Feliks Volkhovskii
A Revolutionary Life

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2. The Making of a Revolutionary

Feliks Vadimovich Volkhovskii was born in July 1846 in Poltava, then a city of some 25,000 people, situated around five hundred miles south of Moscow in modern-day Ukraine.[1] His father Vadim Petrovich Volkhovskii had served as an artillery officer before subsequently taking up a post in the Civil Service as a Collegiate Assessor. The rank was a comparatively modest one. A Collegiate Assessor was only marginally superior to a Titular Councillor, the rank held by Akakii Akakievich Bashmachkin, the downtrodden 'hero' of Nikolai Gogol's short story 'Shinel''('The Overcoat'), who spends his evenings copying official documents by candlelight in a shabby attic room.[2] Vadim Petrovich's situation was somewhat less parlous. He was the eldest of eight children born to Petr Grigor'evich Volkhovskii, a major in the Corps of Gendarmes, whose work required him to travel regularly across the empire. Vadim and his seven younger siblings spent most of their time on their mother's small estate of Chepurkivka in the north-west of Poltava province. The family was far from wealthy, and although Vadim Petrovich's childhood passed in modest comfort, he knew from a young age that he would have to earn his own living.

Vadim's father Petr Grigor'evich himself retired from the Corps of Gendarmes in 1839, living for a while at Chepurkivka, before seeking a new position to improve his family's finances. He found work managing

1 Volkhovskii occasionally wrote that he was born in 1845, a date which appears in some records of his death. See, for example, Newnham College (Cambridge) Library Special Collections, Wallas family papers, PP/Wallas/2/7/6 (Brief biographical note by Volkhovskii). Most other sources are, though, clear that he was born the following year.

2 'The Overcoat', in Nikolai Gogol, *Diary of a Madman and Other Stories*, trans. Ronald Wilks (London: Penguin, 1972), 71–108. It should be noted that the post of Collegiate Assessor—unlike that of Titular Councillor—did provide hereditary noble status.

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factories in Perm province, but his new career was cut short when he fell from a horse, suffering a concussion that caused long-term damage to his memory. In the years that followed, he lived with his brother Stepan Grigor'evich, who later served as Governor of Samara Province, before the fortuitous death of a relative meant that Petr inherited the estate of Moisevka (Ukr. Moisivka) in Poltava Province (his brothers renounced their share of the estate leaving him in sole possession). The Moisevka estate was a substantial one consisting of 300 male peasants and more than 2,000 hectares of land.[3] It had acquired some fame in the early 1800s for the lavish balls hosted there by one Petr Stepanovich Volkhovskii and his wife Tatiana (it was Tatiana who left the estate to Petr Grigor'evich and his brothers since she had no children of her own). The main house was built in an elaborate French style, surrounded by acres of parkland, complete with gazebos and fountains. Some visitors spoke of it in rather exaggerated terms as a veritable 'Versailles'. A church was added in 1808 (which stands to this day).

The parties held by Petr and Tatiana Volkhovskii attracted the attention of the authorities on occasion—not least in the revolutionary year of 1848—when a number of guests belonging to the facetiously-named Obshchestvo mochemordiia (Society of Boozers) attended a party at the house where they gave a toast to the French Republic.[4] Moisevka was also for a time a notable centre of culture, attracting writers and artists including the poet Taras Shevchenko, whose work shaped the growth of a Ukrainian national consciousness during the 1840s and 1850s (a portrait of Petr Stepanovich and his wife painted by Shevchenko hung for many years on the walls of the manor house).[5] By the time Petr Grigor'evich inherited the estate in the early 1850s, though, the house was very run down.[6] His grandson Feliks later recalled that

3 For details of the estate, see *Prilozheniia k trudam redaktsionnykh kommissii dlia sostavleniia polozhenii o krest'ianakh*, 6 vols (St Petersburg: V tip-ii V. Bezobrazova i komp., 1860), VI.

4 On the Society, see Danylo Husar Struk (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Ukraine*, 5 vols (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), III, 430. The drunken toast led to a number of arrests on suspicion of sedition but all those detained were released.

5 On Shevchenko, see Pavlo Zaitsev, *Taras Shevchenko. A Life*, trans. George N. Luckyj (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988).

6 For a brief discussion of the idea of Moisevka as the Ukrainian Versailles, along with some photographs of the estate later in the nineteenth century, see Volodymyr Panchenko, 'Moisivka, "ukrainskyi Versal'"', *Dyen* (16

most of the rooms were shut up and unheated. The mirrors hanging on the walls were cracked and the portraits of half-forgotten ancestors covered with dust. The garden and park were unkempt and returning to wilderness. Volkhovskii had few happy memories of the time he spent at Moisevka as a young boy.

Volkhovskii wrote little about his early life, although on more than one occasion he described how he came to be christened with the distinctively un-Russian name of Feliks. He was throughout his life close to his mother, Ekaterina Matveeva (née Samotsvit), the daughter of a Polish mother and a Ukrainian-Russian father, who lived in the town of Novograd-Volynskii (Ukr. Zviahel) 150 miles west of Kyiv. When he was older, some of those who met Volkhovskii assumed from his name that he was a Polish Catholic, but he was baptised into the Russian Orthodox Church. His mother, who had previously lost two boys and a girl in infancy, vowed that her next child would be christened after the saint whose name-day was celebrated on the day the baby was born. According to her son, writing many years later, a priest in Poltava helpfully pointed out that the full Church calendar for the date of his birth included a reference to Feliks (one of the early popes). Father Ivan told the baby's parents that they should have no qualms about naming a child after a pope who held office before the great schism between the Orthodox and Catholic churches. He also suggested that since Feliks was derived from the Latin *felicita*s—happiness—it was particularly suitable as the given name for the first child of his parents to survive beyond a few days.[7]

Although Feliks was born in the town of Poltava, he moved as a very young child to the family home of his mother in Novograd-Volynskii. Vadim does not seem to have joined his wife and child there, possibly because he was still in the army, although there are hints in Volkhovskii's

January 2014), https://m.day.kyiv.ua/article/marshrut-no1-podorozhi/moysivka-ukrayinskyy-versal.

7 Volkhovskii Papers, Hoover Institution Library and Archives, Stanford University, henceforth Volkhovskii Papers (HIA), Box 11, Folder 5 (Notes headed 'Autobiography'); F. Volkhovskoi (*sic*), 'Otryvki odnoi chelovecheskoi zhizni', Part 1, *Sovremennik* (April 1911), 254–67 (255). During its four-year life (1911-15), *Sovremmenik*, not to be confused with its better-known counterpart of the mid-nineteenth century, published pieces by authors from both the Marxist and *narodnik* wings of the revolutionary movement, and (like the elderly Volkhovskii) determinedly sought to avoid revolutionary sectarianism.

scattered reminiscences that his parents' marriage was not a particularly happy one. Feliks was certainly closer to his mother, who in later years provided what support she could to her son during his time in prison, and later accompanied him to exile in Siberia where she died as a result of the harsh living conditions.[8] Ekaterina Matveeva had married Vadim Petrovich when she was only sixteen or seventeen, following a somewhat perfunctory education, although she subsequently immersed herself in the books of a medical student who lived for a time with the family (which among other things had the unfortunate side effect of turning her into a hypochondriac). She was in her son's later estimation 'naturally timid but extraordinarily kind-hearted'. Feliks also noted that his mother was by instinct 'impulsive' but disciplined enough to learn French and become a good housekeeper.[9]

Feliks had warm memories of his early years spent living with his mother's family in Novograd-Volynskii where he stayed until he was seven or eight. In an article published more than fifty years later, in the journal *Sovremennik* (*The Contemporary*), he lovingly recalled his grandparents' white one-storied house, complete with large windows that gave the building an open and welcoming appearance. Volkhovskii's positive memories were doubtless coloured by his much bleaker experiences a few years later when living with his paternal grandfather at Moisevka, but there was genuine warmth in his recollection of the 'bright and friendly' life that characterised the Samotsvit household. He remembered the household as a 'nest' (*gnezdo*), a word he doubtless chose for its echo of Ivan Turgenev's novel *Dvorianskoe gnezdo* (lit. *Noble Nest*), which had first appeared just a few years after Feliks left Novgorod-Volynskii for Moisevka.[10]

The Samotsvit household was headed by Feliks' maternal grandfather, Matvei Mikhailovich, who had as a young soldier fought against the Napoleonic armies advancing on Moscow. Matvei was

8 Volkhovskii subsequently wrote a poem *Mat'*—'Mother'—describing the grief felt by mothers of young Russian political prisoners who suffered 'the torment of waiting' for news about their loved ones. See A. Bichter (ed.), *Poety revoliutsionnogo narodnichestva* (Leningrad: Izd-vo Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1967), 69.

9 Volkhovskii Papers (HIA), Box 17, Folder 3 (Brief autobiographical notes by Volkhovskii).

10 The account in this and the following paragraphs draws heavily on Volkhovskoi, 'Otryvki', Part 1.

seriously wounded in the leg, an injury from which he never fully recovered, although Feliks remembered him many years later as a vigorous man 'who did not give the impression of being an invalid'.[11] His role as head of the household was nevertheless largely eclipsed by his wife Viktoriia Ivanovna, who also directed life on the family's small country estate, which supplied the Samotsvits with eggs, meat and vegetables. The relationship of the elderly couple was a close one ('two boots made from a single block' in the words of their grandson). They surrounded themselves with numerous relatives who formed part of a large extended family. Several unmarried women—sisters and daughters of the old couple—lived in the house and contributed to the various tasks of household management. An unmarried son occupied a nearby flat and often called in for dinner. The picture of life at Novograd-Volynskii painted by Volkhovskii was one of a self-contained world that seemed impervious to the tribulations of life beyond the white-washed walls of the family 'nest'.

Such tight-knit families were a familiar presence in nineteenth-century Russian literature in stories like Gogol's 'Starosvetskie pomeshchiki' ('Old World Landowners').[12] The texture of life among the provincial Russian gentry during the middle decades of the nineteenth century in fact exhibited enormous variety (which was hardly surprising given its economic and cultural diversity). Although some families focused obsessively on matters of status and money, others placed more emphasis on the importance of emotional intimacy between family members, cutting across the generations and the sexes. Collections of family correspondence from the period often reveal close relations between husbands and wives and parents and children.[13] Feliks Volkhovskii's portrait of his maternal grandparents' household might well have been prompted by nostalgia, as he looked back more than half a century later, but it probably captured something of its spirit as well.

11 Volkhovskoi, 'Otryvki', Part 1, 258.

12 Nikolai Gogol, 'Old World Landowners', in *Evenings on a Farm near Dikanka and Mirgorod*, trans. Christopher English (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 219–40.

13 For a lucid discussion of this theme, see Mary W. Cavender, *Nests of the Gentry. Family, Estate and Local Loyalties in Provincial Russia* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 2007), 26–58. For a somewhat different view, see Jessica Tovrov, 'Action and Affect in the Russian Noble Family' (PhD thesis, University of Chicago, 1980).

Volkhovskii's warm description of his grandparents' household even extended to the treatment of the house serfs. It was common for historical journals to publish nostalgic accounts about serfdom in the decades after its abolition in 1861, describing the close bonds that had supposedly existed between serfs and serf-owners.[14] In reality, of course, the idea that serfdom was rooted in a benign patriarchal order was largely an illusion.[15] During the years before the emancipation of the serfs, the myth formed a central plank in an ideology designed to underpin the *status quo*, while in the years after 1861 it was fuelled by an underlying sense of unease about the changing pattern of social relationships. Volkhovskii naturally made no effort to defend serfdom when writing his piece for *Sovremennik*, which would have run counter to his whole life's work, but he did recall how the house serfs in the Samotsvit residence lived in comparative comfort in a small annexe attached to the main building. Life in the one-storey white house was characterised by harmony, its peace disturbed only by minor perturbations, and free from the harsh economic exploitation and social control that were before long to trouble Volkhovskii so deeply.

A large part of Volkhovskii's account of his early childhood in Novograd-Volynskii was devoted to the complex ethnic composition of the Samotsvit household ('our nest was mixed').[16] His grandmother had been brought up in a Polish-speaking Catholic family. His grandfather was Russian-speaking and Orthodox. Such differences were for the most part subsumed in a culture of benign tolerance (his mother had as a child been taken to both Orthodox and Catholic services). Russian and Polish were spoken in the house and sometimes mixed up together. 'Ukrainian' was, though, never spoken in the main house. Matvei Mikhailovich spoke only Russian and indignantly challenged the idea

14 For three examples of such accounts, see O. I. Kornilova, *Byl' iz vremen krepostnichestva: vospominaniia o moei materi i eia okruzhaiushchem* (St Petersburg: Obshchestvennaia pol'za, 1894); A. Peterson, 'Cherty starinnago dvorianskago byta', *Russkii arkhiv*, 8 (1877), 479–82; I. A. Raevskii, 'Iz vospominanii', *Istoricheskii vestnik*, 101 (1905), 391–409.

15 For two superb (if very different) histories that cast light on both the economics and culture of serfdom, see Stephen Hoch, *Serfdom and Social Control in Russia: Petrovskoe, a Village in Tambov* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1986); Tracy Dennison, *The Institutional Framework of Russian Serfdom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

16 Volkhovskoi, 'Otryvki', Part 1, 259.

that there was such a thing as Ukrainian nationality (*narodnost'*). He believed that the language spoken by the family's servants was simply a crude form of Russian—a kind of rural patois—rather than a fully-fledged language. Yet Volkhovskii's time at Novograd-Volynskii, and his close relations with some of the household serfs, gave him a facility in the Ukrainian language that he made extensive use of in his later career as a revolutionary publicist. His Ukrainian heritage also played a part in fuelling his hatred of the autocratic Russian state.

Volkhovskii's recollection of his early childhood in Novograd-Volynskii, which appeared half a century after the events he described, was subject to the usual mixture of nostalgia and amnesia that invariably shapes such accounts. Nor was it simply an exercise in autobiography. In the years before the 1917 Revolution, radical journals like *Byloe* and *Sovremennik* published numerous reminiscences by men and women who had been active in the revolutionary movement over the previous few decades.[17] Many of these accounts were rather formulaic, often tracing the author's turn towards revolution as a response to youthful experiences, ranging from resentment about authoritarian family *mores* through to horror at some egregious act of casual brutality. The second part of Volkhovskii's memoir in *Sovremennik*, which appeared in 1912, largely followed this format, counter-posing his time living with his mother's family at Novograd-Volynskii with the very different experiences he had at his paternal grandfather's estate at Moisevka.[18]

Volkhovskii and his mother left Novograd-Volynskii for Moisevka shortly after his grandfather inherited the estate, probably in 1853,

17 For a brief discussion of what might be called 'the revolutionary memoir wars', see Ben Eklof and Tatiana Saburova, *A Generation of Revolutionaries. Nikolai Charushin and Russian Populism from the Great Reforms to Perestroika* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2017), 5–6. For a longer discussion by the same authors, see Ben Eklof and Tatiana Saburova, ''Remembrances of a Distant Past': Generational Memory in the Collective Auto/Biography of Russian Populists in the Revolutionary Era', *Slavonic and East European Review*, 96, 1 (2018), 67-93. Also see Stephen Rindlisbacher, 'Living for a "Cause". Radical Autobiographical Writing at the Beginning of the 20th Century', *Avtobiografiя*, 6 (2017), 59–77.

18 Volkhovskoi, 'Otryvki odnoi chelovecheskoi zhizni', Part 2, *Sovremennik* (March 1912), 91–102. The account that follows draws both on this account as well as an unpublished version of Volkhovskii's memoirs written in English contained in Volkhovskii Papers (HIA), Box 11, Folder 3 (Unpublished autobiography). This version of Volkhovskii's autobiography is the fullest available in English of the various autobiographical writings found in his papers.

where they lived for the next three years. The move from one noble 'nest' to another was deeply traumatic for the young Feliks. The brain injury suffered by Petr Grigor'evich a few years before he inherited the estate had a profound impact on his personality. Although Moisevka and the neighbouring village of Stepanovka yielded a good income,[19] their owner was content to live in just two rooms of the thirty-six-roomed mansion, using one as a study and the second as a bedroom. He disbanded the well-known serf orchestra that had made Moisevka a celebrated centre of music and culture in the years before he inherited the estate (the instruments were given to the musicians but they were offered no opportunity to play together again).[20] Feliks' mother took responsibility for managing the household, but she found it difficult to get any money out of her father-in-law, and the family relied heavily on produce from the garden. Petr Grigor'evich shuffled around the house, an incongruous figure in wig and slippers, inspiring fear in family and servants alike through his capriciousness and cruelty. He kept large black cats which he tortured by burning them with hot tobacco from his pipe. He also paid a local 'idiot-boy' to chase birds from the lawn in front of his study, apparently as much for his own amusement as for its horticultural benefits, a fact that impressed itself indelibly on his grandson's mind. The house was invariably very silent, in sharp contrast to the bustling Samotsvit household, and the young Feliks found it hard to adjust to a place that was so much more emotionally austere than the one he had previously known. Yet the most lasting consequence of the three years Feliks spent living with his grandfather was its influence on his attitude towards serfdom.

Volkhovskii regularly described in later life an incident that took place during his time at Moisevka which he saw, at least in retrospect, as a turning point in his outlook:

19 Later owners of the estate went bankrupt, and the house itself was taken over by the local *zemstvo* in the early twentieth century, but Petr Grigor'evich's miserliness in the late 1850s seems to have been as much a personal trait as a response to real financial problems.

20 Volkhovskii Papers (HIA), Box 17, Folder 3 (Autobiographical notes by Volkhovskii). For useful material on serf orchestras, see Richard Stites, *Serfdom, Society and the Arts in Imperial Russian Culture: The Pleasure and the Power* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), 53-87.

> I was only a little seven year old boy when I lived on my grandfather's estate in the south of European Russia. One afternoon, about 5 o'clock, I came to the house of my grandfather's steward to see my playmate, the steward's son. As I passed the stables, a piteous cry reached my ear: a man was crying and entreating on some account. I stopped and listened.
>
> 'No lie down' said a coarse voice in which I recognised the voice of the steward.
>
> 'O sir, have mercy, pardon me this time, I will do it all' ... entreated the first voice.
>
> At this moment I saw the steward's son was beside me.
>
> 'What is the matter?' I asked, overwhelmed with pity & distress.
>
> 'Big John is being punished' he answered in a whisper.
>
> 'What for?'
>
> 'He has not finished his work'.
>
> I stood there feeling myself very unhappy and very ashamed. I could not explain why I was ashamed, but still my cheeks flushed. As the laments and sobs increased intermingled with some tumult then with the whistle of a brandished whip, I peeped into the stables through a hole in the wall and saw 'Big John' lying on the floor with his back bare and his face to the ground. Two strong men held him down—the one by the neck & hands, and the steward was flogging him. Every stroke left a horrible deep-red stripe on John's back.

Volkhovskii went on to describe how he ran to the house where he saw his 'cold unsmiling' grandfather.

> I cannot explain how I contrived, child as I was, to understand the connection between that figure which moved before me and the shameful deed which I had just wittnessed [*sic*]. I know only that at this moment I hated that figure in which I vaguely discerned a landlord, forgetting that it was also my father's father. I felt myself overwhelmed with the consciousness of some great injustice which that man was guilty of and which must be avenged. So I ran after him & struck him childishly with my hands. This was the first revolutionary deed of my life.[21]

21 Volkhovskii Papers (HIA), Box 11, Folder 3 (Unpublished autobiography), 1–3.

The account from which these extracts are taken was probably written in the 1890s, when Volkhovskii was living in London, as part of a planned 'volume of reminiscences' for the publisher Unwins (which never appeared). Thomas Unwin had a particular interest in Russia, although he combined it with a shrewd commercial judgement, and suggested to Volkhovskii that his memoirs should focus on 'the more dramatic periods and situations and those which would be likely to interest an English audience'.[22] It is possible to dismiss such stylised narratives as a kind of *post hoc* explanation for Volkhovskii's revolutionary career, an attempt to reduce a complex chain of circumstances into a single pivotal moment, imbued with the kind of drama that Unwin hoped would sell the mooted 'book of reminiscences'.[23] Yet Volkhovskii was consistent in the different accounts he produced, repeatedly claiming in his articles and lectures that the incident had played a pivotal role in prompting his sympathy for the Russian peasantry.

> As I grew older and the questions of moral responsibility began to agitate me, I felt as if all my education and even my existence were stained with the sweat and blood of men who, being my countrymen and my brothers, were insulted and abused while working for my sake. I felt myself indebted to the Russian peasant and I felt that I must by some means pay my debt.[24]

During his time at Moisevka, Volkhovskii missed the easy intimacy between family members that was such a feature of his maternal grandparents' home. Nor did the polyglot atmosphere of the house in Novograd-Volynskii—where the residents spoke a mixture of Russian, Ukrainian and Polish—find much echo in day-to-day life at Moisevka. And yet it was ironically on his father's side of the family that the issue of Ukrainian national identity had once loomed large. Volkhovskii was, on his paternal grandmother's side, a great-grandson of the historian and folklorist Andrei (Andriian) Chepa, who played a significant role in fostering Ukrainian national consciousness during the late eighteenth

22 Volkhovskii Papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University, henceforth Volkhovskii Papers (Houghton Library), MS Russ 51, Folder 359 (Unwin to Volkhovskii, 1 March 1895, 2 May 1895).

23 A short account of the flogging of Big John later appeared after Volkhovskii's death in George Kennan, *A Russian Comedy of Errors with Other Stories and Sketches of Russian Life* (New York: The Century Company, 1915), 141.

24 Volkhovskii Papers (HIA), Box 11, Folder 3 (Unpublished autobiography), 3–4.

and early nineteenth centuries.[25] Chepa collected numerous manuscripts about the historical development of the provinces of south-west Russia, freely sharing his work with others, and was involved in initiatives to defend the rights of the heterogeneous Ukrainian nobility at a time when its status within the Russian empire was still uncertain. He also set up a school on his wife's family's estate of Chepurkivka, to provide local peasant children with an education in their own language.[26] Although no supporter of any form of separatism, Chepa's efforts to study the history of the Ukraine marked him out as one of the earliest figures in the Ukrainian cultural renaissance, which took on more political overtones in the decades following his death in 1822. Feliks Volkhovskii may not have known much about his great-grandfather's activities when he was a child, but he certainly knew about them in later life, regularly using the pseudonym Chepa in his writings.

Volkhovskii must also have known, at least when older, that Moisevka had once been a centre for writers who were instrumental in efforts to promote a Ukrainian national identity. It was noted earlier that Taras Shevchenko visited the estate on several occasions during the 1840s (a plinth commemorating the poet stands nearby to this day). His patron, the writer and poet Evgenii Grebenka (Ukr. Yevhen Hrebinka), who wrote some of the earliest 'literary' works in the Ukrainian language, was also a regular visitor (Grebenka was the godson of Petr Stepanovich Volkhovskii whose wife left the estate to Feliks' grandfather). In the summer of 1843, the two men visited the estate on a day when Tatiana Volkhovskaia was hosting a large ball to mark the anniversary of her husband's death, at which Shevchenko recited his poems and addressed the audience in Ukrainian.[27] The Moisevka estate may not have provided the youthful Feliks with the unmediated experience of ethnic diversity

25 For useful background on Chepa's life and activities, see S. V. Abrosymova and L. H. Hurai, ''A Chepa i nevidomi marhinalii z yoho biblioteky'(Dnipropetrovsk: NGU, 2006), 134–52, http://ir.nmu.org.ua/handle/123456789/1145. See, too, Dmytro Doroshenko, 'First Efforts to Collect and Publish Ukrainian Historical Material', in the special issue of *The Annals of the Ukrainian Academy of Arts and Sciences in the US, Inc*, 5–6 (1957), 92–103 (an English translation from the author's 1923 work).

26 On Chepa and Chepurkivka, including material on the Volkhovskii family, see 'Khutir Chepurkivka', https://www.grebenka.com/index/serbinivka_chepurkivka_serbinivska_silska_rada_grebinkivskij-rajon/0-480.

27 Zaitsev, *Shevchenko*, 81–82.

that he received in Novograd-Volynskii. Yet its history, too, served as a testimony to the complex identity of the Russian Empire's south-western borderlands.

The atmosphere during Volkhovskii's time at Moisevka was made worse by family quarrels that were destined to have significant consequences on the financial fortunes of his family. Petr Grigor'evich's wife and Feliks' grandmother, Valentina Andreovna, never joined her husband at Moisevka after he inherited the estate in the early 1850s. Nor, as noted earlier, did Feliks' own father Vadim live with his family there. There were also tensions between Petr Grigor'evich's children. In 1857, Vadim's younger brother Esper retired from the army and moved to Moisevka with his wife and children, and shortly afterwards Petr Grigor'evich decided to give him the whole estate. Feliks and his mother had already left Moisevka by the time his uncle arrived, suggesting that there were already tensions within the family, almost certainly focused on ownership of the property (a court case between Esper and his brothers dragged on for many years). The second part of Feliks' childhood was lived in an atmosphere of considerable financial insecurity and uncertainty.

In the years following their departure from Moisevka, Volkhovskii and his mother resided for a time at his paternal grandmother's Chepurkivka estate (where some of Vadim's younger siblings still lived). He was educated at home, before moving to the capital to attend the second St Petersburg Gymnasium, founded in 1805 by a decree issued by Tsar Aleksandr I. One of the pupils who studied there at the time was Petr Tkachev, among the most prominent figures in the revolutionary movement of the 1870s, who subsequently condemned the 'crude despotism, ignorance [and] slow-witted teachers' he encountered in his time at school.[28] Tkachev's dismissal of the education he received was too harsh. Although the Gymnasium lacked the social cachet of the better-known Imperial *Lycée*, it enjoyed significant royal patronage, and had a reputation for offering a high-quality education which included numerous lectures from professors at St Petersburg University.[29]

28 Deborah Hardy, *Petr Tkachev. The Critic as Jacobin* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1977), 19.

29 On the second St Petersburg Gymnasium, including a detailed review of the curriculum, see A. V. Kurganovich, *Istoricheskaia zapiska 75-letiia S.-Peterburgskoi*

Volkhovskii received an equally good education when he was taken by his mother to finish his school education in the gymnasium classes of the prestigious *Richelieu Lycée* in Odessa. He used his time there to develop his knowledge of foreign languages (he had a good command of French, German and English by the time he was eighteen).

Volkhovskii studied in St Petersburg and Odessa at a time when the emancipation of the serfs was creating a ferment in Russian society.[30] The relaxation of censorship in the years following Aleksandr II's accession to the throne, in 1855, allowed debate about a wider range of social, economic and literary questions than had been possible during the reign of Nicholas I.[31] Journals like the original *Sovremennik* and *Otechestvennye zapiski* (*Notes of the Fatherland*) published articles that would not previously have passed the censor. A new generation of radical writers, including Nikolai Chernyshevskii and Dmitrii Pisarev, contributed essays popularising a crude scientific materialism that questioned the aesthetic value of art for art's sake in favour of a realism designed to unmask the ugliness and exploitation of the contemporary world. In Chernyshevskii's words, 'the first purpose of art is to reproduce nature and life, and this applies to all works of art without exception'.[32]

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vtoroi gimnazii, 3 vols (St Petersburg: various publishers, 1880–1905), II, esp. 28–46.

30 Among the large literature in English on emancipation and the other great reforms of the 1860s, see Ben Eklof, Josh Bushnell and Larissa Zakharova (eds), *Russia's Great Reforms, 1855–1881* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994); Terence Emmons, *Emancipation of the Russian Serfs* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970); W. Bruce Lincoln, *The Great Reforms. Autocracy, Bureaucracy, and the Politics of Change in Imperial Russia* (Dekalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1990).

31 For a useful discussion of *glasnost'* in the late 1850s, see W. Bruce Lincoln, 'The Problem of Glasnost' in Mid-Nineteenth Century Russian Politics', *European Studies Review*, 11, 2 (1981), 171–88.

32 Nikolai Chernyshevsky, 'The Aesthetic Relations of Art to Reality', in N. G. Chernyshevsky, *Selected Philosophical Essays* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1953), 281-381 (364). For a valuable study of Chernyshevskii's aesthetic views, see Irina Paperno, *Chernyshevsky and the Age of Realism: A Study in the Semiotics of Behaviour* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1988). For a useful if somewhat polemical essay examining the materialism of Chernyshevskii and others, see Jacob B. Talmon, *Myth of the Nation and Vision of Revolution: The Origins of Ideological Polarization in the Twentieth Century* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), 267–84. For a biography of Chernyshevskii, see William F. Woehrlin, *Chernyshevskii: The Man and the Journalist* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971). On Pisarev, see Peter C. Pozefsky, *The Nihilist Imagination: Dmitrii Pisarev and the Cultural Origins of Russian Radicalism (1860–1868)* (New York: Peter Lang, 2003).

Pisarev pithily expressed this new spirit of 'nihilism' with his celebrated aphorism that 'What can be smashed must be smashed. Whatever withstands the blow is fit to survive; what flies into pieces is rubbish'.[33] Although contributors to journals like *Sovremennik* were still forced to use a veiled language to express their views, the liberalisation of the censorship in the late 1850s and early 1860s facilitated the development of a distinctive Russian *intelligentsia*, characterised by its fascination with radical ideas and committed to social and political change.[34]

The term 'nihilism' was first popularised by Turgenev in his 1862 novel *Otsy i deti* (*Fathers and Children*), which provided a vivid picture of the clash between this new generation committed to the values of materialism and aesthetic utilitarianism, and an older generation of liberal-minded gentry who espoused the importance of progress and high art.[35] The most important response to the book came from the pen of Chernyshevskii. If Turgenev's novel provided a wistful insight into the clash of values between two generations, fretting over the destruction of cherished liberal nostrums and ideals, Chernyshevskii's 1863 novel

33 Quoted in James M. Edie, James Scanlan and Mary-Barbara Zeldin (eds), *Russian Philosophy*, 3 vols (Chicago, IL: Quadrangle Books, 1965), II, 65.

34 Among the large English-language literature on the origins and elusive character of the Russian *intelligentsia*, see Isaiah Berlin, *Russian Thinkers* (London: Penguin, 1994); Martin Malia, 'What Is the Intelligentsia?', *Daedalus*, 89, 3 (1960), 441–58; Laurie Manchester, *Holy Fathers, Secular Sons: Clergy, Intelligentsia and the Modern Self in Revolutionary Russia* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2008); Vladimir C. Nahirny, *The Russian Intelligentsia: From Torment to Silence* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1983); Philip Pomper, *The Russian Revolutionary Intelligentsia* (Wheeling, IL: H. Davidson, 1993); Marc Raeff, *Origins of the Russian Intelligentsia. The Eighteenth-Century Nobility* (New York: Harcourt Brace and World, 1966); Nicholas Riasanovsky, *A Parting of Ways: Government and the Educated Public in Russia, 1801-1855* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976).

35 Among the voluminous literature exploring the importance of Turgenev's novel, including his popularising of the term nihilism, see Isaiah Berlin's 1970 Romanes Lecture 'Fathers and Children. Turgenev and the Liberal Predicament', in Ivan Turgenev, *Fathers and Sons,* trans. Rosemary Edmonds (London: Penguin, 1979), 7–71; William C. Brumfield, 'Bazarov and Rjazanov: The Romantic Archetype in Russian Nihilism', *Slavic and East European Journal*, 21, 4 (1977), 495–505; Olga Vishnyakova, 'Russian Nihilism: The Cultural Legacy of the Conflict between Fathers and Sons', *Comparative and Continental Philosophy*, 3, 1 (2011), 99–111; Irina N. Sizemskaya, 'Russian Nihilism in Ivan S. Turgenev's Literary and Philosophical Investigations', *Russian Studies in Philosophy*, 56, 5 (2018), 394–404. For Turgenev's views on his novel, written some years after its appearance, see Ivan Turgenev, 'Apropos of Fathers and Sons', in David Magarshack (ed.), *Turgenev's Literary Reminiscences* (London: Faber, 1984), 168–77.

Chto delat'? (*What Is to Be Done?*) offered an unambiguous paean of praise for a new generation committed to questioning everything.[36] Thousands of students at Russian universities and gymnasia were enthralled by characters like Rakhmetov, who spent his nights sleeping on a bed of nails, in an unlikely attempt to steel himself for the struggle to bring about revolution. *What Is to Be Done?* helped to forge a new self-consciousness among thousands of educated young Russians, providing them with a model of ways to live that ostentatiously rejected the values of a previous generation.

Volkhovskii was influenced by the new *zeitgeist* even before enrolling in the Law Faculty at Moscow University in 1863. Students at the St Petersburg gymnasium he attended regularly discussed articles appearing in journals like *Sovremennik*. The same was true in Odessa (Lazar' Gol'denberg, who subsequently worked with Volkhovskii in London in the 1890s, recalled in his memoirs that he first read *What Is to Be Done?* and *Sovremennik* while at school in the city).[37] Volkhovskii himself was familiar with the writings of Chernyshevskii before he enrolled at the University, and regularly read *Sovremennik* and *Kolokol* (*The Bell*), the journal published abroad by Aleksandr Herzen which circulated widely in Russia.[38] And, during his first year as a student in Moscow, Volkhovskii was among the crowd that witnessed the civic execution of Chernyshevskii in St Petersburg's Mytninskaia Square in 1864 (a symbolic 'ceremony' in which the victim was led to the scaffold before being forced to kneel as a sword was broken over their head). The spectacle had a profound effect on the young Volkhovskii, who described how the 'remarkable' and 'talented' author of *What Is to Be Done?* had been condemned to exile for nothing more than publishing

36 For a collection of essays by Soviet historians that remains useful today, if bearing the ideological preconceptions of the time, see M. V. Nechkina, *Vstrecha dvukh pokolenii. Iz istorii russkogo revoliutsionnogo dvizheniia kontsa 50-kh – nachala 60-kh godov XIX veka. Sbornik statei* (Moscow: Nauka, 1980).

37 Tuckton House Archive, University of Leeds Brotherton Library Special Collections, henceforth Tuckton House Archive (Leeds Brotherton Library), MS 1381/18 (typescript of L. Gol'denberg, 'Reminiscences'), 10. Gol'denberg appears for a time to have been at the gymnasium with Volkhovskii, although his interest in radical literature developed after he transferred to the Commercial School in Odessa in 1863, where his interest in political questions was roused by news of the suppression of unrest in Poland.

38 Volkhovskii Papers (HIA), Box 17, Folder 3 (Brief autobiographical notes by Volkhovskii).

ideas about reform that were anathema to 'the narrow class interests of the aristocracy'.[39]

The term 'nihilism' was in practice never more than a convenient label for a diffuse set of ideas and behaviours, while any effort to understand historical change in terms of generations inevitably runs the risk of reducing the complex experiences of countless individuals to a single descriptor.[40] The rise of the 'new people' of the 1860s was nevertheless something more than a literary construct. Nihilism was as much about lifestyle as ideas: a distinctive fashion designed to assert a semiotics of protest (long shabby coats and long hair for men, plain dresses and short hair for women); a new balance of relationships between the sexes; and so forth.[41] Yet ideas still mattered greatly to the young radicals. Was Russia bound to go through the West European experience of political and economic development? Or would it be possible, as Chernyshevskii and others argued, to build a distinctively Russian socialism based on the egalitarian and collective instincts of the Russian people? And how should young members of the *intelligentsia* seek to relate to the Russian *narod*—the ordinary Russian people (overwhelmingly peasants)—who lived in ways that were largely mysterious to those who spent their lives in the city? As the 1860s progressed, the principal differences within the radical-revolutionary movement revolved around such questions, and above all the vexed issue of whether social and political change was best brought about by the violent destruction of the tsarist state, or a more gradualist programme that fostered closer relations between the radical *intelligentsia* and the Russian *narod*. It was to become one of the defining

39 For Volkhovskii's account, see F. Volkhovskii, 'Na Mytninskoi ploshchadi', in Iu. G. Oksman (ed.), *N.G. Chernyshevskii v vospominaniiakh sovremennikov*, 2 vols (Saratov: Saratovskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1958), I, 31–36.

40 For a valuable discussion of this subject, see Stephen Lovell, 'From Genealogy to Generation. The Birth of Cohort Thinking in Russia', *Kritika*, 9, 3 (2008), 567–94. For a useful application of the concept of generation to Volkhovskii's own radical milieu, see Eklof and Saburova, *A Generation of Revolutionaries*, passim. For a dated if still useful wider discussion of the subject, see Lewis S. Feuer, *The Conflict of Generations. The Character and Significance of Student Movements* (New York: Basic Books, 1969).

41 For a valuable discussion of the 'self-fashioning' of the radical *intelligentsia*, see Christopher Ely, *Underground Petersburg. Radical Populism, Urban Space and the Tactics of Subversion in Reform-Era Russia* (Dekalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2016). For a useful discussion of the sartorial dimension, see Victoria Thorstensson, 'Nihilist Fashion in 1860s–1870s Russia: The Aesthetic Relations of Blue Spectacles to Reality', *Clothing Cultures*, 3, 3 (2016), 265–81.

tensions in the development of the Russian revolutionary movement in the 1870s.

All these dilemmas lay, though, ahead when Volkhovskii enrolled as a law student at Moscow University in 1863. He spent very little time on his formal studies over the next few years. The quality of lectures at the University varied considerably in the 1860s,[42] and many students preferred to meet informally to discuss the work of writers like Chernyshevskii, a phenomenon that helped to shape the development of a distinct radical subculture.[43] Volkhovskii lived with his mother in a house just off the Arbat near the city centre, but their financial position was precarious, and Feliks spent much of his time earning money through the book trade. A police report written some years later noted that his activities prevented him from attending class regularly. Volkhovskii's work did however give him an insight into the complex web of rules and regulations that defined what could (and could not) be legally published. It also gave him easy access to numerous illegal publications that were in more or less open circulation at the time.

Volkhovskii does not appear to have developed close links with such revolutionary organisations as the first Zemlia i volia (Land and Liberty), although it will be seen later that he was loosely acquainted with some of those involved in the melodramatically named Ad (Hell), whose members were committed to carrying out a programme of assassinations and robbery.[44] He was, rather, one of the thousands of young men and women whose 'nihilism' was shaped by the materialist

42 For a ponderous but still helpful Soviet history of Moscow University, see Mikhail Tikhomirov et al. (eds), *Istoriia Moskovskogo universiteta*, 2 vols (Moscow: Izd-vo Moskovskogo universiteta, 1955). For useful memoirs of Moscow University in the late 1850s and 1860s, by one of the best-known professors there, see B. N. Chicherin, *Vospominaniia,* 2 vols, I, *Moskovskii universitet. Zemstvo i Moskovskaia duma* (Moscow: Izd-vo. im. Sabashnikovykh, 2010), 5–126.

43 On this subject, see Daniel R. Brower, *Training the Nihilists. Education and Radicalism in Tsarist Russia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1975), 190–230.

44 On the first Zemlia i volia see Franco Venturi, *Roots of Revolution. A History of the Populist and Socialist Movements in Nineteenth-Century Russia* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 253–84; Nechkina, *Vstrecha dvukh pokolenii*, 287–336. On 'Hell' see, for example, Adam Ulam, *Prophets and Conspirators in Pre-Revolutionary Russia* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1998), 148–68; Venturi, *Roots of Revolution*, 331-53. For a discussion of 'Hell' from a very different standpoint, see Claudia Verhoeven, *The Odd Man Karakazov. Imperial Russia, Modernity and the Birth of Terrorism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009), passim.

philosophy pithily expressed in Aleksandr Kropotkin's dictum that 'There is nothing except matter. Away with idealism'.[45] Yet the nihilist creed—if strictly interpreted—was more effective at challenging the *status quo* than it was in identifying alternatives. Many of the young people enthralled by the new thinking were by contrast natural enthusiasts inspired by a desire to find positive ways of improving the welfare of the *narod*. Lazar' Gol'denberg, who was trained as a chemist, subsequently articulated the sentiments of many 'new people' when he recalled how he had by the late 1860s become increasingly sceptical about the potential of a 'purely scientific method' to foster social and political change.[46] Volkhovskii himself was subsequently to play a significant role in the search for ways in which the *intelligentsia* could further their understanding of the Russian peasant and find ways of bringing enlightenment to the village.

Volkhovskii devoted a good deal of time as a student to his role as secretary of a Little Russian mutual aid society (*kassa*), established by students at Moscow University who came from the south-western provinces of the Empire. The growth of 'Ukrainophilism' was a source of concern for the tsarist authorities throughout the 1860s. The establishment of the Brotherhood of Saints Cyril and Methodius in the turbulent years of 1847–48 had shown that Ukrainian national sentiment could take on a political form.[47] Most of its members supported the creation of a federation of free Slavic states, organised on liberal principles, a position that was hardly compatible with the ideology of Official Nationality, with its emphasis on Orthodoxy, Autocracy and

45 Brower, *Training the Nihilists*, 159.

46 Tuckton House Archive (Leeds Brotherton Library), MS 1381/18 (typescript of L. Gol'denberg, 'Reminiscences'), 11.

47 On the development of Ukrainian national consciousness in this period, especially in relation to Russia, see Serhy Yekelchyk, *Ukraine: Birth of a Modern Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 33–52; Aleksei Miller, *The Ukrainian Question: The Russian Empire and Nationalism in the Nineteenth Century* (Budapest: Central European Press, 2003), 49–60; Johannes Remy, *Brothers or Enemies? The Ukrainian National Movement and Russia from the 1840s to the 1870s* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2016). For an imaginative and wide-ranging review of the impact of Romantic Nationalism in the region, see Serhiy Bilenky *Romantic Nationalism in Eastern Europe: Russian, Polish, and Ukrainian Political Imaginations* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012).

Nationality, designed to help secure the social and political *status quo*.[48] While the Brotherhood was quickly suppressed, interest in Ukrainian identity and culture never faded away, and the appearance of the legal journal *Osnova* (lit. *The Basis*) in 1861 provided a new setting for debate on questions relating to Ukrainian culture and language.[49] The Polish Rebellion of 1863 made the question more sensitive than ever.[50] By the time Volkhovskii matriculated at the University, any interest in the question of Little Russian identity was bound to attract official suspicion.

The Little Russian *kassa* was at least ostensibly designed to provide financial help to any of its members who fell on hard times. Its rules emphasised the need for members to pool their resources and treat each other with a respect that recognised no distinctions or hierarchies.[51] One Soviet historian suggested that the communal values demanded of members were very similar to those of the Chaikovskii-Natanson radical circle that emerged in the early 1870s (to which Volkhovskii belonged).[52] The sixty members met regularly to discuss requests for financial help (some 2,500 rubles was disbursed between 1863 and 1866). The society also maintained a library that provided a meeting place for its members. While the University authorities were aware of the *kassa's* activities it still attracted suspicion. The Third Section, the 'secret police' agency responsible for monitoring subversive activities, placed an informer among the members of the organisation.[53] A report

48 On Official Nationality, see Nicholas Riasanovsky, *Nicholas I and Official Nationality in Russia, 1825–1855* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1959). For a brief but useful article on Count Sergei Uvarov, widely and not altogether accurately seen as the main architect of the policy, see Cynthia Whittaker, 'The Ideology of Sergei Uvarov: An Interpretive Essay', *Russian Review*, 37, 2 (1978), 158–76.

49 On the creation and demise of *Osnova*, see Miller, *Ukrainian Question*, 75–96; Remy, *Brothers or Enemies?* 90–108.

50 Miller, *Ukrainian Question*, 97–126. See, too, David Saunders, 'Russia and Ukraine under Alexander II: The Valuev Edict of 1863', *International History Review*, 17, 1 (1995), 23–50. For a general discussion of the Polish factor in developments in 'Right Bank' Ukraine, see Kimitaka Matsuzato, 'Pol'skii faktor v pravoberezhnoi Ukraine s XIX po nachalo XX veka', *Ab Imperio*, 1 (2000), 123–44.

51 The elaborate rules of the Little Russian Society can be found in the State Archive of the Russian Federation (henceforth GARF), f. 95, op. 2, del. 419 (Various records relating to the Malorussian student society).

52 P. S. Tkachenko, *Uchashchaiasia molodezh' v revoliutsionnom dvizhenii 60-70-kh gg. XIX v.* (Moscow: Mysl', 1978), 91.

53 On the Third Section in this period, see Sidney Monas, *The Third Section: Police and Society in Russia under Nicholas I* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press,

later described the organisation as secretive—*neglasno*—but suggested that it had no criminal objectives (*prestupnye tseli*). When its library was seized by police in 1868, eighteen months after Volkhovskii had left the University without graduating, most of its books and papers were found to be 'unobjectionable'.[54]

While Volkhovskii's role as secretary of the Little Russian *kassa* focused on providing practical help to fellow students, his interest in all things Ukrainian was much broader, touching precisely on the sorts of questions that concerned the authorities. Nor was he alone. Several members of the *kassa* subsequently faced arrest and imprisonment for their Ukrainophile sentiments. Volkhovskii himself had been under police surveillance for nearly two years at the time of his first arrest, in February 1868, when a search of his flat discovered numerous pictures of Taras Shevchenko and the eighteenth-century Cossack leader Pavlo Polubotok. It also uncovered numerous books with photographs of individuals dressed in Ukrainian national costume.[55] Such artefacts were bound to appear suspect to the authorities, anxious in the wake of the Polish Revolution of 1863 about the growth of nationalist sentiment in the Empire's western borderlands.

A few months before his arrest, Volkhovskii had sought permission to publish a series of articles sketching out a programme of field work to collect material designed to foster greater understanding of the Ukrainian peasantry, telling the Moscow Censorship Committee that he hoped in due course to publish the articles in book form for easy circulation. The Committee was suspicious of the whole enterprise, suspecting that the author 'in all probability has some other goal that he had not explained to the Committee', and referred the issue to St Petersburg. A senior official in the capital wrote a detailed report noting warily that

1961); P. S. Squire, *The Third Department: The Establishment and Practices of the Political Police in the Russia of Nicholas I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968). For the classic pre-revolutionary account of the Third Section and its impact on cultural life in the reign of Nicholas I, see M. K. Lemke, *Nikolaevskie zhandarmy i literatura, 1826–55 gg.* (St Petersburg: Tip-ia A. V. Orlova, 1909). For a recent account, see Igor' Simbirtsev, *Tret'e otdelnie. Pervyi opyt sozdaniia professional'noi spetssluzhbi v Rossiiskoi imperii, 1826–1880* (Moscow: Tsentrpoligraf, 2006).

54 N. F. Bel'chikov, 'Rublevoe obshchestvo. Epizod iz istorii revoliutsionnogo dvizheniia 60-kh godov', *Izvestiia Akademii Nauk SSSR. Seriia vii. Otdelenie obshchestvennykh nauk*, 10 (1935), 941-1001 (942).

55 Bel'chikov, 'Rublevoe obshchestvo', 992.

the programme to collect information about peasant lifestyles would require the dispatch of enumerators to the countryside. He agreed with the Moscow Committee that the author probably had 'another goal' in mind than a purely scientific one, adding that Volkhovskii had a 'Polish name', and that the area to be surveyed formed part of Poland until the country's final partition in 1795. Permission to publish was refused.[56]

When Volkhovskii was arrested early in 1868, though, it was neither a direct result of his involvement in the Little Russian *kassa* nor a consequence of his plans for publishing material about the Ukrainian *narod*. He was instead taken into custody for his part in establishing the so-called Ruble Society, along with his friend German Lopatin, who had graduated from the Mathematics Faculty of St Petersburg University in 1866. Lopatin had been on the periphery of the revolutionary group that coalesced in the mid-1860s around Ivan Khudiakov in Petersburg and Nikolai Ishutin in Moscow (out of which emerged 'Hell'). Ishutin had for a time audited classes at Moscow University, where he met Volkhovskii through the Little Russian *kassa*, although it is not clear how well the two men knew one another.[57] He was also first cousin of Dmitrii Karakazov, who made an unsuccessful attempt on the life of Tsar Aleksandr II in 1866, for which he was subsequently hanged.[58] Ties between members of the Ishutin and Khudiakov groups had grown closer during 1865, and both men were instrumental in encouraging Karakazov's actions, although most of the young student radicals grouped around them had no knowledge of the plot. Lopatin was arrested and imprisoned for two months following the assassination attempt before being released without charge. He almost certainly knew nothing about Karakazov's plans. The same was true of Volkhovskii despite his slight acquaintanceship with Ishutin.[59]

Lopatin was no Jacobin regicide, instead believing that any attempt to bring about radical social and political change in Russia should be

56 Bel'chikov, 'Rublevoe obshchestvo', 986 ff.

57 Philip Pomper, *Sergei Nechaev* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1979), 48–49.

58 For an interesting discussion of Karakazov, which sees his act of violence as something more complex and significant than the act of a deranged misfit, see Verhoeven, *The Odd Man Karakazov*.

59 N. A. Troitskii, *Pervye iz blestiashchei pleiady. Bol'shoe obshchestvo propagandy 1871–1874 gody* (Saratov: Izd-vo Saratovskogo universiteta, 1991), 37.

founded on a deep understanding of the 'real position and needs' of the peasantry, which meant that it was necessary 'to draw closer to that enigmatic sphinx called the *narod*'. Volkhovskii took a similar view. Indeed, when he first sought permission to publish his programme for collecting material about the Ukrainian peasantry, Volkhovskii and Lopatin had already begun to sketch out a plan to create a peripatetic cadre of 'teachers' who would travel to rural areas and acquaint themselves with the life and needs of the peasantry.[60] The 'teachers' would also discuss historical and political questions with members of the peasant commune, and distribute specially published books, written in an accessible language on issues ranging from history to economics. Subscribers would support the whole operation by paying one ruble per month. In the event, the only book to be published was one by Khudiakov, *Drevnaia Rus'* (*Ancient Russia*), which rejected state-centred accounts of Russia's history in favour of one that condemned the modern system of autocratic government as a break with the supposedly more egalitarian traditions of Russia's past.[61]

Lopatin and Volkhovskii exchanged a series of letters discussing their plans. In January 1868, Lopatin told his friend that fifteen people who attended a meeting in St Petersburg agreed to support the scheme.[62] Neither man knew that the mutual friend they asked to carry their letters between Moscow and St Petersburg was in the pay of the Third Section. The authorities were concerned enough to arrest the two men in order to obtain more information about their activities. Volkhovskii described in one of his unpublished autobiographical accounts how, after his mother answered a knock at the door late at night,

> The room was filled with people: there was a colonel of gendarmes, a police-officer, some gendarmes-soldiers and policemen, and two private persons from the neighbourhood who, according to law, are witnesses as to the legality of the manner in which the search is conducted ... the colonel went to my bedroom and, rousing me from my bed, asked where were my papers.

60 A. A. Shilov (ed.), *German Aleksandrovich Lopatin, 1845-1918. Avtobiografiя. Pokazaniia i pis'ma. Stat'i i stikhotvoreniia. Bibliografiia* (Petrograd: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo, 1922), 28.

61 Venturi, *Roots of Revolution*, 341.

62 Shilov (ed.), *German Aleksandrovich Lopatin*, 31.

> I led him to my desk. The colonel took up a position on my left hand, the police officer on my right, and we began to take out, one by one, the papers which were examined by the officials. Those which were evidently without any significance, were put aside, all the rest were kept by the gendarmes. On a sudden [*sic*] I perceived in the drawer the important paper which I had forgotten to conceal: it was a list of persons contributing money monthly. My blood ran cold & my breath stopped. If the list were seized, the lodgings of all these persons would be searched at night like mine, something compromising might be discovered and the people would be ruined – all that through my carelessness! The thought of it was almost unbearable to me. Generally in such cases a Russian revolutionist tries to seize the compromising paper and to swallow it. But I could not do it. The sheet was pretty large and they were at my side—two vigorous men. No doubt the paper would be taken out by force even from my mouth … Luckily my list was written on the opposite side of some advertisements and were lying with the printed side up. I summoned all my self-possession and taking the paper quietly, I showed it to the colonel, keeping it in my hands of course without turning it over.
>
> 'Do you want it' I asked smiling.
>
> 'Certainly not' answered the colonel, and with an exulting heart but an unaltered face I laid the list aside.[63]

After the search was over, Volkhovskii was driven away by sleigh to a local police station, where he was held for a few hours before being put on a train to St Petersburg under the guard of two gendarmes. Lopatin's home in St Petersburg was also searched, although he had somehow got wind of what was happening, and nothing compromising was found. He was nevertheless arrested and taken to prison where, like Volkhovskii, he was detained for several months.

Volkhovskii was just twenty-one at the time of his arrest, and the next few months introduced him to the challenges of 'solitude and forced idleness' that were to become all too familiar in the years that followed. Much of his captivity was spent in the Peter and Paul Fortress on the banks of the Neva opposite the Winter Palace, although he was regularly taken

63 Volkhovskii Papers (HIA), Box 11, Folder 3 (Unpublished autobiography), 8–9. A somewhat different account by Volkhovskii—in another autobiographical manuscript—can be found in George Kennan Papers, 1840–1937, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington DC, henceforth Kennan Papers (Library of Congress), Box 136.

from the prison in a closed carriage for interrogation by a commission of inquiry made up of eight generals, who cross-questioned the prisoner at length, reacting with anger 'when my answers seemed ... not to be frank enough'. Volkhovskii was according to his own account well-treated, although his interrogators still made him feel like a 'desperate culprit ... they knew all about my doings & that my only chance of a mitigated punishment lay in a frank confession'. In true Kafkaesque fashion, when Volkhovskii asked with what he was charged, he was told by his interrogators that 'I knew as well as [they] did'. The questions put to him repeatedly focused on his relationship with Lopatin and other acquaintances, many of whom had been put under surveillance, and when he failed to give satisfactory answers, he was sent back to his cell for days on end. During questioning he found that 'it took an almost superhuman effort to stay clear of the reefs that lay in my way without dropping a name or a sentence which might produce a fatal result'.[64]

In both published and unpublished versions of his memoirs describing this time of his life, Volkhovskii told how a kindly prison guard acted as a go-between with Lopatin, providing the two men with an opportunity to coordinate their answers when questioned by the examining commission.[65] The authorities were nevertheless convinced that they were both being evasive—'not without cause' as Volkhovskii later observed—and played cat and mouse with the prisoners in an effort to catch them out.[66] Although Lopatin and Volkhovskii denied anyone else had been involved in the Ruble Society, officials in the Third Section knew that the claim was false, not least because a second raid

64 Volkhovskii Papers (HIA), Box 11, Folder 3 (Unpublished autobiography), 12 ff. Volkhovskii subsequently published an account describing his experiences for an English audience in Felix Volkhovsii, 'My Life in Russian Prisons', *Fortnightly Review*, 48 (November 1890), 782-94. He also published an account of his arrest and imprisonment for a Russian audience in 1906, which was broadly consistent with the English version, despite the very different audiences. See F. Volkhovskii, *Druz'ia sredi vragov. Iz vospominanii starago revoliutsionera* (St Petersburg: Knigoizdatel'stvo 'Narodnaia volia', 1906).

65 Volkhovskii's account of his various terms of imprisonment in *Druz'ia sredi vragov* was carefully written to suggest that many guards and even some officers felt sympathy for their prisoners, an approach that was designed to emphasise his views in the wake of the 1905 Revolution that it was possible to build close relations between soldiers (including officers) and revolutionaries.

66 The extensive records of the Third Section's investigation into Lopatin and Volkhovskii can be found in GARF, f. 109, op. 153, del. 172.1–172.3.

on Volkhovskii's house had uncovered a list of members (presumably the document he had successfully concealed during the first search). The raid also discovered his account of Chernyshevskii's civic execution which praised the victim as a martyr whose fate should inspire 'deeds' rather than 'helpless whimpering'.[67] It was only after investigators confronted Lopatin with the evidence that he changed his story, telling his inquisitors that he and Volkhovskii had hoped 'to spread enlightenment among the people' by providing them with books that would give them a greater understanding of history and literature. He also claimed unconvincingly that they had not sought approval for their activities because they lacked the right contacts among the bureaucracy.[68]

Although Volkhovskii and Lopatin were evasive in the answers they gave when questioned about the Ruble Society, they were not as the authorities feared planning an armed uprising along the lines set out in some of the revolutionary manifestoes that had circulated in Russia earlier in the 1860s.[69] Volkhovskii still maintained forty years later that the Ruble Society had never been anything more than a loose association of like-minded individuals inspired by a sense of their 'moral debt to the Russian *narod*'.[70] Its programme was indeed in many ways the antithesis of the Jacobinism favoured by the Ishutin-Khudiakov group. Yet both Lopatin and Volkhovskii knew that it was impossible to separate questions of 'enlightenment' and 'propaganda' from questions of organisation. The distinction was also unclear to those charged with maintaining public order.

Lopatin and Volkhovskii were eventually released from prison without charge in the autumn of 1868, in part because of lack of evidence that the Ruble Society was a genuinely revolutionary organisation. Although the Third Section had seized a copy of Volkhovskii's diary, which provided an account of his friendships and activities, they found

67 Volkhovskii, 'Na Mytninskoi ploshchadi', 35.

68 For Lopatin's testimony, see Shilov (ed.), *German Aleksandrovich Lopatin*, 33–43.

69 One of the documents seized in the raid on Volkhovskii's flat was headed 'To the Younger Generation', and the authorities may have been concerned that it was written in a conscious echo of a similarly-named 1862 pamphlet by Nikolai Shelgunov and Mikhail Mikhaikov, which while less sanguinary in tone than some of the more blood-curdling manifestoes of the time still contained demands for an elected Head of State and the transfer of all noble owned land to the peasantry. On Shelgunov and Mikhailov's pamphlet, see Venturi, *Roots of Revolution*, 241–50.

70 Volkhovskii, *Druz'ia sredi vragov*, 4.

no detailed evidence that he was involved in a conspiracy to foment revolution.[71] The behaviour of both men was deemed to be the product of youthful exuberance that would fade with time. The Commission of Inquiry also concluded, not altogether accurately, that Lopatin had been the more important figure in establishing the Ruble Society. Volkhovskii and his mother had to sign a formal document promising that Feliks would not engage in any illegal activities. Lopatin was sent from St Petersburg to join his family near Stavropol.[72]

Following his release, Volkhovskii returned to the book trade to earn money, working in the Moscow branch of the bookshop owned by the St Petersburg lawyer Aleksandr Cherkesov, which provided an important meeting place for young radicals in the city. He established friendly relations with Vsevolod Lopatin, the brother of German, and the two men quickly became central figures in a discussion group that included Petr Uspenskii and his sister Nadezhda, along with Uspenskii's future wife Aleksandra Zasulich.[73] Zasulich recalled later that 'We were all very inexperienced: we read the articles of Chernyshevskii in *Sovremennik* and the works of Lavrov, and we welcomed enthusiastically the small number of back copies of *Kolokol* which Uspenskii had been able to obtain'.[74] They also read numerous foreign works in translation.[75] Most participants in the group seem initially to have held views consistent with the ones that inspired German Lopatin and Volkhovskii when founding the Ruble Society, including agreement about the need to develop a closer relationship between the intelligentsia and the *narod*. They were also still heavily influenced by the positivism that was so influential in radical circles in Russia during the 1860s. The group first assembled at Uspenskii's home, but when he was placed in charge

71 Volkhovskii's episodic diary and other jottings for 1866–67 can be found in GARF, f. 95, op. 2, del. 311. Other material in the same *delo* shows how Volkhovskii had even as a very young man developed the habit of cutting out and keeping cuttings from the Russian press that was to continue till the end of his life.

72 Kennan Papers (Library of Congress), Box 136 (Autobiographical notes by Volkhovskii), 17.

73 Aleksandra was the sister of Vera Zasulich who subsequently became famous for her assassination attempt on the Governor-General of St Petersburg in 1878.

74 Aleksandra Zasulich, 'Vospominaniia shestidesiatnitsy', *Byloe*, 18 (1922), 19–45 (esp. 26–35).

75 For Volkhovskii's views of the circle given at his trial, see *Pravitel'stvennyi vestnik*, 159 (1871).

at Cherkesov's bookshop he asked for the meetings to be moved to his sister's flat, on the grounds that although they were 'completely innocent' they might provoke suspicion and make his job harder.[76] Nadezhda Uspenskaia shared a flat with Aleksandra Zasulich and another young radical, Mariia Antonova, who noted in her subsequent testimony to the Third Section that some fifteen people usually attended meetings, a number that included several who had been on the fringes of the group involved in Karakazov's attempt on the life of Aleksandr II. She also testified that the group was not interested in politics, something that Volkhovskii claimed too, following his second arrest in April 1869.[77] Such protestations were decidedly disingenuous. The discussions may not have focused on the need for political change, in the narrow sense of the term, but the emphasis on developing a closer understanding between the *intelligentsia* and the *narod* was bound to appear subversive in the eyes of the authorities.

The outbreak of student demonstrations in cities across Russia in the final months of 1868 increased official concern about the threat posed by young radicals. Most of the demands related to immediate grievances, including the right to free speech and free assembly on university premises, but the tough response by the University authorities provoked further anger among the students. The ferment prompted discussion in revolutionary circles about the nature and significance of the unrest. The newspaper *Narodnoe delo* (*The People's Cause*), which was published by Mikhail Bakunin in Geneva, called for the protests to become the basis for a more general *bunt* (rebellion).[78] Many students considered giving up their studies to make a more immediate contribution to the welfare of the peasantry. In the words of Solomon Chudnovskii, who later worked closely with Volkhovskii in south Russia in the early 1870s,

> The problem was raised in a ruthlessly categorical and extremely partial form: learning or work? i.e. was it necessary to devote ourselves, even

76 *Pravitel'stvennyi vestnik*, 159 (1871).

77 B. P. Koz'min, 'S. G. Nechaev i ego protivniki v 1868–69 gg.', in B. I. Gorev and B. P. Koz'min (eds), *Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie 1860-kh godov* (Moscow: Izd-vo Vsesoiuznogo obshchestva politkatorzhan i ssyl'no-poselentsev, 1932), 168–226 (192).

78 On Bakunin's views during this period, see Aileen Kelly, *Mikhail Bakunin: A Study in the Psychology and Politics of Utopia* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 257–88.

> if only temporarily, to our studies, so as to obtain diplomas and then live the life of the privileged professions of the intelligentsia; or should we remember our duty to the people, recall that all our learning had been acquired only by means provided by the people, who work like condemned men and are always hungry? Should we not rather, we students, give up our privileged position, give up scholarship and devote ourselves to learning a craft, so as to take part as simple artisans or labourers in the life of the people, and merge with it.[79]

The student unrest provided the background for the appearance of one of the most unsavoury figures in the history of the nineteenth-century Russian revolutionary movement: Sergei Nechaev. Nechaev was born into a poor background in the town of Ivanovo, 150 miles north of Moscow, but subsequently acquired sufficient education to become a teacher. In 1868 he attended lectures at St Petersburg University. Over the next couple of years, Nechaev became adept at constructing a fantasy world in which he played the starring role, convincing both impressionable young students and experienced revolutionaries like Bakunin that he had at his beck and call a large and well-organised revolutionary organisation.[80] He was active in the student disorders of 1868–69, before fleeing Russia in typically melodramatic manner, circulating a note falsely claiming that he had been arrested by the Third Section. Once in Switzerland, Nechaev co-authored with Bakunin the 'Catechism of a Revolutionary',[81] which opened with the sombre words that 'the revolutionary is a doomed man. He has no private interests, no affairs, sentiments, ties, property nor even a name of his own'.[82] He also wrote 'The People's Justice' which called for the assassination of leading

79 Quoted in Venturi, *Roots of Revolution*, 359.

80 On Bakunin's relations with Nechaev, see Paul Avrich, *Bakunin and Nechaev* (London: Freedom Press, 1987); Michel Confino, *Violence dans le violence: Le débat Bakounine-Nečaev* (Paris: F. Maspero, 1973); Arthur Lehning (ed.), *Michel Bakounine et ses relations avec Sergej Nechaev, 1870–1872* (Leiden: Brill, 1971); Woodford McClellan, *Revolutionary Exiles. The Russians in the First International and the Paris Commune* (London: Frank Cass, 1979), 36-40. For useful general discussions of Nechaev's career, see Pomper, *Sergei Nechaev*; Ulam, *Prophets and Conspirators*, 169–200.

81 Full text available in translation at https://www.marxists.org/subject/anarchism/nechayev/catechism.htm.

82 The question of Bakunin's contribution to the Catechism has for many years raised considerable debate. For a discussion, see Philip Pomper, 'Bakunin, Nechaev, and the "Catechism of a Revolutionary": The Case for Joint Authorship', *Canadian-American Slavic Studies*, 10, 4 (1976), 535–51.

ministers and journalists. Nechaev returned to Moscow in September 1869, where he assembled a small group of young and impressionable followers, who were enthralled by their leader's fantastic rhetoric. Yet there was something only too real about the murder that Nechaev orchestrated two months later of one of his followers, Ivan Ivanov, ostensibly because he was a police spy (although more probably because Ivanov had the temerity to question Nechaev's leadership). Ivanov was strangled, shot through the head, and his body dumped under the ice of a frozen lake. Nechaev subsequently fled abroad again following the killing. It was the brutality of the murder that provided the inspiration for Dostoevskii's *The Devils*, in which the sordid details of personal rivalry and ideological extremism were elevated into a religious-metaphysical drama.

Volkhovskii briefly met Nechaev early in 1869 at Cherkesov's bookshop, through Vladimir Orlov, who had previously been a teacher in Nechaev's hometown of Ivanovo. Nechaev was using an assumed name and Volkhovskii does not seem to have been aware of his real identity.[83] Volkhovskii also met several times with Petr Tkachev, like him a graduate of the second St Petersburg Gymnasium, who collaborated with Nechaev in trying to build student protests into a more substantial revolutionary movement.[84] The Third Section had continued to monitor Volkhovskii following his release from prison a few months earlier, and in April 1869 arrested him on suspicion of involvement in efforts to provoke student unrest, apparently after intercepting some incriminating material.[85] He was held in prison for more than two years before eventually being acquitted at trial in the summer of 1871.

The evidence Volkhovskii gave at his trial was designed to distance himself from the more extreme elements involved in the Nechaev affair.

83 Lehning, *Michel Bakounine*, 290.

84 On Tkachev's role in the Nechaev affair, see Hardy, *Tkachev*, 125–55; B. Koz'min, *P. N. Tkachev i revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie 1860-kh godov* (Moscow: Novyi Mir, 1922), 134–208.

85 For an unpublished and untitled article detailing Volkhovskii's analysis of the significance of the student unrest of 1868–69, which shows the importance he ascribed to such a development, see GARF, f. 109, op. 214, del. 334 (the article is not signed but both the style and the handwriting seem to confirm proof of authorship). Volkhovskii's article suggests that he was already convinced that a true revolutionary consciousness could only be fostered in the *narod* by a more politically aware external group.

The fact that he was in prison following Nechaev's return to Moscow in autumn 1869 certainly means that he took no part in the events leading up to the murder of Ivanov. Some of those close to Volkhovskii *were* however implicated in the killing, most notably Petr Uspenskii, a key figure in the discussion circle that Volkhovskii joined following his release from his first spell of imprisonment in August 1868 (Uspenskii was subsequently sentenced to fifteen years' hard labour). Volkhovskii was before his arrest also in close contact with Vladimir Orlov who—along with Nechaev and Tkachev—was active in efforts to fan the flames of student unrest into a more far-reaching revolutionary movement. The Soviet historian Boris Koz'min suggested that Volkhovskii was a fierce critic of Nechaev,[86] but his findings are not entirely convincing, not least because Nechaev's sadism and penchant for fantasy meant that he was a difficult figure for Soviet scholars to discuss, except in a way that treated him as a complete aberration in the Russian revolutionary lineage. It seems on balance likely that Volkhovskii was on the periphery of the web of conspiracies woven by Nechaev, particularly during the student unrest of winter 1868–69, but was never a central figure in any of them.[87]

While Volkhovskii was temperamentally opposed to the kind of melodramatic Jacobinism that characterised Nechaev's whole *modus operandi*, he seems for a time to have become more positive about the potential for a 'political' revolution, in which a small group of agitators forcefully seized power to use the state apparatus to foster a social revolution. The best evidence comes from material in his papers found by the police in January 1870 some months after his arrest. One of these manuscripts was a copy of 'A Programme of Revolutionary Action', which roundly condemned any social and economic system based on 'the mastery of the strong over the weak [and] the parasitism of the capitalist on the exhausted worker', suggesting that real change could only come about through 'the annihilation of the nesting places (*istreblenie gnezda*) of the existing power'. It followed that 'social

86 Koz'min, 'S. G. Nechaev i ego protivniki', 190–98.

87 Pomper, *Sergei Nechaev*, 49. The following pages draw heavily on Pomper's discussion of developments in the winter of 1868–69, in particular his questioning of Koz'min's argument that Volkhovskii was in all respects a sharp critic of Nechaev's Jacobinism. It should however be noted that Koz'min's views are supported by some material in the memoir literature. See, for example, Zamfir Ralli-Arborre, 'Sergei Gennadievich Nechaev', *Byloe*, 7 (1906), 136–46 (139).

revolution—is our ultimate goal and political [revolution]—is the sole way of achieving this goal'.[88] Such a formulation in effect set down the need for a two-stage revolution in which political change could serve as a conduit for social and economic transformation.

The authorship of the Programme remains uncertain. Although the language is reminiscent of some of Nechaev's publications, including 'Catechism of a Revolutionary', the 'nihilist scientism' is not.[89] Petr Tkachev probably contributed to the Programme: it certainly echoes the views he expressed both at the time and when in exile abroad in the 1870s. Vladimir Orlov may have written part of it as well. The Programme was specific in calling for an uprising in the spring of 1870, with a particular focus on the Ukraine, which raises the prospect that one of the authors may have been Vsevelod Lopatin or Volkhovskii himself (since both men had a good knowledge of the region). Whether or not Volkhovskii contributed to the actual Programme, the Third Section did find a second manuscript written in his hand, which Nechaev's American biographer suggests was a commentary on 'A Programme of Revolutionary Action'.[90] Volkhovskii claimed at his trial that he had copied the words from a letter by an unknown author, to which he planned to draft a reply, an explanation which officials at the Ministry of Justice dismissed as 'extremely unsatisfactory'.[91] It seems reasonable to assume that the notes seized by the Third Section were composed by Volkhovskii and provide some insight into his views during this period.

Volkhovskii's notes show that he was still influenced by the 'scientific' discourse associated with Chernyshevskii and other prominent journalists and writers of the late 1850s and early 1860s. He wrote with approval how the British historian Henry Buckle used the language of 'force' and 'action' to understand the past and argued that the language of physics could help to cast light on the study of society. Volkhovskii noted that his own reading of history persuaded him that a revolutionary

88 B. I. Gorev et al. (eds), *Istoriko-revoliutsionnaia khrestomatiia*, 3 vols (Moscow: Novaia Moskva, 1923), I, 81–85. The handwritten version of the Programme was copied by Nadezhda Uspenskaia who belonged to the Volkhovskii circle that met at Cherkesov's bookshop.

89 Pomper, *Sergei Nechaev*, 59.

90 Pomper, *Sergei Nechaev*, 54, 60–62.

91 B. P. Koz'min (ed.), *Nechaev i Nechaevtsy. Sbornik materialov* (Moscow: Gos. sotsialno-ekonomicheskoe izdatel'stvo, 1931), 16; Lehning, *Michel Bakounine*, 291.

conspiracy was bound to fail unless 'revolutionary ideas' had already percolated into 'the minds of the masses'. Yet he also observed—again using a rather stilted scientific language—that should the 'court' find itself unable to rely on control of armed force then it would easily fall prey to another scientific law: 'the smaller mass participation is in political life, the easier it is to have a political revolution'. Volkhovskii used a laboured metaphor drawn from chemistry to suggest that the seizure of power by a small group—a 'spark'—could pave the way for a social revolution that would create a bedrock of support needed in what was bound to be a violent struggle to defeat 'the people's enemies'.[92] If the government lost the support of the army it would be unable to suppress the desire of the *narod* for radical change.

While Volkhovskii was questioned at some length at his trial in 1871 about the provenance and content of 'A Programme of Revolutionary Action', along with the accompanying commentary, the prosecution focused more attention on his role in the student unrest of 1868–69. The abstruse theoretical tone of the Programme and the accompanying notes may have masked their political radicalism. More likely, though, the prosecution's questions reflected greater official concern about revolutionary actions rather than revolutionary words. Volkhovskii told the Court that he had actively discouraged students in Moscow from submitting group demands to the University authorities, which was illegal, suggesting that they instead submit individual petitions relating to their grievances:

> I said that [a mass petition] cannot lead to anything except claims that the students were acting illegally, and since the only legal way of acting is to be silent they should sit and remain silent: if they could not sit and be silent because they have nothing to eat, then they must find some other way of getting out of their situation ... But all my efforts at the Moscow meeting did not lead anywhere.[93]

He went on to add that during a trip to St Petersburg, where the unrest had started, he urged students there to take a cautious approach and 'not

92 *Pravitel'stvennyi vestnik*, 163 (1871).

93 *Pravitel'stvennyi vestnik*, 160 (1871). Volkhovskii repeated his assessment of the student protests in his unpublished autobiography. See Volkhovskii Papers (HIA), Box 11, Folder 3 (Unpublished autobiography), 24, where he described his position as 'a very strange and awkward one'.

think that the Muscovites would support them. The whole point of my speech was the same as the one I made before ... that although students have been deprived of the right to file a collective request, they have not been deprived of the right to file individual requests.' Volkhovskii may have been telling the truth, and other witnesses recalled that he was delighted on hearing that students in cities like Odessa were taking a moderate line, but many of those caught up in the Nechaevskoe delo (Nechaev Affair) were understandably less than open in the evidence they gave in Court.

The 1871 trial of Volkhovskii and others charged with inciting student unrest and involvement in the Nechaevskoe delo was conducted in the spirit of the judicial reforms introduced in 1864. The Soviet historian N. A. Troitskii acknowledged that it took place under conditions of almost complete openness despite the lack of a jury. An article in the journal *Delo* (*The Cause*) noted that 'until now everything has taken place in complete secrecy [but now] everything is discussed openly, in the full light of the factual and moral case'.[94] Crowds of sympathisers flooded the courtroom. The defendants tried to transform proceedings into a carnival of protest. Volkhovskii ostentatiously offered a bouquet of flowers to one of the female defendants despite the protests of the gendarme officer in Court. The procedures were periodically interrupted, as the accused were cheered, and the prosecution counsel catcalled. The Government undoubtedly mismanaged the trials that took place in the summer of 1871, not least by prosecuting individuals charged with Ivanov's murder at the same time as those of men and women charged with involvement in the student unrest of 1868-69, creating confusion in the public mind about the seriousness of the alleged offences. The Third Section agents who attended the trial described the prosecution as inept and the speeches of the defence lawyers as seditious.[95] The men found guilty of Ivanov's murder faced imprisonment rather than the death penalty. Those who were acquitted, like Volkhovskii, were told

94 N. A. Troitskii, *Tsarskie sudy protiv revoliutsionnoi Rossii. Politicheskie protsessy v 1871–1880 gg.* (Saratov: Izd-vo Saratovskogo universiteta, 1976), 122.

95 For the reports by agents of the Third Section on the trial, see Koz'min, *Nechaev i Nechaevtsy*, 158–88. Volkhovskii argued that the defence lawyers were inspired by the recent legal reforms to see themselves as 'champions of humanitarianism'. See Volkhovskii Papers (HIA), Box 11, Folder 1 (Untitled memoir notes by Volkhovskii on meeting with Stepniak in 1872).

that 'justice has spoken: from now onwards your place is not among the accused but among free citizens'.[96] Senior figures in the Moscow police believed that 'a dangerous agitator' had escaped justice.[97]

Volkhovskii was surprisingly terse when recalling his trial in the unpublished biographical notes he wrote many years later: 'In 1871 I was at last brought to trial and acquitted'. He acknowledged that he had been arrested in connection with the activities of Nechaev, 'a very skilful agitator ... though not free from wrong principles [who] undertook to organise a rising of the people for the purpose of overthrowing the government'.[98] Nor did Volkhovskii say much more in the pamphlet he published for Russian readers in 1906 describing his early revolutionary career.[99] Nechaev's reputation for deceit and ruthlessness meant that he was by the closing years of the nineteenth century an embarrassment for all the different strands of the Russian revolutionary movement. And, while Volkhovskii later acknowledged that his 'trial was a fair one', he had little desire to dwell on the subject, given that much of his time in exile abroad after 1890 was devoted to efforts to persuade a Western audience of the arbitrary and harsh treatment faced by all those who dared oppose the tsarist state.

Volkhovskii spent more than two years in prison while awaiting trial, spending most of the time in solitary confinement in the Peter and Paul Fortress.[100] The prisoners nevertheless managed to communicate with one another, taking advantage of their short periods of exercise to leave notes hidden in scraps of rye bread, which they dropped near to the edges of the paths or placed in knots in the bark of trees. They also communicated by tapping on the walls of their cells, using an elaborate code by which each letter in the alphabet was represented by two numbers, and developing a special shorthand in which a particular

96 Ulam, *Prophets and Conspirators*, 197.

97 Koz'min, *Nechaev i Nechaevtsy*, 173.

98 Volkhovskii Papers (HIA), Box 11, Folder 3 (Unpublished autobiography), 17. In another memoir note, Volkhovskii wrote that the importance of the trial was showing 'the existence of a new moral and social current of thought'. Volkhovskii Papers (HIA), Box 11, Folder 1 (Untitled memoir notes by Volkhovskii on meeting with Stepniak in 1872).

99 Volkhovskii, *Druz'ia sredy vragov*.

100 For a recent excellent account of the history of the Peter and Paul Fortress, see Nicholas Romeo Bujalski, 'Russia's Peter and Paul Fortress: From Heart of Empire to Museum of the Revolution, 1825–1930' (PhD thesis, Cornell University, 2020).

sequence of taps represented a whole phrase.[101] Some prisoners became very skilled in this language, but none of these strategies could overcome their sense of isolation, nor ameliorate the harsh conditions they laboured under. Volkhovskii's time in the Peter and Paul Fortress in the years before his trial greatly damaged his health which

> became worse & worse. My memory began to fail me. My nerves were in a dreadful state. I suffered from palpitations of the heart. I frequently had unbearable headache. I lost all appetite and ate only as a duty. In this way I spent in solitary confinement about two years and a half.

It was also during this period that Volkhovskii began to lose his hearing. Although he was eventually moved to a somewhat less harsh regime, prison life continued to 'suck out the best blood of the prisoner and [fill] his heart with despair'.[102]

One of those who had a particularly hard time in prison was Mariia Antonova, who had been active in the discussion circle centred on Cherkesov's bookshop, and was arrested during a raid on the St Petersburg home of Elizaveta Tomilova (Tomilova provided considerable financial support to a number of revolutionaries in the city). Antonova was from a poor background—the daughter of a seamstress—who had nonetheless managed to graduate from a Moscow High School. Volkhovskii later described how, as a 'non-privileged' person, she was only able to afford 'bread & water' while in prison. Nor could her friends find out where she was held. Antonova was also subjected to harassment from one senior police officer, who made her get out of bed at night, covered only with a sheet 'to protect her from the eyes of the crowd of soldiers invading her cell'. She developed typhus and for many days lay delirious in her cell. After a brief stay in the prison infirmary, the authorities transferred her back to the main building, where she was put in a cell with 'a mad woman'. After some months of this harsh treatment, Antonova was cleared of any crime, and released without being brought to trial. Volkhovskii's indignation about her treatment had deep personal roots. He was close to Antonova before their arrest, and the two of them

101 For a detailed account of the various methods and codes used by prisoners to communicate, see Volkhovskii Papers (HIA), Box 11, Folder 3 (Unpublished autobiography), 28–30.

102 Volkhovskii Papers (HIA), Box 11, Folder 3 (Unpublished autobiography), 31–32.

later married in the summer of 1871, after Volkhovskii's acquittal of involvement in the Nechaev conspiracy. Many Russian radicals of the 1860s and 1870s entered marriages of convenience, often to help young females become independent from their families, but Volkhovskii and Antonova appear to have married for love.[103]

Following his release, Volkhovskii felt overwhelmed by the 'bustle and excitement' of the world beyond the walls of the Peter and Paul Fortress.[104] He stayed for a few months in St Petersburg, drawing close to a group of young radicals that had coalesced around Mark Natanson, Nikolai Chaikovskii and Sof'ia Perovskaia. Several members of the group had previously formed a commune in a house at Kushelevka, then on the outskirts of the city, scandalising local society by refusing to adopt the usual conventions of dress code and gender roles, along with the occasional consumption of dogs and cats when their staple diet of horsemeat was in short supply. The circle, in Chaikovskii's words, brought together 'a fairly large group of people who were more or less of one mind, had similar hopes, and were already bound together by a common cause'.[105]

The ideological profile of the group was still fluid in 1871, despite its members' commitment to 'a common cause', and it went through various permutations over the next few years as branches developed in cities across the Russian Empire. Many individuals who came to occupy a prominent place in the history of the Russian revolutionary movement, including Petr Kropotkin and Sergei Stepniak, were participants in what has generally been known to history as the Chaikovskii circle (although Mark Natanson was the most influential figure before his arrest at the end

103 Constance Garnett noted many years later that Volkhovskii had never been in love with his first wife, but she was writing at a time when he had greatly irritated her, and there is little evidence to support the claim. See Barry C. Johnson (ed.), *Olive and Stepniak. The Bloomsbury Diary of Olive Garnett, 1893–95* (Birmingham: Bartletts Press, 1993), 20.

104 Volkhovskii Papers (HIA), Box 11, Folder 3 (Unpublished autobiography), 34.

105 V. Chaikovskii, 'Cherez pol stoletiia', *Golos minuvshego na chuzhnoi storone*, 16, 3 (1926), 179-97 (181). See, too, the comments by N. A. Charushin in his *O dalekom proshlom. Kruzhok Chaikovtsev. Iz vospominanii o revolitusionnom dvizhenii 1870–kh gg.* (Moscow: Vsesoiuznoe obshchestvo politicheskikh katorzhan i ssylno-poselentsev, 1926), 83–84. On the Kushelevka commune, see Erich E. Haberer, *Jews and Revolution in Nineteenth-Century Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 44–45; Vera Broido, *Apostles into Terrorists. Women and the Revolutionary Movement in the Russia of Alexander II* (New York: The Viking Press, 1977), 67 ff.

of 1871).[106] When Volkhovskii first made contact with the young radicals grouped around the Kushelevka commune he declared, according to one account, his wish 'to organise some dirty tricks against the Government' (*ustroit' kakuiu-libo pakost' pravitel'stvu'*).[107] Although he only stayed in St Petersburg a few months, it was long enough to establish good relations with several members of the group, and when he moved to Odessa the following year, the *kruzhok* (circle) he established in the city formed part of the loose network of groups that made up the Chaikovskii movement in the years before the 'Going to the People' movement of 1874.[108]

Many Chaikovtsy (members of the Chaikovskii circle) were influenced by the ideas of Petr Lavrov, the most influential voice arguing that the *intelligentsia* needed to develop a better understanding of the Russian peasantry before they could hope to work effectively for their liberation. There was nevertheless disappointment among some Chaikovtsy at what they believed was the insufficiently revolutionary tone of Lavrov's émigré journal, *Vpered* (*Forward*), when it was first published in London

106 The best Russian-language discussion of the Chaikovskii circle remains N. A. Troitskii, *Bol'shoe obshchestvo propagandy, 1871–1874* (Saratov: Izd-vo Saratovskogo universiteta, 1963) updated as Troitskii, *Pervye iz blestiashchei pleiady*. A useful discussion of the different views within the movement can be found in B. S. Itenberg, *Dvizhenie revoliutsionnogo narodnichestva: Narodnicheskie kruzhkii i "khozdenie v narod" v 70-kh godakh XIX v.* (Moscow: Nauka, 1965), 229–46; Martin A. Miller, 'Ideological Conflicts in Russian Populism: The Revolutionary Manifestoes of the Chaikovskii Circle, 1869–1874', *Slavic Review*, 29, 1 (1970), 1–21. For a recent discussion casting light on the culture of the Chaikovskii circle, see Eric M. Johnson, 'RevolutionaryRomance: Love and Marriage for Russian Radicals in the 1870s', *Russian History*, 43, 3–4 (2016), 311–37. See, too, A. V. Knowles, 'The "Book Affair" of the Chaykovsky Circle', *Slavonic and East European Review*, 51, 125 (1973), 554–66. In addition to the accounts by Chaikovskii and Charushin cited above, other useful memoir material casting light on the activities of the Chaikovtsy includes S. L. Chudnovskii, *Iz davnikh let. Vospominaniia* (Moscow: Izd-vo Vsesoiuznogo obshchestva politkatorzhan i ssyl'no-poselentsev, 1934); Peter Kropotkin, *Memoirs of a Revolutionist* (London: Swann Sonneschein, 1908), 243 ff; L. Shishko, *Sergei Mikhailovich Kravchinskii i kruzhok Chaikovtsev* (St Petersburg: Izdanie Vl. Raspopova, 1906); Sergei Sinegub, *Zapiski chaikovtsa* (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1929), esp. 13 ff.

107 Troitskii, *Bol'shoe obshchestvo propagandy*, 24. Volkhovskii also took part in discussions about the potential for constitutional development in Russia, arguing that there was no social foundation for such liberalism, instead suggesting that members of the *intelligentsia* should seek to mobilise the *narod* behind a socialist programme. See D. A. Klements, *Iz proshlogo. Vospominaniia* (Leningrad: Kolos, 1925), 26.

108 On the Going to the People movement in 1874 see, for example, Itenberg, *Dvizhenie revoliutsionnogo narodnichestva*, 266–360.

in 1873.[109] Some, like Sergei Sinegub, had already turned their attention to developing a programme of education and agitation among the urban workers of St Petersburg and its environs, believing that popular unrest was more likely to break out in the city than the countryside.[110] Others such as Petr Kropotkin were in favour of a more 'Bakuninist' strategy that sought to provoke an uprising among the *narod*.[111] Volkhovskii himself had by now come to believe that political change would prove fruitless if not combined with a programme of agitation and propaganda designed to mobilise widespread radical sentiment. Early in 1872, he travelled south with Antonova, heading first to Stavropol, before settling in Odessa, a town he knew well from his time at the gymnasium ten years earlier. In the two years that followed, Volkhovskii maintained close links with many other Chaikovtsy, including some who were later in exile with him in Siberia or London, among them Chaikovskii, Stepniak, Kropotkin and Leonid Shishko.[112]

Although Volkhovskii's health was poor, visitors to the small flat he shared with Antonova in Odessa were impressed by the strength of his personality, as well as the determination with which he built up a radical *kruzhok* of around one hundred members. Solomon Chudnovskii, who became a key figure among the Odessa Chaikovtsy, praised Volkhovskii for his 'original [and] brilliant mind'.[113] Nikolai Charushin, who had known Volkhovskii back in St Petersburg, recalled in his memoirs that

109 On Lavrov's activities during this period, see Philip Pomper, *Peter Lavrov and the Russian Revolutionary Movement* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1972), 143-200; B. S. Itenberg, *P. L. Lavrov v russkom revoliutsionnom dvizhenii* (Moscow: Nauka, 1988), 129–65.

110 Sinegub, *Zapiski chaikovtsa*, 13–17; Pamela Sears McKinsey, 'From City Workers to Peasantry. The Beginning of the Russian Movement "To the People"', *Slavic Review*, 38, 4 (1979), 629–49; Reginald E. Zelnik, 'Populists and Workers. The First Encounter between Populist Students and Industrial Workers in St. Petersburg, 1871–74', *Soviet Studies*, 24, 2 (1972), 251–69.

111 For a useful discussion of the relationship between populism and anarchism within the Chaikovskii circle, see Graham John Gamblin, 'Russian Populism and its Relations with Anarchism, 1870–1881' (PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 1999), esp. 88–127. See, too, Itenberg, *Dvizhenie revoliutsionnogo narodnichestva*, 218–29.

112 For a fascinating account which traces the careers of many of the Chaikovtsy who came to Britain, see Rebecca Beasley, *Russomania. Russian Culture and the Creation of British Modernism, 1881–1922* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

113 Chudnovskii, *Iz davnikh let*, 52. For a description of Chudnovskii as Volkhovskii's 'right hand', see Charushin, *O dalekom proshlom*, 143.

when he first visited Odessa in 1873, the *kruzhok* headed by his old friend had already adopted a clear strategy of building close links with workers in the various *artely* (small workshops) scattered across the city. He also noted that this focus on urban workers—rather than the peasantry—echoed the priorities of the St Petersburg Chaikovtsy.[114] Another leading *narodnik* activist, Sergei Kovalik, agreed that the principal focus of the Odessa group was on the workers rather than the *intelligentsia*.[115] Russian populism was from its earliest days less exclusively agrarian in focus than sometimes imagined.[116]

Odessa provided a promising background for radical activities. The city was by 1870 the third biggest urban centre in the Russian Empire. Tens of thousands worked in the docks and factories.[117] Many more were employed in the quarries that ringed the city. Odessa had a large Jewish population, prominent in professional and commercial occupations, which increased both their visibility and their vulnerability in a city experiencing the strains and stresses of modernisation (a violent pogrom had erupted in 1871).[118] By the time Volkhovskii and his wife arrived in

114 Charushin, *O dalekom proshlom*, 122.

115 S. F. Kovalik, *Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie semidesiatykh godov i protsess 193-kh* (Moscow: Izd-vo Vsesoiuznogo obshchestva politkatorzhan i ssyl'no-poselentsev, 1928), 83. A rather different view is offered by Troitskii who emphasises the role of students in the Odessa circle. See Troitskii, *Bol'shoe obshchestvo propagandy*, 24-25.

116 Among the large literature on populism, including both its character and ideological content, see Christopher Ely, *Russian Populism* (London: Bloomsbury, 2022); Richard Pipes, '*Narodnichestvo*: A Semantic Inquiry', *Slavic Review*, 23, 3 (1964), 441–58; Venturi, *Roots of Revolution*; Andrzej Walicki, *The Controversy over Capitalism: Studies in the Social Philosophy of the Russian Populists* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969); Richard Wortman, *The Crisis of Russian Populism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967). See, too, Ghita Ionescu and Ernest Gellner (eds), *Populism: Its Meaning and National Characteristics* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969). For an important recent collection by Russian scholars, see G. N. Mokshin et al. (eds), *Narodniki v istorii Rossii*, 2 vols (Voronezh: Istoki and Izdatel'skii dom VGU, 2013–16). Also see G. N. Mokshin (ed.), *Kul'turnoe narodnichestvo 1870–1900-kh gg. Khrestomatiia* (Voronezh: Izdatel'skii dom VGU, 2016).

117 For a fascinating history of Odessa, including material on social and economic issues as well as local administration, see Patricia Herlihy, *Odessa. A History, 1794-1917* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, 1986). For a very different approach to the city's history, see Evrydiki Sifneos, *Imperial Odessa: Peoples, Spaces, Identities* (Leiden: Brill, 2018).

118 For a useful discussion of the social and economic background of Odessa and its impact on the development of Volkhovskii's group, see Haberer, *Jews and Revolution*, 57 ff. On the 1871 pogrom, see Steven J. Zipperstein, *The Jews of Odessa.*

1872, Chudnovskii had already established good ties with radicals in Odessa and Kherson,[119] and over the next year the two men built up a circle that contained both workers and members of the *intelligentsia*, including several who subsequently became active in Narodnaia volia at the end of the 1870s: Andrei Zheliabov, Andrei Franzholi and Martin Langans. Franzholi and Lagans were originally active in Kherson, but moved to Odessa in the early summer of 1873, impressed by what Volkhovskii had already achieved in the city (both men already knew Chudnovskii well).[120] The *kruzhok* produced a *samizdat* (self-published) newspaper *Vpered*—edited by Volkhovskii and Chudnovskii—which was widely read by students in Odessa and circulated in other major Russian cities including Kyiv and St Petersburg. The paper was eclectic in scope. Volkhovskii focused on political and literary topics. Chudnovskii contributed articles on social and economic questions.[121] Pavel Aksel'rod, who was living in Kyiv at the time, later recalled that the ability of the Odessa circle to produce such a publication was of 'great significance in our eyes'.[122]

Members of Volkhovskii's Odessa group played a significant role importing illegal literature from Western Europe for onward circulation throughout the Empire. Some of the clandestine material was brought into the port by ship. Still more came by land across the Austrian border, a process masterminded by Chudnovskii (jokingly referred to by Volkhovskii as his Minister of Communications). The import of literature from Austria was often disrupted by the authorities, but while in December 1873 alone the police intercepted more than 1,500 items including ninety-two copies of Lavrov's *Vpered*, the Odessa circle continued to send material north to other groups of Chaikovtsy in

A Cultural History, 1794-1881 (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1985), esp. 114-128.

119 For his memories of these activities, see Chudnovskii, *Iz davnikh let*, 37-49.

120 The best account of the Volkhovskii group in Odessa can be found in Langans's memoirs, reproduced in P. L. Lavrov, *Narodniki-propagandisty 1873-1878 godov* (St Petersburg: Tip-ia Andersona i Loitsianskago, 1907), 215ff.

121 Chudnovskii, *Iz davnikh let*, 54-56.

122 For Aksel'rod's memoirs of this period, including a trip to Odessa where he met Zheliabov, see P. B. Aksel'rod, *Perezhitoe i peredumannoe* (Cambridge: Oriental Research Partners, 1975), 68-93.

Moscow and St Petersburg.[123] Volkhovskii's group maintained close ties with such groups both through clandestine written communication and more direct personal links. Nikolai Charushin visited Odessa on several occasions (he was probably instrumental in the merger of the Odessa and Kherson groups). So, too, did Chaikovskii.[124] Aksel'rod visited from Kyiv. Several members of the Odessa group had, like Volkhovskii, lived in St Petersburg when the Chaikovskii-Natanson circle was taking shape there, and these networks helped to build a sense of common identity, even though the movement was never more than a loose federation of groups without any definite ideological or organisational unity.

The Odessa Chaikovtsy were well-organised, carefully targeting much of their propaganda at the seasonal workers in the city's many *artely* in the hope that they would carry their new-found radicalism back to the countryside. In late 1873 they conducted a detailed census of workplaces in the city to help them decide where to focus their activities. Volkhovskii himself developed a reputation for insisting on rigid discipline within his Odessa *kruzhok* (something that Chaikovskii still remembered more than forty years later when writing his old friend's obituary).[125] One early chronicler of the circle remarked that its existence was safe-guarded by an emphasis on 'unusual conspiratorialness' (a view echoed by the leading Soviet historian of the Chaikovtsy).[126] Martin Langans believed it was among the best organised circles of the period.[127] Those who wished to join the circle were left in no doubt about the commitment expected of them. When Zheliabov was deciding whether he wanted to join the group, he asked a senior member of the Volkhovskii circle whether he could justify putting a decision to help the masses above his duty to his family, and was told in no uncertain terms

123 B. B. Bazilevskii (ed.), *Gosudarstvennyia prestupleniia v Rossii v XIX veke*, 3 vols, III, *Protsess 193-kh* (St Petersburg: Sklad pri knigoizdatel'stve Donskaia Rech', 1906), 138. Lavrov was well-aware of Volkhovskii's activities in Odessa, See Boris Sapir (ed.), *Lavrov. Gody emigratsii*, 2 vols (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1974), I, 95 (Lavrov to German Lopatin, 2 January 1874).

124 On the visits of Charushin and Chaikovskii to Odessa, see Chudnovskii, *Iz davnikh let*, 78-79.

125 N. V. Chaikovskii, Obituary of Volkhovskii, *Golos minuvshago*, 10 (1914), 231–35.

126 Troitskii, *Bol'shoe obshchestvo propagandy*, 24.

127 Lavrov, *Narodniki-propagandisty*, 215–16.

that the cause should come first.[128] Volkhovskii's own influence as leader depended in large part on his intellectual and personal qualities, but he also possessed a steeliness that some of his contemporaries overlooked, along with a determination to act according to his own judgement. Indeed, he effectively abandoned his leadership of the Odessa group in the spring of 1874 in part because of his frustration that its members seemed reluctant to accept the discipline necessary for an underground organisation. There may also have been growing differences over questions of tactics and ideology.

Volkhovskii was sceptical about the possibility of an immediate peasant *bunt*,[129] and the focus of his group was on distributing propaganda and creating new cells in other towns and cities along the Black Sea coast. Although he spent some time at a small farm outside Odessa in 1873, it was a move inspired less by an attempt to draw close to the people, and more by the hope of evading surveillance.[130] It seems that only a minority of his group took part in the 'Going to the People' that took place in the summer of 1874, although Franzholi and several others did go as 'teachers' to the countryside at the end of 1873, returning some months later having achieved little thanks to the watchful eye of the local authorities.[131] In June 1874, Langans went to the country, in the guise of a cooper, planning to spread propaganda among the peasantry in Poltava and Kyiv provinces (he was quickly arrested).[132] Differences over the wisdom of 'Going to the People' may have contributed to the growth of tension between Volkhovskii and other members of the Odessa group. Some like Andrei Franzholi seem for a time to have drifted towards a Bakuninist-inspired anarchism,[133] calling for armed resistance to oppose the wave of arrests spreading across south Russia, a

128 David Footman, *Red Prelude. The Life of the Russian Terrorist Zhelyabov* (Westport, CT: Hyperion Press, 1979), 48. For further details about Zheliabov's time in the circle, including its leading figure's hostility to the anarchism of Bakunin, see N. P. Asheshov (ed.), *Andrei Ivanovich Zheliabov: Materialy dlia biografii i kharakteristiki* (Petrograd: Izdanie Petrogradskogo soveta rabochikh i krasnoarmeiskikh deputatov, 1919), 19–22.

129 R. V. Filippov, *Iz istorii narodnicheskogo dvizheniia na pervom etape "khozdeniia v narod" (1863–1874)* (Petrozavodsk: Karel'skoe knizhnoe izd-vo, 1967), 184–85.

130 *Stenograficheskii otchet po delu o revoliutsionnoi propagande v Imperii* (St Petersburg: n.p., 1878), I, 411.

131 N. A. Morozov, 'Andrei Franzholi', *Byloe* (March 1907), 283–89.

132 Troitskii, *Pervye iz blestiashchei pleiady*, 240.

133 Lavrov, *Narodniki-propagandisty*, 220.

sentiment that was almost certainly not shared by Volkhovskii.[134] Others like Zheliabov simply drifted away to other underground organisations in Odessa.[135] Volkhovskii was himself arrested in the late summer of 1874 as the result of a tip given to the police by an informant.

Volkhovskii showed little interest in ideological questions while living in Odessa and was ready to cooperate with all those who wanted to bring about change. He became friends with N. A. Novosel'skii, 'one of the most prominent and talented civic leaders in Odessa',[136] who gave him temporary work organising his private collection of books and papers. Novosel'skii was also instrumental in obtaining a post for Volkhovskii in the municipal duma at a salary of 1,500 rubles a year.[137] Volkhovskii used his contacts to raise funds from liberal sympathisers in Odessa (his *kruzhok* also benefitted from donations by two of its wealthy members). During the two years he spent in the city, Volkhovskii therefore held a responsible job that brought him into contact with influential figures, while also running Odessa's largest and most effective illegal organisation. Whether his willingness to cooperate with non-revolutionaries in Odessa was shared by other members of his group is unclear, but it was above all evidence of his pragmatism, rather than any moderation or lack of revolutionary fibre. It also prefigured the strategy Volkhovskii pursued twenty years later in London, when along with Stepniak he sought to cultivate the support of liberals in both Britain and Russia, arguing that they had a common interest in the fight for political reform.

Volkhovskii's time in Odessa also showed his continuing interest in the question of Ukraine's place in the Russian Empire. Soviet historians who wrote about the Odessa circle said little about how its members viewed the question of Ukrainian identity, not least because the ideological canons that shaped their research typically downplayed the national question when tracing the history of the revolutionary movement. There was in fact discussion throughout the 1870s in revolutionary circles about the relationship between Ukrainian

134 For a brief discussion of some of the divisions in the circle, see Filippov, *Iz istorii narodnicheskogo dvizheniia*, 284.

135 For a general discussion of the Going to the People movement in south Russia, see Itenberg, *Dvizhenie revoliutsionnogo narodnichestva*, 322–38.

136 Chudnovskii, *Iz davnikh let*, 53.

137 Volkhovskii Papers (HIA), Box 11, Folder 3 (Unpublished autobiography), 35.

socialists and their counterparts in 'Great' Russia.[138] Both Bakunin and Lavrov were avowed federalists who were happy to acknowledge the distinctive nature of Ukrainian identity. Petr Tkachev in exile abroad was by contrast impatient of such sentiments which he feared would undermine the revolutionary cause.[139] In 1875, the Ukrainian radical Serhii Podolinskyi told Valerian Smirnov, who worked closely with Lavrov in the production of *Vpered*, that Volkhovskii was among those who experienced no contradiction between his Ukrainophilism and his support for the broader revolutionary movement.[140] Volkhovskii would probably have agreed. He certainly believed that the growth of Ukrainian national sentiment could help to foster opposition to tsarism in the south-western provinces of the Empire.

Volkhovskii wrote at least two pieces during his time in Odessa that were designed to harness Ukrainian national sentiment to the revolutionary cause. The first was a translation into Ukrainian of a short story by Mariia Tsebrikova, 'Dedushka Egor' ('Old Man Egor'), that had appeared legally in Russian in the journal *Nedelia* (*The Week*) in 1870, which told how an elderly peasant was exiled to Siberia for protesting against unjust taxation of the peasantry. It was subsequently reprinted as a brochure and circulated widely by *narodniki* in the south-western provinces of the Empire. Volkhovskii's translation was apparently never published (presumably because of his arrest in the summer of 1874).[141] A second piece Volkhovskii wrote in Ukrainian, 'A True Word of a Breadwinner', was more overtly 'agitational' in character, attacking large landowners for increasing their wealth at the expense of the peasants.[142] Although aimed at readers within the Tsarist Empire, it

138 For a useful discussion, see S. V. Kalinchuk, 'Revoliutsionnye narodniki i ukrainofily 1870–1880-kh gg.: sotrudnichestvo ili sopernichestvo?', in Mokshin et al. (eds), *Narodniki v istorii Rossii*, II, 82–106.

139 For a useful recent discussion of attitudes towards the state within Russian populism, see Fei Khaitin, *Federativnye idei v politicheskoi teorii russkogo narodnichestva: A. I. Gertsen, M. A. Bakunin, P. A. Lavrov, P. N. Tkachev* (St Petersburg: Aleteiia, 2018).

140 Roman Serbyn, 'In Defence of an Independent Ukrainian Socialist Movement. Three Letters from Serhii Podolynsky to Valerian Smirnov', *Journal of Ukrainian Studies*, 7, 2 (1982), 3–32 (esp. 22).

141 Serbyn, 'In Defense of an Independent Ukrainian Socialist Movement', 14.

142 F. Volkhovskii, 'Pravdyve slovo Khliboroba', in M. Drahomanov (ed.), *Lysty do I. V. Franka i inshykh 1887–1895* (L'viv: Nakladom ukrainsko-rus'koi vydavnychoi spilky, 1908), 358–69. The first published version appeared in 1876. For a

was published in Lvov (Ukr. L'viv), where copies were seized by the Austrian authorities (the publisher Ostap Terletskyi was subsequently put on trial). Volkhovskii himself seemed to have little interest in the potential impact of the growth of Ukrainian nationalism beyond the borders of the Russian Empire, even though a large part of the population in the Habsburg-ruled province of Galicia was 'Little Russian' in culture and language, perhaps suggesting that his interest in Ukrainian identity was for the most part secondary to his concern with fomenting opposition to tsarism. He was nevertheless later in life on good terms with important figures in the Ukrainian national movement—including Mykhailo Drahomanov and Lesia Ukrainka—while 'A True Word of a Breadwinner' served as a reminder of the threat posed by nationalism to both the main multinational empires of central and eastern Europe.

Volkhovskii was taken to Moscow following his arrest in Odessa, in August 1874, where he was taken to a police station and held in 'the smallest cell I was ever confined in'.[143] He was subsequently moved to the Butyrka prison. Volkhovskii's whereabouts was only discovered when one of his friends visited his original place of detention, disguised as a senior government official, demanding to know where the prisoner had been taken. The ruse was successful and the clerk on duty gave the bogus visitor the information he wanted. Although Volkhovskii was held in solitary confinement, one of the guards helped him to communicate with other prisoners, as well as with family and friends who were still at liberty (Antonova had come to Moscow following her husband's arrest, leaving her children in Odessa with their grandmother).[144] Among the messages passed to Volkhovskii was one from Sergei Stepniak, asking if his friend wanted to attempt to escape, but the authorities somehow got wind of the plot and moved him to a more secure section of the prison.[145]

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discussion of how Drahomanov's Ukrainian nationalism shaped his relations with Russian socialists, which casts light on broader patterns, see V. N. Kudriashev, 'M. P. Dragomanov i russkie sotsialisty: diskussiia o federalisme', *Vestnik Tomskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta*, 336 (July 2010), 82–85.

143 Volkhovskii Papers (HIA), Box 11, Folder 3 (Unpublished autobiography), 37.

144 News of Volkhovskii's arrest also reached Petr Lavrov in London, who regularly discussed the fate of Volkhovskii and Vesvelod Lopatin with the latter's brother. See Sapir (ed.), *Lavrov. Gody emigratsii*, I, 205–06 (Lavrov to German Lopatin, c. November 1874); I, 229 (Lavrov to German Lopatin, 30 December 1874).

145 For Volkhovskii's account of his first meeting with Stepniak, see Volkhovskii Papers (HIA), Box 11, Folder 1 (Untitled memoir notes by Volkhovskii on meeting

Stepniak worked closely with another former member of the Chaikovskii movement, Nikolai Morozov, in planning to free Volkhovskii, but both men recognised that escape would be impossible unless they could find a pretext for him to leave the prison temporarily (early hopes of using a rope ladder to enable the prisoner to escape over the wall were dashed when he was moved to a new cell).[146] Following further clandestine communication, a new plan was developed in which Volkhovskii would ask the prison authorities to take him to the home of an official investigating his case, a sleigh ride away, saying that he was now ready to provide further information about his activities. His would-be rescuers would then 'spring' him from captivity on the street. Things did not work out as hoped. Stepniak was called to St Petersburg by comrades in the Russian capital who were deeply sceptical about the plans (another Chaikovets, Dmitrii Klements, had already made it clear that he thought the plan was folly).[147] The plot to free Volkhovskii was therefore left in the hands of Vsevelod Lopatin, who had been part of the discussion group whose members were caught up in the *Nechaevskoe delo* in 1869, before subsequently joining a group of Chaikovtsy in Kyiv. Lopatin was sceptical about the likelihood of success, but he was persuaded to go ahead with the plan by Antonova, who was desperate to free her husband. Things at first went smoothly. When Volkhovskii caught sight of the sleigh with his wife on board, he threw snuff in the face of the gendarme escorting him, hoping to temporarily blind the officer and make his escape. The snuff did not have the desired effect. The gendarme chased after Volkhovskii, who had no time to leap into

with Stepniak in 1872).

146 The description of the escape attempt is taken from the draft of Volkhovskii's own memoirs, along with the published memoirs of Vsevelod Lopatin and Nikolai Morozov (who discussed the plans extensively with Stepniak). There were significant differences between these accounts which were striking enough for Lopatin to publish his account in part to put right what he believed to be the inaccuracies in Morozov's article. See the relevant sections of Nikolai Morozov, 'Vo imia bratstva', *Golos Minuvshago* 11 (1913), 122–61; 12 (1913), 117–67; Vselvod Lopatin, 'Osvobozhdenie F. V. Volkhovskago', *Golos Minuvshago*, 4 (1914), 217–21; Volkhovskii Papers (HIA), Box 11, Folder 3 (Unpublished autobiography), 42. See, too, Sapir (ed.), *Lavrov. Gody emigratsii*, I, 479–80 (Lavrov to German Lopatin, 12 October 1879). Morozov gave a somewhat different account of the escape in his memoirs. See N. A. Morozov, *Povesti moei zhizni*, 3 vols (Moscow: Nauka, 1965), II, 224 ff.

147 Klements, *Iz proshlogo*, 31.

the sleigh, instead desperately jumping on to the runners as he called on the driver to take off. His pursuer caught him by the collar and wrestled him to the ground—the gendarme apparently suffered some injuries—and the prisoner was eventually overpowered. A policeman patrolling nearby arrested Lopatin (Antonova escaped). Volkhovskii was taken back to prison, and shortly afterwards moved from Moscow to the Peter and Paul Fortress in Petrograd, where he spent the next two years.

Volkhovskii probably saw his wife for the last time during the ill-fated rescue attempt in Moscow. Antonova made her way back south to Odessa, devastated by the failure of the attempt to free her husband. Her health was declining rapidly (she was almost certainly suffering from tuberculosis and had some rheumatic condition which made it difficult for her to walk). She moved abroad in the hope of recovering her health, helped by Stepniak, travelling first to Switzerland and then to Italy. She was nevertheless in a 'deplorable' state by the summer of 1875.[148] One of those who met her during this time recalled that she was 'thin, small, her face shrivelled and almost of a greenish hue'.[149] By 1876 she was living in Sicily, where Stepniak again joined her for a time, before heading to Naples in a hopeless quest to cure her illness. She died early in 1877. It was the first of many personal tragedies that were to plague Volkhovskii over the next ten years. The couple's young son died while his father was still in prison (his daughter Sof'ia survived, later joining her father in his Siberian exile, before becoming an actress at the Mariinskii Theatre and wife of the celebrated actor Nikolai Chaleev-Kostromskoi).[150] Volkhovskii's mother died soon after accompanying her son into exile. His second wife, who he met and married in Siberia, committed suicide. One of the couple's young daughters died just two years later when she was only three years old. All these tragedies still lay ahead in 1874, though, as Volkhovskii was forced to come to terms with the failure of his escape attempt and the prospect of spending many more years in prison.

148 Sapir (ed.), *Lavrov. Gody emigratsii*, I, 301 (Lavrov to German Lopatin, undated letter).

149 Tuckton House Archive (Leeds Brotherton Library), MS 1381/26 (typescript of later parts of L. Gol'denberg, 'Reminiscences'), 27.

150 For Chaleev-Kostromskoi's memoirs of his theatrical career, see N. F. Chaleev-Kostromskoi, *Vospominaniia* (Kostroma: DiAr, 2006). Some sources suggest that the young Volkhovskii child who died in the 1870s was in fact a girl.