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## S. M. Kravchinskii and the National Front Against Autocracy

The concessions embodied in the Manifesto of October 30, 1905 were wrung from the Russian autocracy by an opposition united as it had never been before. For once all the forces of Russian society which stood for change were focused on a common goal, the acquisition of a constitution and political rights. This remarkable consensus was largely the achievement of a group of Russian liberals, the *osvobozhdenitsy* or "liberationists" inspired by the émigré newspaper *Osvobozhdenie* and guided by the Union of Liberation [*Soiuz Osvobozhdeniia*] inside Russia.<sup>1</sup> The idea of a national front against autocracy did not, however, originate with the "liberationists." Tendencies towards union within the ranks of the Russian opposition can be perceived over a decade before the appearance of the first issue of *Osvobozhdenie*. In the 1890s these tendencies were strengthened and national front tactics popularized by the work of the Russian Free Press Fund [*Fond Vol'noi Russkoi Pressy*] in London.<sup>2</sup>

The Russian Free Press Fund<sup>3</sup> was established in June 1891 by the revolutionary publicist Sergei Mikhailovich Kravchinskii, better known as Stepniak, the pseudonym he adopted when he wrote for a Western audience.

1. A survey of the extensive literature in Russian on this topic can be found in George Fischer, *Russian Liberalism: From Gentry to Intelligentsia* (Cambridge, Mass., 1958). Probably the best single account is D. I. Shakhovskoi, "Soiuz osvobozhdeniia," *Zarnitsy*, no. 2 (Moscow, 1909), pp. 81–171. See also the relevant chapters in Donald Treadgold, *Lenin and his Rivals* (New York, 1955); and Richard Pipes, *Struve: Liberal on the Left, 1870–1905* (Cambridge, Mass., 1970).

2. M. Nevedomskii [M. P. Miklashevskii], "80-ye i 90-ye gody v nashei literature," *Istoriia Rossii v XIX veke*, 9 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1907–11), 9:103. Miklashevskii's comments are especially valuable, since as a member of *Narodnoe Pravo* he was sensitive to the development of national front sentiment.

3. Houghton Library, Harvard University has all the titles issued under the RFPF imprint, as well as the complete run of *Letuchie listki*. Information about various aspects of the Fund's activities can be found in: E. A. Taratuta, *Etel' Lilian Voinich: Sud'ba pisatel'ia i sud'ba knigi*, 2nd ed. (Moscow, 1964). S. M. Stepniak-Kravchinskii, *V london-skoi emigratsii*, eds. M. E. Ermasheva and V. F. Zakharina (Moscow, 1968). Dioneo [I. V. Shklovskii], "V emigratsii," in A. A. Titov, ed., *Nikolai Vasil'evich Chaikovskii*

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Research for this paper was supported by grants from the Russian Research Center, Harvard University and the University of Victoria.

Kravchinskii had come to England in 1884, attracted by the popular success that his *Underground Russia* had enjoyed there and hoping to enlist the support of Western public opinion in the fight against Russian autocracy. His efforts in this direction were rewarded with the founding in 1889 of the "Society of Friends of Russian Freedom." The Society was a collection of well-to-do and influential Englishmen who endorsed and financed campaigns to acquaint English public opinion with the issues of political, religious, and national dissent within the Russian Empire and to publicize acts of official cruelty and injustice.<sup>4</sup>

The Society's main influence was exerted through its monthly newspaper, *Free Russia*, which Kravchinskii edited. Because he feared that the direct revolutionary appeals which he was to make in the Russian Free Press Fund might be used to discredit the work of the "Society of Friends of Russian Freedom," Kravchinskii did not assume the editorship of the Fund but gave it instead to his closest friend among the London émigrés, Felix Vadimovich Volkhovskii.<sup>5</sup> Few were deceived by this arrangement. Volkhovskii was regarded by the revolutionary emigration as Kravchinskii's *alter ego*. Furthermore the other active members of the Fund, L. E. Shishko and N. V. Chaikovskii,<sup>6</sup> were both long time associates and collaborators of Kravchinskii. More significantly, the whole character of the Fund's operations betrays

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(Paris, 1929). F. V. Volkhovskii, "L. Shishko (biograficheski ocherk)," in *Pamiati Leonida Emmanuilovicha Shishko* (Geneva, 1910). L. B. Gol'denberg, "Vospominaniia," *Katorga i ssylka*, 1924, no. 5, pp. 106–20; 1924, no. 6, pp. 121–26. The Paris *Okhrana* File at the Hoover Institute on War, Revolution, and Peace contains much material of varying quality. The Volkhovskoi [sic] File also at the Hoover Institute deals to some extent with the Fund's operations. A potentially more valuable collection of Volkhovskii's papers are as yet uncatalogued at the Houghton Library (accession no. \*68M-120).

4. For a description of the Society see Barry Hollingsworth, "The Society of Friends of Russian Freedom: English Liberals and Russian Socialists, 1890–1917," *Oxford Slavonic Papers*, n.s., 3 (1970): 45–64.

5. Felix Vadimovich Volkhovskii, 1846–1914. Studied law at Moscow University. Imprisoned for revolutionary activity three times prior to 1870. Formed student circle in Odessa in 1872. Met Kravchinskii in the winter of 1873–74. Convicted in "the trial of the 193." Exiled to Tomsk where he edited the *Sibirskaia gazeta* together with Leonid Shishko. Escaped to Canada in 1889. Associate editor of *Free Russia* from the fall of 1890.

6. Leonid Emmanuilovich Shishko, 1852–1910. Fellow student of Kravchinskii at Mikhailovskii Artillery School 1869. Joined the Chaikovskii Circle in 1874. Convicted in the "trial of the 193." Met Volkhovskii in exile in Tomsk. Fled abroad in August 1890. Arrived in England in early 1891.

Nikolai Vasil'evich Chaikovskii, 1850–1926. Organized in St. Petersburg the well-known Chaikovskii Circle which Kravchinskii joined in 1871. Emigrated to U.S. in 1875. Came to England in May 1878. Acted as Kravchinskii's literary agent in England and persuaded him to settle there in 1884.

Kravchinskii's leadership. In fact, so forcefully did he stamp the Fund with his ideas and personality that it retained the imprint long after his death.

The first publication of the Russian Free Press Fund was Kravchinskii's tract *Chego nam nuzhno*. Written in early 1891, it was intended to serve as the Fund's programmatic statement; but lack of funds and the difficulty of organizing a print shop deferred publication until December 1892. What we need, wrote Kravchinskii, is to expend less energy in interfactional disputes and more in the service of the general cause. He urged an attack along a broad front by all the effective forces of opposition within Russia. Complete ideological harmony, he felt, was neither necessary nor desirable. "The parties should remain separate, independent units, just as troops, variously armed, all go to make up a single army."<sup>7</sup>

Who were to be the troops of this revolutionary army? For the time being, at least, the peasantry could not be counted among their number. "As far as we know there is not at present a single faction within the Russian revolutionaries which seriously seeks a base of support among the peasantry. Having come to grief over the peasants eighteen years ago, the party apparently has not brought itself to approach them again." The revolutionary potential of the peasants was great but, as yet, unrealized.<sup>8</sup>

The proletariat also received scant attention. Kravchinskii's discussion of the program of Russian Marxists was sympathetic but patronizing. In any event, he wrote, "to see activity among the workers [as] the chief lever by which the autocracy can be overthrown is to abandon through theorizing any grasp of Russian realities. It cannot be doubted that the working class is numerically too small; and, given the lack of education, the extreme dispersal, and the complete lack of class consciousness which characterizes it, it is impossible at the present time to speak of its independent political role."<sup>9</sup>

By a process of elimination, then, Kravchinskii arrived at the conclusion that the revolutionary ranks must be filled now as in the past from "the educated class, the intelligentsia." The intelligentsia was the "heart of the nation" which not only felt most keenly the suffering and grief of Russia but played the most vital role in the life of the society. The armed forces were under its control. "It manages the press, sits in the zemstvos and municipal dumas, occupies the university faculties." If everyone from this class "who was at heart hostile to absolutism could make up his mind to move openly against it, it could not continue for six months."<sup>10</sup>

7. S. M. Stepniak-Kravchinskii, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 6 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1906-8), 6:22-23.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

9. *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

What prevented the intelligentsia from accomplishing what it desired and what so clearly lay within its power was the distrust and suspicion between the two ideological camps into which it was divided, liberalism and socialism. The liberal wing of the intelligentsia was frightened by the specter of a violent transformation of society which they believed to be inherent in the socialists' program; while the socialists viewed the political reforms sought by the liberals as attempts to forestall the social revolution.

In *Chego nam nuzhno*, Kravchinskii appealed to his fellow socialists to take the first step towards allaying this mutual distrust by openly declaring for a constitutional regime. Anticipating the argument that the liberals might accept aid from the socialists in securing representative political institutions and then might control these institutions to stifle social change, Kravchinskii cited the example of England. The English liberals, he noted, were bitterly opposed to socialism, and yet they conscientiously supported the rights of socialists to be heard inside Parliament and in the country:

Can it be that we are so hopelessly, so barbarously behind the times that these elementary truths, which are the A.B.C.'s of the political education of simple English shopkeepers, cab drivers and mill workers, are beyond the grasp of our liberals, the picked men of Russia?<sup>11</sup>

Kravchinskii took equal pains to assure the liberals that under a constitutional regime the socialists would employ only legal and peaceful methods to attain their goals:

The violent actions that we are now forced to employ are only temporary measures which will give way to peaceful cultural work just as soon as the present absolutism is replaced by popular representation. We absolutely and categorically distinguish between our tactics in the political area and in the economic. In politics we are revolutionists. But regarding the introduction of socialism we are evolutionists-gradualists on the foreign model.<sup>12</sup>

Two points in Kravchinskii's appeal deserve to be underlined because they anticipate tactics adopted by the *Soiuz Osvobozhdeniia* a decade later. The first is the recognition that a real union of oppositionist and revolutionary parties was not possible, but that a short-term tactical accommodation in pursuit of political rights was; and secondly, the belief that neither the socialists nor the liberals would exploit the new political order to injure or destroy the other. That this latter is a more questionable assumption is attested to by

11. *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

12. *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17. The "foreign model" here is the German Social-Democratic Party.

the lengthy reassurances that Kravchinskii in 1891 as well as Struve and Miliukov between 1902 and 1904 felt obliged to offer to both sides.

*Chego nam nuzhno* found a receptive audience because the strategy of a united front already enjoyed a certain currency in Russia by 1893. Many socialists, especially former members or supporters of *Narodnaia Volia*, were prepared to mute their social demands in hope of attracting the support of liberal society for the short-term goal of political reform. Indeed, A. N. Potresov was to claim that while "revolutionary constitutionalism," as he termed it, was clearly a minority viewpoint, nonetheless "the first period of the prerevolutionary epoch [that is, the late 1880s and early 1890s] found its extreme and at the same time typical expression in that ideology."<sup>13</sup>

The years immediately preceding the founding of the RFPF saw the appearance of a number of émigré journals which called upon socialists and liberals to unite in the support of a political program. The most important of these was the Geneva *Samoupravlenie*.<sup>14</sup> Emigrés assisted in the publication of *Samoupravlenie*, but the journal was edited from Moscow, the first two numbers by A. S. Belevskii, and the last two by N. K. Mikhailovskii. Although it proclaimed itself "the organ of the socialist-revolutionaries" and advocated a program of socialist reconstruction, the first goals of *Samoupravlenie* were political, the acquisition of representative government on the national and local level, coupled with guarantees of civil rights. In the pursuit of these goals *Samoupravlenie* urged an alliance with liberal society.<sup>15</sup> A very similar line was taken by two other Geneva publications, *Svoboda* and *Svobodnaia Rossiia*.<sup>16</sup>

Between 1890 and 1893 illegal circles were formed in Saratov, St. Petersburg, Moscow, and other Russian cities to advocate the union of all oppositional forces in the common cause of overthrowing autocracy and establishing a constitutional regime. In September 1893, representatives of these circles met in Saratov to found the *Narodnoe Pravo* Party on the basis of a program that was virtually indistinguishable from that advanced by Kravchinskii through the Russian Free Press Fund.<sup>17</sup>

13. A. Potresov, "Evoliutsiia obshchestvenno-politicheskoi mysli v predrevoliutsionnuiu epokhu," in L. Martov, P. Maslov, A. Potresov, eds., *Obshchestvennoe dvizhenie v Rossii v nachale XX-ogo veka*, 4 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1909-12), 1:555.

14. Four numbers of *Samoupravlenie* were published between December 1887 and April 1889.

15. *Samoupravlenie*, no. 1 (December 1887), pp. 1-2.

16. *Svoboda* was edited by K. M. Turuskii and S. Kniazhnin [S. M. Kogan]. Published irregularly in 1888 and 1889, it was directed to a liberal audience and urged sympathy with socialist goals and terrorist tactics. *Svobodnaia Rossiia* was edited by V. L. Burtsev and V. K. Debogorii-Mokrievich. Three numbers were published between February and April 1889.

17. V. V. Shirokova, *Partiia "Narodnogo Prava"* (Saratov, 1972), pp. 33-64.

The very timeliness of the appearance of *Chego nam nuzhno*, however, tends to obscure Kravchinskii's standing as a socialist pioneer of national front strategy, for the program he put forward in that work was no more than a systematic summation of views he had come to hold at least as early as 1882. Both his belief in the primacy of political action and his emphasis on the need for a united opposition were products of his involvement in the revolutionary failures of the 1870s and were clearly articulated a decade before the appearance of "revolutionary constitutionalism" in Russia.

His conviction that the proper starting point of the revolution should be the acquisition of political rights emerged gradually between 1878 and 1882. Until 1878 he displayed either indifference or hostility toward any kind of political action. The revolution was to take the form of a popular revolt which would simultaneously sweep away bureaucrat, landlord, and capitalist, and create new social and economic relationships based on the latent social genius of the Russian people. His chief concern was to define the function of the revolutionary *intelligent* in this process. With the exception of a Bakuninist interlude in 1875–76, the role he assigned the intelligentsia was socialist propaganda.<sup>18</sup>

Then, on August 8, 1878, he assassinated Adjutant General N. V. Mezentsev, Chief of Gendarmes. It is clear that his original motive for this act was his desire to emulate the attempt of Vera Zasluch on the life of General Trepov and to recreate the extraordinary wave of sympathy and approval that this earlier act had provoked from all segments of Russian society.<sup>19</sup> But it turned out that he had little stomach for killing. The feelings of guilt that were to remain with him for the rest of his life<sup>20</sup> spurred him to search for some principled justification for the act.

In his article "Smert' za smert'" written immediately after the assassination, he elaborated a new doctrine of revolutionary self-defense. He an-

18. Throughout the period, however, his views on the proper content and form of propaganda were shifting continuously. The best modern treatment of this subject is E. A. Taratuta, *S. M. Stepniak-Kravchinskii: Revoliutsioner i pisatel'* (Moscow, 1973). Other useful studies are T. P. Maevskaia, *Slovo i podvig: Zhizn' i tvorchestvo S. M. Stepniaka-Kravchinskogo* (Kiev, 1968); and V. F. Zakharina, *Golos revoliutsionnoi Rossii* (Moscow, 1971). Most valuable are the recollections of contemporaries: L. G. Deutsch, *Sergei Mikhailovich Kravchinskii-Stepniak (Baloven' sud'by)* (Petrograd, 1919). L. E. Shishko, *Sergei Mikhailovich Kravchinskii i krushok chaikovtsev* (Geneva, 1903). P. Kropotkin, "Vospominaniia o Stepniake," in *Stepniak-Kravchinskii, Sobranie sochinenii* (St. Petersburg, 1907), 1:xi–xxxii.

19. Deutsch is emphatic on this point (*Baloven' sud'by*), p. 30. See also K. M. Berkova, *S. M. Kravchinskii (K tridsatiletiiu so dnia smerti)* (Moscow, 1925), p. 8; and Kravchinskii's tribute to Zasluch in *Obshchina*, no. 3/4, quoted in Taratuta, *S. M. Stepniak-Kravchinskii*, pp. 155–57.

20. Interview published in the *New York Times*, August 16, 1886, p. 5.

nounced that the government would no longer be allowed to interrupt with impunity the work of peaceable propagandists. Repression was henceforth to be countered by assassinations, and terrorism would provide a shield behind which the social revolution would continue its spontaneous development.<sup>21</sup> On the day of Mezentsev's funeral he explained to a group of friends that the role of the revolutionary was now to be twofold: most important was propaganda to induce the people to make their own revolution, but "meanwhile we have to clear the path for them by fighting the government."<sup>22</sup>

Michael Dragomanov, the Ukrainian nationalist and liberal, writing in his émigré journal *Listok gromady*, hailed the appearance of "Smert' za smert'" as a sign that the Russian revolutionaries were moving from their oft-stated contempt for political action towards a dimly conceived appreciation of its values. If terror protected the individual from the arbitrary actions of the state, it became, in an autocratic system, the counterpart to the guarantees of civil liberties which existed under a constitutional regime.<sup>23</sup>

Kravchinskii rejected this argument in 1878, but during the next three years, in emigration in Geneva, he was to become personally close to Dragomanov and to accept the validity of his analysis.<sup>24</sup> Following, from abroad, the regicide forays of *Narodnaia Volia*, he realized that he was witnessing a political campaign against autocracy, and he began to advocate the use of less crude political instruments.

In a letter to the Executive Committee of *Narodnaia Volia*, written in March 1882, he claimed that terror was the distinctively Russian form of political action, and he declared his intention of equating the *narodovol'tsy* with "the men of '93 and '89 in France" for the edification of his Western readership. He urged the Committee, moreover, to devote its energies henceforth to the acquisition of more effective political weapons. "If you are successful in the political arena, if you win political rights, you will recoup, so to speak, in a single day everything you have been unable to do in the area of socialist propaganda."<sup>25</sup> He hailed the Executive Committee's open letter to Alexander III, which called for the introduction of civil rights and representative government, as a historic document "which accurately captures and marvelously conveys the meaning of the present moment in the activity of our

21. O. V. Aptekman, *Obshchestvo "Zemlia i Volia" 70-kh gg.* (Petrograd, 1924), pp. 328–29.

22. O. S. Liubatovich, "Dalekoe i nedavnee," *Byloe*, May 1906, pp. 210–11.

23. Deutsch, (*Baloven' sud'by*), p. 66.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 64. Plekhanov's appraisal of Dragomanov's influence is seen in a parody he composed on Lermontov's "Demon" in which Kravchinskii played Tamara to Dragomanov's demon.

25. S. S. Volk, ed., *Revoliutsionnoe narodnichestvo 70-kh godov XIX veka*, 2 vols. (Moscow, 1965), 2:344.

party . . . the only document to which I can give my enthusiastic assent and on the basis of which I am ready to enter into any sort of agreement you may desire."<sup>26</sup>

If Kravchinskii came to value political freedom only after 1878, his restless search for ways to establish the revolution on as broad a popular base as possible is evident from the very beginning of his revolutionary career. In the five years before he left Russia for the first time in 1875, he had shaped his appeal to students, workers, peasants, and religious dissenters. Equally evident was his exasperation with the exclusiveness of socialist "circles" which he felt divided and dissipated the forces of revolution. Writing to P. L. Lavrov in late 1875 or early 1876, he exclaimed with uncharacteristic bitterness:

We have many émigré "centers." They differ remarkably in their principles and composition, but they are extraordinarily similar in one respect: *each one* of them proclaims: I alone am worthy, all the rest are scoundrels and sons of bitches!<sup>27</sup>

He consciously developed his natural syncretic and mediatory talents. A revolutionary leader, he wrote, must possess "flexibility . . . the knowledge of how to adapt oneself to people or to the mood of the moment, which gives a man the ability to lead a multitude of people to the goal which he desires."<sup>28</sup> The one quality which all Kravchinskii's contemporaries in the 1870s mention was his exceptional facility for bridging varied points of view and reconciling personal animosities.<sup>29</sup> He cultivated this ability, which he regarded as the prime desideratum of a revolutionary leader. He could literally force consensus upon a small group discussion by a curious combination of ineffable bonhomie and latent menace. Olga Liubatovich wrote of his

extraordinary moral strength thanks to which he succeeded in bringing together the Ukrainophile Dragomanov, the anarchist Kropotkin, the Zemlevolets of the 60s Zhukovskii, the Italian revolutionary Caffiero, and the French Commune La France—persons not merely of different political points of view but of different cultures.<sup>30</sup>

When George Plekhanov invited him to join *Osvobozhdenie Truda* in the spring of 1883, he replied, "It's better for me to remain without attach-

26. *Ibid.*, pp. 342–43.

27. "Materialy i dokumenty," *Na chuzhoi storone*, 10 (1925): 202.

28. Letter to V. Zasluch, June 1878, "Iz peregiski S. M. Kravchinskogo," *Krasnyi arkhiv*, 19 (1926): 196.

29. Deutsch (*Baloven' sud'by*), p. 18. Shishko, *Sergei Mikhailovich Kravchinskii i kruzhok chaikovtsev*, p. 4. Kropotkin, "Vospominaniia o Stepniake," p. xxv. Even police spies commented on this ability, *Obzor vazhneishikh doznanii po delam o gosudarstvennykh prestupleniakh proizvodivshikhsia v Zhandarmskikh Upravleniakh Imperii* (July 1, 1883–January 1, 1884), pp. 64–65.

30. Liubatovich, "Dalekoe i nedavnee," p. 239.

ments, a free cossack."<sup>31</sup> This was the significance of the pseudonym he adopted in 1881, "Stepniak," the man of the steppe, the intellectual cossack. In so styling himself he sought to underline his freedom from the constraints of a cliquish and sectarian émigré milieu and his freedom to coordinate all factions within or without Russia that would benefit by the destruction of tsarism. From 1883 onward he dreamed of founding a journal which would reflect the full range of revolutionary and oppositionist sentiment. "It must be unfailingly free [*vol'nyi*], and not subordinate to anyone in discipline or content."<sup>32</sup>

The mediatory thrust of Kravchinskii's personality is abundantly evident not only in the arguments of *Chego nam nuzhno*, but in all the work of the Russian Free Press Fund carried out under his direction. It was its tone of patient, almost ingenuous, tolerance rather than the brilliance or originality of its arguments that made the Fund so effective an advocate of a strategy that depended upon mutual confidence and trust.

The Fund's first enterprise was the establishment of bookstores. The London store, managed by Volkhovskii, was at the Fund's office on Augustus Road in Hammersmith. Subsequently Shishko established a second store in Paris. The third outlet was a semiclandestine operation in Zurich set up by Egor Lazarev to reach the sizeable Russian student population of Zurich. The catalogue of the Fund's bookstore was virtually a reading list for the history of Russian revolutionary thought. A Soviet scholar has noted that "all free Russian thought of every possible shade and direction was represented in the stock."<sup>33</sup> Beginning with K. F. Ryleev and other Decembrists, the Fund handled works of Belinskii, Chernyshevskii and a very extensive collection from Herzen; old numbers of *Narodnaia Volia* together with biographies of Zheliabov and Perovskaia; prohibited works of Tolstoy, Saltykov-Shchedrin and Shevchenko; and finally a generous selection from Marxist literature, translations of Marx and Engels and works by Plekhanov and Zasulich.<sup>34</sup>

The same catholicity is apparent in the twenty-nine books and pamphlets published by the Fund between 1892 and 1901. *Chego nam nuzhno* established the tone and direction of the series and the appeal for a supra-party coalition against autocracy was repeated in other programmatic statements by members of the Fund. The most significant of these was Volkhovskii's *Chemu uchit "Konstitutsiia" gr. Loris-Melikova?*<sup>35</sup>

31. Deutsch (*Baloven' sud'by*), p. 65.

32. "Pis'ma S. Kravchinskogo," *Katorga i ssylka*, 48 (1928): 76-77.

33. E. A. Taratuta, *Etel' Lilian Voinich: Sud'ba pisatel'ia i sud'ba knigi*, p. 89.

34. Catalogue bound interleaf with *Letuchie listki* at Houghton Library, Harvard (Slav 1450.30\*).

35. No. 8 RFPF series (London, 1894). Contemporaries, quite unfairly, tended to

Kravchinskii maintained that revolutionaries and liberals should act in concert. Volkhovskii asserted that they *must* act in concert if their joint efforts were to bring any positive result; and he sought to show why this was so. The starting point of his discussion was the "constitution" of Loris-Melikov which had just been published by the Fund. In his view, this "constitution," discussed in the State Council in the spring of 1881, was a sham, but even as such it never stood a chance of adoption. Yet the period from 1878 to 1881 had been a time of genuine though modest reform. The crucial event which determined that the liberal "dictatorship of the heart" would be succeeded by obscurantist discussions in the State Council was not the assassination of Alexander II but the destruction of *Narodnaia Volia*.<sup>36</sup>

As long as *Narodnaia Volia* was in the field, the government was forced to grant concessions to liberal opinion in order to gain some base of support in society. Once the revolutionary forces were broken, the liberals could only entreat the tsar to continue to surrender his prerogatives of his own free will, and history offered abundant proof that this is one thing tsars never do. According to Volkhovskii:

This naivete has brought much harm to Russia and will bring still more if our best liberal forces cannot learn the simple truth that they will never receive anything from the crowned Mitrofans even by the most tender appeals to them if side by side with these forces there does not exist a bogeyman in the shape of the revolutionary elements.<sup>37</sup>

Volkhovskii, like most of the Russian émigrés in London, was a keen observer of Ireland's struggle to emancipate herself from the political and economic misrule of Westminster. In his view, Russian liberals ought to take Parnell as their model. "If it were not for the Fenians and the Land League, the English would never listen to the Parnellites in the House of Commons." Parnell and most of his followers condemned violence and did not want land nationalization, but they nonetheless opposed English Coercion Laws against the Irish because they realized the practical necessity for a revolutionary alternative. This should have been the tactic followed by Russian liberals in the late 1870s. "Loudly proclaiming their lack of sympathy with the methods of battle adopted by the terrorist revolutionaries, they should, however, have in practice opposed the destruction of this revolutionary faction and en-

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regard Volkhovskii as Kravchinskii's epigone. For an assessment of his independent contribution to the RFPF, as well as that of Chaikovskii, see Donald Senese, "S. M. Kravchinskii and the London Emigration" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1970).

36. *Ibid.*, pp. 9–14.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

tered into a compromise with them for the realization of measures useful to both sides.”<sup>38</sup>

Whether or not Volkhovskii really believed that the revolutionary was only a bogeyman to frighten the Government into making concessions to the liberals, *Chemu uchit “Konstitutsiia”* . . . ? indicates how far the fundists were willing to accommodate themselves to moderate opinion inside Russia. Volkhovskii ended his brochure by saying that the revolutionaries have abandoned their “the worse, the better” approach and now scorned no advance along the path to political freedom, no matter how “microscopic,” provided it enabled them to carry on their work more effectively.<sup>39</sup>

As might be expected from men whose revolutionary consciousness had been formed by the great events of the 1870s, the fundists all harbored a certain “populist” bias, that is, they regarded a solution to the peasants’ economic plight as the most important task of the revolution and assumed that traditional peasant institutions and values would be clearly evident in the shape of post-revolutionary society. Yet in the Fund’s publications they avoided formulating these views with sufficient clarity or force to give cause for argument with liberals or Marxists. It is interesting in this connection that the only outright party polemic in the RFPF series, Vorontsov’s *Doktrinary materializma i russkaia deistvitel’nost’* published in 1898, was accompanied by editorial comment disassociating the Fund from its “passionate tone” and its strictures against Russian Social-Democrats.<sup>40</sup>

Liberal opinion was represented in the series by the publication of letters, addresses, and petitions denouncing bureaucratic tyranny and calling for the implementation of various basic civil rights. Number 16 of the series was a fully elaborated draft of a Russian Constitution written by the liberal jurist L. A. Kupernik. A Marxist viewpoint was presented in S. R. Dickstein’s tract *Kto chem zhivet*, a simplified explanation of the labor theory of value with an afterword by G. V. Plekhanov. The first Russian translation of Eduard Bernstein’s *Die Voraussetzungen des Sozialismus* appeared in 1900.

Finally the RFPF series contained a wealth of documentary material. V. L. Burtsev’s *Za sto let*, a handbook of nineteenth-century revolutionary history, is still a valuable source. The constitution of Loris-Melikov was first published by the Fund from a text provided by Maxim Kovalevskii. A Russian translation of the first volume of George Kennan’s *Siberia and the Exile System* was the Fund’s last publication.

38. *Ibid.*, pp. 30–32.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 43.

40. *Letuchie listki izdavaemye Fondom Vol’noi Russkoi Pressy v Londone*, no. 41 (December 1, 1897), pp. 14–15.

The Fund made its influence felt almost at once. Between its inception in June 1891 and the appearance of its periodical *Letuchie listki* in December 1893, it distributed 33,000 copies of books and pamphlets forbidden by the Russian government.<sup>41</sup> The majority of these were the Fund's own publications. Some were smuggled into Russia. Others were sold to Russian émigrés. A special effort was made to contact Russian tourists, and the Fund's catalogues were placed in the lobbies of English and continental hotels known to be favored by Russians traveling abroad. Kravchinskii acknowledged that travelers prudently discarded most of this literature before they returned to Russia, but he believed that nonetheless they brought it back "in their heads."<sup>42</sup> His own *Podpol'naiia Rossiia*, an 1893 translation of his enormously popular *Underground Russia*, was one Fund publication that circulated widely inside Russia in the 1890s.<sup>43</sup>

The manifesto of the *Narodnoe Pravo* Party, *Nasushchnyi vopros*, was published in the spring of 1895.<sup>44</sup> Since almost all the copies of the original Smolensk edition had been seized by the police in April 1894, Russian society was acquainted with the program of *Narodnoe Pravo* largely through this London edition which circulated widely inside Russia.<sup>45</sup> The Fund naturally welcomed the appearance of *Narodnoe Pravo*, whose aims were so similar to its own. Cooperation with the party began in the summer of 1893,<sup>46</sup> and, in addition to *Nasushchnyi vopros*, the Fund published a considerable selection of *Narodnoe Pravo* materials.<sup>47</sup>

The most ambitious enterprise of the RFPF was the publication of its newsletter, the *Letuchie listki*. The *listki* were designed to be a running commentary on the struggle of the opposition in Russia. The greater part of every issue was comprised of documents and news items, some of them culled from the legal press, others received by the Fund through the mails or via the Fund's contraband network.

The first number of the *Letuchie listki* claimed that its publication was dictated by the great quantity of evidential material coming to the Fund which could not conveniently be put out in the form of separate brochures. After

41. *Ibid.*, no. 1 (December 25, 1893), p. 4.

42. *Free Russia*, December 1893, p. 135.

43. E. A. Taratuta, *Pod'polnaia Rossiia: Sud'ba knigi S. M. Stepaniaka-Kravchinskogo* (Moscow, 1967), pp. 213–25.

44. No. 8 RFPF series.

45. Shirokova, *Partiia "Narodnogo Prava,"* p. 146.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 121.

47. *Vozzvanie partii "Narodnogo Prava"* (supplement to no. 16 RFPF series). *Letuchie listki*, no. 9 (June 25, 1894), pp. 1–2; no. 15 (February 9, 1895), pp. 4–5; no. 30 (March 22, 1896), p. 10.

two years of operation, however, Volkhovskii admitted that rather than a response to a felt need, the first *listki* were shots fired into a void in the hope of eliciting an answering echo. "Our ambition went no further than the cry 'whoever is left alive in the field call out!' and the hope of sharing with that 'survivor' those fragmentary bits of news that came to us."<sup>48</sup>

As it turned out there were enough "survivors" to keep the *listki* supplied with material for six years. Better than an issue a month was published for the first two years, but frequency of publication declined steadily after 1896. To compensate, however, the size of each issue was gradually raised from the original four pages to a standard format of sixteen, with special numbers running to over forty pages. The *listki* were meant to be simply a mirror in which Russians could glimpse imperfections and contradictions in their national life which were hidden from them in the censored press. The main task of Volkhovskii and Chaikovskii, as editors, was selecting excerpts from the documents that came to the Fund's office to produce the most credible and damning indictment of autocratic Russia.

The RFPF made it clear from the first issue that the *listki* were not a party organ and would support no exclusive ideological position. The aim was to aid "all revolutionary and opposition factions" in Russia because every faction had some contribution to make toward the attainment of the common goal. "The only thing we refuse to do is to help along their mutual feuds."<sup>49</sup> Since it was virtually impossible to say anything without offending or disquieting some faction of its readership, *Letuchie listki* remained almost devoid of editorial commentary until after Kravchinskii's death. It was only in 1896 that the columns of the *listki* began to reflect the intellectual struggles of the fundists to meet the challenges of a changing situation while remaining true to the principles laid down by Kravchinskii.

The average press run of a single number of *Letuchie listki* was four thousand copies, although some numbers ran as high as ten thousand. Of those copies which were dispatched to Russia, some went to subscribers and sympathetic well-wishers, but many copies were sent unsolicited and in some cases unwanted. Kravchinskii conceived the idea of sending a copy to the editor of every important Russian newspaper.<sup>50</sup> Later, copies were sent to selected government, zemstvo and municipal officers. Many of these putative opinion leaders were embarrassed and even frightened to find themselves on the Fund's mailing list, but there was nothing they could do to stay the regular arrival of the yellow and green envelopes which bore the *listki*. Volkhovskii

48. *Letuchie listki*, no. 27 (December 1, 1895), p. 7.

49. *Ibid.*, no. 1 (December 25, 1893), p. 4.

50. *Obzor vazhneishikh doznanii* . . . (1892-93), pp. 219-20.

had no mercy on these timid souls. In reply to their protestations, he acknowledged that many *listki* were broadcast almost at random, but declared that despite his reluctance to lose money and "to disquiet peaceful citizens," the practice would continue.<sup>51</sup>

Reliance on the mails to carry the Fund's message to Russia was, however, a serious weakness in its organization. The mail could be, and increasingly was, interdicted by the Russian government.<sup>52</sup> The procedure also casts doubt on the Fund's claim that it possessed an effective contraband network. Aside from obvious ideological affinity, the most important motive impelling the RFPF into even closer union with the Socialist Revolutionary Party after 1900 was the realization that an émigré organization could achieve a satisfactory distribution of its propaganda only by working with an established party inside Russia.

The *listki* were a constant drain on the Fund's meager finances. Special donations were solicited to cover the printing costs of each book in the RFPF series as it appeared, and the sale of books actually returned a small profit; but all efforts to make the *listki* pay their own way through subscription or donation were unavailing. Monthly publication even in the original four-page format would have cost almost 150 pounds sterling a year in 1895, and this was more than the Fund could afford.<sup>53</sup> If we contrast this small sum with the 130,000 gold rubles that Struve took into *Osvobozhdenie* in 1901, we have another reason why the pioneering efforts of the Fund have been so effectively overshadowed by its liberal analogue.

In 1894 and 1895 Kravchinskii was moving toward closer union with Russian liberals in an attempt to tap the sources that were to underwrite Struve's venture five years later. In the fall of 1895 plans were begun for the publication in London of a monthly journal to be called *Zemskii sobor* which Kravchinskii would edit with the secret collaboration of the St. Petersburg lawyer, L. A. Kupernik, whose *Draft of a Russian Constitution* had been published by the Fund earlier that year. It was while hurrying to a conference which was to have completed planning on *Zemskii sobor* that Kravchinskii was run over and killed at an unguarded railway crossing.<sup>54</sup>

It is impossible to say with absolute certainty what the character of the new "big" journal would have been. All sources agree, however, that it was

51. *Letuchie listki*, no. 15 (February 9, 1895), p. 1.

52. *Free Russia*, April 1895, pp. 27–28.

53. *Letuchie listki*, no. 27 (December 1, 1895), p. 8.

54. The clearest account of the accident is Kropotkin's in "Vospominaniia o Stepniake," pp. xxvii–xxix; the most detailed is E. E. Lazarev's, *Letuchie listki*, no. 28 (January 18, 1896), pp. 3–6. Neither account gives any basis for later claims of suicide or foul play.

expected to be primarily a political organ, and there is reason to believe that it would have limited itself to moderate demands for constitutional reform.<sup>55</sup> In fact, the proposed line was to be so narrowly political that the Fund was preparing to bring out some kind of compensatory socialist revolutionary journal.<sup>56</sup>

Kravchinskii was killed on December 23, 1895. The Fund devoted the whole of the next number of *Letuchie listki* to a commemoration of his life and thought. Volkhovskii summed up the fundamental assumption that had guided Kravchinskii's work in emigration, ". . . the struggle if it were to be successful had to be taken out of the bounds of a party affair and placed on a general national footing; in other words, the struggle for liberation was unthinkable without the active participation of . . . men of all temperaments and varying political tendencies."<sup>57</sup> This commemorative issue of *Letuchie listki* was intended to be read as a pledge that the fundists would continue to follow the course laid down by Kravchinskii.

This was a pledge which they were unable to keep. By 1904 the last vestige of Kravchinskii's supra-party approach was abandoned, and the material and intellectual resources of the fundists were absorbed into the SR Party. What is worthy of note, however, is how hard the fundists struggled against the logic of this union and how reluctantly they entered into it. It is idle to speculate upon what course the Fund would have followed had Kravchinskii remained on the scene; but there can be no doubt that his example and precept were powerful forces impeding the progress of his former colleagues toward the inevitable alliance with the Socialist Revolutionaries.

The alliance was both logical and inevitable for a number of reasons. Two have already been mentioned: the urgent need for cooperation with a party inside Russia which could effectively disseminate the Fund's literature and the nostalgic populism of the fundists which naturally inclined them toward the Socialist Revolutionaries as the most legitimate legatees of the revolutionary ideology of the 1870s.

At the same time, the future leadership of the SR Party, S. M. Sletov and V. M. Chernov, responded most sympathetically to the Fund's tactical precepts. As he contemplated the renewal of revolutionary activity in the late 1890s, Chernov wrote that those of his contemporaries who desired a democratic revolution of the "plebeian-worker force of Russia aided by educated liberal-democratic forces" were enormously heartened by the "big political

55. Dioneo [I. V. Shklovskii], "V emigratsii," in A. A. Titov, ed., *Nikolai Vasil'evich Chaikovskii*, vol. 1, p. 206; K. N. Berkova, *S. M. Kravchinskii (K tridtsatiletiiu so dnia smerti)*, p. 16; Deutsch (*Baloven' sud'by*), p. 67.

56. *Obzor vazhneishikh doznanii . . . (1895-96)*, p. 291.

57. *Letuchie listki*, no. 28 (January 18, 1896), p. 8.

newspaper put out by Stepniak."<sup>58</sup> Chernov believed that "the secret of success would be in the act of gradual but continuous mobilization and deployment of newer forces with the purpose of introducing them into the open social arena." He acknowledged that this formulation was first put forward by Kravchinskii through the Fund. "From Stepniak we received the general idea of the logical unfolding and development of every social manifestation against the principle of the autocratic state, beginning with the most innocent, modest and even half-hinted participation . . . ."<sup>59</sup>

In contrast to this warm reception, the Fund's attempts to maintain friendly contact with émigré Marxists were repeatedly spurned. Plekhanov had always harbored strong reservations about what he regarded as the eclectic and opportunist line of the Fund, but since he was both personally and financially indebted to Kravchinskii he refrained from attacking the Fund until after his death. He then went out of his way to pick a quarrel with the Fund on the question of seating delegates to the 1896 Congress of the International,<sup>60</sup> and shortly thereafter announced his unwillingness to have *Osvobozhdenie Truda* associated in any joint enterprise with the Fund:

It is far from being a matter of indifference to me whether Stepniak or Volkhovskii heads a given literary enterprise. I certainly have no personal feelings against the esteemed Felix Vadimovich [Volkhovskii], but I am just as certainly out of agreement with his views. Of course, both he and I are against Russian absolutism but that is hardly enough to permit us to pull amicably together in the same literary harness.<sup>61</sup>

Despite this and subsequent rebuffs the Fund continued to press for Marxist involvement in a national revolutionary coalition right up until 1904. Although informally linked to the Socialist Revolutionaries from 1900 onward, they resisted absorption by establishing a semiautonomous émigré auxiliary, the Agrarian-Socialist League, membership in which was open to Marxists.<sup>62</sup> Both Chernov and Sletov ascribe the League's refusal to merge formally with the SR Party until 1904 to the desire on the part of the erstwhile London fundists to use the League as a mediating force between the Socialist Revolutionaries and the Social Democrats.<sup>63</sup>

58. V. M. Chernov, *Pered burei* (New York, 1953), p. 107.

59. *Ibid.*, pp. 107-8.

60. K. Tereshkovich, "Posle katorgi v emigratsiiu," *Katorga i ssylka*, 1928, no. 42, p. 78. *Letuchie listki*, no. 35 (September 15, 1896), pp. 6-7.

61. R. M. Plekhanova et al., eds., *Literaturnoe nasledie G. V. Plekhanova*, 8 vols. (Moscow, 1934-40), 4:305.

62. [V. M. Chernov] *Ocherednoi vopros* (London, 1900), p. 2.

63. A. Kubov, "S. N. Sletov (biograficheskii ocherk)," *Pamiati Stepana Nikolaeovicha Sletova* (Paris, 1916), pp. 10-11. Chernov, *Pered burei*, p. 158.

Even after union with the Socialist Revolutionaries, the irenic and cooperative influence of the Fund continued to make itself felt. There is evidence that Volkhovskii and Chaikovskii were instrumental in arranging the "Conference of Oppositional and Revolutionary Organizations" which met in Paris in October 1904.<sup>64</sup> Although Russian Social-Democrats could not be induced to attend, this conference in every other respect represented the fulfillment of the program that Kravchinskii and the Fund had for so long espoused. Eight revolutionary and oppositional parties, including the Socialist Revolutionaries and the Union of Liberation agreed upon a joint declaration of principles which called for overthrowing autocracy, implementing a constitutional order and extending the right of self-determination to minorities. Miliukov described the declaration as "the climax of the political movement in Russia."<sup>65</sup> It provided a basis for the coordinated action of Russian society that brought down the autocracy a year later.

64. Pipes, *Struve*, p. 363.

65. P. Miliukov, *Russia and its Crisis* (New York, 1962), p. 384.