



FELIKS VOLKHOVSKII
A REVOLUTIONARY LIFE

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5. Spies and Trials

The emphasis placed by Stepniak and Volkhovskii on building a broad coalition of opposition to the tsarist regime, bringing together liberals and revolutionaries both in Russia and abroad, echoed changes that were taking place in Russia itself. The former leader of the Chaikovskii circle, Marc Natanson, was instrumental in the 1893 formation of a new *Partiia narodnogo prava* (Party of Popular Rights), designed to serve as a kernel for a broad-based liberation movement.¹ While the membership was small, it attracted support from scholars and writers including the *narodnik* theorist Nikolai Mikhailovskii and the writer Vladimir Korolenko,² who urged critics of the tsarist autocracy to unite whatever their other ideological differences. The Party's manifesto published in February 1894 included such characteristically 'liberal' demands as universal suffrage, freedom of religious belief and judicial

- 1 On the Party of Popular Rights, see the dated but still excellent V. V. Shirokova, *Partiia "Narodnogo prava"*. *Iz istorii osvoboditel'nogo dvizheniia 90-kh gg. XIX veka* (Saratov: Izd-vo Saratovskogo universiteta, 1972). A shorter account in English can be found in Shmuel Galai, *The Liberation Movement in Russia, 1900–1905* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 59–65. Of great value both here and elsewhere in this chapter is G. Michael Hamburg, 'The London Emigration and the Russian Liberation Movement: The Problem of Unity, 1889–1897', *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 25, 3 (1977), 321–39.
- 2 On Mikhailovskii's role, see James H. Billington, *Mikhailovsky and Russian Populism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), 157–60. Some details of Korolenko's activities, including his trip to Britain and America in 1893, can be found in Evgeniia Taratuta, S. M. *Stepniak-Kravchinskii. Revoliutsioner i pisatel'* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1973), 481–85. See, too, Charles A. Moser, 'Korolenko and America', *Russian Review*, 28, 3 (1969), 303–14. Also see Richard Garnett, *Constance Garnett: A Heroic Life* (London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1991), 102–04. For a useful discussion of 'liberal populism', a label that can perhaps be applied to Korolenko and others grouped around the journal *Russkoe bogatstvo*, see B. P. Baluev, *Liberal'noe narodnichestvo na rubezhe XIX–XX vekov* (Moscow: Nauka, 1995); G. N. Mokshin, *Evolutsiia ideologii legal'nogo narodnichestva v poslednei treti XIX–nachale XX vv.* (Voronezh: Nauchnaia Kniga, 2010).

independence. Although it was broken up shortly afterwards, members of the Natanson circle had during the previous year started to develop links with like-minded Russian émigrés abroad. Korolenko visited Britain and America in 1893, as a kind of unofficial ambassador of the circle, meeting Stepniak and Volkhovskii in London. He also met with Egor Lazarev in Chicago (Lazarev himself soon departed for Paris, with the intention of founding a new journal there, although he was forced to move to London after coming under pressure from the French authorities).³ Although these meetings yielded little of real substance, they symbolised a willingness among at least some members of the opposition movement to work together, despite their differences, as well as the potential for building closer ties between critics of the tsarist regime both at home and abroad.

The *Okhrana* devoted considerable energy to keeping abreast of these developments. Petr Rachkovskii, as head of the Paris *agentura* (agency), recognised that a more united opposition movement could pose a powerful challenge to the Russian government. He was also intensely aware that close ties between political exiles abroad and critics of the tsarist government in Russia itself could make the threat still more menacing. Rachkovskii had been concerned about the activities of the Society of Friends of Russian Freedom and the Russian Free Press Fund from the moment they were established. He first visited London in 1891 to get a better sense of the situation there,⁴ and was concerned enough by what he saw to devote a good deal of time and effort over the following years to undermining the activities of Stepniak, Volkhovskii and others. Volkhovskii wrote in 1897 in an unpublished history of the SFRF that

throughout the [first] seven years of its existence the Society of Friends of Russian Freedom as well as the whole pro-Russian movement never ceased to be the objects of the fiercest and most unscrupulous attacks ... the most determined of these was the campaign of 1894 when articles aimed at undermining the influence of the Society and the progress of the movement were almost simultaneously smuggled into the English, French, German & Russian press ... it was just that time when several bombs which exploded in public places of Spain, France, and even England have worked up the fears of the public at large to a pitch at

3 Hamburg, 'London Emigration', 328–29.

4 Robert Henderson, *Vladimir Burtsev and the Struggle for a Free Russia* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 37.

which the commands of cool reason and the securities of liberty become endangered (*sic*) ... the faithful servants of the Tsar's irresponsible rule poured out the vilest calumnies against Stepniak, Dr Spence Watson, F. Volkhovskii and others ...⁵

The 1894 campaign mentioned by Volkhovskii was the culmination of a sustained effort by the *Okhrana* to counter the threat posed by Russian revolutionaries in London. Rachkovskii had for some years been confident that he could rely on the French authorities, and particularly the Paris Sûreté, to help contain the threat posed by Russian political exiles in France.⁶ The situation was more difficult in Britain, where public suspicion of Russia was greater. Rachkovskii requested funds from St Petersburg as early as 1890 to increase the capacity of the Paris *agentura* to monitor developments in London, since it was becoming an increasingly important centre of opposition, a suspicion confirmed by the arrival of Volkhovskii, Voinich and (early in 1891) Vladimir Burtsev. Over the next few years, he orchestrated extensive efforts to infiltrate the networks around the SFRF and the RFPF, while encouraging senior officials in St Petersburg to put pressure on the British government to follow its French counterpart in taking action to prevent Russian exiles from organising effectively.

Stepniak was for Rachkovskii the *bête noire* of the London émigrés, both for his rhetorical defence of terrorism and his assassination of General Mezentsev in St Petersburg in 1878. It was perhaps curious that the head of the Paris *agentura* did not make more of the killing when organising 'smear campaigns' against the London emigration in the early 1890s. While Stepniak's role as an assassin was well-known in revolutionary circles, many Britons and Americans who met him seemed oblivious to the idea that his rhetorical defence of terrorism reflected (in the most brutal sense of the term) 'hands-on' experience. The *New York Tribune* noted as early as February 1890 that Stepniak had killed Mezentsev,⁷ but such suggestions seem to have been widely

5 Volkhovskii Papers (HIA), Box 6, Folder 16 (Unpublished and untitled article by Volkhovskii on the history of the SFRF).

6 For a useful discussion of Rachkovskii's time in Paris, see Fredrick Zuckerman, 'Policing the Russian Emigration in Paris, 1880–1914: The Twentieth Century as the Century of Political Police', *French History and Civilisation*, 2 (2009), 218–27.

7 *New York Tribune* (2 February 1890). For attempts by George Kennan to counter the claims, which he feared could damage support for the 'cause' in North America, see RGALL, f. 1158, op. 1, ed. khr. 232, Volkhovskii to Stepniak, 12 February 1890.

discounted, or indeed simply added to Stepniak's mystique. Rachkovskii was presumably anxious, at least for a time, not to add to this aura of revolutionary glamour by making more of the murder.

The other figure in the London emigration who attracted particular attention from Rachkovskii was Vladimir Burtsev,⁸ who had previously been a member of Narodnaia volia, for which he was condemned to exile in Siberia before escaping abroad in 1888. Burtsev lived for a time in Switzerland, where he edited a short-lived journal *Svobodnaia Rossiia* (*Free Russia*), before fleeing to Constantinople. Here he boarded a British ship, under the protection of a captain who refused to surrender him to Turkish and Russian officials, on the grounds that the ship was English territory, and he—the captain—was a gentleman (Volkhovskii later organised a fund-raising campaign to buy him a silver cup).⁹ Burtsev arrived in Britain in January 1891, and was quickly spirited away from the docks by Volkhovskii, in order to shield him from the attention of tsarist informers (the two men remained on good terms in the years that followed).¹⁰ Rachkovskii was nevertheless still able to keep the Minister of the Interior P. N. Durnovo informed about Burtsev's movements (reports that were sometimes forwarded to Tsar Aleksandr III for comment).¹¹ Burtsev played an important role over the next two decades both in chronicling the history of the revolutionary movement and in unmasking tsarist *agents provocateurs* and infiltrators.¹² Why he attracted such attention from the tsarist authorities during his first few years in London is nevertheless something of a mystery. Although he subsequently published a journal in 1897 that included a piece calling for the assassination of the Tsar—an incident discussed later in this

8 On Burtsev's revolutionary career before arriving in London in early 1891, see Henderson, *Vladimir Burtsev*, 9–69. Dr Henderson's book (and the associated PhD thesis) have been invaluable in preparing this chapter.

9 *Times* (19 January 1891).

10 Volkhovskii had been receiving information about Burtsev's movements for some time before his arrival in London. See, for example, Spence Watson / Weiss Papers (Newcastle University), SW 1/19/1, Volkhovskii to Spence Watson, 2 January (1891). For an example of later correspondence between Volkhovskii and Burtsev see, for example, Volkhovskii Papers (HIA), Box 1, Folder 12, Burtsev to Volkhovskii, 10 December 1894.

11 Hamburg, 'London Emigration', *passim*.

12 On Burtsev's place in the emigration, see David Saunders, 'Vladimir Burtsev and the Russian Revolutionary Emigration (1888–1905)', *European History Quarterly*, 13, 1 (1983), 39–62.

chapter—he was during the first half of the 1890s generally in favour of building a broad opposition movement rather than reviving the terrorist strategy of Narodnaia volia. It may be that it was precisely this prospect that concerned Rachkovskii.

Rachkovskii did not at first consider Volkhovskii to pose such a threat as Stepniak or Burtsev. Volkhovskii was himself in exile when Narodnaia volia assassinated Aleksandr II in 1881, and took no part in the conspiracy, although it was noted in a previous chapter that he would probably have become an active supporter if he had remained at liberty. There is certainly no evidence to suggest that he disagreed with Stepniak's view that the terrorists who killed Aleksandr II had been inspired by anything other than the highest ethical motives. And, in pamphlets such as *Chemu uchit 'Konstitutsiia gr. Loris-Melikova?'*, Volkhovskii strongly implied that violence was likely to be needed to extract political concessions from the tsarist government. Rachkovskii, at least for a time, underestimated Volkhovskii's role in the London emigration.

The novelist Ford Maddox Ford, who had good links with the Russian colony in London in the two decades before the First World War, wrote in his memoirs how during this time:

The fact England was the international refuge for all exiles was not agreeable to the Russian police who filled the country with an incredible number of spies. There must have been at least one for every political exile and the annoyance they caused in the country was extreme. I remember between 1893 and 1894 going home for longish periods almost every night from London University to a western suburb with Stepniak, Volkhofsky or Prince Kropotkin who were then the most prominent members of the Russian extreme left and who were lecturing at the University on political economy, Russian literature and, I think, biology respectively. And behind us always lurked or dodged the Russian spies allotted to each of these distinguished lecturers. Them Stepniak or Volkhofsky dismissed at Hammersmith Station, as often as not with the price of a pint, for the poor devils were miserably paid, and also because, the spies and their purpose being perfectly well known in the district where the Russians lived they were apt to receive very rough handling from the residents who resented their presence as an insult to the country. One or two quite considerable riots were thus caused in the neighbourhoods of Hammersmith proper and Ealing.¹³

13 Ford Maddox Ford, *Return to Yesterday* (London: Victor Gollanz, 1931), 133–34.

Ford's recollections may have owed as much to imagination as to reality. The idea that London was full of Russian spies was a common perception at the time.¹⁴ In reality, though, the number of 'spies'—whether *Okhrana* informants or retired British police officers paid to keep Russian émigrés under surveillance—was never very large in the years before 1914.¹⁵ But nor were Ford's recollections altogether false. Rachkovskii was anxious to monitor the Russian émigré colony in London, employing agents to report on the activities of those involved in running *Free Russia* and the Russian Free Press Fund, with the result that by the end of the nineteenth century the cost of operations in Britain was consuming a very significant part of the budget of the *Okhrana's* Foreign Agency.¹⁶

Rachkovskii's principal agent in London was a Frenchman, Edgar Farce, who had previously worked for the Paris *agentura* before moving to the British capital in the late 1880s.¹⁷ Although the detail in his reports was quite limited, consisting of little more than descriptions of the comings and goings of members of the Russian community, leavened with French translations of articles in *Free Russia*, his letters to Rachkovskii still provided useful information. They also give an interesting insight into the importance Farce attached to the various members of the émigré community, given that he only had the resources to organise surveillance of a small number of them at any one time (Farce carried out some surveillance in person although he also paid a small number of informants). Volkhovskii figures as much as any other Russian in the reports Farce sent to Paris in the first half of the 1890s (his name

14 See, for example, the report by the Vienna correspondent in the *Times* (3 January 1891).

15 On the operations of the Paris *agentura* and its various branches across Europe see, V. K. Agafonov, *Zagranichnaia okhranka* (Petrograd: Kniga, 1918); V. S. Brachev, *Zagranichnaia agentura departamenta politzii (1883–1917)* (St Petersburg: Stomma, 2001); Richard J. Johnson, 'Zagranichnaia Agentura: The Tsarist Political Police in Europe', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 7, 1 (1972), 221–42; Charles A. Ruud and Sergei A. Stepanov, *Fontanka 16: The Tsar's Secret Police* (Montreal: McGill-Queens's University Press, 1999), 79–100; Frederic Zuckerman, *The Tsarist Police Abroad* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003). Some sense of the number of agents employed in Western Europe can be found in S. V. Deviatov et al. (eds), *Terrorizm v Rossii v nachale XX v., Istoricheskii vestnik*, 149 (Moscow: Runivers, 2012), 179–88. The list is very incomplete.

16 For useful discussions of expenditure by the *Okhrana* abroad, see Agafonov, *Zagranichnaia okhranka*, 28–54 (in particular the summary chart on 53–54).

17 On Farce, see Robert Henderson, *The Spark That Lit the Revolution. Lenin in London and the Politics That Changed the World* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2020), 118–20.

occurs with about the same frequency as Voinich and Burtsev and more regularly than Stepniak's). The fact that Rachkovskii does not seem to have queried Farce's *modus operandi* suggests that both men recognised that Stepniak was, for all his charisma and popularity, seldom the central figure in the work of *Free Russia* and the Free Press Fund.

Farce occasionally got access to letters dispatched by members of the émigré community, apparently through subterfuge rather than perustration,¹⁸ although he does not seem to have made much sustained attempt to develop personal relations with Russian exiles in London. Many of his reports contained accounts of Volkhovskii's movements, in particular his meetings with Voinich and other fundists, as well as descriptions of his research at the British Museum Library.¹⁹ Farce also followed members of the fund transporting boxes of publications to the East End, presumably destined for Russia, although the Frenchman was not certain.²⁰ He heard early on about the growing tension between Voinich and the other fundists (his reports rightly suggested that the break may not have been as definite as sometimes assumed).²¹ Farce tried valiantly to keep up with the movements of the most prominent fundists, regularly providing detailed lists of names and addresses, and periodically reported on rumours of bomb plots, but without providing any evidence that his 'marks' were involved in such activities.

Farce did not always understand the significance of what was taking place in front of him, not least because Rachkovskii regularly failed to provide him with relevant information. When Farce noted towards the end of 1894 that a certain Lev Beitner had arrived in London, where he spent much of his time with his 'great friend' Burtsev,²² Rachkovskii apparently neglected to tell him that Beitner was an *Okhrana* informant

18 See, for example, Okhrana archive (HIA), Index IIb, Folder 2, Farce to Rachkovskii, 25 October 1895 (microfilm 13).

19 Okhrana Archive (HIA), Index IIb, Folder 2, Farce to Rachkovskii, 18 June 1894 (microfilm 13). See, too, Colin Higgins, 'The Guttural Sorrow of the Refugees—Constance Garnett and Felix Volkhovsky in the British Museum', *Materialy X Mezhdunarodnogo seminara perevodchikov* (2016), www.repository.cam.ac.uk/handle/1810/252929bb.

20 Okhrana Archive (HIA), Index IIb, Folder 2, Farce to Rachkovskii, 18 June 1895 (microfilm 13).

21 Okhrana Archive (HIA), Index IIb, Folder 2, Farce to Rachkovskii, 29 January 1895 (microfilm 13).

22 Okhrana Archive (HIA), Index IIb, Folder 2, Farce to Rachkovskii, 8 November 1894 (microfilm 13).

paid to report on Burtsev. Yet Farce's reports show that he did have some insight into the networks that shaped the activities of the Russian Free Press Fund. He knew that Volkhovskii and Voinich were the key figures involved in the practical business of producing and distributing the Fund's publications (at least before Voinich stood down from his role). Farce also recognised the important part played by Lazarev during his time in London, in 1894–96, although he does not seem to have obtained copies of the voluminous correspondence Lazarev maintained with Russian exiles across Europe, which provided much of the material that appeared in *Letuchie listki*. Stepniak and Chaikovskii were more detached from day-to-day operations (although Chaikovskii became increasingly active after Lazarev's departure for Switzerland). Farce's reports also show how Russian émigrés who came and went across the channel provided a critical link between the London emigration and its counterparts in Western Europe. The transnational character of the Russian revolutionary emigration was also well-known to Special Branch, including Inspector Melville, who had himself spent much of his early career in France monitoring the movement of political radicals to and from Britain.²³

Rachkovskii claimed as early as 1891 that he had 'complete control' of the situation in London, in part through the recruitment of an informer with access to the inner workings of the SFRF.²⁴ It seems unlikely this was true. Efforts were made in 1892 to use an eccentric Pole named Boleslaw Maliankewicz to infiltrate the Society, but he proved desperately unreliable, sending back implausible reports that the mild-mannered William Morris had made a series of blood-curdling suggestions at one of its meetings.²⁵ Lev Beitner was subsequently more successful, establishing friendly relations with Volkhovskii and other émigrés active in the SFRF and the RFPF,²⁶ but his reports too seem to

23 Andrew Cook, *M. MI5's First Spymaster* (London: Tempus, 2004), 47–57. For a discussion of the development of Special Branch including the monitoring of subversives both foreign and domestic, see Bernard Porter, *The Origins of the Vigilant State: The London Metropolitan Police Special Branch before the First World War* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1987). See, too, Ray Wilson, *Special Branch: A History* (London: Biteback Publishing, 2015), Chapter 2.

24 Henderson, *Vladimir Burtsev*, 37.

25 Henderson, *Vladimir Burtsev*, 57.

26 Some insight into the seemingly cordial relationship between the two men can be gleaned from the material in Volkhovskii Papers (Houghton Library), MS Russ 51,

have contained little of real value. Nor was the Russian government at first any more successful when trying to use formal diplomatic channels to persuade its British counterpart to take a robust line towards Russian exiles in London. Early in 1892, the Russian ambassador in London, Baron E. E. Staal, complained to the British Foreign Office that:

The number of Russian revolutionaries and nihilists based in England, which was already considerable, has acquired, during these past years, a number of recruits expelled from Switzerland, France and elsewhere. The activities of this emigration, under the aegis of the 'right of asylum' have grown in intensity and are currently conducted by such coryphees of terrorist revolution as Prince Kropotkin, Chaikovskii, Kravchinskii (the assassin of General Mezentsev, known under the name of Stepniak), Felix Volkhovskii, Vladimir Burtsev, Michel Voinich (Kelchevskii), Michel-Moise Harmidor (Baranov), Hesper Serebriakov, Stanislaw Mendelssohn and his wife Marie, Aleksandr Lavrenius and many others besides.²⁷

The Memorandum went on to complain about the publication of 'the grossest calumnies' against the Russian government in *Free Russia*, as well as Stepniak's pamphlet *Chego nam nuzhno?*, which defended 'military plots ... bombs, dynamite'. The British Foreign Secretary (and Prime Minister) Lord Salisbury was not unsympathetic, although he knew it would be almost impossible to secure a conviction without evidence of definite wrongdoing, a bland response that predictably caused frustration in the Russian capital, cementing a view that English judges under the guise of defending the 'ancient traditions of asylum' were really nit-picking and pedantic.²⁸ Rachkovskii in Paris fumed with frustration.

The campaign orchestrated against the London emigration referred to by Volkhovskii in his history of the SFRF, which erupted at the start

Folder 190, Beitner to Volkhovskii (various dates).

27 I am indebted to the research of Dr Robert Henderson who located the original version of the Memorandum, a copy of which can be found in The National Archives Kew (henceforth TNA), FO 65/1429. The translation given here is that of Dr Henderson in his 'Vladimir Burtsev and the Russian Revolutionary Emigration: Surveillance of Foreign Political Refugees in London, 1991–1905' (PhD thesis, Queen Mary College University of London, 2008), 98.

28 See, too, the untitled document in the Okhrana Archive (HIA), Index Vc, Folder 1 (microfilm 69), which appears to cover much the same ground as Staal's memorandum, although the language is not identical.

of 1894, marked a new phase in the efforts of the Russian authorities to control what they saw as a significant threat. In January 1894, the *New Review* published an article on 'Anarchists: Their Methods and Organisation' (the timing was probably a response to the start of George Kennan's high-profile lecture tour of England in early January).²⁹ The first part of the article, by 'Z', attacked foreign anarchists who had flocked to Britain over the previous few years as 'unscrupulous agents of the new terror', and 'expert swindlers' of 'the worst character', who espoused political ends to mask their own criminality. The second part, by 'Ivanoff', focused more closely on the Russian 'nihilists' in London, using a language that echoed the Memorandum handed to the Foreign Office two years earlier. It challenged the idea that the 'nihilists' were people of honour and integrity, in the tradition of Kossuth and Mazzini, instead conflating them with the anarchists so roundly condemned by Z. Ivanoff argued that no self-respecting Briton should associate with men and women whose sole object was to use violence ('dynamite') to overthrow 'human civilization'.³⁰

Although Ivanoff did not refer to Stepniak by name, he made no effort to conceal the principal object of his attack. He condemned 'Stepniak' for his 'grandiloquent but empty verbosity' and 'shallow theories of free love', but above all for his brutal murder of Mezentsev ('the murderer, sneaking on tip-toe, assaulted the General, plunging the kitchen-knife into his abdomen' before repeatedly twisting round the knife in 'the open wound'). Volkhovskii as deputy editor of *Free Russia* was second only to Stepniak as a target. Ivanoff described how Volkhovskii toured the country giving 'highly-coloured' accounts of his time in Russian prisons to attract financial contributions from the citizens of cities like Leicester and London. He also deplored the way in which politicians 'sing his praises' and presented his experiences as evidence of the brutality of the Russian government. The unobvious theme of Ivanoff's polemic was that British supporters of the 'nihilists' had been unwittingly duped by Russian exiles in London, who were working to promote violent revolution, while hiding their true intentions behind a veneer of moderation. The dramatic explosion of a bomb in

29 For a report of Kennan's first lecture, see *Times* (9 January 1894).

30 Z and Ivanoff, 'Anarchists: Their Methods and Organisation', *The New Review*, 10, 56 (January 1894), 1-16.

Greenwich Park, a few weeks after the article appeared, can only have helped to bolster Ivanoff's case, even though the only fatality was the French anarchist carrying the device.³¹

Ivanoff was almost certainly a pseudonym for Rachkovskii (who had down the years acquired great experience writing such pieces for the French press). The article may have been drafted some time before, perhaps in 1892, but could not at that stage find a publisher. The identity of Z is unclear, but may have been Inspector Melville, who worked closely with Rachkovskii over the following years in harassing Russian revolutionaries in London. Melville later recalled that Rachkovskii was 'a very hospitable man and a genial character' who 'always called upon me at New Scotland Yard'. He noted the Russian employed several agents in London, 'ostensibly to look after the Nihilists', and was accompanied by many more whenever he visited the British capital in person. Melville was nevertheless 'somewhat suspicious of [Rachkovskii]' although 'without exactly knowing why'.³² Even so, the two men cooperated closely throughout the 1890s, and although Rachkovskii never obtained the same influence with the British police that he had in Paris, he was undoubtedly successful both in countering the influence of *Free Russia* and the SFRF as well as disrupting the activities of the Free Press Fund.

Ivanoff's article predictably attracted a vigorous response from members of the London emigration and their supporters (*Letuchie listki* published a translation of a detailed rebuttal by Spence Watson).³³ Stepniak penned a long piece in the following month's *New Review* in the form of a piece titled 'Nihilism as It Is', noting that Ivanoff's article had almost certainly been 'fathered by the Russian police' in order to damage the reputation of the émigrés grouped around *Free Russia* and the SFRF. He argued that anarchism had almost no presence as an ideology in the Russian revolutionary movement, which was largely though not entirely true, and added that the principal focus of 'the Russian people' was on

31 For reports about the Greenwich Park bomb and growing concern about foreign anarchists in London see, for example, *Daily Telegraph* (17 February 1894; 27 February 1894); *Times* (17 February 1894); *Freeman's Journal* (17 February 1894); *Globe* (16 February 1894). It was of course the Greenwich Park bomb incident that provided the inspiration for Joseph Conrad's 1907 novel *The Secret Agent*.

32 TNA, KV 1/8 (Memoir by William Melville), 15.

33 Robert Spence Watson, 'Grianul', grom, da ne iz tuchi', *Letuchie listki*, 3 (23 March 1894). The piece was presumably translated by Volkhovskii.

the struggle 'to obtain a Constitutional government'. He dismissed as 'moonshine' the idea that Russians involved in the SFRF and the Free Press Fund were involved in dynamite plots. He also seemed to dismiss, though in rather guarded terms, the charge that he had been involved in the Mezentsev murder, suggesting that if 'unimpeachable evidences' existed then the Russian government should arrange for him to be arraigned before an English court. He ended by noting that Ivanoff's accusations would 'never injure my reputation in the eyes of sensible people'.³⁴

Despite this robust response, there was a certain amount of substance in the attacks by Z and Ivanoff, while Stepniak's claim that the Russian revolutionary movement was focused above all on constitutional reform was at best misleading. The furore certainly had an impact on the way that the SFRF and Russian exiles were viewed in Britain over the following year.³⁵ A number of papers reproduced extracts from Stepniak's 'Nihilism as It Is', noting his rebuttal of Ivanoff's charges, but typically without much comment.³⁶ Even papers that were generally supportive of the 'cause', like the *Daily News*, were conspicuously quiet in their response. A Liberal government headed by Gladstone had been returned in the General Election that took place in the summer of 1892, which may explain why Rachkovskii for a time refrained from launching such a public diatribe against the London emigration, hoping that the Russian government could use diplomatic pressure to encourage its British counterpart to take a tougher line against Stepniak, Volkhovskii and others. The publication of 'Anarchists: Their Methods and Organisation' certainly raised concern within the government. Several Liberal MPs withdrew from the General Committee of the SFRF, possibly under pressure from Gladstone himself, so as to distance themselves from the controversy. The articles by Z and Ivanoff inevitably raised concern about whether support for the 'cause' was appropriate for members of the political establishment.

34 S. Stepniak, 'Nihilism as It Is (A Reply)', *The New Review*, 10, 57 (February 1894), 215–22.

35 See, for example, *Beverley and East Riding Recorder* (3 February 1894); *Glasgow Herald* (6 December 1894); *Wells Journal* (4 January 1894).

36 See, for example, *Globe* (2 February 1894).

Ivanoff's article also helped to illuminate the ambiguous attitude of many British supporters of the 'cause' towards the use of force to bring about change in Russia. Stepniak and Volkhovskii had for some years engaged in a kind of semi-conscious self-fashioning, which allowed them to 'fit in' with the *mores* of late Victorian society, even as they simultaneously embodied an alien culture that intrigued so many Britons caught up in the Russian craze.³⁷ Ivanoff's article undoubtedly came as a shock to those, such as Olive Garnett, who had lionised Stepniak (she described the article in her diary as 'a clever mixture of truth unfavourably represented & falsehood in the guise of truth').³⁸ Like many others, Olive struggled to reconcile 'her' Stepniak with the murderer who twisted the knife round and round in Mezentsev's stomach (although both she and her sister-in-law Constance Garnett agreed that, while they condemned Stepniak's act, they retained 'implicit confidence' in him).³⁹ Nor was she alone in being more comfortable with abstract justifications of terrorism than the grisly reality of murder and violence. Many members of the SFRF—particularly those from a nonconformist background—had always been concerned about the issue. There is no firm evidence that publication of 'Anarchists: Their Methods and Organisation' led to a drop in membership of the SFRF or a decline in subscriptions to *Free Russia*. It did nevertheless raise questions that Stepniak and Volkhovskii had for some years carefully tried to keep unasked. Constance Garnett noted in the middle of 1894 that her publisher had refused to include a Preface by Stepniak to her translation of Turgenev's *Rudin* given the recent revelations about his earlier life.⁴⁰ A few months earlier, when Volkhovskii was due to speak

37 For the classic discussion of 'self-fashioning' and the malleability of self in the context of Renaissance England, see Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1984).

38 Barry C. Johnson (ed.), *Olive and Stepniak. The Bloomsbury Diary of Olive Garnett, 1893–95* (Birmingham: Bartlett's Press, 1993), 19. The entry is headed 29 December 1893—the edition of *The New Review* containing the article by Ivanoff was published just before the New Year. Volkhovskii first heard about the appearance of the article from Olive.

39 Richard Garnett, *Constance Garnett*, 114.

40 Garnett Papers (Northwestern University), Box 11, Folder 2, Constance Garnett to Richard Garnett, 18 June 1894.

at Oxford at the height of the Ivanoff controversy, a friend warned him that even among supporters 'the Anarchist scare is on their minds'.⁴¹

Although Stepniak did not 'go to ground' in the last two years of his life, he appeared far less than before in public, and contributed fewer articles to the press. While the reasons are not altogether clear, Ivanoff's diatribe certainly compromised his effectiveness as the public face of the 'cause', even if some newspapers believed that he had enjoyed the 'best of the argument' in the polemical struggle with the authors of 'Anarchists: Their Methods and Organisation'.⁴² Volkhovskii increasingly took the lead throughout 1894 in the public campaign against the Russian government. Two weeks after the *New Review* article first appeared, he addressed a large audience in Piccadilly, at which he dismissed talk of 'the daggers and bombs of the Nihilist' as 'an old song'. He also repeated the familiar argument that there was no moral equivalence between the architects of 'a Barcelona outrage'—a reference to the bombs thrown by anarchists in the city's opera house a few weeks earlier—and the use of violence by 'a Russian *intelligent* to who[m] all other expressions of dissent were denied'.⁴³

Volkhovskii also shaped the response of *Free Russia* to the new landscape created by Ivanoff. In February 1894, he contributed a lengthy piece arguing that attacks on the SFRF in Russian newspapers, including *Moskovskie vedomosti* (*Moscow News*), were evidence that the Russian government was feeling threatened. He also poured scorn on the idea that members of the Society were closet anarchists hoping to overthrow society.⁴⁴ The following month, he wrote a piece attacking an article in *Novoe vremia* (*New Times*) that called for greater international action against anarchists, and rejected the charge that members of the London emigration could spend money raised by the SFRF as they wished (an accusation that carried the clear implication that funds were used to support violent activity).⁴⁵ And then, in May 1894, Volkhovskii published the first part of a long article on *The Claims of the Russian Liberals*, which was designed to persuade its British and American

41 Volkhovskii Papers (HIA), Box 18, Folder 6, Charlotte Sidgwick to Volkhovskii, 22 February 1894.

42 *Liverpool Mercury* (30 January 1894).

43 *Pall Mall Gazette* (29 January 1894).

44 F. Volkhovskii, 'A Beneficial Attack', *Free Russia* (1 February 1894).

45 F. Volkhovskii, 'Belligerent Impotence', *Free Russia* (1 March 1894).

readers that the autocratic government in St Petersburg would never willingly make political concessions.⁴⁶

Volkhovskii argued in *Claims* that liberal members of the various *zemstva* (provincial assemblies) in Russia had given up hopes of bringing about political change, since their appeals were always ignored by the government, with the result that those who hold 'the landed property of the Empire' and 'to a large extent the different branches of manufacture and trade look with great dissatisfaction upon the present arbitrary Russian rule'. He went on to suggest that 'The peaceful elements of society, after having kept for years loyal to the fantastic idea of replacing the present arbitrary mode of government by a representative one while at the same time remaining loyal to the autocracy, came finally to the conclusion that the present autocratic Russian Government would never give up its unnatural prerogatives' unless forced to do so. Volkhovskii was in some ways echoing the line he had taken in his earlier pamphlet on the planned Loris-Melikov reforms, although he was more cautious about suggesting to his English-language readers that the tsarist government would only offer reform in response to the threat of revolution, instead writing more vaguely about 'the pressure of popular wishes'. *Claims of the Russian Liberals* was designed to persuade its readers in Western Europe and North America—*contra* Ivanoff—that opposition to the tsarist government was not confined to 'a small number of troublesome people full of perverted ideas'. Volkhovskii instead wanted his readers to understand that the sharp binary between anarchist and loyal subject, implicit in the pieces by both Z and Ivanoff, did not exist in Russia, and that a broad opposition was emerging there in response to the government's consistent refusal to offer any kind of reform. He concluded with an optimistic suggestion that the recent appearance of the Party of Popular Rights showed how public opinion 'is no longer a myth. History cannot be stopped, and it is not impossible that even our generation will see yet great political changes in Russia'.

46 The first part of the article by Volkhovskii, 'The Political Claims of the Russian Liberals', appeared in *Free Russia*, 1 May 1894, and continued in the following two numbers. He subsequently reprinted his articles with slight changes in a pamphlet that appeared in *Nihilism as It Is. Being Stepniak's Pamphlets Translated by E. E. Voynich, and Felix Volkhovskiy's 'Claims of the Russian Liberals' with an Introduction by Dr R. Spence Watson* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1894). The quotations in the following paragraph are taken from the pamphlet.

Claims of the Russian Liberals was published in book form in the autumn of 1894 along with other material, including Stepniak's *Nihilism as It Is*, and a translation of the letter sent by Narodnaia volia to Aleksandr III after the assassination of his father offering to end violence in return for political concessions. The collection was designed, in the words of Spence Watson, who wrote the Introduction, to introduce the 'reader ... to the inner life of the so-called, and mis-called, Nihilists'. He went on to suggest, both inaccurately and naively, that the various pieces taken together showed how:

the fundamental objects of all Russian Revolutionists (however they may call themselves or be called by others) are the same; that their struggle is for freedom, national and personal; and they forcibly urge the necessity of laying aside all matters which are not absolutely essential, and of working closely and unitedly together for those fundamental objects which all alike hold dear.⁴⁷

The response in the British press was less than overwhelming. While many newspapers and journals noted that they had received a copy of *Nihilism as It Is*, few went on to print reviews, evidence perhaps that the recent attacks by Z and Ivanoff had hit home. One of the reviews that did appear, in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, questioned how Stepniak could 'with an easy conscience, recommend the sort of bomb-throwing, palace-hoisting, train-wrecking which may kill or maim dozens of innocent persons, as well as the one whose death is intended'.⁴⁸ It was a telling statement at a time when fears about anarchist violence were on the rise in Britain. Newspapers and journals were becoming more cautious about eulogising Russian revolutionaries as the innocent victims of tsarist oppression.

Volkhovskii continued to use *Free Russia* to try to convince readers that support for political reform was growing in Russia. At the end of 1894, he wrote a piece telling readers about a proposal for a new constitution that had recently been received in London, based on the principle of limited hereditary monarchy and the development of new local and national assemblies with the power to approve legislation.⁴⁹

47 *Nihilism as It Is*, ix.

48 *Pall Mall Gazette* (8 February 1895).

49 F. Volkhovskii, 'A Constitution for Russia', *Free Russia* (1 November 1894). The full document can be found in *Letuchie listki*, 11 (Prilozhenie) (31 October 1894).

The document was drafted by a prominent Russian jurist and distributed covertly in Moscow and St Petersburg. While Volkhovskii had some doubts about elements of the proposed constitution—not least because he was a convinced Republican—he believed that its appearance was ‘an event of great political importance’ (the Free Press Fund printed 3,000 copies for distribution back to Russia). Rachkovskii in Paris agreed, from a very different perspective, warning his superiors in Petersburg that the proposal was evidence of a growing movement to seek political reform through ‘broad-based social activism’.⁵⁰

At the time Volkhovskii wrote his piece for *Free Russia*, he could not know that the unexpected death of Aleksandr III a few weeks later at the age of forty-nine, from kidney disease, would raise the whole question of the role of representative bodies in the life of the Empire. He spent the last few weeks of 1894 lecturing up and down Britain, hoping to counter the lingering damage caused by Ivanoff,⁵¹ but was perturbed to find that many in the audience believed that the new Tsar Nicholas II would soon address the kind of abuses routinely highlighted by *Free Russia*. Similar sentiments were expressed by several newspapers. In January 1895, Volkhovskii warned that the British press was attributing to the new Tsar intentions that ‘were really only their own wishes’.⁵² He repeated the caution in a short speech introducing Egor Lazarev at a meeting in Oxford. It was therefore no surprise to Volkhovskii when Nicholas II, at a meeting with representatives from the *zemstva*, dismissed any thoughts of convening some form of National Assembly as ‘senseless dreams’. The incident seemed to confirm his argument in *Claims of the Russian Liberals* that the tsarist government would not make even the most modest of political concessions unless forced to do so. The following month, *Free Russia* printed an article by Stepniak roundly declaring that ‘the whole nation cannot take the path leading to mental suicide; the gauntlet thrown down by the Tzar will be taken up. He wants war; there will be war. But by whom, and how will it be

50 Hamburg, ‘London Emigration’, 330.

51 See, for example, the reports of meetings in Derby and Clitheroe in *Derby Daily Telegraph* (16 November 1894); *Preston Herald* (15 December 1894).

52 F. Volkhovsky, ‘The Dangers of the Present Attitude of the Press’, *Free Russia* (1 January 1895).

carried on? The Tzar has challenged—not the revolutionists alone—but the whole of Russian society'.⁵³

Volkhovskii used the pages of *Letuchie listki* to support calls for a national assembly, printing a copy of an Open Letter to Nicholas II that was circulating in Russia, which argued that such a proposal was not designed to destroy the government but rather prevent it from 'digging its own grave'.⁵⁴ Other documents reproduced in the *listki* included a call for an end to censorship. In an editorial 'The Next Step', which appeared in May 1895, Volkhovskii called for the creation of a new publication that would bring together the whole Russian opposition 'from the most moderate to the most extreme' ('ot samoi umerennoi do samoi krainei').⁵⁵ The proposal attracted support from some liberals and liberal-minded *narodniki* back in Russia, and by the summer the idea had been floated that the *listki* could itself become such an organ, although the prospect caused some tensions within the London emigration (developments that were followed with care by Rachkovskii in Paris).⁵⁶ A number of Russian moderates, including the writer Petr Boborykin, visited London in the second half of 1895 to discuss plans. The substance of the discussions is not altogether clear, but it seems that an agreement was reached by the start of December to produce a new journal that would replace *Letuchie listki* and articulate a definite constitutional-liberal position, although probably with some *narodnik* overtones. Liberals in Russia would provide the necessary funds. Some of the fundists, particularly Chaikovskii, were anxious that associating themselves with a new publication focused on political reform could limit their ability to pursue more radical objectives. It was therefore agreed that the Fund should retain the freedom to decide what else it published and that the alliance with Russian liberals and liberal populists would come to an end once constitutional reform had been achieved.

53 S. Stepniak, 'The Tzar's Speech', *Free Russia* (1 March 1895).

54 Details of the address by the Tver *zemstvo* appeared in *Letuchie listki*, 15 (9 February 1895). The 'Otkrytoe pis'mo Nikolaiu II' was printed in *Letuchie listki*, 16 (20 February 1895). A copy can be found in Volkhovskii Papers (Houghton Library), MS Russ 51, Folder 110. For further details about the Open Letter, which was drafted by Petr Struve, see Galai, *Liberation Movement*, 27.

55 F. Volkhovskii, 'Sleduiushchii shag', *Letuchie listki*, 20 (20 May 1895).

56 For some brief comments on the plan for a new journal, see V. L. Burtsev, *Bor'ba za svobodnuuiu Rossiiu. Moi vospominaniia* (Moscow: Direct Media, 2014), 95–96. See, too, Hamburg, 'London Emigration', esp. 332–33.

Stepniak was not for the most part a central figure in these developments.⁵⁷ Lazarev had by contrast taken an increasingly prominent role in shaping the Fund's strategy since his arrival in London from the USA in 1894 (a move that the government in Petersburg believed was itself part of a strategy to unify the Russian revolutionary movement in Western Europe).⁵⁸ Chaikovskii was also involved in the discussions. Volkhovskii's role was pivotal both in terms of initiating the idea for a new journal and discussing it with visitors from Russia. He was also intended to act as *de facto* editor, although Stepniak would have the formal role, replicating the situation at *Free Russia*.⁵⁹ The new journal was to be called *Zemskii sobor* (*Assembly of the Land*), the name of the assembly that met in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which had by the nineteenth century become a symbol in some quarters of the principle that Russian society should be consulted by the government on all important matters.⁶⁰ The readiness of the London emigration to accept such a title at first glance seemed to represent a concession to 'liberalism', or indeed Slavophilism, but the notion of the Land as the authentic voice of the people also had clear affinities to the radical *narodnik* tradition. The term *Zemskii sobor* was fluid enough to appeal to revolutionaries and liberals alike as the title of a publication designed to bring together different strands of opinion behind a programme of political reform.

The new journal never appeared. On 23 December 1895, Stepniak was on his way to Volkhovskii's home in west London to discuss final plans for launching *Zemskii sobor*, when he was run down by a train

57 Taratuta, *Stepniak-Kravchinskii*, rather evades the issue of Stepniak's changing views and his position in the London emigration in the year before his death, and says surprisingly little about many of the issues surrounding the possible publication of a new journal.

58 For a remarkably perceptive if not entirely accurate analysis of developments by a senior official in a memorandum for Aleksandr III, see P. N. Durnovo, 'Aleksandr III i russkie emigranty', *Byloe*, 7 (1918), 198–203. For a different view of Lazarev's role, see Donald Senese, *S. M. Stepniak-Kravchinskii: The London Years* (Newtonville, MA: Oriental Research Partners, 1987), 81–82.

59 Hamburg, 'London Emigration', 333.

60 For a useful discussion, see Ivan Sablin and Kuzma Kukushkin, 'The Assembly of the Land (*Zemskii Sobor*). Historiographies and Mythologies of a Russian "Parliament"', in Ivan Sablin and Egor Moniz Bandeira (eds), *Planting Parliaments in Eurasia, 1850-1950: Concepts, Practices and Mythologies* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2021), 103–49.

and died instantly. The official verdict was one of accidental death. York Powell, Regius Professor of Modern History at Oxford, told the Coroner's Court that Stepniak had been in good spirits when he met him a couple of days earlier. Chaikovskii said there had been other 'near misses' at the same crossing before. Much was made of the fact that the deceased had his head buried in a book as he walked across the track.⁶¹ Private correspondence suggests that some of those who knew Stepniak thought that it might have been a case of suicide.⁶² Stepniak had found the previous two years difficult, not least because of the poor state of his marriage, while the attack by Ivanoff had undermined his reputation among many in Britain. Yet his death was not without serious consequences for the London emigration. It removed from the scene a man whose reputation and charisma had for some years glued together individuals with a range of temperaments and ideologies while raising the profile of the fundists in the wider revolutionary movement.

Hundreds of people followed Stepniak's funeral cortege to Waterloo Station from where his body was taken thirty miles south-west to Woking Crematorium. Volkhovskii organised the funeral arrangements. The speakers at the funeral who spoke about Stepniak's life reflected both his Europe-wide reputation and the increasingly transnational nature of the European revolutionary movement: Kropotkin, Malatesta, Edward Bernstein, Eleanor Marx, Keir Hardie, William Morris.⁶³ The *Times* noted two days later that the funeral had provided a strange meeting place for 'Socialists, Nihilists, Anarchists, and outlaws of every country'.⁶⁴ Stepniak's death also caused enormous dismay among his English admirers. *Free Russia* carried many eulogies. Spence Watson praised Stepniak as 'strong, true, single-minded, earnest for the truth wherever it may lead'. Volkhovskii echoed these sentiments and boldly addressed the question of terrorism, repeating the familiar trope that while the use of terror might seem shocking to British people, it had

61 *Times* (27 December 1895).

62 See, for example, Volkhovskii Papers (Houghton Library), MS Russ 51, Folder 362, Spence-Watson to Volkhovskii, 14 January 1896.

63 A detailed description of the circumstances surrounding the death and funeral of Stepniak can be found in Egor Lazarev, 'Smert' S.M. Kravchinskago Stepniaka', *Letuchie listki*, 28 (18 January 1896). Some sense of the response to Stepniak's death can also be found in the letters and telegrams sent to Volkhovskii when the news first broke, which can be found in Volkhovskii Papers (HIA), Box 3, Folders 15-16.

64 *Times* (30 December 1895).

been justified under Russian conditions of the late 1870s and early 1880s. He referred provocatively to the murder of Aleksandr II in 1881 as 'an enormous moral service', even though it had not achieved its immediate objectives, a failure which he argued had led Stepniak to turn his attention away from terrorism towards building 'a broad and strong popular movement'. Volkhovskii's eulogy was a shrewd programmatic statement designed to distance the SFRF from any suspicion of active support for terrorism while preserving a revolutionary martyrology that looked to the dead as inspiration for the living: 'Let us not offend, then, his memory by even one moment of despair. On the contrary, let us rally closer together, Friends of Russian Freedom, let us double our efforts in our righteous cause, and victory will be ours'.⁶⁵

Volkhovskii formally replaced Stepniak as editor of *Free Russia* at the start of 1896, although he had effectively been performing the role for some time, and over the next few years he contributed many signed articles as well as editorials and other pieces that were published anonymously. The main English contributors remained J. F. Green, formally listed for a time as joint editor, G. H. Perris, and Herbert Thompson (author of *Russian Politics* and founder of one of the most active provincial branches of the SFRF in Cardiff).⁶⁶ Both the tone and style of *Free Russia* changed somewhat in the years after 1895. Volkhovskii himself began to give freer rein to the sarcasm that flowed easily from his pen. He was sharply critical of moves by some Anglican clergy to develop closer links between the Russian Church and the Church of England.⁶⁷ When the Bishop of Peterborough made some complimentary remarks about his Russian hosts, in a lecture given a few months after returning from the Coronation of Nicholas II, Volkhovskii published a piece by one 'L. Varinski' suggesting that his lordship 'would do well to strengthen his sight by putting on his spectacles' (the article was almost certainly penned by Volkhovskii himself).⁶⁸ The following year, he suggested that the only reason some Russian clergy were interested in developing

65 F. Volkhovskii, 'The Russian Bayard', *Free Russia* (1 February 1896).

66 Herbert M. Thompson, *Russian Politics* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1895).

67 On efforts to develop closer relations between the Church of England and the Russian Church during this period, see Michael Hughes, 'The English Slavophile: W. J. Birkbeck and Russia', *Slavonic and East European Review*, 82, 3 (2004), 680–706.

68 L. Varinski, 'The Bishop of Peterborough on Russia', *Free Russia* (1 December 1896).

closer relations with their Anglican counterparts was to 'beguile naïve people'.⁶⁹ Volkhovskii's tone was sharp enough to prompt suggestions in some quarters that *Free Russia* was hostile to religion, a view firmly countered by Spence Watson, who noted that such suggestions were nonsense since political and religious freedom could never be separated.⁷⁰

Volkhovskii also started to give more attention to social and economic questions on the pages of *Free Russia*, a focus shaped by the rapid changes that were taking place in Russia itself. The appointment of Sergei Witte as Finance Minister,⁷¹ in 1892, had marked the start of a new economic programme centred on borrowing money abroad to finance a programme of rapid industrialisation at home. The policy dramatically increased economic growth, resulting in a sharp rise in the population of cities like Moscow and St Petersburg, and a concomitant increase in labour radicalism among an impoverished and demoralised workforce. The growth of industry also fostered the growing popularity of Marxist ideology in Russia,⁷² at least in some quarters, given that the social and

69 'The Russian Clergy', *Free Russia* (1 October 1897). The article was anonymous, but both the content and tone give little doubt about its author.

70 R. Spence Watson, 'The "Anglo-Russian" and Religious Persecution in Russia', *Free Russia* (1 August 1897). The suggestion had been made, rather curiously, in Jacob Prelooker's paper the *Anglo-Russian*, which seems to have aimed to win over some of the more moderate readers of *Free Russia*. On Prelooker and the *Anglo-Russian*, see John Slatter, 'Jaakoff Prelooker and the Anglo-Russian', in John Slatter (ed.), *From the Other Shore: Russian Political Emigrants in Britain, 1870-1917* (London: Frank Cass, 1984), 49–66.

71 For an excellent biography of Witte, see Sidney Harcave, *Count Sergei Witte and the Twilight of Imperial Russia. A Biography* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015). For a book focusing more on Witte's economic policy, see Theodore Von Laue, *Sergei Witte and the Industrialization of Russia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963).

72 For useful discussions of the rise of Marxism in Russia see, for example, John Keep, *The Rise of Social Democracy in Russia* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963); Richard Kindersley, *The First Russian Revisionists. A Study of 'Legal Marxism' in Russia* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962). Much useful material on the complex relationship between the development of Marxist ideas and revolutionary parties in Russia can be found in the relevant sections of biographies of key figures including Abraham Ascher, *Pavel Axelrod and the Development of Menshevism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972); Samuel H. Baron, *Plekhanov. The Father of Russian Marxism* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963); Stephen F. Cohen, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution. A Political Biography, 1888–1938* (London: Wildwood House, 1974); Israel Getzler, *Martov: A Political Biography of a Russian Social Democrat* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967); Robert Service, *Lenin: A Political Life. Vol. 1, The Strengths of Contradictions* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1985); S. V. Tiutiukin, *G. V. Plekhanov. Sud'ba russkogo marksista* (Moscow: Rosspen, 1997).

economic changes taking place seemed to provide a foundation for the kind of class conflict that Marx believed was the *leitmotif* of historical development. Many surviving *narodniki* of the 1870s, including Volkhovskii, were also acutely aware that the development of an urban working class was changing the character of Russian society and creating the foundation for new and potentially more effective opposition to tsarism.

Free Russia reported extensively on the strikes that broke out in major cities in Russia, including one that erupted among textile workers in St Petersburg in the spring of 1896 (the paper established a special fund to support the strikers). Volkhovskii contributed articles on such questions as 'The Maximum Working Day', reflecting his growing conviction that labour unrest could force government concessions.⁷³ There are hints that some members of the SFRF were perturbed by the new tone in *Free Russia*. The coalition between 'Liberals', 'Fabians' and 'Socialists'—which had always formed the foundation of the movement in Britain to support change in Russia—was by its nature vulnerable to such fissures. The extent of the change in the editorial direction of *Free Russia* should not be overstated, though, and Robert Spence-Watson continued to work amicably with Volkhovskii despite his staunch Quaker beliefs and role as President of the National Liberal Association.⁷⁴ The paper still published numerous accounts detailing the harsh treatment suffered by critics of the tsarist regime, which had been its staple fare since it was first established, providing continuing impetus for much of the support attracted by the 'cause' in Britain.

Volkhovskii was at first determined that the plans for *Zemskii sobor* should go ahead despite Stepniak's death. Other fundists agreed that the loss of their friend should inspire them to continue his work.⁷⁵ Yet the plans for the new journal stalled over the following months, even though funding had been promised from Russia, almost certainly with the help of Vladimir Korolenko. The reasons are not altogether clear, but

73 F. Volkhovskii, 'The Maximum Working Day', *Free Russia* (1 August 1897).

74 The correspondence between the two men gives no hint of any fundamental difference of opinion at this time. See, for example, Volkhovskii Papers (Houghton Library), MS Russ 51, Folder 362 (Various letters from Spence Watson to Volkhovskii).

75 See for example 'Ot komiteta V. R. Pressy v Londone' and the obituaries by Lazarev and Volkhovskii in *Letuchie listki*, 28 (18 January 1896).

Volkhovskii doubtless came to recognise that his work for *Free Russia* and the Free Press Fund would take up much of his time, making it difficult for him to edit a new journal. Nor was planning made any easier by the personal and ideological differences that emerged in the months that followed Stepniak's death.

By the spring of 1896, P. A. Dement'ev had become the unlikely central figure in plans for the new journal. Dement'ev had known Lazarev for some years in America, and discussed the new journal in correspondence with him, although he only seems to have considered the possibility of becoming editor following Stepniak's death.⁷⁶ While liberals in Russia looked favourably on Dement'ev, most fundists, including Volkhovskii, were less positive given his lack of experience in running such a venture. Nor were they sympathetic to his decidedly moderate programme. Dement'ev was in any case something of a maverick ('completely Americanised' and 'an extreme individualist' in his own words).⁷⁷ The idea of transforming *Letuchie listki* into a new journal was tacitly dropped, and Volkhovskii continued as editor, although with increasing input from Chaikovskii, who published numerous pseudonymous articles over the initials N. Ch. Dement'ev nevertheless continued with his plans, and in the spring of 1897 a new journal appeared in London under the title *Sovremennik: Ezhemesiachnoe politicheskoe izdanie* (*The Contemporary: A Monthly Political Publication*). The quality of the journal was poor and the political programme obscure. It ceased publication after three issues. Volkhovskii refused to support efforts to save the journal, partly because he did not trust Dement'ev, but perhaps too because he was starting to doubt the wisdom of promoting the kind of accommodation between Russian liberals and revolutionaries that he had once favoured so strongly.

The death of Stepniak also increased tensions between the fundists and other émigré groups in Western Europe. When Dement'ev was planning his new journal in the spring of 1896, he wrote to Petr Lavrov in Paris asking for his cooperation. The reply was scathing. Lavrov attacked the Russian liberals as too poorly organised and hesitant to bring about change. He also dismissed any strategy that focused on

76 See, for example, Volkhovskii Papers (HIA), Box 3, Folder 21, Dement'ev to Lazarev, 9 January 1896; 14 January 1896.

77 Hamburg, 'London Emigration', 334.

the need for political reform that was not combined with a struggle to build socialism, which he argued was 'the only way to eradicate the economic, political, and other evils that currently plague humanity in general, and our homeland in particular'. Lavrov made little secret that the real target of his attack was the London emigration grouped around *Free Russia* (he may not have realised that Dement'ev's links with the group were quite perfunctory).⁷⁸ He was particularly incensed that many Russians both in Russia and abroad seemed to think he endorsed the 'National Front' strategy that Stepniak and Volkhovskii had pursued over the previous few years. The death of Stepniak encouraged Lavrov to express himself more boldly about what he saw as the weaknesses of a purely political strategy.

Stepniak's death also complicated relations between the London emigration and the Emancipation of Labour Group centred in Geneva. Vera Zasluch had moved to London in 1894, in part to continue a long-planned biography of Rousseau, although she may also have wanted to see more of the country that had shaped Marx's understanding of capitalism. The experience was a dispiriting one, leading her to doubt the revolutionary instincts of the British proletariat, who seemed to view the world through the narrow prism of material self-interest. Zasluch had known Stepniak well for many years. In *Underground Russia* he had painted a vivid picture of her as an almost painfully shy introvert, unprepossessing in appearance, yet with 'a mind full of the highest poetry, profound and powerful, full of indignation and love'.⁷⁹ She, for her part, admired Stepniak for his energy and dynamism, even if she did not share his lingering nostalgia for terrorism, which Zasluch had long come to believe was nothing more than an impotent cry of rage.

Zasluch's relationship with members of the London emigration grouped around *Free Russia* and the Free Press Fund declined rapidly after Stepniak's death, for reasons that seem to have been as much personal as ideological, perhaps tinged with concern on the part of the fundists that Zasluch's lingering status as an icon of terrorism might

78 G. M. Hamburg and P. L. Lavrov, 'P. L. Lavrov in Emigration. An Unpublished Letter', *Russian Review*, 37, 4 (1978), 449–52.

79 Sergei Stepniak, *Underground Russia* (London: Smith Elder, 1883), 108.

complicate their position in Britain.⁸⁰ She certainly believed that the fundists discouraged members of the SFRF from inviting her to speak at their meetings. The situation was made more complicated by tension about managing Stepniak's literary and political legacy. Volkhovskii and Kropotkin corresponded extensively about publishing a biography of Stepniak, which never appeared,⁸¹ while Stepniak's wife Fanni complained bitterly to Zasluch that the fundists were trying to prevent her benefitting financially from her late husband's work.⁸² Zasluch for her part complained repeatedly to Plekhanov in Geneva about the pettiness and opportunism of the London emigration (reserving her strongest venom for Volkhovskii).⁸³ Plekhanov himself doubted whether the fundists were capable of any serious analysis of the political and economic situation in Russia. When David Soskice approached him in the autumn of 1896 about possible cooperation with the fundists, he replied firmly that while he had been ready to work with Stepniak, the situation had changed: 'I certainly have no personal animus against the honourable Feliks Volkhovskii, but I am equally certain that I do not agree with his views. Both he and I are naturally opposed to Russian absolutism but that is hardly sufficient to allow us to pull amicably together under the same literary harness'.⁸⁴ The tensions became still more stark at the 1896 fourth Congress of the Second International discussed later in the chapter.

Zasluch's criticism of the 'petty feuds' within the London emigration presumably referred to the debates that took place about the publication of a new journal in the months following Stepniak's death. Vladimir

80 For a useful summary of the tensions, see Jay Bergman, *Vera Zasluch: A Biography* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1983), 135–36.

81 See, for example, Volkhovskii Papers (HIA), Box 3, Folder 17, Kropotkin to Volkhovskii, 27 January 1896; Volkhovskii to Kropotkin, 28 January 1896.

82 On the financial aspect of Stepniak's legacy, and the lack of any remaining payments from his publisher, see Volkhovskii Papers (Houghton Library), MS Russ 51, Folder 362, Spence Watson to Volkhovskii, 31 December 1895.

83 L. G. Deich (ed.), *Gruppa Osvobozhdenie truda (Iz arkhivov Plekhanova, Zasluch i Deicha)*, 6 vols (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo, 1923–28), V, 152 (Zasluch to Plekhanov, mistakenly dated 1895 but in fact 1896). Zasluch found Volkhovskii particularly hostile which may have reflected the fact that he was also strongly disliked by Stepniak's widow.

84 Letter from Plekhanov to Soskice, 1 November 1896, in P. F. Iudin et al. (eds), *Literaturnoe nasledie G. V. Plekhanova*, 8 vols (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe sotsial'no-ekonomicheskoe izd-vo, 1934–40), IV, 305.

Burtsev regularly discussed such problems with Volkhovskii, recalling that his friend was often 'severely attacked' for his views on 'revolutionary issues', and 'found it hard to endure' the hostile attitude he sometimes encountered.⁸⁵ It is not entirely clear whether Burtsev was describing tensions between the fundists or relations between Volkhovskii and other members of the Russian revolutionary movement like Zasulich. Nor is it clear if the divisions were personal or ideological in character. Volkhovskii had a reputation among many of his British friends for charm and good nature, but his Russian colleagues often found him sarcastic and rude, traits that were made worse by his deafness and bouts of ill-health. There were also more substantial disagreements about the character of *Letuchie listki* in the wake of Stepniak's death. Chaikovskii wanted the paper to focus less on reprinting material smuggled out of Russia and more on showing how the growth of labour unrest in Russia signalled the need for changes to revolutionary strategy.⁸⁶ Volkhovskii agreed about the importance of rising industrial militancy, but he was at least initially sceptical about changing the character of the *listki* to one that focused less on reportage and more on polemic, believing that the tone of crafted neutrality actually increased its impact on readers and attracted a wide readership.⁸⁷

This growing tension among the fundists may explain a letter sent to Chaikovskii by Egor Lazarev, in the spring of 1897, in which he noted that differences over the editorial character of the *listki* had become an issue of

ideology and principle. We have had differences with Felix from the very first. We must clarify them for our own sake and explain them to him ... His own life and prejudices were formed under the influence of the monied elite, which may be progressive and liberal in the general cultural sense, but which has little ideological sympathy for the 'working class'. This aloofness from the crowd, from the gray masses, is strongly

85 Burtsev, *Bor'ba za svobodnuiu Rossiiu*, 97–98.

86 Many of the articles Chaikovskii contributed to *Letuchie listki* dealt with issues of strikes and labour militancy both in Russia and abroad. See, for example, N. Ch. (Chaikovskii), 'Mezhdunarodnaia federatsiia rabochikh soiuzov korabel'nykh, portovykh i rechnykh rabochikh', *Letuchie listki*, 36 (23 December 1896).

87 The *listki* undoubtedly moved in a more 'Socialist Revolutionary' direction from 1897 onwards, not least because of Chaikovskii's growing influence, but there is little evidence that Volkhovskii seriously opposed the development. For a nuanced discussion of the change, see Senese, *Stepniak-Kravchinskii*, 113–14.

reflected in his attitudes, emotions, and writing ... He has seen in the workers' strikes, in the labor movement, in the social confrontation only superficial facts, incidental news that might conveniently be exploited by the *Listki*; he has not seen here the epic and unbroken growth of a new and powerful world force which must in the end either conquer and rule or perish.⁸⁸

Lazarev also suggested that Volkhovskii was most comfortable in 'a bourgeois Anglo-American milieu'. His words were not altogether fair, given Volkhovskii's comparatively impoverished background, while his articles in both *Free Russia* and *Letuchie listki* showed that he was well-aware of the significance of growing labour unrest in Russia. And, while Lazarev's letter may have reflected growing scepticism among some fundists about building a 'National Front' against autocracy, at a time when burgeoning worker radicalism heralded the rise of a new revolutionary force in Russia, Volkhovskii's own refusal to help save Dement'ev's short-lived journal suggests that he too was rethinking his ideas about cooperation with Russian liberals. A sceptic might indeed point out that Lazarev himself, although the son of a peasant, was by now spending most of his time in Switzerland where he was married to a wealthy woman and lived as a gentleman farmer.⁸⁹ A decision was nevertheless taken in the spring of 1897 to drop Volkhovskii as the named editor of *Letuchie listki* in favour of a general statement that the journal was edited by members of the Free Press Fund in London.⁹⁰

Lazarev's comments about Volkhovskii probably captured a sense among some fundists that their friend was not only remote from the 'grey masses' of Russia, but also too inclined to immerse himself in English society in a way that distanced him from the struggle for revolution. While Stepniak had used his social contacts to build support for the 'cause' in Britain, Volkhovskii never commanded the same level of respect as his old friend, making him more vulnerable to the charge that

88 The translation is that found in Hamburg, 'London Emigration', 337. The letter has been re-catalogued since Hamburg consulted it and can now be found in Volkhovskii Papers (Houghton Library), MS Russ 51, Folder 188, Lazarev to Chaikovskii, 19 March 1897.

89 N. A. Ekhtina, 'Emigranty, revoliutsionery i koronovannye osoby: "russkaia volost"' E. E. i Iu. A. Lazarevykh v Bozhi nad Klaranom', *Ezhegodnik Doma russkogo zarubezh'ia im. Aleksandra Solzhenitsyna* (2014–15), 20–30.

90 The first edition of *Letuchie listki* to appear without Volkhovskii's name as editor was published in May 1897.

his personal ties in Britain made him (in Lazarev's words) 'aloof' from the revolutionary struggle. Too much should not perhaps be made of these tensions. Lazarev and Chaikovskii were both by the late 1890s less interested in pursuing a strategy that focused on shaping international opinion against the tsarist government, and more concerned with identifying other ways to advance the cause of revolution in Russia itself. The same was increasingly true of Volkhovskii. The differences certainly appear to have dissipated by the early years of the twentieth century, as the fundists gradually coalesced into the Agrarian-Socialist League, which itself in turn subsequently merged with the Socialist Revolutionary Party.

Volkhovskii kept up his interest in literary matters during the second half of the 1890s, using the pages of *Free Russia* to print translations of new stories unfamiliar to British readers, while negotiating with Constables to write a biography of Turgenev (which never appeared).⁹¹ He still instinctively viewed literature in Russia through a political lens, suggesting that for all Tolstoy's genius his emphasis on 'striving after personal self-perfection', which so appealed to his British readers, was almost a 'vice' to Russians since it obscured understanding of the causes of 'oppression in the present'.⁹² He admired Vladimir Korolenko, but the two men were never on particularly close terms, even though Volkhovskii organised the translation of some of Korolenko's stories and met him in person when the author came to London in 1893 (the two men had also corresponded at some length when they were both exiled in Siberia).⁹³ Nor was Volkhovskii particularly interested in following

91 Volkhovskii Papers (Houghton Library), MS Russ 51, Folder 246, Archibald Constable and Co. to Volkhovskii, 27 June 1898.

92 Felix Volkhovskii, 'Preface', in G. H. Perris, *Leo Tolstoy: the Grand Muzhik. A Study in Personal Evolution* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1898), viii. Volkhovskii's correspondence shows that he had many connections with the various Tolstoian communities in Britain but few of these were particularly close. For further details of Tolstoian communities in England, see W. H. G. Armytage, 'J. C. Kenworthy and the Tolstoian Communities in England', *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, 16, 4 (1957), 391–405; Charlotte Alston, *Tolstoy and His Disciples. The History of a Radical International Movement* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2013).

93 See N. V. Zhiliakova, 'Obsuzhdenie professional'nykh tsennostei zhurnalista v perepiske F. V. Volkhovskogo i V. G. Korolenko', *Zhurnalistskii ezhegodnik*, 3 (2014), 38–42. On Korolenko's later journalism in the Russian legal press, most notably *Russkoe bogatstvo*, see L. G. Berezhnaia, 'Zhurnal "Russkoe Bogatstvo" v 1905–1913 gg.', in B. I. Esin (ed.), *Iz istorii russkoi zhurnalistiki nachala XX veka* (Moscow: Izd-vo Moskovskogo universiteta, 1984), 59–93.

literary developments in Britain during this time. He seldom visited Edward and Constance Garnett after they moved in 1895 to a new 'Arts and Crafts' house ('The Cearne') near the village of Limpsfield in Surrey, which became the focus of a small colony of Fabians, as well as a disparate group of Russian émigrés (Edward Garnett later flippantly named the area Dostoevskii Corner).⁹⁴ Stepniak was among those who moved to Limpsfield for a time, in the months before his death, to be close both to the Garnetts and his old friend Edward Pease. Many prominent literary figures visited the Garnetts, including Stephen Crane and Joseph Conrad, whose distinctive mixture of insecurity and Russophobia proved rather trying to Constance.⁹⁵ Ford Maddox Ford also lived in the area for a while, playing at being a farmer, although his commitment seemed to be limited to sinking an old bath into the ground so that the local ducks could 'queue, waiting their turn to swim in it'.⁹⁶ Not only did Volkhovskii seldom visit The Cearne, but he also showed little interest in the development of what one scholar has called 'Limpsfield Modernism' (associated above all with Edward Garnett and Ford Maddox Ford).⁹⁷ Nor did he ever really become a central figure in facilitating the Russian craze in Britain, despite his translations of Russian stories and his early success in encouraging Constance Garnett to learn Russian, admittedly a service to literature that was of lasting importance.

Volkhovskii's growing distance from the Garnetts was not just a consequence of his focus on *Free Russia* and *Letuchi listki*. Olive Garnett noted in her diary early in 1894 that Constance had told her

94 For descriptions of life at The Cearne, see Garnett, *Constance Garnett*, 145–59; Helen Smith, *The Uncommon Reader: A Life of Edward Garnett* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2017), *passim*.

95 Garnett, *Constance Garnett*, 165–69. On Conrad see, for example, Jeffrey Meyers, *Joseph Conrad. A Biography* (New York: Cooper Square Press, 2001); John Stape, *The Several Lives of Joseph Conrad* (London: William Heinemann, 2007).

96 Garnett, *Constance Garnett*, 169. For Ford's less than effusive memories of Limpsfield, see Maddox Ford, *Return to Yesterday*, 33 ff. For Ford's critical view of the Limpsfield aesthetic and political 'ecosystem', see Nathan Waddel, *Modernist Nowheres: Politics and Utopia in Early Modernist Writing, 1900–1920* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 88 ff.

97 Rebecca Beasley, *Russomania. Russian Culture and the Creation of British Modernism, 1881–1922* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 61–80.

that Volkhovskii and Edward Garnett 'mutually enrage one another'.⁹⁸ Several Britons who knew Volkhovskii noted that he could be moody and detached. The more astute recognised he was lonely.⁹⁹ Constance Garnett's observation that Volkhovskii was a 'tremendous ladies' man' was not an idle observation. Fanni Stepniak, who never liked him, wrote sarcastically to Olive Garnett in the spring of 1897 that 'poor uncle Felix [is] in decline altogether. No more flirtations, no expectations, even old maids are not available. C'est fini'.¹⁰⁰ Olive herself noted that her sister-in-law believed that 'F. V. has demanded devotion from women all his life, & is always offended if he doesn't get it to the uttermost. He was a spoiled child, adored by his mother, one of seven children of whom the other six died young, & till he was 18, he never lifted a finger to do a thing for himself. He always fascinated women but was not in love with his first wife who adored him'.¹⁰¹

Olive also recorded in her diary that Volkhovskii's attitude towards women, at least as it was seen by her brother and sister-in-law, was sometimes a cause for concern. Constance told Olive that 'When he [Volkhovskii] comes into a family he can't help making one member of it jealous'. Sometimes he demanded too much by way of support for the 'cause'. He was impatient with one female friend ('Gracie') who would not agree to give help to Russian exiles without her husband's agreement, berating her for 'not saving a fellow creature's life', and petulantly refusing to shake hands when he left her house. Constance Garnett also hinted to her sister-in-law that such behaviour reflected a deeper pattern of emotional manipulation or at least unbridled self-centredness:

98 Johnson, *Olive and Stepniak*, 20. Olive's episodic dating of her diary entries makes it difficult to identify precisely when some entries were written, although Constance's comments seem to have been made in January around the time when Ivanoff's diatribe against the members of the London emigration appeared in the *New Review*.

99 G. H. Perris later recalled that Volkhovskii had been on the point of marriage soon after arriving in London, although for some reason the ceremony never took place, in part because the whole plan was in Perris' view 'slightly absurd'. G. H. Perris, *Russia in Revolution* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1905), 66.

100 Garnett Papers (Northwestern University), Box 23, Folder 3, Fanni Stepniak to Olive Garnett, 9 March 1897.

101 Johnson, *Olive and Stepniak*, 20.

F. V.'s morals are quite different; he would do nothing clandestinely but he would think it quite fair to come openly & steal—say Gracie away from her husband—and then in a year's time if he got tired of her, he would say 'Go back'.

This is not English. We agreed that it was pathetic that now on account of F. V.'s age, ill-health, etc, he is no longer attractive to women, & yet he needs them more than ever, & we agree that of all the Russians we know, he is most devoted to the cause, most single-minded, the greatest idealist & in spite of many childish faults in some respects the most lovable.¹⁰²

Volkhovskii's private correspondence certainly shows that he craved the emotional intensity that had been such a marked feature of the *kruzhki* that shaped his early adult life in Russia. Female acquaintances were sometimes forced to rebuff what appeared to them as inappropriate if rather clumsy advances. One engaged Unitarian woman gently told him ('old chap') that however much she wished convention could be thrown to 'the four winds', in a world of 'old fogies' she had to be cautious: 'I am bound, there are restrictions on me ... I have to bow and submit'.¹⁰³ Another female correspondent who wrote to Volkhovskii, asking for advice about how she could contribute to the cause of Russian liberation, was startled to receive by return a request for a photograph. She gently declined on the grounds—probably untrue—that she had not had one taken since she was six.¹⁰⁴ Volkhovskii's behaviour sometimes caused more serious problems. His flirtatious relationship with one married correspondent—she called him her 'grumpatious old bear "Bruin"' and he called her 'Puck'—exploded when an outraged husband found the correspondence (he condemned Volkhovskii as 'dishonourable' and demanded that he 'drop the friendship').¹⁰⁵

The most intense emotional relationship that Volkhovskii had during these years was with Margaret Heath, the sister of the painter Nellie Heath (Nellie was a close intimate of the Garnett family and had a

102 Johnson, *Olive and Stepniak*, 20.

103 Volkhovskii Papers (Houghton Library), MS Russ 51, Folder 249, Daisy to Volkhovskii, 25 May 1896; Daisy to Volkhovskii, 11 June 1896.

104 Volkhovskii Papers (Houghton Library), MS Russ 51, Folder 244, Laura Coates to Volkhovskii, 3 April 1897.

105 Volkhovskii Papers (Houghton Library), MS Russ 51, Folder 283, Janet Hooton to Volkhovskii, 13 July 1898; Folder 282, Henry Hooton to Volkhovskii, 30 August 1898.

long-term relationship with Edward Garnett that seems to have been tolerated by Constance).¹⁰⁶ Margaret was a member of the Independent Labour Party and later married the son of Edward Pease. The precise nature of her relationship with Volkhovskii remains unclear, but it seems to have been rooted in a desire for a deep emotional and intellectual intimacy, as well as shared political interests. Margaret's correspondence was punctuated with laments about 'how lonely life gets', and rueful acknowledgements of Volkhovskii's claim that he could never really know her since she guarded her inner life so closely (not, it must be said, something that comes over in her correspondence). She in turn told Volkhovskii that it was hard to know him since 'you have so many different selves ... There is one self of yours wh[ich] helps me so much more than most people do—but that is not always there'.¹⁰⁷ Such words were interspersed with more prosaic discussion both about the future of Russia ('you can dream what Russia will be one day') and political developments in Britain (Heath toured Britain speaking at numerous ILP and trade union meetings).¹⁰⁸

In one of her letters sent to Volkhovskii, Heath anxiously asked about his attitude towards the recent fourth Congress of the Second International held in London in July 1896, seeking his views on everything from the treatment of the anarchists through to the quality of the leaders of the British socialist movement.¹⁰⁹ Volkhovskii's reply to Heath has not survived, but he was clearly incensed by much that had taken place. His anger stemmed from the behaviour of Plekhanov and other representatives of the Marxist wing of the Russian revolutionary movement. The composition of the Russian delegation at the Congress caused confusion from the start. Volkhovskii himself spoke at the opening rally in Hyde Park,¹¹⁰ and when the Congress proper began there was a general mood of celebration at the growth of the labour

¹⁰⁶ Garnett, *Constance Garnett*, 175; Smith, *Edward Garnett*, 99 ff.

¹⁰⁷ Volkhovskii Papers (Houghton Library), MS Russ 51, Folder 272, Margaret Heath to Volkhovskii, 20 August 1896.

¹⁰⁸ Volkhovskii Papers (Houghton Library), MS Russ 51, Folder 272, Margaret Heath to Volkhovskii, 29 November 1896.

¹⁰⁹ Volkhovskii Papers (Houghton Library), MS Russ 51, Folder 272, Margaret Heath to Volkhovskii, 16 August 1896. For a dated but still lucid discussion of the history of the Second International, see James Joll, *The Second International, 1889–1914* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1955).

¹¹⁰ *Justice* (25 July 1896).

movement in Russia, given the recent strikes in St Petersburg. Things became much tenser as proceedings got underway. Plekhanov insisted that his country should be formally represented by Marxist delegates from both the emigration and Russia itself. He dismissed the *narodniki* as ineffective and rejected the idea that a socialist revolution would come from the field rather than the factory.¹¹¹ Russian representatives from the *narodnik* wing of the revolutionary movement were, following Plekhanov's verbal report, refused any formal status as delegates. It appears that Volkhovskii was one of their number.¹¹²

The conflict at the Congress was part of the broader tension between members of the London emigration and the Emancipation of Labour Group discussed earlier. Volkhovskii quickly took to the pages of the *Labour Leader* to express his frustration to British readers:

We Russians who have the cause of Russian liberty and justice at heart, and have worked for it, know perfectly well that all fractions of Russian Socialism, and even some people who, though advanced, do not call themselves socialists, have equally wanted to bring about that awakening of the Russian workers which resulted in the St Petersburg strike.

He went on to attack the 'intolerance and partisanship' shown by Plekhanov and other delegates from the Emancipation of Labour Group.¹¹³ His charges were predictably rebuffed a few weeks later in the same paper by Vera Zasulich and, even more vehemently, in *Justice* (where she wrote that Volkhovskii had 'no relations whatsoever ... with the international movement of the socialist workers').¹¹⁴ Volkhovskii's defence of the need for a broad opposition—of all 'fractions of Russian Socialism'—was of course precisely what Plekhanov condemned as 'opportunism'. Yet

111 For a description of how the Congress struggled with the question of credentials, see *Full Report of the Proceedings of the International Workers' Congress, London, July and August 1896* (London: The Labour Leader, 1896). The *Full Report* also noted that the Congress met amid rumours that 'the Marxists had made up their mind ... to expel by main force all who disagreed with them' (16).

112 G. D. H. Cole, *A History of Socialist Thought. The Second International 1889–1914*, Part 1 (London: Macmillan, 1956), 23. For a different perspective, which suggests that the exclusion was of the veteran *narodnik* Esper Serebiakov, along with a delegate from Berne, see A. Hamon, *Le socialisme et le Congrès de Londres: étude historique* (Paris: Ancienne Librairie Tresse and Stock, 1897), 128, 247–49.

113 *Labour Leader* (8 August 1896). See, too, the long article (by Chaikovskii), 'Mezhdunarodnyi kongress', *Letuchie listki*, 35 (15 September 1896).

114 *Labour Leader* (5 September 1896); *Justice* (29 August 1896).

Volkhovskii was correct in arguing that revolutionaries in Russia who looked to Marx for inspiration had been greatly helped by those who articulated more *narodnik* views when fostering labour unrest. And he was also right in suggesting that the fundists in London had from the start welcomed the strike movement as evidence of the growth of labour militancy in Russian factories. Volkhovskii was nevertheless naïve in not recognising that Plekhanov was likely to succeed in presenting the Social Democrats as the authentic voice of the Russian revolutionary movement. Marxist sympathies were strong in most of the delegations at the London Congress, while revolutionary ‘nihilists’ were often conflated in the mind of many Western socialists with anarchists, who were from the start effectively excluded from the Congress.

While Volkhovskii knew leading figures in the Independent Labour Party and the Trade Union movement, including Ramsay MacDonald and Tom Mann, he never made such a strong impression on the British labour movement as Stepniak. Nor was he as well-connected with leading Fabians like Edward Pease. Volkhovskii was, as seen earlier, finding it increasingly difficult by the second half of the 1890s to keep together the distinctive coalition of socialists and liberals grouped around the SFRF and *Free Russia* (an echo, of course, of the tensions that undermined the strategy of building the fragmented Russian opposition into a united front against autocracy). In October 1897, one correspondent wrote to Volkhovskii, apparently in response to a letter from him about possible changes to trade union legislation, arguing that ‘Progress indeed would become impossible’ if trade unions were allowed to become more powerful. He went on to note that ‘it is the capitalist who is the slave of the trade unionist’, adding that unionism was bringing about the ‘decay’ of British industry.¹¹⁵ Yet Henry Simon—the author of these words—was an active member of the SFRF. He was by his own lights ‘a sincere well-wisher of the working-classes’. Simon represented an element in the Liberal tradition—stretching back as far as the campaign by Richard Cobden and John Bright against the corn laws—which identified political freedom at home and peace abroad as intimately bound up with *laissez-faire* economics and free trade. Such an outlook was by the end of the century fading among those most active

115 Volkhovskii Papers (Houghton Library), MS Russ 51, Folder 346, Henry Simon to Volkhovskii, 19 October 1897.

in Britain in the campaign to support Russian freedom, as they were increasingly eclipsed by others drawn from a more radical tradition, sympathetic not only to the cause of political reform in Russia but to more far-reaching radical economic and social revolution as well.

Henry Simon was, despite his concerns, still happy to contribute to a fund set up by the SFRF at the end of 1887 to pay for the legal defence of Vladimir Burtsev, after he was prosecuted for publishing an article justifying the cause of regicide in Russia.¹¹⁶ The Burtsev case provided a test for many supporters of the SFRF, raising the question of whether they should support free expression by political émigrés when it was used to encourage violence (albeit not in Britain). It also casts light on the suspicion with which both the *Okhrana* and Special Branch still viewed members of the Russian exile community in London two years after the death of Stepniak. One of the most striking features of Burtsev's arrest and imprisonment was, indeed, the extent to which his 'crimes' were in many ways no different from those committed by Stepniak in the ten years or so prior to his death (or indeed Mazzini several decades before that). While Stepniak had openly defended Narodnaia volia's use of terrorism in Russia, he never faced arrest or prosecution, instead becoming a well-known public figure and journalist. The public mood had changed by the second half of the 1890, though, and Burtsev was found guilty and sentenced to hard labour for offences that might have gone unpunished just a few years before.

The death of Stepniak had done little to weaken Inspector Melville's antipathy towards the remaining members of the London emigration. While one of his assistants later acknowledged that Russian nihilists only 'plotted against their own country', unlike many anarchists who believed in 'no system of government',¹¹⁷ his chief made no such fine distinctions. When Nicholas II visited Britain in 1896—a visit that was met with predictable anger by Volkhovskii on the pages of *Free*

116 For a detailed discussion of the Burtsev case, see Henderson, *Vladimir Burtsev*, 83–99. Also see Alan Kimball, 'The Harassment of Russian Revolutionaries Abroad: The London Trial of Vladimir Burtsev in 1898', *Oxford Slavonic Papers*, New Series, 6 (1973), 48–65; Saunders, 'Burtsev and the Russian Revolutionary Emigration'; Donald Senese, "'Le vil Melville': Evidence from the *Okhrana* File on the Trial of Vladimir Burtsev', *Oxford Slavonic Papers*, New Series, 14 (1981), 47–53.

117 John Sweeney, *At Scotland Yard: Being the Experiences during Twenty-Seven Years' Service of John Sweeney* (London: Grant Richards, 1904), 71.

*Russia*¹¹⁸—the Inspector worked closely with Rachkovskii to ensure the royal visitor's safety (there had been reports that an attempt might be made on the Tsar's life by Fenian terrorists, perhaps in an unlikely alliance with Russian nihilists).¹¹⁹ While there is no record of the British Prime Minister Lord Salisbury discussing the issue of terrorism with the Tsar, when the two men met at Balmoral,¹²⁰ the visit helped to deepen relations between the Paris *agentura* and Special Branch. Rachkovskii himself was closely involved in the events leading up to Burtsev's arrest the following year.

The fundists had reacted with concern to Burtsev's decision in early 1897 to establish a new journal, *Narodovolets* (*The People's Supporter*), recognising that its endorsement of the use of terror could make the position of Russian political exiles in London more vulnerable. Volkhovskii and Chaikovskii knew that the German anarchist Johann Most had been imprisoned in Britain in 1881 for praising the murder of Aleksandr II.¹²¹ When the first number of *Narodovolets* eventually appeared, it contained an article by Burtsev arguing that 'the name of our journal clearly reflects its programme', before going on to endorse the principle of regicide and 'systematic terror' (though he carefully noted that this only applied to actions carried out by Russians on Russian soil).¹²² Rachkovskii in Paris contacted Melville demanding action. The inspector advised the head of the Paris *agentura* to ask the Russian ambassador in London, Baron Staal, to make a formal complaint to the British government (he made his own position clear when telling Rachkovskii that 'I will be glad to do you a service and grab these scoundrels').¹²³ The ambassador duly made a protest to the Foreign Office, although Lord Salisbury warned him that a prosecution

118 F. Volkhovskii, 'The Tzar's Visit', *Free Russia* (1 October 1896).

119 See, for example, the reports from various European papers in *The Standard* (18 September 1896).

120 On the meeting, see Margaret M. Jefferson, 'Lord Salisbury's Conversations with the Tsar at Balmoral, 27 and 29 September 1896', *Slavonic and East European Review*, 39, 92 (1960), 216–22.

121 On Most, see Frederic Trautmann, *The Voice of Terror. A Biography of Johann Most* (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1980). For the prosecution of Most, see Bernard Porter, 'The *Freiheit* Prosecutions, 1881–1882', *Historical Journal*, 23, 4 (1980), 833–56.

122 *Narodovolets. Sotsialnoe-politicheskoe obozrenie*, 1 (April 1897).

123 Henderson, *Vladimir Burtsev*, 88.

might not be successful, given that the jury could choose not to convict. Melville meanwhile pushed things along by sending one of his men to purchase copies of *Narodovolets* from a shop in Tottenham Court Road.¹²⁴ The journal was translated into English, and Melville obtained a warrant to arrest Burtsev, finding his quarry in the British Museum Library. Burtsev handed the keys to his flat over to the inspector, who duly organised a thorough search, seizing numerous documents used in the compilation of *Za sto let* (Burtsev's history of the Russian revolutionary movement). Burtsev was sent for trial. The material seized by the police was never seen again.

Burtsev was not particularly close to most members of the Russian Free Press Fund, although when researching *Za sto let* he lived at its headquarters and received fifteen shillings a week for his efforts, but he was on good terms with Volkhovskii.¹²⁵ He had shown his friend the final proofs of the first edition of *Narodovolets* before it appeared, who cautioned that it would be 'mad' to publish it, since it would do great damage to 'the common cause'.¹²⁶ Burtsev was nevertheless determined to press ahead with further issues despite more warnings from Volkhovskii about the potential consequences.¹²⁷ Following his arrest, though, the fundists had no option but to support Burtsev, not least to fight back against what they saw as the *de facto* extension of the Russian government's claims to authority over its subjects wherever they were in the world.

Volkhovskii took a leading role in the campaign to persuade British supporters of the 'cause' to offer financial and rhetorical support to Burtsev. He worked closely with Robert Spence Watson to identify a defence counsel who would take on the case *pro bono* or at least at a

124 For the depositions of Melville and the police constable see Volkhovskii Papers (HIA), Box 1, Folder 14.

125 On the support offered to Burtsev when writing *Za sto let*, see Tuckton House Archive (Leeds Brotherton Library), MS 1381/26 (typescript of later parts of L. Gol'denberg, 'Reminiscences'), 64–65. The warm tone of correspondence between Burtsev and Volkhovskii can be seen clearly in the various letters found in Volkhovskii Papers (HIA), Box 1, Folder 12. The trial was extensively covered in articles in *Letuchie listki* which expressed deep concern about the process. See, for example, 'Delo Burtseva', *Letuchie listki*, 42 (23 March 1898).

126 Burtsev, *Bor'ba za svobodnuiu Rossiiu*, 106.

127 See, for example, Volkhovskii Papers (Houghton Library), 66M-197 (miscellaneous material relating to the Volkhovskii family), Volkhovskii to Burtsev, 1 November 1897.

reduced rate. Spence Watson advised Volkhovskii to avoid publishing anything that could prejudice the trial and give rise to contempt of court proceedings. He also cautioned that it would be difficult for Burtsev to get a fair trial since it was so 'difficult to fight the police. They all stick together like wax and swear through thick and thin'.¹²⁸ Spence Watson, like Volkhovskii, believed that the case was a political one, and that the British government had instigated the prosecution at the behest of St Petersburg, and he was doubtful about success in Court.¹²⁹ He was also shrewd enough to realise that whatever the rights and wrongs of the case, the public mood had changed over the previous few years, making it difficult to mount a defence of a foreigner in Burtsev's position. Volkhovskii himself contemplated a libel action against Inspector Melville, who had during the course of the investigation said that he had purloined funds sent from abroad for his personal use, but Volkhovskii's solicitors persuaded him not to proceed at such a febrile time (Melville predictably said he know nothing about the supposed statement).¹³⁰ A few weeks after the Court returned a guilty verdict, Spence Watson told an English correspondent that 'The whole subject is one of much sadness and great difficulty. I cannot possibly express to you what I should like to do in a letter. I believe the action of our Government to have been entirely wrong ... In the meantime I feel more than ever the importance of keeping our Society alive. It is very difficult, and I scarcely, at times, see how it can be done'.¹³¹

Many contributors to the Burtsev defence fund made it clear that they did not approve of terrorism but were concerned about the principles raised by the case. Such a view was expressed most eloquently by Rosalind Howard (Lady Carlisle), when she sent a cheque for £10 towards Burtsev's defence costs, noting in her letter that she wanted to see 'a perfectly fair trial for a Russian patriot', but hoped that if he had indeed advocated the murder of the Tsar he should

128 Volkhovskii Papers (Houghton Library), MS Russ 51, Folder 362, Spence Watson to Volkhovskii, 9 January 1898.

129 Volkhovskii Papers (Houghton Library), MS Russ 51, Folder 362, Spence Watson to Volkhovskii, 13 January 1898.

130 Volkhovskii Papers (HIA), Box 18, Folder 4, Radford to Volkhovskii, 11 January 1898; 20 January 1898; 22 January 1898. Letter by Melville, 25 January 1898.

131 Volkhovskii Papers (Houghton Library), MS Russ 51, Folder 388, Spence Watson to Cecily Sidgwick, 7 March 1898.

suffer penalty, as I have never swerved from the conviction that no good can come from such a method ... I glory in the execution of Charles the First, but regicide is one thing, & assassination is another. You need not recapitulate to me the deeds of shame committed by the Russian government. I hate that Government & all its works with my whole soul; but we shall not exterminate the Tzar & his dynasty by murderous acts ... I fully agree with you that the search for Russian papers in an English domicile, & the possible publication of those papers for some dastardly Government object is most deplorable.¹³²

Volkhovskii was shrewd enough to play on such sentiments when raising money for Burtsev's defence. Yet it was difficult for him to know how to present the case in public. His passionate condemnation of the Burtsev trial in *Free Russia* started even when the case was still *sub judice*. He argued—although in slightly oblique terms—in defence of the use of terror by Narodnaia volia nearly two decades earlier as a justified response to the oppression of the tsarist regime. He also suggested that when Burtsev invoked the names of those involved in the murder of Aleksandr II—such as Sof'ia Perovskaia and Andrei Zheliabov—he was simply behaving like a British republican inspired by the example of Oliver Cromwell. Volkhovskii told his readers that, since *Narodovolets* 'was published in the Russian language, [and] the argument was carried on, so to say, on the soil of Russian thought, of Russian political circumstances', the British government had no reason to become involved in something that was of little consequence to it.¹³³

His words had little effect. Volkhovskii attended Burtsev's trial when it took place in February 1898, although he was at one stage asked along with other Russians to leave the courtroom, and he was astute enough to recognise that the judge presiding over the case was determined to secure a guilty verdict. When the jury duly reached its decision—Burtsev was sentenced to imprisonment with hard labour for eighteen months—the British press overwhelmingly endorsed the outcome, though perhaps in more muted terms than might have been expected.¹³⁴

132 Volkhovskii Papers (Houghton Library), MS Russ 51, Folder 236, Letter by Lady Carlisle, 8 January 1898.

133 F. Volkhovskii, 'The Case of V. Bourtzhev', *Free Russia* (1 February 1898).

134 For the somewhat muted reactions, see, for example, *Daily Telegraph* (12 February 1898); *Morning Post* (12 February 1898); *Times* (12 February 1898). For a more dramatic account of the trial and Burtsev's conviction, see *Irish Independent* (12 February 1898).

Volkhovskii was left to fret that 'The whole affair from beginning to end was not one of justice, nor was it even one of a necessity to enforce law, but merely a matter of political convenience of the moment. It was thought imperatively necessary to pay a visible compliment to one of "our neighbours" at the lowest possible cost'.¹³⁵

The Burtsev trial marked a distinct stage both in the campaign to mobilise British public opinion against tsarist Russia as well as the fundists' relations with other revolutionary groups in emigration and in Russia itself. There was by the end of the 1890s a growing tension among members of the SFRF between those who were concerned above all at the harsh way the tsarist government treated its opponents and others who were convinced that lasting change could only come about in Russia through building a new socialist society. In the years before 1900, the 'liberal-pacifist' wing had generally prevailed. In the years after 1900, the voices of more radical supporters became stronger. And, following the creation of the Agrarian-Socialist League in 1900, and its merger two years later with the Socialist Revolutionary Party, the fundists themselves effectively became a more integral part of a larger if fissiparous 'neo-populist' movement committed to fomenting violent revolution in Russia. The next two chapters explore Volkhovskii's role in these developments during the last fifteen years of his life.

135 F. Volkhovskii, 'A Russian's View of the Bourtzev Case', *Free Russia* (1 March 1898).

