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Recent Soviet Historiography of Russian Revolutionary Populism

Lenin selected from the “populist heritage” and praised at various times those points which might strengthen his attempt to make a revolution, and condemned whatever parts did not relate well to a particular phase of his program. Wielders of Soviet power since Lenin have continued to demonstrate this artificial ideological flexibility in their efforts to perpetuate the victory of 1917. As political and national requirements have changed, the regime has demanded that interpretations of the revolutionary populist movement complement these developments.

Soviet historiography of revolutionary populism prior to 1956 must be divided into two periods—before and after the onslaught of Stalinization in the early 1930s.¹ In the first of these periods, research and writing on populism flourished. The journals *Byloe* (1917–29), *Katorga i ssylka* (1921–35), and *Krasnyi archiv* (1922–41) devoted considerable space to biographical sketches, memoir literature, and interpretive articles on the populists. Monographs and commemorative biographies also appeared. Indeed the 1920s saw a rather full exposure of the Marxists’ ambivalent attitudes toward populism.² Diverse

1. As Richard Pipes has shown, it is necessary to clarify one’s use of the word “populism,” especially with regard to periodization. Pipes distinguishes the “subjective and narrow original meaning” of the term *narodnichestvo*, as conceived by the revolutionary intelligentsia of the late 1870s to describe the stage of the revolutionary movement, 1875–78, from the “broad and objective” connotation of the word as introduced by Russian Marxists of the early 1890s. Richard Pipes, “*Narodnichestvo: A Semantic Inquiry*,” *Slavic Review*, 23, no. 3 (September 1964): 441–58. Franco Venturi, in his classic work on the Russian revolutionary movement (*Il populismo russo*, 1952, or in its English version, *Roots of Revolution*, 1960), defines populism as the phase of the revolutionary movement from 1848 to 1881, while according to Avrahm Yarmolinsky populism “dominated the radical scene from the sixties until nearly the end of the century.” Avrahm Yarmolinsky, *Road to Revolution: A Century of Russian Radicalism* (New York, 1962), pp. 168–69. Since this paper is concerned with Soviet historiography, I have followed the practice of Soviet historians in referring to Russian revolutionary populism (*russkoe revoliutsionnoe narodnichestvo*) of the 1870s.

2. Marxist ambivalence toward Russian revolutionary populism has rather profound

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interpretations prevailed in a controversial but healthy atmosphere, and even certain nonparty historians expressed their views freely. There was little hesitation about stating one's ideas.³

A party-line interpretation emerged only in the early 1930s, as part of Stalin's general plan to expose real or supposed elements of opposition. In the general rewriting of history the fine distinctions between differing interpretations of populism disappeared. *Byloe* and *Katorga i ssylka* were forced out of existence. The new Stalinist journal, *Bor'ba klassov*, lashed out at I. A. Teodorovich, who had drawn parallels between the populists of the 1870s and the Bolsheviks, labeling his work "a crude revision of Marxism-Leninism on the crucial hegemony of the proletariat."⁴ From 1935 to the mid-1950s very few works dealing with populism in any form appeared in the Soviet Union. The official guide to "correct" interpretations of Russian history during the Stalin era, the *Short Course*, presented a stinging criticism of the populism of the 1870s. Separating them from their revolutionary predecessors of the 1860s the *Short Course* called the populists the enemies of Marxism and denied that they were the revolutionary ancestors of Bolshevism.⁵ Populism was portrayed as a single, ideologically unified movement spanning the seventies, eighties, and nineties—a movement whose essential goal was peasant reform and whose strategy was completely inappropriate for the objective requirements of late nineteenth-century Russia. The *Short Course* noted that Marxism could be established in Russia only after the complete defeat of populism.

What were the motives behind Stalin's artificial resolution of Soviet historians' conflicting interpretations of populism? We might offer two hypotheses. In the first place, Stalin's program of absolute subordination and consolidation of Soviet society allowed little room for diversity of opinion in any field, including history. Yet as the active historical debate of the pre-Stalinist era had demonstrated, any adequate treatment of populism necessitated a com-

roots among the ideological forefathers to whom Soviet historians must refer. Marx and Engels appear to have been generally perplexed, although occasionally encouraged, by the Russian situation. See David Mitrany, *Marx Against the Peasant: A Study in Social Dogmatism* (Chapel Hill, 1951), pp. 30–35. Plekhanov, of course, was an ardent populist before he became a Marxist. As suggested above, Lenin's evaluation of the populists of the 1870s varied as a function of strategy requirements. Thus a certain amount of confusion confronts anyone who wishes to find in Lenin's writings a single, ideologically "correct" interpretation of the period.

3. The reader is here referred to Jonathan Frankel's excellent article, "Party Genealogy and the Soviet Historians (1920–1938)," *Slavic Review*, 25, no. 4 (December 1966): 563–603.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 599.

5. The ideologues of the 1860s—Chernyshevsky, Dobroliubov, and Pisarev—have generally received a good press in the Soviet Union. They have been recognized as "revolutionary democrats" and the chief representatives of the so-called Russian Enlightenment, because they were the first to propose an uncompromising struggle of the Russian masses against the tsar, the church, and the nobility.

plex, differentiated, sophisticated approach. This complexity rendered the history of populism vulnerable to attack by the simplistic methodology of Stalinism.

Another possible explanation for Stalin's renunciation of the populists concerns the nature of the revolutionary movement of the 1870s. Following the assassination of Sergei Kirov in 1934, Stalin's ideological henchman, Zhdanov, announced that it would be improper to relate the history of the People's Will to the Soviet youth, for the example could only inspire further thoughts of reckless terrorism.⁶ Whether or not Kirov was murdered on Stalin's orders, as Khrushchev later implied, Zhdanov's words reflected an essential concern of the Stalin regime. The image of the Russian populism of the 1870s posed a potential threat to this system. The populists had focused on the role of the peasant, whom Stalin sacrificed to his program of industrialization. More important still was the record of populist resistance to the tsarist state. In the People's Will the populists had provided an example of underground conspiracy, organization, and terrorism—the extremist effort to unseat an authority that would tolerate no opposition, no independent sources of power. It was logical that Stalin and his cultural watchdogs, whose control mechanism resembled the tsars' in this respect, should have attempted to erase the image of revolutionary populism from Soviet minds.

De-Stalinization of the 1950s affected the Soviet historical profession, as it did all other areas of Soviet scholarly work. N. S. Khrushchev included a general criticism of Stalin's *Short Course* in his electrifying "secret speech" at the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU, in February 1956.⁷ Yet it has been suggested that by 1957 Soviet historical scholarship had already been forced to relinquish the freedoms gained in the aftermath of the "secret speech." In 1957 a stream of criticism was leveled at the editors of *Voprosy istorii*, the journal in which "revisionist" articles and statements relating to several fields of history had appeared in 1956, and a new editorial board replaced those responsible for the new trends. Observing these developments in the conclusion to his excellent study *Russian Historians and the Soviet State* (published in 1962) Konstantin Shteppa noted: "Everything is now as it was before [i.e., during the Stalin era]."⁸

The amount of recently published material dealing with revolutionary populism could hardly support the contention that "everything is now as it

6. S. S. Volk, *Narodnaia volia (1879–1882)* (Moscow, 1966), p. 25. The People's Will (*Narodnaia volia*) was the organization under which populism launched its aggressive, terrorist manhunt, which resulted, on March 1, 1881, in the assassination of Tsar Alexander II.

7. The Russian Institute, Columbia University, *The Anti-Stalin Campaign and International Communism: A Selection of Documents* (New York, 1956).

8. K. F. Shteppa, *Russian Historians and the Soviet State* (New Brunswick, 1962), p. 382.

was before" in Soviet historical studies.⁹ Continuously since 1956 hundreds of articles and books have appeared relating to every aspect of the revolutionary movement in the 1870s,¹⁰ and several historical conferences have been devoted to this area of study.¹¹ The interpretive atmosphere that has prevailed has borne a much closer resemblance to the relatively free play of conflicting schools of Marxist historical thought of the 1920s than to the rigid views of the Stalin era. Sharp differences of opinion between "rehabilitators" of the revolutionary populists and those who have opposed this rehabilitation (whom I have called "detractors") have been given rather full exposure. By comparison with the ugly denunciations and reprisals of the 1930s and 1940s, the recent resolution of this interpretive debate has been carried out in a relatively peaceful manner.

Recent Soviet historians of populism have intertwined the problems of evaluation and periodization. In between the revolutionary period of the 1860s, which Russian Marxists have traditionally praised as the Russian "Enlightenment," and the 1880s and 1890s, which they have viewed in terms of the struggle between Russian social democracy and liberal populism, lies the period of the 1870s, when populism dominated the Russian revolutionary movement. Soviet historians have had to decide whether the ideas and activities of the men of the seventies represent a continuation of the positive revolutionary activity of the 1860s or an early stage of the (from their viewpoint) negative, "bourgeois-reformist" populism of the 1880s and 1890s. Stalinism forced the selection of the latter alternative, as we have seen; but by dismissing the

9. Thus I am inclined to agree with S. V. Utechin, who argues that the tremors of 1957, instead of heralding a reversion to Stalinist precepts in Soviet historiography, in fact were concerned only with selected interpretive questions which had surfaced in 1956 and which by 1957 the regime had seen fit to pronounce upon. The introduction of new areas of study, initiated in the mid-1950s, was relatively unaffected. See Utechin's comments in John Keep and Liliana Brisby, eds., *Contemporary History in the Soviet Mirror* (New York and London, 1964), p. 25.

10. One might consider Venturi's *Il populismo russo*, published in Italy before Stalin's death, as the first evidence of the "rehabilitation" of the populists and of a burgeoning interest in this area of study by Soviet historians. Venturi's postwar research was based on extensive materials from Soviet archives, and he received considerable aid from Soviet historians, who hoped that he would make an appropriate interpretation. Indeed, *Il populismo russo* has been favorably reviewed and widely read by Soviet students of the revolutionary movement.

11. One of these conferences met in the spring of 1957, under the auspices of the Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences, and drew up the following list of subjects for subsequent investigation: Lenin on populism; historiography of populism; periodization of populism; sociological outlook of the revolutionary populists; populists and the workers' movement; the Chaikovskiy circle; the movement *v narod* (to the people); the Trial of the Fifty; the People's Will; populists and the national raions; the Russian revolutionary movement among army and navy men in the 1870s and 1880s; the significance of the populists for the social democrats. D. A. Kolesnichenko and N. Kurashova, "Obsuzhdenie problem po istorii revoliutsionnogo dvizheniia vtoroi poloviny XIX v.," *Istoriia SSSR*, 1957, no. 2, p. 212.

populists of the seventies, Stalinist writers denied the chronological, developmental relationship between the Russian Marxists of the 1880s and their acknowledged predecessors of the 1860s. In the October 1956 issue of *Voprosy istorii* P. S. Tkachenko attempted to erase this discontinuity. He criticized Stalinist writers for ignoring the connections between the revolutionaries of the 1860s and 1870s and denied that populists had embraced reformism before the 1880s.¹²

At the 1957 conference on populism Tkachenko restated his case but encountered considerable opposition. V. E. Illeritsky accused him of underrating the unique theoretical achievements of the men of the 1860s by placing them in the same category with the theoretically weak populists. A. F. Smirnov noted that in the seventies the populists had resorted to a negative, self-defeating terrorism, which the men of the sixties had had the wisdom to avoid. Iu. Z. Polevoi denounced Tkachenko for his idealization of populism.¹³ These initial confrontations set the stage for a debate that intensified in later months and gave rise to two opposing schools of thought—the rehabilitators and the detractors.¹⁴

Detractors of populism maintained the Stalinist scheme of periodization, linking the men of the seventies with the “liberal populists” against whom the Russian Marxists waged a fierce polemical struggle in the eighties and nineties. According to the detractors the men of the seventies refused to acknowledge the “objective circumstances” of rural capitalism, which were already apparent by that time and which disproved the theory of peasant socialism. This lack of perception by the populists is at the heart of the qualitative distinction which the detractors draw between the revolutionaries of the 1860s (Chernyshevsky and his contemporaries) and those of the 1870s. Chernyshevsky’s ideology, say the detractors, was based on a “correct” perception of socioeconomic conditions in the 1860s. In the 1870s, however, the detractors note a degeneration of revolutionary ideology, as the populists failed to adjust their theory in accordance with the emergence of Russian capitalism.

Moreover, say the detractors, the men of the 1860s approached scientific socialism. The origins of materialism and dialectics in Russian social thought are to be found in their ideas. Chernyshevsky, Dobroliubov, and Pisarev clearly

12. P. S. Tkachenko, “O nekotorykh voprosakh istorii narodnichestva,” *Voprosy istorii*, 1956, no. 5, p. 37.

13. Kolesnichenko and Kurashova, “Obsuzhdenie problem,” pp. 207–11.

14. See, in support of Tkachenko: Sh. M. Levin, “Revoliutsionnoe narodnichestvo 70-kh godov v osveshchenii V. I. Lenina,” *Istoriia SSSR*, 1962, no. 2, pp. 19–41; V. V. Shirokova, “Eshche raz o revoliutsionnykh demokratakh i narodnikakh,” *Istoriia SSSR*, 1962, no. 3, pp. 72–79; V. F. Zakharina, “Revoliutsionnye narodniki 70-kh godov: Ideologi krest’ianskoi demokratii,” *Istoriia SSSR*, 1963, no. 5, pp. 101–16; and opposed: G. I. Ionova and A. F. Smirnov, “Revoliutsionnye demokraty i narodniki,” *Istoriia SSSR*, 1961, no. 5, pp. 112–42; and the description of this position in M. G. Sedov’s article, “Sovetskaia literatura o teoretikakh narodnichestva,” in *Istoriia i istoriki* (Moscow, 1965).

perceived class struggle as a historical force.¹⁵ They understood the class character of the state, identifying the socioeconomic origins of the men who composed the superstructure of Russian officialdom. Their social theory led these revolutionary democrats of the 1860s to oppose liberalism or any form of appeasement by the ruling class. They believed that social change could be realized only through mass revolution. They rejected the tactics of conspiracy and terror.¹⁶ Although the men of the 1860s thought in terms of peasant socialism, this did not lessen the value of their theoretical formulations. In the 1860s the Russian liberation movement still had to overcome the remnants of serfdom. The newly emancipated peasantry had not yet become stratified into two opposing classes, so that it was too early for the revolutionary democrats to realize this inevitable trend. Therefore, peasant "utopian socialism" was a respectable theory in the 1860s.¹⁷

But while objective conditions of the sixties supported the notion of peasant socialism, the detractors charge that the populists who emerged in the 1870s failed to consider changing economic realities. By the 1870s rural capitalism was blossoming. Many peasants were taking advantage of serf reforms to acquire small private farms. They were proving that the simple theory that advocated turning land over to the peasantry would result in the rise of a new class of small agricultural capitalists, while the landless proletariat would have to seek employment as exploited laborers on farms or in the cities.¹⁸ In these circumstances peasant socialism was no longer only utopian—it was dangerous. Yet the populists of the seventies did not want to acknowledge the encroaching bourgeoisification of the peasantry, so they ignored it.¹⁹

With regard to revolutionary strategy the detractors accuse the populists of having renounced the revolutionary democrats' faith in the masses. Frustrated by the failure of their programs, they determined that the revolutionary movement must be inspired from above. The detractors point especially to P. L. Lavrov's idea of the critically thinking individual as the epitome of the populists' belief that the individual, not the mass of the population, is the motive force in history. According to Smirnov, this kind of thinking led the populists to make conspiracy and terrorism a predominant part of their program.²⁰

To the post-1956 detractors, then, the populists of the 1870s were unable or unwilling to understand the objective conditions confronting them, and they

15. Iu. Z. Polevoi, "V. I. Lenin o domarksistom periode revoliutsionnogo dvizheniia v Rossii," *Kommunist*, 1958, no. 6, pp. 60–62.

16. Kolesnichenko and Kurashova, "Obsuzhdenie problem," p. 211.

17. Ionova and Smirnov, "Revoliutsionnye demokrati i narodniki," p. 139.

18. *Ibid.*, pp. 117–18; and D. A. Kolesnichenko and M. G. Vandalkovskaia, "Diskussiiia o vnutrennei periodizatsii raznochinskogo etapa russkogo revoliutsionnogo dvizheniia," *Istoriia SSSR*, 1966, no. 4, pp. 108–9.

19. Ionova and Smirnov, "Revoliutsionnye demokrati i narodniki," p. 128.

20. Kolesnichenko and Kurashova, "Obsuzhdenie problem," p. 211.

failed to adjust their theory to fit those conditions. They supported the petty aspirations of the peasants and abandoned the rural, landless proletariat. The populists conceived of a revolution from above, emphasizing terrorist tactics.

The rehabilitators make much less of the differences between the revolutionaries of the 1860s and the 1870s, and they separate the Russian “revolutionary populists” of the pre-1881 period (before the demise of the People’s Will) from the “liberal populist” adversaries of Russian Marxism. The rehabilitators maintain that capitalism was really not *evident* in Russia until the 1880s, so that prior to that date an ideology based on the prospect of peasant socialism was not necessarily outmoded. Moreover, the rehabilitators identify strong bonds of continuity between the revolutionary decades of the 1860s and the 1870s. They hold that revolutionary populism was the continuation, in the practical sphere, of the ideology formulated by the revolutionary democrats of the preceding decade.²¹

The rehabilitators emphasize that in the 1870s the populists were the only active revolutionary force in Russia. In their view the late development of Russian capitalism had produced only a small industrial proletariat by that time, while peasant problems were still at the forefront. Thus peasant “utopian socialism” continued to serve a positive function in the seventies, as it had in the sixties.²² By the 1880s and 1890s, however, Russian capitalism had become firmly established and the urban proletariat had grown significantly. In those circumstances populist theory could no longer provide a “scientific analysis” of Russian life.²³

For the rehabilitators revolutionary populism is a complex movement with wide chronological boundaries. Within this general framework there is an assortment of ideas and forces. Tkachenko notes that populism was “revolutionary” in that it united many elements against serfdom and tsarism, while it was “nonrevolutionary” in that its theory was, from a Marxian viewpoint, “ultimately utopian, unscientific, and illusory.” One must identify the predominant features.²⁴ V. F. Zakharina and V. V. Shirokova state that there were bourgeois tendencies in the revolutionary movement even in the 1860s;

21. Both the detractors and the rehabilitators maintain that they have derived their views from Lenin’s works. The detractors, who build their argument upon the distinction between the revolutionaries of the seventies and the “revolutionary democrats” of the sixties, cite *Ot kakogo nasledstva my otkazyvaemsia?*, in which Lenin identified three separate periods of the revolutionary movement: the 1860s, the 1870s, and the 1880s–90s. The rehabilitators retort by referring to the Leninist distinction between “old” populism (which, with its origins in Herzen and Chernyshevsky, continued on through the 1860s and 1870s) and “new” populism (liberal populism) of the 1880s and 1890s.

22. Zakharina, “Revoliutsionnye narodniki,” p. 112.

23. V. A. Malinin and M. I. Sidorov, *Predshestvenniki nauchnogo sotsializma v Rossii* (Moscow, 1963).

24. P. S. Tkachenko, “O spornykh problemakh istorii narodnichestva,” *Istoriia SSSR*, 1963, no. 6, pp. 76–84.

but they conclude that populism cannot be labeled “liberal” or “reactionary” until after the introduction of a proletarian party in Russia. Only then did liberalist elements come to dominate the ranks of populism, while the real revolutionaries among the populists went over to join the social democrats.²⁵

B. P. Kozmin has expressed most clearly the notion of continuity in populism over a broad period of time. Kozmin follows Lenin in calling populism the ideology of the second or *raznochintsy* stage of the liberation movement, as distinct from the *dvoriane* stage (beginning with the Decembrists) that preceded it and the proletarian stage that followed.²⁶ Kozmin says that if we bear in mind Lenin’s broad use of the word “populism,” implying, simply, peasant interests, we can see continuity throughout this stage of the liberation movement. According to this approach, populism originated in the first thoughts about serf reform during the 1840s. With the end of serfdom and the prospect of new social and economic conditions, populist thinkers evolved new ideas. They observed the evils of Western capitalist industrialism and determined to avoid capitalism in Russia. They placed their faith in the development of agrarian socialism, based on the institution of the *obshchina* (commune).²⁷ The great obstacle to the realization of their plans was the autocratic government, which refused to complete the serf reforms and persecuted the populist ideologues. The populists responded by becoming violent antimonar-chists in the seventies. But Kozmin notes that a general pattern of thinking was shared by all of the revolutionaries from Herzen and Ogarev to the members of the People’s Will.²⁸ They had in common their opposition to the autocracy, general representation of peasant interests, adherence to peasant socialism, anticapitalism, and reliance on the masses as the ultimate revolutionary force.²⁹ Kozmin has been joined in this notion of continuity between the 1860s and the 1870s by other writers, whose essential suggestion is that the men of the seventies posed new questions and tested out ideas that had originated in previous years.³⁰

The rehabilitators stress revolutionary and propagandist activities as the most positive aspects of populism in the 1870s. The revolutionary populists

25. Zakharina, “Revoliutsionnye narodniki,” pp. 102, 116.

26. B. P. Kozmin, *Russkaia sektsiia pervogo internatsionala* (Moscow, 1957).

27. B. P. Kozmin, “Narodnichestvo na burzhuzno-demokraticheskom etape osvoboditel’nogo dvizheniia v Rossii,” *Istoricheskie zapiski*, 65 (1959): 195–98.

28. Here, especially, one can note the similarities between the schematic framework of Franco Venturi and B. P. Kozmin.

29. Kozmin, “Narodnichestvo na burzhuzno-demokraticheskom etape,” pp. 198–214.

30. Ia. A. Linkov, for example, suggests that the seventies witnessed a *complication* of the revolutionary movement as it had existed in the sixties, for the populists adapted the earlier theories to a program of action. V. F. Zakharina, “Teoreticheskaia konferentsiia po narodnichestvo,” *Istoriia SSSR*, 1960, no. 1, p. 262. According to M. I. Khafets, revolutionary populism of the seventies was the successor, in somewhat different historical

followed the only paths open to them, proceeding from one method of revolutionary struggle to the next, each demanded by the changing conditions in which they operated. One of the populists' chief contributions, they argue, was to foment political action against the government.³¹ The terroristic strategy of the People's Will eventually had disastrous consequences, but these activities advanced the political struggle to a prominent place in the revolutionary movement.³² In addition, populists constantly worked to stir up revolutionary fervor. Their propaganda aimed at setting one class against another, demonstrating their belief that socialism could be achieved only by a revolution from below.³³

Of course the rehabilitators admit that populist theory and action could not offer the ultimate solution to Russia's problems. The unavoidable eclecticism of the 1870s allowed subjective sociological methods into the revolutionary movement.³⁴ Also, the populists offered the wrong alternatives to Russian capitalism, which they observed in its initial stages. But only *after* capitalism had established itself in Russia did these ideas take on a reactionary, non-revolutionary character. By then the growth of an independent working-class movement and a proletarian party had exhausted the populists' historically significant role.³⁵

In their 1967 review of the historiography of Russian populism S. S. Volk and S. B. Mikhailova wrote that most Soviet historians have determined that the men of the 1870s played a positive role in the Russian revolutionary movement and were not the enemies of Marxism.³⁶ The majority of Soviet historians now recognize the similarities between the revolutionary ideas of the sixties and seventies. They view the late sixties as a transition period during which the theories of the early revolutionary democrats were incorporated into a practical populist program that served as the basis for the activities of the

conditions, of the earlier movement. M. I. Khefets, *Vtoraia revoliutsionnaia situatsiia v Rossii* (Moscow, 1963), p. 59. B. S. Itenberg states that the men of the seventies were able to make contacts and to carry on propaganda activity among the people, while their ideological predecessors of the sixties had only been able to dream of these practical programs. B. S. Itenberg, *Dvizhenie revoliutsionnogo narodnichestva* (Moscow, 1965), p. 6.

The new ideas posed in the seventies revolved around the problem of capitalism. The original role of the populists, say the rehabilitators, was to note the development of capitalism and to pose alternative solutions to it. Although they were mistaken in believing that capitalism could be avoided, the populists are not to be blamed, because capitalism was not developed sufficiently to appear irreversible. Kolesnichenko and Vandalkovskaia, "Diskussiia o vnutrennei periodizatsii," p. 114.

31. Volk, *Narodnaia volia (1879–1882)*, p. 29.

32. Tkachenko, "O nekotorykh voprosakh," p. 42.

33. Tkachenko, "O spornykh problemakh," pp. 75–79.

34. B. S. Itenberg, "Nekotorye voprosy izucheniia istorii obshchestvennogo dvizheniia v Rossii vo vtoroi polovine XIX veka," in *Sovetskaia istoricheskaia nauka ot XX k XXII s'ezdu KPSS* (Moscow, 1962), p. 262.

35. Malinin and Sidorov, *Predshestvenniki*, pp. 251–52.

36. S. S. Volk and S. B. Mikhailova, "Sovetskaia istoriografiia revoliutsionnogo

1870s.³⁷ Volk's and Mikhailova's comments appear definitive regarding recent trends in Soviet writing on populism. No subsequent publications have appeared in opposition to these views (as of July 1970), and the tone of all works dealing with populism since 1966 has been in agreement with the general rehabilitation.³⁸ The 1966 conference on populism endorsed a scheme of periodization that favored the populists. The traditionally venerated revolutionary democratic "enlighteners" of the sixties and the revolutionary populists of the seventies were shown to be part of a single trend, in contrast to the decadent, liberal populists of later decades.³⁹ Surprisingly, Karataev and Smirnov (two detractors) joined in the acceptance of this periodization, thereby implicitly renouncing their previously outspoken opposition to the populists' rehabilitation.⁴⁰

Still, the rehabilitators have maintained a certain balance between the old and new interpretations. Recent writers do not hesitate to point out the "theoretical shortcomings" of the chief revolutionary thinkers of the 1870s.⁴¹ Bakunin's anarchism has not been rehabilitated, although Soviet historians do acknowledge that he drew many young people into the revolutionary movement.⁴² Lavrov is criticized for his reputedly unsuccessful attempt to blend populist and Marxist ideas, which, according to B. S. Itenberg, revealed Lavrov's inability to comprehend the distinction between classes.⁴³ Similarly, most writers have been cautious about repudiating Stalinism. They point to positive aspects of pre-Stalinist studies, "forgotten under the influence of the cult of personality," but little else is mentioned. M. G. Sedov devoted less than one of the twenty-three pages of his chronologically ordered essay on the historiography of populism to the years 1935–56.⁴⁴ Sh. M. Levin severely reprimanded the innovator Tkachenko for asserting that Soviet historiography of

narodnichestva 70-kh – nachala 80-kh godov XIX veka," in *Sovetskaia istoriografiia klassovoi borby i revoliutsionnogo dvizheniia v Rossii* (Leningrad, 1967), pt. 1, p. 143.

37. *Ibid.*, and Kolesnichenko and Vandalkovskaia, "Diskussiia o vnutrennei periodizatsii," p. 114.

38. See, for example, V. N. Ginev, *Narodnicheskoe dvizhenie v Srednem Povolzh'e, 70-e gody XIX veka* (Moscow, 1966); Institute of History, *Istoriia SSSR s drevneishikh vremen do nashikh dnei*, vol. 3 (Moscow, 1967); M. G. Sedov, *Geroicheskii period revoliutsionnogo narodnichestva* (Moscow, 1966); A. K. Vorobeva, "K. Marks i F. Engels o revoliutsionnom dvizhenii i revoliutsionerakh Rossii," *Voprosy istorii*, 1968, no. 4, pp. 44–59; V. F. Zakharina, "Problemy istorii revoliutsionnogo narodnichestva, 1870–1880 gg.," *Istoriia SSSR*, 1967, no. 1, pp. 160–77.

39. Volk and Mikhailova, "Sovetskaia istoriografiia," p. 146.

40. Kolesnichenko and Vandalkovskaia, "Diskussiia o vnutrennei periodizatsii," p. 111.

41. See, for example, Levin's *Obshchestvennoe dvizhenie v Rossii v 60–70-e gody XIX veka* (Moscow, 1958), p. 297, and "Revoliutsionnoe narodnichestvo 70-kh godov v osveshchenii V. I. Lenina," pp. 22–24.

42. *Istoriia Kommunisticheskoi partii Sovetskogo Soiuza*, 1 (Moscow, 1964): 52–53.

43. B. S. Itenberg, "Parizhskaia kommuna i russkie revoliutsionery 70-kh godov XIX v.," *Istoriia SSSR*, 1961, no. 2, p. 158.

44. Sedov, "Sovetskaia literatura o teoretikakh narodnichestva."

the Stalin era was valueless.⁴⁵ The rehabilitators appear to understand that new directions in the party line are susceptible to further change at a later date.

We have yet to consider why populism has been reintroduced as a suitable subject of study in the Soviet Union, and, further, why the revolutionary populists have been rehabilitated. John Keep suggests that developments in all areas of Soviet scholarship have attempted to blend dogmatism with common sense in the post-Stalin era. This would appear to be part of a general pattern of political socialization, an attempt to move away from Stalinist methods of coercion and enforced acquiescence to official dogma and toward a Soviet society in which the people, by virtue of their own identification with Soviet ideology, find the political regime more palatable. The success of this effort is largely attributable to the revival of the role of the party and its ability to communicate Communist ideology in a penetrating way to all levels of the population. But for ideological control to replace coercion effectively in Soviet life it is necessary for the ideological components to be credible, so that they can be readily assimilated. Keep suggests that it is this desire for a more popular, common-sense approach that has given rise to recent innovations in Soviet historiography. Soviet historians have been allowed to reconsider questions of national and international historical significance which previously were banned or distorted under Stalin.⁴⁶

This view appears plausible as a partial explanation of the reintroduction of populism as a subject of historical inquiry and the reinterpretation of the pre-Marxist revolutionary movement along lines that are more credible than the silence and repudiation of the Stalin era. It is impossible to believe that Stalin's renunciation of the populist stage of the Russian revolutionary movement effectively obliterated it from the minds of the more acute or older elements of Soviet citizenry. There are too many intrinsically attractive qualities about populism: elements of heroism and national pride, a concept of public welfare, self-sacrifice in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds. Probably the rehabilitation of revolutionary populism has had the effect of raising the Soviet reading public's opinion of Soviet scholarship. Then, too, the subjects of study which Stalin substituted for populism (and for the many other shades of evil he identified) were not especially believable. Stalin employed the "cult of personality" to elevate his own image as the driving force of the revolutionary movement. This was actually a departure from Soviet Marxism as understood by Lenin. The forces leading up to the Revolution of 1917 were minimized by comparison with the exaggeration of Stalin's role. In this sense the rehabilitation of revolutionary populism can also be viewed as a result of the post-Stalin return to Soviet Marxist orthodoxy.

What is the role of the individual Soviet historian in the Soviet Marxist

45. Kolesnichenko and Kurashova, "Obsuzhdenie problem," p. 211.

46. Keep and Brisby, *Contemporary History in the Soviet Mirror*, pp. 95-97.

approach to history? Do all Soviet historians exist only to do the party's bidding, faithfully reflecting in their works the vicissitudes of policy? From the nature of recent Soviet writing on Russian revolutionary populism, it would appear that this is not the case. The great outpouring of primary and secondary sources related to the populists of the 1870s since 1956, and the high quality of much of this work, indicates that the authors and editors of these works have welcomed enthusiastically the opportunity to re-examine the populist movement.⁴⁷ Indeed many of them may have been studying populism independently and silently during the Stalin era. There are good reasons for Soviet historians to appreciate the populists of the 1870s. These young people were heroic figures of the national past who fought for social justice against oppressive tsarism. Moreover, the populists need not necessarily be seen as competitors of Soviet Marxism and the victory of the proletariat in 1917. As we have seen, scholars such as Kozmin, Tkachenko, and Volk view the populists of the 1870s as the predecessors of Russian Marxism who contributed to the national revolutionary ferment. Thus the populists' image is reconcilable with the historical framework of Soviet Marxism, especially if one discounts populist ideology.

As Keep points out, the attempt to popularize Soviet scholarship is limited by one vital restriction. There can be no conflict with the basic goals or temporary policies of the regime. If we consider this, and also note two other factors—the rather extensive efforts and space that Soviet historiography has devoted to the discussion of revolutionary populism and the fact that the subject has been resolved in favor of the rehabilitators—it would appear that the Soviet regime has found in the treatment of populism a real *contribution* to certain of its specific policy objectives.

The Khrushchev leadership that emerged from the power struggle after Stalin's death had to face certain truths. The world revolutionary situation did not agree with long-held Soviet predictions. The masses in Western industrialized, capitalist countries were not, in fact, becoming increasingly alienated. Nor were foreign Communist parties overwhelmingly popular. In these circumstances the Soviets apparently modified their world-revolutionary outlook. Khrushchev announced that there might be several paths to socialism, and the Soviet Union increasingly turned its attention to the underdeveloped nations of the world.⁴⁸ The specific revolutionary theories of Marx and Engels, and, to an extent, of Lenin, were outdated by changing conditions. In Lenin-

47. Several works of considerable scholarly significance have been produced by the rehabilitators, a testimony to the potential of Marxist historical writing when it is permitted a certain degree of freedom. Of particular interest are Itenberg, *Dvizhenie revoliutsionnogo narodnichestva*; Levin, *Obshchestvennoe dvizhenie v Rossii v 60–70-e gody XIX veka*; Sedov, *Geroicheskiĭ period revoliutsionnogo narodnichestva*; V. A. Tvardovskaia, "Organizatsionnye osnovy 'Narodnoi voli,'" *Istoricheskie zapiski*, 67 (1960): 103–44; and Volk, *Narodnaia volia (1879–1882)*.

48. Keep and Brisby, *Contemporary History in the Soviet Mirror*, pp. 105–6.

like fashion, Soviet policy-makers adapted to the requirements of the day. It was inevitable that these changes would be reflected in the modification of the corresponding components of Soviet ideology.

In addition to the factors mentioned above, an explanation for the Soviet rehabilitation of Russian revolutionary populism can also be found in the Soviets' recent attitudes toward underdeveloped nations. Lenin exhorted the Russian Social Democrats to select from populism the "healthy kernels," the revolutionary and democratic elements, and to use them to advantage on the basis of their own more mature understanding.⁴⁹ It appears that Lenin's conception of "healthy kernels" is more applicable to the contemporary world situation than to the circumstances Stalin faced. The potential for revolutionary development outside the Soviet state is to be found in economies largely supported by rural, backward peoples. Clearly, the Soviets have turned their attention to these areas. R. A. Ulianovsky, in his article "On Several Aspects of the Contemporary Stage of the National Liberation Movement," writes with animation of the development of class struggle in Asian and African countries. In the immediate situation, he says, one must place faith in the direction of the "revolutionary democrats" of these countries. They have achieved national liberation by a merger of social classes for that purpose. Now, however, class differentiation is setting in. Polarizations among peasants are emerging as initial programs of land reform in the countryside and capitalistic development in the urban areas fail to solve the problems of the people. These areas are not yet ripe for a Marxist revolution; nor has the proletarian class consciousness matured.⁵⁰ But the revolutionary democrats in these countries appear to Ulianovsky to be the most positive forces of social movement during this time of transition. Furthermore, if one examines Soviet attitudes toward Latin American countries, the recent intensification of interest in the peasantry is striking. In the Stalin era Soviet publications dealing with rural social discontent and the revolutionary potential of the peasantry in Latin America amounted to three articles, one each published in 1935, 1950, and 1951. Between 1956 and 1964, however, one conference, two books, and thirteen Soviet articles dealt with such topics as the peasant movement in Latin America, the alliance of Latin American workers and peasants, and the agrarian problem and the national liberation movements.⁵¹

The Soviets seem to see in these conditions an analogy with the revolutionary movement of the 1870s in Russia. In fact some rehabilitators refer to it openly. S. S. Volk, in urging Soviet historians to study the history of Russian revolutionary populism, states that the subject is important because it demon-

49. Tkachenko, "O nekotorykh voprosakh," p. 34.

50. R. A. Ulianovsky, "O nekotorykh chertakh sovremennogo etapa natsional'no-osvoboditel'nogo dvizhenia," *Narody Azii i Afriki*, 1967, no. 5, pp. 21-36.

51. Leo Okinshevich and Robert G. Carlton, eds., *Latin America in Soviet Writings: A Bibliography*, vols. 1 and 2 (Baltimore, 1966). The trend has continued in the last half of the 1960s.

strates that radicalism can develop out of peasant capitalism in backward countries.⁵² Tkachenko says that the men of the 1870s represented a definite stage in world-revolutionary movements. He compares Russian revolutionary populists with the Chinese Sun Yat-sen. Like the Russians of the seventies, states Tkachenko, Sun Yat-sen was also a revolutionary democrat and a populist. He combined opposition to the existing political, economic, and social structure with a demand for radical agrarian changes and a belief in the revolutionary role of the masses. Sun's socioeconomic ideas were ultimately utopian, as were the populists' ideas, but he too fulfilled a positive role in the historical circumstances of his time, and he contributed to the long-range success of the revolutionary movement in his country.⁵³

Thus the Soviets observe new revolutionary potential in precapitalist countries. Politically they are ready to give encouragement to motive forces in these countries, and by rehabilitating populism they have modified their ideological framework in support of these endeavors.

A confluence of motives and forces has resulted in the recent rehabilitation of Russian revolutionary populism. The rehabilitation was initiated concurrent with Khrushchev's launching of the anti-Stalin campaign, but the significance of this new direction in Soviet historiography extends beyond the attempt to discredit the Stalin era. Rehabilitators have responded eagerly to the regime's directions about infusing realism into this aspect of Russian national history. In this task the historians seem to share a continuing admiration for Russian national tradition with their nonprofessional countrymen. Simultaneously, however, the rehabilitators have expressed their admiration for revolutionary populism within the framework of the Soviet Marxist approach to history. Admitting the ideological weaknesses of the revolutionary populists by comparison with the revolutionaries of 1917, the rehabilitators have effectively eliminated competition between them. In fact populism is now described in terms of its practical revolutionary contribution to the subsequent stages of the Russian revolution.

From the viewpoint of the Soviet regime the rehabilitation of revolutionary populism is an artificial resolution of a problem about which there has been considerable ambivalence in the past. This resolution has been made partially in deference to national requirements brought on by changing world conditions. It is possible that future developments may change, once again, the officially sponsored approach. The increasingly prevalent picture of contemporary university students, protesting against societal orders around the globe, might well lead conservative Soviet politicians to muffle the historical voice of the young revolutionary populists of the 1870s.

52. Volk, *Narodnaia volia (1879-1882)*, p. 465.

53. Tkachenko, "O spornykh voprosakh," pp. 76-77.