

TERENCE EMMONS

## The Beseda Circle, 1899–1905

*Constitutions in almost all states have been introduced at various times, in bits and pieces and for the most part amidst violent political upheavals. The Russian Constitution will owe its inception not to the inflaming of passions and extremity of circumstance, but to the virtuous inspiration of the Supreme Authority, which, in ordering the political life of its people, is fully capable of endowing it with proper forms.*

M. M. SPERANSKY

*Every attempt to introduce West European parliamentary forms of government into Russia is doomed to failure. If the tsarist regime is overthrown, its place will be taken by pure undisguised communism, the communism of Mr. Karl Marx who has just died in London and whose theories I have studied with attention and interest.*

D. A. TOLSTOY

The constitutional-reform movement in Russia passed through three stages of institutional development before its ultimate demise in revolution and civil war. In the first, occupying about a decade between the mid-1850s and the mid-1860s, the reform movement was concentrated in the corporate institutions of the landed gentry. In the second stage, extending from the mid-1860s to the eve of the 1905 Revolution, constitutionalist strivings were centered for the most part in the zemstvos, the institutions of limited local self-government brought into existence in three-fourths of the Russian provinces by the legislation of 1864. In the final stage, bounded by the Revolutions of 1905 and 1917, the reform movement was sustained by legal or semilegal (that is, tolerated but not officially recognized) political parties and parliamentary factions. The succeeding stages of the movement were linked to institutional innovations entailing the mobilization of new social groups into political participation in response, however muted, to the country's ongoing socioeconomic development.

The political reform movements in the gentry assemblies and in the zemstvos had each in their time attracted the attention and, in various ways, the support of politicized elements outside these institutions: publicists, academics, functionaries, and, on a few occasions, professional revolutionaries. But neither the gentry assemblies nor the zemstvos succeeded in becoming institutionalized centers of power in the political order.

The limited potential of the zemstvo for mobilizing a reform movement that could draw in sustained support from beyond its own ranks became in-

creasingly clear to reform activists as unrest grew among the masses and the revolutionaries set about building party organizations designed to harness that unrest to their political ends. Moreover, as the revolutionary situation which would lead to the 1905 events began to take shape, it became equally clear that reliable support for political reform was far from general even within the zemstvo. Recognition of these facts led the leaders of the reform movement, most of them zemstvo veterans, to seek new structures for sustaining the content of their movement in what they saw to be a race against time: somehow to cajole or compel the regime to submit to substantive reform before the country descended into anarchy with the encouragement of the revolutionaries.

This search was begun in a concerted fashion in the mid-1890s, about a decade before the immediate need to organize for parliamentary elections finally precipitated formal foundation of the political parties.<sup>1</sup> A complex organizational experience lay between the political reactivation of the zemstvos in the mid-1890s and the formation of the parties in 1905.

Surprisingly little is known of the political organizations of this transition period. This is true even of the Union of Liberation, probably the most original and certainly the most influential of them all.<sup>2</sup> What groups, interests, or values did the new parties represent? What was the relation between the institutional developments of the transition period and the political mobilization of new groups? How did continuity or change in leadership in the transition from the zemstvo-centered movement to the parties reflect on continuity or change in ideology?<sup>3</sup> Informed answers to such questions should be of value for the study of political change in general, and of the social and political development of prerevolutionary Russia in particular, where confusion and controversy about the social foundations of political movements have long prevailed.

The present article is devoted to one of the earliest organizations to appear in the transition from zemstvo to parties, the group called Beseda (The Colloquium), in which a number of prominent zemstvo men took their first gingerly steps outside the zemstvo institutions in seeking the realization of their political goals. The principal source for the study of the group's activi-

1. Here and elsewhere in the paper the term "political parties" is used to refer to those organizations, calling themselves parties, whose main purpose was to engage in electoral and parliamentary politics and seek power through those institutions. The Constitutional Democrats (Kadets) and the Octobrists merit the reference; the Social Democrats and Socialist Revolutionaries do not.

2. The fullest published account of the Union's structure and operations is D. I. Shakhovskoy, "Soiuz Osvobozhdeniia," in the Kadet miscellany *Zarnitsy*, no. 2 (Moscow, 1909).

3. See S. P. Huntington, "The Change to Change: Modernization, Development, and Politics," *Comparative Politics*, April 1971, pp. 283-322.

ties, which have never been systematically investigated,<sup>4</sup> is its unpublished archive, preserved among the papers of its last secretary, V. A. Maklakov, in the State History Museum in Moscow.<sup>5</sup>

The revival of the reform movement in the zemstvos in the mid-1890s was directly provoked by the death of Alexander III and the consequent prospect of liberalization arising with the change of rulers. The first fruit of the revival, beginning in late 1894, was the series of zemstvo “addresses” to the new emperor, nine of which asked, in effect, for institutionalized consultative zemstvo

4. Most of the secondary works dealing with the “liberation movement” mention Beseda, relying for the most part on the published comments of former members Maklakov and Shakhovskoy; but no detailed knowledge about the circle’s operations and membership can be acquired from the published sources alone. The unpublished record of Beseda has been exploited by only one historian, E. D. Chermensky, for his general study of liberal politics in the early twentieth century. In Chermensky’s interpretation the liberal movement is the affair of an aristocratic *fronde*, and Beseda is assigned the role of GHQ in its direction. Such a view, as the reader should see from what follows, is plainly unwarranted by the circle’s records. E. D. Chermensky, “Zemsko-liberal’noe dvizhenie nakanune revoliutsii 1905–1907 gg.,” *Istoriia SSSR*, 1965, no. 5, pp. 41–60, and his *Burzhuziia i tsarizm v pervoi russkoi revoliutsii*, 2nd rev. ed. (Moscow, 1970), esp. pp. 17–22. E. P. Mikheeva, “Neskol’ko dopolnenii k istorii ‘Besedy,’” *Istoriia SSSR*, 1966, no. 2, pp. 241–43, is a brief note by an archivist. A brief, systematic description of the Beseda archive, accompanied by a reproduction of its membership list, has been published by A. S. Krasavin, “Obzor dokumental’nykh materialov kruzhka ‘Beseda’ v fonde V. A. Maklakova,” *Arkheograficheskii ezhegodnik za 1968 god* (Moscow, 1970), pp. 354–59.

Chermensky’s discussion of Beseda contains several purely factual errors, which have been repeated by other writers relying on his work. These include (1) attribution of membership to several prominent figures, including S. A. Muromtsev, I. I. and M. I. Petrunkevich, V. I. Vernadsky, and F. D. Samarin, (2) description of the “Shipov circle” as a group internal to Beseda (see below, note 10), (3) assertion that the last meeting recorded in the circle’s papers was held on February 20, 1905, and (4) assertion that Beseda was responsible for calling the May 1902 zemstvo congress (there is no evidence of this in the circle’s papers; if Chermensky has other evidence to that effect, he does not cite it). The note by Mikheeva also mistakenly attributes membership to several persons and claims that Beseda founded the journal *Osvobozhdenie*.

5. Gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii muzei (GIM), Otdel pis’mennykh istochnikov: fond 31 (V. A. Maklakov), folder no. 142, pp. 1–344. In addition to various other materials directly or indirectly related to the circle, the folder contains the minutes of its meetings of 1902 (one meeting, no exact date noted), August 25, 1903, January 11–12, 1904, February 15, 1904, August 31–September 1, 1904, October 30, 1904, January 8–9, 1905, February 20–21, 1905, May 27, 1905 (rough notes only), and October 10, 1905 (brief note on a meeting canceled for lack of attendance).

The Beseda papers were held by Maklakov in emigration for many years after the Revolution of 1917. They were evidently deposited, either by him or by Peter D. Dolgorukov, in the Prague Russian Archive at some time in the interwar period, and were removed to the Soviet Union with the rest of the Prague Archive in December 1945.

representation in the capital.<sup>6</sup> Nicholas II's curt rejection of the zemstvo requests as "senseless dreams" (the apparently immortal phrase was supplied by Pobedonostsev)<sup>7</sup> provoked the first serious efforts within the zemstvo leadership since 1879–81 to develop regular interzemstvo contacts on a national level. Plans were laid to institutionalize annual conferences of zemstvo board chairmen, and one of these soon met at Nizhny Novgorod in August 1896. Despite the innocuous character of its activities and the vagueness of its statement of purpose ("to facilitate the understanding and identification of the basic conditions of zemstvo activity"), the conference was not permitted to reconvene the following year, and the executive board which it had appointed was ordered disbanded by the minister of internal affairs.<sup>8</sup>

The Beseda circle first met sometime in the summer or autumn of 1899; the precise date of the first meeting is not known.<sup>9</sup> Neither is the identity of the group's founders entirely clear. In his reminiscences, written long after the Revolution, Prince Peter Dolgorukov gave credit for the founding of Beseda to himself, his twin brother Pavel, Prince D. I. Shakhovskoy, and Count P. S. Sheremetev. It does seem clear that the brothers Dolgorukov were among the small group of original members, and the original initiative may well have been theirs. The circle's meetings were regularly held in their family mansion in Moscow.<sup>10</sup>

6. S. Mirnyi [D. I. Shakhovskoy], *Adresy zemstvu 1894–1895 gg. i ikh politicheskaiia programma* (Geneva, 1896).

7. L. G. Zakharova, "Krizis samoderzhaviiia nakanune revoliutsii 1905 goda," *Voprosy istorii*, 1972, no. 8, p. 120.

8. I. P. Belokonsky, *Zemskoe dvizhenie* (Moscow, 1914), pp. 58–59; D. N. Shipov, *Vospominaniia i dumy o perezhitom* (Moscow, 1918), pp. 57–99.

9. Two members, Shakhovskoy and A. A. Stakhovich, have dated the founding to the year 1899; others have referred to the "turn of the century." Shakhovskoy, "Soiuz Osvobozhdeniia," p. 103; Belokonsky, *Zemskoe dvizhenie*, p. 80n.; P. D. Dolgorukov, *Velikaia razrukha* (Madrid, 1964), p. 332; *Byloe*, 1907, no. 8, p. 304. The earliest meeting mentioned in the circle's papers was one held on April 16, 1900, and referred to as the third meeting. Given the group's custom of meeting two to four times a year, one can surmise that the first meeting was held in mid-1899. See GIM, fond 31, no. 142, pp. 5–7. Maklakov is obviously in error in referring to Beseda as a "circle founded in the early 1890s." In a later version of his memoirs he merely refers to the circle's having been founded "in the 1890s." See V. A. Maklakov, *Vlast' i obshchestvennost' na zakate staroi Rossii (Vospominaniia)* (n.p., n.d.), p. 291; and his *Iz vospominanii* (New York, 1954), p. 302.

10. Dolgorukov, *Velikaia razrukha*, p. 332; *Russkie vedomosti, 1863–1913: Sbornik statei* (Moscow, 1913), pt. 2, pp. 63–64; Belokonsky, *Zemskoe dvizhenie*, p. 80 and n. It is worth mentioning that the unnamed "Moscow circle" of 1900–1901 to which D. N. Shipov refers in his memoirs was not Beseda but another group convened—possibly at Beseda's request (there is no direct evidence)—for the specific purpose of drawing up a response to Witte's memorandum *Autocracy and the Zemstvo*. Neither the dates nor the membership of that group as reported by Shipov coincide with the corresponding evidence for Beseda, and Shipov's memoirs are a model of accurate reporting (they are

It appears that the colloquia were initially meant to substitute for the suppressed annual zemstvo conferences and their permanent bureau. Dolgorukov writes that he and the others got together “rather by chance and without a precisely elaborated plan”; gradually drawing in “several other public men of the capitals and provinces who were near to us,” he says, they “decided to gather in Moscow two or three times a year in order to confer about the more effective conduct of certain aspects of zemstvo affairs.” According to Shakhovskoy, writing not long after the group’s demise, its main purpose was “the facilitating of unanimous and authoritative declarations on urgent questions on the part of the zemstvo and gentry assemblies.”<sup>11</sup>

The Beseda papers include a membership list of fifty-four names, a list apparently including all persons who had been dues-paying participants at any time during the circle’s existence. Because of lacunae in the records and irregularity of attendance (less than half the total membership ordinarily attended a single meeting, and often only a dozen or so were present), it is impossible to determine when most members joined and whether certain ones abandoned the circle between 1899 and October 10, 1905, the date of the last recorded meeting. Co-optation into the circle was still going on in late 1904 and early 1905. Among the virtually steady attendants from the earliest recorded meetings to the end were the brothers Dolgorukov, Shakhovskoy, N. N. Lvov, Count S. L. Tolstoy, Count P. A. Geiden, M. V. Chelnokov, M. D. Ershov, and R. A. Pisarev.<sup>12</sup>

Eligibility for membership in the circle was restricted, with perhaps only two exceptions, to men with formal ties to the zemstvo or gentry institutions. According to Shakhovskoy, “Its ranks were filled exclusively from zemstvo or gentry circles, but from them Beseda tried to draw in the most outstanding and vital men, while somehow instinctively avoiding persons of marked party coloration who could have hindered a completely free exchange of opinions. . . .”<sup>13</sup> Such criteria brought together in Beseda, as Maklakov put it, “the

---

for the most part a collection of documents contemporary to the events they describe). Moreover, the independent existence of the two groups is remarked clearly in the correspondence for 1901 between Shipov and another Beseda member, M. V. Chelnokov. Shipov, *Vospominaniia*, pp. 131–35, 151–55; Gosudarstvennaia biblioteka im. V. I. Lenina, Otdel rukopisei (ORLB), fond 440 (D. N. Shipov); Tsentral’nyi gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Oktiabrskoi revoliutsii i sotsialisticheskogo stroitel’sтва (TsGAOR), fond 810 (M. V. Chelnokov), opis’ 1, no. 492, pp. 14, 16. Identification of the two groups has led to several erroneous conclusions about Beseda’s origins and membership in the otherwise judicious assessment by Shmuel Galai, *The Liberation Movement in Russia, 1900–1905* (Cambridge, 1973), pp. 51–57, 273.

11. Dolgorukov, *Velikaia razrukha*, p. 332; Shakhovskoy, “Soiuz Osvobozhdeniia,” p. 103.

12. Dues were ten rubles per year. At least four new members were co-opted no earlier than late 1904. Co-optation was by unanimous secret ballot.

13. Shakhovskoy, “Soiuz Osvobozhdeniia,” p. 103. As examples of persons belonging

future pillars of the Kadet party—Golovin, the Kokoshkins, the Dolgorukovs, and the Shakhovskoyes, and the last knights of Autocracy—Khomiakov, Stakhovich, and Shipov.”<sup>14</sup>

A look at the membership list (see appendix) shows that the rule of *zemstvo* or gentry representation for membership was generally applied. Among the members there were eight provincial *zemstvo* board chairmen, five provincial board members, and ten provincial deputies, three district board chairmen, and one district deputy. Among the remaining members there were four provincial gentry marshals and seventeen district gentry marshals (ex officio chairmen of their respective *zemstvo* assemblies). In sum, all but two Beseda members for whom the relevant information is available (or forty-eight out of fifty-four) were *zemstvo* delegates or officials, and most of them occupied positions of some prominence in the *zemstvo* administration (only ten were merely deputies—*glasnye*—in the *zemstvo* assemblies). Twenty-one of the thirty-four *zemstvo* provinces were represented in the membership. As one would predict, knowing the gentry predominance in *zemstvo* leadership generally, most of the Beseda members—with perhaps two exceptions only—were of hereditary gentry origin.<sup>15</sup>

Although the significance of a collective profile of the group in terms of age, education, and professional activities is limited by the absence of analogous profiles for either the “second element” as a whole or the *zemstvo* leadership in particular, its characteristics may probably be taken as representative of the politically active *zemstvo* leadership.

The median age of the group (information for forty-six members) was thirty-nine in 1900; the mean age, forty. Two-thirds of the members (or twenty-seven out of forty-six) were between thirty-three and forty-three years of age in 1900. The majority of the group may be said to have belonged to the younger generation of *zemstvo* leaders who began their *zemstvo* careers no

---

to the latter category, Dolgorukov mentions I. I. Petrunkevich and V. E. Iakushkin. Dolgorukov, *Velikaia razrukha*, p. 335.

14. Maklakov, *Vlast' i obshchestvennost'*, pp. 292–93. The two exceptions to the rule of institutional affiliation were Maklakov and S. N. Trubetskoy. Maklakov was first proposed for membership on February 15, 1904, and was made permanent secretary and member of the “Moscow bureau” on September 1, 1904, replacing I. P. Demidov, who had been mobilized (GIM, fond 31, no. 142, pp. 151, 158–59). Maklakov attributed the exception made in his case primarily to close personal relations with several members. Trubetskoy, although centrally involved in the *zemstvo* movement in 1904–5, apparently held no *zemstvo* office. Maklakov, *Iz vospominanii*, p. 303; O. Trubetskaia, *Kn. S. N. Trubetskoi: Vospominaniia sestry* (New York, 1953), p. 12.

15. The two exceptions were N. I. Guchkov and M. V. Chelnokov, both members of prominent Moscow merchant-industrialist families. In 1903, 94 percent of all provincial board members were of gentry origin; the corresponding figure for district boards was 75 percent. B. B. Veselovskiy, *Istoriia zemstva za sorok let*, vol. 3 (St. Petersburg, 1911), p. 434.

earlier than the late 1880s and for the most part in the 1890s, and for whom occupancy of zemstvo board positions was of rather recent date.<sup>16</sup>

Of forty-five members for whom such information was at hand, thirty-seven had university degrees and two others were graduates of higher technical or professional schools.<sup>17</sup> Field of education was determined for twenty-two members: ten had graduated from the law faculties, six from the historical-philosophical faculties, and the remaining six had been trained in scientific or technical fields. Of six members without higher education whose educational profiles are known, four had been educated in the military schools, one in the Imperial Lycée, and one had received an exclusively domestic education. In all, probably about 90 percent of the members had university educations.

For most of these men, however, a university education had not been a steppingstone to government-service careers or the modern professions. Although some experience in the officer corps or the civil bureaucracy (apart from the zemstvo) is fairly common in the background of the Beseda members, long-term careers of those kinds are not. At least three members had at some time been zemstvo employees (“third element”). Five were university professors. There was one practicing lawyer, and there was one industrialist.<sup>18</sup> The remaining members apparently had no professions outside of zemstvo or gentry service. This situation is not surprising for a group recruited largely from the executive offices of the institutions of local self-government (thirty-seven members were not merely deputies to the infrequent assemblies, but full-time administrators).<sup>19</sup>

It would be technically possible to acquire information on the landholdings of many members, but such data are virtually worthless as indicators of wealth and economic circumstance unless accompanied by much other, usually inaccessible, information. It is probably fair to ascribe the majority to the category of “middle gentry” landowners with enough estate-income to devote time to

16. The *Dvorianskii adres-kalendar na 1899 g.* (St. Petersburg, 1899) lists only five Beseda members on zemstvo boards.

17. Moscow University, twenty-three; St. Petersburg University, eight; other universities, six. The other schools were the Petrovsky Agricultural Academy and the Imperial School of Law.

18. There were two professors of law, A. F. Meiendorf (St. Petersburg) and F. F. Kokoshkin (Moscow); one professor of history, S. A. Kotliarevsky (Moscow); and two professors of philosophy, S. N. and E. N. Trubetskoy (S. N. was professor and, for a short time before his death, rector of Moscow University; E. N. taught at St. Vladimir University and later at Moscow). The lawyer was Maklakov, and the industrialist was Chelnokov. (Guchkov was apparently not directly involved in business affairs. P. A. Buryshkin, *Moskva kupecheskaia* [New York, 1954], pp. 111, 178.)

19. Many writers have remarked about the extensive participation by professional men in zemstvo affairs in this period. For the most part such participation was limited to their serving as deputies to the annual assemblies.

zemstvo affairs—that is, the group that generally populated the zemstvo institutions from the gentry *curia*.<sup>20</sup> It should not be forgotten, however, that the administrative offices of the zemstvo were salaried, that the salaries were relatively handsome, and that in many cases they must have been important sources of income to their holders.<sup>21</sup>

An inquiry into the political affiliations of Beseda members during the period of the “liberation movement” and party formation (1902–6) yields the following results:

*Zemstvo congresses:* Sixteen of the fifty-two participants in the congress of May 1902 (the “first congress”), which reactivated the zemstvo congress movement after the hiatus of 1896–1901, were Beseda members. At the decisive congress of November 1904, attended by about a hundred delegates from thirty-three zemstvo provinces, twenty-three Beseda members participated. (In the subsequent congresses of 1905 the number of delegates regularly rose to two hundred or more, and the relative weight of Beseda members fell to insignificant proportions.)

*Union of Liberation:* At least eighteen Beseda members, and in fact probably quite a few more, belonged to the Union of Liberation. Of these eighteen, five were founding members of the Union, participants at the Schaffhausen meeting in July 1903, where they constituted about half of the zemstvo contingent and a quarter of the total participants.<sup>22</sup> Not all the names of the participants at the first Union meeting on Russian soil (Kharkov,

20. Dolgorukov at one point characterized the group as “all more or less large land-owners.” GIM, fond 31, no. 142, p. 92.

21. Shipov, for example, had to look for work after his nonconfirmation in office in April 1904. His salary for the year 1903 had been 6,000 rubles, one of the highest zemstvo salaries in the country (other provincial chairmen-members had salaries ranging from 5,000 to 3,000 rubles; district chairmen’s salaries ranged from 3,500 to 1,500, generally). Salaries of provincial chairmen compared quite favorably with those of university professors or doctors, and put them in the upper third of the state-bureaucratic salary scale. Board members received somewhat lower salaries than chairmen. See *Spisok chlenov ministerstva vnutrennikh del 1903 goda*, pt. 2 (St. Petersburg, 1903).

22. The brothers Dolgorukov, Golovin, Kokoshkin, Kotliarevsky, Kovalevsky, N. Lvov, Shakhovskoy, A. Stakhovich, Svechin, N. Guchkov, I. Demidov, G. Lvov, Mukhanov, Novosiltsev, Petrovo-Solovovo, Kolokoltsov and E. Trubetsky were all members of the Union. Pisarev, both Tolstoys, and Chelnokov were almost certainly members. Relative neglect by the police of the “nonrevolutionary” opposition before 1905 and subsequent historical events have conspired to make the reconstruction of the Union and other liberal organizations extremely difficult. Insofar as they knew anything about them, the police tended to confuse the organizations, aided in this by the “interlocking directorates” of the organizations which tended to meet in the same places. The separate existence of Beseda was apparently unknown to the police, although Pleve was personally aware of it in 1903 (GIM, fond 31, no. 142, p. 139). Shakhovskoy, Peter Dolgorukov, N. Lvov, Kotliarevsky, and Kovalevsky attended the Schaffhausen meeting. I. I. Petrunkevich, *Is zapisok obshchestvennogo deiatelia: Vospominaniia* (vol. 21 of *Arkhiv russkoi revoliutsii*) (Berlin, 1934), p. 338.



September 15, 1903) are known, but from the clues given by Belokonsky (and accepted as correct by Shakhovskoy, who was there) at least six of the ten *zemstsy* in attendance out of a total of sixteen must have been from Beseda.<sup>23</sup> Four of the five *zemstvo* men on the first secret ten-man Council of the Union (elected by secret ballot at the St. Petersburg “founding congress” of January 1904) belonged to Beseda.<sup>24</sup> Apparently most of the central committee (“center”) of the Moscow Group of the Union, the most active and important branch in the country, consisted of Beseda members.<sup>25</sup>

*Zemstvo Constitutionalist Group:* Membership in this group was undoubtedly more common in Beseda ranks than membership in the Union of Liberation, although the size and loose-knit character of the group make ascertaining of membership in it difficult. At least four other members in addition to those who belonged to the Union of Liberation definitely belonged to the group, and the actual number was certainly larger. The “bureau,” or executive committee of the group, apparently consisted entirely of Beseda members, all but one of them also “liberationists.”<sup>26</sup>

*Political parties:* Most of the “liberationists” and *zemstvo* constitutionalists in Beseda eventually found their way into the Kadet (Constitutional Democratic) Party; at least twenty Beseda members were early joiners of the party, and the actual Beseda representation in it was, again, probably considerably larger.<sup>27</sup> Of the twenty-odd members of the organization bureau

23. N. N. Kovalevsky and probably V. G. Kolokoltsov among the five “Kharkov *zemstsy*”; Peter Dolgorukov from Kursk; Mukhanov (or possibly Svechin) from Chernigov; Shakhovskoy from Iaroslavl; Kokoshkin (or possibly Golovin) from Moscow. (The remaining five or six participants undoubtedly included E. Kuskova, S. Prokopovich, V. Khizhniakov, and I. Luchitsky.) Belokonsky, *Zemskoe dvizhenie*, p. 174n.; Shakhovskoy, “Soiuz Osvobozhdeniia,” p. 107n.

24. The same as at Schaffhausen, less Kotliarevsky. P. N. Miliukov, “Rokovye gody (iz vospominanii),” *Russkie Zapiski* (Paris), 12 (1938): 121n.

25. According to the secretary of “Group A,” these included Peter Dolgorukov, N. Lvov, Shakhovskoy, Kotliarevsky, Novosiltsev, I. Demidov, and N. Guchkov (in addition to Petrunkevich, P. I. Novgorodtsev, V. I. Vernadsky, Savva Morozov, and others). According to the same source, E. Trubetskoy was one of the heads of the Kiev branch, Kovalevsky was in charge of the Kharkov branch, and Petrovo-Solovovo of the Voronezh (Tambov?) branch (from notes by B. I. Nicolaevsky on an interview with G. I. Shreider, Brussels, Oct. 6, 1928; supplied by A. M. Bourguina from her private collection).

26. The four were Geiden, S. Tolstoy, Chelnokov, and Maklakov. Novosiltsev was host and chief convener of the group’s meetings (whence the appellation “Novosilt'tsevtsty” for the group). Shakhovskoy, the brothers Dolgorukov, and Count Geiden also occupied central positions. TsGAOR, fond 102, op. 5, no. 1000, pp. 32–35; Shakhovskoy, “Soiuz Osvobozhdeniia,” pp. 108, 120; Chermensky, *Burzhuaziia i tsarizm* (2nd ed.), p. 31.

27. The members of the Union of Liberation listed earlier, minus Guchkov and Petrovo-Solovovo, as well as Tatarinov, Bulygin, Shishkov, and Chelnokov (positive identifications). Dolgorukov wrote in his reminiscences that the “majority” of Beseda members entered the Kadet party (*Velikaia razrukha*, p. 334).

who convened the founding congress of the party in October 1905, four were Beseda members, as were seven of the twenty-six-man first (“temporary”) party central committee, including its chairman (Pavel Dolgorukov). Ten of the Kadet deputies to the First Duma were former Beseda members.<sup>28</sup>

If the Kadets commanded the allegiance of more Beseda members than any other party, the role of former members in other parties and factions was far from insignificant: Seven of the twelve original founders of the Union of October 17 had belonged to Beseda.<sup>29</sup> The founders of the Duma faction Peaceful Renovation (*Mirnoe Obnovlenie*) were all former Beseda colleagues.<sup>30</sup> And two members were among the founders in mid-1905 of the Union of Russian People (*Soiuz Russkikh Liudei*).<sup>31</sup>

Although attendance at the meetings of the circle tended to vary widely, except for a few regulars, a fundamental continuity was maintained through a routine of procedure in the meetings, through the existence of a “bureau of Moscow-resident members” and a permanent secretary (from 1903), and through constant concern with the planning of tactics to be pursued on current issues in upcoming zemstvo and gentry assemblies. Over the duration of Beseda’s existence, the concerns and activities of the circle underwent a considerable evolution.

Meetings were held three or four times a year throughout most of the six years of the circle’s existence, with extraordinary sessions called in response to such events as the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War, the summoning of the November 1904 zemstvo congress, and the issuance of the Bulygin rescript (February 18, 1905). The task of convening the circle and the handling of continuing business lay with the “Moscow bureau.”<sup>32</sup> In mid-1903 a perma-

28. Peter Dolgorukov, Kokoshkin, Kotliarevsky, and Shakhovskoy were in the bureau (all represented both the zemstvo constitutionalists and the Union of Liberation there). Maklakov, Chelnokov, A. Stakhovich, Pavel Dolgorukov, and Golovin were also members of the bureau. See *Konstitutsionno-demokraticheskaia partiia: S'ezd 12–18 oktiabria 1905 g.* (n.p., n.d.); *Otchet tsentral'nogo komiteta Konstitutsionno-demokraticheskoi partii (Partii Narodnoi svobody) za dva goda: S'ezd 18 oktiabria 1905 g. po oktiabr' 1907 g.* (St. Petersburg, 1907), pp. 16, 55; TsGAOR, fond 523 (*Konstitutsionno-demokraticheskoi partii*), op. 1, no. 34; Raúl A. García, “A Prosopographical Sketch: Cadets in the First Duma and the First, Second, and Third Central Committees” (unpub. paper, Stanford, 1972). Central Committee members from Beseda were the brothers Dolgorukov, Shakhovskoy, Kokoshkin, Kotliarevsky, N. Lvov, and Maklakov.

29. Shipov, Guchkov, M. Stakhovich, Khomiakov, Geiden, Volkonsky, and Maslov. Other Octobrists from Beseda included A. Meiendorf, D. Olsufiev, Petrovo-Solovovo, and Kamensky.

30. Geiden, M. Stakhovich, N. Lvov, and Volkonsky.

31. A. Bobrinsky and Sheremetev. Bobrinsky was also first president of the Union of Russian Nobility.

32. The bureau included Pavel Dolgorukov, Golovin, Pisarev, I. Demidov, Maklakov

ment secretary, resident in Moscow, was elected. His responsibilities included maintenance of the circle's records, circulation of notices for meetings, distribution of various materials to the membership (all this ordinarily by mail), collection of dues, and solicitation of funds for various projects.<sup>33</sup> As a rule, meetings opened with general exchange of news about recent developments in the provinces and in the capital (where some members had access to goings-on in high places). Next came debate over current political issues (it was here that general airing of political views occurred), followed by discussion of various business at hand, and finally agreement would be sought on tactics to be pursued in the zemstvo and gentry assemblies on these current issues.

Until the outbreak of the war, the circle's tactical concerns in regard to the zemstvos generally involved defense of what were seen to be the prerogatives of the zemstvo, or of local society as a whole, against encroachments by the government bureaucracy. Thus in 1900–1901 the circle was engaged in an effort to mobilize the zemstvo and gentry against the Ministry of Education's campaign (launched in 1899) to assert bureaucratic control over local primary schools.<sup>34</sup> And in 1902–3 the circle was involved in coordinating zemstvo objections to the procedures of Witte's Special Conference on the Needs of Agriculture (established in January 1902), calling for elected zemstvo representation in both the conference and its local committees.<sup>35</sup>

---

(from September 1904), and several other Moscow-resident members at one time or another.

33. The secretary was provided with an assistant hired with the circle's funds. Some examples of materials distributed to membership are a report by Shakhovskoy in early 1904 on the Union of Liberation and other "parties" in formation, a report by S. Tolstoy and Golitsyn on the redemption operation, a questionnaire on the effects of the war on local economic conditions (autumn 1904), and the draft constitution prepared by the Union of Liberation (October 1904).

34. This campaign is described by Veselovsky, *Istoriia zemstva*, 3:542.

35. The creation of the Special Conference was the direct provocation leading to reactivation of the zemstvo congress movement in 1902: the undertaking of a major government inquiry into the agrarian situation which demonstratively by-passed the zemstvo institutions was generally taken in zemstvo circles to be a frontal attack on the "zemstvo idea." See Shipov, *Vospominaniia*, chap. 6; Nathan Smith, "The Constitutional-Democratic Movement in Russia, 1902–1906" (Ph.D. diss., University of Illinois, 1958), pp. 62–72. Beseda adhered to the position on the conference adopted by the May 1902 zemstvo congress. It is possible, as Maklakov surmised in his memoirs (he was not at the time a member of the circle), that the elaboration of a general line of response by the zemstvos to Witte's provocation was begun in Beseda, and that the initiative for the summoning of the May congress lay, in some way, with it. Unfortunately, the circle's archives throw no light on the background to the May congress. The discussions among some forty zemstvo men in April 1902 described by Shipov (*Vospominaniia*, p. 159), which led Shipov to organize the congress, were undoubtedly attended by many Beseda members. The number of zemstvist attending (exceeding the current membership of Beseda) and the circumstances suggest, however, that these were not meetings of the circle as such.

It has also been surmised that Beseda was responsible for the composition and

In the course of 1903 Witte's offensives were replaced by those of Pleve, and essentially the same issue came up again following the government's creation, in January 1904, of "extraordinary provincial conferences" for review of legislation on the status of the peasantry. (Like Witte's local committees, these were to be constituted by invitation of their chairmen—in this case the governors—and their procedures were to be strictly controlled by the Ministry.)<sup>36</sup> In its January 1904 meeting Beseda elaborated a set of tactics concerning these committees for the zemstvos. They provided that *zemtsy*, if invited, should participate in the committees in order to protest their unrepresentative character and to obstruct their proceedings. *Zemtsy* were also to be encouraged to put petitions before the forthcoming zemstvo and gentry assemblies asking the government to submit all draft legislation on the peasants to zemstvo and gentry review.<sup>37</sup> In the same meeting the circle began planning mobilization of zemstvo condemnation of Pleve's attacks against "troublesome" zemstvos. These latter took the form of ministerial audits of zemstvo finances (such were carried out in several provinces in 1903–4, including Moscow, Kursk, Viatka, and Tver), and of nonconfirmation in office of disliked zemstvo officers (the two most notorious acts in the last category involved D. N. Shipov, re-elected in early 1904 as Moscow board chairman, and the entire board of the Tver provincial zemstvo). At a meeting in late August, Beseda resolved that its members should agitate for petitions calling for zemstvo review of the audits and abolition of the practice of nonconfirmation. They were also to collect signatures for a declaration of solidarity with Shipov.<sup>38</sup>

By that time, however, the war and other issues transcending the con-

---

circulation in mid-1901 of the "Letter of Zemstvo Veterans" ("Pis'mo starykh zemtsev"), which called for zemstvo subscription to a list of liberal reforms (Galai, *Liberation Movement*, pp. 133–34). There is no trace of such a connection in the archive, however. At least two other open letters, similar in style and orientation, were circulated in the zemstvos in 1901–2: *Chto she nam delat': Otkrytoe pis'mo k zemskim deiateliam*, signed "Starye zemtsy. Gruppya Osvobozhdeniia," TsGAOR, fond 102, Departament politsii, Osobyi otdel, no. 14, part 67, 1898, pp. 1–4. *Otkrytoe pis'mo k zemtsam*, signed "Gruppya Osvobozhdeniia," TsGAOR, fond 1241, op. 11, no. 1337, 1902, pp. 2–3. The first letter mentioned has been published in several places, including Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 5th ed., vol. 6, pp. 349–55. All three letters were most likely the work of the *zemtsy* initiators of the Union of Liberation.

36. Belokonsky, *Zemskoe dvizhenie*, p. 196.

37. GIM, fond 31, no. 142, p. 145. The record does not show that Beseda elaborated any official policy on the situation of the peasantry beyond calling for abolition of redemption payments (September 1904), although by the time of the February 1905 meeting the level of peasant disturbances had reached such startling proportions in the view of the members present that the need for an "economic program" was recognized. If such a program was ever elaborated in the circle, it has not been preserved (*ibid.*, pp. 157, 239).

38. *Ibid.*, pp. 157–58. By a directive of June 20, 1903, the Committee of Ministers had informed the governors of their right to remove at their discretion any zemstvo officer or employee and to designate interim replacements.

frontation between the zemstvos and the Ministry had taken clear precedence on the Beseda agenda.

The record shows that the circle had, in fact, expanded its activities beyond the strict limits of the zemstvo and gentry corporations fairly soon after its foundation. As early as January 1901, representatives of Beseda were in contact with academics and journalists in St. Petersburg for the purpose of finding means to counter the government's offensive against public control of primary schools. Plans for mounting a newspaper campaign "emphasizing the importance of broad public participation in the affairs of popular primary education" were laid, and the publishing of a book with the same import was proposed. The immediate target of this publicist activity was, to be sure, the gentry assemblies, especially the gentry marshals who were due to convene shortly in Moscow for a government "conference of persons involved in primary education," and the issue was the established principle of public participation in local affairs. The possibility of reaching a broader public had, however, been broached, and the means for doing so apparently discovered. In any event, the Moscow conference, consisting in large part of gentry marshals, decisively rejected the Ministry's proposals.<sup>39</sup>

By early 1902 discussion in the circle's meetings had passed beyond attempts to harmonize gentry and zemstvo opinion regarding specific policies to a direct concern with the overall drift of political life in the country and questions of fundamental political institutions. The approach to the problem of reform was cast in terms of the question: How can a revolutionary upheaval be avoided? And two lines of opinion were clearly expressed—one constitutionalist, the other "Slavophile."<sup>40</sup>

A meeting was called in early 1902 primarily to discuss a statement, prepared at the circle's request by N. N. Lvov, "on the causes of Russia's present unsettled state and on measures for improving it." The gist of Lvov's argument was the familiar liberal proposition that the country's ills resulted from the continuation under Nicholas II of the reactionary policies elaborated under Alexander III. Though relatively inconsequential under Alexander, they would now lead sooner or later to revolution because of the recent advent of the working-class movement, the increasingly dire straits of the peasantry (for which Witte's fiscal policies were largely to blame), and the progressive alien-

39. *Ibid.*, p. 12. The Beseda members participating in the St. Petersburg discussion were Peter Dolgorukov, M. Stakhovich, and Sheremetev. The "representatives of the capital press" with whom they met were K. K. Arseniev, P. N. Miliukov, A. A. Kornilov, and G. A. Falbork.

40. The record confirms Shakhovskoy's observation: "Already by 1901, the political question had decisively inserted itself among the questions considered in Beseda, and this subsequently provoked a direct confrontation of opinions—constitutionalist and Slavophile" (Shakhovskoy, "Soiuz Osvobozhdeniia," p. 103).

ation of the intelligentsia. To avoid revolution, Lvov prescribed the following: "freedom of person, freedom of conscience, free expression of public opinion, free development of zemstvo and municipal institutions, and, finally, elective public representation in the country's legislative institutions." As for action to bring these things about, Lvov proposed only exertion of moral influence on the tsar through publication of a memorandum.<sup>41</sup>

The question of imposing constitutional limitations on the monarch, which had been skirted by Lvov in his general reference to public representation, became the focus of discussion following Lvov's presentation. The constitutionalist view was succinctly stated by Iu. A. Novosiltsev, who simply declared that the enumerated freedoms were "incompatible with autocracy." The "Slavophile" view was expressed by its foremost spokesman in the circle, Shipov, who ended his long discourse on the "moral union between the population and Authority" with the prescription: "It is necessary only that society be able to express its needs and that the supreme authority listen. By the force of moral feeling the Autocrat will, of course, fulfill the wishes of the people."<sup>42</sup> This amounted to an argument in favor of an elected consultative assembly, or rather one whose relation to the monarch would be left undefined by any "contract."

Although the constitutionalist view was clearly in the majority at the meeting, the group agreed to avoid reference to constitutional limitations on the autocracy in the memorandum, which was to mention only the need for the enumerated liberties, expansion of local self-government, a consultative voice in the central government, and, in general, a "struggle against arbitrariness."<sup>43</sup> And even the "Slavophile" assertions of M. A. Stakhovich and Sheremetev that the circle's goal was actually to fortify the autocrat's authority and that there was "general recognition that at least for the time being the autocracy must remain in full force" were let go without challenge. In short, the debate between the constitutionalist and "Slavophile" positions was not really en-

41. GIM, fond 31, no. 142, p. 22. The only question raised by this recommendation in the meeting was whether the memorandum ought to be presented directly to the tsar over influential signatures or published abroad. The majority preferred publication abroad.

42. *Ibid.*, pp. 30, 33. It would be incautious to assume that Shipov's political philosophy was shared by all those who with him (inside or outside the circle) were generally called "Slavophiles" or "neo-Slavophiles." Those who were suspicious of constitutional limitations on the crown did not necessarily share Shipov's romantic ideas about moral union and nonresistance to evil. Thus, in the discussion in question, Sheremetev admitted he was less interested in the religious and moral foundations of autocracy than in the practical question of its utility as a bulwark against revolution (*ibid.*, p. 30).

43. *Ibid.*, pp. 28–33. "Constitutionalists" in attendance included the brothers Dolgorukov, Shakhovskoy, Pisarev, Novosiltsev, Golovin, Lvov, and Petrovo-Solovovo. The "Slavophile" group counted Shipov, Stakhovich, and Sheremetev. (A. D. Polenov, who was present at this meeting, but whose name figures nowhere else in the records, also sided with the "Slavophile" position.)

gaged, and the constitutionalists, for the most part, made no effort to have the circle formally adopt a constitutionalist position.<sup>44</sup>

Later in that year, shortly after P. B. Struve had begun publishing *Osvobozhdenie* in Stuttgart, the proposition was entertained in Beseda that the journal be adopted as its official organ. The proposition was rejected on the grounds that the group wished to avoid identification as a “constitutionalist circle.”<sup>45</sup> By mid-1903, however, the circle was in the midst of a crisis over organization and goals, if the debate at an August 25 meeting may be taken as representative of a general trend. The session, attended by only ten members—all apparently of constitutionalist persuasion—began with discussion of various proposals for expanding the circle’s organization. It was proposed (by N. N. Lvov) that membership be extended to include representatives of all the zemstvo provinces, and that local branches be set up, “in order to put through the decisions taken here, insofar as possible, in all the zemstvos.” An alternative of decentralization—the setting up of similar but independent circles throughout the country—was also proposed (by A. A. Stakhovich). The discussion of organization gave rise to debate over goals; V. M. Petrovo-Solovovo, in particular, insisted on the transformation of the circle into a “constitutionalist political party.” Any expansion of membership, he argued, should proceed on the basis of solidarity of views about the ultimate goal—namely, the “struggle against autocracy.” “Our methods in organizational terms,” he continued, “are inevitably the same as for the *revolutionary party*; the difference is all in tactics, which are characterized on our side by *correctness of behavior*.”<sup>46</sup>

In the end, neither the idea of extensive expansion of membership nor the proposal that the circle transform itself into a party representing specific political goals was accepted by the group. Peter Dolgorukov argued the prevailing position: on the one hand, the group’s membership was too elitist for it to take on the role of representative of zemstvo Russia as a whole (the

44. *Ibid.*, p. 34.

45. The record of the meeting in which the proposition was made has not been preserved. The decision was mentioned in a later meeting (*ibid.*, p. 93). If the circle as a whole took no responsibility for the journal, some of its members (Shakhovskoy, the Dolgorukovs, and others) were deeply involved in its creation, and, as Shakhovskoy later recalled, the policy articles for the first issues of *Osvobozhdenie* were discussed in Beseda in May 1902, prior to their publication. “Soiuz Osvobozhdeniia,” p. 104.

46. GIM, fond 31, no. 142, pp. 90–98. Petrovo-Solovovo confessed that until recently he had believed Beseda could operate on the basis of accommodation of differing views (*nedogoverennost'*), but had come to change his mind after becoming convinced that “administrative arbitrariness is an unavoidable attribute of an autocratic regime” (*ibid.*, p. 95). Petrovo-Solovovo was by all counts one of the most moderate of the circle’s constitutionalists: he was one of the few to object to discontinuation of the moratorium on political opposition in late 1904; he became an Octobrist in 1905, rather than a Kadet.

import of the expansion proposals); on the other hand, the nonpartisan stance of this elitist circle carried advantages which should not be forfeited:

We have preserved a means for influencing those who are not in agreement with us constitutionalists, those who still believe in the autocracy (for example, Shipov, M. A. Stakhovich, and others). In that way we shall have a greater chance to see them one day in our camp than if we had no contact or exchange of ideas with them. We still hope to convert them some day. . . . In any event, we must recognize the value of a bridge *between the Slavophiles and the revolutionaries*, and it is just such a bridge that we in Beseda are destined to provide.<sup>47</sup>

At the meeting's end the group agreed for the record that while the organization of similar circles would be "desirable," Beseda's transformation into a constitutionalist party was to be avoided.<sup>48</sup>

The same question was brought up again in the circle's meeting in early 1904 (January 11–12), this time clearly provoked by the formation in the intervening months of the Union of Liberation and the Zemstvo Constitutionalist Group, in both of which organizations Beseda members played leading roles. The question of Beseda's relation to the new "parties" was raised, with various solutions offered, ranging from arrangement of formal representation of the new organizations in Beseda to the circle's transformation along their lines—"to take the illegal path, become a party, and produce a program." Peter Dolgorukov again took the lead in defending the status quo. Referring to the groups just mentioned, he argued, "Beseda, after all, is not the central organ of such parties and can only be the indirect reflection of these tendencies to the extent that participants in Beseda will be members of the opposition organizations." The group of twenty-two members who were present, most of them also members by now of the Union of Liberation, accepted Dolgorukov's argument and ended the debate.<sup>49</sup>

The accommodation of diverse political views and deliberate avoidance of a definite political program remained the policy of the circle until the end of its existence. This principle was reiterated as late as May 1905, in the last meeting for which the minutes have been preserved.<sup>50</sup> As a matter of practice, however, the circle was becoming ever more deeply involved in the constitutionalist opposition movement. A major contributing factor to this growing involvement was the impact of the Russo-Japanese War on the outlook of the group's members.

Although the record of the group's initial debates on the war, held on

47. *Ibid.*, pp. 92–93.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 97.

49. *Ibid.*, p. 141.

50. *Ibid.*, p. 253.



February 15, 1904, shortly after the commencement of hostilities, has not survived, we do have a summary of tactics for the zemstvos agreed upon at that meeting. It reads, in part, as follows:

The war obliges public men not to cause difficulties, insofar as possible, for the government in its external struggle; but at the same time it does not relieve them of the responsibility of defending the rights of public institutions against possible attacks against them. The tactic during the course of the war should not be offensive, but defensive; in other words, public opinion should desist from initiative on new reforms, but in all questions raised and put on the agenda, it should speak out just as clearly and decisively as before the war.<sup>51</sup>

At the same meeting, Beseda took the position on the sensitive question of zemstvo support for the war effort that designation of zemstvo funds for military purposes was improper. As for aid to the wounded and to families of war victims, it was proposed that aid to the former be undertaken as a united zemstvo effort, while the latter ought to be considered part of the zemstvo's ordinary welfare activities.<sup>52</sup>

By the time of the next recorded meeting (August 31–September 1, 1904) views in the circle about appropriate political behavior in wartime had changed considerably. The predominant attitude toward the war itself was by now clearly “defeatist,” with only two participants (P. A. Geiden and Petrovo-Solovovo) defending the view that the war had to be won or at least continued until a favorable settlement could be extracted from the Japanese. As for politics at home, the large majority of those attending agreed that it was time to call off the moratorium on political opposition and to return to offensive tactics. For at least some members this clearly meant exploiting the government's embarrassing situation arising from unsuccessful conduct of the war in order to provoke the summoning of the first Russian parliament.<sup>53</sup>

After considerable discussion the group agreed, in the words of the chairman's summary, “that it is time to exercise influence on public opinion in the direction of causing it to begin speaking out on the war and the interconnection between the war and the country's political order.”<sup>54</sup> The group then went

51. *Ibid.*, p. 147.

52. *Ibid.*, p. 146. Beseda's policy did not prevent fifteen provincial zemstvos from designating 4,710,000 rubles of their tax revenues to the war effort (half of that explicitly earmarked for military expenditures). Veselovsky, *Istoriia zemstva*, 3:590n. An initiative on united zemstvo aid to the wounded had already been taken by the Moscow zemstvo. Shipov became president of the “all-zemstvo organization for aid to sick and wounded” which resulted from the initiative, and both its representatives at the front were also Beseda members: G. E. Lvov and S. N. Maslov.

53. GIM, fond 31, no. 142, pp. 152–55.

54. *Ibid.*, p. 153. Attending were S. Tolstoy, P. Tolstoy, Peter Dolgorukov, Shak-

on to decide, for the first time, to begin agitation in the zemstvos for the summoning of popular representatives to St. Petersburg. But they could not reach agreement on how these representatives were to be chosen or what their charge in St. Petersburg was to be. Were they to be delegates from the zemstvo, gentry, and дума assemblies (a *zemskii sobor*, in contemporary political jargon), or were they to be elected by universal direct suffrage; were they to foregather in order to make a resolution on the war only, or were they to inaugurate a permanent parliament; was their voice to be consultative or decisive? All these solutions had their advocates. In the end, the group agreed to accept N. N. Lvov's formulation which declared: "It is necessary . . . to make declarations in the zemstvo assemblies on the desirability of summoning elected representatives of the country in view of the general difficult situation created by the war."<sup>55</sup> And it was decided to leave more concrete formulations up to the individual zemstvo assemblies. A committee of four was designated to formulate a draft declaration in the sense of Lvov's formulation for review by the next meeting before carrying it into the zemstvo assemblies at the end of the year. But by the time the next meeting convened, plans were under way for the November zemstvo congress and the circle had turned its attention to the resolutions being prepared for the congress.

The evolution in Beseda of views on the war and, relatedly, on political tactics conformed to the prevailing trend in the liberation movement as a whole. Both the Union of Liberation and the Zemstvo Constitutionalist Group had decided to refrain from pushing constitutionalist demands in the zemstvos and elsewhere when the war was announced. But by the summer of 1904 the Union was undertaking the mass circulation of its proclamation on "the people and the war," which (in what was thought to be appropriately folksy and simple language) linked the military and diplomatic failures to the political system and called for popular participation in government; and the zemstvo constitutionalists were once again actively planning systematic presentation of constitutionalist demands in the forthcoming zemstvo assemblies. As in other parts of the movement, it must have been the combined effect of Russian military failure and the increasingly aggressive internal policies of Pleve which led Beseda to end its truce and enter a new stage of oppositional activity in the second half of 1904.<sup>56</sup>

---

hovsky, N. Lvov, A. Stakhovich, Golovin, Geiden, Novosiltsev, Petrovo-Solovovo, Maklakov, Shishkov, Ershov, (?) Demidov, Golitsyn, Smirnov, and Orlov.

55. *Ibid.*, p. 155. But only Count Geiden took exception to the general proposition that the country was ready for a regime of popular sovereignty based on universal suffrage. He preferred to see the "gradual expansion of local self-government" (*ibid.*, p. 156).

56. Shakhovskoy, "Soiuz Osvobozhdeniia," pp. 118-21; Smith, "The Constitutional-Democratic Movement," pp. 187-89, 204. Pleve's most recent affronts to zemstvo sensi-

On October 30 Beseda met to discuss the resolutions which had been prepared for the forthcoming zemstvo congress by the congress's bureau. As in the meeting of zemstvo constitutionalists held a few days later (in which many Beseda members took part), special attention was paid to point 9 of the resolutions which demanded "participation in legislation by popular representatives" (the famous "point 10" of the congress resolutions). While recognizing that there were members who favored only consultative representation, all those present at the meeting agreed that the participation imprecisely referred to in the resolution ought to be of a "decisive character," and most present apparently favored representation by universal, direct suffrage.<sup>57</sup> The question of zemstvo tactics to be drawn from this declaration was left open in attendance on the zemstvo congress. The bureau was instructed to circulate the Union of Liberation's new constitutional draft to the membership before the next meeting.<sup>58</sup>

Following the congress, Beseda accepted the constitutionalist position of the congress majority as the will of the zemstvos. Having done so, the circle began plotting constitutionalist initiatives and counterinitiatives for zemstvo and gentry assemblies against the "Slavophile" propositions of erstwhile colleagues. (Shipov, N. A. Khomiakov, M. Stakhovich, Sheremetev, and several other "Slavophiles" had ceased attending the meetings by late 1904.) The next meeting of January 8–9, 1905, was devoted primarily to this kind of activity.<sup>59</sup>

In 1902 Beseda had rejected formal association with the émigré paper *Osvobozhdenie* because of its too-close association with a definite political program. In January 1905 Beseda undertook sponsorship of the "legal" constitutionalist newspaper being planned, in anticipation of further relaxation of censorship, by S. N. Trubetskoy. The paper was frankly introduced to the circle by Trubetskoy as a "party organ." "Its orientation," he declared, "will be constitutionalist, without a nod in the direction of the Slavophiles," whom

---

bilities included the aforementioned audits and nonconfirmation in office of zemstvo officials, and an attempt to wreck the all-zemstvo medical organization, among other things.

57. GIM, fond 31, no. 142, p. 170 [misnumbered 159]. In attendance were Kotliarevsky, Pisarev, Novosiltsev, S. Tolstoy, Geiden, A. Stakhovich, Maklakov, Peter Dolgorukov, Mazarovich, Smirnov, Shakhovskoy, Shishkov, Bobrinsky, P. Tolstoy, Chelnokov, Orlov, and N. Lvov.

58. This project was "going from hand to hand" at the meeting. At least two Beseda members, Kokoshkin and N. Lvov, had participated in the drafting of it. Smith, "The Constitutional-Democratic Movement," pp. 304–8.

59. This was in particular anticipation of the forthcoming Moscow gentry assembly. As things turned out there, Trubetskoy, Pavel Dolgorukov, and Novosiltsev cosponsored with Khomiakov and Shipov a minority address asking the tsar "to summon elected representatives to participation in state affairs" against the majority address of a markedly reactionary character. GIM, fond 31, no. 142, p. 234.

it would indeed “be necessary to criticize sharply in the very first issues.” Although the paper was to be aimed at “all levels of the population” with its liberal constitutionalist solutions, it is clear from the discussion that the primary targets were the zemstvo and gentry constituencies.<sup>60</sup>

Although Dolgorukov, true to his earlier position, argued that Beseda should not sponsor the paper or “enter into any kind of legal ties with it” in view of its intention of attacking the Slavophiles, the circle nevertheless ruled it “desirable to enter into close relations with the newspaper and to take broad part in it, both by contributing and by acquiring shares.” A prospectus prepared shortly after this meeting listed an editorial board composed largely of Beseda members, along with I. I. Petrunkevich and several leading liberal academicians; and on March 26 secretary Maklakov sent to all members an announcement of the circle’s intention to gather funds for publication of *Moskovskii ezhenedel’nik* by issuing shares at 500 rubles each.<sup>61</sup> The same commitment to liberal constitutionalist propagandizing was evident in Beseda’s other publishing activities at about the same time (see below).

With Beseda taking the constitutionalist side in the split in the zemstvo political movement that had come into the open with the November congress, the justification for its separate existence as a forum for political discussion and for the influencing of zemstvo affairs had nearly disappeared. Shipov and his fellow “Slavophiles” went off to consolidate their position in the zemstvo and gentry assemblies and to prepare a “countercongress”; and the zemstvo constitutionalists already had their organization, for acting on the assemblies as well as for discussion, and most of the Beseda members still active in late 1904–early 1905 probably belonged to it. And they, if their opinions in the early January 1905 meeting are good evidence, far from seeking to preserve a forum for discussion with the “Slavophiles,” now wanted to do political battle with them in the assemblies and in the press. In January 1905 the idea of *nedogovorennost’* as an organizing principle for political activity apparently had few advocates.

The circle still had enough vitality to produce a relatively large turnout for the meeting called on February 20, 1905, to discuss the just-published Bulygin rescript.<sup>62</sup> Consideration of the February 18 rescript and the accom-

60. Ibid., pp. 230, 304–5.

61. Ibid. Three numbers of Trubetskoy’s paper were set in type in May 1905, under the title *Moskovskaia nedelia*, but all three failed to pass the censor. The paper was revived by E. N. Trubetskoy in 1906 (his brother having died on September 29, 1905) and was published by him until 1910 under the original title *Moskovskii ezhenedel’nik*.

62. Attending were Ershov, Geiden, Shishkov, Kovalevsky, the brothers Dolgorukov, P. Tolstoy, S. Tolstoy, Kotliarevsky, Pisarev, S. Trubetskoy, Novosiltsev, G. Lvov, N. Lvov, Orlov, Shakhovskoy, P. (?) Demidov, Maklakov, Golovin, Chelnokov, and Petrovo-Solovovo.

panying *ukaz* and manifesto took place against a background of intense concern about the situation of the peasantry, which all present agreed was critical.<sup>63</sup>

Warnings of imminent peasant revolution and mass expropriation of property were heard in the general discussion preliminary to the business of the meeting, and in the midst of the proceedings N. N. Lvov rushed in directly from his Saratov estate to tell of extensive disorders and looting by peasants there and in the neighborhood.<sup>64</sup> The group agreed that it was high time to begin disseminating constitutionalist propaganda among the peasants in order, as one member put it, “to lead them onto a peaceful path of development” and to exploit that movement as a source of pressure on the government for reform. But no details of how this was to be done were mentioned, nor were any initiatives along these lines taken by the circle.<sup>65</sup>

Instead, the group decided to turn its attention to the problem of tactics concerning the documents of February 18, in anticipation of the extraordinary assemblies that were sure to be called in response to their issuance. While all apparently agreed that the rescript was inadequate, several members proposed that the other assemblies ought to follow the example of the Moscow *zemstvo*, which had first expressed thanks to the throne for the rescript and then, taking advantage of the *ukaz*'s offer, had appointed a committee to draw up a communication of political desiderata for the Council of Ministers. It was after all, they argued, a concession, and the *ukaz* provided a means for communicating with the government; moreover, expression of thanks would support the ministers who had talked the tsar into granting the rescript.<sup>66</sup>

But others took strong exception to this tactic, arguing that nothing had

63. GIM, fond 31, no. 142, pp. 238 ff.

64. *Ibid.*, p. 245.

65. Only Petrovo-Solovovo among those present objected to the general idea of popular agitation: “The tsar is holy to the people, as a counterbalance to the masters. . . . Propaganda can provoke only anger. Only when Russia will have become a little used to public activity in the form of a consultative organ will it be possible to agitate” (*ibid.*, p. 242). He may have been thinking of Lvov's report that the peasants in his region were being subjected to governmental propaganda to the effect that the “masters want to get rid of the tsar and seize power” (*ibid.*, p. 245).

66. The rescript had announced the tsar's intention of summoning elected representatives to legislative consultation and called for creation of a “special conference,” to be chaired by Bulygin, to realize this intention. The *ukaz* directed the Council of Ministers to study proposals addressed to the government concerning the “improvement of state organization and amelioration of the popular welfare,” and thereby appeared to affirm the right of the public to petition the Council for reforms. The ministers had drawn up the rescript and persuaded the tsar to sign it when they learned that the tsar had signed the manifesto calling on the population to support the throne “against foreign and domestic enemies” and to pray “for the greater strengthening of the true autocracy.” All three documents were published on the same day.

in fact been conceded. It appears that some of them thought the government was at that moment on the verge of capitulating to the constitutionalist campaign and that it was time to force the issue, rather than allowing the regime (in time-honored fashion) to buy time with vague promises of reform. There was even talk of calling an extraordinary zemstvo convention to formulate demands on the government, and proposals for “going to Petersburg and forming our own government” were made.<sup>67</sup>

The circle adjourned, however, without having agreed on a plan of action for the zemstvo and gentry assemblies regarding the Bulygin rescript. Apparently, the members who were at the meeting found it unnecessary to do so. Their attention was turned elsewhere. The proposals for popular agitation, the development of programs, convocations in St. Petersburg, and “forming a government” had been made not as recommendations for Beseda but in reference to the zemstvo congress and the “liberal party”—that is, the zemstvo constitutionalists and the Union of Liberation. The increasing urge to action beyond the coordination of zemstvo declarations had led the membership into other political organizations, undermining the foundation for Beseda’s existence.

The record mentions only three later meetings: one held on May 27, which was attended by only nine members; a meeting scheduled for October, but canceled for lack of attendance when only three members in addition to the secretary made an appearance; and a meeting scheduled for November (there is no evidence that it was ever convened). The last (May) meeting was devoted entirely to the circle’s publishing activities—reports on projects under way and proposals for new publications on current political issues. What remained of Beseda in the spring of 1905 was a politically inspired publishing cooperative.<sup>68</sup>

Beseda’s program of book publishing on contemporary political and social issues had begun in 1902. In January 1904 the circle in effect transformed itself into a publishing cooperative by ruling that henceforth all new members would be obliged to purchase 100 rubles of shares in its publishing cooperative as a condition for membership in Beseda. In the course of 1904 and 1905 the planning of the circle’s books was a regular item on the agenda of its scheduled meetings. By the end of its existence, Beseda had brought out seven collections of articles, several of them in multiple volumes or in more than one edition.<sup>69</sup>

67. These proposals were made under the impact of Lvov’s report on agrarian violence in Saratov (*ibid.*, pp. 245–46).

68. *Ibid.*, p. 253.

69. *Vseobshchee obrazovanie v Rossii: Sbornik statei L. N. Blinova, N. P. Bogolepova, N. F. Bunakova, N. M. Bychkova, V. Ia. Murinova, Narrator’a, F. F. O’denburga, A. I. Shingareva i A. A. Shteven*, pt. 1, ed. D. Shakhovskoy (Moscow, 1902); *Melkaia*

The format of the volumes was relatively uniform: general editorship by two Beseda members and articles contributed by a long list of prominent academics and journalists, along with a smattering of nonprofessional zemstvo men (among them, several members of the circle). Beseda's sponsorship of the volumes was formally announced on the title pages only of those published after early 1905. In intellectual level and complexity the collections were clearly designed for the well-educated public. Some of them were serious contributions to scholarship and are frequently cited in scholarly works to this day. In this respect the Beseda cooperative performed a sort of division of labor with N. E. Paramonov's Donskaia Rech firm (Rostov on Don), which published huge quantities of popular brochures on current issues in the period during 1905 and 1906 when the censorship was most relaxed. Many of the contributors to the Beseda collections also wrote popular essays on the same subjects for publication by Paramonov.<sup>70</sup>

---

*zemskaia edimitsa: Sbornik statei K. K. Arsen'eva, V. G. Bashaeva, P. G. Vinogradova, I. V. Gessena, G. B. Iollosa, M. M. Kovalevskogo, N. I. Lazarevskogo, M. K. Lemke, Barona A. F. Meiendorfa, M. N. Pokrovskogo, V. Iu. Skalona, V. D. Spasovicha, I. M. Strakhovskogo i G. I. Shreidera*, ed. P. D. Dolgorukov, D. I. Shakhovskoy, and editors of *Pravo* (St. Petersburg, n.d., but 1902); *Melkaia zemskaia edimitsa: Sbornik statei . . .*, 2nd rev. ed., ed. P. D. Dolgorukov, D. I. Shakhovskoy, and editors of *Pravo* (St. Petersburg, n.d., but 1903) (the second edition included amendments to several articles, the deletion of Shreider's article, and new articles by O. Solnerdal, N. E. Kudrin, V. M. Gessen, and A. D. Gradovsky); *Melkaia zemskaia edimitsa v 1902–1903 gg.: Sbornik statei*, pt. 2, ed. P. D. Dolgorukov, D. I. Shakhovskoy, and editors of *Pravo* (St. Petersburg, 1903) (the supplement includes Shreider's article, displaced from the second edition, articles by S. Bleklov and M. Ippolitov, and documents); *Nuzhdy derevni po rabotam komitetov o sel'skokhoziaistvennoi promyshlennosti*, vol. 1: *Sbornik statei K. K. Arsen'eva, V. M. Gessena, I. V. Gessena, M. I. Ippolitova, A. A. Leon'eva, P. N. Miliukova, V. A. Rozenberga, I. M. Strakhovskogo, N. V. Chekhova, i G. I. Shreidera*, ed. N. N. L'vov and A. A. Stakhovich (St. Petersburg, 1904); vol. 2: *Sbornik statei N. F. Annenskogo, M. Ia. Gertsenshteina, A. I. Kaminki, A. P. Mertvago, A. V. Peshekhonova, M. N. Soboleva, V. V. Khizhniakova, A. A. Chuprova*, ed. N. N. L'vov and A. A. Stakhovich (St. Petersburg, 1904); *Agrarnyi vopros: Sbornik statei prof. M. Ia. Gertsenshteina, kn. P. D. Dolgorukova, prof. V. E. Dena, prof. I. A. Iveronova, A. A. Kaufmana, prof. A. A. Manuilova, I. I. Petrunkevicha, prof. A. F. Fortunatova, prof. A. A. Chuprova*, ed. P. D. Dolgorukov and I. I. Petrunkevich (Moscow: Knigoizdatel'stvo "Beseda," 1905); *Krest'ianskii stroi*, vol. 1: *Sbornik statei A. A. Kornilova, A. S. Lappo-Danilevskogo, V. I. Semevskogo i I. M. Strakhovskogo*, ed. P. D. Dolgorukov, S. L. Tolstoy, and editors of *Pravo* (St. Petersburg: Knigoizdatel'stvo "Beseda," 1905); *Politicheskii stroi sovremennykh gosudarstv: Sbornik statei*, vol. 1, ed. P. D. Dolgorukov, I. I. Petrunkevich, and editors of *Pravo* (St. Petersburg, 1905) (contributions by M. A. Reisner, V. M. Gessen, P. G. Vinogradov, M. M. Kovalevsky, N. E. Kudrin, and P. N. Miliukov); *Konstitutsionnoe gosudarstvo: Sbornik statei*, ed. I. V. Gessen, A. I. Kaminka, and editors of *Pravo* (St. Petersburg, 1905) (contributors include N. I. Kareev, A. K. Dzhivelegov, M. B. Gorenberg, M. A. Reisner, N. I. Lazarevsky, N. E. Kudrin, S. A. Kotliarevsky, V. V. Vodovozov, Z. D. Avalov, L. V. Shalland, M. N. Pokrovsky, and V. M. Gessen); *Konstitutsionnoe gosudarstvo: Sbornik statei*, 2nd ed. (St. Petersburg, 1905).

70. Paramonov's firm also published Marxist "classics" and S.D. and S.R. tracts. It

Taken as a lot, the collections deal with three broad themes: the peasant-agrarian question, local self-government, and constitutional government at the national level. The first Beseda publication grew out of the January 1901 St. Petersburg meeting with "representatives of the capital press" which had been held to plan a response to the Ministry of Education's policies on primary education; this was the collection of articles entitled *Universal Education in Russia*, edited by Shakhovskoy. It was published in Moscow; most of the remaining collections were published in St. Petersburg with the extensive help of the editorial staff of the liberal weekly *Pravo*. Shakhovskoy's volume was plainly meant to be a part of the campaign in defense of public control of primary schools. The next two collections reflected the circle's preoccupation between 1902 and mid-1904 with the struggle against the ministries over the prerogatives of local self-government. *The Small Zemstvo Unit* (1902-3) reiterated the perennial liberal arguments in favor of creating a subdistrict level zemstvo organ and provided laudatory descriptions of self-government institutions in a variety of countries.<sup>71</sup> *Needs of the Village* (1904) analyzed the materials of the local committees of Witte's Special Conference on the Needs of Agriculture. These materials, according to N. F. Annensky's preface to volume 2, revealed "amazing unanimity in rural society in the struggle for representation and self-government, and against bureaucratic arbitrariness."<sup>72</sup>

Of the four collections that appeared in the course of 1905, the first two continued the discussion of the peasant-agrarian question begun in *Needs of the Village*, focusing on the land-shortage crisis and the history of agrarian reform (*The Agrarian Question*, comprising the papers presented at the Conference on the Agrarian Question, April 28-29, 1905, and other materials of the conference; and *The Peasant Order*). The third, *The Political Order of Contemporary States*, contained articles on constitutional theory and descriptions of the political systems of modern constitutional states; a preface refuted the Slavophile doctrine of the uniqueness of Russian national development

---

was closed down by the police first in December 1905, reopened after four months, and closed for good on November 25, 1906. The total volume of publishing was enormous, numbering millions of copies which were widely distributed by the parties, zemstvos, and other organizations (they were regularly displayed alongside the Beseda collections at the zemstvo congresses in 1905). The police spent many months after suppression of the press in eliminating stocks of Paramonov's publications. TsGAOR, fond 102 (Departament politsii), no. 13, pt. 3, p. 88.

71. In an introduction Arseniev summarized the two basic arguments in favor of creating a small zemstvo unit: (1) it would better satisfy local administrative and fiscal needs, (2) it would lead to social rapprochement between the classes. "The small zemstvo unit" was the successor in the liberal program to the "all-class *volost'*" of the 1860s and 1870s. (In the liberal view, the *volost'* had been rendered unsuitable as the basis for local reform as a result of the "counterreforms" of Alexander III's reign.)

72. *Nuzhdy derevni*, 2:3-4.



from the point of view of positivist sociology: the laws of historical development dictated that Russia, too, was to become a constitutional state.<sup>73</sup> The fourth, put to press after the defeat at Tsushima Straits but before publication of the “Bulygin constitution” (August 6), bearing the title *The Constitutional State*, fairly exuded optimism about the impending introduction of a constitutional monarchy in Russia and identified its aim as the “elucidation of the basic features and interrelations of the various parts of the constitutional state” for the practical edification of future voters and legislators.<sup>74</sup> Its second edition had a new preface written after the publication of the “Bulygin constitution” which advertised the position taken toward the “constitution” by the nascent Kadet party.<sup>75</sup> In the last recorded discussion of the Beseda circle, a third volume in the series on constitutionalism, to be entitled *Adoption of a Constitution in Russia*, was being planned. It never saw the light of day.<sup>76</sup>

The pattern of changing concerns and growing politicization which is perceptible in the record of Beseda’s meetings is equally apparent in the history of its publications. The general subjects for the collections were discussed and preliminary agreement on them was reached in the circle; the manuscripts were circulated, and occasionally criticized, at the meetings.<sup>77</sup> But the detailed planning and execution of the books were done elsewhere; no strict editorial control over the contents was maintained by the circle. Neither the choice of specific articles nor even less the solutions proposed by them represented views peculiar to Beseda. They reflect, rather, the prevailing views in the circles from which the authors were drawn: liberal university professors (some of whom were no longer in the Russian universities as a result of their

73. *Politicheskii stroi*, pp. v–vii.

74. *Konstitutsionnoe gosudarstvo* (2nd ed.), p. v.

75. *Ibid.*, pp. vi–vii.

76. GIM, fond 31, no. 142, p. 253. Second volumes of the collections on the political order and the agrarian question were published under the Beseda imprimatur in 1905 and 1907, respectively: *Politicheskii stroi sovremennykh gosudarstv*, vol. 2, ed. P. D. Dolgorukov, I. I. Petrunkevich, and editors of *Pravo* (St. Petersburg, 1905); *Agrarnyi vopros*, vol. 2: *Sbornik statei L. K. Breiera, M. Bruna, N. I. Vorob'eva, prof. M. Ia. Gertsenshteina, prof. V. E. Dena, A. A. Kaufmana, N. N. Kutlera, prof. V. L. Levitskogo, prof. A. A. Mamulova, I. I. Petrunkevicha, O. A. Khauke, prof. A. I. Chuprova i V. E. Iakushkina: Posviashchaetsia pamiati M. Ia. Gertsenshteina* (Moscow: Knigoizdatel'stvo “Beseda,” 1907).

77. In the meeting of October 30, 1904, A. Stakhovich asked for a decision by the group in his dispute with N. Lvov over the contributions of Khizhniakov to the collection for which he and Lvov were assuming editorial responsibility. Lvov had found Khizhniakov's articles too sharp and tendentious and wanted them removed; Stakhovich favored some editing only. The question was left open until the articles could be read in a later session. The decision, if taken, is not in the record. The articles by Khizhniakov did appear. There is no other example in the record of direct consideration by the circle of the merits of individual articles; and this example is one in which the circle's attention was invited by the editors. GIM, fond 31, no. 142, p. 170.

political views or activities); liberal and moderate-socialist (“legal populist”) journalists with ties to *Pravo*, *Russkie vedomosti*, *Vestnik Evropy*, or *Russkoe bogatstvo*; and veterans of the zemstvo constitutionalist movement. (The absence of social-democrat contributors was reflected in the neglect by the collections of the “working-class question” as such, and by the general emphasis on rural problems and local self-government.) Many of the views expounded in the Beseda collections found their way into the program of the Kadet party.<sup>78</sup>

Beseda’s publishing enterprise provided an important institutional setting for contacts between zemstvo political leaders and the “intelligentsia” (the journalists and academics without gentry or zemstvo ties), which led to, among other things, the formation of the Union of Liberation and eventually of the Kadet party. These contacts were for the most part established through the St. Petersburg editorial offices of *Pravo*. I. V. Gessen, chief editor of *Pravo*, tells in his memoirs of his first meeting with Peter Dolgorukov, who had come to St. Petersburg as a representative of Beseda to seek editorial help in publishing a collection of articles on the “small zemstvo unit.” Gessen agreed to handle the editing; and the next collection on the “needs of the village” was undertaken at his suggestion after the great success of the first. His description of the first contacts between *zemtsy* and *intelligenty* in this enterprise is worth quoting in part:

My plan for the publication of the collection was approved by Beseda, and subsequently a populous meeting of *zemtsy* and literary men was held in Petersburg for discussion of the program worked out by Ganfman. It was accepted in its entirety. . . . The *zemtsy* received the representatives of the intelligentsia with exaggerated respect and greedily drank in their views and attitudes. But my delight was equal to their respectfulness, and I took pride and great pleasure in my contacts with them: these were for the most part members of the editorial staff of *Russkoe bogatstvo* and the populist circles attached to it. The fledgling social-democrats, prisoners of class-consciousness, were feverishly concerned with keeping their skirts clean and therefore held themselves aloof and carefully refrained from common actions with other circles.<sup>79</sup>

78. The Soviet historian L. V. Cherepnin appropriately cites four of the Beseda publications in a recent article on the “crisis of bourgeois historiography” as “containing the political credo of the liberal Russian bourgeoisie . . . , part of which subsequently entered the Kadet party,” apparently without being aware of their common sponsorship. See *Ocherki istorii istoricheskoi nauki v SSSR*, vol. 3 (Moscow, 1963), pp. 246 ff.

79. I. V. Gessen, *V dvukh vekakh: Zhiznennyi otchet* (Berlin, 1937), pp. 166–67. It is interesting to note that Gessen uses the term “intelligentsia” in a way that excludes himself and other members of the *Pravo* staff (most of whom were of nongentry origin and without zemstvo ties). He apparently applied it only to persons in the radical socialist tradition. The *zemtsy* with whom he met would certainly have applied it to Gessen and his colleagues. M. K. Ganfman was Gessen’s chief editorial assistant.

An important and instructive example of the kinds of ties established in these publishing ventures is provided by the case of G. I. Shreider, son of a Jewish estate-manager of Ekaterinoslav Province, former *narodovolets*, zemstvo statistician, and editor before the turn of the century of numerous provincial newspapers, most of which were shut down by the police. From 1898 to the spring of 1903 Shreider was on the editorial staff of *S.-Peterburgskie vedomosti* and contributed simultaneously to *Russkoe bogatstvo* and *Pravo*. His specialty was writing on local administration, particularly its fiscal aspects. He participated intimately, as editor and contributor, in the two Beseda collections mentioned by Gessen, and in the process got to know well the Dolgorukovs, Shakhovskoy, N. N. Lvov, and several other members of Beseda.

In May 1903 Shreider's work in St. Petersburg was cut short by arrest and incarceration. (He was falsely accused of being an S.D.; in fact his sympathies were with the S.R.'s, and he later joined that party.) Following his release sometime later he went to Moscow (in October 1903), at the invitation of Lvov and Peter Dolgorukov, to become the first secretary and organizer of the Moscow branch of the Union of Liberation. He took the job, according to his unpublished reminiscences, after conferring with Annensky, Peshekhonov, and others at *Russkoe bogatstvo*, who agreed that he should enter the Union "in order to work at moving it to the left and remaining there, of course, only up to a certain point." When Shreider left Moscow in the autumn of 1904 to return to St. Petersburg to become editor of *Syn otechestva*, his place as secretary of the Union of Liberation was taken by another intelligentsia contributor to the Beseda collections, S. M. Bleklov.<sup>80</sup>

### Conclusion

To many of its members, Beseda provided a first political step outside the confines of the zemstvo and gentry institutions—a cautious first step, into a sort of gentlemen's club with membership recruited almost exclusively from influential zemstvo men of educated gentry background. Here the "old constitutionalists"—the Dolgorukovs, Shakhovskoy, N. N. Lvov, Novosiltsev, N. N. Kovalevsky, and a few others—became acquainted with colleagues of like mind and recruited new supporters for their cause. The proportion of convinced constitutionalists grew rapidly in the circle beginning about 1902,

80. Hoover Institution Archives (Stanford, California). Nicolaevsky Collection, no. 104, box 1, folder 1; and Nicolaevsky interview with Shreider in Brussels. According to Shreider he left the Union in late 1904 because he saw it was about to be transformed into a constitutionalist political party "in which, of course, there was no place for me or for other revolutionary and socialist elements." His editorship of *Syn otechestva* lasted until December 1905, when he fled abroad to avoid arrest. Shreider was apparently suggested for the Moscow Union job by Gessen (*V dvukh vekakh*, p. 188).

partly through an influx of new members and partly through evolution in the views of old members.<sup>81</sup> These were, for the most part, “men of the eighties,” members of a political generation raised on the “gospel of small deeds,” which had led them into zemstvo service and had kept them throughout most of their careers on the path of strict legality.<sup>82</sup> The record of Beseda is instructive about how such men, under the pressure of mounting social crisis on the one side and accelerating government repression and incompetence on the other, were mobilized into political opposition, abandoning along the way the gospel of small deeds and the path of strict legality as well.

Beseda facilitated the political communication within zemstvo ranks and between zemstvo men and the “intelligentsia” which led to the creation of the Union of Liberation, the Union of Zemstvo Constitutionalists, and the Constitutional Democratic Party. A small group of men, among whom Peter D. Dolgorukov and D. I. Shakhovskoy deserve special mention for ubiquitousness, stood at the center (along with others, to be sure) of all these organizations. Beseda was only one of several organizations they helped to create in their endeavor to expand the movement. If they had ever entertained the idea of making the circle the political nerve center of the liberation movement, they must soon have abandoned it. The record provides no grounds for concluding that for them Beseda was anything beyond a source of contact with influential zemstvo men, an instrument for influencing the actions of zemstvo and gentry assemblies, and a publishing enterprise. It was just those members who were most actively involved in other political organizations who most staunchly defended the nonpartisan, informal character of the circle.

81. The record again confirms Shakhovskoy's observation: “The times were such that the number of convinced and determined constitutionalists in Beseda grew, both by the entrance of new members and by natural evolution among the old members.” See “Soiuz Osvobozhdeniia,” p. 103; also Maklakov, *Vlast' i obshchestvennost'*, pp. 291–97; and Dolgorukov, *Velikaia razrukha*, pp. 332–35.

82. The general characteristics of the political generation of the 1880s are described with extraordinary insight in the memoirs of A. A. Kizeveter, *Na rubezhe dvukh stoletii (vospominaniia, 1881–1914)* (Prague, 1929), pp. 167–71.

APPENDIX: *Beseda Membership*

The fifty-four members are listed below along with the zemstvo or gentry position(s) they held during membership. *Sources*: GIM, fond 31, no. 142, pp. 1–3; data on officeholding and vital statistics are drawn from diverse sources, including the invaluable compilation of N. F. Ikonnikov, *NdR, la noblesse de Russie: Éléments pour servir à la reconstitution des registres généalogiques de la noblesse d'après les actes et documents disponibles complétés grâce au concours dévoué des nobles russes*, 2nd ed., 26 vols. (Paris, 1957–66). Note that the district and provincial gentry marshals were ex officio chairmen of the corresponding zemstvo assemblies.

- BARIATINSKY, Prince Viktor Viktorovich (1861–1915), district gentry marshal, Kazan District, Kazan Province
- BOBRINSKY, Count Aleksei Aleksandrovich (1852–1927), provincial gentry marshal, St. Petersburg Province
- BOBRINSKY, Count Vladimir Alekseevich (1867–1927), district zemstvo board chairman, district gentry marshal, Bogoroditsk District, Tula Province
- BULYGIN, Peter Pavlovich (?–?), provincial zemstvo board member, Vladimir Province
- CHELNOKOV, Mikhail Vasilievich (1863–1917?), provincial zemstvo board member, Moscow Province
- DEMIDOV, Igor Platonovich (1873–?), (Moscow address)
- DEMIDOV, Lev Platonovich (1870–?), (Moscow address)
- DOLGORUKOV, Prince Pavel Dmitrievich (1866–1927), district gentry marshal, Ruza District, Moscow Province
- DOLGORUKOV, Prince Peter Dmitrievich (1866–1945?), district zemstvo board chairman, Sudzha District, Kursk Province
- ENGALYCHEV, Prince Nikolai Nikolaevich (1865–1916), (Tambov address)
- ERSHOV, Mikhail Dmitrievich (1860–?), provincial zemstvo deputy, Tula and Kaluga Provinces
- GEIDEN, Count Peter Aleksandrovich (1840–1907), district gentry marshal, Opochet'sk District, provincial zemstvo deputy, Pskov Province
- GLEBOV, Nikolai Nikolaevich (?–?), provincial zemstvo deputy, Iaroslavl Province
- GOLITSYN, Prince Mikhail Vladimirovich (1872–?), district gentry marshal, Epifan District, Tula Province
- GOLOVIN, Fedor Aleksandrovich (1867–?), provincial zemstvo board member and board chairman, Moscow Province
- GUCHKOV, Nikolai Ivanovich (?–?), provincial zemstvo deputy, Moscow Province, Moscow city дума deputy
- KAMENSKY, Peter Valerievich (?–?), district gentry marshal, Mariupol District, Ekaterinoslav Province
- KHOMIAKOV, Nikolai Alekseevich (1850–1925), district gentry marshal, Sychev District, Smolensk Province
- KOKOSHKIN, Fedor Fedorovich (1871–1918), provincial zemstvo deputy, provincial zemstvo board member, Moscow Province
- KOLOKOLTSOV, Vasilii Grigorevich (1867–1934), provincial zemstvo board chairman, Kharkov Province
- KOTLIAREVSKY, Sergei Andreevich (1873–?), provincial zemstvo deputy, Saratov Province
- KOVALEVSKY, Nikolai Nikolaevich (1860–?), provincial zemstvo deputy, Kharkov Province
- LVOV, Prince Georgii Evgenievich (1861–1925), provincial zemstvo board chairman, Tula Province
- LVOV, Nikolai Nikolaevich (1865–1940?), provincial zemstvo deputy, provincial zemstvo board chairman, Saratov Province

- MAKLAKOV, Vasilii Alekseevich (1870–1957), none (Moscow address)
- MASLOV, Sergei Nikolaevich (?–?), provincial zemstvo board chairman, Orel Province
- MAZAROVICH, Nikolai Ivanovich (?–?), district gentry marshal, Krasninsk District, Smolensk Province
- MEIENDORF, Baron Aleksandr Feliksovich (1868–?), (St. Petersburg address)
- MEIENDORF, Baron Iurii Feliksovich (?–?), (Kiev provincial address)
- MUKHANOV, Aleksei Alekseevich (1860–1907), provincial gentry marshal, Chernigov Province
- NOVOSILTSEV, Iurii Aleksandrovich (1853–192?), district gentry marshal, Temnikovo District, Tambov Province
- OLSUFIEV, Count Dmitrii Adamovich (1862–1937), provincial zemstvo board chairman, Saratov Province
- OLSUFIEV, Count Mikhail Adamovich (1860–1918), district zemstvo board chairman, district gentry marshal, Dmitrov District, Moscow Province
- ORLOV, Mikhail Nikolaevich (1867–?), district gentry marshal, Balashov District, Saratov Province
- PETROV-SOLOVOVO, Vasilii Mikhailovich (1850–1908), district gentry marshal, Tambov District, Tambov Province
- PISAREV, Rafael Alekseevich (1850–1906), district gentry marshal, Epifan District, provincial zemstvo deputy, Tula Province
- RUSINOV, Aleksandr Fedorovich (?–?), district gentry marshal, Lkhvitsy District, Poltava Province
- SHAKHOVSKOY, Prince Dmitrii Ivanovich (1861–1940?), provincial zemstvo deputy, Iaroslavl Province
- SHEREMETEV, Count Pavel Sergeevich (1871–1942), district gentry marshal, Zvenigorod District, Moscow Province
- SHIPOV, Dmitrii Nikolaevich (1851–1920), provincial zemstvo board chairman, Moscow Province
- SHISHKOV, Nikolai Aleksandrovich (1857–?), provincial zemstvo deputy, Samara Province
- SKOBELTSYN, Peter Aleksandrovich (?–?), district gentry marshal, Aleksin District, Tula Province
- SMIRNOV, Georgii Aleksandrovich (?–?), provincial zemstvo board member, Vladimir Province
- STAKHOVICH, Aleksandr Aleksandrovich (1858–1915), district gentry marshal, Elts District, Orel Province
- STAKHOVICH, Mikhail Aleksandrovich (1861–1923), provincial gentry marshal, Orel Province
- SVECHIN, Aleksandr Alekseevich (?–?), provincial zemstvo board chairman, Chernigov Province
- TATARINOV, Fedor Vasilievich (?–?), district zemstvo board chairman, Orel District, Orel Province
- TOLSTOY, Count Pavel Mikhailovich (?–?), (St. Petersburg address)
- TOLSTOY, Count Sergei Lvovich (1863–1947), district zemstvo deputy, Chern District, Tula Province
- TRUBETSKOY, Prince Evgenii Nikolaevich (1863–1920), provincial zemstvo board member, Kaluga Province
- TRUBETSKOY, Prince Sergei Nikolaevich (1862–1905), none (Moscow address)
- UNKOVSKY, Semen Aleksandrovich (1875?–1930), district gentry marshal, Balashov District, Saratov Province
- VOLKONSKY, Prince Nikolai Sergeevich (1848–1910), provincial zemstvo board chairman, Riazan Province
- VSEVOLOZHSKY, Mikhail Vladimirovich (1861–1909), provincial gentry marshal, Tver Province