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Ideological Conflicts in Russian Populism: The Revolutionary Manifestoes of the Chaikovskiy Circle, 1869-1874

During the first half of the 1870s the character of the revolutionary movement in Russia changed considerably. At this time the movement spread its base of operation and its organizational effectiveness beyond the confines of St. Petersburg. The idea of a widespread revolutionary movement led by radical circles operating in several large cities was not a new conception in the 1870s. The efforts of *Zemlia i Volia*, *Velikoruss*, Ishutin, Karakozov, and Nechaev are all testimony to the emergence of a permanent underground opposition aimed against the ruling tsarist regime. Between 1869 and 1874, however, this process reached a new level with the activities of the Chaikovskiy Circle, which managed to survive for five years under various names and in spite of even more various ideological approaches to the problem of revolution. This circle succeeded in building a truly nationwide network of affiliated groups which provided the initial revolutionary experience and loyalty to radicalism for many later members of the second *Zemlia i Volia*, *Narodnaia Volia*'s executive committee, and the growing ranks of young Russian Marxists in the 1880s.

Scholars in the West have not treated the activities of the Chaikovskiy Circle in detail. Despite the extensive literature on Russian populism, our knowledge of this group remains limited.¹ Until recently, Soviet scholars also manifested little interest in this circle, although this gap has now been filled.² One way to understand the development of the *Chaikovttsy* is in terms of its relationship to the broader ideological questions of the period. The nature of

1. The best treatment available in English is Franco Venturi, *Roots of Revolution* (New York, 1960), chap. 18, pp. 469-506.

2. See especially N. A. Troitsky, *Bol'shoe obshchestvo propagandy (1871-74)* (Saratov, 1963), and B. S. Itenberg, *Dvizhenie revoliutsionnogo narodnchestva* (Moscow, 1965).

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populist ideology has been studied by both Western and Soviet scholars with widely differing results. In general, the former tend to underestimate the role of ideology,³ while the latter overestimate it.⁴ Part of the interpretive disagreement is due to the ambiguity presented by contemporary accounts.

The memoir literature of Chaikovsky Circle members stresses the overall abhorrence of political manifestoes and ideological affinities. N. I. Drago, who joined the circle in 1872, claimed that its members were ultimately concerned with "the morally developed personality" which was to be independent of any political alignments. For this reason they "refused to accept any program of action."⁵ N. V. Chaikovsky, after whom the circle was named, wrote that the circle was "an *order* without written regulations, rituals, or a general hierarchy" and that it would have been "a profanation if someone would have proposed that we formulate them."⁶ Another contemporary memoirist insists that the *Chaikovtsy* "regarded any written document as the surest means of ruining the entire cause."⁷ The same refusal to adopt a program was voiced by the Moscow section of the circle.⁸ While this antiprogrammatic attitude certainly represents the intention of many members of the Chaikovsky Circle, a close examination of the period shows that the very opposite tendency developed. Instead of disregarding political manifestoes, the *Chaikovtsy* produced a num-

3. Richard Pipes has written that populism was not "a concrete body of political or social doctrine" as much as it was "a broad spectrum of ideas and attitudes" from which specific movements later emerged. "Russian Marxism and Its Populist Background: The Late Nineteenth Century," *Russian Review*, 19, no. 4 (October 1960): 318-19. In another article he states that populism was "devoid of specific programmatic content." "Narodnichestvo: A Semantic Inquiry," *Slavic Review*, 23, no. 3 (September 1964): 452. J. M. Meijer states that the Chaikovsky Circle "had no dictated social program because of their veneration of the people" and "what cemented the group was not so much ideology as moral unity." *Knowledge and Revolution* (Assen, 1955), pp. 82, 166.

4. The most important studies are critically reviewed in V. F. Zakharina, "Problemy istorii revoliutsionnogo narodnichestva, 1870-80 gg.," *Istorii SSSR*, 1967, no. 1, pp. 160-77. See also B. P. Kozmin, "'Narodniki' i 'Narodnichestvo,'" *Voprosy literatury*, 1957, no. 9, pp. 116-35, and M. G. Sedov, "Sovetskaia literatura o teoretikakh narodnichestva," in M. V. Nechkina, ed., *Istoriia i istoriki* (Moscow, 1965), pp. 246-69. For recent bibliographies, see E. S. Vilenskaia et al., *Obshchestvennoe dvizhenie v poreformennoi Rossii* (Moscow, 1965), pp. 372-73, and S. S. Volk and S. B. Mikhailova, "Sovetskaia istoriografiia revoliutsionnogo narodnichestva 70-kh-nachala 80-kh godov XIX veka," in *Sovetskaia istoriografiia klassovoi bor'by i revoliutsionnogo dvizheniia v Rossii* (Leningrad, 1967), pt. 1, pp. 133-60.

5. N. I. Drago, "Zapiski starogo narodnika," *Katorga i ssylka*, 1923, no. 6, p. 11.

6. N. V. Chaikovsky, "Cherez polstoletiiia," *Golos minuvshago na chuzhoi storone*, 1926, no. 3(16), pp. 183-84.

7. [N. A. Morozov], "Ocherk istorii kruzha 'Chaikovtsev' (1869-72)," in B. S. Itenberg, ed., *Revoliutsionnoe narodnichestvo 70-kh godov XIX veka* (Moscow, 1964), 1:202-40. The authorship of this anonymous manuscript is established in K. G. Liashenko, "Ob avtorstve i istorii sozdaniia rukopisi 'Ocherk po istorii kruzha 'Chaikovtsev,'" " *Istoriia SSSR*, 1965, no. 4, pp. 145-50. For further debate over the authorship of this manuscript between the Soviet historians K. G. Liashenko and N. A. Troitsky, see "Versiia trebuet utochnenii," *Istoriia SSSR*, 1968, no. 5, pp. 129-35.

8. V. N. Figner, *Polnoe sobranie sochineniia* (Moscow, 1929), 5:187-88.

ber of such programs, all of which reflect the confusion as well as the variety of populist ideological conflicts at this time.

Two intellectual currents which profoundly influenced the entire revolutionary movement were merged together in the ideological conflicts of the Chaikovsky Circle: the revolutionary tradition in Russia, shaped by the concrete realities of conditions at home, and the tradition of European socialism, brought from abroad to provide a theoretical basis for radical change. The effects of these currents upon Russian revolutionaries were complicated by the duality of radical centers which existed in the seventies. One stream developed inside the country (primarily in Petersburg), while another developed in Zurich among the Russian émigré colony. According to Jan Meijer, there was "a certain parallelism of the developments in Zurich and in Russia."⁹ The ideological conflicts which preoccupied the Russian colony in Switzerland ultimately became a source of controversy for the *Chaikovtsy*. This influence is clearly present in the programs of the Chaikovsky Circle.

In the early 1870s in Zurich the Russian colony split into two camps because of the bitter polemical struggle between Michael Bakunin and Peter Lavrov over the course of the future revolution. One of the crucial aspects of this debate was the argument over consciousness and spontaneity in the formulation of a theory of revolution. The followers of Lavrov argued that the radical student intelligentsia alone comprehended the nature of Russian reality and was capable of bringing about a fundamental transformation of the society. Bakunin's supporters argued that revolution could come about only through spontaneous insurrections of an aroused peasantry and that the intelligentsia could only help incite this discontent. Both camps were populist in the sense that their philosophic belief and their emotional commitment were dedicated to the salvation of the Russian *narod*. Nevertheless, they differed greatly on the issue of whether revolution emanated from a "conscious," intellectual elite guiding the oppressed and passive masses or whether the masses themselves possessed the necessary revolutionary energy and direction.

The substance of this argument was fed back into Russia primarily through pamphlets and books written by Bakunin and Lavrov, as well as through the increasingly popular works of West European materialists such as Buchner and Moleschott, and socialists such as Louis Blanc and Lassalle. One of the great problems which the Chaikovsky Circle faced in the early 1870s was how to deal with these intellectual currents from abroad, which were frequently at variance with the practical problems facing the revolutionaries in Russia.

The origins of the Chaikovsky Circle can be traced to 1869 in St. Petersburg when student groups began organizing at the university and the

9. Meijer, *Knowledge and Revolution*, p. 79.

Medical-Surgical Academy. The issues of this period are intimately connected with the activities and personality of S. G. Nechaev, and indicate the importance of ideology in the revolutionary milieu. Nechaev was partly responsible for circulating the first issue of Bakunin's paper, *Narodnoe Delo*. Also, in the winter of 1868–69, the "Program of Revolutionary Activity" was drawn up. It called for a social revolution and discussed plans for an uprising of the people across Russia.¹⁰ During the spring of 1869, at the time of the student disturbances in March at the Medical-Surgical Academy, Nechaev and his followers urged radical students in the capital to abandon the university and to form secret revolutionary organizations which would work in the countryside to agitate and direct peasant discontent in order to achieve a victorious revolution.

Numerous meetings were held to discuss proposals on revolutionary strategy. L. B. Goldenberg, a future *Chaikovets*, attended one of these meetings. Goldenberg opposed the plans submitted by the *Nechaevtsy*, arguing that the goal of revolutionary transformation could be better and more practically accomplished by training groups of workers to agitate in the provinces rather than preparing "completely inexperienced youth" for the task:

I reminded [them] that the Technological Institute has a school for the training of mechanics for factories and railroads, and that it would be more practical to make propagandists of socialist ideas out of them; they could spread agitation among the workers while at work. Since these are sons of mechanics, city people and peasants, their words will have greater meaning than the words of some Mr. Student from the university or Medical Academy.¹¹

At the heart of this debate was the question of whether the bearers of revolutionary activity were to be the intelligentsia or the *narod*. The interesting aspect of Goldenberg's position is that he expressed a viewpoint which was to become a matter of great concern to the Chaikovsky Circle in 1873. Most of the opposition to Nechaev was not, however, in favor of agitating either among the urban proletariat or the rural peasantry, but rather sought to redirect the strategy to the revolutionary role of the student youth. Mark Natanson, the founder of the Chaikovsky Circle, was one of Nechaev's opponents who took this position. A student at the Medical-Surgical Academy, Natanson had organized a small group with a library of socialist literature in 1869. During the fall of that year, he and V. M. Aleksandrov, a fellow medical student, rented a two-story house on *Vol'fovskaiia ulitsa* which gradually became a revolutionary center known as the *Vol'fovskaiia kommuna*. Many *Chaikovtsy* began

10. Itenberg, *Dvishenie*, p. 131. Nechaev and Tkachev are the presumed authors of this program.

11. "Vospominaniia L. B. Gol'denberga," *Katorga i ssylka*, 1924, no. 3(10), p. 102.

their activities at this commune. There were four rooms on each floor, all of which served for meetings, meals, and sleeping. The commune at its height had about fifty members actively participating.

Natanson's position on Nechaev has been reported quite inconsistently by his contemporaries. O. V. Aptekman claimed that Natanson was a leader among the anti-Nechaev elements in 1869, but S. P. Shvetsov said that Natanson felt he owed his revolutionary consciousness to Nechaev, who aroused in him the need to follow "the revolutionary path." Yet judging from most memoirs and from the unpublished draft of Natanson's autobiography, it is evident that he was definitely an opponent of Nechaev's, although not as conspicuously and decisively as Aptekman believed.¹² Nechaev's supporters frequently came to argue their position at meetings held by the *Vol'fovskaiia kommuna*. In order to formulate clearly a position in opposition to the *Nechaevtsy*, several Natanson circle members drew up a platform—the first of a series of manifestoes which occupied the group during the next four years.

I. E. Deniker participated in the debates at one of these meetings and described them in a memoir. One speaker advocated the formation of student circles in rural areas for the purpose of helping the suffering *narod*. A law student suggested that persons from the cities go to the countryside to inform the people of their legal rights as established by the 1861 Emancipation Decree. A *Nechaevets* then sharply countered these moderate proposals by arguing "that a scoundrel wrote the *polozhenie* of February 19 and that it is necessary to kill him . . . and to slaughter every minister." The polarization of views continued at further meetings until it was unclear whether it would be better "to distribute books or to assassinate."¹³ Finally a group of people drew up a draft of a program which was to settle the question of ideological orientation. The draft was entitled "The Program of the Gathering of Information on the Condition of the People." Deniker described it:

I copied out this program myself. It was composed quite sensibly; in it they gave instructions to students going on vacation in the cities or countryside that attention should be focused on the life of the people. There was the question of factory wages in various workshops, etc., and of peasant land allotments, and of the means of possessing land, of taxes and collections, etc., about the relationship of the peasant to religion, to the tsar, to authority, to the kulaks. There were questions of the sort: "Has the situation of the peasants improved in the countryside (villages, districts) since the time of the abolition of serfdom?" "If yes, then has the

12. For the outline draft of Natanson's autobiography and a full discussion of this problem, see B. Kozmin, "S. G. Nechaev i ego protivniki v 1868–69 gg.," in B. I. Gorev and B. P. Kozmin, eds., *Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie 1860-kh godov* (Moscow, 1932), pp. 176–90. On Natanson, see also O. V. Aptekman, "Dve dorogi teni," *Byloe*, 1921, no. 16, pp. 7–10.

13. "Vospominaniia I. E. Denikera," *Katorga i ssylka*, 1924, no. 4(11), pp. 24–25.

improvement been expressed materially or morally?" I note further that many questions were concerned with local ethnographic and social conditions.¹⁴

The program emphasized the circle's effort to discover the object of their revolutionary aspirations. The *narod* remained an abstraction for most of the radical students, and many of them had had little if any contact with the rural conditions of the peasantry. The program was essentially an effort to understand the people by conducting fact-finding surveys similar to those carried out by the *zemstvo* statisticians during the 1860s. The mood of the circle was definitely against accepting either the ideological doctrines of Bakunin or the tactics advocated by Nechaev. All activities related to *buntarstvo* were rejected in favor of a more moderate approach. The views of Nechaev and Bakunin appeared wild and impractical to them.

Prior to the implementation of the program of collecting information, the circle decided upon an intensive study of socialist writings and the distribution of this literature to provincial centers. During the year 1870 the members of the circle made great efforts to establish socialist libraries on the model of the earlier one formed by Natanson and Aleksandrov at the Medical-Surgical Academy. After a period of preparation, the enlightened *narodniki* hoped to spread their knowledge to the masses and transform the society. Regional branches developed in Moscow, Kiev, Kharkov, and Odessa in addition to the Petersburg group. The most frequently used books were the works of Spencer, John Stuart Mill, Buckle, Lavrov, and Chernyshevsky. The circle began to be referred to by contemporaries as the "book circle" (*knizhnyi kruzhok*).

By the end of 1870 the time seemed ripe to take some form of action. Now, however, it was not merely a problem of resolving the differences of intellectuals in the capital; the new provincial circles had to be considered also. Consequently Natanson and his followers decided to convene an "illegal" student congress during the Christmas holidays in Petersburg. Each provincial circle was instructed to elect delegates to the congress who were to present any position for which they sought general approval. The delegates arrived late in December from Moscow (3), Kiev (4), Kharkov (1), Odessa (1), and Kazan (1). The Petersburg circle was represented by Natanson, Aleksandrov, Chaikovsky, A. I. Serdiukov, V. G. Emme, F. N. Lermontov, and N. K. Lopatin, most of whom had been students at the Medical-Surgical Academy.¹⁵

The meetings took place during the first half of January 1871. The

14. *Ibid.*, p. 25. The identity of the author(s) of this document remains uncertain. Deniker suspected that V. F. Troshchansky (1846–98) had a part in composing it.

15. [Morozov], "Ocherk istorii kruzhka 'Chaikovtsev,'" pp. 215–16.

Petersburg delegates presented to the congress a wide program of revolutionary activity whose ultimate objective was a "movement to the people." They also outlined their immediate strategy, which was to precede revolutionary work among the people: "(1) socialist agitation among the youth and (2) *knizhnoe delo* as material for agitation and as a tool for organization according to the type which had been practiced in the north [i.e., in Petersburg]."¹⁶ Although the Natanson group was the single most influential and the largest circle at the congress, its members found that they could not gain unanimous consent from the provincial delegates. Indeed, most of them disagreed with the program. S. N. Iuzhakov, speaking for the Odessa delegation, wanted a united front on the basis of student-operated schools for the *narod*. Ia. I. Kovalsky from Kharkov argued for concentrating efforts exclusively on the distribution of books in order to provide general education for the people.¹⁷ The Kiev delegates wanted political agitation to be the central focus of future revolutionary activity, while the position of the Moscow delegation was closest to the original Petersburg proposal. From this array of views, the only common position that all the circles could agree upon was a loose framework based on the *knizhnoe delo*.

The most elaborate program of this period, one presumably composed for consideration at the congress, emanated from Moscow. Entitled "The Program for Circles of Self-Education and Practical Activity," it began with an open declaration of commitment to Lavrov's philosophy of progress.¹⁸ The goal of a progressive movement, according to the program, was the development of the personality through physical, intellectual, and moral relationships. Before this development could take place economic changes had to occur to raise the material level of the entire population. To realize this transformation,

16. *Ibid.*, p. 216. *Knizhnoe delo* broadly concerned the operation of distribution of socialist works to both students and the *narod*.

17. On the Kharkov Circle and Kovalsky, see Ia. D. Baum, "K istorii kharkovskikh revoliutsionnykh kruzhek nachala 70-kh gg.," *Katorga i ssylka*, 1931, no. 4(77), pp. 125-34, and E. Kovalskaia, "Po povodu pis'ma V. Maliutina," *ibid.*, pp. 135-42.

18. The history of the recovery of this document is interesting in itself. The first known mention of this program is in O. V. Aptekman's article on the Moscow circles published in 1923 ("Moskovskie revoliutsionnye kruzki," *Russkoe proshloe*, 1923, no. 1, p. 44). According to him the program was seized by the police during a search of the apartment of a member of the Petersburg circle, E. A. Trofimova. She in turn had received it from A. S. Prugavin, the leader of a Moscow circle and a personal friend of Natanson's. No further mention of the document can be found until 1930 when it was published in full by Ia. D. Baum. In an introductory article, Baum states that the program had been seized from Trofimova in April 1871 ("Programma dlia kruzhek samoobrazovaniia," *Katorga i ssylka*, 1930, no. 6[67], p. 95). Again it was ignored until N. A. Troitsky's recent article, which points out that it was discussed at the 1871 congress arranged by Natanson and was discovered by the police in the papers of Chaikovsky in the spring of that year. "O pervoi programme revoliutsionnogo narodnichestva 1870-kh godov," *Voprosy istorii*, 1961, no. 6, pp. 208-10. For his evidence, see [Morozov], "Ocherk istorii kruzka 'Chaikovtsev,'" pp. 221-22.

an encounter with the autocracy was inevitable. Only the collective action of people discontented with the autocracy would effect the necessary change. The people had to be led by a revolutionary party. In organizing this party of struggle, it was imperative that common objectives be agreed upon, that all personal differences between members be disregarded, and that the party itself be a model of dedication to the kind of truth and justice which was to dominate society in general. The conditions for truth and justice, as formulated by Lavrov, could be realized by furtively distributing books on philosophy forbidden by the state, and by educating the illiterate masses. Ultimately, "social forms" (*obshchestvennye formy*) had to be altered in Russia and this could not be accomplished without "a fundamental change in the entire state structure." This, then, was to be "the chief goal" of the new party.¹⁹

How was the struggle to take place and who was to carry it out? First, the transformation of social forms and the expression of the consciousness of abuses and grievances were the concerns of a "comparatively developed mind." Thus, the party was to be made up of "only educated or semieducated classes." The masses would act as "a simple tool for the achievement of political freedom." Second, the new principles had to be instilled into society so that when demands for change became strong enough, the battle against the monarchy would be successful and a new social structure could finally be established "on the principle of a federated republic with the motto of democratic socialism."

The second part of the program was titled "Knowledge and Solidarity," and contained a detailed account of the structure and function of the circles of self-education, which were to act as the agents of revolutionary change. The circles were to be composed of members of the educated classes who were responsible for "the spread of useful knowledge" and the creation of "conditions for the foundation of self-administration in all strata of Russian society." Preparation for this work was to vary according to the particular stratum to be dealt with (educated or not, workers or peasants, etc.). The bond between these circles was to be maintained through periodic meetings of selected members, the so-called "progressive practical activists." Another level of circles was to operate simultaneously in the workers' milieu through book distribution and teaching in schools. They were also to gather periodically at general meetings composed of representatives from all the district circles. It would be impossible to take into the circles the mass of young people who lacked "consciousness" and "practical activity" before they were prepared for these revolutionary tasks. Preparatory institutions, or "territorial circles," were to be established to train these young people in various districts. The author of the manifesto believed that by collecting statistics and running local socialist

19. "Programma dlia kruzhek samoobrazovaniia," p. 97.

libraries, the “shapeless mass” of Russian youth across the country would be transformed into activists who were conscious of the evils of the autocracy. They would then “know that one must act and know where to direct their energies in order to change the existing order into a better one.”²⁰

The Program for Circles of Self-Education was one of the clearest examples of the conflict over ideology at this time. Written in highly abstract language and owing much to the philosophical conceptions of Lavrov, it stressed the role of the radical youth as the revolutionary force which alone was capable of and responsible for social progress. The approach was gradualist and far more intellectual than activist, but nevertheless it did seek a total transformation of Russian society. This transformation was defined as the result of the activities of “critically thinking” individuals who had a moral obligation to serve and uplift the inert masses. The people were viewed as inherently lacking this consciousness. This program, by openly accepting the Lavrist theory of social change, revealed the extent to which some members of the circle felt the need to justify and explain their motives through ideology.

The program was seized by the police before most of the circle members had a chance to study it. It was, therefore, never voted on, and we have no record of the circle’s attitude as a whole on its ideological position. Nevertheless, the program clearly indicates that the ideological conflict abroad between the supporters of Lavrov and Bakunin was beginning to interfere with the development of the Chaikovsky Circle.

At the end of 1871 ideological disagreement continued, and the search for a satisfactory program of action resumed. A strong desire for a constitutional orientation now developed within the Chaikovsky Circle. In December a meeting was held at the home of Professor N. S. Tagantsev to decide whether to adopt the goal of a constitution for Russia as a revolutionary objective. After much debate, N. A. Charushin spoke for the majority when he told the fifty people present that a constitution would benefit only the privileged classes who by themselves “are weak and will not fight for a constitution.” The problem of the people would remain even with a constitution, which could only serve to “strengthen the exploitation of the masses and their oppression.”²¹ Charushin felt that “the intelligentsia must unite its cause with the general popular cause [*s delom obshchenarodnym*]” rather than the reverse.²²

The proposal in favor of constitutionalism was finally voted down at that

20. Ibid., pp. 98–100. For a discussion of this document by a Soviet scholar, see R. V. Filippov, *Ideologiia “Bol’shogo obshchestva propagandy,” 1869–74* (Petrozavodsk, 1963), pp. 31–44. See also “Avtobiograficheskoe zaiavlenie A. A. Kviatkovskogo,” *Krasnyi arkhiv*, 1926, no. 1 (14), pp. 159–75.

21. N. A. Charushin, “Chto bylo na sobranii u professora Tagantseva,” *Katorga i ssylka*, 1925, no. 2 (15), p. 100.

22. N. A. Charushin, *O dalekom proshlom* (Moscow, 1926), p. 102.

meeting, but the issue was not entirely resolved. The following May (1872) when P. A. Kropotkin entered the Chaikovskiy Circle in Petersburg, he found constitutionalism a subject of serious consideration. Advocates of this point of view argued that the circle could influence Alexander II "to give Russia a constitution."²³ As an entering member, Kropotkin was anxious to perform any task, and offered to serve as a constitutional agitator at the court. He believed himself qualified to do this without arousing suspicion. He was already personally acquainted with certain government officials as a result of family connections and his own experience in government service. The proposal, however, lacked support and was rejected. Constitutionalism was never again discussed by the circle.

In December 1871 Natanson was arrested, and several months later was exiled to a remote Siberian district. A few months before, Aleksandrov had emigrated to Switzerland with the intention of establishing a printing press for the circle there. The circle was weakened by the loss of these important members and began to split off into separate groups. Some members continued the distribution of books to the provinces; some, such as Perovskaia, began "going to the people,"²⁴ and others, such as Serdiukov and Nizovkin, began to devote themselves entirely to agitation among factory workers in Petersburg. Between the summers of 1871 and 1872 the membership altered considerably as new people were admitted more easily. Before his departure, Natanson had entrusted his responsibilities to Chaikovskiy, who was regarded from then on as the leader of the circle which bore his name. Also at this time a separate women's circle which had been pursuing a program of self-education merged with the Chaikovskiy Circle. It included the Kornilov sisters, Perovskaia, and others, some of whom had already been loosely affiliated with the men's group.²⁵ The transition in membership also involved a corresponding transition in the ideological conflicts of the period.

The Chaikovskiy Circle began the most effective period of its activities in 1872 after its reorganization in Petersburg. "Strictly speaking, the existence of an organized circle with a defined physiognomy began from that time," writes an early chronicler of the circle.²⁶ The members were not to be bound by any written regulations or ideological programs. All members were regarded as equals, with no hierarchical distinctions; there was, therefore, neither a chairman nor an executive committee. The tactics of agitation among

23. P. A. Kropotkin, *Zapiski revoliutsionera* (Moscow and Leningrad, 1932), p. 192.

24. For her letters from this period, see "Neizdannye pis'ma S. L. Perovskoi," *Krasnyi arkhiv*, 1923, vol. 3, pp. 243-50.

25. See A. Kornilova-Moroz, "Perovskaia i osnovanie kruzha Chaikovtsev," *Katorga i ssylka*, 1926, no. 1(22), pp. 7-30.

26. [Morozov], "Ocherk istorii kruzha 'Chaikovtsev,'" p. 224.

the urban workers (*rabochee delo*) were assigned the highest priority. At the same time, they continued to distribute socialist literature to the provincial affiliated circles. They developed a complicated correspondence in code in order to communicate with the provincial circles across the country.²⁷

Despite efforts to neutralize ideological struggles and to avoid enforcing a political manifesto upon the members, there was no lack of such manifestoes written between 1872 and 1874. At least two were composed in 1872. The first was found by the police in the papers of Chaikovsky. The authorship of the document is not certain. It was written in the form of a proclamation calling for another radical student congress along the lines of the one held the previous year. It opened with the following exhortation:

We, the students of the capital, aroused by the arbitrariness of the government which has moved to the extreme limits of despotism and demoralized the enormous mass of student youth, have come to the conclusion that the united form of action has brought nothing except useless sacrifices; thus, for the achievement of our rights and freedoms, as well as those of our future comrades, it is necessary to act collectively and [to become] decentralized. [Then] we can be assured that victory is ours!²⁸

In order to explain the reasons for this viewpoint and to hear the views of other circles, the manifesto called for a general congress of students from all institutions of higher learning. The congress was to provide a forum for an exchange of views among members of various circles. A plea was issued for all comrades to gather together their "insignificant forces" in order to bring "your protest to us." Conditions had worsened to the point where the alternatives had been reduced to the destruction of the status quo or the destruction of the forces of revolution. If a student congress were held, the general movement could be strengthened and students could be aroused from their "lethargic sleep." The purpose of the congress would be to form a united movement of federated groups in various centers. All questions relating to the maintenance of this movement were to be considered at the congress.²⁹

Although the congress was never convened, the proclamation does express some interesting conceptions. There was no mention of the *narod* or of the workers. Furthermore, the author of the proclamation did not raise any

27. For a discussion of the membership and operations of the circle at this time, see N. A. Troitsky, "Bol'shoe obshchestvo propagandy, 1871-1874 gg.," *Istoriia SSSR*, 1962, no. 5, pp. 74-91, and Venturi, *Roots of Revolution*, pp. 469-506.

28. "Proklamatsiia 1872," *Byloe*, 1912, no. 14, p. 64. In his reminiscences, Chaikovsky wrote that at the time of his arrest in the spring of 1872 the police found "a paper on students' congresses written by some of my friends and left in my room in my absence, without my knowledge. They tried by all means to find proofs of my authorship of this paper, but failed." "Nicholas Tchaykovsky's Narrative," in G. H. Perris, *Russia in Revolution* (New York, 1905), p. 204.

29. "Proklamatsiia 1872," *Byloe*, 1912, no. 14, p. 65.

ideological issues. The proclamation was designed to bring into the revolutionary movement unpoliticized and moderate youth, and thus it dealt exclusively with the rights and freedoms of students. Compared to the 1871 congress, the platform for this meeting was far more specific and far less radical. Perhaps most important was the emphasis on decentralization. This attitude is in part traceable to the reaction produced by the Nechaev trials held in the summer of 1871. Increasing numbers of populists began opposing the conception of a centralized organization directing nationwide revolutionary activities, which was associated with the conspiratorial tendencies of Nechaev.³⁰

The second document from 1872 originated in the Moscow section of the Chaikovsky Circle. The main operations of this group involved propaganda and agitation in the university and book distribution to provincial areas around the city. S. L. Kliachko, one of the delegates to the 1871 congress in Petersburg, was the acknowledged leader of the Moscow *Chaikovtsy*. Despite the frequent rejections of hierarchical distinctions and official leadership found in the memoir literature, the figure of Kliachko, like those of Natanson and Perovskaia, has been enshrined by his contemporaries. L. Kornilova characterized him in this manner: "Concerning the movement among the youth, Natanson is a fanatic; second to him is Kliachko. And if there were more of such activists, the fulfillment of the holy cause would be greatly advanced."³¹

The Kliachko circle's program, known as the "Note" of V. P. Sidoratsky, was taken by the Third Section in 1872. The note centered on the idea of a constitution, which had been rejected previously by the Petersburg *Chaikovtsy*, and was concerned with raising certain unresolved problems for consideration:

By constitution we understand that form of rule which guarantees: (a) the right for society through representatives to participate in the legislative procedure of public discussion and the confirmation of legislative measures, together with the right of private initiative; the right of inspection for the fulfillment of administrative law . . . ; full separation of the judiciary from the administration . . . (b) for individual persons, the right of freedom of speech, science, and activity [*slova, nauki i deiatel'nosti*].³²

Among the related questions raised for consideration were whether the masses as well as the intelligentsia stood to gain in such a constitutional

30. Almost every memoir expresses this feeling. See, for example, Charushin, *O dalekom prošlom*, pp. 78-79, and Figner, *Polnoe sobranie sochineniia*, 1: 91. There was an additional reason for the circle's hostility toward Nechaev in that Natanson and Aleksandrov had both been arrested and questioned in connection with the Ivanov murder. The circle came under police surveillance from then on. See B. P. Kozmin, ed., *Nechaev i nechaevtsy* (Moscow and Leningrad, 1931), pp. 135-37.

31. Cited in O. V. Aptekman, "Moskovskie revoliutsionnye kruzhki: Moskovskie Chaikovtsy," *Russkoe prošloe*, 1923, no. 2, p. 92.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 99. On Sidoratsky, see A. Kunkl, *Dolgushintsy* (Moscow, 1932).

system, whether a constitution was possible in Russia, and what value a democratic party would have for the people in a constitutional government. These questions, which made up the bulk of the Sidoratsky note, were drawn up for discussion at meetings and therefore were left unanswered in the text. There is an absence of any obvious ideological position beyond a general interest in Western constitutionalism.

P. A. Kropotkin, a member of the Petersburg group since the spring of 1872, composed the final manifesto related to the Chaikovsky Circle in 1873. Kropotkin's manifesto marked a sharp departure from the more moderate platforms of 1872 and represented the ideological antithesis of the 1871 Program for Circles of Self-Education. In order to comprehend the significance of such a shift, one must keep in mind the evolution of the Petersburg *Chaikovtsy* up to this time.

The organization of the Chaikovsky Circle had been structured along the lines of a federated system of cooperating circles, not unlike the arrangement which had been called for in the 1872 Proclamation. Each affiliated circle maintained full autonomy, operationally and ideologically. In Petersburg the alteration in membership which had occurred in 1872 brought about a change in the activities of the circle. The *knizhnoe delo* had been transformed from the distribution of intellectually oriented socialist literature designed for educated youth to the writing, printing, and distribution of radical pamphlets catering to the mind of the rural peasant.³³ This tactical change was reflected also in the growing importance of the *rabochee delo*. According to Chaikovsky, at the end of 1872 the earlier emphasis on propaganda among the intelligentsia was replaced by similar activity among the Petersburg workers.³⁴ The *rabochee delo*, which originally had been the interest of only a few members of the circle, became the paramount activity of the circle during 1873–74. Those members favoring this activity regarded the workers, in the words of a participant, as the material from which they could shape “the purest revolutionary element.”³⁵

Also at this time, the circle members became involved in the question of their relationship as an organization to the Russian revolutionary émigrés. There are varying versions of the nature of this debate, depending upon the

33. See V. F. Zakharina, “Revoliutsionnaia propagandistskaia literatura 70-kh godov XIX v.,” *Istoricheskie zapiski*, 71 (1962): 74–112. The best guide to the literature written by members of the Chaikovsky Circle and published by their press in Switzerland is S. N. Valk and B. P. Kozmin, eds., *Russkaia podpol'naiia i zarubezhnaia pečat'* (Moscow, 1935), vol. 1.

34. Chaikovsky, “Cherez polstoletiia,” *Golos minuvshago*, p. 182.

35. Testimony of A. V. Nizovkin, Apr. 14, 1874, in Itenberg, ed., *Revoliutsionnoe narodnichestvo*, 1: 246. See also Sh. M. Levin, “Kruzhok Chaikovtsev i propaganda sredi peterburgskikh rabochikh v nachale 1870-kh gg.,” *Katorga i ssylka*, 1929, no. 12 (61), pp. 7–27, and Itenberg, *Dvishenie*, pp. 186–93.

ideological persuasion of the memoirist, but there was certainly disagreement on whether the circle was to become attached to the Bakuninists or the Lavrists. Kropotkin's version is that until 1873 the *Chaikovtsy* had remained independent of associations with the émigré groups which, they felt, had little understanding of events inside Russia. As a result, they had established their own printing press in Switzerland under Aleksandrov's guidance rather than utilizing the previously established presses operated there by the Russian émigrés. In 1873, however, when the split between the followers of Bakunin and Lavrov was at its height, the Petersburg *Chaikovtsy* began discussing the issue and taking sides. Finally, at one meeting a circle member suggested uniting with one of the groups abroad, and "we raised heated arguments over which of the proposed journals we were to merge with."³⁶ After further debates, the membership decided to send a delegate to visit both camps in Switzerland. This delegate was to present his findings to the circle when he returned, and a vote on affiliation would then be taken. D. A. Klements was selected because of his neutrality on the entire issue. However, at the next meeting of the circle, Kropotkin discovered to his surprise that "not Klements, but [M. V.] Kuprianov had traveled to Zurich, a man of definitely moderate convictions. . . . He did not even see the Bakuninists or Bakunin in Zurich, but went directly to conclude an agreement with the Lavrists by which Lavrov's journal *Vpered!* would be received and distributed by our circle."³⁷

Kropotkin felt that the most important work of the circle was agitation among factory workers and propaganda in the countryside. Lavrov's program was in complete contradiction to these activities: it was aimed at the student youth, not the workers and peasants, and urged unobtrusive preparation instead of direct, incendiary action. Kropotkin, however, was in the minority, and the circle continued to distribute the journal for a short time, although it remained fairly independent of either faction abroad. Lavrov's program ultimately proved unsatisfying to the circle members.

Kropotkin's sympathies for the Bakuninist position were well known to the circle by this time. He often spoke at meetings of favoring local uprisings, regardless of the preparation beforehand by student circles, and advocated the ideological viewpoint of the Bakuninist wing of the First International. It is, however, more difficult to ascertain the number of other Bakuninist sympathizers in the circle. Kropotkin claimed he was most strongly supported by Kravchinsky, Perovskaia, and Charushin. Of these people, only Kravchinsky has left evidence of his violent opposition to Lavrov's conceptions and of his

36. Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Oktiabr'skoi revoliutsii (TsGAOR), fond 1129, opis' 3, ed. khr. 195, list 12.

37. *Ibid.*, 1. 13. See also Kropotkin, *Zapiski revoliutsionera*, pp. 221–22.

affinities to certain Bakuninist ideas.³⁸ On the other hand, Charushin's account of these ideological controversies contains a strong indictment of Kropotkin's interpretation.³⁹

In any case, Kropotkin's 1873 manifesto was the most detailed program of the period (some eighty-five pages in the original manuscript). It was discovered by the police in March 1874. A Third Section report dated March 18 states that among the items found during a search of the room of I. I. Gauenshtein, a student at the Medical-Surgical Academy who had been affiliated with the Chaikovsky Circle, were two copies of a revolutionary manifesto entitled "Must We Concern Ourselves with an Examination of the Ideal of a Future System," later identified as having been written by P. A. Kropotkin.⁴⁰ The importance the government attached to this document was extraordinary. One police report which analyzed developments between 1872 and 1874 concluded that the goal of the revolutionaries had been "the subversion of the existing order," the plan for which had been "diagramed in its main features in the program of Prince Kropotkin."⁴¹ The manifesto furthermore represents Kropotkin's first major political work and thus is a crucial document both as a reflection of his formative thinking and as a statement on the nature of the Russian revolutionary movement.

The manifesto was divided into two parts, the first of which was a theoretical discussion of the ideals to be realized in a future society, and the second, an analysis of the practical tactics of a Russian revolutionary party seeking to achieve these goals. In the first section Kropotkin proposed to examine several aspects of the general ideal of equality which all socialists presumably had in common. He found that property, capital, and the means of production could not be the possession either of private individuals or of the

38. S. M. Kravchinsky, "Pis'ma S. M. Kravchinskogo (Stepniaka) P. L. Lavrovu," *Byloe*, 1912, no. 14, pp. 52-63.

39. Charushin, *O dalekom proshlom*, pp. 135-37.

40. TsGAOR, f. 112, op. 1, ed. khr. 390, l. 11. It was completed around November 1873 and was first published, albeit in a shortened version, in *Byloe*, 1921, no. 17, pp. 3-38. This version was taken from a police copy adapted for the Committee of Ministers (TsGAOR, f. 109, op. III *ekspeditsii*, ed. khr. 144, ch. 15). The original is in TsGAOR, f. 112, op. 2, ed. khr. 683, and has recently been published in full in Itenberg, ed., *Revoliutsionnoe narodnichestvo*, 1: 55-118. The only other published variant is in N. K. Karataev, ed., *Narodnicheskaia ekonomicheskaia literatura* (Moscow, 1958), pp. 236-56, but it is incomplete.

41. TsGAOR, f. 109, op. III *ekspeditsii*, ed. khr. 146, l. 78 ob. It should be noted that another document called "The Program of Revolutionary Propaganda," which has been attributed incorrectly to P. A. Kropotkin, is actually the work of his brother Alexander. The original is in TsGAOR, f. 1762, op. 4, ed. khr. 244, ll. 74-77, and has been published in Karataev, *Narodnicheskaia ekonomicheskaia literatura*, pp. 233-35. See also Itenberg, *Dvizhenie*, pp. 243-46.

state if economic egalitarianism was to be achieved. He was especially critical of state control:

And the wider the sphere of activity of this government, the greater the danger of enslavement for society, the greater the likelihood that the government will cease to be the expression of the interests and aspirations of the majority.

Thus, the masses have understood, just as have many separate thinkers before, that the transfer of the most essential element of the life of society into the hands of any elected government whatsoever would be a source of the most essential inconveniences, if not simply the suicide of society.⁴²

Capital and the means of production had to become the common property of everyone in the society. To guarantee this, labor had to be redefined as useful work which answered some need in a society. As a result, the "privileged labor" of intellectuals and managerial elites had to be abolished. Intellectuals were to engage in useful physical labor and workers were to take over a share of the desk jobs. How could this be accomplished? Kropotkin saw the answer in the reorganization of education. The privileged labor force was but a product of a superior education, available to a small minority of the population. To correct this disparity, he called for new schools whose course of study was to be integrally related to the basic needs of the society. What had to be recognized was "the necessity to close all universities, academies, and institutions of higher learning and to open instead trade schools [*shkola-master-skaia*]" which would eventually educate the masses and eliminate the inequalities of the older system.⁴³

As for government, Kropotkin decided it was the cause of many inequalities and provided no indispensable benefit. The officialdom and bureaucracy upon which all forms of government rested were concerned with power and control rather than with the needs of the people:

Thus, in connection with the aforementioned about the inability of any government to act fairly and about its harmfulness, we propose as . . . a condition of equality to recognize the necessity of the destruction of every currently existing government and to give the producing *obshchiny* and artels the opportunity to direct unconditionally all affairs concerning the members of the *obshchiny* and artels, uniting on the basis of free agreements. . . .⁴⁴

The second part of the manifesto began by declaring that the social transformation required to realize this egalitarian society could be achieved only

42. P. A. Kropotkin, "Dolzhny-li my zaniat'sia rassmotreniem budushchego stroia," in Itenberg, ed., *Revoliutsionnoe narodnichestvo*, 1: 59.

43. *Ibid.*, 1: 63, 67.

44. *Ibid.*, 1: 73.

through social revolution. All efforts at reform within the framework of the society were illusory and constituted diversions from the fundamental issue. Kropotkin believed that the overriding goal of every revolutionary should be the disruption and destruction of the institutions and power of the existing society. The revolutionary's task in this upheaval was to ignite the discontent of the masses:

Thus our goal must be to implement our force so as to hasten this outburst, to clarify those hopes and aspirations which exist in unclear forms among the enormous majority, to be able at the proper time to utilize such circumstances so that the outburst would have the most favorable result, and finally, [to insure] that the outburst occur in the name of clearly expressed demands, namely, those that we expressed above.⁴⁵

In defining the desired revolutionary party, Kropotkin stated that it had to orient itself exclusively to the *narod* rather than to the intelligentsia. The latter was still too attached to its privileged origins and to the institutions of the society which had to be overthrown. On the other hand, the masses were far more numerous and far more discontented, and therefore were to be the object of the party's agitation. The revolutionaries had to be prepared to live the daily life of the common man in order to spread propaganda and win sympathizers. At first the intelligentsia would perform this function because they were more prepared, but it had to be acknowledged that "an agitator from the people will be incomparably more useful than an agitator from the civilized milieu."⁴⁶ These new men, the *narodnye agitatory*, would form the foundation of the future society. The intelligentsia would train them and phase itself out; these agitators from the people, as they became more numerous, would begin to establish the new institutions.

In a final section, Kropotkin dealt with the question of affiliation with parties abroad. He concluded that although the ideological sympathies of the revolutionary party were with the federalist wing of the International, "we do not intend to engage in a tightly organized union" with them or with any other group: "We intend to develop here independent of any leadership from émigré parties."⁴⁷

45. *Ibid.*, 1: 85.

46. *Ibid.*, 1: 94.

47. *Ibid.*, 1: 115. The program drafted at this time by Alexander Livanov, the leader of a radical circle in Nizhny Novgorod, bears a close resemblance in many respects to Kropotkin's manifesto. No evidence exists, however, to prove that Livanov had ever read Kropotkin's program. Livanov had connections with the Petersburg *Chaikovtsy* but was not officially part of the provincial network of the circle. For the text of his program, see V. Bazanov, "Aleksandr Livanov i ego traktat 'chto delat'?", *Russkaia literatura*, 1963, no. 3, pp. 109–38. See also V. N. Ginev, *Narodnicheskoe dvizhenie v srednem povolzh'e* (Moscow and Leningrad, 1966), p. 38, and P. S. Tkachenko, "O nekotorykh

In November 1873 the police began a series of raids which paralyzed the most important operations of the circle at the time the *Chaikovtsy* were discussing Kropotkin's manifesto. By the following March all key members of the circle had been arrested. Kropotkin, one of the last to be taken, was arrested on the morning of March 22, 1874, as he was preparing to flee the capital.⁴⁸ For all practical purposes, the existence of the Chaikovsky Circle came to an end at this time.

After the arrest of the leading Chaikovsky Circle members, the government began analyzing the activities of the circle. The conclusions of the government are particularly interesting from the standpoint of the ideological conflicts of the period. The evidence gathered by the police (prisoners' testimonies and confiscated manifestoes) was examined by Alexander II's Committee of Ministers at secret meetings held on March 18 and 26, 1875. The ministers were convinced that Kropotkin, as the author of the Chaikovsky Circle manifesto, was the ideologist of the entire revolutionary movement. His 1873 manifesto, which was summarized in detail by the ministers, was viewed as a blueprint for the activities of the revolutionaries. They believed that the agitation conducted in the cities and in the countryside was the realization of the "practical measures" outlined in the manifesto. The intention in both cases was to undermine the existing order and to establish a future society "without any government."⁴⁹ Noting the similarity in ideas between Kropotkin's manifesto and Bakunin's writings, the ministers decided that the Chaikovsky Circle had functioned under "Bakuninist leadership."⁵⁰ Carefully organized by this leadership, the small circles had spread from Petersburg to the rural areas of the empire and had culminated in the massive movement "to the people" during the summer of 1874. These "criminal ideas" had originated in Western Europe, the ministers reasoned, and had been brought to Russia by revolutionaries who had visited abroad. Thus the ministers attempted to link together the ideology of the Russian colony in Switzerland with the activities of the Chaikovsky Circle in Russia.⁵¹

The government ministers thought they had located the organizing genius

programmno-takticheskikh voprosakh revoliutsionnogo narodnchestva 70-kh godov," *Voprosy istorii*, 1969, no. 1, pp. 196-201.

48. TsGAOR, f. 112, op. 1, ed. khr. 351, ll. 8, 43 ob., 129.

49. Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv Leningrada (TsGIAL), f. 1263, op. 1, ed. khr. 3722a, ll. 13-13 ob.

50. *Ibid.*, l. 26.

51. *Ibid.*, l. 34. This general thesis remained essentially unchanged and, together with additional evidence, was presented at the Trial of the 193 as the government's official interpretation of the revolutionary movement. Pahlen, one of the ministers on the council, later wrote his own memorandum of these meetings which reiterated the emphasis on Kropotkin as one of the most important figures in the movement. See Pahlen's memorandum, reprinted in L. Deich, *Sotsialisticheskoe dvizhenie nachala 70-kh godov v Rossii* (Rostov-on-Don, 1925), p. 56. For the discussion of Kropotkin's manifesto at the Trial of the 193, see B. Basilevsky (V. Ia. Iakovlev), ed., *Gosudarstvennyia prestupleniia v Rossii v XIX veka* (n.p., n.d.), 3: 15-16.

and ideology of the revolutionary movement. Their conclusion, however, was an inaccurate interpretation of the significance of the 1873 manifesto. Kropotkin was the chief theoretician neither of the revolutionary movement nor of the Chaikovsky Circle. The movement itself was far more fragmented than the government suspected. The Chaikovsky Circle was certainly the most advanced revolutionary circle of the early 1870s, but it had never been able to maintain a common ideological position. Kropotkin's program of 1873 was but the last of a series of programs before the demise of the circle the following year, none of which had been officially accepted by the entire membership. Most *Chaikovtsy* bitterly criticized Kropotkin's manifesto for its anarchism, its *buntarstvo*, and even for its populism, which itself seemed too radical. Kropotkin insisted on agitating among the *narod*, urban and rural, for the purpose of bringing about a revolution to end all government, but there was little support for these views. According to one memoirist, "Kropotkin then was without a doubt on the side of the anarchist course," while the rest of the circle remained "statists" (*gosudarstvenniki*).⁵² Kropotkin was clearly in the minority and represented an extreme wing of opinion in the circle.

Throughout the five years of its existence, the Chaikovsky Circle maintained a delicately balanced autonomous position with respect to the ideological conflicts of the Russian colony abroad. No member of the circle admitted any identification with either the Bakuninist or the Lavrist camps, despite the predilections of many members to favor one or another of these sides. Chaikovsky himself was bitterly critical of Lavrov's emphasis on the intelligentsia as the transmitting agent of socialism. In a letter which he wrote to Lavrov's journal *Vpered!* he forcefully argued that Lavrov's appeal to knowledge would only induce passivity and delay the revolution. He further claimed that Lavrov was "living in abstract dreams and ideas" in believing that knowledge and consciousness would lead to revolution; in fact, these were the possessions of an elite, of a "monopolizing force in contemporary society," from which the people stood to gain nothing.⁵³

Kravchinsky, as indicated earlier, was also against accepting a Lavrist program. In a letter written to Lavrov in 1875, he wrote that "the enormous majority of revolutionary youth was against your organ [*Vpered!*] and your orientation."⁵⁴ On the other hand, there is evidence to show that the hostility

52. N. A. Charushin, "Neskol'ko slov o P. A. Kropotkine," *Biulletin' vserossiskogo obshchestvennogo komiteta po wekovecheniu pamiati P. A. Kropotkina*, 1924, no. 1, p. 18. For a full discussion of the attitudes of the *Chaikovtsy* toward Kropotkin, see my unpublished dissertation, "The Formative Years of P. A. Kropotkin, 1842-1876: A Study of the Origins and Development of Populist Attitudes in Russia" (University of Chicago, 1967), pp. 296-306.

53. "Pis'mo iz Peterburga," *Vpered!* (London), 3 (1874): 147-53. It should be added that Chaikovsky was not sympathetic to Bakunin either.

54. B. Nikolaevsky, "S. M. Kravchinskii i P. L. Lavrov v 1875 g.," *Na chuzhoi storone*, 1925, no. 10, p. 200. See also note 38 above.

to Bakunin was equally strong in the circle. Charushin wrote that "Bakunists were not acceptable to us and we would not permit any uniting with them."⁵⁵ Even Kropotkin, who was closest to the Bakuninist position, realized that explicit ties to Bakunin's wing of the International were out of the question.

This autonomy, however, was achieved at a price. The determination of the circle members to maintain a revolutionary organization willing to face the practical realities of the political conditions in Russia entailed drastic changes in orientation. Indeed, the evolution of the Chaikovsky Circle indicates a shift from a group of young radical intellectuals interested in expanding their own knowledge to a revolutionary underground committed to altering the political and social conditions of the country. In 1869, when the circle was founded, most of the members were concerned with reading and discussing the forbidden works of European and Russian socialists. The urge somehow to apply these theories to improve Russia brought about a new situation. The absence of legal reformist parties, the omnipresence of the gendarmerie, the static nature of the autocracy, and the enormous gap between Russian social classes compelled growing numbers of radical students to narrow debate, clarify tactics, and deal with questions of ideology.

The consequences of this change were important. Essentially, the requirements of ideological commitment meant adopting a theory of social change, a program of action to bring about this change, and the renunciation of personal intellectual gratification for the special role of an agent of social progress. Thus the moral bond of brotherhood which originally united the circle members was submerged beneath the search for a means of achieving desired goals. As these goals became more clearly defined, deviations from them were considered intolerable. Moderate notions concerning constitutionalism were dismissed as unfeasible in the face of a repressive autocracy. Certain members were expelled. The Bakuninist Lermontov, one of the more radical members, was ousted and eventually formed his own circle. Aleksandrov, one of the founders of the circle, was also disposed of because of certain personality conflicts with other members. Nizovkin, who was one of the first *Chaikovtsy* to direct attention to the potentialities of radicalizing the urban proletariat, was expelled.

This is not to say that the Chaikovsky Circle ever became completely united under a common ideological banner. On the contrary, the basic ques-

55. Charushin, *O dalekom proshlom*, pp. 136-37. According to Meijer, relations between the political émigrés of the Russian colony in Switzerland and Russian revolutionaries at home "had no more than a technical importance and remained outside the colony proper" (*Knowledge and Revolution*, p. 83). Venturi states (*Roots of Revolution*, pp. 429, 438, 459) that "populism received far less direction from exile than is generally thought." Neither Bakunin nor Lavrov was able to convert the *Chaikovtsy* to their respective positions.

tions concerning tactics were never adequately resolved. The character of the organization differed drastically from that of the Russian colony in Switzerland in this regard. The émigré factions were more rigid and polarized. They were not questioning whether an ideology should be adopted but, rather, which of two competing programs should be adopted as an ideological position. The *Chaikovtsy*, by contrast, were far less dogmatic. They entertained a wide and diverse assortment of ideas, and resisted accepting an ideology binding for the entire membership.

The circle refused to elect or appoint chairmen or executive committees: there was no explicit hierarchy or leadership. As we have seen, none of the programs submitted for acceptance gained the approval of the entire circle. Heterogeneity in class background and political philosophy continued to mark the membership throughout the period. More significant, the search for common revolutionary objectives produced a continual oscillation between the principles of centralized and federalist organizational frameworks, between an orientation focused on the intelligentsia and one geared to the *narod*, between agitation in the city and the countryside, and between Lavrist and Bakuninist sympathies. In the midst of this general ambiguity, the 1871 Program for Circles of Self-Education and the 1873 Kropotkin manifesto stand out sharply because of their explicit ideological stances.

One of the most important by-products of these conflicts within the Chaikovsky Circle was the firm desire of later revolutionaries to resolve all tactical and ideological questions. From the ashes of this crisis, a determined group of *Chaikovtsy* who had survived the arrests of 1874 began to form a new organization almost immediately. They played a leading role in the populist congress held in Moscow in 1875 which led to the rise of the second *Zemlia i Volia*.⁵⁶ It is interesting to note how the process of self-definition had reversed itself: now the debates were held as a prerequisite for the creation of a new organization. The experience of later years was to show that ideological programs did in fact become one of the predominant features of the Russian revolutionary movement. It became apparent to many radicals that a successful revolutionary party had to give up the intellectual luxury of discussions about "critically thinking" people, remote social revolutions rooted in the moral convictions of an educated elite, and romanticized pictures of mass outbreaks by the people. The experiment in nonideological, antiprogrammatic, and egalitarian organizational structure produced precisely the opposite tendencies as a legacy for the future.

56. G. M. Lifshits, "K istorii Moskovskogo s'ezda narodnikov 1875 g.," *Istoriia SSSR*, 1965, no. 4, p. 145. See also G. M. Lifshits and K. G. Liashenko, "Kak sozdavalas' programma vtoroi 'Zemli i Voli,'" *Voprosy istorii*, 1965, no. 9, pp. 36–50.