SAINT PETERSBURG MOVEMENT FOR WOMEN'S EDUCATION

IN THE LATE 1860S-70S:

CONFLICT AND COOPERATION BETWEEN "ARISTOCRATS" AND "NIHILISTS"

By

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Abstract

This thesis analyses the escalation of conflict inside the Saint Petersburg women's movement for education in the late 1860s-70s. Through the establishment of temporary assembly deriving from the "Society for Women's Work" (1864-65) and the "Society for Cheap Accommodation" (established in 1860), "Triumvirate" of Maria Trubnikova, Nadezhda Stasova and Anna Filosofova along with their associates tried to establish the new institution for women's higher education, the first women's university. However, since the movement was not homogeneous and included women of different class backgrounds and political views, there was a conflict between noble members, "aristocrats", who were blamed by radical women for philanthropist attitude towards the beneficiaries of the "Society for Cheap Accommodation" and "nihilists", women involved in rapidly emerging radical circles, future revolutionary organizations. In particular, the thesis examines the discussion between "aristocrats" and "nihilists" and their conflict during the campaign for women's higher education (1868), which resulted with separation of radical women, who were dissatisfied with the exclusion of class question, established Alarchin Courses and further preferred to cooperate with the political underground of Saint Petersburg to promote their agenda.

DECLARATION OF ORIGINAL RESEARCH AND THE WORD COUNT

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of original research; it contains no materials accepted for any other degree in any other institution and no materials previously written and/or published by another person, except where appropriate acknowledgment is made in the form of bibliographical reference.

I further declare that the following word count for this thesis are accurate:

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Signed _____ Ivanna Lomakina

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Chapter 1. Introduction

In the first decade of the 20th century, socialist activist Alexandra Kollontai (1872-1952), one of the first Soviet female politicians, refused to be associated with the term "feminist" locating its roots in "bourgeois feminism", the term applied by Kollontai, which was, from the socialist point of view, practiced by Russian female philanthropists from the second part of the 19th century. Kollontai claims: "The feminists declare themselves to be on the side of social reform, and some of them even say they are in favour of socialism – in the far distant future, of course – but they are not intending to struggle in the ranks of the working class for the realisation of these aims."[1] The lack of attention to the class question was pointed by "nihilists", future radical populists and revolutionaries appearing in post-serfdom Russian empire, and led to a conflict inside Saint Petersburg women's movement in the end of 1860s. Defined by Kollontai as "bourgeois feminists", the "Triumvirate", as contemporaries called them, of outstanding women's education activists Mariia Trubnikova (1835-97), Nadezhda Stasova (1822-95) and Anna Filosofova (1837-1912), who established several women's organizations deriving from the "Society for Cheap Accommodation" (operating since 1860) for female workers, played crucial role in expanding women's presence in political sphere and created one of the first safe platforms for them to express their agenda. All of them were coming from similar wealthy backgrounds and, except for a daughter of exiled Decembrist Mariia Trubnikova, were born in Saint Petersburg. Their platform, namely the "Society for Cheap Accommodation" and the "Society for Women's Work" included many women of

[1] Alexandra Kollontai, 1909. The Social Basis of the Woman Question: https://www.marxists.org/archive/kollonta/1909/social-basis.htm (13/06/2020).

different social backgrounds that served as a fuel for the constant antagonism inside the movement.

In this research, I focus on the conflict between "aristocrats" and "nihilists" inside the movement during the campaign for women's higher education in 1868. The terms "aristocrats" and "nihilists" were the definitions they applied to each other in a ridiculing manner during the meetings of the "Society for Women's Work" and the temporary assembly, which the "Triumvirate" and the union of Saint Petersburg University professors established to promote the petition to the Minister for Education in order to open the first women's university. In a few years, the conflict had significantly escalated and led to the separation of "nihilists", who then established their own institution for women's education and actively joined the political underground of Saint Petersburg that, by the beginning of 1870s, consisted predominantly of radical populists, *Narodniks*, engaged in the education of Russian peasantry throughout the empire. Indeed, the leaders of the "Society for Cheap Accommodation" never expressed their support for radical tendencies occurring inside the movement and feared the possible sanctions from the Ministry for Education and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. However, the "Triumvirate" never excluded "nihilists" and recognized their contribution to the movement. The "Triumvirate" and their associates established the network of women's mutual assistance and expanded women's social and political aspirations, which helped them to articulate the demand for women's higher education in front of the imperial institutions.

In my thesis, I analyse escalation of the conflict between "aristocrats" and "nihilists", which took place from the establishment of the "Society for Women's Work" to the opening of Alarchin and Vladimirskiye women's higher courses. In particular, I examine the conflict within the temporary assembly for women's higher education emphasizing its ideological fragmentation, different class backgrounds of its participants, diverse views on the methods of struggle and dissimilar opinions on the final purpose of women's education. Moreover, I

demonstrate how the women's movement for education transformed into a platform nurturing the working-class women's political ambitions and emphasize close connection between the "socialist underground" of Saint Petersburg and the temporary assembly for women's university. Finally, I analyse the liminal position of the "Triumvirate" that was "too rapid and non-pragmatic" for the liberal public (or Westernizers, followers of the Western-like development of the Russian empire) and too liberal ("bourgeois") for the "nihilist" party of the "Society for Women's Work".

Hence, in the third chapter I analyse the establishment of the "Society for Cheap Accommodation", one of the first social organizations for aiding women (usually former peasant of impoverished former landowners). By focusing on the opposition of "aristocrat" and "nihilist" parties, I demonstrate how the movement was gradually expanding and transforming from philanthropist organization to the network of mutual assistance through the establishment of the "Society for Women's Work". In the first chapter, I also pay attention to the reaction of contemporaries to the women's movement led by the "Triumvirate"; in particular, I analyse how the woman question functioned within the discussion between conservative Slavophiles and Westernizers, followers of European rationalism.

In the fourth chapter, I examine the campaign for women's higher education initiated by the "Triumvirate" and the Union of Professors after the speech given by Evgenia Konradi (1838-98) at the Congress of Natural Scientists (1868). I demonstrate how the outcomes of this campaign worsened the relationship between "aristocrat" and "nihilist" members of the temporary assembly responsible for the petition applied to the Minister for Education Count Dmitriy Tolstoy. At the same time, preparation for the petition united women of the assembly and encouraged them to make the first political claim demanding women's access to higher education in form of a separate university or equal opportunity to attend Saint Petersburg University. By analysing the outcomes of this campaign, I also focus on the attitude toward

the idea of women's higher education expressed by the Ministry for Education as a rationale behind the rejection of this petition.

In the last chapter, I discuss the climax of the conflict between former "aristocrat" and "nihilist" parties of the "Society for Women's Work", which happened after the formation of "nihilists'" cooperation with the political underground, radical circles of Saint Petersburg. The separation of "nihilists", which continued through the establishment of Alarchin Courses, from the "Triumvirate's" point of view, threatened the alternative proposed by the Minister for Education, since they believed that "nihilists'" belonging to the radical circlers would damage the reputation of temporary assembly. However, as I demonstrate in my research, flawless reputation of the "Triumvirate" did not prevent the Ministry for Education and the Ministry of Home Affairs from working against their establishment through instrumentalization of various bureaucratic reasons.

The primary sources of my research are diaries of Nadezhda Stasova and her close friend Yelena Shtakenshneider (1836-97), who also participated in the movement but, as I conclude from the diary, tried to remain centrist position (even though she always supported Stasova). Even though these sources express predominantly the viewpoint of "Triumvirate" and their supporters (the party of "aristocrats"), they still contain a lot of information about "nihilist" women and their claims. In the future, I would like expand this research with the sources produced by "nihilists", women who joined radical organizations and entered the political underground. In addition, I use writings produced by the 19th century intellectuals in the context of the discussion on Europeanness of the Russian empire. In particular, I turn to the pieces by Slavophile Nikolay Strakhov and Westernizer Grigoryi Blagosvetlov, translator of John Mill's *The Subjection of Women* (1869).

The main actors of my research are the participants of the "Society for Cheap Accommodation" and the temporary assembly for women's university. In the diaries, Stasova and Shtakenshneider write about the following women who participated in the "Society for Women's Work" and the temporary assembly for women's education (except for the "Triumvirate" and Evgenia Konradi: Count V. N. Rostovtseva, E. Zhukovskaya-Tsenina (1841-1913), N. A. Belozerskaya (1838-1912), O. A. Mordvinova (1837-1900), V. P. Tarnovskaya, E (1844-1913). Vodovozova (1844-1923), M. A. Mezhinskaya, N. K. Solodovnikova, R. V. Obolenskaya and many other women not explicitly mentioned in the pieces relevant for the objectives of my research.

Chapter 2. The state of the art in scholarship on Saint Petersburg women's movement in the late 1860s- early 1870s.

Activities of Saint Petersburg movement for women's education intersect with several substantial events and consequently well-researched topics: the formation of "political underground" or, in other words, establishment of radical populist movements (1870s); appearance of women's higher courses (which though were not an equivalent of university education) student unrest and the expulsion of chemist Dmitriy Mendeleev from Saint Petersburg Imperial University (late 1880s – 90s), which, due to its chronology, is out of focus of my research. However, the movement is rarely discussed autonomously as an organization of substantial political value; it is rather mentioned in relation to the history of "great events" that occupy perceptible space in historical narratives on the Russian empire. Thus, Richard Stites, prominent historian of women's movements and cooperation in Russian context, chronologically localizes "the birth of woman question" in years after the Crimean War (1853-56) that "revealed the essential weaknesses of an archaic socio-political system, previously obscured by a seemingly efficient bureaucracy".[2] During the war, despite the huge opposition famous surgeon Nikolai Pirogov initiated the organization "Sisters of Mercy of the Society of the Exaltation Cross" advocating for women's ability to perform decent medical treatment and endurance on a par with male doctors.[3] Stites continues to build his narrative referring primarily to intellectuals' views on the woman question considering their strong influence among Russian educated audience.

Even though Stites managed to approach women's history "from the inside" referring a number of brilliant documents produced by women (for instance, Yelena Shtakenshneider), I would like to discuss another substantial part of his book that focuses on androcentric

[2] Stites, Richard. *The women's liberation movement in Russia: feminism, nihilism, and bolshevism, 1860-1930*. Princeton University Press, 1978. P. 29.

[3] Ibid. Pp. 29-30.

perceptions of "Western-like" ideas about women's integration into the public/political spheres introduced by male intellectuals. In order to recreate the history of women's political action, Stites includes such writers as "publicist-apologist of women's emancipation" Mikhail Larionovich Mikhailov (author of articles on John Stuart Mill, George Eliot and women's emancipation) and Nikolai Chernyshevsky, the author of *What Is to Be Done?* (1863). Mikhailov was one of the first Russian intellectuals who publicly discussed the weakness of female education in the middle of the century; Stites claims that Mikhailov saw the core problem in "the lack of a realistic and healthy education."[4] While criticizing the concept of female physical and intellectual inferiority as well as bourgeois perception of romantic love, Mikhailov still proposed transformation of women's lives *inside* the family consisting of "well-matched mates, based upon equal education and equal status."[5] On the contrary, it is distinctly clear from the sources produced by women that the family problem was not one of their top priorities: while the "Triumvirate" and the associates were fully integrated into the practical side of the university establishment, their agenda was much more intersectional. The fair criticism of bourgeois family (or, as proposed by Stites, "Balzacian family life") was not relevant for the target audience of the "Triumvirate", since the women's university project implied invitation of working-class women. At the same time, marriage and romantic love problems discussed by Mikhailov were relevant precisely among the nobility. I find this distinction important while articulating my approach to the history of the movement: instead of focusing on theoretical elaborations produced by male intellectuals in dialogue with their European sympathizers and opponents, I analyse the practical obstacles the movement faced during the women's university assembly and the disagreements they experienced while opposing each other's strategies and objectives.

[4] Ibid. P. 43.
[5] Ibid. P. 44.

In turn, the novel *What Is to Be Done?* also represents the problematic side of androcentric narration on history of Russian woman question.[6] In this writing, Chernyshevsky describes the fate of Vera Rozalskaya who establishes a sewing workshop-commune after avoiding unwanted marriage through the marriage of convenience with a friend. However, along with advocating for women's emancipatory practices, the author puts the idea of romantic love between a man and a woman as one of the central aspects in the plot and, consequently, in Vera's life. Addressed as "a Bible for all advanced Russian women", the novel celebrated women's sexual positivity and liberation symbolically equalizing work and fertility.[7] However, as Stites claims, the history of "working artel" (co-living and/or co-working spaces) in some cases implied the establishment of certain "free love" relations between its members and uneven distribution of power resources: female participants could not reach same hierarchal position with philanthropists who paid for artels' needs (for instance, Ishutin and Khudyakov).[8] Undoubtedly, the image of Rozalskaya and ideas proposed by Chernyshevsky contributed to the formation of new "female nihilists", the generation of women interested in political philosophy; but who were the real prototypes of Rozalskaya and why the fictional character got into the focus of historical narratives on Russian women of 1860s-70s? Moreover, Chernyshevsky presents Rozalskaya in constant state of "to-be-looked-at-ness": as a romanticized collective image of the "new society's" ideal woman, she embodied a certain convention, which obviously set standards for young women who desired to join the political underground.[9] In my view, focusing on Rozalskaya and Chernyshevsky's novel distracts historians from the real participants of the movement

[6] Ibid. Pp. 38-55.
[7] Ibid. Pp. 89-94.
[8] Ibid. Pp. 108-118.
[9] Along with Laura Mulvey's concept of male gaze, "to-be-looked-at-ness" refers to John Bergers' book *Ways of Seeing.* For further reading see: van Zoonen, Elisabeth Aafje, and Liesbet van Zoonen. *Feminist media studies*. Sage, 1994. Pp. 87-104; Berger, John. *Ways of seeing*. Penguin UK, 2008; Mulvey, Laura. "Visual pleasure and narrative cinema." *Visual and other pleasures*. Palgrave Macmillan, London, 1989. 14-26.

and their complicated biographies; comparison with a fictional character of Rozalskaya also prevents from discovering their own unique views and actions and creates a unified, even caricature, perception of "nihilist women" even though their groups were never homogeneous.

Apparently, dynamic discussion of the woman question starts along with the reign of Alexander II (emperor of Russia in 1855-1881), whose main achievement was the Emancipation Reform of 1861 or final abolition of serfdom. From the perspective of intellectual life of the empire in 1860s and the emergence of new radicalized identities, establishers of radical circles, the public discussion was as vibrant as actions. Dissatisfied with the outcomes of Alexander's Great Reforms, which were "the answer to the Westernizers' prayers", Russian followers of nihilism, be they radical populists, socialists or none of these, discussed the necessity of radical reforms, far beyond what autocratic regime could propose.[10] Even though radical populists, adherents of nihilist tradition, considered the reforms of Alexander II superficial and not substantially changing the old order, in historiography this era is usually identified as rapidly transforming.[11] For instance, another prominent historian of Russian culture Richard Wortman addresses Alexander's "scenario of power" as emancipatory including his influence on the woman question.[12] Of course, Alexander II and his progressive reforms created conducive atmosphere for the development of women's projects. However, it is important to emphasize that imperial institutions never initiated reforms that would allow women to join the professional spheres: the "Triumvirate" and their associates developed women's university project as well as co-working spaces for women in Saint Petersburg. The diary of Nadezhda Stasova indicate Minister Tolstoy's

[10] Gillespie, Michael Allen. *Nihilism before Nietzsche*. University of Chicago Press, 1995. Pp. 138-141

[11] Ibid. P. 138.

[12] Wortman, Richard S. *Scenarios of power: myth and ceremony in Russian monarchy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995.

refusal to allow women's university with the following justification: "I have to tell you that the Emperor probably will not allow the university. I think that the only agreeable thing is public lectures."[13] I analyse this case in one of the chapter of the thesis, so I will not elaborate on this right now; however, my point is that only non-governmental organizations (usually established by women), philanthropists and sympathetic professors of Saint Petersburg University supported women's emancipatory activities in the capital of empire. The woman question was never a part of Russian imperial political agenda: the noble women were supposed to attend "institutes for noble maidens", while others could rather finance themselves through crafts, service or criminalized affairs. [14] In addition, the imperial institutions did not properly addressed the gender component of the Emancipation Reform: many former peasant women (sometimes with children) had to move to Saint Petersburg in search of work; the Emancipatory reform lacked suggestions about the further occupation of former peasantry, especially females, in the following decades.

Another way to approach the movement for women's education is through "political underground" – radical populist movements that soon were transformed into the key revolutionary organizations. Even though there were many associates of the "Triumvirate" who formed the political underground organizations, historians predominantly focus on the most visible female participants of radical populist movement such as, for instance, members of "People's Will" Executive Committee Sofia Perovskaya and Vera Figner.[15] The approach to the history of radical populism usually combines the genealogy of Russian nihilist tradition,

[13] Nadezhda Vasil'evna Stasova: Memoirs and Essays, 1899. P. 188.

[14] By that time (1843-1917), registered prostitution was legalized; registration included payment of state duty, medical examinations and sometimes (if a woman did not belong to a brothel) issuance of a yellow passport/ticket. However, the percentage of registered prostitutes was not absolute.

For further reading see: Golosenko Igor Anatol'evich. "Russkaya dorevolutsionnaya sociologiya o fenomene prostitutsii." Rubezh (almanakh social'nykh issledovanii) 10-11 (1997): 30-41.

[15] Narodnaya Volya [People's Will] – revolutionary organization of radical populists/terrorists established in 1879. For further reading see: Ely, Christopher. *Underground Petersburg: Radical populism, urban space, and the tactics of subversion in reform-era Russia*. Northern Illinois University Press, 2016.

its differences from the German experience, which was especially relevant for the radicals, and their actions incarnated through radical organizations and public events that occupied the urban spaces of Saint Petersburg. Even though the woman question is not a rare subject of the discussion about nihilism, in this research, I pay special attention to the recent book by Christopher Ely who zooms in the map of Saint Petersburg, the capital of the empire and its most progressive city, to recreate the communication network established by radical organizations and their performance in the public sphere of the capital.[16]

While political potential of the movement for women's education remains underestimated, the Triumvirate's network of workshops were located in the working-class district of Saint Petersburg, the industrial area of Vyborgskaya side. At the same time, one of the most influential ideologists of radical populism Pyotr Lavrov was a member of the movement for education and a close friend of the Triumvirate. Thus, in my view, depolitization of the movement prevents scholars from estimating women's contribution in the process of revolutionary social transformation in the second part of the nineteenth century. The problem of depolitization of women's history is well observed within the approach of social historians: women are analysed in the context of their gender roles constructed by the traditional society, so in most cases, it becomes not women's history but rather the history of traditional (usually noble) women's domestic routine and rare scraps of public appearance. Even though historicizing implies accepting traditional gender roles, it is necessary to approach these roles through critical optics; otherwise, women's history remain androcentric and, consequently, biased. Depolitization of women's education dramatically narrows socio-historical context of the movement for education and simplifies biographies of its associates leaving out the political impact of the movement that functioned as a platform for many other intersectionally marginalized elements of the Russian empire.

[16] Ely, Christopher. *Underground Petersburg: Radical populism, urban space, and the tactics of subversion in reform-era Russia*. Northern Illinois University Press, 2016.

The women's movement of Saint Petersburg, versatile and sometimes contradictory, operated in the context of the ongoing discussion between Slavophiles, conservative proponents of Russian "special path" (*osobyi put'*) and Westernizers, supporters of Western-like organization of the Russian empire, which, according to their statement, should follow the European stages of societal development. In fact, none of them perceived the woman question, the term frequently used by Westernizers and the proponents of women's higher education, as a considerable part of social transformation. Westernizers, even though they articulated their support for women's education, still followed a utilitarian approach to women and their bodies – they wanted them to be educated mothers, educators of future generations, not equal political and social subjects able to form their own identity in the post-serfdom Russian society. In order to address this complicated and multi-layered debate on women's education between Slavophiles and Westernizers, I dive into the discussion between traditionalist publicist Nikolay Strakhov and liberal Grigoryi Blagosvetlov, (not the first and single) translator of John Mill's *Subjection of Women*. The amount of historiography on Slavophiles and Westernizers is nearly immense; to contextualize their debate in my research I primarily refer to Michael Allen Gillespie's *Nihilism before Nietzsche* to reconstruct the formation of nihilism in relation to Westernizers'/Slavophiles and analyse women's identities on the political stage of 1860s-70.[17] In my research, I demonstrate how the women's movement, not unified by the same political agenda, still builds up its own identity depending on the limitations set by the dominant intellectual traditions. In other words, I analyse how women had to find their own place between conservative, liberals and radical populists, future socialists, avoiding unnecessary cooperation with imperial institutions and trying to find support from all of the above-mentioned political groups at the same time.

[17] Gillespie, Michael Allen. *Nihilism before Nietzsche*. University of Chicago Press, 1995.

Today, as a noninstitutionalized field of studies in Russia, women's and gender history is not that widespread among Russian scholars, since most universities do not provide a platform for the development of this discipline. The work done by such scholars, as Richard Stites, Bianka Pietrow-Ennker and Barbara Engel remain the most miscellaneous and comprehensive examples of writing on Russian women's history: the amount of sources and details they introduced is truly impressive. In particular, this thesis derives from Stites' research on the "Triumvirate" and women's cooperative action in 1860-70's; however, in this piece, I attempt to analyse the movement for women's education with more detailed and precise approach, since the restrictions imposed by objectives of Stites' book limited his narrative on the "Triumvirate" and the movement to one chapter. By focusing predominantly on the sources produced by women-participants of the movement, I propose a vision of their history that perfectly demonstrates political potential of the movement and its contribution to significant social transformation, which occurred in the public sphere of the Russian empire in the decades after the abolition of serfdom.[18]

Chapter 3. Saint Petersburg as a political stage for the new women's associations

Saint Petersburg, capital of the Russian empire in 1713-1918, functions as the main area of women's political action in 1860-70s and noticeably changes under the influence of labour projects developed by the "Triumvirate" and their charity organization "Society for Cheap Accommodation". The population of Saint Petersburg was 500,000 in 1850 and

[18] The bourgeois "public sphere" is defined by Jürgen Habermas as "the sphere of private people come together as a public; they soon claimed the public sphere regulated from above against the public authorities themselves, to engage them in a debate over the general rules governing relations in the basically privatized but publicly relevant sphere of commodity exchange and social labor." Habermas, Jurgen, and Jürgen Habermas. *The structural transformation of the public sphere: An inquiry into a category of bourgeois society*. MIT press, 1991. P. 27.

doubled during the decades of industrial and political expansion by 1890.[19] In her analysis of Saint Petersburg urban space in the era of great reforms (reign of Alexander II), Alexandra Staub states:

> "As in many Western European cities, the apartment buildings built were of two types: those for a bourgeoning upper class, and those for the poorer peasants who flooded the city to work in the new factories. […] Because St. Petersburg lacked cheap public transportation, industries were located near workers' quarters, creating a ring around the old city that exists to this day. […] The industrial ring meant a formal boundary to the old town, a city that had been built under both imperial and capitalist influence. Although the streets and squares were open to all, the structures bordering this channels were largely restricted, reserved for those who owned them or their guests, tenants, servants, and employees."[20]

Thus, the space of the capital, divided by class stratification and poor transportation between different parts of the city, consisted of two opposing localities: "old city" with stunning facades and the industrial side where the "Society for Cheap Accommodation" established their first sewing workshops for female peasants and their children. It is especially meaningful to consider the dichotomy of city space while analysing the spread of power and reaction of imperial Police Department (owned by the Ministry of the Interior of the Russian empire) to the visible presence of the marginalized elements (including radical populists) in the "old town", heart of the Russian monarch legacy. While governmental institutions tried to influence and regulate places of "public sphere" such as bookshops and private salons and homes, the practical part of emancipation and critical education took part outside of the city centre, on the Vyborgskaya side.[21] In this case, charity organizations trusted by the government and usually ruled by figures close to the imperial institutions were given a certain amount of autonomy to regulate the "outside" of the "old town", since overall modernization of Saint Petersburg implied the reduction of imperial institutions' authority. This trust might

[19] Ely, Christopher. *Underground Petersburg: Radical populism, urban space, and the tactics of subversion in reform-era Russia*. Northern Illinois University Press, 2016. P 38.
[20] Staub, Alexandra. "St. Petersburg's double life: the planners' versus the people's city." *Journal of Urban History* 31.3 (2005). P. 336.

[21] Ely, Christopher. *Underground Petersburg: Radical populism, urban space, and the tactics of subversion in reform-era Russia*. Northern Illinois University Press, 2016. P. 46.

be an explanation why the "Triumvirate" and their noble associates did not share enthusiasm of those participants of the movement for women's university who joined the "political underground", organizations formed by radical populists. While the "short-lived" places of practicing political speech and their hosts were under the threat, government distrust grew at an incredible rate.[22] Reputation and apolitical approach of the "Triumvirate" helped their organization to continue its work; however, as I will analyse later, it was a temporary solution. It was barely possible to stay out the opposition movements when a number of female associates of the "Triumvirate" sympathized with the political opposition. Christopher Ely contextualises establishment of the most influential radical organizations as follows:

> "When in the early 1860s the state began to shut down left-wing participation in the public sphere, it was hoping that without a voice the oppositional movement of the late 50s and early 60s would collapse and live on as nothing more than a passing phase, a forgotten anomaly. Instead, Russian radicalism managed to survive by transforming itself into a different sort of movement. Several clandestine organizations arose in the 1860s that attempted, under the cloak of secrecy, to carry out various forms of anti-governmental activism."[23]

By analysing the diary of Stasova and Shtakenshneider, the most significant sources of my research, I concluded that the key events that stimulated the increase of opposition (also among women) were the execution of Decembrists (1825) and the Crimean War. Although there were other factors that influenced the spread of radical organizations, the above-mentioned events carried the symbolic value and were instantly read among the educated public. As a daughter of an exiled Decembrist Vasiliy Ivashev, Trubnikova had a powerful reputation among the opposition, even though she did not publicly express support for radicalists' agenda. Thus, having connections both in pro-state and opposition circles, Trubnikova, along with Stasova and Filosofova, gained as many advantages as possible for their charity projects.

[22] Ibid. Pp. 46-47.
[23] Ibid. P. 59.

3.1 Establishment of the "Society for Cheap Accommodation"

In order to reconstruct the history of the "Society for Cheap Accommodation", I primarily refer to the diaries of Nadezhda Stasova published and expanded by her brother Vladimir Stasov. The diary was certainly created to commemorate the social work activities to which Stasova devoted her whole life. At the same time, I also address the diaries of Yelena Shtakenshnaider, a close friend of Stasova, Trubnikova and Filosofova, to introduce slightly more evaluative narrative about the movement. While Stasova had to mediate between the opposing "parties" of the organization, Shtakenshnaider expressed her sympathies and antipathies openly. Undoubtedly, Shtakenshnaider was a close friend of Stasova who, in turn, was a welcome guest in the salon of Shtakenshnaider; in her diary, she admired Stasova's work in the "Society for Cheap Accommodation" and expressed her respect for organization's activities. In addition, the diary of Shtakenshnaider is especially interesting due to the variety of events she was involved into as one of the main salon hosts of Saint Petersburg. Even though Shtakenshnaider had some health issues that did not allow her to walk, she managed to be in the centre life, since, as contemporaries claimed, she obtained outstanding intellectual and communicative abilities.[24]

According to the diaries of Stasova published by her brother, Vladimir Stasov, the move of Trubnikova to Saint Petersburg after the marriage (1854) was one of the most significant factors that led to the establishment of women's association. Described as an incredibly energetic and inquisitive person, Trubnikova easily gathered a "circle of educated and well-read young people" and university professors around herself and made friends with Stasova in May of 1859.[25] The first documented discussion of possible women charity projects took place the same day they first met: together with Nadezhda Belozerskaya (1838-1912, educator

[24] Shtakenshneider Yelena Andreevna and Ivan Nikanorovich Rozanov. *Dnevnik I zapiski*. Academia, 1934. Pp. 7-11.
[25] Nadezhda Vasil'evna Stasova: Memoirs and Essays, 1899. P. 64.

and writer), Anna Filosofova (1837-1912, public figure), baronesses Korf and Shtakelberg (public figures and philanthropists) and Trubnikova's sister, Vera Ivasheva (future organization treasurer).[26] The initial capital of the project, 500 rubles, was collected through voluntary donations of the organization's members.[27] However, as soon as they started the practical part of the project, there was a discord between the "German" and "Russian" parties:

> "One part of them [members of the assembly] certainly wanted to have the right to monitor the dwellings and their families, to obtain uncontrolled authority to enter their apartments any time, intervene in all their affairs, surcharge them, instruct in everything, etc. It was predominantly a German party. The opposing party, the Russian, did not allow such rights, did not want to have them, and said that the tenants and their families are not subordinate to them, but completely free, and the goal of new society is to help them live, not command them."[28]

The first disagreement between the members of the organizations led to separation of the "German party" and the establishment of their own "cheap accommodation" project.[29] Even though it was not clearly reflected in Stasova's diaries, the model of "guardianship" proposed by baronesses suspiciously resembled the basic patterns of serfdom, condemned by the Russian intelligentsia. Obviously, the above-mentioned "new society" represented the society without serfdom, the main expectation of an educated public from the reign of Alexander II. At the same time, further pages of Stasova's diaries evidence that the organization at certain point was overwhelmed with beneficiaries who did not want to find an occupation shifting the responsibility for their well-being to the leaders of the "Society for Cheap Accommodation". However, even though such approach had its disadvantage and the leaders had minimum influence over the beneficiaries, guardianship and control did not suit the overall design of Trubnikova's organization. Referring to an English philanthropist Clara Balfour's notion of "the faculty of self-help", Stites defines their attitude as "the cultivation of concern for the unfortunate members of one's sex by the 'more fortunate'" designating this model as

[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid. P. 65.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid.

"outgrowths of the Protestant, Anglo-Saxon philanthropic tradition".[30] Stites tends to distinguish between "court ladies" and "feminists" claiming that the main "feminist" feature of Trubnikova's association was their "unfeigned respect" for the helped ones.[31] Apparently, the association had a well-developed unwritten charter of the main ethical principles they relied on. Perhaps, this precise attitude conduced the quick growth of the organization and the establishment of charity network that attracted new contributors and their initiatives.

Shortly after the start of "Society for Cheap Accommodation", Yelena Shtakenshnaider, a well-known public figure and member of the "Triumvirate's" organization, proposed the founding of the "Society for Women's Work", which was, according to Stites, "one of the most ambitious of the feminist projects in 1860s".[32] In principle, this organization had to encourage the wards of "Triumvirate" to work and become more self-sufficient. Famous theorist of radical populism Pyotr Lavrov and Apollon Krivoshein, who served at the Ministry for Education at the time of founding, both stood at the origins of new organization: they developed the charter and controlled finances. Thus, in 1862 the government approved the project that was officially aimed at "assisting in finding work and giving loans to women in need".[33] According to the official governmental approval, the chairperson of the organization was Countess Rostovtseva and only figures close to her and the "Triumvirate" (especially, Filosofova) were empowered to administrate this project.[34] This prescript led to the huge conflict inside the movement and was the first significant disagreement that led to the schism. Yelena Shtakenshnaider wrote that right after the discussion about Rostovtseva's administration, another member of the meeting, Yekaterina Zhukovskaya-Tsenina, known as a writer and translator, presented the position of "nihilists"

[30] Stites, Richard. *The women's liberation movement in Russia: feminism, nihilism, and bolshevism, 1860-1930*. Princeton University Press, 1978. Pp. 64-65.
[31] Ibid. P. 65.
[32] Ibid. P. 69.
[33] Nadezhda Vasil'evna Stasova: Memoirs and Essays, 1899. P. 68.
[34] Ibid.

who threated to quit the assembly if they assign administration to the Countess.[35] This meeting was the starting point of forever escalating conflict between "aristocrats" and "nihilists", the names that opposing parties used to address each other. The reason why Zhukovskaya-Tsenina and her party were so dissatisfied was the suspicious reputation of Rostovtseva's husband, adjutant-general Yakov Rostovtsev who, according to the testimony of Prince Yevgeny Obolensky, one of the most prominent leaders of Decembrist revolt, was admitted to the North Society (part of the organization based in Saint Petersburg).[36] At the same time, according to Militsa Nechkina, Soviet historian specializing in Decembrists, Rostovtsev reported the forthcoming revolt to the Emperor.[37] Since the Decembrists were the first opposition to absolute monarchy and abolitionists of serfdom, their honour was undeniable for the left-wing intellectuals. Hence, the presence of Rostovtseva irritated the "nihilists" as much as her "philanthropist" attitude towards the movement for women's labor. Shtakenshneider emphasized that Zhukovskaya-Tsenina and the opposition she headed were adamant: "The leader of the opposition Tsenina did not want to listen anything. We were just happy that the Countess did not hear the severest expressions."[38] However, as she mentions in the end of this not, the leaders managed to persuade the opposition but not to convince them to let Rostovtseva occupy this position. However, at this point I would like to emphasize the influence both Rostovtseva and Filosofova had due to their families' affiliation to the imperial institutions. While Countess Vera Rostovtseva was a wife of adjutant-general Yakov Rostovtsev, whose suspicious image also contributed to the conflict inside the organization, Anna Filosofova was married to Chief Military Prosecutor of the Russian Empire Vladimir

[35] Shtakenshneider Yelena Andreevna and Ivan Nikanorovich Rozanov. *Dnevnik I zapiski*. Academia, 1934. P. 351.
[36]Materialy sledstvennogo dela E. P. Obolenskogo. Vosstaniye dekabristov. Dokumenty. T. I. P. 235.
[37] Nechkina, Militsa Vasil'evna. *Decembrists.* Nauka, 1984.

[38] Shtakenshneider Yelena Andreevna and Ivan Nikanorovich Rozanov. *Dnevnik I zapiski*. Academia, 1934. P. 351.

Filosofov.[39] Even though "nihilists" never doubted the authority of "Triumvirate", their cooperation with philanthropists was doubtful. However, the schism between them did not prevent Lavrov from inviting anyone whom he found "useful" for the overall development of the organization.[40] The conflict around Rostovtseva was a symbolic start of the dispute inside the "Society for Women's Work": it certainly brought awareness to the "Triumvirate" who from now on tended to demonstrate their difference from caricature noble philanthropists condemned by the "nihilist" side of the organization. At the same time, their acceptance of "nihilists" and the intention to cooperative with radicalists (even though it threatened the overall existence of the "Society for Women's Work") also demonstrated their ability to moderate women's emancipatory projects and proved their leading position. In general, the "Society for Women's Work" officially operated only in 1864-65; however, it did not prevent former associates of this organization to meet and discuss possible trajectories of development for the "Society for Cheap Accommodation".

3.2 "Aristocrats" and "Nihilists" in the "Society for Women's Work"

In regards to nihilism, it is easier to define what it was not rather than to give a certain definition to this phenomenon. Genealogically, nihilist tradition, a reaction to European Romanticism, is rooted in Left Hegelianism; as a tradition of thought practiced in Russia through radical populism and the rejection of centuries old discussion about "Europeanness" of the Russian empire, they were convinced that "instantaneous change was possible if only enough men ["the new people"] of integrity willed in".[41] According to Ely, nihilism was a response to censorship that fell on the left-wing participants of the public sphere in early 60s

[39] For further reading about Anna Filosofova see: Tyrkova, A. "Anna Pavlovna Filosofova I eyo vremya." *Pamyati AP Filosofovoi* (1915): 488.

[40] Nadezhda Vasil'evna Stasova: Memoirs and Essays, 1899. P. 68.

[41] Gillespie, Michael Allen. *Nihilism before Nietzsche*. University of Chicago Press, 1995. P. XIX.

during the embodiment of Emancipation Reform.[42] In a sense, nihilism was a specific subculture attending daily practices as well as the overall appearance. In the *Encyclopedia of Russian Women's Movement's*, a compilation of events, associations and names from 1850s to 1917s and beyond, a "typical" nihilist woman, *nigilistka*, is described as follows:

> "[…] nihilist women of the 1860s were cultural revolutionaries who refused to participate in the polite world of their parents. Instead, they insisted on total equality with men and attempted to reorganize the structure of work and home, and many devoted themselves to medicine and science. They were a generation of women who were influenced by the intelligentsia's embracing of George Sand in the 1840s and who, in turn, inspired the populist and anarchist women of the next generation in the 1880s. […] The term *nigilistka* (nihilist woman), a term used by sympathizers and critics alike, encompassed accomplished scientists as well as schoolgirls with short hair who smoked, and by the 1870s the word *nigilistka*, along with its masculine counterpart 'nihilist', had become synonymous to assassin. […] By shedding outward signs of femininity – dress, mannerism, and comportment – nihilist women hoped to achieve some measure of equality with men. Their "revolt in dress" translated into a costume of dark-coloured, loose-fitting shirts and blouses without frills that covered their bodies up to their necks. Their hair was shortly cropped and they smoked."[43]

Visual features of nihilist women, of course, made them recognizable in public; at the certain point of time (for instance, after radicalists' attempts to assassinate the Tsar, their appearance could endanger their freedom. However, reclaiming their right to consciously choose and translate certain image in public was an inherent side of the principles they followed as "new women".

One of the most famous and controversial portrait of a nihilist was composed by Russian writer Ivan Turgenev in his novel *Fathers and Sons* (1862). The fictional character Yevgeny Bazarov, arrogant student of medicine, is a nihilist "mentor" to Arkady Kirsanov who imitates a nihilist as a tribute to progress but questions nihilist beliefs under the influence of his traditionalist parents and liberal brothers. In my view, it would be incorrect to define this novel as anti-nihilist; however, there were many other literary works discrediting nihilism

[42] Ely, Christopher. *Underground Petersburg: Radical populism, urban space, and the tactics of subversion in reform-era Russia*. Northern Illinois University Press, 2016. P. 59.
[43] Nechemias, Norma C. Noonan Carol. *Encyclopedia of Russian women's movements*. Greenwood Publishing Group, 2001. P.46.

(as well as populism and socialism). Turgenev confessed that his perception of Bazarov was inconclusive: he doubted whether this powerful character caused in him rejection or sympathy.[44] Susan Morrissey describes the reception of Bazarov in Russian public as follows:

"Bazarov became famous for his rude manners, rejection of social convention, and passion for science over poetry – symbolized by his keen interest in dissecting frogs, which he considered the first step toward a scientific understanding of man. Critics on the right and left judged the novel as if it were a mirror of life and its main character a contemporary social type. […] For the "nihilist" children, as they were called after Turgenev's term, the fathers represented a generation of superfluous men, eloquent in their condemnation of the old order, but inadequate to the task of changing it. The new era required bold and rude new people – the products and agents of social transformation."[45]

Reacting to the traditions of Romanticism, Bazarov practices nihilism as "the rejection of all authority and especially the authority of the human heart".[46] The "new people" became a widespread definition, maybe a little more inclusive than "nihilist", to talk about the proponents of drastic changes in Russian social order. Conservative intellectuals also ridiculed "typical" nihilist women exaggerating their external features. In one of her notes, Shtakenshneider describes the conflict between "aristocrats" and "nihilists" during the meeting of the "Society for Women's Work" as follows:

"Apparently, it was enough to see both parties at the Filosofova's meeting – the one around Rostovtseva, in silk dresses and fashionable hats, and the one around Tsenina, in black wool [dresses] without hats on their short cut heads, – to realize that two completely heterogeneous elements are called to cooperate and that nothing could come out of it."[47]

However, women perceived nihilism as an efficient tool for expressing their incompliance with the traditional order and while conservatives used term *nigilistka* to diminish their political aspirations equalizing them to the tribute to fashion, many other sympathizers were using it for the empowerment. For instance, famous mathematician Sofia Kovalevskaya

[44] Gillespie, Michael Allen. *Nihilism before Nietzsche*. University of Chicago Press, 1995. P. 148.

[45] Morrissey, Susan K. *Heralds of revolution: Russian students and the mythologies of radicalism*. Oxford University Press on Demand, 1998. Pp. 20-21.

[46] Gillespie, Michael Allen. *Nihilism before Nietzsche*. University of Chicago Press, 1995. P. XIX.

[47] Shtakenshneider Yelena Andreevna and Ivan Nikanorovich Rozanov. *Dnevnik I zapiski*. Academia, 1934. P. 352.

(around 1858-91), the next generation after the "Triumvirate", wrote an autobiographical novel called *Nigilistka* where she described the revolutionary atmosphere of Saint Petersburg in late 1860s-70s and the formation of nihilist women through the immersion in the environment of young urban radicals. She describes nigilistka through the portrait of the main character, Vera, a woman who recently arrived to Saint Petersburg in search of "the purpose of life". Kovalevskaya writes about it as follows:

> "What excited me in Vera from the first hour of our acquaintance was complete indifference to anything material. […] I asked her whether she arrived in Saint Petersburg a long time ago and if she is comfortable in the hotel. However, to all of this superficial questions Vera answered in a scattered way and was a little displeased. Apparently, little nothings of life did not interest her. Even though she never lived in Petersburg, life in the capital did not surprise or interest her. She was completely busy with the only thought – to find the purpose of life."[48]

Apparently, the values of traditional society and the role of mother and wife did not appeal to Vera anymore. With the description of Vera's character, Kovalevskaya demonstrates radical changes in women's self-identification and crisis they opposed as followers of nihilism, the rejection of the old regime. While one of the reasons for Russian intellectuals to criticize nihilist women was the absence of unified agenda and dispersion of beliefs, Kovalevskaya stated that at least these women knew what they exactly did not want. In general, by the middle of the 19th century, the transformation of women's mentality was a cross-European trend that initiated the rejection of subordinating practices and language that were used by governments to address women and women's position in the society. As Marcelline J. Hutton notices, there were many other new ways to approach women's demand for emancipation: in Russia, it was "the woman question", in France it was "feminism", in England – suffrage.[49] However, while describing the activities of the "Society for Women's Work", Stasova does not use the term "woman question" (*zhenskiy vopros*); this term circulates predominantly in

[48] Kovalevskaya, Sofia Vasil'evna. *Nigilistka*. 1884.

[49] Hutton, Marcelline J. *Russian and West European women, 1860-1939: dreams, struggles, and nightmares*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2001.

the writing pieces of male Russian intellectuals and always in relation to something "bigger" like, for instance, the discussion between Westernizers and Slavophiles.

Most of the nihilists soon transformed into populists, participants of Narodnichestvo, the movement consisting primarily of young intelligentsia passionate about the critical literacy of peasantry and leftist social transformations.[50] As Ely notices, "for young Russian intelligentsia of this era the personal was political and the political was personal", which undoubtedly applies to nihilists who reconsidered their own position in the Russian society as well as reflected on its troubles and the affliction of Russian peasantry. The majority of "nihilists" transformed into Narodniks, or at least supported "going to people". Regardless of class and its specific interests, the radical community of nihilists shared same values and focused on challenging liberal and conservative beliefs through self-transformation and the spread of emancipatory aspirations.[51] Nihilism was quickly transferred in universities; Ely reproduces the idea about the influence of "raznochintsy", people of non-identified class (closer to lower strata of the society), whose presence in educational institutions introduced new debates about social struggles and injustice.[52] However, as Barbara Engel claims, relationship between radicalists and female nihilists was an "unequal partnership".[53] She claims that women's radicalism and call for emancipation was "rather naïve", while their male counterparts never prioritized the woman question.[54]

[50] "Critical literacy" is a term proposed by Jennifer E. Subban and Alma H. Young. They define it as "a response to an increased awareness of the connection between power relations and the literacy experiences of individuals and communities. The purpose of critical literacy is to develop individuals with the ability to analyze and challenge the oppressive nature of society and to facilitate the transformation to a more just, equitable, and democratic one." See: Andrew, Caroline, et al. *Gendering the city: Women, boundaries, and visions of urban life*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2000. P. 89.

[51] Ely, Christopher. *Underground Petersburg: Radical populism, urban space, and the tactics of subversion in reform-era Russia*. Northern Illinois University Press, 2016. Pp. 60-61.

[52] Ibid. P. 61.

[53] Engel, Barbara Alpern. *Mothers and daughters: women of the intelligentsia in nineteenth-century Russia*. CUP Archive, 1985. P. 87.

[54] Ibid. Pp. 87-88.

Apparently, rapid urbanization, the expansion of women's access to the city and places where they could join and exercise the public sphere (such as public lectures and events, literary salons, etc.) were stimulating women's interest in nihilism, a part of political underground of Saint Petersburg. The presence of "nihilists" in the "Society for Women's Work" and the "Society for Women's Work" certainly challenged both organizations; however, the involvement of "nihilists" enhanced the functions, which were the main characteristic for the "Triumvirate's" platform, such as political debating, voting and representing the interests of various marginalized elements of the society. Of course, so-called "aristocrats" used the term "nihilist" in a ridiculing way; however, it is an exact collective definition of the associates representing leftist agenda and then joining the populist movement.

The main claim of nihilist participants of the organization was the "philanthropic" attitude of the wealthier (usually noble) associates. Deriving from the core nihilist criticism of the upper classes with the concept of "class guilt", guilt for the belonging to the higher social strata of the society built on the serfdom, the opposing party of the movement encouraged the leaders to avoid the top-down aid for their beneficiaries and to build a communication network instead. Probably, the presence of nihilists in the movement indeed created obstacles while approaching the Ministry for Education but it is likely that without "nihilist" party the "Society for Women's Work" would have been just another philanthropist project. As Shtakenshneider repeatedly mentions in her diary, nihilists insisted that they condemn philanthropist approach to aid and the main demand they promoted during the meetings was equal representation.[55] Dissatisfied with the "Triumvirate's" favour towards "aristocrats", "nihilists" led by Zhukovskaya-Tsenina were suspicious; even though they never refused to cooperate, they definitely held meetings beyond the organization, which is proved by the case

[55] Shtakenshneider Yelena Andreevna and Ivan Nikanorovich Rozanov. *Dnevnik I zapiski*. Academia, 1934. Pp. 352-353.

I discuss in the last chapter. However, it is important that the leaders of the movement listened to "nihilists" and never dismissed their criticism. For instance, to regulate the conflict around Countess Rostovtseva and her position, Trubnikova invited the opposing parties to meet at her residence and accepted the conditions proclaimed by Tsenina: to assign three representatives of "nihilist" party to administrative positions.[56] Shtakenshneider expresses negative description of what she perceives as "nihilist". She insisted that nihilists were limited in their one-sided judgments, which damaged the cooperation and further development of educational initiatives. Shtakenshnaider blames nihilists for maximalist approach and the absence of "delicacy": "Nihilists are always in search of truth. They know that truth is naked and […] try to unclothe everything in search of it. It leads to the extreme poverty of thought".[57] Unlike Shtakenshneider, Nadezhda Stasova excludes judgments about political believes of radical women and tries to avoid such definition as "nihilists", "radicals", "socialists", etc. While Stasova tends to present the movement as a unified group of women sharing the same struggle, Shtakenshneider emphasizes the disputes occurring inside the movement and distinguishes between different or even opposing political camps.

Even though only Anna Filosofova had been developing radical views during the existence of the movement and then participated in revolutionary women's activities, while most of the other "aristocrat" women remained out of the leftist agenda, nowadays the initiatives of the "Society for Women's Work" would still be addressed as inducing revolutionary agenda in the history of revolutionary activities. Their projects perfectly corresponded to the activities managed by the radical circles of Saint Petersburg. In other words, revolutionary activities were embodied in many different forms including Sunday schools, lithography of censored literature, literary meetings, publishing of hand-written

[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid. P. 166.

journals, etc.[58] For the "nihilist" party it was not enough to achieve the opening of women's university: driven by the "class guilt" as well as the theoretical elaborations on socialist reformation of the society, they insisted on using the university as a platform for spreading socialist ideas, which might be articulated as a form of critical literacy. The "class guilt" tendency was adapted by particular members of the "Society for Cheap Accommodation" and the "Society for Women's Work" from the radical populist circles. Ely states:

> **"[…]** the turn to populism, with its focus on interacting with the rural peasantry, that took place in 1870's has been associated with class guilt, particularly the guilt carried by wealthy and/or noble students who saw themselves as gaining an education and a comfortable living by relying for material support on the wealth generated by the agricultural labor of the Russian peasant."[59]

Hence, this tendency directly comes out of the populist movement's approach to educating peasantry about their rights and possible solutions to improve their status in the society. Excluded from the discussion between liberal Westernizers and conservative Slavophiles, women enthusiastically joined the radical populist movement.

The presence of "aristocrats", in turn, was natural: they followed the philanthropist tradition initiated by their families and noble contemporaries. Of course, it would be impossible to start such a complicated project as a network of women-workers without solid donations, which "aristocrats" provided using the benefits of their social status and communication. Since I analyse the diaries produced by women who were closer to the "aristocrat" party, my knowledge about their approach to "nihilists" is limited. However, judging by the reputation the "Triumvirate" gained in the "Society for Cheap Accommodation" and beyond, even though they were sometimes criticized by "nihilists", it is evident that they cared for the inclusiveness and flexibility of the platform they created.

[58] Vilenskaya, Emiliya Samoylovna. *Revolutsionnoye podpol'e v Rossii: 60-e gody XIX v*. Nauka, 1965. Pp. 84-85.

[59] Ely, Christopher. *Underground Petersburg: Radical populism, urban space, and the tactics of subversion in reform-era Russia*. Northern Illinois University Press, 2016. P. 115.

3.3 Expansion of the "Society for Cheap Accommodation" from philanthropist organization to the network of mutual assistance

Despite constant conflicts between "aristocrat" and "nihilist" parties that occurred during almost all of the meeting held by the "Society for Women's Work", organizations established by the "Triumvirate" flourished:

> "The feminists began with charity, employing the talents of a few women to help large numbers of poor of the both sexes. This added little impetus to a women's movement as such, but it did provide experience in leadership, nurtured a feeling of self-respect, and aroused a consciousness of women's ability to function in public life. Most important, these efforts brought together many women of similar backgrounds in new situations that transcended the salons and the other established forms of social intercourse that prevailed among ladies. Philanthropy blended easily into feminism, and in a short time their efforts were pointed in the direction of helping women to live, to study, and to work. Initially, feminists seemed to have had no clearer purpose than to bring women together in a more democratic atmosphere that that of the salons […]."[60]

As Stites continues, "the schism […] was not serious enough to prevent the feminists of Saint Petersburg from spawning other labor and cultural organizations for women".[61] Indeed, the organization differed from other places of practicing public sphere; the platform of discussion they created was much more inclusive in terms of gender, ethnicity and social background. The leaders of the movement did not tend to separate themselves from the helped ones. In contrast, the invited women to participate in making decisions and being vocal about their concerns. Obviously, this democratic attitude implied political disputes and disagreement in strategies the movement applied to achieve its goals. Even though some members could not encourage inviting "radicals" (who were mostly introduced by Lavrov), the leaders did not refuse to cooperate with women of another political views and backgrounds.

At the same time, the Society for Cheap Accommodation expanded: in 1867, they initiated a public lottery to build a new large house for female workers and their children.[62] Lotteries and plays organized by amateur theatre of the Society were a financial addition to

[60] Stites, Richard. *The women's liberation movement in Russia: feminism, nihilism, and bolshevism, 1860-1930.* Princeton University Press, 1978. P. 68.
[61] Ibid. P. 70.
[62] Nadezhda Vasil'evna Stasova: Memoirs and Essays, 1899. P. 71.

membership dues. Referring to the words of M. A. Menzhinskaya, one of the members, Stasov, brother of Nadezhda Stasova writes that the main aim of the Society, supply of work and low-cost accommodation, was hard to achieve because many helped ones, as soon as they obtained an apartment, fully entrusted their further well-being on the "Society for Cheap Accommodation": "We had to put up with it and hoped that children of those poor people would be able to take care of themselves in the future by getting an education in sciences or crafts."[63] She emphasized that they did not want to "make parasites of society of the helped ones"; their aim was "to give them a start in life".[64] In my view, it also was another feature that differed "Society for Cheap Accommodation" from many other charity organizations. Acting as curators, not just sponsors, they were building a self-sustainable system of help by establishing the network of workshops, dining rooms, schools and kindergartens.

As stated in Stasova's diaries, the "Society for Cheap Accommodation" at first glance seem to be a continuation of the "Society for Visiting the Poor" that existed during the reign of Nicholas I; however, in reality these organizations were completely the opposite.[65] Stasova emphasizes the difference primarily through the social origin of the leaders and the attitude to the poor they performed claiming that the "Society for Visiting the Poor" "was designed and embodied by our aristocracy and was mostly financed by them".[66] In an ironic manner, she states that this organization "soon became fashionable and belonging to it was something comme il faut [komilfotnym]".[67] Meanwhile, as I discuss in the next chapter, the "radical" part of the "Society for Women's Work" invited by Lavrov condemned the "aristocrats" of the movement in the same way: by calling out their social privileges and making fun of their attitude towards the helped ones. Even though the "Triumvirate" followed centrist position

[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid. P. 73.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid.

and did not express their opinion about members of the movement and their social positions, it becomes clear that they were aware of problematic "top down" attitude which was a characteristic of charity organizations established by the nobility for whom, in turn, it was rather a tribute to fashion, not social work. This type of patronage expressed through such appeals as "my poor" was never a feature of the "Society for Cheap Accommodation". In order to define the "Society for Visiting the Poor", Stasova refers to a painting "Philanthropists" by Vladimir Makovsky (1874).[68] Openly expressing the contempt, she describes this work as follows:

> "[…] frant-visitor in an expensive sable fur coat […] watching taken by surprise poor who are in hurry to wear their tatters in a decent way, while full-dressed footman in expensive raccoon furs stands by the door and squeamishly glances this 'rag-tag' whom his countess decided to visit – oh this trick and lordly whim, in their free time, before the dinner!"[69]

By depicting hypocrisy of some noble philanthropists who made hobbies out of charity, this painting in a way condemned the (non)existing system of social care which was relying only on the "lordly whim" of aristocrats, the tourists of slums. Therefore, it would be fair to conclude that the "Society for Cheap Accommodation" was conscious about it and practiced something different. They did not visit the helped ones; they were co-working and co-living. The institution of "self-help", as Stites puts it with a reference to Belfour, was their priority, since the organization started its charity projects in hard times of crisis induced by the abolition of serfdom:

> "In addition, liberation of peasants (1861) dramatically changed the everyday life of many nobles and, all in all, this huge social turn reflected on the income of the whole nobility. We could not expect substantial donations and dues. Merchants did not participate at all because they are eager to get medals and honours for their money. Private organization could not offer these attractions."[70]

[68] See Figure 1.
[69] Nadezhda Vasil'evna Stasova: Memoirs and Essays, 1899. P. 73. The word "frant-visitor" derives from the Czech word František meaning "rogue"; in this context serves to define the "goldfinches".
[70] Ibid. Pp. 71-72.

The first solution for maintaining life in the new building they managed to get after the lottery was to establish a sewing workshop; the responsible curator was Stasova.[71] The educated women of the "Society for Cheap Accommodation" worked at the "Women's Publishing Cooperative" established in 1863 to provide them with "interesting and useful work corresponding to their intellectual abilities".[72] Overall, it was enough for the organization to successfully operate and induce further projects.

By the middle of 60s, all of their workshop projects located at the Vyborgskaya side of Saint Petersburg, "a great proletarian zone" that was especially perceptible during the October Revolution.[73] As I have already mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, imperial governing institutions delegated some autonomy to charity organizations that were responsible for workers' social well-being, accommodation and, most importantly, attitude to the tsarist regime. Due to the absence of a unified social care system, rare charity organizations took care of all the costs of maintaining workers, which was, for sure, beneficial for the government that was rather involved in foreign policy and military service. Even though Alexander II was the first monarch who embodied substantial domestic reforms including, at first place, abolition of serfdom, it was not even close enough to improve living conditions of former peasantry. At the same time, urbanization and industrialization were detaching the governing structures from people, since, as Ely puts it, "the larger a city grows, the harder it is to maintain traditional distinctions".[74] In these conditions, the "Society for Cheap Accommodation" was exercising a certain degree of authority that facilitated their reputation among the helped ones and guaranteed their solidarity. The specific feature of the "Society for Cheap Accommodation" was their gender-sensitivity; while the imperial

[71] Ibid. P. 72.
[72] Stites, Richard. *The women's liberation movement in Russia: feminism, nihilism, and bolshevism, 1860-1930*. Princeton University Press, 1978. P. 69.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Ely, Christopher. *Underground Petersburg: Radical populism, urban space, and the tactics of subversion in reform-era Russia*. Northern Illinois University Press, 2016. P. 43.

government expected them to donate money and visit the helped ones as depicted in the painting of Makovsky, most of the members of this organization were fully involved in the lifestyle they offered to the helped ones. As I demonstrate in the next chapter, this approach soon became disturbing for the imperial governing institutions because they did not expect the "Society for Cheap Accommodation" to practice solutions for the woman question. At the same time, it was the first public platform for women to express their political views and attitudes that were not encouraged by either the government or the progressive liberal public, followers of Western-like reorganization of the empire.

3.4 Reaction of the contemporaries: Slavophiles and Westernizers on the "woman question"

In the male-dominated public sphere of non-radicals, the woman question existed primarily in the discussion between Westernizers and Slavophiles. In order to give proper definitions to what is Slavophilism and Westernism, I should start from mentioning that, unlike Westernizers, Slavophiles formed a unified intellectual tradition, a circle with specific regulations, inner discussion and aspiration towards identifying Russian "specific path". On the contrary, Westernism was much more heterogeneous. In principle, both traditions were nationalist; they originated from the idea of Russian inherited inferiority to Western Europe consisting of states that had been sharing the same stages of social development, from which Russia was excluded due to a number of historical factors.[75] While, according to Slavophiles, the main feature of exclusion was the absence of Roman heritage, the other stages included Christianity, "barbarianism" and European classical heritage.[76] Polish historian Andrzej Walicki explains the rationale behind Slavophiles/Westernizers debate by referring Ivan Kireyevsky (1806-56), one of the establishers of Slavophilism:

[75] Gessen, Masha. *Dead again: The Russian intelligentsia after communism*. Verso, 1997. P. 43.

[76] Walicki, Andrzej. *A history of Russian thought: From the Enlightenment to Marxism.* Stanford University Press, 1979. Pp. 93-94.

"He saw ancient Rome as a rationalist civilization that represented 'the triumph of naked and pure reason relying on itself alone and recognizing nothing outside itself'. That was why the Romans had excelled mainly in the sphere of jurisprudence, in the pernicious rationalization and formalization of vital social bonds. The juridical rationalism of the Roman state had appeared to hold society together, but it had actually torn apart its organic unifying bonds. Roman society had been merely an aggregation of rationally thinking individuals motivated by personal advantage and knowing no other social bond than that of common business interests. The state of 'universal' sphere, had split off from the sphere of private, antagonistic interests and had risen above it as an alienated, external force that chained people together but did not unite them. Having inherited this pagan rationalism, Western Europe found its evolution bound to be a constant struggle of mutually antagonistic interests; Russia, on the other hand, had been spared this fatal heritage and was therefore established on purely Christian principles that were in complete harmony with the spirit of the Slavic commune."[77]

This doctrine was extremely unpopular among the younger generation of nihilists. It is evident from the diaries of Stasova that some of her female associates were in close contact with Slavophiles, attended their circles in search of women's place in the doctrine that, by resembling the postulates of Orthodox Church, clearly criticized putting the relations of private property and "all types of legal conventions" over "human beings" and therefore creating social hierarchies.[78] However, both Slavophilism and Westernism failed to assist the woman question, even though Westernizers thought otherwise.

In order to demonstrate how the woman question functioned in this discussion, I would like to analyse the dispute between Westernist Grigoryi Blagosvetlov, the translator of John Mill's *The Subjection of Women*, and Slavophile Nikolay Strakhov, a wide-known traditionalist philosopher. Both of them produced writing reactions to Mill's book in the first years of 70s to discuss how the woman question fits to the opposing agendas of mainstream Russian intellectual traditions. In other words, they tried to use the woman question in order to support their ideological views about the "destination" of the Russian empire. It is notable that both of them agree on Mill's intellectual authority; however, the interpretations they rely on are strikingly different. By expressing misogynistic affirmations, Strakhov refers to Mill's

[77] Ibid. P. 94.
[78] Ibid.

scepticism, which he, in turn, expresses by the lack of knowledge about the "moral difference" of men and women:

"For a skeptic, it does not matter if there is a difference between a man and a woman, and how this difference is expressed. However, for someone who recognizes a certain difference between the sexes, it becomes important how this difference is manifested. […] The effeminate man and the masculine woman are equally disgusting to us. So surely, we do not like the old people pretending to be young, and the young men shining with maturity, and any other perversion of nature, so common between people. Therefore, first of all, and most of all, we would wish in a woman the purest and clearest development of female qualities, and not some other.
Woman, as you know, in beauty, in the charm of soul and body is the first creature in the world, the crown of creation. It is not an accident that the statues of pagan goddesses and paintings of Christian madonnas represent the highest expressions of beauty available to art. In addition, the nobility and charm of female nature belong to her only if she does not change herself. The more beautiful the thing, the more disgusting is its deviation from type, the perversion of its nature. Not only goddesses and madonnas come out of women, but furies and witches come out of them. […]. A man, by the very essence of the matter, can never achieve the degree of disgust that a woman reaches."[79]

By adhering certain postulates of essentialist philosophy and strongly denying rationalism, Strakhov tries to apply Slavophile interpretation of Mill's writing to make it beneficial for his beliefs, since the rejection of Mill would have probably made him seem outdated. In the writing where he analyses *The Subjection of Women*, Strakhov tends to introduce various arguments to diminish value of the woman question in Russian society. Starting from the moral and intellectual domination of English women over Russian and finishing with the argument about artificial nature of the woman question, Strakhov by any means tries to protect traditionalist values of Slavophile public. While dismissing the woman question, Strakhov fully devaluated work of the "Society for Cheap Accommodation" and neglected their achievements:

"If that was the woman question, if it was the business of women themselves, we would be very willing to make peace with that forgiving all the extremes. Unfortunately, things are different; the woman question is public. Women suddenly felt something they had never felt before; they felt that they needed to be in the office of their husbands and brothers, somewhere far away. Women should dream of political rights. History does not provide us

[79] Strakhov Nikolay Nikolaevich. Zhenskiy Vopros: http://az.lib.ru/s/strahow_n_n/text_1870_zhensky_vopros.shtml (08/05/2020).

with examples of women's desire for political empowerment; modern men invented this desire. […] we deal with a fake view of the whole thing, an exaggerated value."[80]
This excerpt clearly shows Strakhov's ignorance of the woman question: unable to provide historical examples of women expressing their political aspirations, he concludes that the woman question itself is constructed by men. Apparently, this claim demonstrates that the writing produced by Strakhov was created in the dialogue with Westernists who, as he believes, are the proponents of women's empowerment.

One year later, Grigoryi Blagosvetlov published a response to Strakhov in the preface to the translation of Mill's book. Condemning Strakhov's position, Blagosvetlov criticizes women's education that was training "feminine" social skills demanded in the traditional society.[81] As a follower of the Westernist intellectual tradition, Blagosvetlov emphasizes the importance of women's social, economic and political equality for bridging the cultural gap between the Russian Empire and Europe. Before the emigration to Western Europe and becoming a writer, Blagosvetlov taught Russian literature in the Pavlov Institute for Women in Saint Petersburg and had an opportunity to familiarize with the traditional system of women's education carefully guarded by the noble families. Apparently, this experience formed him as a great supporter of women's admission to the state universities equally with male students. Referring to Alexander Radishchev (1749-1802), a proponent of peasantry's emancipation, Blagosvetlov compares the woman question with the phenomenon of serfdom and slavery but at the same time, he does not directly condemn neither patriarchy, nor colonialism. Blagosvetlov begins the preface to the first volume of Mill's translation with disserting about the relevance of *The Subjection of Women* for the Russian educated audience. Suggesting that most of the readers would think that the emancipation of women is a matter of distant future for the Russian empire, which is "at least two centuries behind" England where

[80] Ibid.
[81] Mill', Dzhon Stuart. O podchinenii zhenschiny. Izdanie 2. Redakziya i predisloviye G. E. Blagosvetlova. Tipografia A. Morigerovskago, 1871.

the woman question is not yet solved, he positions the preface as an objection to such prejudice.[82] In the beginning of the preface, he claims that the fate of the issues comparable with the woman question was the same everywhere. The author insists that the relevance of similar issues to the vast majority of a society used to correlate with the "egoistic dominants" who defended their superior position.[83] Continuing the thought about the Russia's backwardness, Blagosvetlov insists that integration of women into the social and public life would make the Russian Empire a step closer to the "educated nations". Even though he advocates for women's professional education, he does not criticize traditional gender roles that patriarch society relies on:

> "What can we expect in terms of children's upbringing from a spineless creature that has no will, no social position, and no goals in life? From a creature absorbed by her husband's personality? Such a mother can only bring up as spineless and empty human as herself. […] Therefore, we are convinced that all the pedagogical attempts to organize a better system of education will remain vain until women's social position will not be free from the artificial fetters that prevent instincts of women's nature from developing."[84]

Blagosvetlov perceives family as "naturally" organized form of social relations and does not theorize about the model of a nuclear family constructed by "the norms of bourgeois sexual respectability".[85] Blagosvetlov represents women's emancipation as something that men should take care of in order to overcome the distance between "backward" Russia and other "educated nations" (obviously, Blagosvetlov means Western countries). The author juxtaposes women and the cultural state of the Russian empire, implying that women themselves represent the government and its interstate position. Hence, in Blagosvetlov's narrative women appear as the "bodyguards of culture" not in terms of sexual relations (which

[82] Ibid. P. III.
[83] Ibid. P. IV.
[84] Ibid. P. X.
[85] Sinha, Mrinalini. *Gender and nation*. American Historical Association, 2006. P. 260.

is a characteristic of a pronounced nation state) but in terms of education, progressiveness, and social involvement.[86]

At first glance, the Westernist attitude to the woman question seems a little more friendly and developed than in Slavophile tradition; however, while Strakhov fully neglects a decade of women's social work, Blagosvetlov criticizes them for being too rapid:

"Unfortunately, there are such aspirations among women who advocate for their emancipation that are the evidence of their non-pragmatism. In literature and in public everyone started to discuss the practical part of the woman question as if its theoretical part has already been developed. […] We still do not have magazines specialising in the woman question as well as we do not have a paper that would do anything apart from raising its voice to make laugh out of the most innocent woman's aspiration towards independency. Where is the propaganda of ideas that we want to embody? […] However, we are used to look at everything top down and for that reason we directly start from practice even if we do not have basic knowledge about theoretical side of the question."[87]

As a follower of Western rationalist tradition, Blagosvetlov is convinced that the practical part of the woman question is only relevant after the development of some theory that would fit the Russian context. As a representor of Westernist tradition, he refers to the "Western societies", where, as he claims, the theoretical part prevailed in terms of contributing in the improvement of women's position. As in case of women's education, Blagosvetlov does not encourage women's labor and public self-organization, openly condemning them of not being pragmatic enough. It remains unclear whether he realized that by prioritizing development of theoretical base for women's emancipation he intentionally or unintentionally implied that male intellectuals themselves were responsible for theory and, as I have mentioned earlier, this position was heavily criticized by Slavophiles. As Stites emphasizes, the core difference between the followers of these tradition is not in the view on the woman question, it is rather

[86] Ibid. 256.
[87] Mill', Dzhon Stuart. O podchinenii zhenschiny. Izdanie 2. Redakziya i predisloviye G. E. Blagosvetlova. Tipografia A. Morigerovskago, 1871. P. XIX.

"in their attitude toward the nature of social evolution and the possibility of man's consciously changing his lot for something better".[88]

Thus, the "Society of Cheap Accommodation" and their projects were not recognized by the contemporaries: as a women's organization, they set an agenda that was dramatically different from what liberal intellectuals approved. It is clear that there was no place for the women's movement in the public discussion that was focused on the dialogue between Westernists and Slavophiles. In relation to the woman question, attitude of both liberal and conservative groups were almost identical, since they followed traditional gender roles and did not agree on women's independent political action. Depreciation of women's achievements and efforts demonstrates that even the most liberal Russian intellectuals were not ready for the real women's emancipation and only few of them understood that women had already been active participants of creating their own future, not waiting for somebody to resolve their problems "from above". Undoubtedly, the leaders of the women's movement were legally dependent on their husbands but, as I have learned from the sources, in many cases, this dependence is overestimated.

Apparently, Westernists were mostly encouraged to integrate the woman question into their agenda to supplement and expand the argumentation against the supporters of "traditional order". According to Stites, *The Subjection of Women* received a huge response in Russia and renewed the debate between the conservatives and the supporters of Western-like transformations.[89] However, in the discussion between the mainstream Russian intellectuals, Mill's book served rather as a useful argument supporting the Westernists than as a contribution to the development of theoretical base related to the woman question of the Russian empire. The attitude of intellectual public towards the woman question explains why

[88] Stites, Richard. *The women's liberation movement in Russia: feminism, nihilism, and bolshevism, 1860-1930.* Princeton University Press, 1978. P. 75.
[89] Ibid. P. 72.

these women had to develop their own public platform to promote their agenda: even though most of them were not radicals, their "practical" attitude did not fit any other political group that had influence in the Russian public sphere of that time. It is especially notable that Russian followers of Western rationalist tradition expressed even less support for the women's activities than conservatives such as Slavophiles who, as Strakhov insists in his writing, approved women's involvement in emancipatory activities. While liberal intellectuals were theorizing the reason for noble women to be introduced to the public sphere in order to represent the government as "enlightened", radical populists proposed practical solution that would enhance women's everyday routine regardless their social position. In addition, as Ely claims, for radical populists and nihilists "respect for women's rights was generally assumed".[90] The political underground of Saint Petersburg claimed to include men and women equally (even though in practice it might had not been the truth); moreover, radical organizations were much more inclusive in terms of social backgrounds of its members, which was also a feature of the "Society for Cheap Accommodation". At the same time, as Stites mentions, sometimes radical populists, like in case of Nechayev, whom I mention in the last chapter, "used" female students of women's higher courses to enlarge their political groups through propaganda at educational institutions.[91]

While it is hard to find any reactions of the women's movement to the comments about their "non-pragmatic" approach, it is obvious that liberal public were not participating in "practical" solutions introduced by the "Triumvirate". Thus, connection between the radical part of the "Society for Women's Work" and underground populist organizations was an expected continuation of women's consolidation in the public sphere. This alliance between

[90] Ely, Christopher. *Underground Petersburg: Radical populism, urban space, and the tactics of subversion in reform-era Russia*. Northern Illinois University Press, 2016. P. 74.
[91] Stites, Richard. *The women's liberation movement in Russia: feminism, nihilism, and bolshevism, 1860-1930*. Princeton University Press, 1978. P.

the members of the “Society for Cheap Accommodation” and radical organizations became even more prominent during the campaign for women’s higher education.

Chapter 4. Campaign for women's higher education

Women's demand for higher education appeared in the middle of 60s when the leaders realised that many talented beneficiaries of the "Society for Cheap Accommodation" and their relatives expressed their passion for getting a professional education. As Vladimir Stasov quotes his sister Nadezhda Stasova: "Publishing business made us understand that there are many outstanding hard-working half-educated women […] who by nature strive to throw off the slavery of ignorance and are ready for any work just to stand up on feet."[92] From the beginning, it was a hard work to demand women's university especially after a woman, who attended male university courses, had been caught during the student unrest in 1861.[93] Stasova emphasized the influence of the Emancipatory Reform of 1861. She wrote about the increasing amount of "landowner proletariat" who had to gain education in order to find their place in post-serfdom society.[94]In addition, with a gradual expansion of the "Society for Cheap Accommodation" the organization had to hire more teachers, publishers and workers for other positions related to education of beneficiaries and their children. The organization could not afford university professors as well as another building, so they had to start a campaign to attract more investors and associates to prepare women's university petition to the Ministry for Education. At the same time, this initiative got an extensive response from various women's associations in other localities of the empire.[95] Saint Petersburg women's university would have probably become an example for other provinces (gubernii) to rely on in terms of inner structure, syllabus and, of course, negotiating the bureaucracy with the Ministry for Education.

[92] Nadezhda Vasil'evna Stasova: Memoirs and Essays, 1899. P. 154.
[93] Kornilova, Irina V., and Timur A. Magsumov. "Emancipation in Educational System: Formation of Women's Higher Education in Russia." *European Journal of Contemporary Education* 6.2 (2017). 355.

[94] Ibid.
[95] For instance, women of Smolenskaya guberniya (Smolensk) supported this project to use it as a prototype in the future. See: Stites, Richard. *The women's liberation movement in Russia: feminism, nihilism, and bolshevism, 1860-1930*. Princeton University Press, 1978. Pp. 64-75.

4.1 Evgenia Konradi at the Congress of Naturalist Scientists

The symbolic start of the movement for women's university in Saint Petersburg took place during the first Congress of Naturalist scientists organized by the rector of Saint Petersburg Imperial University Karl Kessler in December of 1867. The event got a huge response from different groups of scientists and was in demand of Saint Petersburg educated public: while there were around 500 presenting members of the Congress, the university hall designed for 2500 seat was full.[96] Even though the first female chairperson and presenter, zoologist Sofia Pereyaslavtseva, started to participate equally only in the sixth Congress, many women were attending these events as listeners.[97] Apparently, the popularity of Congress was a reason why Evgenia Konradi, one of the temporary assembly's member widely known as a journalist, writer and educator, decided to give speech about the need of women's higher education in front of the scientists-presenters and their audience inviting those people to contribute to the idea promoted by the "Society for Cheap Accommodation". According to Nadezhda Stasova's diary, Konradi (maiden surname Bochechkarova) was coming out the wealthy landowner family living in Tula, one of the provincial imperial cities not far from Moscow.[98] Described as an intelligent person with a great knowledge of French, German and English, Konradi obtained the knowledge through home education, since her family could afford it.[99] In youth, her social circle consisted mainly from Moscow nobility and, as mentioned in Stasova's diary, Konradi attended the salon of Slavophiles.[100] In the early 60s, Konradi moved to Saint Petersburg due to the marriage and started her work as a

[96] Nauchnaya Biblioteka MGU imeni M. V. Lomonosova. Iz istorii s'ezdov russkih estestvoispytatelei I vrachei. S. E. Shnol: http://nbmgu.ru/publicdb/fonds/history-of-congresses/ (09/05/2020).
[97] Loskutova, Marina Viktorovna. "S'ezdy russkih estestvoispytatelei i professorsko-prepodavatel'skiy korpus universitetov Rossiiskoy imperii (1860-1910-e gg.)." *Professorsko-prepodavatel'skiy korpus rossiiskih universitetov. 1884-1917 gg.: Issledovaniya I dokumenty.* 2012. P. 82

[98] Nadezhda Vasil'evna Stasova: Memoirs and Essays, 1899. P. 161.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Ibid.

translator and publicist.[101] At this point of her life, she had been getting involved in the woman question, which formed her beliefs and political views. She wrote for *Zarganichnyi Vestnik* [Foreign News] in 1864-67, *Zhenskiy Vestnik* [Women's News] in 1866, translated George Elliot's *Adam Bede* (1859) and commented on George Sand's *Le Dernier Amour* (1866).[102] Another topic for Konradi's writings was the woman question in European states; hence, she was especially interested in the German woman question and, in particular, she analysed the organization "Neue Bahnen", which was the "new institution for the cross-German women's society".[103] Therefore, Konradi was an adamant proponent of radical reformations of women's position in the Russian society. Referencing to European experience, Konradi believed that the Russian society was ready for including women in the public sphere and, as her actions prove, she was a proponent of "practical" approach towards the woman question. It is hard to claim whether Konradi belonged to "moderates" or "nihilists", since she joined the "Triumvirate" only during the university campaign. However, judging from Shtakenshnaider's diary, Konradi's actions were more or less correlating with the strategies proposed by "nihilists". It is evident that by 1868 Konradi had already formed her political beliefs. According to Pietrow-Ennker, Konradi (whose family had Polish-Lithuanian origins), like many other prominent radicals of 1860s-70s, was affected by the compassion toward Polish national movement that was severely supressed in 1863 by the autocratic power.[104] Hence, Konradi's actions were determined by her political affiliations and sympathies; she consciously performed in the recently emerged public sphere, which still lacked women's presence.

In her petition to the Saint Petersburg's University rector Karl Kessler, Konradi wrote:

[101] Ibid.
[102] Ibid. P. 162.
[103] Ibid.
[104] Pietrow-Ennker, Bianka. *Rußlands" neue Menschen": die Entwicklung der Frauenbewegung von den Anfängen bis zur Oktoberrevolution*. Campus Verlag, 1999. P. 183.

"By inviting scientists of various field to participate in forthcoming lectures, the committee of the Congress of Russian Naturalists calls this event a common business for everyone who is passionate about the development of natural sciences in Russia. These words allow believing that the venerable committee will not reject the voice of that part of society, which, although until nowadays had no opportunity to actively express itself in natural sciences, has some respectable reasons to cherish the spread of this important field of education for the sake of their own intellectual success and other saint interests. This part of the society is Russian women, mothers and educators of the younger generation. Since the program of Congress consists from not only encouraging scientific research but also educating activity, the Congress without a doubt knows about the significance of natural sciences in education. […] There is no need to prove that absolute majority of women do not have a systematic scientific knowledge and some of them do not even have basic skills to continue scientific research. With every new step, they obtain a more clear understanding what they lack and that their will is not enough to fill it. The only solution for them is to be quickly self-taught as much as they can. […] Here we need classes, museums, laboratory experiments and visual teaching without which the best scientific textbook remains a dead letter."[105]

Even though Konradi does not directly reference to her own education experience, she probably describes it while talking about self-teaching. The lack of professional education used to be an excuse to diminish women's presence in journals and the absolute majority of authors writing about the woman question in women's journals were male intellectuals. In the previous chapter, when I quote Blagosvetlov and his ideas about the need of "theoretical development" before practical solutions, I also read it as disregarding "self-taught" women participating in emancipatory activities.

Initially, Konradi was the first enthusiast who suggested asking Saint Petersburg University's rector Kessler to facilitate women's university; however, other associates of the movement considered Konradi too radical to independently negotiate directly with the rector and then with the minister for education. As I conclude from diaries of Nadezhda Stasova and Yelena Shtakenshnaider, the action of Konradi was rather spontaneous: the speech was her personal decision that she did not agree with other associates of the movement. "Although the conference did not formally accept her motion, most of the delegates privately offered their support,"- highlights Stites while demonstrating the outcomes of Konradi's speech.[106]

[105] Ibid. Pp. 167-168.
[106] Stites, Richard. *The women's liberation movement in Russia: feminism, nihilism, and bolshevism, 1860-1930*. Princeton University Press, 1978. P. 75.

However, the discussion that followed inside the organization after Konradi's presentation remains out of his focus. In my view, this case generally contributed to the schism that divided "moderate" and "radical" members of the movement. In her diaries, Shtakenshnaider reacts to Konradi as follows:

"The main initiator Konradi had soon been eliminated. That was the first nuisance that resembled the collapse of the "Society for Women's Work". However, it was impossible to make it the other way. Konradi was too restless and tactless element. She had been barely known in public before that but during the period from spring to autumn, she managed to express herself and, while not really dislodging, to inspire concern that her restless personality may damage the whole initiative."[107]

Through such words as "restless" and "tactless" Shtakenshnaider probably attributes Konradi to the "radical" part of the temporary assembly that, in her view, constantly discorded the whole movement and endangered its operation. As I have already mentioned, the diary of Shtakenshnaider is much more evaluative, since, unlike the leaders of the movement, she was not forced to mediate between the opposing "parties" to multiply the "Society for Cheap Accommodation" and the temporary assembly. However, as a close friend of Stasova with who, she shared the private information, she probably reproduces the viewpoint of the "moderate" side. Shtakenshnaider concludes:

"Not to offend Konradi, Trubnikova also restricted herself from visiting the minister. Though Konradi still felt aggrieved and continued her tactless behaviour, however she did not eliminate herself from the deputies [of the assembly for women's university] and generally her actions did not lead to any significant consequences."[108]

According to Shtakenshnaider, the case of Konradi's exclusion from the delegation that was formed to be presented in front of the minister for education was the second substantial dispute after the assignation of Countess Rostovtseva. Unlike Stasova, Shtakenshneider does not recognize the contribution of Konradi done through her speech at the Congress: some professors present at the event soon attended the meeting at Trubnikova's apartment and

[107] Shtakenshneider Yelena Andreevna and Ivan Nikanorovich Rozanov. *Dnevnik I zapiski*. Academia, 1934. P. 430.

[108] Ibid.

offered their help to promote the petition and solve some technical and financial issues. The speech of Konradi received a wide response; it was the first public claim for women's education performed by a female intellectual. While Shtakenshnaider considers Konradi "tactless", Stasova addresses her speech initiative as "eccentric" and generally approves the outcomes of this action:

> "Konradi asked for herself and for the many other women who shared the same status and this is why her speech was so passionate, persuasive and coming out of her excited soul and urgent need. She will be playing a huge role in the history of Russian women."[109]

Indeed, Konradi's speech attracted attention of several academics who later organized the "Union of Professors" to promote women's higher education project. Moreover, the "radical" party of the temporary assembly who intended to have more visibility inside the movement approved Konradi's "eccentric" gesture, since they had already gained confidence to declare their political agenda and identify as "women's movement", not the "movement for women's education". However, this case pointed again to the schism inside the movement proving that their actions had never been a unified tactic; on the contrary, while the "moderate" party was afraid of restrictions as a governmental reaction to their work and perceived imperial institutions as benevolent, "radicals" promoted this petition as a part of their political claim. Obviously, due to all these differences, the leaders of the movement were in an extremely unstable position trying to make all members cooperate with each other.

4.2 Petition to Dmitriy Tolstoy and the Outcomes

As I have already mentioned, Konradi's speech contributed to the development of women's higher education: the movement gained more associated among university professors who expressed their intention to facilitate women's university. The Union of Professors consisted of botanist Andrey Beketov, chemist Dmitriy Mendeleev, physiologist Ivan Sechenov and others. After the several meetings of temporary assembly established to

[109] Nadezhda Vasil'evna Stasova: Memoirs and Essays, 1899. P. 170.

promote the petition for women's university, the Union coming from Saint Petersburg University agreed to teach without a salary for the first year of university's operation and donate some finances for landing a building and other possible expenses. In other words, they promised to invest in both material and non-material ways as much as they could afford. Overall, there were 43 members of the assembly including the Union of Professors, the "Triumvirate" and other participants of the "Society for Cheap Accommodation" and former participants of the "Society for Women's Work". Even though the assembly developed a strategy to facilitate the university, they still needed substantial resources from the Ministry for Education to start this project. The demands of the assembly were articulated as follows:

1. Opening of the Saint Petersburg women's university or/and allowing women to access Saint Petersburg Imperial University along with male student on equal basis.
2. If possible, to provide an accessible building for the university (at least for rent).
3. If possible, to support financially the professors who agreed to teach without salaries for the first year of university.
4. Saint Petersburg women's university should be as proficient as Saint Petersburg Imperial University.
5. Women should have access to all scientific fields including exact sciences, natural sciences and other academic tracks lacking women's presence due ti the absence of women's professional education.
6. Avoid the type of women's education proposed by "institutions for noble maidens".

The petition included many different strategies they could rely on to implement this project. The temporary assembly considered all the possible factors being ready kessto different answers the rector and the minister might give. The overall number of signatures this petition gained was around 400: many women of other imperial provinces (gubernii) put their signatures for Saint Petersburg women's university planning to take an example from it. At

first, the assembly decided to agree with the rector of Saint Petersburg University Kessler, the main organizer of the Congress, and therefore to get a guarantee of his support throughout the next steps they had to overcome. Even though Kessler expressed enthusiasm about Konradi's speech at the Congress, he still was not sure if the whole women's university idea was feasible: "We did not receive a response from the rector for a long time. Finally, on June 5, we received it and the content was as follows: before undertaking and writing programs, we had to apply for permission to the Minister [for Education] Count Tolstoy."[110] As regards allocating women's university in the campus of Saint Petersburg University and/or letting women attend current lectures, Stasova summarizes the answer of Kessler as follows: "[…] the committee [of Saint Petersburg University] finds opening of university classrooms for the alleged courses inconvenient and leaves the financial part of lecture organization to the petitioners themselves."[111] In other words, even though Kessler was an ideological proponent of women's professional education, he did not really help the assembly to facilitate it. However, in this case, they perceived Kessler's neutral position as a green light: "Again we draw up a petition and get an approval from the university commission, and finally the minister appoints us an audience. It happened a year after the first petition for women's university we submitted in December 1867 [during the Congress] and in May 1868 [after the formation of temporary assembly]."[112] In principle, the content of petition the assembly submitted to the minister Tolstoy remained same. However, before applying to the Ministry for Education, the assembly decided to collect signatures in support of their project. The overall number of signatures this petition gained was around 400: many women of other imperial provinces (gubernii) put their signatures for Saint Petersburg women's university planning to take an example from it. For instance, women of Smolensk [Smolenskaya

[110] Ibid. P. 180.
[111] Ibid.
[112] Ibid. P. 181.

guberniya] expressed their excitement about women's university and intended to follow the assembly's example in their province.

Ministry for education recognized problems with women's educational institutions tin different parts of the empire. According to the reports on activities and achievements annually provided by the Ministry for Education, officials were apprised about the deplorable state of Russian institutions responsible for women's education including gymnasiums and craft colleges. By the beginning of 1860s, most of these institutions existed only due to the donations and were extremely unstable.[113] Of course, there were proponents of women's education among the officials of the Ministry for Education; however, like the followers of Westernist tradition, they justified women's education by appealing to motherhood and the necessity of women's basic knowledge of core disciplines to bring future generations. At the same time, in one of the reports, officials refer to the lack of finances allocated to assist women's education and therefore shift responsibility to the upstream administrative institutions:

"In front of His Imperial Majesty [Alexander II], I have to express my strong belief that we should accept some quick measures to eliminate this [financial] drawback; however, the Ministry for Education is not able to do anything without the necessary financial support. If the Ministry had at least 150, 000 rub. annually exclusively for the demands of women's education, then, even though this sum is limited, we would be able to at least initiate establishment of women's colleges and help the most needy ones: these expenses are quite moderate in comparison to the great benefit it might bring in the future."[114]

However, imperial bureaucracy only prevented from the embodiment of any initiatives and a minister appointed by the monarch made the final decision alone. Hence, the opinion of Count Tolstoy was especially important for continuing their activitiesi. Minister Tolstoy is wide known in Russian history in the reign of Alexander III (1881-94) who carried out reactionary reforms after the assassination of his father "tsar-emancipator" Alexander II. Chief of gendarmes Count Tolstoy was clearly conservative. Even though most of his life Tolstoy was

[113] Zhurnal Ministerstva Narodnogo Prosvescheniya. Chast' CXXXVII. P. 31.
[114] Ibid. P. 33.

engaged in military affairs, he managed to reform education by introducing *real'nyiye uchilischa* [real colleges/school] by the example of German *Realschule* with a substantial accent on mathematics and natural sciences for male students. According to Russian historian Alexander Kornilov (1862-1925) who lived at the turn of the century, these institutions were created to prevent students from radical thinking by involving them in scientific research. According to Kornilov, these measures were also undertaken for preventing young people from obtaining their education in Europe and therefore from spreading revolutionary ideas that gained popularity after 1848.[115] In 1870s, opening of the first women's courses was also justified by conservatives, since many young women of wealthier background were going to European universities, which, of course, influenced them in many different manners: for instance, some women of the Zurich diaspora of Russian female students of Zurich University joined radical organizations after returning from Europe.[116] Overall, it seems that imperial institutions tried to reform education emphasizing mathematics and natural sciences and prioritizing them to humanities to promote a form of "apolitical" education for male students. Moreover, being an academic of exact sciences was a great privilege achieved through proper education investments. In my view, the exclusiveness if exact sciences was also attained through excluding women out of this field: as I learn from sources, "self-taught" women mostly occupied positions of translators, writers and publicist. Thus, in existing conditions, it was hard for the assembly to promote their petition among academicians.

While Shtakenshnaider directly writes that the meeting with the Count Tolstoy was at least disobliging, Stasova recalls the long-awaited audience as "strange":

"Audience with the minister for education Count Dm. Andr. Tolstoy was scheduled […] for November 26th 1868 […]. Filosofova came for me with the petition. At the minister's reception room, we met A. N. Beketov and E. I. Voronina. We sent our cards and ten minutes

[115] Kornilov, Alexander. *Kurs istorii Rossii XIX veka*. Litres, 2018.

[116] For further reading about Zurich diaspora see: Stites, Richard. *The women's liberation movement in Russia: feminism, nihilism, and bolshevism, 1860-1930*. Princeton University Press, 1978. Pp. 134-140.

after the minister came out to us full dressed – he was on his way to the palace [the residence of monarch]; he invited us in his room and the first thing he asked was: 'Finally you came; here and there I hear about the opening of women's university, even the Tsar asked me once if I assist the opening. Nevertheless, I know nothing about it! What is your suggestion?'"[117]

Only from this passage, it is prominent how both Stasova and Tolstoy emphasize minister's close relationship with the Emperor Alexander II. It seems to me that Stasova relied on Tolstoy's approval, since she was confident that the Emperor-reformer himself would have definitely agreed to allow women's institution for higher education. Retrospectively, it becomes clear that in wider context this project was revolutionary, especially after the conservative rule of Nicholas I (1825-55), "gendarme of Europe" who forced intensive censorship and limited the public sphere of the empire. Stasova continues:

"The conversation was strange. The first thing the minister asked after we had read the request was the following: 'What about finances? You want to embody a millionth business but talk about the lack of money and then you want to manage the university relying on the contribution of students. That is unthinkable; each professor earns 3,000 rub. per year and your syllabus consisting of rhetoric, history, law, math and natural sciences demands at least 20 professors. […] The Ministry cannot give you subsidies, not at all."

The way Stasova recalls this conversation is remarkable. It might be just an interpretation but I believe that she intentionally contrasts full dressed minister on his way to palace with the absence of finances the Ministry could provide for their project. She writes that even when Beketov outlined the financial plan the assembly created to manage the university in the first years after the opening – including professors' charity work – Tolstoy continued to reject this idea relying on many other reasons. Finally, he expressed his hones opinion as follows:

"The minister was altercating and saying that women do not need that and that after the marriage they all will abandon science and that there are a few women who want to get this education. When we referred to the amount of signatures we collected, he answered: 'All of them are sheep! You call them and they do not care where to go […].' I barely kept from full annoyance. Then I found out that all the associates felt the same indignation, especially Beketov. Finally, Count Tolstoy said the following: 'I have to tell you that the Emperor will probably not allow the university. I suggest that everything we can do is public lectures.' We were

[117] Shtakenshneider Yelena Andreevna and Ivan Nikanorovich Rozanov. *Dnevnik I zapiski*. Academia, 1934. P. 182.

devastated. I started to molest him and told him directly: 'We all know that the final decision fully depends on you […].'"[118]

Nevertheless, Tolstoy was adamant. He promised to "bustle" about the petition but still expressed his convenience in failure. Despite Filosofova's attempts to speed up the process of response announcement (she used her privilege to remind the minister about their petition during the public events that they both attended), Count Tolstoy gave the final answer in December of 1868, almost a year later. Filosofova's attempts were probably the reason why the final response came to her name. Referencing the initial petition, the minister answered that basic education of children does not require university education; Tolstoy added that if women want to educate higher courses at women's educational institutions (such as gymnasiums, craft colleges, etc.), then it is possible to organize qualification courses with a condition that they would not have a "populist character".[119] This apprehension of "populism" was probably a consequence of nihilists' presence among the signatories; this reference then exacerbated the conflict inside the movement and the temporary assembly, since, according to Shtakenshnaider, "moderates" were blaming "nihilists" for this failure.[120] In an inexorable manner, Count Tolstoy continued: "A condescension for women in this regard is tantamount to lowering university courses to popular lectures, which directly contradicts the statement of the St. Petersburg University Council."[121] Just like the Council who denied women's access to the Saint Petersburg University's classrooms, the minister occupied a defensive position. Finally, he pushed on the lack of financial support and "doubtful" strategy the assembly intended to follow. "In general, petitioners cannot rely on material support from the side of the Ministry for Education because current educational institutions for women […] are in unsatisfactory state due to the lack of financial provision."[122] Hence, the minister reproduced

[118] Nadezhda Vasil'evna Stasova: Memoirs and Essays, 1899. P. 183.
[119] Ibid. P. 185.
[120] Shtakenshneider Yelena Andreevna and Ivan Nikanorovich Rozanov. *Dnevnik I zapiski*. Academia, 1934. P. 131.
[121] Nadezhda Vasil'evna Stasova: Memoirs and Essays, 1899. P. 185.
[122] Ibid. P. 186.

the report on women's institutions published by the Ministry for Education in 1868. In the footnotes of Stasova's diaries, her brother, Vladimir Stasov writes the following: "Let us note once again that in the request […] to the minister, Saint Petersburg women did not mean to ask for any financial assistance."[123] As an alternative to the full-fledged women's university Count Tolstoy offered public lectures that everyone, men and women, could equally attend. "We were completely devastated!" – summarizes Stasova.

Count Tolstoy fully rejected the petition offering a disproportionate replacement of the university project with already existing facilities such as open public lectures, which, of course, were not aimed to develop academic skill necessary for scientific/professional approach to disciplines they promoted. Moreover, these public events could barely assist lectures on natural sciences, which was the primary demand of female signatories excluded from this field of science. Stasova proposed to accept public lectures, even though some members of the assembly considered this offer humiliating. It was obvious for all the associates of the assembly that Count Tolstoy rejected the university primarily due to his conservative beliefs. The minister was aware of women's request for the university and he definitely knew that there were many proponents of this innovation – at least because in the late 60s, Tolstoy received another petition coming from the University of Kharkov.[124] The main initiator of this petition in Kharkov was Yelizaveta Kovalskaya (1851-1943), a future founder of revolutionary organization of populists "Black Repartition". Before applying to the Ministry for Education, Kovalskaya transformed her residence into the women's school and invited the most prominent professors of physics (Ya. Kovalskiy, her husband), natural sciences and history to teach at her self-proclaimed "women's university".[125] Unlike the Committee of Saint Petersburg Imperial University, the University of Kharkov and its best

[123] Ibid.
[124] Sukovataya, V. "Zhenskoye obrazovaniye v Ukraine XIX veka: gendernaya istoriya." Vyshee obrazovaniye v Rossii 11 (2007). P. 153.

[125] Ibid.

academics, including Nikolay Beketov (whose brother Andrey Beketov had already participated in the temporary assembly in Saint Petersburg), assisted the petition of Kovalskaya; however, Count Tolstoy immediately rejected this application.[126] In both cases, apart from his conservative judgements about women's position in a society, the minister was afraid of populism and its quick cross-imperial development, which was especially the case for such localities as Saint Petersburg and Kharkov – cities of public sphere, self-organization, high quality education and dialogue with post-revolutionary Europe. Apparently, another reason to reject women's university in Kharkov was nationalist tendencies especially tangible among Ukrainian populist women who advocated for avoiding imperial influence even (or especially) in the sphere of education.[127] In general, proponents of reactionary politics perceived women's activities as firmly embedded in the agenda of radical populist organization. Even though the leaders of the "Society for Cheap Accommodation" and the temporary assembly possessed notable reputation, it was barely enough to achieve their initial goals related to women's education. In her memoirs, Stasova, of course, tries to represent the movement for education as a unified and stable organization; however, as Shtakenshnaider recalls, this failure escalated the conflict inside the temporary assembly reviving previous disagreements, which were occurring throughout the whole existence of the "Society for Cheap Accommodation".[128]

Intentionally or not, women of the "Society for Cheap Accommodation" and the temporary assembly for women's higher education claimed their rights for occupying political space by applying the petition for women's university. For the first time, women demanded

[126] Ibid.

[127] For further reading on Kharkov women's movement and the assistance of Kharkov University see: Dukhopelnikov Volodimir. "Participation of women of Kharkov region in social and political life of the Russian Empire (the second half of the XIX–the first half of the XX century)." *Visnik Kharkivskogo natsional'nogo universitetu imeni VN Karazina. Seria "Istoriya"* 53 (2017): 80-90.

[128] Shtakenshneider Yelena Andreevna and Ivan Nikanorovich Rozanov. *Dnevnik I zapiski*. Academia, 1934. Pp. 430-431.

the expansion of the possibilities to enhance their own social status, to get an education for themselves, not for executing their "natural" responsibilities of educators for children or the bodies of nation. While practicing the "informal politics", which, according to Ruth Lister, "embraces local community-based action" and is invisible due to defining politics predominantly through the "masculine" optics of "formal politics" or, in other words, "political decision making".[129] While the principles of both types of politics are articulated in the end of 20th century, the division between them enhances the understanding of the process started by women in the late 19th century to claim for the presence in the sphere of "formal politics". Hence, if I continue apply Lister's definition of women's social work, it appears that the "Society for Cheap Accommodation" was already operating in the field of politics, just "informal". Therefore, I analyse their first steps made into the sphere of "formal" masculine politics.

In her speech, Konradi used motherhood to prove the necessity for women's education and it was the quality to rely on while demanding the full access to the public sphere and the sphere of politics – what Lister defines as "full political citizenship".[130] The demand stated in the petition the assembly submitted to Count Tolstoy was aimed to expand women's political rights: while the "Society for Cheap Accommodation" was still far from the political women's (feminist) movement, the claim for education suited the political context of the woman question and therefore was perceived as a threat by the minister. The status of philanthropists that the Russian male-dominated public prescribed to the "Triumvirate" was shattered, since their beneficiaries as well as the leaders themselves entered the public sphere by expressing their aspirations. The "Triumvirate" was drastically different from caricature philanthropists encouraged by the imperial institutions who approved their "social work" that

[129] Lister, Ruth, and Jo Campling. *Citizenship: feminist perspectives*. Macmillan International Higher Education, 2017. Pp. 146-147.

[130] Ibid. P. 149

substituted an adequate system of social care. In case of the "Society for Cheap Accommodation", it developed into a network of mutual aid, which gifted a platform for women of different class backgrounds to express their political claims.

The "aristocrat" associates of the "Society for Cheap Accommodation" and the "Society for Women's Work" who also joined the assembly for women's university had no doubt that one of the crucial reason to reject their petition was "doubtful" reputation of some "nihilist" signatories. Shortly before the audience with Count Tolstoy, the leaders of assembly discussed the police search at the residence of Solodovnikova who represented a "nihilist" party in the "Society for Women's Work".[131] According to Shtakenshneider, this case almost ruined the whole movement because of Solodovnikova's reaction towards her possible exclusion from the assembly. Shtakenshneider describes this situation as follows:

> "Suddenly we found out that the flat of Solodovnikova was searched by the police and that she then was arrested. The arrest did not last long and apparently, the occasion was not that serious, so she soon was completely free of charge. However, during the meeting there were conversations about her inability to be one of the deputies after that because the whole case could cast a shadow on the business, it might damage it, we tried to keep it safe. Solodovnikova heard these conversations; she flared up and resigned by her own will and therefore appeared to be out of the movement, fully free in her actions and she used this freedom."[132]

Indeed Solodovnikova continued her activities outside the "Society". Free from the regulations accepted by the "Triumvirate's" organization, she held her own meetings that were certainly attended by the "nihilist" party of the "Society for Cheap Accommodation" and the temporary assembly for women's higher education. As I demonstrate in the fifth chapter, it soon became impossible for the "Triumvirate" to ignore Solodovnikova's actions.

4.3 Women's Higher Courses: an alternative to women's university

[131] Shtakenshneider Yelena Andreevna and Ivan Nikanorovich Rozanov. *Dnevnik I zapiski*. Academia, 1934. P. 430.
[132] Ibid. P. 431.

The assembly decided to take all benefits out of the alternative proposed by the minister. Even though the failure of their petition aggravated the schism between "aristocrats" and "nihilists", who gave up on trying to compromise with inflexible imperial institutions and commenced joining radical populist organization, the "Triumvirate" came up with the decision to organize women's higher courses based on the minister's permission to conduct public lectures. From the side of the Ministry for Education, this step was a preventive measure to decrease the amount of women entering European universities. The main prototype to rely on while managing women's education was the University of Zurich, one of the first institutions to grant women an academic degree.[133] In this university, the decision to facilitate women's professional education was not abrupt; gradually, the academic council was matriculating a few women basing on their individual achievements: not all of them were eager to pass an exam at the end of their studies. For instance, by 1871, only 3 out of 25 women attending lectures on medicine passed final exams and successfully graduated; however, the amount of women graduating with a degree was swiftly increasing.[134] As I have already mentioned, there was a diaspora of Russian female students at the University of Zurich; they organized the socialist "Circle of Frichi" led by [future] Russian revolutionist Vera Figner and [future] activist of Russian populist movement (Narodniks) Sofia Bardina.[135] German publicist and statistician Karl Böhmert, whose brochure on women's university education was translated in Russian in 1873, summarizes the experience of Zurich University as follows:

"The first cohort enjoyed the greatest respect between the professors and other students. Almost all of their professors share that the five-year experience with this course was completely successful. The eight enrolled women were not amateur in sciences as one might fear; they passed the entrance exam and if it was too hard for them, they continued

[133] Bemert, Karl Viktor. Universitetskoye obrazovaniye zhenschiny / V. Bemert. Sankt-Peterburg: tip. P.P. Merkul'eva, 1873. Pp. 12-13.
[134] Ibid. P. 13.
[135] Stites, Richard. *The women's liberation movement in Russia: feminism, nihilism, and bolshevism, 1860-1930*. Princeton University Press, 1978. Pp. 132-138.

filling the gaps in their education studying math, physics, literature, etc. They never had troubles with [male] students; on the contrary, their serious, modest and polite attitude had rather a motivating effect for them."[136]

The example of Zurich was inspiring for Russian proponents of women's higher education. However, while it was impossible to imagine women attending the courses of Saint Petersburg University, the only way they could possibly get closer to sciences was through women's higher courses approved by the Ministry for Education. In 1869, women's higher courses were opened in Saint Petersburg ("Alarchinskiye" and "Vladimirskiye" courses) and Moscow ("Lubyanskiye"). The former assembly expanded the number of associates through establishing the "Society for Financing Women's Courses", since, as Stasova recalls, "the upcoming expenses were enormous".[137] In 1868, when the temporary assembly received the final decision of the Minister for Education, Trubnikova got sick and was not able to manage the courses; moreover, she was preparing for travelling abroad for the treatment. Thus, Stasova and Filosofova remained the main associates responsible for women's higher courses.[138]

[136] Bemert, Karl Viktor. Universitetskoye obrazovaniye zhenschiny / V. Bemert. Sankt-Peterburg: tip. P.P. Merkul'eva, 1873. P. 18.
[137] Nadezhda Vasil'evna Stasova: Memoirs and Essays, 1899. P. 239.
[138] Ibid.

Chapter 5. Outcomes of the conflict: Alarchinskiye and Vladimirskiye courses

"There was already the Great Lent. From every part of Russia and even from abroad, from John Stuart Mill, André Léo and [Josephine Elizabeth] Butler we received compassionate letters but the initiative did not live and did not die, we still lacked money, - writes Nadezhda Stasova describing the situation preceding the establishment of women's higher courses.[139] By that time, the division between "aristocrats" and "nihilists" took a more clear shape, since the "radicals" were blamed for the rejection provided by the Ministry for Education. Opposing parties transformed into the concrete political camps, which, from now on, opposed each other even beyond the meetings of the "Society for Women's Work". Hence, Solodovnikova, supporter of the "nihilist party" who dropped her deputy status after the police searched her flat, opened her own courses behind the leaders of the "Triumvirate". Shtakenshnaider (cited in the diaries of Stasova) recalls this episode as follows:

"Suddenly, out of the blue, we were deeply afflicted by the news: Solodovnikova organized higher courses and already held a supportive concert [to promote them] with the assistance of [Yelizaveta] Lavrovskaya [Russian opera singer]. The hall of nobility was full, the gathering [of money] was great and the number of people aspired to attend [the courses] was so huge that they [organizers] had to reject some of them due to the lack of seats. N. V. [Nadezhda Stasova] and all of us were just afflicted. N.V., not sparing her strength, struggled with an ocean of obstacles, while others just walked along the clear path and achieved the goal earlier! […] It was unbearable!"[140]

According to the diary of Stasova, the courses established by Solodovnikova were opened "with the allowance of His Majesty) in the building of 5th gymnasium near the Alarchin bridge.[141] This is a periphery of industrial area in nowadays Admiralteiskii district of Saint Petersburg (See Figure 2). The main rationale behind Solodovnikova's action was to avoid

[139] Nadezhda Vasil'evna Stasova: Memoirs and Essays, 1899. P. 245.
[140] Ibid.
[141] Ibid.

"philanthropist patronage" of the "Society for Cheap Accommodation".[142] Even though "nihilists" still attended the meetings initiated by the "Triumvirate", they had their own association where they tried to overcome the lack of representation in the "main" organization. As Shtakenshneider claims, the moderate part of the "Society for Women's Work" was afraid of such outcomes, since that they predicted this action after the conflict provoked by the negative answer of Count Tolstoy.[143]

While the "Triumvirate" and their associated perceived Solodovnikova's behaviour as a betrayal, "nihilists" considered separation as a chance to promote their radicalized agenda and therefore get closer to the political underground, other nihilists and already formed radical populists of Saint Petersburg. "Nihilists" answered the following: "How did we spoil it [the business of the "Society"]? You were achieving the courses and here they are! Does it matter who organized them in the end?".[144] In turn, the "Triumvirate" and their associates insisted that the quality of nihilists' courses was low. In their view, if "nihilists" established the courses neglecting the content of education, then the whole idea of improving the quality and status of women's education was pointless. "These courses were of low quality program suitable only for preparation [to women's higher courses] with teachers instead of professors."[145] The leaders of the former temporary assembly were deeply insulted by this action especially because many of associates related to Solodovnikova's courses had been still attending their meetings, even though they already had a secret plan they embodied behind the back of the assembly: "It is surprising how silently and skilfully Solodovnikova acted and that, being present at our meetings, she never dropped a word about her initiative," – continues Shtakenshneider, who then was the only representative of the "Society" directly

[142] Ibid.
[143] Ibid. Pp. 245-246.
[144] Ibid. P. 246.
[145] Ibid.

communicating with Solodovnikova about the separation of "nihilists".[146] Shtakenshneider recalls conversation with Solodovnikova as follows:

"Once I have met her [Solodovnikova] on the Pentecost at the residence of Sokovniny [the family of old noble origins, some men of this family occupied high officials' positions] and asked her directly and without any introduction why she did that and why, while being present during our meetings, she acted apart and, when it was important to unite, she disassociated everyone and brought the schism. Even though I am mad at Solodovnikova, I like her; she has such a lively and clever face. Reacting to my words, she flared up, especially from the word 'schism'".[147]

In her turn, Solodovnikova answered that she proposed a meeting to the party of "Triumvirate" but they declined this offer due to the threat of the prohibition of women's higher courses because of the student unrest provoked by the radical activist Sergey Nechayev, revolutionary terrorist and leader of the organization "People's reprisal society", which he entered in 1869.[148] Indeed, in the end of 1860s, a great number of university students joined radical organizations, which might had been a threat for the nearly emerging women's higher courses. The unrest followed after Nechayev assassinated one of his associates, student Ivanov, who "refused to be completely subservient to his will".[149] The assassination of Ivanov was a decision Nechayev made after student's exit from the Nechayev's "radical committee" due to the disagreement about the spread of propaganda.[150] According to Stites, Nechayev actively "used women to infect other women with radical ideas", since, as he continues, "this was within the bounds of accepted revolutionary morality", so there were many women involved in *Nechayevschina*, the series of actions under the influence of Nechayev's propaganda..[151] This case brought a huge unrest to radical organizations and the government. The main point of Solodovnikova was that the

[146] Ibid.
[147] Ibid.
[148] The case of Nechayev inspired Dostoyevsky's anti-nihilist novel *Demons* (1872).
[149] Moss, Walter. *Russia in the age of Alexander II, Tolstoy and Dostoevsky*. Anthem Press, 2002. P. 144.
[150] Ibid.
[151] Stites, Richard. *The women's liberation movement in Russia: feminism, nihilism, and bolshevism, 1860-1930*. Princeton University Press, 1978. P. 123.

"Triumvirate" refused to cooperate due to the possible arrests of Solodovnikova's associates and their close friends from radical organizations.[152] She answered that she did not see any danger if Stasova and her party attend a meeting organized by Solodovnikova at the residence of Sokovniny and invite about 30 people to think about the possible communication between her and the "Triumvirate's" higher courses.[153] Solodovnikova admitted that their courses were just a preparation and could not be an obstacle for the "Triumvirate" to open their higher courses; she expressed her confidence in their success and then added: "Trubnikova and Stasova still remain philanthropists!"[154] Hence, the main reason for the schism was "nihilist" party's aspiration to join the political sphere: by that time, it became impossible to act independently, since a lot of support for women's education and enhancing women's social status came out of radical circles.

According to the personal correspondence between Stasova and Trubnikova, initially, in 1869, they did not get a full allowance to establish women's higher courses with university professors (which was, of course, a strong alternative to the university education almost copying the programs of imperial universities); in the correspondence with Stasova, Trubnikova wrote:

"It is so sad for me to know that our business does not go well. […] I think it [the conditions] will change. If they would completely reject us, then, how do you think, maybe we should add professors' lectures to the preparation courses of Solodovnikova in a form of higher grades? Of course, this is pis-aller. […] Nevertheless, we should wait the final fiasco before making this sacrifice. From our previous writings, I see that these women acted unfair and becoming their associates may be only due the necessity and by sacrificing self-worth and decency. However, we should not care about ridiculing and vanity. […] People go away, institutions – live for ages and transforming. They cannot be demolished without a trace."[155]

Fortunately, courses of the "Triumvirate" were opened and their cooperation with Solodovnikova took place in the following years. Women's higher courses of the

[152] Nadezhda Vasil'evna Stasova: Memoirs and Essays, 1899. P 246.
[153] Ibid.
[154] Ibid. P. 247.
[155] Ibid. P. 250.

"Triumvirate" were opened in 1870 under the name "Vladimirskiye" – resembling the name of the secondary school that owned the building they used for the courses.[156] Hence, there were two Women's higher courses in Saint Petersburg – Alarchinskiye, the preparation, and Vladimirskiye, the main university program. According to Stasova, there was no competition between these courses and many women attended both.[157] However, as Trubnikova (who was in Switzerland because of the health issues) and Stasova later discussed in their personal correspondence, the threat of abolition of women's courses remain high due to the "personal beliefs" of certain associates and organizers of this institution.[158] Looking ahead, I would like to demonstrate how the official tried to discredit women's higher courses and obtain the control over them eliminating the leaders of the temporary assembly (that was exactly why Trubnikova worried about the threat brought by "nihilists". In the note from November 3, 1878, Shtakenshneider writes the following:

"Yesterday I was at the residence of Filosofova. There was a gathering of an old committee where the organizers of higher women's courses were present. A day after tomorrow, there is an opening of the new "Society for financial support of women's higher courses" approved by the Ministry of Home Affairs. There were not many of us, heads of the previous committee but the discussion was intensive. The leaders – Stasova, Filosofova, Tarnovskaya, and Mordvinova – of course, stay in the new committee; Belozerskaya, Trubnikova and me are quitting the committee but remain the members. There is a gossip that one of the students stood on the table and preached socialism; that Prince Oldenburgsky [general-adjutant, member of the Council of state] noticed during his visit to the courses how many cigarettes are scattered on the floor. Tarnovskaya, Stasova and Mordvinova claim that it is nonsense."[159]

In 1870, Trubnikova predicted that the governing institutions would try to control every step of the "Society" because of the scare in front of the "nihilists" attending these courses. Cigarettes, one of the main stereotypes about *nigilistka*, were not used because of the Oldenburgsky's cleanliness; it was another gesture demonstrating how the strong is the "Triumvirate's" dependence on the allowance given by the Ministry for Education; it was

[156] The address was Vladimirsky prospect, 21. The building was lost in 1991.
[157] Ibid. P. 249.
[158] Ibid. P. 250.
[159] Shtakenshneider Yelena Andreevna and Ivan Nikanorovich Rozanov. *Dnevnik I zapiski*. Academia, 1934. P. 431.

aimed at demonstrating their instability and the impossibility of the further steps on their path to women's higher education and the access to the imperial universities.

Therefore, as it turned out in the first years of the women's courses (which were officially named public lectures and were accessible for women and men), it was not necessary for the "Triumvirate" to communicate with Solodovnikova to threaten the existence of their initiative. While Solodovnikova sacrificed the quality of the courses to avoid communication with the Minister for Education Count Tolstoy, the officials constantly attacked higher courses of the "Triumvirate" who developed a high quality program that could actually compete with Saint Petersburg Imperial University. Apparently, while officials neglected another "school" organized by Solodovnikova, they perceived the real threat in the courses of the "Triumvirate". For instance, before they moved to the building of Vladimirskaya secondary school, they changed locations twice: the first hall was instantly taken away because the Ministry for Home Affairs decided to give it to the committee that managed "polish cases"; then they moved to the gymnasium on the Vasilyevsky Island and operated there before the final move to the Vladimirsky prospect. In general, the attitude of officials was disparaging; they certainly were in search of the legal reason to close the initiative or to create unbearable conditions and wait until the "Triumvirate" and their associates give up on this intensified struggle. However, it was impossible for the women's movement to detach education from revolutionary tendencies, even though the "Triumvirate" tried to decrease the possible consequences of radical women's presence in the "Society" and the assembly (which, of course, is not an evidence of their rejection of these women's political aspirations).

As Stites claims, study became equal to the "first step leftward" for many women who attended the courses or were able to study abroad.[160] For instance, established by the student of medicine Mark Natanson, the organization "Circle of Tchaikovsky" consisted of the "small male student commune and small group of women doing preparatory work at the Alarchin Courses.[161] Natanson and Tchaikovsky were close friends of Sofia Perovskaya, future leader of revolutionary organization "People's Will", also attended Alarchin Courses, which formed women of new radicalized generation.[162] Sofia Perovskaya, Olga Natanson (Shleisner), Alexandra Kornilova-Moroz and her sisters – all of these women, the whole generation of future exiled met and made friends during their studies at the Alarchin Courses.[163] As I have mentioned earlier, many women attended both Alarchin and Vladimirskiye courses. In general, in the following years, women's higher courses appeared in Moscow, Kyiv, Kazan and Tomsk. Undoubtedly, women's higher courses became another platform for radical populists and socialists to recruit new associates that was the reason for increased police control over student communities. In a sense, it would be appropriate to claim that radical organizations relied on women's higher courses to enlarge their circles, which might be perceived as damaging for the whole concept of women's higher courses. However, by claiming so, scholars risk minimizing women's agency and misrepresenting their own attitude towards the struggle for radical social reformations. In this case, history of the "Society for Cheap Accommodation" and the diaries of its participants help to reconstruct women's discussions, which happened in a close community established for the promotion of women's higher education. For many female revolutionists, especially in Saint Petersburg, women's

[160] Stites, Richard. *The women's liberation movement in Russia: feminism, nihilism, and bolshevism, 1860-1930*. Princeton University Press, 1978. P. 127.
[161] Nadezhda Vasil'evna Stasova: Memoirs and Essays, 1899. P. 431.
[162] Perovsky, Vasiliy Lvovich. Vospominaniya o sestre: Sof'ye Perovskoi. Gos. Izd-vo, 1927. P. 51.

[163] Stites, Richard. *The women's liberation movement in Russia: feminism, nihilism, and bolshevism, 1860-1930*. Princeton University Press, 1978. P. 129.

higher courses was an integral episode for their political formation. At the same time, the capital of the empire itself represented a very diverse space with a huge political underground and possibilities. Despite strict police watch and multiple arrests, radical circles continued to function and enlarge. Radicalists' cross-imperial mobility played an impressive role in the formation of radical circles. Many revolutionary activists moved to Saint Petersburg at certain point of their lives. For instance, above-mentioned activist for women's higher education Yelizaveta Kovalskaya leaved Kharkov and then participated in several Saint Petersburg radical organizations such as the "Circle of Tchaikovsky" (also attended by Sofia Perovskaya), "Land and Liberty" and "Black Repartition". [164] After building reliable cooperation with Saint Petersburg radicalists, Kovalskaya established another organization in Kyiv right before the exile.[165] Hence, Saint Petersburg was a place of radicalists' coordination and that is why, as Kovalevskaya mentioned in *Nigilistka*, so many women came there "in search of purpose".

The main outcome of the conflict between "liberal feminists" and radical women of the "Society for Cheap Accommodation" and the temporary assembly foe women's higher education was a final separation of "nihilists" who started to contrapose the "Triumvirate" and their political camp without the consideration of possible partnership in the future. By the middle of 1870s, most of the "nihilists" confidently articulated their political demands, which, of course, include the question class. Even though it is hard to claim that the class element was absent in the "Society for Cheap Accommodation", since they benefited working-class women, "nihilists", who blamed the "Triumvirate" for philanthropist attitude, were not

[164] Dukhopelnikov Volodimir. "Participation of women of Kharkov region in social and political life of the Russian Empire (the second half of the XIX–the first half of the XX century)." *Visnik Kharkivskogo natsional'nogo universitetu imeni VN Karazina. Seria "Istoriya"* 53 (2017): 80-90.

[165] For further reading about Kovalskaya see: Kovalskaya, E. *Yuzhno russkiy rabochiy soyuz 1880-1881*. M.: Izd vo vsesoyuz. o. va politkatorzhan i ssyl'nopos. 1926.

satisfied with the agenda of the organization represented by the members of noble origins who preserved their social status.

Conclusion

By the early 1870s, the movement for women' higher education, which emerged from the women's network developed by the "Triumvirate" and their associates, went far beyond its initial aims: even though they did not achieve the opening for women's universities, intentionally or not, they undoubtedly encouraged the new generation of women (some of them were beneficiaries of the "Society") to enter the sphere of politics. Despite the long-lasting conflict inside the movement, both sides contributed to the development of women's political consciousness and increased amount of women confidently entering the sphere of politics and promoting their emancipatory agenda. However, as I would argue, the reformation process initiated by Alexander II was beneficial for neither of these two political camps formed inside the organization during the establishment of the "Society for Women's Work". While "liberal feminists" were outside the scope of Russian liberal male intellectuals, "nihilists" refused to cooperate with them at all considering Westernizers' approach too limiting and patronizing. Hence, the women's movement existed in its own "world" influenced from the outside but still preserving marginal position in the public sphere of the Russian empire. In a way, it was liberating; however, when the "Triumvirate" made a step further than social work and philanthropist activities, imperial educational institutions started to perceive them as a threat. Conservative Minister for Education Count Tolstoy never differentiated between radical organizations and women's movement relying mostly on the reputation of the "Triumvirate" but remaining suspicious.

In liberal paradigm, the woman question, usually addressed by Westernizers, was an addition to a wider program proposed by mainstream male-dominated intellectual traditions; while Westernizers, followers of the Western rationalism, instrumentalized the woman question to support their vision about the necessity of Western-like organization of the Russian empire, Slavophiles, who insisted on the "natural predestination of women", rejected the need for women's higher education. In general, both of these intellectual traditions were limited by essentialist perception of women's role in a society. However, it is not that obvious that the position of Slavophiles, who neglected women's aspirations and, as Strakhov puts it, let them do everything on their own without the influence of Westernizers, was in fact more liberating. Westernizers who criticized "practical solutions" of the women's movement and imposed their view on the development of women's education and, consequently, on the overall status in the society, denied women's agency and neglected the achievements of Saint Petersburg women's movement. In these conditions, radical left remained the only political flow ready to give women equal representation and cooperate with them on the equal basis; at least, they claimed so.

From the viewpoint of conservatives including the Minister for Education Count Tolstoy, both parties, "aristocrats" and "nihilists", were leftist or, at least, had significant potential to transform into another radical group. While the "Triumvirate" worried about the possible danger of Solodovnikova's separation and the establishment of Alarchin Courses, the Ministry of Home Affairs was predominantly controlling Vladimirskiye courses that proposed high quality education and lectures instructed by professors of Saint Petersburg Imperial Universities who allied with the movement for women's education offering their gratuitous help. As I demonstrate in the research, administrative institutions such as Ministry for Education and the Ministry of Home Affairs impeded normal functioning of women's higher courses, which were suggested by the "Society for Cheap Accommodation" and their

associates as an alternative to women's universities. Since the presence of radical women was evident through the names of signatories, the "Triumvirate" and the party of "aristocrats" tried to level political aspirations of "nihilists". In their turn, "restless elements" of the "Society for Women's Work" and the temporary assembly who refused to agree with an alternative proposed by the Ministry for Education, separated for another courses, which were, in fact, a solid platform for their associates, even though they lacked the assistance of university academics.

Even though the party of "nihilists" blamed the "Triumvirate" for "philanthropist patronage", the leaders of the "Society for Cheap Accommodation" managed to facilitate one of the first safe spaces for women regardless their class backgrounds and education. By supplying work for women with different abilities, they created a network that in a way resembled a trade union. Of course, the "Triumvirate" and the noble part of the organization used their networks for financial supply; however, unlike philanthropist organizations, the "Society for Cheap Accommodation" successfully tried to force sustainable cooperation unifying women's work and providing them with co-working and co-living spaces. Overall, it was a great alternative to working artels inspired by the type of communal living described by Chernyshevsky in *What Is to Be Done?*, since these spaces lacked safety due to the regular police search and the threat of sexual harassment and usually did not last long.

For "nihilist" women, education served as means for a fundamental reformation of the Russian society. Resembling one of the sub-chapters of Stites' book, I would claim that for "nihilists" education went hand in hand with revolution.[166] One of their demands was professional critical education instead of traditional institutes for "noble maidens" and this demand was, of course, already political. While rejecting being limited by the sphere of

[166] Stites, Richard. *The women's liberation movement in Russia: feminism, nihilism, and bolshevism, 1860-1930*. Princeton University Press, 1978. P. 126.

private life, these women, both "aristocrats" and "nihilists", articulated one of the first political claims for the change of women's social status, which, as Trubnikova answered to Stasova in their correspondence, did not disappear without a trace, even though it faced considerable obstacles later, in 1881, with the beginning of reactionary reign of Alexander III.

Appendices

Figure 1: Painting "Visiting the poor" (1874) by Konstantin Makovsky.

Source: https://artchive.ru/artists/486~Vladimir_Egorovich_Makovskij/works/7891~Poseschenie_bednykh (17/06/2020).

Figure 2: Building of the Alarchin Courses in Saint Petersburg. Address: Rimsky-Korsakov prospect, 73.

Source: https://www.citywalls.ru/house5510.html?s=r1g4o7i28bk787d321r99invd3 (17/06/2020).

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