Feliks Volkhovskii
A Revolutionary Life

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3. Prison, Poetry and Exile

When Volkhovskii was sent to the Peter and Paul Fortress in St Petersburg following his unsuccessful escape attempt in Moscow, he found 'everything altered for the worse' from the time he had first been incarcerated there five years earlier. The only window in his cell looked out on a high wall and he could 'only get light enough to read by putting my solitary chair upon the table, and then sitting on the chair'. The cell was so damp that there were pools of water on the floor. The food was poor and opportunities for exercise infrequent.[1] Still worse than the physical conditions were the psychological strains of solitary confinement.

> All the intense longings of a human soul are kept without any food. No work or occupation to escape the torture of over-active imagination which prevents you from enjoying reading, by showing you images of what you are craving for and never get, or of the possible sufferings of those near and dear to you.[2]

In the draft notes he wrote many years later for his autobiography, Volkhovskii recalled how political prisoners in the Peter and Paul Fortress were dressed in 'linnen [linen], sleepers [slippers] and a long dressing-gown, presenting the strange appearance of a patient in a Russian hospital' (the hospital metaphor was used in the memoirs of many other prisoners, including his old comrade from Odessa Solomon Chudnovskii).[3] The process undermined any sense of individuality.

1 Felix Volkovsky, 'My Life in Russian Prisons', *Fortnightly Review*, 48 (November 1890), 782-94 (792).

2 Volkhovskii Papers (HIA), Box 11, Folder 3 (Unpublished autobiography), 52.

3 Volkhovskii Papers (HIA), Box 11, Folder 3 (Unpublished autobiography), 51; S. L. Chudnovskii, *Iz davnikh let. Vospominaniia* (Moscow: Izd-vo Vsesoiuznogo obshchestva politkatorzhan i ssyl'no-poselentsev, 1934), 124. See, too, Leo Deutsch, *Sixteen Years in Siberia. Some Experiences of a Russian Revolutionist*, trans. H. Chisholm (London: John Murray, 1904), 49. For some illuminating comments about the experience of imprisonment, and its psychological impact, see Ben Eklof

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Like many prisoners held in solitary confinement, Volkhovskii dreaded losing his mind in the face of silence and isolation, not least because his deafness meant that he found it hard to communicate through the system of coded pipe-tapping used by prisoners to keep in touch with one another.[4] He kept his sanity by composing 'a long poem of which the subject was taken from Russian history', committing it to memory, since he had no pen or paper to write it down (the final version consisted of 178 verses).[5]

The idea of the Peter and Paul Fortress as a Russian Bastille was a well-established motif in the Russian imagination—it was a theme in many popular ballads—although conditions actually improved there during the third quarter of the nineteenth century. Even Volkhovskii acknowledged that prisoners held in the new block, built in the early 1870s, fared better than those incarcerated elsewhere in the prison (although he still found it a kind of 'monstrous tomb'). Political prisoners were usually allowed to read, while communication with the outside world was surprisingly easy, thanks to guards who smuggled messages in and out for a small fee. Yet the suffering incurred by political prisoners during the 1860s and 1870s was still very real. The fact that generations of prisoners who later wrote about their experiences had a political agenda in embellishing their stories does not invalidate all they had to say.[6] The Peter and Paul Fortress was far from being a 'comfortable hotel'

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and Tatiana Saburova, *A Generation of Revolutionaries. Nikolai Charushin and Russian Populism from the Great Reforms to Perestroika* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2017), 114 ff. For a valuable discussion of the nature of prison memoirs, see Sarah J. Young, *Writing Resistance. Revolutionary Memoirs of Shlissel'burg Prison, 1884–1906* (London: UCL Press, 2021).

4 For a recent article on the importance of pipe-tapping as a form of communication, see Nicholas Bujalski, '"*Tuk, tuk, tuk!*" A History of Russia's Prison Knocking Language', *Russian Review*, 81, 3 (2022), 491–510.

5 Volkhovskii Papers (HIA), Box 11, Folder 3 (Unpublished autobiography), 54–55.

6 For a brief but nuanced discussion of the psychological impact of punishment on prisoners, see Eklof and Saburova, *Generation of Revolutionaries*, 111–14. For a helpful discussion of radical autobiographical writing in Russia before 1917, 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. See, too, Stephen Rindlisbacher, 'Living for a "Cause". Radical Autobiographical Writing at the Beginning of the 20th Century', *Avtobiografiя*, 6 (2017), 59–77; Young, *Writing Resistance*.

as one historian has suggested.[7] The rituals of prison confinement and the challenge of isolation warped many prisoners' experiences of space and time. A significant number were driven to despair and suicide.

Volkhovskii was at the end of 1875 transferred from the Peter and Paul Fortress to the House of Preliminary Detention, in part because one of the officials investigating his case feared that he was about to go insane, although other Chaikovtsy like Sinegub were moved around the same time. The material conditions were no better than in the Peter and Paul Fortress—some memoirs suggest the food was worse—but the discipline was more relaxed. Prisoners could wear their own clothes which helped to restore a sense of self. Although Volkhovskii was in solitary confinement, the gaolers talked to him, and he could hear 'muffled sounds of life around my cell'. He nevertheless still experienced fits of 'nervous irritation, during which I felt I could commit murder.'[8] And, while prisoners found it comparatively easy to obtain news from the outside world, the information they received could make their isolation harder to bear. Volkhovskii was a prisoner in the House of Preliminary Detention when he first heard about the deaths of his wife and child.

Although no copy survives of the long historical poem Volkhovskii composed in prison to help him stay sane, many other verses he wrote in the ten years before his exile to Siberia in 1878 were published. While a few appeared in legal journals in Russia itself, most were smuggled out and printed abroad.[9] The act of writing poetry at first glance hardly seems to reflect the kind of nihilist world view articulated by such fictional characters as Bazarov, the (anti-)hero of Turgenev's *Fathers and Children*, whose thorough-going materialism meant that he had little time for such fripperies as music and art. Yet literature was of great importance to writers like Chernyshevskii and Pisarev.[10] Chernyshevskii's *What Is to Be Done?* had proved so influential precisely because it provided

7 Orlando Figes, *A People's Tragedy. The Russian Revolution, 1891–1924* (London: Pimlico, 1996), 123.

8 Volkhovsky, 'My Life in Russian Prisons', 793.

9 Volkhovskii was known by the middle of the 1870s to be collecting revolutionary verses for publication abroad, which duly appeared as the collection *Iz-za reshetki* (Geneva: Rabotnik, 1877). See N. A. Morozov, *Povesti moei zhizni*, 3 vols (Moscow: Nauka, 1965), II, 178.

10 For discussions of both writer'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); Peter C. Pozefsky, *The Nihilist Imagination: Dmitrii Pisarev*

role models for young radicals who were determined to emancipate themselves from the conventions of the society around them. Much of the prose and poetry Volkhovskii wrote in the 1860s and 1870s was similarly didactic in character. He nevertheless displayed a literary sensibility that at times sat uneasily with the aesthetic *credo* articulated by 'nihilists' like Chernyshevskii.

Volkhovskii's first published literary work was his contribution to V. V. Butuzov's translation of Bayard Taylor's *Hannah Thurston: A Tale from American Life*, which appeared in *Sovremennik* in 1864 when he was just eighteen years old (Taylor was an accomplished travel writer and poet, who served as American Consul in St Petersburg in 1862–63, which doubtless increased interest in the novel among Russian readers).[11] Volkhovskii won the commission after he was recommended to the journal by his father, Vadim Petrovich, who seems to have developed connections there. During the following ten years or so, he worked on several further translations, including John Lubbock's *Prehistoric Times as Illustrated by Ancient Remains* and Herbert Spencer's *Social Statics* (although the latter was banned soon after publication). Volkhovskii also translated poetry from English into Russian for various 'thick' journals including *Vestnik Evropy* (*Herald of Europe*). In 1872, he published under the pseudonym L. M. N., a translation of Thomas Hood's 'Gold', which half-jestingly condemned those who pursued the acquisition of wealth 'To the verge of a church yard mold'.[12] He also translated Henry Longfellow's *The Arsenal at Springfield*. In 1876, Volkhovskii contributed an anonymous translation of a Serbian poem 'The Song of a Citizen' to *Novoe vremia* (*New Times*) which appears to have passed the censor despite its radical tone, probably because of the widespread sympathy at the time in Russia for Balkan Christians fighting to throw off Ottoman rule.[13]

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and the Cultural Origins of Russian Radicalism (1860–1868) (New York: Peter Lang, 2003).

11 The translation was serialised in *Sovremennik* (1864), Nos 6–10. On Volkhovskii's contribution, along with a useful bibliography of his writings before his flight from Russia, see I. G. Iampol'skii, 'K bibliografii F. V. Volkhovskogo', *Uchenye zapiski Leningradskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta*, 349, *Seriia filologicheskikh nauk*, 74 (1971), 184–90.

12 *Vestnik Evropy* (February 1872), 695.

13 *Novoe vremia* (5 December 1876).

Much of Volkhovskii's work as a translator was motivated by the need for money (even when in prison he was determined to find ways to support his family). The same may have been true of the numerous articles and poems he published in the slew of pedagogical journals that began to appear in Russia during the 1870s. Volkhovskii nevertheless developed a real interest in education in general and female education in particular. In a series of articles published in *Pedagogicheskii muzei* (*Pedagogical Museum*), he lamented the absence of a clear theoretical foundation in many discussions of pedagogy, including the widespread lack of understanding of its psychological dimension. He also argued that despite recent improvements, the books published for children in Russia were of lower quality than those produced abroad, and suggested that young readers could benefit from being introduced at an early age to the classics of Russian and foreign literature (including translations of Trollope and Dickens).[14] Volkhovskii's reviews of new children's books were often scathing,[15] and it was partly for this reason that he started to compose numerous short poems that were designed to engage the interest and enthusiasm of youthful readers in ways that existing material could not.

The poems published by Volkhovskii in journals like *Sem'ia i shkola* (*Family and School*) and *Vospitanie i obuchenie* (*Education and Upbringing*) were typically aimed at very young children, complete with a powerful beat and rhyming couplets that made them easy to recite. Many included references to animals that talked or magically came to life after being built by children out of paper.[16] Others were loosely based on stories from various Russian chronicles.[17] A number were described as 'songs'. Some of the poems were illustrated, including 'Babushka' ('Grandmother'), which described how a little girl was anxious to come to the aid of her grandmother who was worn out by endless work at

14 F. V-skii, 'Zadachi zhurnala, posviashchennago voprosam zhenskago obrazovaniia', *Pedagogicheskii muzei*, 6 (20 March 1876), 345–51; A. Chepa (Volkhovskii), 'Odin iz istochnikov detskoi literatury', *Pedagogicheskii muzei*, 10 (20 October 1876), 567–75. Volkhovskii published a number of reviews in *Pedagogicheskii muzei* of articles appearing in the journal *Zhenskoe obrazovanie* which began to appear at the start of 1876.

15 See, for example, the unsigned review of M. B. Chistiakov, 'Byloe i vozmozhnoe. Novyia povesti dlia starshago vozrasta', *Delo*, 1 (1877), 64–70.

16 A. Chepa (Volkhovskii), 'Vas'ka'; Petushok', *Sem'ia i shkola*, 4 (1877), 537–38.

17 'Pesnia pro boiarina Artomona Matveeva', *Sem'ia i shkola*, 8 (1877), 7–14.

her sewing machine.[18] A few combined humour with a none-too-subtle attack on self-important authority figures who failed to recognise that honest labour alone deserved true respect.[19] Such radical motifs were however generally muted, although they were subsequently to become more pronounced in the stories that Volkhovskii published when living in Siberian exile in the 1880s, and even more so during his time in Britain in the early 1900s, when he wrote a number of *skazki* (fairy tales) that sought to subvert the established order of tsars and landowners in the vernacular of traditional folk tales.

While the poems Volkhovskii wrote for children during the 1870s were for the most part simple entertainments, the same was not true of the verses he penned for adults in the same period.[20] Many *narodniki* wrote verses during these years with rousing titles like 'The Songs of the Workers of Young Russia' (Sergei Sinegub) and 'Battle Cry' (Nikolai Morozov).[21] Volkhovskii himself started writing poetry seriously in the late 1860s, when in prison awaiting trial over the Nechaevskoe delo. In 1871 he published anonymously in *Vestnik Evropy* a poem 'Terplenie' ('Patience'), which began with a reflection on how, as he sat in his cell, he came to realise that 'the most important thing in life is patience'.[22] Such sentiments were not, though, typical of the verses he composed over the following few years (almost none of which appeared legally in Russia). More characteristic were poems with such titles as 'Nashim ugneteliam' ('To Our Oppressors') and 'Progress'. 'To Our Oppressors' concluded with the ringing words that 'the garland [of freedom] will be plucked from the despot / And returned to the people'. 'Progress' ended with a rousing declaration that despite being in prison, normally a place of despair and suffering, the author was 'On the contrary full of joy / Beyond myself with happiness / Seeing the powerful spirit of progress / Even in a time of imprisonment'.[23]

18 A. Chepa (Volkhovskii), 'Babushka', *Sem'ia i shkola*, 2 (1878), 252–53.

19 A. Chepa (Volkhovskii), 'Pro Kozla', *Vospitanie i obuchenie*, 4–5 (1880), 7.

20 A useful discussion of Volkhovskii's poetry can be found in V. A. Domanskii, 'F. V. Volkhovskii—neglasnyi redaktor "Sibirskoi gazety"', in E. A. Kol'chuzhkin et al. (eds), *Russkie pisately v Tomske* (Tomsk: Vodolei, 1996), 147–66.

21 For selections of poems by Sinegub and Morozov see, for example, V. N. Orlov et al. (eds), *Poety-demokraty 1870–1880-kh godov* (Leningrad: Sovetskii Pisatel', 1968).

22 *Vestnik Evropy* (October 1871), 767–68.

23 A. Bichter (ed.), *Poety revoliutsionnogo narodnichestva* (Leningrad: Izd-vo Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1967), 53, 57. It is difficult to date the composition

Still more striking, perhaps, was the poem 'Tam i zdes'' ('Here and There'), which was written in 1872, when Volkhovskii was at liberty and living in south Russia:

> There in the far-away west
> The proletarian leads the struggle,
> He is becoming stronger in the fight against cruelty,
> Is strengthening, multiplying, growing.
>
> Here, in the gloomy east,
> The proletarian is fast asleep;
> He does not think of the time
> Of deliverance and remains silent.
>
> But then the student awoke
> And rubbed his eyes,
> And looked to the west:
> Would God's thunder soon be heard?
>
> He will wake up the worker,
> Will establish a common interest with him
> And hand in hand will secure
> Bread, freedom and progress.

The language was striking both for its emphasis on 'the proletarian' (rather than the peasant) and the pivotal role of the student in mobilising the workers.[24] The poem was of course written at a time when Volkhovskii was encouraging members of his circle in Odessa to focus on building close relations with local workers rather than agitating among the rural population out on the steppe.

Volkhovskii suggested that some of his poems could be put to music, making use of tunes that were 'already in use among the working class', which his mother smuggled out during visits to her son at the Peter and Paul Fortress. Although he did not know it at the time, he later discovered that several poems had 'found their way among the masses, and one of them, at least, ha[s] even become a favourite!'[25] They also found an

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of Volkhovskii's poems precisely, despite the best efforts of Soviet scholars, since many were written long before they first appeared in any published form.

24 *Poety revoliutsionnogo narodnichestva*, 60.

25 F. Volkhovsky, 'Peter the Weaver', *Free Russia* (1 May 1900). Volkhovskii was told about the popularity of his 'songs' by Peter Alekseev who was in prison with him in 1876–77. For Volkhovskii's memory of 'the real peasant' Alekseev, see his

audience among a section of the radical *intelligentsia*. The writer Vladimir Korolenko recalled that Volkhovskii's 1872 poem 'Krichi' ('Cry Out')—which called on its readers to 'Cry out about equality, brotherhood and freedom'—was often sung aloud by groups of students heading to the countryside during the Going to the People movement that took place in the summer of 1874.[26]

Some of the poems that Volkhovskii wrote in the 1870s were more personal in tone. In his poem 'U okna' ('Through the Window'), which was headed by a verse in Ukrainian from Taras Shevchenko ('I do not know whether I am alive or dead'), Volkhovskii described the dreary passage of time in prison, where 'the heart and mind fall asleep / there are no desires, no wishes'.[27] Still more intimate was the poem 'M. A.' [Mariia Antonova]. After lamenting how he felt 'poorer than poverty itself' at the prospect of never seeing his wife again, Volkhovskii concluded with a fatalistic cry that 'All this is so; all this will be', despairing at his failure to express the depth of his feelings in words: 'But my God how poor all this is / As a way of expressing my love'.[28] Many of Volkhovskii's poems, including 'Progress' and 'M. A.', were published under a pseudonym in the collection *Iz-za reshetki* (*From Behind Bars*) that appeared in Geneva in 1877.[29] So too was his poem 'Mat'' ('Mother'), which described the anguish suffered by women who were unable to discover the whereabouts of their children who had been arrested and placed in detention by the authorities.[30]

Much of the poetry Volkhovskii composed in the 1870s was re-published many years later by a press closely associated with the Socialist Revolutionary Party,[31] and subsequently anthologised during

pamphlet *Russkii tkach. Petr Alekseevich Alekseev* (n.p.: Tip-ia Rabochago Znameni, 1900).

26 *Poety revoliutsionnogo narodnichestva*, 61.

27 *Poety-demokraty 1870–1880-kh godov*, 90.

28 *Poety revoliutsionnogo narodnichestva*, 66. The poem was presumably written when Volkhovskii heard of his wife's death, although the text makes it hard to date with certainty, not least given the final lines: 'I love you immensely / And am ready to die for you'.

29 *Iz-za reshetki*. Volkhovskii was the *de facto* editor of the collection, contributing his own poems under the pseudonym A. Chornyi, but his editorial role was not acknowledged in the printed volume.

30 *Poety revoliutsionnogo narodnichestva*, 69.

31 F. Volkhovskoi (*sic*), *Sluchainyia pesni* (Moscow: Knigoizdatel'stvo L. I. Kolevatova, 1907).

the Soviet period as a product of 'revolutionary populism', but even his warmest admirers would be hard-pressed to consider it as part of the Russian literary canon. Volkhovskii himself would probably have agreed. In one piece he wrote that,

> I know my verse is often bad,
> It is crude, without a golden touch,
> Often in it the heart sighs,
> And it sounds dissonant and tuneless...

He went on, though, to suggest that the mere act of writing such 'trifles' could help to protect against the threat of being 'smothered by tears'.[32] Volkhovskii's verse of the 1870s—much of it composed in prison—was designed both to encourage those who sought to overthrow tsarism as well provide a way for him to maintain his sanity.

Volkhovskii was by the mid-1870s instrumental in collecting poems by his fellow prisoners for publication abroad. Although his own work on educational issues appeared legally, suggesting that the authorities were surprisingly relaxed at the prospect of prisoners continuing to write and publish, the fact that so much agitational verse was smuggled out of prison indicates that the repressive apparatus of the tsarist state was often characterised by the same indolence and corruption as the rest of the bureaucracy. While political prisoners like Volkhovskii were treated better than common criminals, the uncertain freedoms they carved out in their daily routines were less the result of concessions by the authorities, and more minor triumphs that exploited the failings of the punitive system tasked with crushing critics of the tsarist government.

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Significant changes took place in the web of individuals and organisations that made up the Russian revolutionary movement in the years Volkhovskii spent in prison following his third arrest in 1874. He had been astute in his scepticism about the Going to the People movement that culminated in the chaos of the 'mad summer' of that year. Although the peasantry's response to the wave of urban incomers was not as

32 Volkhovskoi, *Sluchainyia pesni*, 24.

hostile as sometimes suggested,[33] many of the new arrivals had little understanding of the harsh realities of rural life, and the subsequent tensions illuminated the gulf between the *narod* and members of educated society. Some newcomers were denounced to the authorities for criticising the tsar, often by the local priest, although in other cases they received a warmer welcome. Many found themselves unable to earn a living despite their best efforts to learn a rural craft. Most soon realised that their romanticised image of the Russian peasantry had little in common with the flesh and blood population they encountered in the villages.[34]

The debacle of the Going to the People prompted many radicals who remained at liberty to reconsider both their focus and their tactics. The demonstration that took place in Kazan Square in St Petersburg, in December 1876, was organised by members of the embryonic second Zemlia i volia group, including the future Menshevik leader Georgii Plekhanov,[35] and was intended to mobilise urban workers to protest in the streets. The previous year, Mark Natanson began work bringing together 'illegals' who remained at liberty—his fellow revolutionary Dmitrii Klements christened them 'troglodytes'—in an effort (in Vera Figner's words) to 'unite them in a common goal'.[36] Petr Tkachev abroad in Switzerland continued to promote the virtues of a Jacobinism that emphasised the need for violent action against the representatives of

33 For a superb article examining this theme and challenging many traditional views about the 'mad summer', see Daniel Field, 'Peasants and Propagandists in the Russian Movement to the People of 1874', *Journal of Modern History*, 59, 3 (1987), 415–38. For a more traditional account of events, 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), 504–06.

34 For a brief review of the way in which educated Russians of different outlooks constructed the peasantry as a blank canvas on which to build their own hopes, see Michael Hughes, 'Misunderstanding the Russian Peasantry: Anti-Capitalist Revolution or Third Rome?', in Helga Schultz and Angela Harre (eds), *Bauerngesellschaften auf dem Weg in die Moderne. Agrarismus in Ost Mitteleuropa 1880 bis 1960* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010), 55–67.

35 Pamela Sears McKinsey, 'The Kazan Square Demonstration and the Conflict between Russian Workers and *Intelligenty*', *Slavic Review*, 44, 1 (1985), 83–103. For a detailed if somewhat dated discussion of the development of Zemlia i volia over the months and years that followed, see Deborah Hardy, *Land and Freedom: The Origins of Russian Terrorism, 1876–1879* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1987).

36 Quoted in Christopher Ely, *Underground Petersburg. Radical Populism, Urban Space and the Tactics of Subversion in Reform-Era Russia* (Dekalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2016), 172.

state power.[37] Although there was little real pattern underpinning this revolutionary kaleidoscope, there was a growing recognition of the need to avoid a repetition of the chaos of 1874, as well as a burgeoning sense that a focus on agitation and propaganda among the peasantry was unlikely by itself to unleash the forces needed to create lasting social and political change.

There is little available material to provide an insight into Volkhovskii's views on these developments during the years he spent in prison, before appearing in front of a special session of the Senate in the autumn of 1877, as a defendant in the celebrated Trial of the 193. It was the third mass trial of the year (the defendants at the first trial were accused of involvement in the Kazan Square demonstration, while those involved in the second Trial of 50 were charged with belonging to a secret organisation seeking the 'overthrow of the existing order'). The Government's decision to stage high-profile trials was prompted by an expectation that 'the well-disposed social classes' would rally to support the Government when confronted with a public airing of 'the delirious ravings of a fanatical imagination'.[38] Such hopes were to prove forlorn.

During the months leading up to the trial, most prisoners were, like Volkhovskii, held in solitary confinement in the House of Preliminary Detention. Charushin described the regime there as more relaxed than in the Peter and Paul Fortress, providing more opportunities for communication between prisoners, although he also remembered that after several years of isolation he found it hard to interact at all with other people.[39] Sergei Sinegub recalled that the prisoners created informal clubs, using clandestine forms of communication to swap information and recite poetry to one another.[40] Ekaterina Breshko-Breshkovskaia later described the atmosphere in the House of Preliminary Detention as 'lively and even jolly'.[41] The arrival of a new head of the prison administration in the summer of 1877 increased tension, though, which

37 On Tkachev during this period, see Deborah Hardy, *Petr Tkachev. The Critic as Jacobin* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1977), 247–77.

38 Quoted in Venturi, *Roots of Revolution*, 585.

39 N. A. Charushin, *O dalekom proshlom. Kruzhok Chaikovtsev. Iz vospominanii o revolitusionnom dvizhenii 1870–kh gg.* (Moscow: Vsesoiuznoe obshchestvo politicheskikh katorzhan i ssylno-poselentsev, 1926), 194.

40 Sergei Sinegub, *Zapiski chaikovtsa* (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1929), 184.

41 Ekaterina Breshko-Breshkovskaia, *Skrytye korny russkoi revoliutsii. Otrechenie velikoi revoliutsionerki, 1873–1920* (Moscow: Tsentrpoligraf, 2007), 136. See, too, N. A.

exploded in dramatic fashion when General F. F. Trepov, Governor of St Petersburg, made a visit to the prison.[42] When one of the prisoners who went by the name of Bogoliubov failed to raise his cap,[43] Trepov reacted with fury, and appeared to onlookers to strike the offending article off the prisoner's head.[44] The Governor also ordered that Bogoliubov be flogged for his insolence. When news of the decision was announced, the prisoners howled abuse and shook the bars of their windows, continuing their protests for many hours. Eventually the prison guards were commanded to restore order by force.

Volkhovskii made a good deal of the incident in his unpublished memoirs, claiming that Trepov had first insisted on inspecting the quarters of the women prisoners, despite complaints from the female warden that such a visit was unseemly. He described how the guards responded to protests by dragging prisoners out of their cells and

> beat them mercilessly ... One of the prisoners was gazing out of the window, when the door flew open. He was caught by his feet and dragged down. As the windows in the cell are high from the floor and beneath an iron wash-basin is fastened to the wall, he fell with his face on it and got a severe wound. A blanket was thrown over another—a refined student and an artist, to prevent him from defending himself, and he was beaten till he fainted.

'[T]wo strong policemen with the faces of excited bulldogs' forced their way into Volkhovskii's cell, submitting him to 'a shower of heavy blows', although he fared better than some other prisoners who were thrown into punishment cells close to a massive oven where they 'got blood-poisoning from the vile atmosphere'.[45] The whole affair was to have long-term consequences. When the flogging became common knowledge, several revolutionaries still at liberty vowed

Troitskii, *Tsarskie sudy protiv revoliutsionnoi Rossii. Politicheskie protsessy v 1871–1880 gg.* (Saratov: Izd-vo Saratovskogo universiteta, 1976), 188.

42 Richard Pipes, 'The Trial of Vera Z', *Russian History*, 37, 1 (2010), 1–82 (13 ff.).

43 The real name of the prisoner was A. S. Emelianov who had been arrested the previous year for his participation in the Kazan Square demonstration. On Emelianov's career during this time, see Pipes, 'Trial of Vera Z', 8–11.

44 For accounts of the Bogoliubov incident and the riot that followed see, for example, Sinegub, *Zapiski chaikovtsa*, 181–96.

45 Volkhovskii Papers (HIA), Box 11, Folder 3 (Unpublished autobiography), 60–61; Morozov, *Povesti moei zhizni*, II, 195.

to take revenge, and in January 1878 the twenty-eight-year-old Vera Zasulich shot and wounded Trepov after seeking an audience at his office. She was subsequently tried and found not guilty, an acquittal that provided stark evidence of how significant sections of 'the well-disposed classes' were in fact better disposed to the radicals than they were to the government.[46]

The Trial of the 193, which took place a few months before Zasulich's trial, showed how hard it was for the government to mobilise opinion against its radical critics (the cases were heard before a Committee of the Senate, in part because the government was wary about the unpredictability of juries, making the subsequent decision to try Zasulich in a regular court so surprising).[47] Volkhovskii described the Trial of the 193 as a 'mock trial' in the account he wrote twenty years later for a Western audience. He was less keen to emphasise the chaotic nature of the proceedings, which would not have fitted well with his attempt to promote an image of tsarist Russia as an embryonic police state. Nor did he note that defendants were permitted defence lawyers or that many journalists were allowed to watch proceedings. The accused often treated the Courtroom as a place to meet old friends, after months in solitary confinement, creating an atmosphere that turned the trial into a site of protest. Many defendants initially refused to appear at all. Some like Sergei Sinegub resisted when efforts were made to transport them to 'Court'. And, when the defendants did eventually come before the senators, some took the opportunity to disrupt proceedings and attack the 'judges'. Ippolit Myshkin, who had been arrested in Siberia in 1875, where he had gone on an ill-fated mission to rescue Chernyshevskii from exile, declared in a scathing speech,

46 On Zasulich's attempt on Trepov's life and subsequent trial, see Jay Bergman, *Vera Zasulich: A Biography* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1983), 19–62; Pipes, 'The Trial of Vera Z'; Anna Siljak, *Angel of Vengeance: The "Girl Assassin", the Governor of St. Petersburg, and Russia's Revolutionary World* (New York: St Martin's Press, 2008), 189–247. For a useful memoir by one of her contemporaries, the liberal jurist A. F. Koni, see his *Vospominaniia o dele Very Zasulich* (Moscow: Direct Media, 2015).

47 The best general account of the Trial of the 193 remains N. A. Troitskii, *Tsarskie sudy*, 157 ff. Among the many memoir accounts of those involved in the trial (and were on good terms with Volkhovskii), see Breshko-Breshkovskaia, *Skrytye korny russkoi revoliutsii*, 144–55; Charushin, *O dalekom proshlom*, 196–206; Chudnovskii, *Iz davnikh let*, 134–59; Sinegub, *Zapiski chaikovtsa*, 196–201.

> this is not a tribunal but a useless comedy; or something worse, something more repulsive, more shameful than a brothel. There a woman sells her own body out of necessity. Here, senators trade with the lives of others, with truth and justice; trade in fact with all that is dearest to humanity out of cowardice, baseness, opportunism, to gain large salaries.[48]

Eight members of the Odessa *kruzhok*—in addition to Volkhovskii—faced charges at the Trial of the 193, including Chudnovskii, Zheliabov and Langans. Volkhovskii's first appearance before the Court took place towards the end of October 1877, just a week after the start of proceedings, when he began by telling the Court that:

> Before I address the matter of my culpability, I must ask permission to explain ... issues relating to my deafness and my declining health that have come about as a result of the six years solitary confinement that I have experienced since 1868. I lost almost all my hearing ... this puts me in an exceptional position in relation to everything that takes place in this hall; I can hear almost nothing ... and at every moment risk not understanding properly everything that is taking place around me.

He was given permission to come closer to the 'judges' so that he could hear them more clearly. Volkhovskii then continued with a long speech that defended his own integrity in the face of a process that lacked any moral legitimacy.

> I want all honourable people to understand that ... I consider the current proceedings to be those of an administrative commission and not a court. I protest against such a state of affairs. I want all honourable people to understand that I wash my hands of all this ... I am appearing here only because compelled to by physical force and I decline both witnesses and defence lawyers and ask immediately to be taken from this hall.[49]

The guards led a still-protesting Volkhovskii away.

Volkhovskii was brought back to Court the following day when his speech was at first less provocative (he began by apologising for his earlier rudeness). He instead focused on procedural issues, once

48 Venturi, *Roots of Revolution*, 590.

49 *Stenograficheskii otchet po delu o revoliutsionnoi propagande v Imperii* (St Petersburg: n.p., 1878), I, 32–33 (transcript of sitting held 25 October 1877). Further material from the trial can be found in 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).

again asking permission not to appear in person before the Court. The presiding Senator K. K. Peters noted that he had only refused such permission the previous day because he thought it would help the 'not young' Volkhovskii—he was thirty-one—to get the hearing over as soon as possible. The prisoner for his part expressed 'gratitude in the highest degree' for such courtesy, before going on to use a tortured chess metaphor to describe his position, irritating Peters who interrupted him exclaiming 'Enough, enough, be quiet'. Volkhovskii responded by once more asking permission to leave the Court. The President angrily declared 'Take the defendant away in view of the disrespect (*neuvazhenie*) he has shown the Court'.[50] Some other prisoners who were watching proceedings shouted out that they too wanted permission to leave.

Many witnesses who appeared over the next few weeks were asked about Volkhovskii's activities, including the sister of his late wife Mariia Antonova, as well as others who had known him when he was living in Odessa. His defence lawyer was present throughout and questioned some of the witnesses, including the gendarme attacked by Volkhovskii in his escape attempt three years earlier. Volkhovskii's later description of proceedings as a 'mock trial' was, as already noted, misleading (or at least simplistic). Most defendants were found not guilty of the charges they faced. Among those acquitted were several who were shortly to become involved in terrorism, including Sof'ia Perovskaia and Andrei Zheliabov, both later sentenced to death for their part in the assassination of Aleksandr II in March 1881. The sentences of those found guilty varied. Nikolai Charushin and Sergei Sinegub were condemned to nine years hard labour in Siberia. Volkhovskii and his old friend from Odessa, Solomon Chudnovskii, escaped more lightly. They were sentenced to deprivation of civil rights and exile for life to Siberia but without hard labour.

The defendants who had been found guilty were returned to prison, before being sent eastwards to Siberia to serve their sentences in the spring of 1878. A number signed an open letter, drafted by Volkhovskii, setting out their beliefs and hopes for the future of the revolutionary cause.

50 *Stenograficheskii otchet*, I, 41–43.

> The trial of the Russian popular revolutionary (social revolutionary) party has officially ended: the so-called verdict has been issued in its final form, and all that remains to the official powers is to send us, the condemned, to hard labour and exile as decreed. Having left the field of activity as a result of captivity, but having honourably paid our dues ... we consider it our right and our duty to turn to you, comrades, with these few words .... We call on our comrades resolutely to pursue with renewed energy and a redoubled courage that holy (*sviatoi*) goal for which we exposed ourselves to persecution and for which we are ready to struggle and suffer to our last breath.[51]

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The period that followed the Trial of the 193 was indeed an important watershed in the development of the revolutionary movement. Zasulich's attempt on Trepov's life marked the beginning of a new wave of assassinations and attempted assassinations. Sergei Stepniak returned to Russia from Switzerland in the summer of 1878, inspired by Zasulich's actions, and in early August stabbed to death General N. V. Mezentsev (Director of the Third Section). The authorities responded by declaring that violent activities against government officials would be heard in the military courts.[52] The move had little effect. A few months later, Grigorii Gol'denberg killed General Dmitrii Kropotkin (the Governor of Kharkov, Ukr. Kharkiv). The revolutionary organisation Zemlia i volia took on a more definite form and became, in the words of one of the leading historians of the period, 'the organizing centre of the entire revolutionary Populist movement'.[53]

The question of terrorism eventually split Zemlia i volia, leading to the creation in 1879 of Narodnaia volia, which was dedicated to using terror to undermine the tsarist government including, if possible, the assassination of the tsar himself.[54] Among its members were some who

51 Bazilevskii, *Gosudarstvennyia prestupleniia v Rossii*, III, 303.

52 Jonathan Daly, *Autocracy under Siege: Security Police and Opposition in Russia, 1866–1905* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois Press, 1998), 23. For a fuller discussion of the events surrounding Mezentsev's death, see Ely, *Underground Petersburg*, 210–15.

53 Venturi, *Roots of Revolution*, 597. On Zemlia i volia, see Hardy, *Land and Freedom*.

54 For a valuable account of *Narodnaia volia* by a Soviet historian, which has stood the passage of time surprisingly well, see S. S. Volk, *Narodnaia volia, 1879–1882* (Moscow: Nauka, 1966). Those who rejected terrorism, including Plekhanov, formed the group Black Repartition on which see E. R. Ol'khovskii, 'K istorii "Chernogo Peredela" (1879–1881 gg.)', in L. M. Ivanov et al. (eds),

had been part of Volkhovskii's circle in Odessa in the early 1870s including Zheliabov and Langans. Narodnaia volia quickly established itself as an effective terrorist group—in many ways the first of its kind—developing a cell-based infrastructure that minimised the danger of penetration by the Third Section.[55] Its members were far from unified in their ideological views, not least as to whether the use of terror was designed to pave the way for a peasant *bunt*, or rather to secure political reforms that could facilitate the struggle for further social and economic revolution. While such questions were played out on the pages of Narodnaia volia's main journal, edited by Lev Tikhomirov, the commitment to terror was the binding rationale of the group. Volkhovskii had been living in exile in Siberia for a year at the time when Narodnaia volia came into existence. If he had remained at liberty, then he (like many other former Chaikovtsy) would probably have come to accept the use of terror as a necessary weapon in the struggle against tsarism, not least as a means of exacting political concessions from the Government. Volkhovskii was often described in later years by other members of the Russian revolutionary movement as a *narodovolets* (a member of Narodnaia volia). He made little effort to reject the label.

It is perhaps strange that Volkhovskii did not receive such a harsh sentence at the Trial of the 193 as the one handed out to other former Chaikovtsy like Charushin. He had long been seen by the Third Section

Obshchestvennoe dvizhenie v poreformennoi Rossii (Moscow: Nauka, 1965), 124–78. For a collection of memoirs of those involved, see S. S. Volk et al. (eds), "*Narodnaia volia*" *i* "*Chernyi peredel*"*: vospominaniia uchastnikov revoliutsionnogo dvizheniia v Peterburge v 1879–1882 gg.* (Leningrad: Lenizdat, 1989).

55 For an influential article examining whether Narodnaia volia can be considered the first modern terrorist group, see Lindsay Clutterbuck, 'The Progenitors of Terrorism: Russian Revolutionaries or Extreme Irish Republicans?', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 16, 1 (2004), 154–81. For a broader comparative analysis of the origins of modern terrorism, see Carola Dietze, *The Invention of Terrorism in Europe, Russia, and the United States* (London: Verso, 2021). For an imaginative argument that Russian terrorism was actively shaped by literary models of terrorists, see Lynn Ellen Patyk, *Written in Blood. Revolutionary Terrorism and Russian Literary Culture, 1861–1881* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2017). For biographies of key individuals who turned to terrorism in the late 1870s see, for example, David Footman, *Red Prelude. The Life of the Russian Terrorist Zhelyabov* (Westport, CT: Hyperion Press, 1979); Lynne Hartnett, *The Defiant Life of Vera Figner: Surviving the Russian Revolution* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2014); Evgeniia Taratuta, *S. M. Stepniak-Kravchinskii. Revoliutsioner i pisatel'* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1973).

as a 'dangerous' agitator,[56] while his speech in Court singled him out as one of the ringleaders among prisoners seeking to boycott proceedings. The 'judges' may have spared him hard labour on account of his poor health, but the stenographic record of the trial suggests they had little detailed knowledge of the scale of his activities in Odessa, since witnesses who described his time there were usually very vague. Banishment to Siberia was nevertheless still a severe punishment, even without hard labour, for exiles had to adapt to a harsh climate and isolation from all they had previously known.[57] Those who did not possess independent means also faced the challenge of earning a living. Volkhovskii's journey to Siberia was uneventful, even though the perils and dangers faced by convicts and exiles on the long trip eastwards had become part of revolutionary mythology since 1825, when the government of Nicholas I sent into exile army officers who had taken part in the Decembrist conspiracy. Nor (as a member of a noble family) did he have to wear chains. He was instead transported by train to Nizhnii Novgorod, and then by barge to Perm, from where he was taken by a relay of horses to the small town of Tiukalinsk a hundred miles north of Tomsk. He was to remain there for the next two years.

Volkhovskii later recalled Tiukalinsk as a 'wretched town' of some fifteen hundred people.[58] The inhabitants received little news from the outside world, while the authorities closely monitored the mail of exiles who had been sent there. Volkhovskii was joined by his mother Ekaterina Matveeva, although his daughter Sof'ia seems to have remained for a time in European Russia, only travelling to Siberia when her father moved to Tomsk two years later. Volkhovskii also met

56 B. P. Koz'min (ed.), *Nechaev i Nechaevtsy. Sbornik materialov* (Moscow: Gos. sotsialno-ekonomicheskoe izdatel'stvo, 1931), 173.

57 For an excellent general discussion of Siberian exile in the nineteenth century, see Daniel Beer, *The House of the Dead: Siberian Exile under the Tsars* (London: Penguin, 2016). For the earlier period, see Andrew A. Gentes, *Exile to Siberia, 1590–1822* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Andrew A. Gentes, *Exile, Murder and Madness in Siberia, 1823–1861* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010). For two excellent if contrasting general histories of Siberia, see Janet M. Hartley, *Siberia. A History of the People* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014); Alan Wood, *Russia's Frozen Frontier: A History of Siberia and the Russian Far East, 1581–1991* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011).

58 For Volkhovskii's memories of this time, see his article 'The Suffering of Russian Exiles', *New Review*, 18, 3 (1890), 414–26. See, too, Volkhovskii Papers (HIA), Box 17, Folder 3 ('Sketches Continued').

and married a fellow exile, Aleksandra Khorzhevskaia, who had been sentenced to exile in Siberia at the Trial of the 50. Khorzhevskaia was like Volkhovskii originally from Ukraine. She had gone to Zurich in 1872 to study in the Medical Faculty of the University, where she met Vera Figner and other members of the Fritsche circle of young female radicals,[59] before returning to Russia to live under an assumed name in Moscow and Odessa. The conditions faced by Volkhovskii and his small family were difficult. They lived together with the exiled writer Grigorii Matchet in a two-roomed wooden hut with bare walls lined with moss to keep out the cold. Volkhovskii worked as a bookbinder and house painter to support their meagre existence (the government provided a stipend of just six rubles per month). It was almost impossible to buy food except at the Saturday market. The intense cold and poor food were severe enough to undermine the health of Volkhovskii's mother (the fact that the local doctor was an alcoholic did nothing to help matters).[60] She died less than a year after arriving in Tiukalinsk.

The harsh living conditions were not the only challenge facing Volkhovskii and his wife. On arrival in Tiukalinsk, Volkhovskii was taken to the police station, where he was told that all his correspondence would be read. He was also instructed not to leave the town even to bathe in a nearby lake.[61] The treatment of exiles by the authorities in Siberia depended a good deal on the personality and caprice of officials. The appearance of a new police chief (*Politseiskii nadziratel'*), just a few months after Volkhovskii's arrival, made life more difficult. The officer appeared on several occasions at Volkhovskii's cabin, often drunk, and flew into a rage when the inhabitants treated him with barely concealed contempt. The situation facing political exiles was generally worse in small towns like Tiukalinsk than in bigger cities. The material conditions were harsher, and there was little cultural life, while the local population was often hostile. When living in London many years later, Volkhovskii recalled that the main challenge he faced in Tiukalinsk was not so much

59 Vera Figner, *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*, trans. Richard Stites (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1991), 39–40.

60 Chudnovskii, *Iz davnikh let*, 243. Volkhovskii Papers (HIA), Box 17, Folder 3 ('Sketches Continued'), 3. Some fragments of information about his mother's long-term health before moving to Siberia can be found in F. Volkhovskii, 'Pamiati cheloveka i grazhdanina', *Letuchie listki*, 25 (15 October 1895).

61 Volkhovskii Papers (HIA), Box 17, Folder 3 ('Sketches Continued'), 1-2.

the shortage of food, but rather the relentless sense that 'Your time, your home, your peace, your family life do not belong to you'.[62]

Volkhovskii himself moved to Tomsk in the summer of 1881, where his wife had moved a few months earlier, probably on account of her poor health.[63] The following year Khorzhevskaia gave birth to a daughter Vera (the couple were not married at the time which subsequently created numerous bureaucratic problems). Another daughter, Katia, was born three years later. The couple were also joined in Tomsk by Volkhovskii's older child Sof'ia. The move to a large city was undoubtedly welcome to Volkhovskii, both because it offered a more congenial social and intellectual environment, as well as new opportunities to earn a living through writing and journalism. Although Tomsk was home to the notorious Forwarding Prison, soon to be made famous by George Kennan in his articles for *Century Magazine* condemning the 'exile system', the city of some 40,000 people was one of the liveliest centres of cultural life east of the Urals. It had for many years boasted a large wooden theatre, complete with chandelier and red upholstered seating, which was replaced in 1885 by a new stone building.[64] It also boasted one of the biggest bookshops in Siberia, owned by the entrepreneur P. I. Makushin, who in 1881 established the weekly *Sibirskaia gazeta*, the first privately-owned newspaper east of the Urals.[65] It quickly became one of the most widely read papers in Siberia, and Volkhovskii one of its most assiduous

62 Felix Volkhovsky, 'Suffering of Russian Exiles', 418.

63 Some documents suggest that Volkhovskii in fact travelled to Tomsk with Khorzhevskaia. See Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Tomskoi oblasti (henceforth GATO), f. 3, op. 4, del. 820 (Letter from the Main Administration of Western Siberia to the Tomsk Governor V. I. Mertsalov, 9 September 1881).

64 Iu. I. Rodchenko, 'Istoriia pervogo Tomskogo teatra, 1850–1882 gg. (na materiale "Tomskikh gubernskikh vedomostei" i "Sibirskoi gazety")', *Vestnik Tomskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta*, 366 (2013), 78–81. For a valuable discussion of the role of Tomsk theatre in cultural life, see O. B. Kafanova, 'Dialog kul'tur v teatral'nom khronotope Tomska na rubezhe XIX–XX vv.', *Knigoizdanie* 3 (2014), 45–64.

65 Among the large literature on *Sibirskaia gazeta*, see L. L. Ermolinskii, *Sibirskie gazety 70–80-kh godov XIX veka* (Irkutsk: Izd-vo. Irkutskogo universiteta, 1985), 37–104; L. S. Liubimov, *Istoriia Sibirskoi pechati* (Irkutsk: Izd-vo. Irkutskogo univesiteta, 1982), 67–77; and especially N. V. Zhiliakova, *Zhurnalistika goroda Tomska (XIX–nachalo XX veka): stanovlenie i razvitie* (Tomsk: Izd-vo Tomskogo universiteta, 2011), esp. 128–61. I am indebted to Professor Zhiliakova both for her extensive published work on journalism in Tomsk and for providing me with material I could not otherwise obtain.

contributors, as well as one of the *de facto* editors.[66] Makushin was also involved in numerous other civic initiatives to improve education and eliminate illiteracy in the town itself.[67] There were also plans to build a new University in Tomsk, a proposal first approved by Tsar Aleksandr II in 1878, although it was only put into effect a decade later.

The growth of civil society in late imperial Russia—the constellation of independent societies and publications operating outside the formal control of the state—was as striking in Siberia as it was in European Russia.[68] George Kennan nevertheless painted a grim picture of the situation endured by the political exiles he met in Tomsk in 1885 in his critical account of the Siberian exile system:

> The number of politicals in Tomsk, at the time of our visit, was about thirty, including six or eight women. Some of them were administrative exiles, who had only just arrived from European Russia; some were *poslentsi*, or forced colonists, who had been banished originally to 'the most remote part' of Siberia, but who had finally been allowed to return in broken health to a 'less remote part'; while a few were survivors of the famous '193', who had languished for years in the casemates of the Petropavlovsk fortress, and had then been sent to the plains of Western Siberia.
>
> I was struck by the composure with which these exiles would sometimes talk of intolerable injustice and frightful sufferings. The men and women who had been sent to the province of Yakutsk for refusing to take the oath of allegiance to Alexander III, and who had suffered in that arctic wilderness all that human beings can suffer from hunger, cold, sickness, and bereavement, did not seem to be conscious that there was anything very extraordinary in their experience … as a rule, both men and women

66 For a discussion of Volkhovskii's role at *Sibirskaia gazeta*, see Domanskii, 'F. V. Volkhovskii'.

67 For a useful description of civil society in Tomsk during these years, see V. P. Zinov'ev et al. (eds), *Obshchestvenno-politicheskaia zhizn' v Tomskoi gubernii v 1880–1919 gg.: khronika*, 3 vols. (Tomsk: Izd-vo Tomskogo universiteta, 2013), I. Further material about social and economic developments in Tomsk, as seen through the prism of official publications, can be found in V. V. Shevtsov, *Pravitel'stvennaia periodicheskaia pechat' Sibiri (vtoraia polovina XIX–nachalo XX veka)* (Tomsk: Izd-vo Tomskogo universiteta, 2016).

68 In addition to V. P. Zinov'ev et al., *Obshchestvenno-politicheskaia zhizn' v Tomske'*, see the useful encyclopaedia of organisations and individuals edited by M. V. Shilvoskii et al., *Obshchestvenno-politicheskaia zhizn' Sibiri v kontse XIX–nachale XX veka* (Novosibirsk: Parallel, 2019).

> referred to injustice and suffering with perfect composure, as if they were nothing more than the ordinary accidents of life.[69]

Kennan's words eliding the situation at Tomsk with the experiences of those who had been sent to towns like Iakutsk, a far more remote place thousands of miles to the east, was something of a rhetorical sleight of hand designed to paint a devastating picture of the exile system for his readers. His private notes show that he knew the situation of political exiles varied enormously from place to place and that in Tomsk 'The treatment of exiles ... is generally quite good'.[70]

While Kennan believed there were around thirty political exiles in Tomsk, the real figure was probably higher, certainly if it includes the many Polish exiles living in the city.[71] During the 1880s, several former Chaikovtsy lived in the town, including Volkhovskii's old comrade from Odessa, Solomon Chudnovskii, who greatly impressed Kennan as 'a bright and talented publicist' who met the challenges of exile with 'energy and courage'.[72] Aleksandr Kropotkin—brother of Petr—was also exiled to Tomsk where he subsequently committed suicide.[73] Other notable members of the exile community in Tomsk included the writer Konstantin Stanukovich, who spent three years in the town, after being sent there as punishment for his contacts with political exiles living in Western Europe. The former Chaikovets Dmitrii Klements lived for a time in Tomsk and contributed regularly to *Sibirskaia gazeta*.[74] The exile colony also included S. P. Mokievskii-Zubok, M. S. Moroz and V. P. Aleksandrov, along with the prominent female radicals Liubov' and

69 *Century Magazine*, 37, 2 (December 1888), 174.

70 Kennan Papers (Library of Congress), Box 20, Diary/Book No. 24 (Miscellaneous notes on exiles), 15, 18.

71 Chudnovskii, *Iz davnikh let*, 248. On the exile of Poles to Siberia in the third quarter of the nineteenth century, see Andrew A. Gentes, *The Mass Deportation of Poles to Siberia, 1863–1880* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

72 *Century Magazine*, 37, 1 (November 1888), 31.

73 On Aleksandr Kropotkin see T. V. Vagina, 'Kniaz' Aleksandr Kropotkin: Pechal'nyi udel nesostoiavshegosia talenta', *Vestnik arkhivista*, 1 (2017), 226–38.

74 On Klements' contributions to the Siberian press, including *Sibirskaia gazeta*, see S. I. Gol'dfarb, *D. A. Klements. Revoliutsioner, uchenyi, publitsist* (Irkutsk: Izd-vo Irkutskogo universiteta, 1986), 40 ff. See, too, the 2022 article by M. V. Balakhnina, 'Sotsial'no-ekonomicheskie i politichestkie aspekty sostoianiia Sibirskogo kraia v 1880-e gg. v publikatsiiakh D. A. Klementsa v "Sibirskoi gazete"', *Interexpo GEO-Siberia* (2022), 10–14, https://scholar.archive.org/work/bxh6lpr5uva5bfod3som4wl7ci.

Aleksandra Kornilov, who had both been active in the Chaikovskii circle from its earliest days when Mark Natanson was still its leading figure.[75]

The exiles' presence helped to strengthen the cultural life of Tomsk. Many of them were active in societies like The Society for Spreading Popular Education, which attracted enthusiastic support both from the local *intelligentsia* and the exile community. So too did initiatives to establish schools in the town and the wider province. Political exiles were well-represented in the audience at many of the public lectures offered on subjects ranging from literature to the ethnography of Siberia. Chudnovskii contributed regularly to the official Tomsk Yearbook. He also obtained permission to take part in two ethnographic expeditions to eastern Siberia, later recalling that the local authorities generally took a tolerant line towards political exiles living in the town,[76] although he acknowledged that much depended on the personality of the governor and other leading officials. Dmitrii Klements was allowed to carry out extensive ethnographic research on Siberia throughout the 1880s.[77] Exiles living in Tomsk could even on occasion meet with political prisoners passing through the town *en route* to other places of exile in Siberia. There was indeed significant support among the city's residents for the exiles. Lev Deich—who subsequently became a leading figure in the Menshevik Party—later recalled how when he was being transported through the town, 'two young girls, scarcely over school-age, suddenly broke through our escort of soldiers, and rushed upon us ... The girls ran like squirrels through our midst, announced themselves as the two sisters P., gave each of us a hasty kiss, and paid no attention to the calls of the officers and soldiers'.[78]

The most important figure among the liberal *intelligentsia* of Tomsk was Petr Makushin, the founder of *Sibirskaia gazeta*, whose publishing house produced numerous books about Siberian history and culture.[79] The first edition of *Sibirskaia gazeta* that appeared in March 1881, when

75 For a series of pen portraits of the exile community in Tomsk, see Chudnovskii, *Iz davnikh let*, 254 ff.

76 Chudnovskii, *Iz davnikh let*, 251.

77 For Klements' extensive ethnographic activities in Siberia, see Gol'dfarb, *Klements*, passim.

78 Deutsch, *Sixteen Years in Siberia*, 153–54.

79 On Makushkin and his educational activities, see for example *Kapital sel'skikh bezplatnykh bibliotek v Sibiri* (Tomsk: Tip-litografiia Sibirskago t-va pechatnago dela, 1907); *Poluvekovoi iubilei P. I. Makushina 1866–1916 gg.* (Tomsk: n.p., 1917); G.

Volkhovskii was still living in Tiukalinsk, set out a manifesto declaring its aim of 'monitoring the development of local life, focusing the attention and interest of local society on its needs [and] giving all its energy to the development of a local independent cultural life ... Public education (*narodnoe prosveshenie*) in Siberia, the situation and needs of the Siberian peasant and the incomer, and the rapid reform of the old pre-reform order ... [these] will be the main tasks that *Sibirskaia gazeta* will focus on'.[80] Interest in the ethnographic character of Siberia was a defining feature of many of those who contributed to *Sibirskaia gazeta*. Chudnovskii travelled through Yenisei province and later toured the Altai region of Siberia looking at patterns of settlement.[81] Aleksandr Adrianov, a native-born Siberian who served for several years as editor, also explored the Altai and wrote extensively about his experiences there. Grigorii Matchet contributed stories on village life in Siberia. And Volkhovskii, as will be seen later, wrote numerous poems and short stories with a Siberian setting.

Sibirskaia gazeta was following a sensitive path in emphasising the need for a Siberian intelligentsia attuned to local needs.[82] Students from Siberia had gathered in informal discussion circles at Moscow and St Petersburg universities from the late 1850s and 1860s. Among their number were Nikolai Iadrinstsev and Grigorii Potanin, who were both deeply interested in the ethnography of Siberia, and later became critics of the Government for treating the region as a colony rather than a place with a distinctive identity.[83] Iadrintsev believed that the boundary between 'Populism' and 'Siberianism' was necessarily uncertain (he later wrote that 'Populism in its general specific form was dominated

K. Krepkin, *Revnitel'sveta—P. I. Makushin: 50 let prosvetitel'noi deiatel'nosti* (Tomsk: n.p., 1916).

80 *Sibirskaia gazeta*, 1 (1 March 1881).

81 Chudnovskii, *Iz davnikh let*, 253. See, too, S. L. Chudnovskii, *Eniseiskaia guberniia: k trekhsotletnemu iubileiu Sibiri* (*statistiko-publitsisticheskie etiudy*) (Tomsk: n.p., 1885); S. L. Chudnovskii, *Pereselenicheskoe delo na Altae* (Irkutsk: Vostochnoe obozrenie, 1889).

82 For a useful summary of this theme, see N. G. O. Pereira, 'The Idea of Siberian Regionalism in Late Imperial and Revolutionary Russia', *Russian History*, 20, 1–4 (1993), 163–78.

83 Iadrintsev was closely involved in the planning for George Kennan's Siberian expeditions and provided him with numerous letters of introduction. Kennan Papers (Library of Congress), Box 6, Kennan to Smith (*Century Magazine*), 30 May 1885.

by a current that sprung from the capital. But how is real populism possible without the participation of the intellectual and civil life of the province').[84] By the 1880s, 'Siberianism' had evolved a distinctive character in which populist elements, including a focus on the welfare and education of the peasantry, were combined with a desire to foster a Siberian consciousness that acknowledged how the vast territory east of the Urals was a region with its own character and needs. *Sibirskaia gazeta* articulated a similar set of principles. It was a combination that could easily fall foul of the authorities, anxious that such sentiments might encourage the growth of liberal and revolutionary sympathies.

Volkhovskii's move to Tomsk was prompted in part by his hope of getting regular work at *Sibirskaia gazeta*. His Ukrainophilism had already shown that he recognised how regionalism in all its forms could mobilise opposition to the autocratic system of government, and Siberian motifs came to feature prominently in his writings during the 1880s. Volkhovskii was still under surveillance throughout his time in Tomsk,[85] and he seems to have been wary of developing relations with the more radical elements in the town's underground, preferring to work with liberals like Makushin. Much of his literary work of the 1880s was published in *Sibirskaia gazeta* and fell firmly within the ambit of a 'legal' populism that emphasised the importance of promoting the welfare of the *narod*, while remaining more circumspect about how such a goal could be achieved.[86] The shift echoed a broader change in the character of Russian populism, at a time when the repressive policies pursued by the tsarist government were largely successful in containing the challenge posed by revolutionary groups.[87] Volkhovskii certainly believed that

84 Quoted in Dmitri Von Mohrenschildt, *Toward a United States of Russia: Plans and Projects of Federal Reconstruction of Russia in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Assoc. University Press, 1981), 110.

85 See, for example, GARF, f. 102, op. 78, del. 252 (Intercepted correspondence between Volkhovskii and Machtet); GATO, f. 3, op. 4, del. 820 (1882 Report sent by Tomsk Police Chief to the Tomsk Governor about Volkhovskii).

86 For useful discussions of liberal populism, see B. P. Baluev, *Liberal'noe narodnichestvo na rubezhe XIX–XX vekov* (Moscow: Nauka, 1995); G. N. Mokshin, *Evoliutsiia ideologii legal'nogo narodnichestva v poslednei trety XIX–nachale XX vv.* (Voronezh: Nauchnaia Kniga, 2010).

87 On the development of the Russian revolutionary movement in the 1880s and early 1890s, see Norman M. Naimark, *Terrorists and Social Democrats. The Russian Revolutionary Movement under Alexander III* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983); Derek Offord, *The Russian Revolutionary Movement in the*

his time working for *Sibirskaia gazeta* was productive. Several years after he fled Russia, he told Chaikovskii that 'I had five years' editorial and newspaper experience and clearly my work in Siberia bore good fruit'.[88] He also believed that *Sibirskaia gazeta* had 'without doubt had a good impact on the growth of Siberian social thought'.[89]

Successive editors saw *Sibirskaia gazeta* not simply as a local newspaper, but rather one that should provide its readers with a broad view of the world, and it typically included extensive coverage of foreign and domestic news as well as reports from correspondents across Siberia. The paper also published accounts of explorations and ethnographic investigations along with numerous short stories and poems. Volkhovskii contributed to *Sibirskaia gazeta* under a series of assumed names—most frequently Ivan Brut—although some of his work was uncredited. He played a key role in encouraging the paper's focus on *belles-lettres* after his move to Tomsk, penning the theatre reviews himself, and writing many of the paper's distinctive *feuilletons*. In the months following the closure of *Sibirskaia gazeta*, in 1888, he noted that he had on average been paid twenty-five rubles a month for his contributions to the paper and sixty-two rubles at times when he was required to devote all his time to editorial work.[90]

Volkhovskii's status as a political exile meant that he could not formally serve as the editor of *Sibirskaia gazeta*, although he performed the role informally when Adrianov was away from Tomsk.[91] He was

1880s (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986). For a useful discussion of the concept of 'cultural populism', see G. N. Mokshin, 'Osnovnye etapy istorii "Kul'turnogo" narodnichestva', *Vestnik Rossiiskogo universiteta druzhby narodov. Ser. istoriia Rossii*, 15, 2 (2016), 19–28. For useful brief reviews of the historiography of populism in the final decades of the nineteenth century, see V. A. Isakov, 'Sushchnost' rossiiskogo radikalizma vtoroi poloviny XIX veka v istoriograficheskom protsesse', in G. N. Mokshin et al. (eds), *Narodniki v istorii Rossii*, 2 vols (Voronezh: Istoki and Izdatel'skii dom VGU, 2013–16), I, 8–25; M. D. Karpachev, 'O novykh i starykh podkhodakh k periodizatsii istorii russkogo narodnichestva', in G. N. Mokshin et al. (eds), *Narodniki v istorii Rossii*, II, 7–19.

88 Gol'dfarb, *Klements*, 42.

89 Gol'dfarb, *Klements*, 57. For some further useful comments about Volkhovskii's views of provincial journalism, see N. V. Zhiliakova, 'Obsuzhdenie professional'nykh tsennostei zhurnalista v perepiske F. V. Volkhovskogo i V. G. Korolenko', *Zhurnalistskii ezhegodnik*, 3 (2014), 38–42.

90 Iampol'skii, 'K bibliografii F. V. Volkhovskogo', 188.

91 For an article emphasising Volkhovskii's *de facto* editorial role, see Domanskii, 'F. V. Volkhovskii'. Adrianov seems to have taken a rather different view, complaining

certainly one of the most prolific contributors throughout its seven-year life, as well as an active member of the collective that met to discuss the newspaper's contents, although Makushin and Adrianov took the lead when dealing with the authorities over such questions as censorship. The paper maintained good relations with other newspapers that took a 'Siberianist' editorial line, including *Sibir* (*Siberia*),[92] published in Irkutsk, and Iadrintsev's *Vostochnoe obozrenie* (*Eastern Review*) which was produced in St Petersburg.[93] Iadrintsev himself took a keen interest in *Sibirskaia gazeta* during its early years, and was instrumental in bringing about the departure of the lawyer E. V. Korsh from its editorial board, ostensibly for his lack of concern with Siberian issues, although the conflict also reflected deep clashes of personality.[94] Korsh subsequently became editor of a new Tomsk newspaper, *Sibirskii vestnik* (*Siberian Herald*), which engaged in polemics with *Sibirskaia gazeta* on a range of issues throughout the second half of the 1880s.

Volkhovskii's role in fostering the 'literary turn' of *Sibirskaia gazeta* reflected both his interests as an author—whether as poet, critic or short story writer—as well as his belief that *belles-lettres* could shape the moral and political views of the public. Although recent efforts by Russian scholars to present him as a literary figure of significance in his own right are perhaps too ambitious,[95] he was without doubt an astute critic, while his best creative work displayed real sensitivity and imagination. Volkhovskii wrote dozens of theatre columns for *Sibirskaia gazeta*. Some of these described local theatrical performances, that were typically staged in Tomsk by touring companies, while others offered

in a letter to Potanin that he carried out much of the work 'alone'. For Adrianov's correspondence with Potanin, see N. V. Zhiliakova (ed.), *Sibirskaia gazeta v vospominaniiakh sovremennikov* (Tomsk: NTL, 2004), 133–40.

92 On *Sibir*, see Ermolinskii, *Sibirskie gazety 70–80-kh godov*, 37–104.

93 S. I. Gol'dfarb, *Gazeta "Vostochnoe Obozrenie" 1882–1906* (Irkutsk: Izd-vo Irkutskogo universiteta, 1997).

94 For Korsh's account of the dispute, see E. V. Korsh, 'Vosem' let v Sibirii', *Istoricheskkii vestnik*, 5 (1910), 424-49 (esp. 436–37). See, too, Zhiliakova, *Zhurnalistika goroda Tomska*, 138–39.

95 See, for example, N. V. Zhiliakova, 'Mezhdu literaturoi i zhurnalistikoi: fel'etony F. V. Volkhovskogo v "Sibirskoi Gazete"', *Amerikanskoe issledovanie v Sibiri*, 9 (2008), 333–45. Also see A. E. Mazurov and N. V. Zhiliakova, '"Kartinka mestnogo nastroeniia": Obstoiatel'stva zapreshcheniia i soderzhanie pervogo fel'etona "Sibirskoi gazety" (1881)', *Vestnik Tomskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta. Filologiia*, 66 (2020), 308–17.

more general reflections on the social significance of dramatic art. Volkhovskii's criticism was rooted in Chernyshevskii's aesthetic views, telling readers of his column that the theatre should show 'what takes place in life',[96] and 'cultivate positive feelings and aspirations that foster in people a sense of human dignity [and] a selfless commitment to truth'.[97] He also ascribed a pivotal role to the critic, as a representative of the *intelligentsia*, who he believed had a duty to help the public understand the significance of what they saw on stage:

> The reviewer writes for the public. In this regard he must keep in mind two tasks: 1) clarifying the social significance of the relations, characters and circumstances which define the content of the play; 2) the development of taste in society, cultivating in it correct aesthetic views and understandings in relation to literature and dramatic art.[98]

Volkhovskii fulminated in many of his columns against actors who were too mannered, suggesting that such a mode of performance emphasised the artifice of theatrical performance and undermined its impact on the audience. His reviews of productions staged in the Tomsk theatre were nevertheless both livelier and more subtle than his somewhat laboured aesthetic *credo* might have suggested. His analysis of performances of Aleksandr Gribodev's *Gore ot uma* (*Woe from Wit*) and Gogol's *Revizor* (*Inspector-General*), which were both staged soon after he arrived in Tomsk, included detailed critiques of everything from the costumes through to the performances of individual actors. One young actor in *Woe from Wit* was judiciously praised for being 'in general not bad, at times good. One must remember that he is young and establishing himself'.[99] Volkhovskii was more critical of the production of *Inspector-General*, suggesting that its emphasis on the 'external' comedic elements undermined the play's satirical treatment of the banality of provincial society. He was more positive in his review of (the now long-forgotten) *Nishchie dukhom* (*Beggars of the Spirit*) by Nikolai Potekhin—who had himself been arrested in the 1860s for revolutionary activity—praising

96 *Sibirskaia gazeta*, 42 (20 October 1885). Volkhovskii's early columns of theatre criticism were written under the pseudonym F. Poltavchuk (a name inspired by his place of birth).
97 *Sibirskaia gazeta*, 43 (24 October 1882).
98 *Sibirskaia gazeta*, 48 (28 November 1882).
99 *Sibirskaia gazeta*, 48 (28 November 1882).

the play for its attacks on provincial bureaucrats and merchants who enriched themselves while impoverishing the lives of those around them.[100]

It is difficult not to see a tension between Volkhovskii's formal commitment to an unimaginative aesthetic realism and his intuitive recognition of culture as a form of dialogue that at its best avoided any overt didactic function. His willingness to marginalise the shibboleths articulated by a previous generation of radical Russian critics was most visible in the numerous feuilletons he wrote for *Sibirskaia gazeta*. It was a form of writing that defies easy characterisation—a mixture of fiction, poetry and essay—but one that was popular in Russian periodicals and newspapers in the second half of the nineteenth century.[101] While such a genre was not necessarily incompatible with the theories advanced by the 'men of the sixties',[102] many of the most popular feuilletons displayed a whimsy that owed little to the aesthetic principles set down by Chernyshevskii since, as Volkhovskii himself came to realise, effective social commentary could take different forms from the realism of *What Is to Be Done?* The *feuilletons* he contributed to *Sibirskaia gazeta* were often fuelled by a search for new ways of using his talent to condemn the corruption of Russian society and the incompetence of its government.

Many of Volkhovskii's *feuilletons* showed the influence of writers like Nikolai Gogol and Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin, who regularly satirised the abuses of the world around them by juxtaposing the familiar and bizarre. The most astute scholar of his *feuilletons* rightly notes that he often conflated both space and time, fostering a dreamlike atmosphere in which strange or bizarre happenings took place in the familiar world of Tomsk or some other 'real' Siberian setting.[103] The unfeeling *chinovniki* (civil servants) and merchants who populated many of his sketches were figures in a fictional and sometimes farcical world, as well as 'aesopian' exemplars of a corrupt social and political order. Many of the *feuilletons* formed part of cycles— 'Ordinary Notes on an Extraordinary World', 'The Siberian Museum', 'Chronicles of a Peaceful Town'—which

100 *Sibirskaia gazeta*, 43 (24 October 1882).

101 For the development of the feuilleton form in Russia, see Katia Dianina, 'The Feuilleton: An Everyday Guide to Public Culture in the Age of the Great Reforms', *Slavic and East European Journal*, 47, 2 (2003), 187–210.

102 Domanskii, 'F. V. Volkhovskii', 154.

103 Zhiliakova, 'Mezhdu literaturoi i zhurnalistikoi', 336–37.

allowed figures who sometimes appeared as characters in one story to act as narrators in another. Volkhovskii's work appeared under various pseudonyms: Foma, Achinskii, Prostoi smertny (A Mere Mortal) and above all Ivan Brut. These pseudonyms themselves sometimes became characters in the stories they narrated to readers. Volkhovskii intended his work both to entertain his readers and encourage them to think critically about the world around them.

Volkhovskii's best-known story from this period was probably 'Noch' na novy god' ('New Year's Eve'), which appeared in *Sibirskaia gazeta* in 1884, before being published separately the following year.[104] The story describes the experiences of a 'typical' 'thickset' Siberian merchant—Egor Popov—as he sees in the New Year alone. During a series of strange encounters, which reveal Popov as a grasping speculator who has little interest in the welfare of others, the clock steadfastly refuses to advance to strike in the new year. Although Popov himself is discontented with his life—'he felt vaguely that everything was wrong'—he dismisses out of hand the ideas expressed by a procession of visitors who attack the authorities and condemn the accumulation of capital as theft. While frequent references to the decanter of vodka in front of Popov offer a mundane explanation for the uncanny series of events, the fantastic elements are presented as literal happenings, portraying the main character as the face of a corrupt merchant class standing in the way of progress. The story somewhat surprisingly passed the censor without trouble when it first appeared, but the subversive message subsequently raised official suspicion, and it was deemed to be 'an openly revolutionary homily' (*propovel'*).[105]

While 'New Year's Eve' provided a critique of contemporary Russian (and Siberian) society, Volkhovskii's populism and 'Siberianism' was articulated more clearly in another story, 'S novym godom' ('Happy

104 Ivan Brut (Volkhovskii), *Noch na novyi god* (Tomsk: Sibirskaia gazeta, 1885). On the practice of various Siberian papers in publishing some of the work that appeared in their columns in book form, see N. V. Zhiliakova, 'Knizhnye proekty redaktsii sibirskikh gazet (na primere Tomskoi "Sibirskoi gazety" 1880-e gg.)', *Knigoizdanie*, 1 (2012), 89–97.

105 Domanskii, 'F. V. Volkhovskii', 162. The interpretation of Volkhovskii's feuilletons in the following paragraphs draws heavily on Domanskii's work, as well as that of Prof. Zhiliakova, who kindly provided me with detailed lists of all the feuilletons written by Volkhovskii.

New Year') published in *Sibirskaia gazeta* the previous year.[106] The story focuses on a writer who—rather in the tradition of Aleksandr Radishchev's *Journey from St Petersburg to Moscow*—seeks to make sense of the country through which he is travelling (in this case Siberia). The ordinary world dissolves into fantasy when 'Siberia' appears before the traveller in the guise of a beautiful woman:

> Her features were severe but her eyes glowed with kindness. The hem of her dress was edged at the front and the sides with the colour of the sea. Rich blue ribbons were wrapped around her and ran down her in stripes like waves. Her head was crowned with a beautiful diadem, that seemed like a profile of the Altai mountains, in the middle of which was a large opal which shimmered with all the colours of the rainbow like a large lake. A necklace made up of all the different rocks of the Urals decorated her neck.

The personification of Siberia as a female form was not in fact an original motif (Iadrintsev had written in a similar vein the previous year in *Vostochnoe obozrenie*).[107] Yet Volkhovskii's female figure also carried a shield covered with words of a distinctively radical character: 'Brothers let us love one another'; 'there are no rights without duties and no duties without rights'; 'knowledge is light and ignorance is darkness'; and (most surprisingly in view of the censorship) 'the instruments of production belong to the working people'. The tale goes on to tell how the wealth and nobility of Siberia is stolen and desecrated by those interested only in selfish material gain.

In another story—'Moi Tost' ('My Toast')—Volkhovskii again juxtaposed the mundane and the fantastic.[108] The unnamed central character makes a toast at a party to Siberia, resulting in general merriment among the listeners, who think of it simply as a freezing country that is home to an ignorant peasantry. The maker of the toast is mortified and withdraws to another room, where out of the smoke of the fire appears the form of a Siberian 'fairy', who engages him in a dialogue that convinces him that he was right to think of his homeland as a place where 'the heart of humanity beats' and where 'burns the flame of life lighting up the earth'. The hero recognises his duty to stay in

106 *Sibirskaia gazeta*, 1 (2 January 1883).
107 Zhiliakova, 'Mezhdu literaturoi i zhurnalistikoi', 342.
108 *Sibirskaia gazeta*, 6 (16 February 1883).

his homeland to help Siberia develop its distinctive identity and future. Once again—as in 'Happy New Year'—Volkhovskii portrayed Siberia not simply as an abstract geographical space but rather a place with its own distinctive spirit and potential.

Siberian motifs also loomed large in the poetry Volkhovskii wrote during his time in Tomsk. Some of his verses appeared in *Sibirskaia gazeta*, often over the telling pseudonym of 'a Siberian poet',[109] and in 1889 he published (as Ivan Brut) an edited collection *Otgoloski Sibiri* (*Echoes of Siberia*) which contained work by some twenty contributors including himself.[110] In the lengthy introduction, Volkhovskii argued that although 'Siberia has not up to this point produced a single authentic (*tsel'nyi*) poet', there already existed the 'sparks' of a new Siberian poetry. He was nevertheless concerned that the local population did not yet understand Siberia's real identity. *Echoes* was designed to show that there were already poetic voices expressing a sense of the region's distinctive self-consciousness.

Volkhovskii's own contributions to *Echoes of Siberia* were less obviously political than the verses he had written in the 1870s. He took his family every summer to a *dacha* a few miles from Tomsk—where his *sojourns* in the countryside seem to have had a considerable impact on him—giving him an opportunity to see the natural landscape up close.[111] Siberian themes figured prominently in poems like 'The Songs of a Siberian Poet', which acknowledged that although 'There are no gay Siberian tunes', there was already 'In its poetry ... great sternness / Through its verses you can / Discern its manly thoughts / And the power of its noble dreams'.[112] Other poems like 'Gorelyi les' ('The Burnt Forest') were more intimate in tone, using natural images as a backdrop to reflections on lives that were lived and sometimes lost under difficult circumstances. The same was true of 'Solovei' ('The Nightingale'), written over a period of years, which in its published form appeared to serve as an elegy to his second wife ('Dear little bird ... / You have flown

109 See, for example, *Sibirskaia gazeta*, 40 (5 October 1886).

110 Ivan Brut (ed.), *Otgoloski Sibiri. Sbornik stikhotvorenii raznykh avtorov* (Tomsk: Tip-ia Mikhailova i Makushina, 1889).

111 For Volkhovskii's request for permission to leave the city see, for example, GATO, f. 3, op. 4, del. 820 (Letter from Volkhovskii to the acting Governor, 28 May 1883).

112 Brut, *Otgoloski Sibiri*, 3–4. Like many other poems in the collection, 'The Songs of a Siberian Poet' had first appeared in *Sibirskaia gazeta*.

away from here'). A close reading of Volkhovskii's poems of the 1880s can certainly find political motifs, including one which celebrated how the opening of Tomsk University would allow 'the sun to shine with a new strength', yet there was an absence of the kind of rhetoric that characterised his poetry of the 1870s, with its focus on the awakening of the proletariat and the suffering of those imprisoned for daring to support political change. *Echoes of Siberia* was published legally, which doubtless helps to explain the moderate tone of Volkhovskii's poems, but there was also real passion in his commitment to capturing the area's distinctive landscape and character.

Some isolated political motifs can be found in a few of the children's stories that Volkhovskii published during his time in Tomsk. Six of these tales were published in 1888 in a collection that appeared under the familiar pseudonym of Ivan Brut (a number had already appeared in print before).[113] Some were retellings of traditional folktales. Others were pure literary creations. Several of the stories included in *Shest' skazok* (*Six Fairy Tales*) were fables with no apparent political overtones, such as the one describing the woes of an elderly dog rejected by its master, who conspired with a wolf to win back his place by pretending to rescue the child of the house from a lupine aggressor. Another told of the fate of a lump of clay transformed into a china cup that is smashed by a spoilt child, after they burn their lips when drinking tea, before being glued back together by a beggar woman who uses it to feed broth to her sickly granddaughter. Such stories with their familiar motifs of talking animals and sentient objects were intended above all as entertaining fables designed to articulate a wisdom that reflected ironically upon the foibles of the world.

Other stories in *Shest' skazok* had a more obviously radical tone. 'Lesnaia pomeshchitsa' ('A Forest Landowner') begins with a lyrical description of a colony of small birds that live and work in harmony on the banks of a Siberian river. This paradise of avian cooperation disintegrates when a family of crows demand that the trees they roost in should be respected as their own private domain. When fire rips

113 Ivan Brut, *Shest' skazok* (Moscow: Tipo-litografiia I. N. Kushnereva, 1888). Several stories in the collection were later translated into English and published under Volkhovskii's own name as *A China Cup and Other Stories for Children* (London: T. Unwin Fisher, 1892).

through the part of the forest where the crows live, all are burnt to death except for the mother and one of her fledglings, who linger for a while before they too die lamenting that they have been offered no help. The other birds revert to their previous life 'rejoicing as before in the whole of God's creation'. It is hard to read the story of the forest landowner—the ironic name given to the female crow who nests there—as anything other than a socialist fable. Nor is it possible to miss the radical moral of the story 'Kak petushok Krasnyi-Grebeshok za pravdu postoial' ('How Scarlet-Comb the Cock Defended Justice'), which tells how a Polish landlord who stole a grindstone from one of his serfs gets his comeuppance at the hands of a young cockerel, who pursues him for months demanding that he return the stone. The landlord in desperation eventually shoots the bird, though only manages to wound it, and the following night it pecks out one of his eyes. Realising that he will only get peace by restoring the grindstone to its rightful owner, the landlord orders it to be sent back to the village, to the delight of the young bird who has fought so hard for justice.

The story of Scarlet-Comb needs to be read against the background of a widespread Russian folklore tradition in which animals restore justice to the human world, just as 'The Forest Landlord' can be seen as a fable emphasising the dangers of selfishness, rather than a polemical tract about how private property leads to egoism and division. And it would certainly be unwise to imagine that all the tales in *Shest' skazok* were crafted primarily as radical propaganda to win over young minds. Volkhovskii later claimed that he first told the stories to his young daughter, Vera, and only published them so that they could be enjoyed by other young children.[114] The experience of writing such pieces nevertheless helped him develop his aptitude for articulating ideas of justice and fairness in a simple and accessible way.

Volkhovskii's work for *Sibirskaia gazeta* provided him with congenial duties and extra income to support his young family, but the situation in Tomsk was still difficult for all political exiles, both materially and psychologically. Volkhovskii regularly wrote to the local authorities asking for financial help to support his family.[115] He also earned money

114 Volkhovsky, *China Cup* ('The Tale About How All These Tales Came to Light').

115 See, for example, GATO, f. 3, op. 4, del. 820 (Volkhovskii to the Tomsk Governor, August 1882; Volkhovskii to the Tomsk Governor, 4 February 1883).

at various times working in a bank and at a government office (although his earnings there led to a reduction in the small amount of money he received as a political exile).[116] Volkhovskii's situation was made more fraught by continuing police surveillance which, although less onerous than at Tiukalinsk, still created considerable strain and constantly threatened to lead to a new clash with the authorities. The situation was not made any easier by the sloth and incompetence of the local bureaucracy (Volkhovskii regularly faced official obstacles, not least over his passport and residence papers, and it took him several years to obtain a formal statement that his designated place of exile was Tomsk).[117] The suicide of his old friend Aleksandr Kropotkin in 1886 appears to have been a consequence both of the stress of exile and concern about money.[118] The suicide of Volkhovskii's wife the following year reflected her irrational fear that she had become a burden to her husband and children (even though she had, in George Kennan's words, 'worked herself to death' taking up sewing to keep her family afloat).[119]

Khorzhevskaia's death left her husband with three daughters to raise alone: Sof'ia (from his first marriage to Mariia Antonova), Vera, and Katia. Volkhovskii's earnings from *Sibirkskaia gazeta* were barely enough for his family to live on, despite being supplemented by the extra income he made contributing to other newspapers including *Vostochnoe obozrenie*. The crisis came to a head in 1888 when *Sibirskaia gazeta* was closed down permanently by the authorities in Tomsk, ostensibly because of an article about the opening of the new University, although more probably because of concern both about its 'Siberian' orientation and the role played by political exiles in the paper's production.[120]

116 GATO, f. 3, op. 4, del. 820 (Report sent by Tomsk Chief of Police to the Tomsk Governor, n.d. but probably 1885 or 1886).

117 GATO, f. 3, op. 4, del. 820 (Volkhovskii to the Tomsk Governor, 19 April 1885).

118 For a report of Kropotkin's death, see *Vostochnoe obozrenie* (21 August 1886).

119 George Kennan Papers, 1856-1987, New York Public Library (Manuscripts and Archives Division), henceforth Kennan Papers (NYPL), Box 6, Folder 3, Kennan to Frost, 12 October 1887.

120 On the closure of *Sibirskaia gazeta*, see Zhiliakova, *Zhurnalistika goroda Tomska*, 157–58. Volkhovskii himself noted that the authorities were determined to reduce the number of political exiles in Tomsk following the opening of the new University there, in 1888, not least to limit their potential influence on the student body. Volkhovskii Papers (HIA), Folder 17, Box 3 ('Sketches continued'), 7. For a useful discussion about how the opening of Tomsk University became embroiled in disagreements over 'Siberianism', see N. V. Zhiliakova, '"V zashchitu

Volkhovskii wrote in desperation to the committee of the Society for the Provision of Aid to Writers and Scholars in Need, asking for financial help to ease the parlous situation of his family:

> My oldest daughter is going into the 6th class of the gymnasium and the middle one will this winter begin study there: but all the expenses mount up and I, in truth, do not know what I will do in August when I must pay for both of them not to mention clothes, books, textbooks, etc.[121]

His request does not seem to have met with any response.

The strain of exile affected even those who had, like Volkhovskii, already endured many years in solitary confinement. The visit of George Kennan to Siberia in 1885–86 was welcomed by many exiles precisely because it seemed to provide a link to the outside world. Kennan established particularly close friendships with Volkhovskii and Chudnovskii during his time in Tomsk, visiting them most days when he was in the city,[122] later writing how on his departure Volkhovskii hugged him, saying that 'in bidding you good-bye, I feel as if something were going out of my life that would never again come into it'.[123] Kennan was given a good deal of material by Volkhovskii and other members of the Tomsk exile community while in Siberia, including detailed lists of prisoners and extracts from *Sibirkskaia gazeta*,[124] which he later used when writing his articles for *Century Magazine*. He also continued to correspond fitfully with Volkhovskii after his return to the USA.[125] Kennan was anxious to persuade his readers that the political exiles he encountered in cities like Tomsk were courageous opponents of a brutal system of autocratic rule rather than

> crazy fanatics, or men whose mental processes it is difficult to understand. On the contrary, they are simple, natural, perfectly comprehensible, and often singularly interesting and attractive. One sees at once that they

umstvennogo tsentra": polemika "Sibirskogo vestnika" i "Grazhdanina" po povodu otkrytiia Imperatorskogo Tomskogo Universiteta (1888)', *Vestnik Tomskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta. Filologiia*, 17, 1 (2012), 129–39.

121 Iampol'skii, 'K bibliografii F. V. Volkhovskogo', 188.

122 Chudnovskii, *Iz davnikh let*, 262–64; George Kennan, *Siberia and the Exile System*, 2 vols (New York: The Century Co., 1891), I, 322 ff.

123 *Century Magazine*, 37, 1 (November 1988), 34.

124 For some of this material see Kennan Papers (NYPL), Box 3, esp. Folder 10.

125 See, for example, Kennan Papers (Library of Congress), Box 1, Volkhovskii to Kennan, 13 July 1887; 9 December 1888. On the problems faced by Kennan in keeping up correspondence with Siberian exiles, in part due to interception of letters, see Kennan Papers (NYPL), Kennan to Frost, Box 6, 11 October 1886.

> are educated, reasonable, self-controlled gentlemen, not different in any essential respect from one's self.[126]

Kennan may have been naïve in failing to acknowledge that many of the political exiles he met were committed to a socialism that would have been antithetical to many of his readers in Western Europe and North America (although in lectures to American audiences he acknowledged that he did not always share the 'visionary and over-sanguinary hopes and plans for the future of their country' expressed by some of them).[127] Nor did he deny that many of them supported terrorism,[128] arguing that such a tactic was simply a response to the actions of the tsarist government, while men like Volkhovskii possessed a generosity of spirit that set them apart from the 'wrong-headed fanatics of the anarchistic type with which we in the United States ha[ve] become so familiar' (Kennan doubtless had in mind the Chicago Haymarket bombings of 1886 that were widely attributed at the time to foreign-born anarchists).[129] He told one correspondent how 'I went to Siberia regarding the political exiles as a lot of mentally unbalanced ... bomb-throwers and assassins and ... when I came away from Siberia I kissed these same men good bye with my arms around them and my eyes full of tears'.[130]

The friendship between Kennan and Volkhovskii was without doubt genuine. Although it was difficult for the two men to communicate once Kennan had returned home, Volkhovskii wrote a good deal about the personal challenges he faced in the period following the death of his wife. In February 1889, he told Kennan both about the closure of *Sibirskaia gazeta* and the poor health of his youngest daughter Katia, who was 'still sick and has grown so thin that it is painful to look at her. She

126 *Century Magazine*, 37, 1 (November 1888), 34. Kennan noted in his private correspondence that he had been surprised on first meeting with political exiles that 'They are more reasonable, better-educated, less fanatical, and have far more moral character than the Nihilists I had pictured to myself'. Kennan Papers (Library of Congress), Box 6, Kennan to Smith, 16 July 1885.

127 Kennan Papers (NYPL), Box 4, Folder 6 (Notes for a lecture on 'Russian Political Exiles').

128 Stepniak noted in a letter to Kennan that the main difference between them was that Kennan thought the use of terror was 'excusable and comprehensible' whereas he thought it was 'obligatory' and 'as moral as anything can be'. Kennan Papers (Library of Congress), Box 1, Stepniak to Kennan, 23 March 1888.

129 The words are taken from the Preface to Kennan, *Siberia and the Exile System*, I, iv.

130 Kennan Papers (Library of Congress), Box 6, Kennan to Miss Dawes, 15 December 1886.

sleeps badly and often I have to be up all night taking care of her. This, together with constant fear for her life, disorders my nerves terribly, and undermines what health I have left ... It is very hard, sometimes, my dear fellow, to live in this world!' He went on to note that he was finding it impossible to earn any money through journalism ('I have sent four manuscripts to St. Petersburg, but none of them has been published').[131] The situation got worse over the following weeks. Volkhovskii had for some years taken his family to one of the villages near Tomsk each summer, to enjoy life in the Siberian countryside, and he did so once again early in the spring of 1889 in the hope that it would improve Katia's health. Things at first went well, but in early May he wrote to Kennan that

> Fate has dealt me another blow. My youngest Katie died a month or two since of pneumonia ... She was about three years old—and such a dear lovable child! But whose child is not dear and lovable?
>
> No! I can't write any more about it! This is the second time within a few days that I have tried to write you of her—but I cannot—it hurts me too much! As long as I am busy and can talk or write of other things, it seems as if the wound were healed; but let my thoughts once go to her, and I feel such grief and pain that I don't know what to do with myself.[132]

Volkhovskii's pain was doubtless made worse by the fact that he had already lost two wives and a young son. The tragedies he encountered while still in Russia were later to become part of a mythology—or perhaps a martyrology—built up by some of those who met him following his flight to Britain. Kennan himself contributed to the process by printing extracts from the letters about Katia's death in *Siberia and the Exile System* (the book published in 1891 that was based closely on his *Century Magazine* articles). Volkhovskii's correspondence was in fact as much concerned with the challenge of establishing effective communication between Siberian exiles and their sympathisers abroad as it was with more personal reflections about the hardships he faced, but Kennan was shrewd enough to realise that highlighting the story

131 The translation is that of George Kennan and is reproduced in Kennan, *Siberia and the Exile System*, I, 336. The full letter in Russian can be found in Kennan Papers (Library of Congress), Box 1.

132 Kennan, *Siberia and the Exile System*, I, 337. The full letter can again be found in Kennan Papers (Library of Congress), Box 1.

of Katia's death could dramatise the plight of all those exiled by the tsarist government, and help mobilise opposition to the tsarist regime in Western Europe and North America.[133] Yet none of this detracts from the desperate personal and financial position in which Volkhovskii found himself after the closure of *Sibirskaia gazeta*, which not only deprived him of a living, but also denied him the chance to use his talents as a writer.

Volkhovskii moved from Tomsk to Irkutsk in Eastern Siberia in the spring of 1889, a few weeks after his daughter's death. He had been offered a job there in a bank, and although the work was not particularly congenial, it did at least hold out the prospect of a salary. The town was located near Lake Baikal, and Volkhovskii welcomed the chance to see at first hand another part of Siberia (he had occasionally used the pseudonym 'Baikal Poet' when publishing his work). Irkutsk like Tomsk had a vibrant cultural life, despite being a place of exile for many, and the town was home to the newspaper *Sibir.* Volkhovskii had contributed to the paper in the past and doubtless hoped he would be able to gain some new commissions. He was not, though, able to stay in Irkutsk for long. The Governor-General, A. P. Ignat'ev, ordered that he leave the town since his presence was prejudicial to public order.

The loss of Volkhovskii's job meant that his financial future was as uncertain as ever. He decided to head for the city of Troitskosavsk (Kiakhta), on the Russian-Mongolian border, leaving his younger daughter Vera behind in Irkutsk (his older daughter Sof'ia appears to have remained in Tomsk before subsequently returning to European Russia). Volkhovskii may have headed to Troitskosavsk because it was the home of his old friend and fellow Chaikovets Nikolai Charushin, who had over the previous two years toured Siberia taking numerous photographs illuminating the area's ethnic heritage,[134] but he had almost certainly already decided to flee Russia given that he had lost any hope

133 Volkhovskii had been out of Russia for more than a year by the time *Siberia and the Exile System* was published and it seems likely that Kennan consulted him about the publication of their correspondence.

134 Volkhovskii wrote in his autobiographical notes that he had received a job offer in Irkutsk, although he struggled to get official permission to make the move, a bureaucratic obstacle that demoralised him still further and added to his eventual decision to flee Russia. See Volkhovskii Papers (HIA), Box 17, Folder 3 ('Sketches continued'), 7–8. On Charushin's photographic tours, see Eklof and Saburova, *A Generation of Revolutionaries*, 169–83.

of earning a living or expressing his views legally. In September 1889, Volkhovskii made his way to the Amur River, hoping to catch a steamer that would take him to the Pacific Ocean and a passage to North America and freedom.

Volkhovskii's flight from Siberia was an escape from oppression and poverty and grief. He had during the previous twenty years spent six years in prison and a further ten in exile. Some former members of the Chaikovskii movement followed his example in escaping abroad, including Leonid Shishko, who fled Siberia for Europe in 1890, where he worked closely with Volkhovskii in producing revolutionary literature. Other old friends like Charushin and Chudnovskii remained in Siberia, returning to European Russia a few years later, after an imperial decree provided an amnesty to many political exiles. There is no way of knowing whether Volkhovskii would have followed their example if he had been given permission to return home at a time when he was still living in Siberia. His decision to flee abroad was certainly a brave one given that he had never left Russia before. It is not clear if he had any definite plans, although his friendship with Kennan had opened his eyes to the possibility of mobilising international opinion against the tsarist regime, and he was hopeful of using his skill as a writer and propagandist abroad in ways that would be impossible in Russia. He certainly planned to meet up with his old friend once he reached America. Volkhovskii's journey was, though, to prove anything but straightforward.