet a form of the primeval common ownership of land, pass directly to the higher form of communist common ownership? Or on the contrary, must it first pass through the same process of dissolution as constitutes the historical evolution of the West?

The only answer to that possible today is this: If the Russian Revolution becomes the signal for a proletarian revolution in the West, so that both complement each other, the present Russian common ownership of land may serve as the starting-point for a communist development.¹⁵ Manifesto Moscow ed. p. 12

The Preface, with its mention of a complementary proletarian revolution in the West, to be sparked off by Russia, was somewhat more cautious than Marx's letter to Zasulich. But the inference was clear. The Preface was

first published, not in Plekhanov's new edition of the *Manifesto*, but three months earlier, less than a month after it had been written, in *Narodnaya Volya* No. 8-9, with an exultant footnote:

It gives us great pleasure to publish this Preface, in view of the profound scientific and practical importance of the problems discussed. We are especially gratified to note the concluding words. We see in them confirmation of a cardinal thesis of the theory of *narodovolstvo*—confirmation based on the findings of such great scientific authorities as Marx and Engels. The long-awaited continuation of Marx's famous work (*Capital*) will undoubtedly give due space to elaborating the propositions which could only be touched upon in this Preface.¹⁶

The *narodovoltsy* had good grounds for their confidence, as Marx had promised them that he would write a detailed treatise on the *obshchina* (in the event, he never got round to it). By this time the close collaboration between Marx and Engels and *Narodnaya Volya* was in full swing. The founders of 'scientific socialism' now approved of the method of political assassination. The day after the death sentence had been passed on Zhelyabov and his comrades Marx described them to his daughter: 'They are sterling people through and through, without a melodramatic pose, simple businesslike, heroic. . . . They try to show Europe that their *modus operandi* is a specifically Russian and historically inevitable method about which there is no more reason to moralize—for or against—than about the earthquake of Chios.'¹⁷

In the split between *Narodnaya Volya* and *Chernyi Peredel* Marx from the first unequivocally sided with the terrorists. He established direct contact with them early in 1880 through Lev Gartman, an agent of the Executive Committee just arrived in London. On 27 May 1880 Gartman wrote to the arch-terrorist Morozov: 'Choosing between the two organizations he has determinedly taken the side and supported the programme of the terrorists.' But Marx had understandable qualms about openly embracing the principles he had opposed for so many years. Two months later Gartman was reporting to Morozov: 'You shouldn't count on Marx, I mean, on getting his article. He won't write it. He will sympathize in private, so to speak, but not in print, because he says that the terrorists' programme is not socialist. In short, he is cautious.'¹⁸ Marx was indeed cautious when it came to public expression of his new-found sympathies, but in private correspondence with friends he made no bones about his choice. On 5 November 1880 he informed one such old associate, F. A. Sorge, that in Russia 'we have a central committee of the terrorists, whose programme, recently published in Petersburg, has aroused the rage of the Russian anarchists in Switzerland, who in Geneva are publishing *Die schwartze Verteilung* (*Chernyi Peredel*). These people—the majority of them (not all) are those who left Russia voluntarily—have formed, in

contrast to the terrorists who are risking their lives, a so-called propaganda party. (In order to conduct propaganda in Russia they go to Geneva! What a *quid pro quo!*)¹⁹ The spectacle of Marx—who had fled to London as a haven for his revolutionary activities in order to escape, at most, a short prison sentence—mocking Russian rebels for *voluntarily* evading the very real threat of execution, is an unedifying one, though fairly typical of his peculiar moral standards. Yet it also contained a much more poignant irony: the members of *Chernyi Peredel* were even then becoming orthodox Marxists—only to discover that Marx and Engels had meanwhile moved over towards accepting the basic Populist theses.

Marx had no patience with the idea of a 'so-called propaganda party' being formed, even in support of his own doctrines, at the very moment when a genuine activist revolutionary party existed inside Russia. With the revolution obviously due at any time he had more pressing matters to attend to. He was being regularly informed by the Executive Committee, via Gartman, about the latest current developments, including their preparations for a coup d'état. Marx, in turn, acted as a kind of foreign affairs consultant to the *narodovoltsy*, advising them on the best ways of influencing Western public opinion. He supplied their representatives with useful introductions to influential people, and took an active part in negotiations aimed at starting an English-language *narodovolets* newspaper in London (the idea fell through).²⁰

The high regard in which Marx was held by *Narodnaya Volya* found its expression in an official Address to him from the Executive Committee, dated 6 November 1880 and published a few weeks later in *L'Intransigeant*. Not even Marx's most devoted followers could have outdone the lavish panegyric: 'The progressive intelligentsia of Russia, ever attentive to European intellectual developments, has received the appearance of your scientific works with great enthusiasm. The most sterling tendencies of Russian life have found their scientific confirmation in these works. *Capital* has become a handbook for all educated people. . . . It is only natural that your name should have become indissolubly connected with the internal struggle in Russia.'²¹ At about the same time Marx was sent a copy of the 'Programme of working-class members of *Narodnaya Volya*', which earned his full approval; indeed, there are strong, though not entirely conclusive, indications that he actually helped to edit this important statement of aims.

The eulogy of Marxist theory contained in the Address of the Executive Committee was not mere lip-service. Their alliance with Marx (for that is what it amounted to) was not confined to practical co-operation: Marx's approval of basic elements of Populist doctrine was more than matched by the eagerness of the *narodovoltsy* to study Marxism, to accept its tenets and to adapt them to Russian conditions. Classical Populism had been suspicious of Marxism because of its stress on political action,

Chapter VI.

CULTURE IN THE VILLAGES.

THE NEWSPAPER.

In the five villages investigated by us, there is only one person who is getting a paper - a retired merchant, who has the monopoly on knowing what the Soviet government is doing and on the authoritative explanation of its intentions, decrees and orders for the peasants of the entire volost.

Naturally, how could a peasant subscribe to our papers! Formerly, the cadet "Sovremennoye Slovo" (Contemporary Word) cost 45 kopeks a month - i.e. the peasant had to sell a little more than a half a pood of grain to secure the paper. Now, the "Izvestia" costs 25,000,000 rubles and a peasant in the Nikolskaya volost would have to sell four poods of grain in order to have the "Izvestia" for one month.

No wonder all the peasants smiled when we asked them about subscriptions to newspapers!

In the peasant environment even the soldiers of the read army lost the habit of reading newspapers. Many of the soldiers with whom we talked either read papers every day, or listened frequently ^{to} readings of newspapers in the barracks and clubs; now they go for months without seeing a single newspaper sheet.

(Xeroxed only, 1992) Stanford! Hoover Archives
The Village As it is TS
by S. Yokobev Russia
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916

In the village Ivanovka a meeting of peasants, who were answering our questions on blanks, had a hard time remembering when they last saw a paper in the village; at last, they could recall - it was in May 1922. And this in a village only three versts from a railroad station. It is only 20 hours' ride by train from Moscow, and Moscow publishes dozens of papers - some of them making a lot of noise and covering many sheets of paper, containing examples of the new proletarian culture....It seems we cannot help but recall from the past the long forgotten:

"There is noise in the capital, orators are thundering, a battle of words is in progress, but there - in the depths of Russia, the silence of the ages is reigning"....

THE SCHOOL.

When we reached Nikolskoye, I went first of all to verify the signs by which my Kursk friend told me to distinguish a schoolhouse. Not far from the church I noticed a fairly good-sized house, with broken windows stuffed up with all kinds of trash that only a peasant environment can picture.

I walked into the house: on the left a horse, a cow, sheep; on the right - living quarters, from where voices were heard. Decided that this time the signs failed. In order to check up further, on going out



I stopped a passing peasant and asked him who lived in that house. I received the definite reply: "This was a schoolhouse, which was closed four years ago; the house remained empty, so the church janitor went to live there".

In the village of Zuevka the school was in session until October. In December it was closed: the peasants could not collect the several wagonloads of wood that was required for fuel.

At the same time the wife of the deacon in the village Nikolskoye is teaching a large group of children, taking a half a pood of grain per month for each child, a figure ~~about~~ which an ordinary teacher could not dream of.

The wealthy peasants of Zuevka do not suffer for lack of a school: the wife of the priest conducts a school for a few pupils, which pays her very well.

And the more serious peasants, when the question of the school is brought up, wave their hands. "You can't wake up our peasant without a club; he is used to it, and so he was taught. They should not ask us to open the school, but they ought to ^{impose} ~~order~~ a tax on all and open the school"...

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And when you talk with the soldiers of the red army, you will not find one who does not realize the necessity of having an education nowadays, and that the peasants do an injustice to the children by wanting to save the funts of grain that they would have to pay a teacher and ^{the} fuel for the school.

And the village of Nikolskoye has a very intelligent doctor in the hospital and two priests, graduates of several schools (yes, two priests for one village); and there is the manager of the Sovkhoz, who has had a great deal of experience in party and Soviet work.

And this does not prevent the peasant community to support eight people. When the question came up about straw for the school, one peasant said:

"Where are we to get straw? There is none. There is nothing to feed the cattle with. The authorities do not bother about the school, and what can we, outsiders, do!" The word "outsiders" reveals the depth of the stupidity which the hundreds of years of the czaristic regime had hammered into the heads of the peasants....

In the village Zuevka the priest was put on a salary, but most of the peasants still pay him separately for services. There is a fixed charge for marriages, christenings, etc.

92



99

There is no doubt that it is custom and ignorance rather than religious conviction and sentiment that dominate the peasants in their present attitude toward the church.

A "seredniak" (middle-class peasant) from the village of Alexandrovka told us once: "The priest has studied - we can't forsake him. We don't want a new religion; a new religion requires new churches - more money will have to be spent, let us remain with the old religion". Another argument: "If we should keep our priest in tatters, people will laugh at us. The children will poke fun at him". And a third explains with malice: "We don't stand up for the priest, but for the church. If the comrades had only given a little of what they promised. And they promised a school and socialism, and now they don't even let us have bark for our "laptias" (sandals). That's the kind of socialism". When a peasant does not go to church everybody knows it, even the street urchins.....

Every village has three or four unmarried families. The attitude of the villagers toward them is not hostile; the young folks show sympathy, but the women do not approve - they fear that a civil marriage is not as binding as a church marriage. The peasants explain right there that there is nothing that could hold a man anyway and that some civil marriages are stronger than

any kind of church marriage



122

"SAMOGONNAYA DEMOKRATIA" (Home-Brew Democracy).

Crafty Father Alexander gave the best interpretation of home-brew democracy. "The city is getting drunk on wines and liqueurs, and the village mustn't... It means that the gentry may, but the lower classes mustn't". And it was ~~only~~ this splendid red-headed, fat priest, that gave us in such pure form the idea of home-brew democracy. Besides, he gave us a little practical information: that in the Kursk gubernia it is made from beets. According to his wife, it makes "a pretty good kvas" (drink made from apples). And according to information received by us, 7 people died in the last few months in the Timsky uyezd alone from this "kvas".

The pulp remaining after the drink is drained is not thrown away, but is mixed up with bread dough. I think that this utilization of the residue will be envied by more than one "sovnarkhoz" (Soviet of People's Economy) enterprise.

Read in the "Izvestia" not long ago that thanks to the efforts of the "Narkomvnutel" (Commissariat of Internal Affairs), about 10,000 home-brew machines were seized in various parts of Russia. And reliable peasants of the Nikolskaya volost told us that in the Timsky uyezd alone, of the Kursk gubernia, there are no less than 5,000 of them. This shows how much there is to be done to combat this evil.

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122a
"Steps must be taken to destroy it entirely".

"The samogon must be destroyed, so as to leave no trace; it must be dealt with severely, as it is a great evil."

"The authorities must take more drastic action in combatting the 'samogon', they should not drink themselves".

"The samogon must be fought to the end".

"Steps must be taken to persuade people to give up drink".

Of course, we get mostly the kind of answers that show the utter ignorance of the peasants, reminding us better than anything else that it is only a little over a half a century since serfdom existed, and there lives in the village of Zuevka a man today who was 15 years at the time of the liberation of the peasants.

"Samogon is considered necessary for a person who works hard".

"As the earth cannot live without oxygen, so a human being cannot live without alcoholic drinks".

"The samogon is necessary in all cases".

"We do not recommend the abolition of the samogonka, for it is difficult for a working man to live without it".

"We are in sympathy with the measures for abolishing the samogon, but do not deny its beneficial effect upon one's mood".



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1222

"It is necessary to fight the samogon, if it hampers the government, but we also can't deprive humanity of its pleasure."

"Consider the samogon a drink which is beneficial to the human organism and consider it absolutely superfluous to fight it".

"Consider the samogon a salutary drink for the human being and consider its destruction barbarous."

"Consider it a medicine".

"Consider the samogon a useful drink".

"Think it is superfluous to fight the samogon, as I recognize its tremendous value as a medicine".

"Consider the samogon necessary as a means for curing disease".

"Consider it a necessary adjunct to weddings, funerals, christenings and other festive occasions".

"The samogon is ^a necessary ~~xx~~ drink at weddings, funerals and at time of sickness".

"The samogon will not be abolished, as it makes life easier".

"Does not harm, takes place of medicine".

"To rest after work it is necessary to take a drink".

"Alcoholic drinks are necessary; I suffer from short

breath. I take a glass of the samogon and it makes me feel

better. Wine is harmful, if used in excess".

Characteristic of the inertness of the peasants are the following answers: -

"If the samogon comes to hand, I drink. The samogon is not our affair - if they will fight it, we will not drink; if they don't, we will."

"The authorities themselves ought to look after the samogon".

"You can't depend on the peasants to fight the samogon, but you ought to fight it yourself".

Right here there is a special group of "samogonnaya democratia" (Home-brew democracy).

Father Alexander gave us a sample of this democracy; also some of the more well-to-do peasants share his view.

One of the peasants advises: "Make a demand of the authorities that they themselves should not drink, and only then demand the same of the peasants".

Another: "To abolish the samogon it is necessary first of all that the authorities themselves should not drink, and then prove to the peasants".

A third: "To make the severest demands of the authorities and only afterwards of the peasants".



The struggle on the cultural front must be converted by the Soviet government into a class struggle.

A fight for schools, war on drink, a fight for education among the party members, for the circulation of communist newspapers, for the creation of a literature of our own - are all elements of a tremendous struggle, of a gigantic battle with the old world of the peasants, in which the party must know how to challenge the ignorance, darkness and absence of culture, which have always been the best foundation for the rule of the priest and the kulak.

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Worst of all is that not only the grown-ups drink, but the youth follows their example, considering it a heroic deed.

The production of the samogon has greatly increased. Some technical improvements have been achieved. They have almost learned how to make real alcohol, 70-80 degrees in strength, freed from the unpleasant odor, etc. It is accomplished in the following manner: the samogon is poured a second time into the barrel and is passed twice through the boiler and pipes. This samogon has a different name: "peregonka" (distilled) - and it costs more. For every-day needs they use the ordinary samogon, but for festive occasions they always have the "peregonka". It is necessary to note ^{here} that nearly every house has a samogon apparatus to supply their own needs, and there are also large producers supplying the market.

THE CHURCH, MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY.

The old patriarchal customs of the village family are well known. A girl does not marry, but is "given away". The daughter-in-law in the new family became the slave of the husband and his parents. It was a hard, disgusting life.

Now the situation has changed. A girl is not

"given" in marriage, but gets married at her own free will.

Only the form, the tinsel, without real significance, is

left of the old tradition. The question of marriage is

*Has the Village lives
Krasnaya 15.9.1923*

*Village of Pokrovskoye
Riaran Gul, Riashny*

by P. Arsenov

*not
used*

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12

now decided not by the parents, but by the bridegroom and the bride. The parents in such cases only perform their duty, giving their blessing; their permission is not asked.

Along with this the position of the woman in the family has also changed. She became a comparatively an equal member, with equal rights. If she does not like the father-in-law, or the mother-in-law, or the husband, she leaves them. Before divorces were a rare occurrence in the village, and if anyone was divorced, it was a public disgrace. At the present time the picture has changed. Divorces between husbands and wives have assumed tempestuous proportions. Everybody gets a divorce who is not lazy. Just now there are multitudes of cases of girls having married several time in one year. The same is true of ^{the} man: today he is married, tomorrow he is single again, and day after tomorrow he marries again.

And all this is considered perfectly natural, in the order of things. Nobody condemns such deeds. Even the old folks look upon it without hard feeling: "well, such times have come", they say.

The majority, as a matter of tradition, still marry in church, but this does not prevent them from getting a divorce a week later, and to marry again a few weeks later. There are

many instances of peasants who were married in the church during the last few years, and were divorced as many times as the next few years, four or five times, and were divorced just as

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According to the canon of the church, a person has the right to marry not more than twice, and at most not more than three times. There is even a saying among the people: "The first wife is from God, the second from human beings, and the third from the devil". But life prescribes its own laws, before which the canon retreats. If the priest refuses to perform the marriage ceremony once more, they get along without him - "it's not a great affair, perhaps!"

However, the percentage of civil marriages is in-
creasing. Not so long ago even the daughter of the ^{head} village priest got along without the assistance of her father, finding a civil marriage quite sufficient. This did not prevent the priest, after exhausting all threats, to "feast" at his daughter's wedding.

In this manner the church marriage has lost all moral significance. They go to the church not because they believe in the power of the holy marriage, but because they have become accustomed to do so, it is somehow more convenient and, finally, more festive. The theatrical aspect of the church marriage is of tremendous importance. And Com. Trotsky was absolutely right when he raised this question in his articles on contemporary life.

It is not superfluous to mention one more point.
Examining the divorces, we can see that the initiative in

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