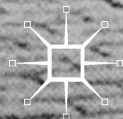




**Family Networks
and the Russian Revolutionary Movement,
1870–1940**

Katy Turton



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SYSTEM OF TRANSLITERATION AND CLARIFICATION OF DATES

I have used the Library of Congress system of transliteration throughout, except for those names which have a more familiar version, for example Trotsky rather than Trotskii, or where they have been anglicized in publication.

Until the Bolsheviks changed the Russian calendar on 14 February 1918, Russia followed the Julian (old style) calendar rather than the Gregorian (new style) calendar which was used in the rest of Europe. The Julian calendar was twelve days behind the Gregorian calendar in the nineteenth century and thirteen days behind it in the twentieth century. I have used the Julian calendar for dates before 14 February 1918.

Belfast, UK

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INTRODUCTION

The Decembrist uprising of 1825 was the opening salvo of an almost century-long revolutionary struggle against the Russian autocracy. A group of officers, supported by several thousand soldiers, staged a protest in St Petersburg demanding that Alexander I's brother Constantine ascend the throne rather than his younger brother Nicholas and that Russia be given a constitution. Nicholas I successfully crushed the revolt, executing five men and sending several hundred more into Siberian exile. It was expected that the wives of these exiles would exercise their right to divorce their criminal husbands, putting their loyalty to the state above their family ties. Some did, but eleven chose instead to travel with their husbands, accompanied in a few cases by the men's mothers and sisters.¹ The historian D.S. Mirsky argued that 'the heroic conduct of the wives of the Decembrists' was a powerful act which did a great deal to 'enhance the prestige of the exiles'.² Beyond this, the deeds of the wives showed that women and men might support each other in revolutionary activity and that family ties could prove stronger than loyalty to the crown. They demonstrated that a revolutionary's life defied the

¹Natalia Pushkareva, *Women in Russian History from the Tenth to the Twentieth Century*, trans. and ed. by Eve Levin (Stroud: Sutton Publishing Limited, 1997), pp. 201–202.

²D.S. Mirsky, 'The Decembrists, (14 (26) December, 1825)', in *The Slavonic Review*, 1925, Vol. 4, No. 11, p. 403.

traditional delineation between personal and political affairs since a private act of devotion could also serve as a public statement of political sympathy. That it was recognized as such is highlighted by the fact that while Nicholas I was alive ‘it was forbidden to refer to the rebels or their wives in public’.³

In an inverse journey in April 1917, Vladimir Il’ich Lenin and some of his revolutionary comrades returned to Russia from European exile, safe to do so now that Tsar Nicholas II had been overthrown in the February revolution and a provisional government had been established. Amongst the group were a number of families and two children, including Lenin and his wife Nadezhda Konstantinovna Krupskaja, Grigorii Evseevich and Zlata Lilina Zinoviev with their son Stepan,⁴ Elena Feliksovna and Grigorii Aleksandrovich Usievich, Georgii Ivanovich and Valentina Sergeevna Safarov, Ol’ga Naumovna Ravich (Zinoviev’s first wife), Inessa Armand (Lenin’s former lover) and her sister-in-law Anna Evgen’evna Armand.⁵ The front cover of this book features a photograph of the group in Sweden.

Between 1825 and 1917, the revolutionary movement developed and grew from the Decembrist uprising and the populist and terrorist organizations of the 1860s, 1870s and 1880s, including Land and Liberty, the People’s Will and the Black Repartition, to the arrival of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (RSDRP) and the Party of the Socialist Revolutionaries (SRs) in 1898 and 1901 respectively. While these organizations had distinct ideological outlooks, tactics and visions for a reformed Russia, which were often asserted and debated in the most fraught ways, in terms of their practical work and basic assumptions about the duties and responsibilities of the revolutionary there were commonalities. Regardless of theoretical position, all groups

³Barbara Alpern Engel, *Women in Russia, 1700–2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 44.

⁴Stepan was born to Grigorii Evseevich Zinoviev and Zlata Evnovna Lilina in 1908 and he can be seen holding Zinoviev’s hand in the photograph taken in Sweden of the group which is on the front cover of this book.

⁵N. Krupskaja, *Vospominaniia o Lenine* (Moscow: Partiinoe izdatel’stvo, 1932), p. 266; Carter Elwood, ‘Lenin and Armand: New Evidence on an Old Affair’ in *Canadian Slavonic Papers/Revue Canadienne des Slavistes*, 2001, Vol. 43, No. 1, pp. 49–65; R.C. Elwood, *Inessa Armand: Revolutionary and Feminist* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 39–40.

agitated or propagandized amongst workers and to a greater or lesser degree peasants, all printed illegally, all made use of safe houses, and all lost members to arrest, imprisonment and exile, regardless of theoretical position.⁶ Similarly, all shared the need for secrecy, the requirement to limit contact with innocent parties and the expectation that the revolutionary cause should be prioritized over personal concerns.

Revolutionaries also experienced the reality that adhering to these principles was not always possible or desirable. As the two vignettes above have suggested, in the Russian revolutionary movement political activity and family life were inextricably linked. Rarely did an individual join the underground without also involving his or her parents, siblings, spouse and even his or her children. Private homes were used for a wide variety of conspiratorial purposes, including as safe houses, meeting places and as the site of printing presses and weapons stores. Family networks were used to facilitate secret correspondence, they could be drawn on to help those arrested, imprisoned and exiled, and more generally they were a constant source of emotional and financial support to party activists.

So fundamental was familial involvement in the revolutionary movement that after the revolutionary year of 1917, family networks continued to play a role in the building of the Soviet regime, informing staffing decisions, working patterns and living arrangements. As the Bolshevik dictatorship was consolidated, the socialist opposition reverted to their old conspiratorial techniques in order to offer resistance to the regime and once again relied on their families as an integral part of their activities. Now, however, their oppressors understood deeply the ways in which kin supported revolutionary activities, and the laws which the Bolsheviks devised to target the opposition contained numerous measures deliberately designed to prevent family networks being used against the regime, if not to obliterate them altogether.

The family lives and personal connections of revolutionaries have been a consistent part of the historiography of the movement. Biographers of revolutionaries have acknowledged the family ties of their subjects, while those concerned with the structure, organization and functioning of the underground have included familial aspects of revolutionaries'

⁶J.L.H. Keep, *The Rise of Social Democracy in Russia* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), p. 11.

lives as incidental detail.⁷ In both fields, however, there has always been a small but significant group who have preferred to keep the personal out of biographies and political studies, the former in particular, which are often framed as ‘political biographies’.⁸ In the introduction to his biography of the Menshevik leader Iulii Osipovich Martov, for example, Israel Getzler wrote:

[I have not] presumed to pry into the intimacies of Martov’s personal life. Having no family, worldly possessions or private interests of his own, Martov put all he had into the service of the Russian revolution and of socialism. For the purpose of this study, then, his public was his private life.⁹

In fact, as Getzler and this book discuss, Martov had seven siblings, six of whom were involved in the revolutionary movement, and parents

⁷For biographical examples, see Barbara Evans Clements, *Bolshevik Feminist: the Life of Aleksandra Kollontai* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979); Tova Yedlin, *Maxim Goriky: A Political Biography* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1999); Robert Service, *Lenin: A Biography* (London: Macmillan, 2000); Carter Elwood has written two articles on the non-geometric Lenin, see ‘What Lenin Ate’ in *Revolutionary Russia*, 2007, Vol. 20, No. 2, pp. 137–49 and ‘Lenin on Holiday’, in *Revolutionary Russia*, 2008, Vol. 21, No. 2, pp. 115–34; Lynne Ann Hartnett, *The Defiant Life of Vera Figner: Surviving the Russian Revolution* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014). Histories of the underground which contain details of family connections include: Avrahm Yarmolinsky, *Road to Revolution: A Century of Russian Radicalism* (London: Cassell, 1957); David Lane, *The Roots of Russian Communism: A Social and Historical Study of Russian Social-Democracy 1898–1907* (Assen: Van Gorcum and Company, 1969); Adam B. Ulam, *In the Name of the People: Prophets and Conspirators in Pre-Revolutionary Russia: Prophets and Conspirators in Prerevolutionary Russia* (New York: The Viking Press, 1977); Stephen F. Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors: The European Road to Social Democracy, 1883–1917* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2005).

⁸See, for example, Israel Getzler, *Martov: A Political Biography of a Russian Social Democrat* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), p. vii; W.H. Roobol, *Tsereteli — A Democrat in the Russian Revolution: A Political Biography*, trans. by Philip Hyams and Lynne Richards (The Hague: Martinus Nijhof, 1976); Stephen F. Cohen, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution: A Political Biography, 1883–1938* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980); Yedlin, Tova, *Maxim Goriky: A Political Biography* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1999).

⁹Getzler, *Martov*, p. vii. See also editorial comments regarding a letter from Iu.O. Martov to S.D. Shchupak, 26 June 1920, in *Dear Comrades: Menshevik Reports on the Bolshevik Revolution and the Civil War*, ed. and trans. by Vladimir N. Brovkin (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1991), p. 209 and p. 214.

who were sympathetic to the cause. He may not have married, but he certainly had a family.¹⁰

More recently, prosopographical studies of socialist and Bolshevik women have commented on the family lives of their subjects and noted the supportive role relatives played in the work of revolutionary women. Understandably, given the focus of these works, they have not offered the same analysis of men's family lives.¹¹ In contrast, studies of the new regime established after the revolutions of 1917 have shown a great deal of interest in family ties amongst the Bolshevik and especially the Stalinist elite, as well as in the inclusion of family members in the widespread arrests of enemies of the state.¹² More generally, much work has been done on the place of the family in the Imperial Russian state, in socialist theory and in the Soviet regime, the latter of which is known both for its progressive and globally unprecedented laws emancipating women in its early years and for the Stalinist retreat to more conservative policies in the 1930s.¹³ What is missing is an analysis of the family as an integral part of the Russian revolutionary movement, as important to men as to women.

¹⁰Getzler, *Martov*, p. 3.

¹¹Beate Fieseler, 'The Making of Russian Female Social Democrats, 1890–1917', in *International Review of Social History*, 1989, Vol. 34, pp. 193–226; Barbara Evans Clements, *Bolshevik Women* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Anna Hillyar and Jane McDermid, *Revolutionary Women in Russia, 1870–1917. A Study in Collective Biography* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000).

¹²T.H. Rigby, *Lenin's Government: Sovnarkom, 1917–1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979); Simon Sebag Montefiore, *Stalin: The Court of the Red Tsar* (London: Phoenix, 2004); Sheila Fitzpatrick, *On Stalin's Team The Years of Living Dangerously in Soviet Politics* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2015); Stephen Kotkin, *Stalin: Paradoxes of Power, 1878–1928* (Penguin, 2015); Melanie Ilic, *Stalin's Terror Revisited* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); Golfo Alexopoulos, 'Stalin and the Politics of Kinship: Practices of Collective Punishment, 1920s–1940s', in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 2008, Vol. 50, No. 1, pp. 91–117.

¹³Mary Buckley, *Women and Ideology in the Soviet Union* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989); Laura Engelstein, *The Keys to Happiness: Sex and the Search for Modernity in Fin-de-Siècle Russia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992); Elizabeth Waters, 'The Modernization of Russian Motherhood, 1917–1937' in *Soviet Studies*, 1992, Vol. 44, No. 1, pp. 123–35; W. Z. Goldman, *Women, the State and Revolution: Soviet Family Policy and Social Life, 1917–1936* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Barbara Raney, *From Baba to Tovarishch: The Bolshevik Revolution and Soviet Women's Struggle for Liberation*, (Chicago: Marxist-Leninist Books and Periodicals, 1994); William G. Wagner, *Marriage, Property, and Law in late Imperial Russia* (Oxford: Oxford

The family lives of party activists had a daily, practical impact on their ability to work for the revolutionary movement, as well as on the viability of the movement itself. Here the work of researchers in other fields is illuminating, where studies of the family have found that it can be an important site of resistance in an oppressive regime.¹⁴ In addition, there is an emerging literature about ‘activist mothering’, where women expand their traditional caring roles to support protestors and revolutionaries in their political struggles, which is instructive for understanding the importance of the types of roles Russian female party workers performed.¹⁵

In researching family networks I have found, like many other feminist historians, that there is no need to look for new primary documents to research women’s contributions to the past.¹⁶ Instead, what is required is the asking of new questions. This book draws on a range of published materials, from various collections of party documents and correspondence, to biographical sketches of key revolutionary figures, histories of revolutionary parties, and studies of Stalin and his elite circle. Autobiographical works and memoirs have been particularly important. When not published as monographs, such memoirs are to be found in a range of socialist publications dedicated to materials related to aspects

University Press, 1994); Elizabeth Wood, *The Baba and the Comrade* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997); B.A. Engel, *Mothers and Daughters: Women of the Intelligentsia in Nineteenth-century Russia* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2000); Choi Chatterjee, *Celebrating Women: Gender, Festival Culture, and Bolshevik Ideology, 1910–1939* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2002).

¹⁴See, for example, Katherine Hollander, ‘At Home with the Marxes’, in *Journal of the Historical Society*, 2010, Vol. 1, No. 10, pp. 75–111.

¹⁵The term ‘activist mothering’ was coined by Nancy Naples in her book, *Grassroots Warriors: Activist Mothering, Community Work and the War on Poverty* (London: Routledge, 1998). Naples’ work discusses how women view their duties as mothers on a continuum with their work as civic or political activists. The term has also been applied by Alexandra Hrycak in her study of the Orange Revolution in Ukraine to highlight the way that women chose to take on this particular role, regardless of their high level of education and experience of political activism: Alexandra Hrycak, ‘Seeing Orange: Women’s Activism and Ukraine’s Orange Revolution’, in *Women’s Studies Quarterly*, 2007, Vol. 35, Nos. 3/4, pp. 208–25.

¹⁶Jane McDermid and Anna Hillyar, *Midwives of the Revolution: Female Bolsheviks and Women Workers in 1917* (London: UCL Press, 1999), p. vi.

of the revolutionary movement, including *Byloe (The Past)*, *Katorga i ssylka (Hard Labour and Exile)*, *Krasnyi arkhiv (The Red Archive)* and *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia (The Proletarian Revolution)*. They are also contained in biographical collections, such as the 1934 guide to members of the Society of Political Prisoners and Exiles, and in collections of short memoirs about party members and leaders.¹⁷

In many cases, I have had to search for the single line of reference to family connections, often buried in the notes rather than the text itself. Indeed, socialist memoirs in particular have a reputation for not dealing with personal concerns. As Clements has noted, those writing memoirs in the Soviet regime were expected to stress their contribution to the political struggle and limit references to family life since this was ‘an unseemly assertion of the importance of the individual’.¹⁸ Even socialists writing in emigration were bound by a similar code. More generally and beyond the revolutionary context, male autobiographers have a reputation for not discussing their home and family life to the same extent as female writers.¹⁹ As this study shows, however, there are numerous examples of female *and* male revolutionaries being candid about family life and the emotional experiences which went along with it.²⁰ Indeed, since so much underground activity took place in private homes and involved spouses and relatives, and since family networks remained so important in the Soviet regime, it is not surprising that descriptions of family life found their way into memoirs.

¹⁷*Politicheskaiia katorga i ssylka: biograficheskii spravochnik chlenov o-va politkatorzhan i ssyl'no-poselentsev*, ed. by M.M. Konstantinov (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Vsesoiuznogo Obshchestva Politkatorzhan i ssyl'no-poselentsev, 1934); Ignat'eva, V., ed., *Slavnye bol'shevichki* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1958); Vinogradova, S.F., E.A. Giliarova, M.Ia. Razumova (eds), *Leningradki: vospominaniya, ocherki, dokumenty* (Leningrad: Lenizdat, 1967); Zhak, L., and A.M. Itkina, eds., *Zhenshchiny russkoi revoliutsiia* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1968); V.M. Chernov, *V partii Sotsialistov-Revoliutsionerov: vospominaniia o vos'mi liderakh*, ed. by M.E. Ustinov (St Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo 'Dmitrii Bulanin', 2007).

¹⁸Clements, *Bolshevik Women*, p. 298.

¹⁹James Fentress and Chris Wickham, *Social Memory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), p. 121.

²⁰Leon Trotsky, *My Life: The Rise and Fall of a Dictator* (London: Thornton Butterworth Ltd., 1930); ‘Interview with Lydia Dan’, in Leopold H. Haimson, *The Making of Three Russian Revolutionaries: Voices from the Menshevik Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 148.

The book also makes use of unpublished primary materials including personal and party correspondence, petitions to the authorities and the personal papers of some key revolutionary figures. Party correspondence from before and after the revolutions contains numerous candid references to the presence and role of family members in the movement. The archives of the Society of Old Bolsheviks, the personal papers of Bolsheviks, Socialist Revolutionaries (SRs) and Mensheviks held in various archives contain personal details of the families of revolutionaries as well as of their contributions to the underground and the new Soviet regime.

Also of value have been police reports and petitions to the authorities. The Tsarist political police, especially the Okhrana, was well aware that it had to take into account the work of women in the revolutionary movement if it was to identify and understand the nature of the radical threat to the autocracy.²¹ Police reports regularly noted the presence and activities of women, as well as the wider family networks which surrounded party activists. Indeed, since the law allowed prosecutions of family members for hiding or aiding revolutionary kin, the police were duty-bound to observe them. Other documents held by the police and the authorities are also of interest, including petitions on behalf of imprisoned relatives appealing for clemency or the mitigation of their sentence. Indeed, one of the most common ways for family members to support their revolutionary kin was to submit appeals to the authorities.

THE VALUE OF STUDYING FAMILY NETWORKS

Taken together, these sources make a convincing case that family networks were a constant presence in the revolutionary movements from the 1860s to the 1930s. This book deals with all the key radical parties of the pre-1917 period, as well as the new political scene of the early decades of the Soviet regime, but its approach is broadly thematic. Throughout the book, the focus will be above all on the interaction between family members and the revolutionary movement, the practical daily impact of the family on the underground or post-revolutionary political life and vice versa. Where there is discussion of the intimate and

²¹See, for example, I.E. Gorelov, *Bol'sheviki: Dokumenty po istorii bol'shevizma s 1903 po 1916 god byvshego Moskovskogo Okhrannogo Otdeleniia* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1990), pp. 18–21.

gendered aspects of family life, it is included to demonstrate how these affected an individual's ability to contribute to party work.

Studying the family life of revolutionaries allows a bridge to be built between histories of the revolutionary movement and studies of women's involvement in it. As is so often the case, women's history remains a field apart from the more 'general' histories of the Russian revolution. Women are rarely or only briefly included in histories of the revolutionary movement, despite the growing field of work on the part they played as comrades. If the ultimate aim of women's history is to produce an integrated narrative of the past in which men and women are dealt with equally, family life—the site of daily interaction between men and women—is one possible route by which to achieve it.²² This is particularly the case where the Russian revolutionary underground is concerned, since so much of its work was conducted in the private sphere. In this way it was unlike other political movements, which operated more freely in less oppressive regimes and could more easily exclude women from the traditional political spaces of meeting halls, gentlemen's clubs and party offices. While women's participation in the official work of parties was still unequal in terms of the roles they fulfilled, the use of domestic settings for revolutionary work to an extent compensated for this and offered more opportunities for women's involvement than was the case in other political movements.

Another benefit of studying the family life of revolutionaries is the insight it provides into the mindset of men and women in terms of issues of gender. Much has been written about socialist theories of women's emancipation and the institutional efforts (or lack thereof) post-1917 to implement them, but it is the daily lives of the revolutionaries propounding those theories that best illuminate their attitude towards women's place in society in all its complexities and contradictions and the extent to which they implemented the beliefs they propounded.

Lastly, there is a very real link between the activities of family members in supporting the revolutionary movement's work against the Tsarist regime and Bolshevik and later Stalinist policies regarding opposition. Arguably, the well-documented Soviet approach to political enemies, of

²²See also Katy Turton, 'Men, Women and an Integrated History of the Russian Revolutionary Movement' in *History Compass*, 2010, Vol. 8, pp. 1–15.

arresting, deporting, incarcerating or executing whole families, can only be properly understood in the context of the underground period.

This book takes a thematic approach, with chapters devoted to different aspects of the underground and the Soviet regime. It can also be understood as the life story the typical Russian revolutionary, who first had to be recruited into revolutionary circles (Chapter “[Joining the Movement](#)”) and then assigned party tasks (Chapter “[The Underground](#)”). Arrest, imprisonment and exile almost inevitably followed (Chapters “[Prison](#)” and “[Exile](#)”). While the revolutions of 1917 offered the chance for revolutionaries to begin building the better society of which they had dreamed (Chapter “[Consequences: The Bolsheviks After 1917](#)”), many, especially those who had participated in the underground, found themselves swept up in the Soviet persecution of perceived enemies (Chapter “[Consequences: Families in Opposition After 1917](#)”). The common thread through each chapter is the personal and political support of the family received by the revolutionary and by the movement itself.

Joining the Movement

The circle accepted as members only persons who were well known and had been tested in various circumstances, and of whom it was felt that they could be trusted absolutely. [...] The circle preferred to remain a closely united group of friends; and never did I meet elsewhere such a collection of morally superior men and women as the score of persons whose acquaintance I made at the first meeting of the Circle of Chaikovskii. I still feel proud of having been received into that family.

—Peter Kropotkin

(P. Kropotkin, *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*
(New York: Horizon Press, 1968), p. 306.)

The routes by which individuals became politically radicalized in Russia were numerous and varied. Social status, ethnicity, gender, level of education, place of employment and even geographical location all had a role to play in influencing an individual's opportunities for gaining political awareness and engaging in radical activities. If there is a 'creation story' for the revolutionary it is the anarchist Pëtr Alekseevich Kropotkin's above: joining the movement meant replacing one's own family with a new family of revolutionary comrades. A young person would gradually become aware of the systemic injustices of the Russian autocratic system through personal observation, reading and perhaps through the guidance of an influential figure—a school mate, student or teacher. Having decided to become a revolutionary, the youngster would abandon his or her home, family and career path, and set out to find like-minded

comrades, joining study circles and then a party cell. Life would now be dedicated to revolutionary work, with all else sacrificed to the cause, especially the personal, with the sole exception of the brotherly respect and affection shared between comrades who would live, work and die together. For women revolutionaries, the rejection of the family home and a future that likely would have contained marriage and childbearing, or even the abandonment of an existing marriage and children, had a particular resonance and symbolic power, for it captured in microcosm the revolution itself. The rejection of the patriarchal oppression of the family paralleled the future destruction of the autocratic Tsarist regime.

The need to sever family ties can be traced to both theoretical and practical reasoning. As nihilism emerged as one of the first inspirers of revolutionary activity, it also informed how individuals were to behave as revolutionaries. Sergei Gennadevich Nechaev's *Revolutionary Catechism* of 1869 is often cited as the foundation of this view, with its argument that 'all the gentle and enervating sentiments of kinship, love, friendship, gratitude, and even honour, must be suppressed in [the revolutionary] and give place to the cold and single-minded passion for revolution'.¹ While nihilism gave way to populism and social democracy, hostility to the family remained, as Alexopoulos explains:

The Communist Manifesto called for the abolition of the traditional family which Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels believed was based on exploitation—the enslavement of wives by husbands and children by parents. Bolshevik revolutionaries viewed the traditional family with hostility as a site of so-called bourgeois, backward, and patriarchal power.²

Notions of personal sacrifice amongst the populists and 'hardness' amongst the Bolsheviks were embedded in revolutionary culture.³ Ol'ga Spiridovna Liubatovich, a member of the People's Will, wrote: 'Yes, it's a sin for revolutionaries to start a family. Men and women both must stand

¹Sergei Nechaev, 'Revolutionary Catechism', at <https://www.marxists.org/subject/anarchism/nechayev/catechism.htm>, last accessed 11 May 2017.

²Golfo Alexopoulos, 'Stalin and the Politics of Kinship: Practices of Collective Punishment, 1920s–1940s', in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 2008, Vol. 50, No. 1, p. 95.

³Barbara Evans Clements, *Bolshevik Feminist: the Life of Aleksandra Kollontai* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), pp. 59–64.

alone, like soldiers under a hail of bullets.⁴ The social democrat Liubov' Nikolaevna Radchenko wrote in her diary that 'it was the duty of the true revolutionary not to be tied down by a family', while the Bolshevik Semën A. Ter-Petrosian, better known as Kamo, declared that he would break his ties with his aunt and sisters.⁵ From now on his only family would be his revolutionary comrades.⁶

Each sex developed its own rationales for avoiding romantic attachments with the other. For some women, the idea of avoiding romantic relationships with men and thereby emancipating themselves from patriarchy was attractive. For them, their fulfilment as socialists could only be properly achieved if they were allowed to be free of the shackles of family life and instead devote themselves wholeheartedly to their own development, education and political work. The Fritschi circle, formed by Russian women students in Zurich, deliberately excluded men in order to give its members time to improve their own revolutionary education and increase their confidence, before they joined mixed groups.⁷

Amongst some men, there was an unmistakable misogynistic tendency to view women as backward, conservative and religious, and therefore instinctively hostile to socialism.⁸ Socialism would emancipate women and transform their consciousness, but until then, they were best left out of the movement. In 1916, Lenin gave voice to this view of women as a brake on men's revolutionary activities in a letter to Inessa Armand when he wrote: 'What sort of person is Usievich's wife? An energetic woman, I believe? Will he make a Bolshevik of her or she make a neither-this-nor-that of him?'⁹

⁴'Olga Liubatovich', in Barbara Alpern Engel and Clifford N. Rosenthal, eds., *Five Sisters: Women Against the Tsar* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1975), p. 196.

⁵Orlando Figes, *The Whisperers: Private Life in Stalin's Russia* (London: Allen Lane, 2007), p. 3.

⁶S.F. Medvedeva-Ter-Petrosian, 'Tovarishch Kamo', in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1924, No. 8–9, p. 121.

⁷Lynne Ann Hartnett, *The Defiant Life of Vera Figner: Surviving the Russian Revolution*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014, p. 56 and p. 46.

⁸Dave Pretty, 'The Saints of the Revolution: Political Activists in 1890 s Ivanovo-Voznesensk and the Path of Most Resistance', *Slavic Review*, 1995, Vol. 54, No. 2, p. 294.

⁹Letter, Lenin to Inessa Armand, 17 December 1916, in *Lenin's Collected Works*, 45 Vols. (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977) Vol. 43, pp. 587–588, at <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1916/dec/17ia.htm>, last accessed 10 May 2017.

There were of course practical considerations for encouraging and even demanding the breaking of ties with family members and anyone else not fully initiated into the revolutionary movement. The first was the risk of secrets being divulged. The terrorist Sergei Mikhailovich Stepniak-Kravchinskii asserted that family connections led to

those almost inevitable indiscretions, as, for instance, between husband and wife, or friend and friend, by which it sometimes happens that a secret, which has leaked out from the narrow circle of the organization through the thoughtlessness of some member, in a moment spreads all over the city, and is in every mouth.¹⁰

The second was that involving family members, in however limited a fashion, in revolutionary activities condemned them as revolutionaries in their own right in the eyes of the Tsarist regime. Kennan described the law as it stood in the 1880s:

A man may be perfectly loyal; [...] and yet, if he comes accidentally to know that his sister, or his brother, or his friend belongs to a society which contemplates a 'change in the existing form of government', and if he does not go voluntarily to the chief of gendarmes and betray that brother, sister, or friend, the law is adequate to send him to Siberia for life.¹¹

Convictions on this basis alone were rare, but the threat was a constant presence. Thus, the 'sole purpose' of cutting oneself off from one's family was, as the Socialist Revolutionary Marie Sukloff remembered, 'to safeguard innocent people against governmental persecution in the event of arrest of a member of the organization'.¹²

In view of the above, it is not surprising that when describing their entry into the revolutionary movement, party members regularly give the impression that they found their way independently to socialism and to party activity. The social democrat George Denike, who joined the Mensheviks in 1917, used rather startling imagery in his memoirs when he asserted that 'it was not in my family that I was infected by

¹⁰Sergei Stepniak, *Underground Russia: Revolutionary Profiles and Sketches from Life* (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1890), p. 137.

¹¹George Kennan, *Siberia and the Exile System*, 2 vols. (London: James R. Osgood, McIlvaine & Co., 1891), Vol. 2, p. 509.

¹²Marie Sukloff, *The Life Story of a Russian Exile* (New York: Century Co., 1914), pp. 126–127.

revolutionary bacilli. I cannot say whether my parents were conservative or liberal. Politics simply did not exist in our family'.¹³ The medical imagery was used here presumably to reinforce the notion that he became a revolutionary due to forces entirely external to his family life. Other revolutionaries made similar claims, sometimes adding that their revolutionary spirit sprang spontaneously from within themselves.

The future Bolshevik Aleksandra Mikhailovna Kollontai remembered her feeling of deep independence as a child and her awareness that she had to break free from 'the given model' and 'grow beyond' it in order to find her way in life. She framed her 'protest against everything' around her as a rebellion against being the spoiled youngster of the family and asserted: 'Already early in life I had eyes for the social injustices prevailing in Russia.'¹⁴

Despite these assertions of independent arrival at revolutionary thinking, however, further investigation clearly reveals that familial influence was also important. Denike went on to modify his earlier statement, saying: 'although far from being a radical himself, [my father] unwittingly helped me to become a revolutionary'.¹⁵ Denike's father's career as a judge had been cut short because, Denike implies, he was too reformist for the establishment's liking. Similarly, while Denike claimed that he was independently aware of Marxism and Bolshevism by the time he was aged fourteen or fifteen, it also emerges that it was a cousin of his, Nikolai Ivanovich Dankerov, who brought him into contact with a revolutionary circle. Dankerov was seven or eight years older and had already been expelled from university. He now led a Bolshevik group in Kazan.¹⁶ Indeed, Dankerov was something of a recruiter for the Bolsheviks, sometimes drawing whole families into the movement.¹⁷

¹³Iu. Denike, 'Memoirs', in Hoover Institution Archive, Nicolaevsky papers, Series 279, Box 672, Folder 11, p. 1. Denike's real name was Iurii Petrovich Denike.

¹⁴Aleksandra Kollontai, *The Autobiography of a Sexually Emancipated Communist Woman*, trans. Salvator Attansio (New York: Herder and Herder, 1971) (<https://www.marxists.org/archive/kollonta/1926/autobiography.htm>, last accessed 20 April 2017).

¹⁵Iu. Denike, 'Memoirs', in Hoover Institution Archive, Nicolaevsky papers, Series 279, Box 672, Folder 11, p. 2.

¹⁶Iu. Denike, 'Memoirs', in Hoover Institution Archive, Nicolaevsky papers, Series 279, Box 672, Folder 11, pp. 2–3.

¹⁷Denike describes how Dankerov introduced four out of five siblings from one family to Bolshevism. The siblings were the four sons and one daughter of the widow of Viktor Tikhomirov, a member of 'a family of very interesting Kazan merchants'; only the eldest son did not become a Bolshevik (Iu. Denike, 'Memoirs', in Hoover Institution Archive, Nicolaevsky papers, Series 279, Box 672, Folder 11, p. 34).

Kollontai's parents had their own connections with revolutionary activity. Her father had pleaded on behalf of her mother's first husband, who had been 'arrested for involvement in conspiracy to assassinate Alexander II', and the governess of Kollontai's half-sister, Evgeniia, had regular political conversations with Kollontai's father and introduced Kollontai to radical ideas, finding her work 'at a library that supported the Sunday classes teaching workers basic literacy and a little socialism'.¹⁸

Once Kollontai had made her decision to pursue higher education abroad in Switzerland, not least because it had long been a haven for radical Russian students, she needed her parents' approval and financial support, as well as their agreement to care for her son while she was away, in order to do so. Arguably, if they had wished to prevent her activities, which they were aware of, they had the means to do so.

There are numerous other examples of progressive parents who came into conflict with the regime, but maintained their commitment to raising their children in a reformist atmosphere. The terrorist and People's Will member Sergei Petrovich Degaev was raised with his three siblings by his widowed mother, Natal'ia Nikolaevna Degaeva, in a 'radical spirit'. She was the daughter of the liberal writer, historian and publisher Nikolai Alekseevich Polevoi, who had 'suffered at the hands of Nicholas I's censors'. When the Degaevs arrived in St Petersburg in 1879, the whole family 'became close acquaintances of several members of the People's Will'.¹⁹ Lev Stepanovich Olitskii, father of the future Socialist Revolutionary Ekaterina L'vovna, had been a member of the People's Will, but had long since settled into a progressive but law-abiding life. Nonetheless, he happily provided his daughter with books on political economy to read.²⁰

There are also more clear-cut examples of parental influence in the development of revolutionaries. Osip Aleksandrovich Tserdobaum, father of the future Menshevik leader Martov, was well educated and

¹⁸Clements, *Bolshevik Feminist*, p. 9, p. 11, p. 12 and p. 18.

¹⁹Adam B. Ulam, *In the Name of the People: Prophets and Conspirators in Pre-Revolutionary Russia: Prophets and Conspirators in Pre-revolutionary Russia* (New York: The Viking Press, 1977), p. 380.

²⁰E.L. Olitskaia, *Moi vospominaniia*, 2 vols. (Frankfurt: Posev, 1971), p. 74 <http://www.libros.am/book/167398/moi-vospominaniya-1>, downloaded 3 March 2017.

liberal in outlook, but became increasingly hostile to the regime, partly as a result of the harsh treatment Jews faced under Alexander III. He hosted regular evening parties at which he and his like-minded friends criticized the regime and discussed the activities of the People's Will. As a young teenager, Martov was allowed to participate in these evenings and it was here that he heard his 'first "seditious" ideas'.²¹ One of the leading figures of Georgian social democracy, Iraklii Tsereteli, was raised by a father who had himself been imprisoned for rioting against the Tsarist regime and now dedicated himself to editing a number of radical newspapers. Giorgi gave one of them, *Kvali*, to a local social democratic group in 1898 and Iraklii became one of its editors. 'By the 1890 s', as Jones describes, Giorgi Tsereteli 'was championing the "young" generation of Marxists, who would 'show the Georgian people a new way forward'.²²

Female revolutionaries record similar experiences. The Bolshevik Rozaliia Samoilovna Zemliachka learned her 'democratic ways of thinking and living' from her mother, while Evgeniia N. Adamovich remembered that her mother's 'energy, diligence, [and] attraction to the revolutionary-democratic ideals of the 1860 s and 1870 s had a decisive influence' on her own outlook.²³ The future leader of the Women's Section in the Soviet government, Aleksandra Vasil'evna Artiukhina, was first drawn into workers' activism by her mother, who recruited her to a trade union for textile workers.²⁴ Mariia Prokof'evna Timofeeva-Reingol'dts was born and raised in Finland by a father who opposed the autocracy and soon became familiar with social democratic ideas before joining the RSDRP.²⁵ It is also clear that a number of children born to

²¹ Israel Getzler, *Martov: A Political Biography of a Russian Social Democrat* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), p. 3 and pp. 5–6.

²² Stephen F. Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors: The European Road to Social Democracy, 1883–1917* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2005), p. 39 and p. 42.

²³ R.S. Zemliachka and E.N. Adamovich, quoted in Clements, *Bolshevik Women*, p. 23 and p. 38.

²⁴ Hillyar, Anna, and Jane McDermid, *Revolutionary Women in Russia, 1870–1917. A Study in Collective Biography* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 146.

²⁵ Pamiati M.P. Timofeevoi-Reingol'dts', in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1924, No. 5, p. 10.

parents in political exile went on to become revolutionaries, including Minei Izrailevich Iaroslavskii-Gubel'man, who joined the RSDRP in 1902, and Konstantin Ivanovich Slobodchikov, who participated in radical activity in Irkutsk.²⁶

With or without parental influence, another route into the revolutionary movement was to follow an older sibling. The Ul'ianov (Lenin's) and Tserderbaum (Martov's) siblings followed uncannily similar paths into the movement. After the initiation of the eldest or elder siblings, they passed on their knowledge to younger brothers and sisters, deliberately recruiting them as their helpers in revolutionary activity, but also as members of the same party in their own right.

The six Ul'ianov children were born in pairs: Anna and Aleksandr were of similar ages, then Vladimir (Lenin) and Ol'ga, followed by Dmitrii and Mariia. They were raised by liberal parents who gave them all an excellent education. Anna and Aleksandr attended university in St Petersburg at the same time. Both quickly became involved in radical discussion groups and student activism, but Aleksandr took things further and joined a conspiracy to assassinate Tsar Alexander III. He and his group were caught and Aleksandr and four others were executed. Anna had received a telegram from one of Aleksandr's co-conspirators and for this was imprisoned then exiled for five years. In trying to understand Aleksandr's actions, Anna, Lenin and Ol'ga familiarized themselves with illegal literature and sought out radical groups, soon becoming activists in their own right. Indeed, it was their connection to Aleksandr, whose deeds were well known, which facilitated their entry to revolutionary activities.²⁷ When Dmitrii and Mariia were old enough, they followed their siblings, first into the RSDRP, then into the Bolshevik party.²⁸

In the Tserderbaum family, it was Iulii Osipovich Martov who first came into contact with revolutionary ideas, both through the democratic outlook of his father and through his friends at gymnasium in St Petersburg. One told him secretly that his older sister, Vera Davidovna

²⁶ *Političeskaiia katorga i ssylka: biograficheskie spravocniki členov o-va politkatorzhan i ssyl'no-poselentsev*, ed. by M.M. Konstantinov (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Vsesoiuznogo Obshchestva Politkatorzhan i ssyl'no-poselentsev, 1934), p. 764 and p. 866.

²⁷ Richard Pipes, *Social Democracy and the St Petersburg Labour Movement, 1885–1897* (Irvine, CA.: Charles Schlacks Jr, 1985), p. 33.

²⁸ Katy Turton, *Forgotten Lives: The Role of Lenin's Sisters in the Russian Revolution, 1864–1937* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 10–29.

Gurari, was in exile for revolutionary activities; another was the nephew of the revolutionary and writer Nikolai Vasil'evich Shelgunov; and a third, Sergei Nikolaevich Kranikhfel'd, had two cousins in exile for their involvement in the People's Will.²⁹ Having begun to participate in radical circles, Martov shared the ideas and information he gleaned from them and from his wide and avid reading with his brothers and sisters and increasingly drew them first into revolutionary discussions and then into illegal activities. As his sister, Lydia Dan, put it: 'Each of us was involved, however slight our involvement might be. Iulii always tried to involve everyone in these doings.'³⁰ Indeed, Martov's younger brother Vladimir claimed that Martov felt it was his duty to do so.³¹

Other revolutionaries, of all persuasions, reported a similar route into revolutionary activities. When the populist and 'Grandmother of the Revolution' Ekaterina Konstantinovna Breshko-Breshkovskaia decided to embark for good on a revolutionary career, her first port of call was the Kiev home of her sister Ol'ga, a widow, with whom she formed a revolutionary cell.³² The Ivanovskii siblings also joined the populist movement en masse. Vasilii Semenovich, the eldest brother, first came into contact with radical ideas in Moscow while studying at the Medical and Surgical Academy. On his return to Tula, he set up a study circle, discussion groups and a library of illegal literature which his sister Praskov'ia helped to run. After her came their sister Aleksandra, who went to St Petersburg to attend the Higher Women's Courses and joined the 'To the People' movement. Meanwhile their younger brother helped hide illegal literature and even their youngest brother, aged ten, became involved.³³

²⁹Iu.O. Martov, *Zapiski sotsial-demokrata*, ed. P.Iu. Savel'ev (Moskva: ROSSPEN, 2004), p. 31 and p. 42. Kranikhfel'd went on to marry Martov's sister Nadezhda Osipovna (Martov, *Zapiski*, p. 459).

³⁰Interview with Lydia Dan', in Leopold H. Haimson, *The Making of Three Russian Revolutionaries: Voices from the Menshevik Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 68.

³¹V.O. Tsederbaum (V. Levitskii), 'Za chetvert' veka' in Martov, *Zapiski sotsial-demokrata*, p. 435.

³²Alice Stone Blackwell, ed., *The Little Grandmother of the Russian Revolution: Reminiscences and Letters of Catherine Breshkovsky* (Westport, Connecticut: Hyperion Press, Inc., 1973), p. 31.

³³'Praskovaia Ivanovskaia', in Engel and Rosenthal, *Five Sisters*, p. 99, pp. 101–102 and p. 112.

The Figner sisters (though not their brothers)³⁴ are another good example of revolutionary siblings. Initially influenced by the progressive outlook of her uncle, Vera became determined to go abroad to study medicine and took her sister Lydia with her. It was Lydia who initially joined the Fritschi circle and then drew in her sister. By 1875 Lydia was conducting propaganda in Russia and by 1876, Vera had helped found Land and Liberty. Vera and Lydia's younger sister Evgeniia followed suit.³⁵ Also in the Fritschi circle were the Liubatovich sisters, who, on returning to Russia, joined the All-Russian Social Revolutionary (or Moscow) Organization, a precursor to Land and Liberty.³⁶ Other examples abound. Nechaev himself had a sister, Anna, in the movement.³⁷ The brothers Vasilii and Nikolai Stepanovich Kurochkin belonged to Land and Liberty.³⁸ Members of the People's Will included the three Subbotina sisters, Mariia, Nadezhda and Evgeniia Dmitrievna, and the Olovennikov sisters.³⁹

Social democrats tell similar stories. Iraida Karaseva (Murav'eva) Ul'ianova remembered being aware from the age of eleven that her elder brother and sister were holding meetings of social democrats in their flat.⁴⁰ The Bolshevik and future Politburo member Lazar' Moiseevich Kaganovich was introduced to the revolutionary movement by his elder brother Mikhail.⁴¹ Similarly, Avgusta Iakovlevna Degtiareva-Boksberg (Zonta) became acquainted with social-democratic illegal literature through her brother (and others).⁴² Amongst the Socialist

³⁴Vera's brother Pëtr became a 'prominent mining engineer' in Perm and Ufa, while her other brother Nikolai was 'an operatic tenor' (Vera Figner, *Memoirs of a Revolutionist* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1991), p. 12).

³⁵Figner, *Memoirs*, p. 12, p. 39, p. 40 and p. 48.

³⁶'Olga Liubatovich', in Engel and Rosenthal, *Five Sisters*, p. 146.

³⁷'Vera Zasluch', in Engel and Rosenthal, *Five Sisters*, p. 76.

³⁸Ulam, *In the Name of the People*, p. 153.

³⁹'Vera Figner', in Engel and Rosenthal, *Five Sisters*, p. 31; Avraham Yarmolinsky, *Road to Revolution: A Century of Russian Radicalism* (London: Cassell, 1957), p. 314; Ulam, *In the Name of the People*, pp. 347–348.

⁴⁰Iraida Karaseva (Murav'eva) Ul'ianova, 'Avtobiografia', in RGASPI, f. 124, o. 1, ed. khr. 823, l. 6.

⁴¹E.A. Rees, *Iron Lazar: A Political Biography of Lazar Kaganovich* (London: Anthem Press, 2012), p. 3 and p. 6.

⁴²Avgusta Iakovlevn Degtiareva-Boksberg (Zonta), 'Avtobiografia', in RGASPI, f. 124, o. 1, ed. khr. 572, l. 8.