

The Underground

I was born on 7 October 1907 [...], as my mother's fourth and last child. [...] Father was hiding from the police in Finland. There was, of course, no way of reaching him—but just then a Menshevik from Moscow, Vasilii Sher, appeared unannounced on the doorstep, on the run from the Moscow police. Mother immediately dispatched him to Finland, to find my father and tell him the glad news. No sooner had he departed than an unknown comrade arrived from Moscow just too late to inform him that his own wife too had just given birth to a daughter.

Vera Broido

(Vera Broido, *Daughter of Revolution: A Russian Girlhood Remembered* (London: Constable, 1998), p. 27).

In telling the story of her birth, Vera Broido captured in one episode the entangled nature of family life and revolutionary activities. Women bore children while maintaining their commitment to their party, families endured separations while members hid from the police, private homes doubled as safe houses for revolutionaries, and comrades were as likely to share personal news as conspiratorial information about the underground. Most importantly, families made numerous practical contributions to the daily functioning of the movement and to the parties' ability to resist state interference and persecution. Parents of revolutionaries offered funds and shelter, and helped hide incriminating evidence. Siblings and spouses worked together as party comrades, forming especially reliable groupings within the underground's networks. The children of revolutionaries were

trained not to expose any illegal activities they were witness to and even to help where possible. Beyond this, family members rarely limited their help to their own kin and could usually be relied on to offer the same support to their relatives' comrades. Revolutionaries were well aware that the appearance of domesticity was an effective disguise for party work and made use of family settings whenever possible to operate secretly. Indeed, so valuable was the appearance of family life that where real homes or relatives could not be used, fake ones were created. The nature of the underground meant that the boundaries between the public and private spheres were constantly blurred, with domestic settings used for much political activity, and domestic tasks, like providing food, clothing and shelter, taking on political significance and involving personal risk.

The revolutionary movement developed initially from small circles of like-minded individuals who came together to study, discuss politics and eventually to reach out to workers and peasants to spread radical ideas. The first political groups of a nihilistic or populist persuasion emerged in the 1860s and there was a gradual burgeoning of organizations, either through splits or through the formation of new parties based on divergent political theories. While the parties espoused different ideas about how the revolution was to be achieved and what a reformed Russia would look like, they all functioned in broadly similar ways. Organizationally, all were directed by a central or executive committee which aimed to coordinate the activities of party cells based in urban and rural areas across Russia and Europe. The activities of the party cells were often the same too and included conducting conspiratorial correspondence with other cells and the centre, fundraising, writing, publishing (or receiving) and distributing agitational leaflets and newspapers, organizing conferences, hiding weapons, arranging for the movement and safe housing of party agents, preparing for large-scale operations such as demonstrations, strikes, prison breaks and escapes from exile, and, in the case of terrorist organizations (affiliated to populist or SR groups), assassinations and attacks. Social-democratic groups shunned terrorism, but they did engage in a range of other violent activities including robberies and planning for armed uprisings. In all of these activities, family members offered valuable support.

Of central importance to party cell work was the task of maintaining contact with the central committee as well as with groups in other locales. Given the ubiquity of Tsarist surveillance, correspondence had to be conducted extremely carefully, using code or chemical ink, as well as, where

possible, safe addresses which first the gendarmes and later the Okhrana would be unlikely to monitor. Parents' homes could sometimes be used as safe addresses since the police often assumed they were not privy to nor supporters of their offspring's activities. More generally, disguising party correspondence as personal letters was a highly effective technique. Kropotkin described hiding messages in letters about family life:

You write an ordinary letter about all sorts of things, but in this letter it is only certain words—let us say every fifth word—which has a sense. You write, for instance: 'Excuse my hurried letter. Come tonight to see me; tomorrow I shall go away to my sister. My brother Nicholas is worse; it was late to perform an operation.' Reading each fifth word, you find, 'Come tomorrow to Nicholas, late'.¹

In other cases, information about family events disguised news. Stepniak-Kravchinskii remembered one telegram where the announcement 'Rejoice, boy just born' meant that some comrades had escaped from prison.² Those communicating with family members who were also party members had the added advantage that they could use personal terms as a type of informal code which removed the need for cyphers or chemicals. Gifts such as photograph albums sent to family members could also be used to conceal letters or illegal literature.³

Campaign literature and weapons were also sent through these channels and the appearance of domesticity proved time and again to be the key to success in this dangerous work. In 1903, the American and future scholar of Russian history and politics Samuel N. Harper lived in a boarding house for Russians in Paris while he studied Russian at the School of Oriental Languages. Some of the residents were revolutionaries and he observed that 'many evenings were spent addressing envelopes in which small pamphlets of revolutionary content were sent to individuals in Russia'.⁴ He continued: 'These pamphlets were printed

¹ P. Kropotkin, *Memoirs of a Revolutionist* (New York: Horizon Press, 1968), p. 321.

² Sergei Stepniak, *Underground Russia: Revolutionary Profiles and Sketches from Life* (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1890), p. 57.

³ L. Kunetskaia and K. Mashtakova, *Mariia Ul'ianova* (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1979), p. 39.

⁴ *The Russia I Believe In: The Memoirs of Samuel N. Harper, 1902–1941*, ed. by Paul V. Harper with the assistance of Ronald Thomson (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1945), p. 14.

on rice paper and folded like personal letters, for letters got through the strict censorship more easily than did printed matter.⁵ The Bolshevik Osip Aaronovich Piatnitsky remembered hiding the Bolshevik newspaper *Vpered* (*Forward*) in domestic items to be sent: 'We cut off the margins to reduce the weight, compressed the papers so that the bundles would be thinner and more compact [...]. We stuffed them into the frames of pictures, into book covers.'⁶

Family relations were often integral to the supply of literature. Anna Elizarova used a visit to her husband Mark in exile in Syzran in December 1906 to collect literature on the second Duma, including information about the first set of social-democratic candidates.⁷ To disguise a trip to Vilna to collect some illegal literature, the Bolshevik Cecilia Samoilovna Bobrovskaja told her landlady that she had been 'suddenly called away by [her] parents on some important matters' in order to prevent the landlady, who was a sympathizer but 'quite a gossip', from giving anything away to her neighbours.⁸ Krupskaja recalled shipping the Bolshevik newspaper *Proletarii* (*The Proletarian*) via Gorky's wife, Maria Fëdorovna Andreeva, who lived on Capri and communicated with ship crew members to arrange it.⁹

Parents of revolutionaries often played a role in the ongoing task of conducting secret correspondence and smuggling literature or weapons. Anna Epstein, who was a member of the Chaikovskii circle and married to a fellow comrade, Dmitrii Aleksandrovich Klements, was helped by her own mother in the smuggling of literature and people across the Russian border. Both of her parents had in fact been smugglers and so her mother's help and advice in effective techniques was invaluable.¹⁰ In 1892, a comrade of Martov's, Sergei A. Gofman, 'used his father's position as a railroad employee to smuggle to Petersburg a package of

⁵ *The Russia I Believe In*, p. 14.

⁶ O. Piatnitsky, *Memoirs of a Bolshevik* (London: Martin Lawrence Ltd., 1927), p. 69.

⁷ P.P. Elizarov, *Mark Elizarov i sem'ia Ul'ianovykh* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1967), p. 87.

⁸ Cecilia Bobrovskaya, *Twenty Years in Underground Russia* (London: Martin Lawrence Ltd., 1934), pp. 36–37. Cecilia's full name was Tssetsiliia Samoilovna Zelikson-Bobrovskaja.

⁹ N. Krupskaja, *Vospominaniia o Lenine* (Moscow: Partiinoe izdatel'stvo, 1932), p. 131.

¹⁰ 'Vera Zasulich', in Engel and Rosenthal, *Five Sisters*, pp. 89–90.

illegal literature' which had been brought into Russia from Geneva.¹¹ Krupskaiia's mother, Elizaveta, helped sew illegal literature into clothes and pack up guns so they could be smuggled into Russia.¹² Since his mother, Virginiia Karlovna Niurgen, was Finnish and fluent in the language, the social democrat Smirnov worked with her to transport illegal literature from Helsingfors to St Petersburg. In fact, Niurgen was once caught in a police cordon with a bag of such papers, but she approached a policeman and he, assuming she was innocent, escorted her to a tram.¹³

The appearance of travelling as a family proved to be an effective 'disguise' for revolutionaries on the run. The Bolshevik A. Sukhov described posing as the brother of the daughter of a senior railway official, which allowed him to travel first class from Nizhnii Novgorod to Odessa to escape police.¹⁴ When Smirnov went abroad to Stockholm in the hopes of obtaining party funds from the Swedish social-democratic party, he made the journey with his comrade Nikolai Evgen'evich Burenin and his wealthy mother in order to appear respectable.¹⁵

Similarly, the children or younger siblings of revolutionaries regularly proved to be the perfect decoy when literature and weapons were smuggled. On one occasion, Vera Figner's mother, Ekaterina Khristoforovna, and two of her sisters, Evgeniia and Ol'ga, travelled abroad and took money to three of Figner's comrades. The money was entrusted to Vera's mother, but in case they were stopped by the police, the accompanying letter was carried by eleven-year-old Ol'ga, who was less likely to be searched.¹⁶ Inessa Armand recorded being searched only cursorily by the police when travelling into Russia in 1904 because she had her five children, including an infant, with her. This enabled her to smuggle illegal social democratic literature into the country in her luggage.¹⁷

¹¹ Leopold H. Haimson, *The Making of Three Russian Revolutionaries: Voices from the Menshevik Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 456.

¹² Krupskaiia, *Vospominaniia*, p. 232.

¹³ 'prishche', in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1926, No. 1, p. 120 and p. 130.

¹⁴ A. Sukhov, 'Revoliutsiia 1905 g. v Nizhnem i Sormove (Vospominaniia agitatora)', in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1925, No. 11, p. 235.

¹⁵ Smirnov, 'Revoliutsionnaia rabota v Finlandii', p. 137.

¹⁶ 'Vera Figner', in Barbara Alpern Engel and Clifford N. Rosenthal, eds., *Five Sisters: Women Against the Tsar* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1975), p. 39.

¹⁷ R.C. Elwood, 'Lenin and the Brussels 'Unity' Conference of July 1914', in *Russian Review*, 1980, Vol. 39, No. 1, p. 44.

The Bolshevik and sister of Stalin's second wife, Anna Sergeevna Allilueva, remembered as a child willingly helping to smuggle arms to Baku. She travelled by train with her father's comrade, whom she knew as 'Uncle Vania', wearing a brand new overcoat made specifically to hide the gun cartridges strapped to her chest.¹⁸ The Bolshevik Feodosiia Drabkina was able to successfully smuggle weapons into Russia from Finland because she was accompanied by her young daughter Elizaveta.¹⁹

As the example of Ol'ga Figner above suggests, money was also transported between party groups, either sums for individual party members or larger sums for the parties' own coffers. After a successful robbery in Tiflis, the Bolshevik Kamo took the money to Lenin in Finland, travelling by train 'disguised as a Georgian prince with a new bride' who was a fellow comrade.²⁰ Where money was concerned, family members proved useful when plans went awry. Smirnov described one occasion when, unable to find his comrade Leonid Borisovich Krasin in order to give him a large sum of money for the Bolsheviks in 1906, he gave it instead to Gorky's wife's sister, A.V. Krit, knowing that she could be relied on to get the money to the right person.²¹

The money which was smuggled had to be raised, if not actually stolen, and here family members contributed as well.²² Money was vital for the cause—to support party members and their families, to rent accommodation, to buy materials, printing presses and weapons, and to pay for travel. At the most basic level, family members could contribute to party finances by supporting their relatives and relieving the party of the need to do so. Revolutionaries often found it difficult to get work as a result of their reputation for being 'politically unreliable', and impossible if they were forced to live underground without official papers, thus the financial support of parents was invaluable. Populists of the 1860s

¹⁸A.S. Allilueva, *Vospominaniia* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1946), pp. 52–55. This was not the only time the Alliluev children helped to smuggle cartridges. See Ol'ga Evgen'evna Allilueva, 'Avtobiografiia', in RGASPI, f. 124, o. 1, ed. khr. 40, l. 11.

¹⁹G.M. Kramarov, *Soldat revoliutsii: o Sergee Ivanoviche Guseve* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1970), p. 58.

²⁰Stephen Kotkin, *Stalin: Paradoxes of Power, 1878–1928* (Penguin, 2015), p. 114.

²¹Tova Yedlin, *Maxim Gorky: A Political Biography* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1999), p. 81.

²²Tat'iana Ivanova Vulikh, 'Memoirs', in Hoover Institution Archive, Nicolaevsky Papers, Series 134, Box 207, Folder 10, p. 1.

and 1870s might have committed to giving up their wealth to become revolutionaries, but even they sometimes turned to home in emergencies. The populist Koval'skaia was supported by 'small funds secretly sent' by her mother.²³ Amongst the Bolsheviks, Kollontai, Lenin and his siblings, Suren Spandarian and Lev Borisovich Kamenev relied on their parents for financial support; Iurii Mikhailovich Larin relied on his uncle.²⁴ Even Kamo received food parcels from the family with which he claimed to have severed ties.²⁵ Of the Mensheviks, Martov's father, Osip, continued to support his children financially throughout their revolutionary careers.²⁶

Parental financial support was also regularly used to escape abroad, and even parents or relatives who disapproved of their children's activity did at times offer funds in this situation. When S. Shiriaev, a member of the People's Will, had only fifty roubles for going abroad, he turned to his mother, who gave him a further seventy to pay for his papers.²⁷ The social democrat Boris Nikolaevich Noskov turned to his uncle for money to pay for his escape abroad.²⁸ In 1893, the Georgian and future Menshevik Noe Nikolaevich Zhordania avoided police arrest by going to Europe with eighty roubles from his father.²⁹

²³'Elizaveta Kovalskaia', in Engel and Rosenthal, *Five Sisters*, p. 238.

²⁴I.D. Remezovskii, *Ul'ianovy v Kieve: 1903–1904 gg.* (Kiev: Izdatel'stvo pri kievskom gosudarstvennom universitete, 1979), p. 8; Barbara Evans Clements, *Bolshevik Women* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 25; Miklós Kun, *Stalin: An Unknown Portrait* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2003), p. 129; Simon Sebag Montefiore, *Young Stalin* (London: Phoenix, 2008), p. 122; Anna Larina, *This I Cannot Forget: The Memoirs of Nikolai Bukharin's Widow*, introduction by Stephen F. Cohen, trans. by Gary Kern (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1994), p. 206.

²⁵Krupskaia, *Vospominaniia*, p. 116.

²⁶'Interview with Lydia Dan', in Haimson, *The Making of Three Russian Revolutionaries*, pp. 210–211.

²⁷S. Shiriaev, 'Avtobiograficheskaia zapiska S. Shiriaeva', introduction by R.M. Kantor, in *Krasnyi Arkhiv*, 1924, No. 7, p. 76. In fact, his request for a passport was rejected, but he went abroad anyway.

²⁸Krupskaia, *Vospominaniia*, p. 47.

²⁹Stephen F. Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors: The European Road to Social Democracy, 1883–1917* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2005), p. 60; see also M.M. Shneerov, 'Memoirs', in Hoover Institution Archive, Nicolaevsky Papers, Series 232, Box 392, Folder 10, p. 11.

Other revolutionaries used their inheritance or personal allowance to fund the movement. A printing press in Zurich loyal to the Chaikovskii circle in the 1870s was funded by money donated by Ekaterina Ivanovna, the sister of the radical writer Dmitrii Ivanovich Pisarev.³⁰ Elizaveta Petrovna Durnovo, the niece of the Governor of Moscow, donated 16,000 roubles to her group, the Black Repartition.³¹ In 1874, the three Subbotina sisters put 'the whole of their large fortune at the disposal' of the All-Russian Social Revolutionary (Moscow) Organization and later, in 1881, donated the remaining 11,000 roubles of their family's fortune to the People's Will.³²

The Bolshevik party also benefited from donations of personal fortunes, from Adol'f Abramovich Joffe, for example, and Nikolai Pavlovich Schmidt.³³ The latter was the nephew of the industrialist Savva Timofeevich Morozov, and a successful factory owner himself, who joined the Bolsheviks in 1905 and helped fund their legal daily newspaper, *Novaia Zhizn'* (*New Life*). He died in police custody, but made known his desire that his fortune go to the Bolsheviks. Officially Schmidt's estate was inherited by his family members, but one beneficiary, Schmidt's sister Elizaveta Pavlovna, was willing to donate her share to the Bolsheviks. However, because she was still a minor, and despite the fact that she was the common-law wife of a Bolshevik, Viktor Konstantinovich Taratuta, a fictitious marriage was arranged with another party member, Aleksandr Mikhailovich Ignat'ev, so that she could gain the consent of her husband to dispose of her legacy.³⁴ This tactic of contracting a legal but fictitious marriage to allow a young woman to access her inheritance in order to donate it to the cause was a fairly common one.³⁵

³⁰Avrahm Yarmolinsky, *Road to Revolution: A Century of Russian Radicalism* (London: Cassell, 1957), p. 180.

³¹Yarmolinsky, *Road to Revolution*, pp. 231–232.

³²'Vera Figner', in Engel and Rosenthal, *Five Sisters*, p. 31; Yarmolinsky, *Road to Revolution*, p. 314.

³³William Reswick, *I Dreamt Revolution* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1952), p. 209.

³⁴Krupskaia, *Vospominaniia*, pp. 141–142.

³⁵Adam 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), pp. 150–151 and pp. 177–178.

Less scrupulous schemes involving sexual relations and family members were also used. When the funds donated by Dmitrii Ivanovich Pisarev's sister to the Chaikovskii circle's Zurich printing press ran out, her comrade V.M. Aleksandrov suggested that 'she obtain more funds for the establishment by selling herself to an old man'. She carried out this plan but committed suicide afterwards.³⁶ One member of the All-Russian Social Revolutionary (Moscow) Organization considered poisoning his father in order to gain access to his inheritance.³⁷

More conventional methods for obtaining money included hosting fundraising lectures and parties. The mother and father of Elena Dmitrievna Stasova hosted lectures in their St Petersburg apartment at which it was expected that their guests would make donations to the Bolshevik party.³⁸ Sometimes parents simply donated money to the cause, while others were approached for contributions.³⁹ In 1880, Koval'skaia approached the father of a revolutionary who had killed himself after 'failing in an attempt to assassinate a provocateur' to ask if he would give some money to the populist terrorist organization, the Union of Russian Workers of the South, so that it could help three comrades escape from prison. Polikarpov went so far as to borrow 1000 roubles to give to Koval'skaia.⁴⁰ Children of revolutionaries would sometimes be employed in the task of fundraising. Thus, the Alliluev sisters collected money for revolutionaries during the war.⁴¹

To conduct all these activities, party cells needed safe houses. These were the first port of call for revolutionaries arriving in a town in order to make contact with the local group, they were a safe haven for revolutionaries on the run from exile or who were being watched by the police, they were the meeting place for gatherings of revolutionaries and lastly they were the site of revolutionary activities.

³⁶Yarmolinsky, *Road to Revolution*, p. 180.

³⁷Yarmolinsky, *Road to Revolution*, p. 137.

³⁸Clements, *Bolshevik Women*, p. 69.

³⁹N.B. Bogdanova, *Men'shevik* (St Petersburg: Nauchno-informatsionnyi tsentre 'Memorial', 1994), p. 19.

⁴⁰'Elizaveta Kovalskaia', in Engel and Rosenthal, *Five Sisters*, p. 228 and p. 237.

⁴¹'Anna', in *The Alliluev Memoirs: Recollections of Svetlana Stalin's Maternal Aunt Anna Alliluyeva and her Grandfather Sergei Alliluev*, ed. and trans. by David Tutaev (London: Michael Joseph, 1968), p. 159.

It was no small matter to establish them, for every block of apartments in Russian towns was staffed by a doorman who monitored residents for the police. Once they were established, it was important to keep them safe and reliable for as long as possible, for communicating a change of safe house, its address and the signal both for entering it and knowing that it was safe to enter (for example, by the placing of an umbrella in the window),⁴² was difficult and time-consuming.

Safe houses were kept by a range of people. Sometimes they were run by sympathizers who had no familial connection to the movement, but just as often they were run by relatives of revolutionaries. Degaev's mother Natalia allowed People's Will revolutionaries to stay at her house and to hold meetings there.⁴³ The Bolshevik N. Leshchenskii worked as a tailor alongside his father and nephew, with their workshop doubling as a safe house.⁴⁴ The parents of the Bolshevik Sof'ia Nikolaevna Smidovich, who would lead the Zhenotdel (Women's Department) between 1922 and 1924, were sympathetic to the revolutionary cause and sheltered 'revolutionary students'.⁴⁵ Trotsky remembered the doctor Aleksander Aleksandrovich Litkens, whose sons were members of the Bolsheviks and who ran a safe house for revolutionaries in St Petersburg.⁴⁶ Anna Allilueva wrote about her grandmother supporting the activities of her son and daughter-in-law, Sergei and Ol'ga:

Granny never passed judgement on any of her children: she was proud of them. She was also on the side of every rebel in Didube. The workmen at the rail depot liked coming to Granny [...] If there was anything they wanted to hide, they knew they only had to ask Magdalina Iakovlevna. She never asked any questions and her house was always open to anyone persecuted by the police.⁴⁷

Cecilia Bobrovskaia described her work in Moscow in 1907 as follows: 'I had three apartments which I could use for our daily work and for

⁴²'Olga Liubatovich', in Engel and Rosenthal, *Five Sisters*, p. 169.

⁴³Ulam, *In the Name of the People*, pp. 380–381.

⁴⁴N. Leshchinskii, 'Rabota sotsial-demokratov v Stavropolegubernskom (1904–1907 g.g.)', in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1924, No. 4, p. 129.

⁴⁵Clements, *Bolshevik Women*, p. 37.

⁴⁶Leon Trotsky, *My Life: The Rise and Fall of a Dictator* (London: Thornton Butterworth Ltd., 1930), pp. 149–150.

⁴⁷'Anna', in *The Alliluyev Memoirs*, pp. 39–40.

meeting purposes whenever it was expedient from the point of view of secrecy, and the tenants of these apartments never objected to our using them.' One of them belonged to her mother-in-law Sof'ia Bobrovskaia, and the other to Sergei Veidrikh, who lived with his mother Alissa 'who was also a sympathizer'.⁴⁸ Siblings also ran safe houses, including the Bolshevik sisters Ol'ga and Vera Dilevskaia, and Bobrovskaia's sister Rose.⁴⁹

Safe houses were often kept by married couples. In 1913, the Bolshevik Lazar' Moiseevich Kaganovich and his wife Mariia Markovna Privorotskaia, who had met and married through their underground work, ran a safe house in Kiev.⁵⁰ The Bolsheviks Ol'ga Pavlovna Ermakova and Viktor Pavlovich Nogin used their flat for Moscow Committee meetings in 1908.⁵¹ Where there were couples, there were often, also, children. The presence of children in safe houses did pose problems, but the fact that there were protocols for dealing with such circumstances highlights that family-run safe houses were fairly common. Going to a safe house usually required preparation, for example acquiring a password, but further precautions were required if a family lived there. According to Lydia Dan, it was 'absolutely inadmissible, except in the most extreme circumstances' to go to a revolutionary's family home without contacting him first. This, however, increased the danger to all concerned: 'At that time the telephone was not so common, so it was impossible to call. You had to write, which was always risky. It was documentary evidence.'⁵²

Safe houses were used for a variety of purposes. The Chernovs' home in Vyborg in 1907 'became the center for the Socialist Revolutionary party in Finland' as Ol'ga remembered: 'Central Committee members, as well as comrades from Russia and abroad would come to stay with our family—sometimes for weeks at a time. Mother, young, outgoing

⁴⁸Bobrovskaia, *Twenty Years*, p. 195.

⁴⁹K.T. Sverdlova (Novgorodtseva), *Iakov Mikhailovich Sverdlov. Vospominaniia* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo TsK VLKSM, Molodaia gvardiia, 1939), p. 78; Bobrovskaia, *Twenty Years*, p. 134.

⁵⁰Rees, E.A., *Iron Lazar: A Political Biography of Lazar Kaganovich* (London: Anthem Press, 2012), p. 7.

⁵¹N. Nelidov, 'Tovarishch Makar (V.P. Nogin)', in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1924, No. 7, p. 157.

⁵²'Interview with Lydia Dan', in Haimson, *The Making of Three Russian Revolutionaries*, p. 140.

and generous, considered this natural.⁵³ Safe houses could also be used for meetings of workers, soldiers or sailors. Bobrovskaiia's mother-in-law Sof'ia and daughter Nina allowed all sorts of gatherings:

It often happened that mother and daughter, not having had time to consult each other, both offered the apartment for meeting purposes on the same day. Once, for example, a secret meeting of soldiers [...] was held in one room, which Sof'ia had lent for the purpose, while in another room the girl cashiers of the Chichkin dairies met to discuss the forthcoming strike of the employees of that firm. Nina had consented to let them have the room without consulting her mother. [...] Furthermore, workers frequently made appointments at the house without telling the Bobrovskii beforehand because they knew that the latter would acquiesce.⁵⁴

One tactic to disguise these large meetings was to pretend they were family gatherings, a New Year's celebration or an engagement party.⁵⁵

Safe houses were also used for that other major activity of underground party cells: printing. One of the central tasks of any revolutionary group was to assert its existence and to convey its revolutionary message to workers and peasants. This was achieved by issuing proclamations, leaflets and newspapers, though printing them was often a difficult task. At the most basic level leaflets were copied out by hand or retyped manually. This was an extremely time-consuming and tedious job, and needed as many people as possible to do it. It was not uncommon for mothers and children to be drawn into such work.⁵⁶

A much more satisfactory approach was to establish a printing press. Presses could be housed in revolutionaries' homes or the homes of relatives. In 1895, while living in his grandmother's house, the future head of the Cheka, Feliks Edmundovich Dzerzhinskii, kept an illegal printing

⁵³ Olga Chernov Andreyev, *Cold Spring in Russia*, trans. by Michael Carlisle (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1978), p. 30.

⁵⁴ Bobrovskaya, *Twenty Years*, pp. 115–116.

⁵⁵ V. Kartsev, *Krzhizhanovskii* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo 'Molodaia gvardiia', 1985), p. 200; P. Kushner, 'Russkii kul'turnyi tsentr v 1908–1915 g.g.', in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1924, No. 8–9, p. 210; S. Balashov, 'Rabochee dvizhenie v Ivanovo-Voznesenske (1898–1905 gg.)', in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1925, No. 9, p. 156.

⁵⁶ See for example E.A. Elagina, 'Avtobiografiia', in RGASPI, f. 124, o. 1, ed. khr. 633, l. 6 and l. 6 ob.

press in the attic.⁵⁷ A Bolshevik family, the Orlovs and their baby, housed the first *Iskra* printing press.⁵⁸ The presence of children inevitably required extra conspiratorial methods to be used to protect the press, but this did not stop revolutionaries using family homes. Bobrovskaia recalled just such a press in Kostroma in 1906:

The necessity for printing a leaflet was very urgent [...] [W]e took courage and decided to work our machine in Zhiroslavka. At about this time I sent for an experienced Moscow comrade, an excellent typesetter (he was a printer as well) called Vasya Mayorov. Vasya came with his wife to Kostroma, and we immediately sent him to Zhiroslavka. In the evening when the children and servants were in bed, our work would begin.⁵⁹

That this was not a happy arrangement is highlighted by the fact that when setting up another press later, Bobrovskaia deliberately chose a childless couple to oversee it.⁶⁰ Indeed, it was far more common that rather than use an existing home, an apartment would be rented specifically for the purpose of keeping the press. Unlike safe houses for meetings, these apartments were often cut off from most members of the party, with only a small number allowed to 'enter the premises, in order to bring supplies and take away the printed matter'.⁶¹

Often presses were run by a pair of revolutionaries who pretended to be married in order to give the apartment the respectability it needed to avoid the suspicion of the doorman.⁶² The Black Repartition kept their press first in a flat rented by the fake couple I. P'iankov and Mariia K. Krylova and then in an apartment held by Nikolai Pavlovich Shchedrin and Koval'skaia, who posed as a German couple, the Krudners, using 'phony identity papers'.⁶³ The press of the People's Will was

⁵⁷S.S. Khromov, *Felix Dzerzhinsky: A Biography* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1988), p. 15. See also Eva L'vovna Broido, *Memoirs of a Revolutionary*, ed. and trans. by Vera Broido (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 76–77.

⁵⁸Marie Sukloff, *The Life Story of a Russian Exile* (New York: The Century Co., 1914), p. 71.

⁵⁹Bobrovskaya, *Twenty Years*, pp. 152–153.

⁶⁰Bobrovskaya, *Twenty Years*, p. 177.

⁶¹Yarmolinsky, *Road to Revolution*, p. 214.

⁶²N. Leshchinskii, 'Rabota sotsial-demokratov v Stavropolegubernskom (1904–1907 g.g.)', in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1924, No. 4, pp. 127–128.

⁶³'Elizaveta Kovalskaia', in Engel and Rosenthal, *Five Sisters*, p. 221.

operated by Vera Figner and Grigorii Prokof'evich Isaev, who lived together as the Kokhanovskii in a flat which was also used for 'important meetings', and another was run by Mikhail Fëdorovich Grachevskii and his 'nominal wife'.⁶⁴ There are also examples of genuine couples overseeing presses. Sergei Petrovich Degaev and his wife Liubov' Nikolaevna Ivanova ran a printing press in Odessa for the People's Will (before Sergei betrayed the group).⁶⁵

Once the printing was complete or illegal literature was received from abroad, it had to be concealed until it was needed, as did the weapons party cells occasionally gathered or received. Safe houses were used for this purpose as well.⁶⁶ Parents, including Kollontai's, sometimes helped conceal literature.⁶⁷ Rozaliia Zemliachka remembered watching 'her mother hiding illegal pamphlets printed by her brothers and sisters', while the Menshevik Anan'in relied on his mother to do the same.⁶⁸ Others hid literature in their parents' home without their knowledge. Cecilia Bobrovskaya remembered finding one comrade (whom she does not name, unfortunately) in 'a very worried state'. She remembered:

He sat locked in his room in his father's luxurious mansion, almost buried in piles of illegal literature. He complained to me that the maidservant had been trying to clean up the room for several days. He had made various excuses not to let her in. But this could not continue very much longer. His people would get wind of it sooner or later.⁶⁹

Safe houses were also sites of planning for terrorist activities by those parties which used assassination as a tactic, including the People's Will and later the Socialist Revolutionaries. Terrorist cells often genuinely did cut off ties with family members.⁷⁰ Yet the appearance of family life in

⁶⁴Vera Figner', in Engel and Rosenthal, *Five Sisters*, pp. 51–52; Yarmolinsky, *Road to Revolution*, p. 236.

⁶⁵Vera Figner, *Memoirs of a Revolutionist* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1991), pp. 139–141.

⁶⁶Bobrovskaya, *Twenty Years*, p. 135 and p. 116.

⁶⁷Clements, *Bolshevik Feminist*, p. 25.

⁶⁸Clements, *Bolshevik Women*, p. 37; E.A. Anan'in, 'Iz vospominanii revoliutsionera, 1905–1923 gg.', in Hoover Institution Archive, Nicolaevsky Papers, Series 279, Box 672, Folder 2, p. 13.

⁶⁹Bobrovskaya, *Twenty Years*, p. 37.

⁷⁰Yarmolinsky, *Road to Revolution*, p. 137.

such a safe house was still vital, as the numerous examples of cells run by fictitious married couples show. In September 1878, Lev Nikolaevich Hartman and Sof'ia Perovskaia posed as a married couple and bought a house near Moscow station so as to have a base to carry out a plan to bomb Tsar Alexander II's train.⁷¹ Perhaps most famous is the cheese shop and living quarters rented in St Petersburg by the fake couple of Iuri Nikolaevich Bogdanovich and Anna Vasil'evna Iakimova in January 1881 for the purposes of tunnelling under a street regularly used by the Tsar in order to plant a mine.⁷²

The Bolsheviks, meanwhile, produced bombs in preparation for armed uprising and, in 1905, for example, for the defence of the revolution. In a St Petersburg flat in 1905, dynamite production for the Bolsheviks was overseen by A.M. Bulygin and his wife Nastia under the false names of Barsukov 'Potapych' and Liutsia.⁷³ It was so common for Russians to purchase or rent dacha space in Finland that two Bolshevik operatives, using false passports, were able to pose as a married couple and purchase a dacha in order to make bombs.⁷⁴

Despite all the precautions taken by the revolutionaries, the police were well aware that private homes were used by the underground movement. Anna Allilueva admitted of her grandmother's safe house: 'Everyone in Didube knew that [she would hide people], including the police.'⁷⁵ In Samara in 1901, the police reported of the Krzhizhanovskii's flat that 'many undesirable elements had links with the lodgers of 95 Troitskaia Street, at least three of whom—Gazenbush, Lengnik, and Kranikhsfel'd—were under police surveillance'.⁷⁶ Similarly, the Okhrana reported that in the autumn of 1914,

⁷¹Yarmolinsky, *Road to Revolution*, p. 253; see also Stepniak, *Underground Russia*, p. 152.

⁷²Yarmolinsky, *Road to Revolution*, p. 273; Figner, *Memoirs*, p. 51.

⁷³Sergei Sulimov ('Petr'), 'Vospominaniia o boevoi tekhnicheskoi gruppe pri TsK partii (1905–1907 gg.)' in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1925, No. 7, p. 90.

⁷⁴Kitty Lam, 'Russia's Revolutionaries on Vacation: Anti-Government Activities in the Finnish Countryside', in *Historical Research*, 2017, Vol. 90, No. 247, p. 64.

⁷⁵'Anna', in *The Alliluyev Memoirs*, pp. 39–40.

⁷⁶Kartsev, *Krzhizhanovskii*, p. 161; Rees, *Iron Lazar*, p. 7. Lengnik and Kranikhsfel'd are referred to in the biographical list. Gazenbush might be K.K. Gazenbush, who was a member of the Russian *Iskra* organization, or A.G. Gazenbush; the latter worked together with K.K. Gazenbush in Kuban in 1907 as a Bolshevik organizer. Presumably they were a married couple.

Socialist Revolutionary leaders met at Chernov's apartment in Lausanne, Switzerland, for what they described as 'an intimate discussion'.⁷⁷

The secret police also knew that family members were often at the heart of revolutionary activity. When Martov's youngest brother, Vladimir, was arrested, a police chief in St Petersburg exclaimed that he had now caught 'the oldest ones, the middle ones and the youngest ones too'.⁷⁸ In May 1912, the following report was sent to the minister of the interior in St Petersburg by the Moscow security police:

Enclosed, please find the resumé of the security files on the members of the RSDRP Gleb Krzhizhanovskii and his wife Zinaida Krzhizhanovskaia. They are important party workers whose influence is constantly felt in various party activities in Moscow. I beg to inform Your Excellency that the residence of these persons in Moscow is undesirable since they extensively support the party by arranging public lectures with the fees donated to the party funds, by assisting in the selection of legal methods for conducting underground activities, trade union work, and strikes.⁷⁹

The police regularly watched the relatives of revolutionaries at their places of employment and homes.⁸⁰ Thus 'police agents openly waited for Dmitrii Il'ich Ul'ianov's wife, Antonina Ivanovna Neshcheretova, and sisters, Anna and Mariia, near the door of the railway office where they had jobs'.⁸¹ There were also times when relatives were arrested for their association with the revolutionary movement. The father of Fëdor Afanas'evich Afanas'ev, who was a member of social democratic Ivanovo-Voznesensk group, was arrested on one occasion, as was Sof'ia Aleksandrovna Subbotina, the mother of three revolutionary daughters.⁸² In the latter case, however, Subbotina had in fact been actively taking part in the movement and spreading propaganda amongst the peasantry. She was

⁷⁷Michael Melancon, *The Socialist Revolutionaries and the Russian Anti-War Movement, 1914–1917* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1990), p. 27.

⁷⁸Israel Getzler, *Martov: A Political Biography of a Russian Social Democrat* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), p. 3.

⁷⁹Security police report, sent to the Minister of the Interior, St Petersburg, May 1912, quoted in Kartsev, *Krzhizhanovskii*, pp. 238–239.

⁸⁰Kropotkin, *Memoirs*, pp. 355–356.

⁸¹Kartsev, *Krzhizhanovskii*, p. 196.

⁸²Balashov, 'Rabochee dvizhenie v Ivanovo-Voznesenske', p. 161; Yarmolinsky, *Road to Revolution*, p. 195.

not simply a sympathetic bystander who knew what her daughters were doing.⁸³ Stalin's mother, Ekaterina 'Keke' Geladze, was regularly visited by the police because of her son's activities, especially his frequent escapes from prison and exile.⁸⁴

THE VALUE OF FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

Despite the risks of police harassment and even arrest, revolutionaries continued to involve family members in their work. It was simply unrealistic and impractical not to bring them into the political fold, but the other major consideration was that family members were of great value to the movement.

Tied closely to this question is an ongoing debate about the place, role and importance of women in the revolutionary underground. Despite the prominence of a small number of radical women, from the terrorist Sof'ia Perovskaia to the Bolshevik theorist Aleksandra Kollontai, most women in revolutionary parties performed supportive roles or what was known in the underground as technical work. This included all the tasks discussed above: conducting correspondence, organizing safe houses, raising funds, hiding illegal literature, organizing the travel of party members and taking on secretarial duties in committees. While rank-and-file men also carried out technical work, it is also the case that virtually all the leadership roles in the revolutionary movement were taken up by men, most theoretical publications were written by men and, when delegates were sent to conferences and congresses, they tended to be men too.⁸⁵

When women wrote about doing technical work, they often downplayed its significance.⁸⁶ The work of the Bolshevik Mariia Andreeva consisted of organizing fundraising concerts, participating in the illegal organization of the Political Red Cross, safeguarding illegal literature and securing passports and jobs for party members in hiding. She described it

⁸³Yarmolinsky, *Road to Revolution*, p. 195.

⁸⁴Kun, *Stalin*, p. 42.

⁸⁵S. Mitskevich's description of the Bolshevik Moscow Committee in 1905 captures this gendered division of labour (S. Mitskevich, 'Lektorskaia gruppa pri Moskovskom komitete v 1905–1907 gg.' in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1925, No. 9, p. 51 and p. 55).

⁸⁶Katy Turton, *Forgotten Lives: The Role of Lenin's Sisters in the Russian Revolution, 1864–1937* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 56.

as follows: 'My part was a very minor one—I collected and obtained funds for the party and fulfilled those tasks which were entrusted to me by the more experienced and important members of the Party. That was all.'⁸⁷

Historians have argued convincingly for the importance of women's technical work to the revolutionary movement, though at least one reviewer has accused them of 'special pleading'.⁸⁸ Strikingly, male revolutionaries (and their biographers) have been more keen to stress the value of such activities if they were involved in it. As Kartsev put it of Krzhizhanovskii:

After his resignation from the [RSDRP] Central Committee [in 1904], Gleb continued to perform important duties in the underground movement in which he was highly skilled thanks to his Samara experience, and which were often condescendingly referred to as 'prosaic'. They included collecting donations to the party funds primarily from party members and sympathizers, smuggling illegal literature, setting up underground printing presses, finding new useful contacts, procuring forged identity papers, sending messages in code, taking measures against police surveillance.⁸⁹

Stalin's daughter Svetlana Iosifovna Allilueva wrote of her maternal grandfather, Sergei: '[He] was never a theoretician or an important figure in the Party. He was one of the humble rank and file, without whom there could have been no communications between one Party group and another, nor the ground work laid, nor the Revolution itself accomplished.'⁹⁰ Yedlin, the biographer of Gorky, in fact changed her view of his subject's activities. She argued in 1975 that 'Gorky's work for the RSDRP during this period [...] was not central to the party's activities' since it was mainly of a technical nature, but later in 1999 asserted that it was in fact of considerable importance.⁹¹ Eva Broido supported this view, claiming:

⁸⁷Yedlin, *Gorky*, p. 33.

⁸⁸Yarmolinsky, *Road to Revolution*, p. 237; Sarah Ashwin, 'Review: Women's Lives under Socialism', in *Labour/Le Travail*, 2002, Vol. 50, pp. 261–273, p. 266.

⁸⁹Kartsev, *Krzhizhanovskii*, p. 217.

⁹⁰Svetlana Alliluyeva, *Twenty Letters to a Friend*, trans. by Priscilla Johnson (London: World Books, 1968), p. 46.

⁹¹Tova Yedlin, 'Maxim Gorky: His Early Revolutionary Activity and his Involvement in the Revolution of 1905', in *Canadian Slavonic Papers/Revue Canadienne des Slavistes*, 1975, Vol. 17, No. 1, p. 89; Yedlin, *Gorky*, pp. 33–34.

To wield real authority in our organization, an intellectual had to prove himself a good organizer, a first-rate practical leader of the movement; a good propagandist or agitator was equally highly esteemed. If a newly arrived intellectual did not satisfy any of these requirements, he was soon told that this was not the place for him, was given his fare and sent elsewhere.⁹²

Many comments by revolutionaries highlight how important safe houses were to the movement. E. Belen'kii, of the Minsk organization of the RSDRP, in 1903–1905 described the task of obtaining apartments as one of the 'most important questions in work', for which the group set up a special committee.⁹³ He added: 'It was difficult to stock up apartments for all needs, and the needs were many, starting with apartments for depots/stores, for safe houses, for circles and finally apartments for meetings.'⁹⁴ Piatnitsky set out vividly the problems he faced when unable to use a safe house:

Three or four times a week I had to make use of any chance lodgings I could find where I could get a night's rest. Much time and effort was spent merely to find a night's lodging. Occasionally it was necessary to go to places at eight or nine o'clock in the evening and remain there until the next morning. Of course, it was not convenient to take any documents or books with me, and therefore much time was wasted.⁹⁵

Indeed, Piatnitsky took pride in the fact that he replaced a very poor organizer, who could only find accommodation for one or two comrades at a time, while he himself was apparently able to accommodate twenty to thirty at a time.⁹⁶

The importance of safe houses is also highlighted by the lengths to which revolutionaries would go to protect them. In 1905, Bobrovskaia was making use of the excellent safe house run by her mother- and sister-in-law. It was so important that when Bobrovskaia was arrested she refused 'point blank' to give the police any of her personal details, even

⁹²Broido, *Memoirs*, p. 91.

⁹³E. Belen'kii, 'K istorii Minskoi organisatsii RSDRP(b) v 1903–1905 gg.', in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1925, No. 8, p. 71.

⁹⁴Belen'kii, 'K istorii Minskoi organisatsii RSDRP(b)', p. 71.

⁹⁵Piatnitsky, *Memoirs*, p. 114.

⁹⁶Piatnitsky, *Memoirs*, p. 51.

though she knew she would be imprisoned ‘under Article 102 of the Criminal Code’.⁹⁷ Sof’ia Smidovich found herself in a similar position in 1910 when she was arrested. At home, she had a store of illegal literature, as well as her two children who were alone since their father was in exile at the time. In these circumstances, Smidovich chose not to give her address so as to protect the pamphlets and assumed (correctly) that her comrades would help her children and clear out the literature when they realized she had been arrested.⁹⁸

Other aspects of technical work which were carried out by spouses and relatives were also vital. Krupskaia could not attend the Fourth Party Conference in Kotka, Finland, in 1907 because, as she put it, ‘there was no one to whom I could hand over the secretarial work’.⁹⁹ Similarly, those who were skilled in arranging for the movement of literature and weapons were also sought-after comrades. As Krupskaia described: ‘Kostia (Dement’ev’s wife) really astounded Vladimir Il’ich with her knowledge of transportation affairs. “That’s a real transporter!” he repeated. “She does not chatter, but acts.”’¹⁰⁰ Lenin’s slip into the sexist assumption that women would not be suited to such a role because of their tendency to talk too much is worth noting, however.

Printing presses and revolutionary publishing were revered. Stepniak-Kravchinskii described visiting a printing press ‘with the sense of awe experienced by the faithful crossing the threshold of a temple’.¹⁰¹ In December 1913, Lenin asserted at a Bolshevik conference that ‘without *Pravda* the Bolshevik Duma fraction [would] lose 99/100 of its significance’.¹⁰²

Technical work, then, had a value in the revolutionary movement. It is also clear that when it was carried out by family members, it was much safer. The police may have known that family members were involved in revolutionary activities, yet time and again families proved extremely adept at resisting police interference and thwarting attempts by police to find evidence of revolutionary activities. The appearance of domesticity

⁹⁷Bobrovskaya, *Twenty Years*, p. 115.

⁹⁸L. Krechet, ‘Sof’ia Nikolaevna Smidovich’, in V. Ignat’eva, ed., *Slavnye bol’shevichki* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel’svo politicheskoi literatury, 1958), p. 281.

⁹⁹Krupskaia, *Vospominaniia*, p. 117.

¹⁰⁰Krupskaia, *Vospominaniia*, p. 66.

¹⁰¹Kravchinskii quoted in Yarmolinsky, *Road to Revolution*, p. 214.

¹⁰²Jonathan W. Daly, ‘Government, Press, and Subversion in Russia, 1906–1917’, in *The Journal of the Historical Society*, 2009, Vol. 9, No. 1, p. 25.

proved to be one of the best ways to disguise party activity, playing as it did on notions of women's innocence as well as the assumption that those with families would not put their kin in jeopardy for the sake of the movement. Eva Broido described how in Balakhany, Azerbaijan, she was trained by her worker hosts to pass unnoticed when she transported illegal party literature:

When I had to go alone somewhere or to travel by post-coach, I used to improve my general appearance by stuffing my pockets with sunflower seeds and assuming that could-not-care-less look that goes with them. Soon I began to use these trips for transporting illegal literature: I tied the leaflets into a kerchief and put the bundle at the bottom of a basket that I slung over my arm; over it I put some brushes, a kettle, a candlestick, any kitchen-ware that came to hand and on top of it all the inevitable bag with sunflower seeds. Installed in the coach, I cracked the seeds with great gusto, inviting my neighbours to help themselves straight from the basket. I learnt this touch from the mother of my hostess, a woman of about 65, who spent most of her time transporting illegal literature.¹⁰³

Domestic items in general were extremely useful as hiding places and were sometimes adapted to create hidden compartments. Lenin's family, famously, had an adapted chess table with a secret drawer, while others used niches in larders and even bathrooms as hiding places.¹⁰⁴ Clothing also proved eminently adaptable to transport party literature, with special waist-coats made for men which could carry up to 300 copies of *Iskra* and bodices and skirts constructed so that women could transport up to 400 copies.¹⁰⁵

Despite Lydia Dan's comments above, the utility of keeping a safe house in a family home is clearly evidenced by the number of times it was done, as well as by remarks by a number of memoirists that suggest family homes were preferable to other arrangements. The Odessa-based Marxist revolutionary Ivan Aleksandrovich Iukhotskii remembered how he sometimes hosted workers at his place, 'but to do this too often was suspicious, because it was in the Government harbour and in a separate

¹⁰³ Broido, *Memoirs of a Revolutionary*, p. 77.

¹⁰⁴ Michael Pearson, *The Sealed Train: Journey to Revolution; Lenin—1917* (London: Fontana Paperbacks, 1989), p. 168; 'Anna', in *The Alliluyev Memoirs*, p. 73; E.A. Anan'in, 'Iz vospominanii revoliutsionera, 1905–1923 gg.', in Hoover Institution Archive, Nicolaevsky Papers, Series 279, Box 672, Folder 2, p. 13.

¹⁰⁵ Piatnitsky, *Memoirs*, p. 48.

house, where no one lived except me, and empty places were easy to watch'.¹⁰⁶ Visitors were also harder to explain, especially in the case of single young women, who would soon find themselves prey to gossip and even unwanted official attention to their sexual activities. Samuel Harper knew of a revolutionary safe house in 1906 run by two young women. The regular visits from sailors and soldiers did not go unnoticed by the doorman and the police, who suggested the women 'take out yellow tickets' which would identify them, and allow them to work, as prostitutes.¹⁰⁷

Indeed, even unconventional households aroused less suspicion than single occupiers. Eva Broido recalled of her apartment in St. Petersburg in 1905:

I myself registered under my maiden name. Marriages of an irregular kind being not uncommon among Russian intellectuals, it attracted no comment when a Miss Gordon rented a large apartment for herself, her aged mother, her three children and a 'lodger' by the name of Kuritsky.¹⁰⁸

This latter was her husband Mark who, unlike Eva, did not have legal papers in his own name. Nikolai Nikolaevich Sukhanov had a similar arrangement with his wife, Galina Konstantinovna Flakserman. Forbidden to live in St Petersburg, he continued to stay there, 'sometimes sleeping in a different place every night, sometimes slipping past the night-porter in the shadows as a "frequent visitor"¹⁰⁹ to my own flat, where my family was living'.¹¹⁰

Revolutionaries also readily admitted that if they could not find or use an official safe house, they could usually count on being able to go home, whether their relatives were sympathizers or not.¹¹¹ In 1875, Land and Liberty member Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Kviatkovskii was living illegally under a false name and moving from place to place.

¹⁰⁶Ivan Alexandrovich Yukhotsky, 'Prisoner of the Tsar', in Norman Stone and Michael Glenny, *Other Russia* (London: Faber and Faber, 1990), p. 79.

¹⁰⁷*The Russia I Believe In*, pp. 43–44.

¹⁰⁸Broido, *Memoirs*, p. 123.

¹⁰⁹A frequent visitor was not included in the list of tenants all doormen kept for the police (Joel Carmichael in N.N. Sukhanov, *The Russian Revolution 1917: Eyewitness Account*, Vol. 1, ed., abridged and trans. by Joel Carmichael (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1962), p. 3).

¹¹⁰Sukhanov, *The Russian Revolution*, p. 3.

¹¹¹Piatnitsky, *Memoirs*, p. 48.

When he was able, however, he would live, unregistered, with his wife in St Petersburg.¹¹² When, in 1905, the Menshevik Evgenii Arkad'evich Anan'in returned from a spell in Europe, where he had been working with revolutionaries in Paris and Geneva, he found that none of his safe house addresses in St Petersburg were still active as a result of the mass arrests in the wake of Bloody Sunday. Thus he was forced to go to his family, who were at their dacha in Finland, despite the fact that his father was not a sympathizer.¹¹³ Piatnitsky found himself in a similar situation in 1906: 'I had to leave Odessa promptly, because I and my fellow accused were summoned before the court-martial for some reason or other. But I had as yet received no address to which to go to in Moscow, and at the same time I had no suitable clothes for Moscow. I decided to visit my relatives in my native town.'¹¹⁴ The Bolshevik Aleksandr Mitrofanovich Stopani hid in his mother's flat to escape police searches in Kazan.¹¹⁵

Another indicator of the success of family homes as safe houses is the number of times fake families were set up to disguise party activity, as outlined above. Presumably, however, the pretence of innocence was more easily maintained by those who were actually a couple and certainly it helped if the fake couple got along. Praskov'ia Ivanovskaia of the People's Will remembered the following:

The apartment was to be staffed by Nikolai Kibalchich and me (alias the Agicheskulovs) and Lila Terent'eva (alias Trifonova), who was to pose as a poor relative working as our servant. As was often the case in this kind of operation, we didn't know each other beforehand, although I had met Lilochka Terent'eva in Odessa. Generally speaking, the title of 'socialist', with the addition of 'revolutionary', served as sufficient guarantee of comradesly kinship, intimacy, and readiness for sacrifice of all sorts. However, occasionally people found their apartment mates too incompatible, even

¹¹²'Avtobiograficheskoe zaiavlenie A.A. Kviatkovskogo,' in *Krasnyi arkhiv*, 1926, Vol. 1, No. 14, p. 162.

¹¹³E.A. Anan'in, 'Iz vospominanii revoliutsionera, 1905–1923 gg.', in Hoover Institution Archive, Nicolaevsky Papers, Series 279, Box 672, Folder 2, p. 6.

¹¹⁴Piatnitsky, *Memoirs*, p. 102.

¹¹⁵A.K. Petrov, 'K 35-letnemy iubileiu pervykh s.-d. rabochikh kruzhkov v Kazani (1889–1924 g.g.)', in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1925, No. 2, p. 188.

though they were fellow radicals, and categorically refused to live with them; and since it was best to be cautious in establishing a fictional 'family', Lila and I asked for a prior meeting with the man who was going to be living with us.¹¹⁶

Real families often included children, and while this did bring certain risks, it is also clear that the presence of children was also enormously helpful to revolutionaries trying to subvert police raids. Children were trained from an early age not to give away what their parents did.¹¹⁷ Anna Allilueva put it as follows: 'From our earliest years we learned the dangers and deprivations which faced those who had chosen a revolutionary's path. Even before we could speak, we knew we had to be afraid of the police, and that we had to keep quiet about the things our elders said or did at home.'¹¹⁸ Other parents took more drastic measures. The Bolshevik Nadezhda Kondrat'evna Emel'ianova told her son that his father would 'cut out his tongue' if he spoke to anyone about the fact that Lenin was using their place as a safe house, while Feodosiia Drabkina spread hot mustard on her daughter Elizaveta's tongue as a punishment for speaking about conspiratorial conversations that she had eavesdropped on.¹¹⁹ When the Bolshevik Margarita Vasil'evna Fofanova sheltered Lenin in her flat in 1917, she took the precaution of sending her children away to stay with her parents.¹²⁰

The presence of children regularly deflected police attention. On one occasion, in 1907, Ol'ga Allilueva was sheltering her husband Sergei, who was on the run from exile. She managed to prevent the police searching the flat by sitting at her sewing machine and pointing to the

¹¹⁶'Praskovia Ivanovskaia' in Engel and Rosenthal, *Five Sisters*, pp. 114–115.

¹¹⁷Elena Loskutova, 'Dorogoi nepokorenykh (E.F. Rozmirovich)', in L.P. Zhak and A.M. Itkina, eds., *Zhenshchiny russkoi revoliutsiia* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1968), pp. 388–389.

¹¹⁸'Anna', in *The Alliluyev Memoirs*, p. 38.

¹¹⁹'Vospominaniia S.Ia. Allilueva i N.A. Emel'ianova o prebyvanii V.I. Lenina i G.E. Zinov'eva v podpol'e (v Raslive) v 1917 g. v Rossii i ob iul'skikh sobytiakh v Rossii', in RGASPI, f. 324, o. 1, ed. khr. 8, l. 5; Clements, *Bolshevik Women*, p. 89.

¹²⁰M.V. Fofanova, 'Poslednee podpol'e', in A.F. Smirnov, ed., *Oktiabr' v Petrograde: stat'i, vospominaniia, dokumenty* (Moscow: 'Sovremennik', 1987), p. 97.

'ill children in bed' to create an impression of innocence.¹²¹ Even less discreet children lent an aura of innocence to the scene. When Axelrod, his wife Nadezhda and their daughter were travelling into Russia by train, 'two policemen joined them in their compartment and engaged little Vera in conversation'. To her parents' horror, Vera mentioned her parents' revolutionary comrades 'Uncle Dragomanov' and 'Uncle Kropotkin', but luckily 'mispronounced the names' and the police did not realize who they were talking to.¹²² In Moscow in 1914, the police did not arrest Sonia Grunt as part of a raid on the Bolshevik committee because she had an infant child, but this left her free to warn her comrade Martyn Ivanovich Latsis about the arrests and able to continue working for the party.¹²³

At home, children's toys were an ideal place in which to hide illegal literature.¹²⁴ Galina Petrovna, the daughter of Elena Fedorovna Rozmirovich, proudly remembered helping her mother to thwart a police search. She was only eight years old and ill in bed, but when her mother handed her a notebook and some revolutionary leaflets to hide as the police knocked on the door, she concealed the book under her dolls and the leaflets in amongst the doctor's notes attached to her bed.¹²⁵ The Bolshevik Mariia Petrovna Golubeva, a mother to three children, hid illegal literature in her daughter's doll and the toy was overlooked during a police search in 1907. In doing this, Golubeva took a relatively minor risk. Two years previously, during the revolutionary days of October 1905, her home had been the Petersburg Committee's headquarters where revolutionaries met and weapons were stored. As one comrade commented, 'Her children slept on bombs'.¹²⁶

¹²¹'Anna', in *The Alliluyev Memoirs*, p. 120.

¹²²Abraham Ascher, *Pavel Axelrod and the Development of Menshevism* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1972), p. 43.

¹²³M. Latsis, 'Podpol'naia rabota v Moskve (1914–1915)', in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1925, No. 10, p. 201 and p. 205.

¹²⁴E. Golubeva, 'Mariia Petrovna Golubeva', in Ignat'eva, *Slavnye bol'shevichki*, p. 128. E. Golubeva writes that the search occurred in 1907 or 1908.

¹²⁵Elena Loskutova, 'Dorogoi nepokorenniykh (E.F. Rozmirovich)', in Zhak and Itkina, *Zhenshchiny russkoi revoliutsiia*, pp. 388–389.

¹²⁶Golubeva, in Ignat'eva, *Slavnye bol'shevichki*, p. 128.

Family members were also useful when a police search was successful and word had to be got out to other comrades that a safe house had been exposed. Eva Broido remembered one raid on a worker's home in the winter of 1910–1911: 'Our main concern', she wrote, 'was to smuggle out a warning to our families, so that they could destroy or remove all compromising material from our homes. In order to gain time we refused to give our names. Meanwhile our resourceful hostess found somebody reliable to send round and all our families were in fact warned even before we were taken into custody.'¹²⁷ It was also important that other revolutionary comrades did not come to flats during a police search, so it was often the 'innocent' kin, who were watched less closely or even allowed to leave altogether, who were relied on to signal at the window or head off individuals in the street. In May 1912, Mariia Aleksandrovna Ul'ianova wrote to her son-in-law's brother to warn Mark Elizarov not to return from his business trip to Saratov as he was likely to be arrested, even using the code 'fall ill' for arrest.¹²⁸

While many revolutionaries referred to the help of family members in their memoirs, and several pointed to how hard their lives were because they did not have parental support, few offered passionate thanks in the way that V.M. Smirnov did.¹²⁹ He dedicated a whole section of his reminiscences to an unashamed and heartfelt tribute to his mother for helping him in his work, admitting at the end: 'If I succeeded in doing a little for the party, I am indebted to her to a significant degree [...] I do not doubt that it was because of her constant care [...] that I successfully avoided prison and exile in those years.'¹³⁰

¹²⁷Broido, *Memoir*, pp 139–140.

¹²⁸Letter, M.A. Ul'ianova to A.I. Elizarova, 26 April 1910, in N.N. Simagin and A.G. Vinogradova, eds., *Perepiska sem'i Ul'ianovykh, 1883–1917*, p. 224 (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1969), p. 224. For another example of a mother warning her son's revolutionary comrade of his imminent arrest, see Iu.O. Martov, *Zapiski sotsial-demokrata*, ed. P.Iu. Savel'ev (Moskva: ROSSPEN, 2004), p. 55 and p. 76.

¹²⁹See, for example, Nikolai Emel'ianovich Aivasov, 'Avtobiografiia', in RGASPI, f. 124, o. 1, ed. khr. 20, l. 10 ob.

¹³⁰Smirnov, 'Revoliutsionnaia rabota v Finlandii', pp. 155–156.

THE FAMILY LIFE OF REVOLUTIONARIES

The picture painted here of family life is one of harmonious and loving cooperation, in which dedication to the cause was reinforced by personal loyalties and affection.¹³¹ However, family life did not always combine seamlessly with revolutionary activities, with personal concerns such as income, health, caring responsibilities and affairs of the heart often taking precedence over or at the very least distracting attention from party work. Revolutionaries grappled with this issue in their theories about how a party member ought to conduct him or herself, and sources from and about the underground period often refer to this question. While there is a great temptation to see this as a problem affecting only women, and numerous historians have made such assertions or at least dealt with the question exclusively from the female perspective, it is in fact clear that domestic, personal and private issues were also likely to affect men.¹³² Inevitably, gender played a role in the way such problems were experienced, especially where issues such as housework and childcare were concerned. On the other hand, family life contains in it a curious potential to uphold and subvert gender roles in equal measure.

The division of household chores amongst the family was an important issue in the revolutionary movement, not least because socialists were strident about the fact that confining women to performing unpaid labour in the home was detrimental to them as individuals as well as to society as a whole. Under socialism, such drudgery would be eradicated through the establishment by the state of communal canteens and laundries as well as the deployment of paid cleaners. Until socialism came to pass, of course, such developments were impossible.

In certain circumstances, efforts were made to divide up housework in a more egalitarian manner. In single-sex exile communities, the tasks of cooking and washing were often shared fairly amongst group members. However, in mixed groups, women were almost always expected to take on this work, and in family homes, whether real or fake, women were also expected to shoulder these burdens. Praskov'ia Ivanovskaia remembered her fake household referred to above: 'One day, when Lila and I were deeply

¹³¹These ideas are also discussed in my chapter 'Gender and Family in the Russian Revolutionary Movement', in Melanie Ilic, ed., *Palgrave Handbook on Women and Gender in Twentieth-Century Russia and the Soviet Union* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

¹³²See, for example, Clements, *Bolshevik Women*, pp. 81–91; Anna Hillyar, and Jane McDermid, *Revolutionary Women in Russia, 1870–1917. A Study in Collective Biography* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 171–176.

involved in urgent work, Nikolai [Kibalchich] suddenly proposed that we all have some tea.¹³³ When Lila asked Nikolai to go and make it, he protested: 'Well, you know, that's not man's work!'¹³⁴ Indeed, there was an ongoing assumption that it was up to women party members to organize food for their comrades, as well as to do any necessary cleaning.¹³⁵ A. Katanskaia remembered the RSDRP printing press run by the brothers Korobkov in Astrakhan from 1901 to 1903. Their sister Tat'iana, who along with her husband Pëtr Sal'nikov was a member of the group, was made responsible for cleaning the floors, though it was justified with the assertion that this would give the apartment a 'lived-in air' and so disguise the political work carried out there.¹³⁶ Similarly, a member of the People's Will argued that in safe houses 'the ladies had to do the housework themselves whether or not the men felt inclined to help them' so that the front of normal domesticity was maintained.¹³⁷ Even the émigré canteen in Geneva, run by Ol'ga Borisovna Lepeshinskaia, was staffed by other female comrades, though notably her husband Panteleimon Nikolaevich did the shopping for it.¹³⁸

Lastly, women tended to be expected to organize the moving of households, a common task in the movement, with revolutionaries often having to flee police attention or move to where a new revolutionary community had sprung up. Krupskaia mentioned several times in her memoirs either being left to pack up the Ul'ianov household while Lenin went on ahead or setting up their new household while Lenin immersed himself in his work.¹³⁹ Ol'ga Andreev remembered her family's return to Russia in 1917 after the February revolution: 'It was decided that [Viktor] would start for Russia first, by way of Paris, London and Scandinavia, and would wait for us in Petrograd. Mother would settle our affairs in Italy, pack, and bring us along.'¹⁴⁰

¹³³'Praskovaia Ivanovskaia', in Engel and Rosenthal, *Five Sisters*, p. 118.

¹³⁴'Praskovaia Ivanovskaia', in Engel and Rosenthal, *Five Sisters*, p. 119–120.

¹³⁵See, for example, Kun, *Stalin*, pp. 99–100; A. Kiselev, 'V iule 1914 goda (Iz vospominanii)', in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1924, No. 7, p. 39.

¹³⁶A. Katanskaia, 'Astrakhanskaia typografiia (1901–1903 g.g.)', in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1925, No. 6, p. 213 and p. 214.

¹³⁷Lev Tikhomirov cited in Barbara Alpern Engel, 'The Emergence of Women Revolutionaries in Russia', in *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, 1977, Vol. 2, No. 1, p. 99.

¹³⁸Nikolay Valentinov (N.V. Volsky), *Encounters with Lenin*, trans. by Paul Rosta and Brian Pearce, foreword by Leonard Schapiro (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 84.

¹³⁹Krupskaia, *Vospominaniia*, p. 120 and p. 146.

¹⁴⁰Andreyev, *Cold Spring*, p. 69.

The expectation that women should take on household chores clearly grated on female members of the revolutionary movement. According to Kropotkin, Sof'ia Perovskaia made it 'a point of honour' to keep the safe house she ran 'relatively clean' but she 'quarrelled' with her male visitors when they brought mud from the streets into the flat with them.¹⁴¹ Krupskaja was also vocal in her protests about these tasks.¹⁴²

Yet many revolutionary women found ways of alleviating the burden, even if it did mean sharing it with other women, rather than men. Families who were able to employ servants, including the Alliluevs and, while in exile, Eva Broido, and Lenin and Krupskaja.¹⁴³ Others relied on help from their mothers or mothers-in-law, as well as their children.¹⁴⁴ The seven Emel'ianov children had to do household chores while their Bolshevik parents carried out party work. Their eldest remembered that the children 'did not avoid women's work' for 'there were no daughters, you see, only sons'.¹⁴⁵ When without the services of a housekeeper, the same pattern was followed in the Alliluev family, though since they had daughters as well as sons, it was on the girls' shoulders that these responsibilities mainly fell.¹⁴⁶

Finally, it was not unheard of for men to take on some household tasks, either as a matter of course or if, for example, the wife was ill or in prison.¹⁴⁷ The Bolshevik Nikolai Ivanovich Bukharin took over the cooking when his wife Nadezhda Mikhailovna Lukina was unwell.¹⁴⁸ There are examples of revolutionary men doing their own laundry, including Lenin who made a point of not asking his landlady in Finland to wash his clothes.¹⁴⁹

One problem which did remain, however, was that often expectations that women should do housework extended into notions about

¹⁴¹ Kropotkin, *Memoirs*, pp. 317–318.

¹⁴² Krupskaja, *Vospominaniia*, p. 118.

¹⁴³ Kun, *Stalin*, p. 192; Broido, *Daughter of Revolution*, p. 60; Krupskaja, *Vospominaniia*, p. 27.

¹⁴⁴ Bobrovskaya, *Twenty Years*, p. 94; 'Anna', *Alliluev Memoirs*, p. 139.

¹⁴⁵ A.N. Emel'ianova, 'Rasskaz o moei materi', in S.F. Vinogradova, E.A. Gilyarova, M.Ya. Razumova (eds), *Leningradki: vospominaniya, ocherki, dokumenty* (Leningrad: Lenizdat, 1967), p. 74.

¹⁴⁶ 'Anna', in *The Alliluev Memoirs*, pp. 146–147.

¹⁴⁷ Krupskaja, *Vospominaniia*, p. 239.

¹⁴⁸ Krupskaja, *Vospominaniia*, p. 201.

¹⁴⁹ Mary Hamilton-Dann, *Vladimir and Nadya* (New York: International Publishers, 1998), p. 218. See also Krupskaja, *Vospominaniia*, p. 239.

how political tasks were divided up. Lydia Dan noted her own brother's assumptions about what tasks his siblings would perform when they joined the movement. She remembered that because 'habits were rather patriarchal then', she and her sister were 'promptly instructed' by Martov 'to write to so-and-so, say such-and-such, and so forth'.¹⁵⁰ Similarly, while the Bolsheviks Martyn Ivanovich Latsis and Ia. Grunt made leaflets and red flags, they assigned Grunt's wife, Sonia, the 'thankless work' of cleaning up afterwards.¹⁵¹ Wives were often used also as messengers and as lookouts while meetings were being held.¹⁵²

Women also tended to take on supportive roles where party writing was concerned. Although some women wrote independently, often for revolutionary publications aimed at women, many more helped their husbands in their literary work. Kropotkin was helped by his wife, 'with whom I used to discuss [...] every proposed paper and who was a severe literary critic of my writings'.¹⁵³ Krupskaja remembered playing the "un-understanding" reader to help Lenin prepare his work *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* for publication, while Natal'ia Ivanovna Sedova helped her husband Trotsky with his research.¹⁵⁴ There is a description of Lev Mikhailovich Karakhan compiling a propaganda leaflet for the RSDRP Mezhrainka group in the summer of 1914, which his wife Klavdiia Efremovna then rewrote in preparation for typesetting.¹⁵⁵

It is important to note that gender expectations also affected male party comrades. If women had to take on the burden of housework, earning a family income was one which men tended to shoulder. Combining legal, regular paid work with revolutionary activity was extremely difficult, though some men, such as Mark Elizarov and Gleb

¹⁵⁰ 'Interview with Lydia Dan', in Haimson, *The Making of Three Russian Revolutionaries*, p. 68.

¹⁵¹ Latsis, 'Podpol'naia rabota v Moskve', pp. 190–191.

¹⁵² Kiselev, 'V iule 1914 goda', p. 44; Ol'ga Evgen'evna Allilueva, 'Avtobiografiia', in RGASPI, f. 124, o. 1, ed. khr. 40, l. 7; Sulimov, 'Vospominaniia', p. 94.

¹⁵³ Kropotkin, *Memoirs*, p. 424.

¹⁵⁴ Letter, Krupskaja to M.A. Ul'ianova, 14 October 1898, in *Lenin's Collected Works*, 45 Vols. (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), Vol. 37, pp. 569–571, at <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1898/oct/14.htm>, last accessed on 11 May 2017.
n401; Ian D. Thatcher, *Trotsky* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 137.

¹⁵⁵ I. Iurenov, "Mezhraionka" (1911–1917 g.g.) (Vospominaniia)', in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1924, No. 1, pp. 109–139, p. 127; see also Samuel H. Baron, *Plekhanov: The Father of Russian Marxism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1963), p. 258.

Krzhizhanovskii, managed it.¹⁵⁶ Others found that paid employment interfered with their revolutionary work. In Novgorod in 1892, Maxim Gorky had to take on work as a lawyer's copyist in order to support his first common-law wife, Ol'ga Kaminskaia, but found that it left him 'little time for involvement in revolutionary activity'.¹⁵⁷

Many other revolutionaries found themselves unable to obtain paid work, either because they had been identified as 'politically unreliable' by the police or because they could not find suitable employment while in exile abroad. Poverty was often a source of deep depression and even shame for men. It was by no means unusual for female revolutionaries to have careers and to take up employment to help support the family, including, for example, Axelrod's wife Nadezhda.¹⁵⁸ At other times, men chose to leave the revolutionary movement altogether in order to provide for their families through legal employment. In 1915, the Bolshevik Aleksandr Gavrilovich Shliapnikov reduced his party work and took employment in a factory in London for a time to support his mother in Russia.¹⁵⁹ George Denike gave up his role with the Mensheviks and moved to Kazan in 1914 after his father's death because, as he put it:

The family had nothing to fall back on, and since it would take some months for his pension to come through, my principal concern was to earn money to support not only myself but my mother and younger brothers. So it was a period when family matters took up most of my time.¹⁶⁰

Denike lived in Kazan until his return to Petrograd in November 1917.¹⁶¹ Having escaped arrest in Russia by going abroad, Tikhomirov found it increasingly hard to support his wife and child. He converted to Christianity and renounced his revolutionary work.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁶Turton, *Forgotten Lives*, p. 32 and p. 64; Kartsev, *Krzhizhanovskii*, pp. 215–216.

¹⁵⁷Yedlin, *Gorky*, p. 15 and p. 16. Shortly after this relationship broke up, Gorky married Ekaterina Pavlovna Peshkova, née Volzhina.

¹⁵⁸Ascher, *Pavel Axelrod*, pp. 82–83.

¹⁵⁹Barbara C. Allen, *Alexander Shliapnikov, 1885–1937: Life of an Old Bolshevik* (Chicago, IL.: Haymarket Books, 2015), p. 59.

¹⁶⁰'Interview with George Denike', in Haimson, *The Making of Three Russian Revolutionaries*, p. 386.

¹⁶¹Iu. Denike, 'Memoirs', in Hoover Institution Archive, Nicolaevsky papers, Series 279, Box 672, Folder 11, p. 36.

¹⁶²Ulam, *In the Name of the People*, p. 396.

Some men did not embark on revolutionary careers at all because of their family commitments. Marie Sukloff wrote of one acquaintance: 'I knew that N_____ [*sic*] sympathized with the revolution, but I also knew that he had never taken an active part in it, and besides he had a wife and two children.'¹⁶³ Lydia Dan admitted: 'Not everyone was able simply to abandon his wife and children—they would be lost. The party could not be counted upon for support. Naturally, people were greatly tied down and restricted by this.'¹⁶⁴

Others took breaks in order to care for loved ones. Axelrod lived in Switzerland from 1881 to 1906 in order to support his wife through a long illness.¹⁶⁵ Lenin took time off from his party work to care for his sister Mariia when she was ill in 1909, and reduced his working hours to be by Krupskaja's side after she underwent an operation in 1913.¹⁶⁶ In 1914, Zinoviev did not go to the socialist Unity Conference in Brussels in 1914 because Zlata, his wife, was ill in hospital.¹⁶⁷

Children of course required care and attention as well. The previous chapter noted some examples of mothers leaving their children in the care of others in order to embark on revolutionary careers. Children were also born after individuals had become party members, and parents made a variety of choices about how best to care for them. Some parents chose to hand their children over to others to be looked after. Anna Larina remembered as a young girl asking about her adoptive parents. Larina's father abandoned her mother shortly after Anna's birth and she died when Anna was one year old. Her mother's sister and her husband, Elena Grigor'evna and Iurii Mikhailovich Larin, took her in but soon left her with Elena's father to be cared for while they conducted revolutionary work. Bluntly, her grandfather told her: 'Your parents are social democrats. They prefer to sit in jail, to escape arrest by running abroad, to sitting here beside you and cooking you kasha.'¹⁶⁸

¹⁶³ Sukloff, *The Life Story of a Russian Exile*, p. 209.

¹⁶⁴ 'Interview with Lydia Dan', in Haimson, *The Making of Three Russian Revolutionaries*, p. 157.

¹⁶⁵ Abraham Ascher, ed., *The Mensheviks in the Russian Revolution* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1976), p. 16; Ascher, *Pavel Axelrod*, pp. 232–233.

¹⁶⁶ Krupskaja, *Vospominaniia*, p. 151 and p. 200.

¹⁶⁷ Kiselev, 'V iule 1914 goda', p. 40.

¹⁶⁸ Larina, *This I Cannot Forget*, pp. 209–210.

At other times, when children were born one or both parents withdrew from the underground in order to care for them. Generally, the wife became the primary carer, even if this meant a separation with the husband while he continued his revolutionary work. As Bobrovskaya observed, there were many women who, when they had children, 'were obliged to play the unenviable role of mother and housewife even though they had all the attributes required to make them real party workers'.¹⁶⁹ Her comment is all the more pointed because she herself felt unable to immerse herself fully in her revolutionary work when her son was born. She remembered:

On my return from exile I could not find either the Moscow or the Regional Party organizations to which to go [...] Perhaps if I had gone to the districts and had got into my old harness of professional district worker, everything would have looked much brighter, but I could not do that because of a purely personal disability, I had a new born child on my hands, a sick little boy, who unjustly had to pay for my restless life.¹⁷⁰

Similarly, Ekaterina Ivanovna Lorberg, the wife of future Soviet head of state Mikhail Ivanovich Kalinin, gave up her involvement in the Bolshevik party and moved to her husband's home village, temporarily, to raise her three children out of harm's way.¹⁷¹ There are many more examples of women who left the movement, at least for a short time, for their children.¹⁷² The RSDRP member Tania Abrosimova temporarily left her work for the Dvinsk Committee in 1907 in order to devote herself to raising her children.¹⁷³

Fathers often made a great deal of effort to be with their wives for the birth of their children. Ol'ga Liubatovich remembered Sergei Kravchinskii overcoming his great desire to return to Russia from European exile and

¹⁶⁹ Bobrovskaya, *Twenty Years*, p. 150.

¹⁷⁰ Bobrovskaya, *Twenty Years*, pp. 214–215.

¹⁷¹ Vasilieva, Larissa, *Kremlin Wives*, ed. and trans. by Cathy Porter (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1994), p. 117.

¹⁷² See, for example, the autobiographies of K.N. Gavrilova, 'Avtobiografiia', in RGASPI, f. 124, o. 1, ed. khr. 426 and E.A. Elagina, 'Avtobiografiia', in RGASPI, f. 124, o. 1, ed. khr. 633, l. 6 and l. 6 ob in which these Bolshevik women ceased temporarily their active role in the party in order to care for children.

¹⁷³ I. Iurenov, "Mezhraionka" (1911–1917 g.g.) (Vospominaniia)', in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1924, No. 1, p. 110.

instead staying with his wife Fanny who was pregnant.¹⁷⁴ Axelrod came to Geneva, leaving his revolutionary work in Russia behind, in order to attend the birth of his first child in 1876.¹⁷⁵ It was not unusual for fathers to leave children in the care of their mothers after that, however. Dzerzhinskii did not see his son Jaček for the first seven years of his life, and Gusev did not see his daughter for twelve years.¹⁷⁶

There are, however, some examples of fathers who ceased, at least temporarily, their revolutionary activities.¹⁷⁷ The Bolshevik Aleksei Ivanovich Rykov's brother-in-law, Vladimir Nikolaevskii, abandoned his illegal revolutionary work to live with his wife and three children on a cooperative, while in 1908, Leonid Krasin, who also had three children, left Russia for Germany with his family to avoid further police harassment for his involvement in the RSDRP.¹⁷⁸ It is worth noting that in these cases both parents ceased their revolutionary work, causing their party to lose two agents, whereas fathers who left their children in the care of their mothers could continue with their activities. While fluctuations in party membership can in the main be put down to the level of state repression, political or economic factors, this evidence points to more personal issues which also affected member numbers.¹⁷⁹

Most parental breaks from revolutionary activity were temporary and many revolutionaries kept their children with them and continued to work as party agents. The Bolshevik Evgeniia Bogdanovna Bosh combined being a wife and mother with full membership of the party.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁴'Olga Liubavovich', in Engel and Rosenthal, *Five Sisters*, p. 164.

¹⁷⁵Ascher, *Pavel Axelrod*, p. 32.

¹⁷⁶A. Tishkov, 'Feliks Edmundovich Dzerzhinskii', in S. Semanov, ed. *Kommunisty: Sbornik* (Moscow: 'Molodaia gvardiia', 1976), p. 257; S. Dzerzhinskaia, *V gody velikikh boev* (Moscow: Mysl', 1964), p. 268; Figes, *The Whisperers*, pp. 1–2.

¹⁷⁷P.A. Garvi, *Zapiski sotsial-demokrata (1906–1921)* (Newtonville, MA.: Oriental Research Partners, 1982), p. 90.

¹⁷⁸'Interview with Boris Nicolaevsky', in Haimson, *The Making of Three Russian Revolutionaries*, p. 219; Lubov Krassin, *Leonid Krassin: His Life and Work* (London: Skeffington, 1929), pp. 39–40.

¹⁷⁹André Liebich, 'The Mensheviks' and Michael Melancon, 'Neo-Populism in Early Twentieth-Century Russia: The Socialist Revolutionary Party from 1900–1917', in Anna Geifman, ed., *Russia Under the Last Tsar: Opposition and Subversion* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1999), p. 24 and p. 81.

¹⁸⁰E. Preobrazhenskii, 'Evgeniia Bogdanovna Bosh', in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1925, No. 2, p. 7; Clements, *Bolshevik Women*, p. 27.

Later, when she separated from her husband, she took her children with her.¹⁸¹ Axelrod returned to Russia illegally with his family in 1878 in order to take up a job as one of the editors of the newspaper of the Northern Union of Russian Workers.¹⁸²

Revolutionaries drew on a range of support in order to protect and care for their children. Many depended on help from their own mothers or mothers-in-law, while wealthier revolutionaries hired nannies. As well as taking on household chores, the Chernov family's nanny Praskovia Nikifrovna Nikifrova cared first for Andreeva's children from her first marriage, Vadia, Ol'ga and Natasha, and then her daughter with Viktor Chernov, Adia.¹⁸³ In emigration in Paris, the Bolshevik Kamenevs and Steklovs as well as the SR Avksent'evs all employed nannies for their children.¹⁸⁴ In Vienna, in 1912, the Bolsheviks Aleksandr Antonovich Troianovskii and his wife Elena Rozmirovich hired a governess for their daughter Galina.¹⁸⁵

Not all families could afford a nanny. Trotsky remembered living in poverty with his family in emigration in Vienna during the war: 'We had two babies and no nurse; our life was a double burden on my wife. But she still found time and energy to help me in revolutionary work.'¹⁸⁶ Trotsky unwittingly reveals here his assumption that it was his wife's responsibility to care for children and that in party work, she was his helper rather than an independent member herself.

However, there are examples of fathers helping with childcare, especially in cases where the mother was in prison or absent conducting revolutionary work. Sergei Alliluev regularly looked after his children when his wife Ol'ga was away on party business.¹⁸⁷ Sof'ia Smidovich left her daughter with her husband, Platon Vasil'evich Lunacharskii, brother of the future Commissar of Enlightenment, Anatolii Lunacharskii, while she fulfilled her revolutionary duties.¹⁸⁸ That this was a fairly rare

¹⁸¹ Preobrazhenskii, 'Evgeniia Bogdanovna Bosh', p. 8.

¹⁸² Ascher, *Pavel Axelrod*, pp. 42–43.

¹⁸³ Andreyev, *Cold Spring*, p. 26.

¹⁸⁴ Andreyev, *Cold Spring*, pp. 38–39 and p. 45.

¹⁸⁵ Kun, *Stalin*, p. 154.

¹⁸⁶ Trotsky, *My Life*, p. 200.

¹⁸⁷ 'Anna', in *The Alliluyev Memoirs*, p. 75.

¹⁸⁸ Smidovich's biographer stresses on several occasions that Lunacharskii suffered from a long-term illness, perhaps implying that if he had been well, he would not have cared for his daughter (L. Krechet, 'Sof'ia Nikolaevna Smidovich', in Ignat'eva, *Slavnye bol'shevichki*, p. 277).

occurrence is suggested in an anecdote to be found in the memoirs of Land and Liberty member Ol'ga Liubatovich. She remembered that she was amazed to see the Ukrainian activist and scholar Mikhail Petrovich Dragomanov take a hands-on approach to fatherhood, highlighting her own assumptions about male and female parenting duties. As she put it: '[Dragomanov's wife] was suffering from a serious illness [...] She couldn't even look after her little eight-month-old daughter, and with my own eyes I saw Dragomanov himself change the baby! [...] I had to wonder at the courage of this man, who was able to reconcile serious literary work with caring for a sick wife and small child.'¹⁸⁹

Other family members might be called into help out as well. When Anna Elizarova was arrested in 1916, her husband Mark had to take on the care of Gora.¹⁹⁰ In fact he shared this duty with Anna's younger sister Mariia, and this was not always a happy arrangement. Gora remembered Mariia having 'fits of hot-temper and irritability' and arguing with Mark over her childcare responsibilities, probably because they affected her ability to fulfil her many revolutionary tasks.¹⁹¹ Regardless of Mariia's annoyance, there was in fact an understanding amongst revolutionaries that in times of crisis they might be called on to help with their comrades' children. Ol'ga Liubatovich left her infant with a male comrade in Geneva while she travelled to Russia to try to secure the release of her partner, Morozov, from prison.¹⁹²

In October 1905, the Bolsheviks Evgeniia Samoilovna and Aleksandr Grigor'evich Shlikhter actively supported a railway workers' strike in Kiev, even though they had three young sons. Returning from a trip to St Petersburg, Evgeniia discovered that her husband had successfully evaded arrest after a political demonstration, but had since disappeared. She then had to find and collect her children, who had been divided up amongst friends to be cared for, and go after her husband, who it turned out was in Finland.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁹'Olga Liubatovich', in Engel and Rosenthal, *Five Sisters*, p. 162.

¹⁹⁰Elizarov, *Mark Elizarov*, p. 112.

¹⁹¹Georgii Iakovlevich Lozgagev-Elizarov, *Nezabyvaemoe* (Leningrad: Lenizdat, 1970), p. 116.

¹⁹²'Olga Liubatovich', in Engel and Rosenthal, *Five Sisters*, p. 195.

¹⁹³Natal'ia Aleksandrova, 'Sil'naia dukhom (E.S. Shlikhter)', in Zhak and Itkina, *Zhenshchiny russkoi revoliutsii*, p. 543.

Children themselves reacted in a range of ways to their revolutionary parents' lifestyles. Larina was 'crushed' to learn that her parents had left her with her grandfather in order to pursue their revolutionary activities.¹⁹⁴ Those children who lived with their parents often found separations difficult. Anna Allilueva remembered her 'heart sink[ing]' on one occasion when her mother announced she was going to travel to Tula to collect ammunition for the party.¹⁹⁵ Similarly, the Chernov children experienced anxiety when their mother visited Russia in 1913: 'we awaited her return to Alassio with impatience, especially Vadia, who had been taken seriously ill. All four of us children missed Mother desperately. We had the habit of running down to the road below our house to check and see whether she might be arriving.'¹⁹⁶ Vera Broido described vividly the impact of her mother's frequent absences:

She was so often away from home for long periods that I hardly noticed her absence and no-one explained what had happened to her. [...] I always cried when she reappeared though I don't think that I cried or missed her very much in between. Each time she seemed a stranger at first and I felt a bit shy of her but a good cry seemed to bring us together.¹⁹⁷

Others, such as the daughter of Bolsheviks Feodosiia Drabkina and Sergei Gusev, Elizaveta, found the perpetual need for discretion and caution burdensome. She recalled:

When I remember my mama, a street under wet snow appears to me. I step in the puddles behind mama and wipe away tears. I'm cold, I want to eat, but mama goes on and on without end and drags me by the hand. When finally a door opens before us, mama wipes my nose with her perfumed lace handkerchief and says: 'Silence! It is necessary.' That 'it is necessary' oppressed me. My whole childhood passed under the sign 'it is necessary' and 'it is not allowed'. It is not allowed to talk about the strange people—the aunts and uncles. It is not allowed to give your surname, it is not allowed to say what your mama is called. It is not allowed to say who

¹⁹⁴ Larina, *This I Cannot Forget*, p. 209.

¹⁹⁵ 'Anna', in *The Alliluyev Memoirs*, p. 71.

¹⁹⁶ Andreyev, *Cold Spring*, p. 60.

¹⁹⁷ Broido, *Daughter of Revolution*, p. 42.

my papa is and where he is. In a word, it is not allowed to do what any five years old child does and is praised for.¹⁹⁸

At other times, children seem to have been more than willing to participate in their parents' or older siblings' work, as in the case of Allilueva smuggling the cartridges discussed above. According to Figner, Ol'ga 'jumped for joy' when she was given the 'important' task, mentioned above, of carrying the letter destined for Vera's comrades.¹⁹⁹ On the other hand, Ol'ga did not continue her revolutionary activities into adulthood, instead preferring 'cultural and educational work'.²⁰⁰

While the children of revolutionaries had unconventional upbringings, revolutionaries had far from traditional marriages. Indeed, socialist theory had long been critical of bourgeois marriage, which was seen as a patriarchal institution that oppressed women, especially in view of the inability of women to escape unhappy marriages due to restrictive divorce laws. Sexual freedom and the use of common-law marriages rather than officially sanctioned and registered arrangements were an integral part of the underground movement, as was an acceptance of separations and divorce.

There were of course marriages which endured all the hardships and challenges of party life, including the Broidos' and the Dans'. Some couples had open marriages, including the Alliluevs, while others, for example Lenin and Krupskaya, survived adultery.²⁰¹ Many more male and female revolutionaries were serial monogamists, marrying two or even three times, including Gorky, Trotsky, Bukharin, Chernov, Kollontai and Armand. A significant number of male comrades, including Stalin, were sexually promiscuous.²⁰²

It is impossible to generalize about the intimate details of marriages and divorces, but it is clear that both, alongside wider familial relationships, were often entangled with political loyalties, and at times of crisis or changes in party allegiance, relationships played a role in individuals'

¹⁹⁸Elizaveta Drabkina, quoted in Tamara Leont'eva, 'Partiinai klichka Natasha (F.I. Drabkina)', Zhak and Itkina, *Zhenshchiny russkoi revoliutsii*, p. 103.

¹⁹⁹'Vera Figner', in Engel and Rosenthal, *Five Sisters*, p. 39.

²⁰⁰Figner, *Memoirs*, p. 12.

²⁰¹Alliluyeva, *Twenty Letters*, p. 53.

²⁰²Stephen Kotkin, *Stalin: Paradoxes of Power, 1878–1928* (London: Penguin, 2015), p. 124 and p. 193; Kun, *Stalin*, p. 130.

decisions or indeed suffered the consequences of them.²⁰³ At least one marriage broke up on the basis of the split of the RSDRP into Bolshevik and Menshevik factions. Mikhail Stepanovich Ol'minskii and his wife Ekaterina Mikhailovna Dolgova separated when he became a Bolshevik and she a Menshevik. Liebach noted that although all of Martov's siblings became Mensheviks, his 'brother and sister-in-law Sergei Ezhov and Konkordiia Zakharova originally inclined towards bolshevism'. Their familial loyalty, however, brought them to the Mensheviks.²⁰⁴

More broadly, the personal life of a revolutionary was often used as a means of attacking him or her politically. Krupskaiia remembered that when it came to choosing a new RSDRP Central Committee at the party congress in 1903, not only were there 'too many "generals" at the Congress, who were candidates for the Central Committee', but 'everybody knew one another not only as Party workers, but knew about each other's personal lives. There was thus a whole network of personal sympathies and antipathies. The nearer the voting approached, the more strained became the atmosphere.'²⁰⁵ Lenin appalled Valentinov by ignoring the fact that a comrade had spent party money in 'a brothel', but he was prepared to use evidence of immoral behaviour to attack his enemies.²⁰⁶

Others rejected as political allies those they perceived to condone or conduct sexual improprieties.²⁰⁷ When the anarchist Mikhail Aleksandrovich Bakunin turned against Nechaev, it was not only for his unscrupulous revolutionary methods but also for his sexual promiscuity. 'If you introduce him to a friend', Bakunin wrote, 'he will immediately proceed to sow dissension, scandal, and intrigue between you and your friend and make you quarrel. If your friend has a wife or a daughter, he will try to seduce her, and get her with child, in order to snatch her from the power of conventional morality and plunge her despite herself into revolutionary protest against society.'²⁰⁸ Krupskaiia remembered at the 1903 congress Axelrod reproaching '[Nikolai Ernestovich] Bauman

²⁰³ See, for example, André Liebach, *From the Other Shore: Russian Social Democracy after 1921* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 355 and Kotkin, *Stalin*, p. 118.

²⁰⁴ Liebach, *From the Other Shore*, pp. 40–41.

²⁰⁵ Krupskaiia, *Vospominaniia*, pp. 71–72.

²⁰⁶ Valentinov, *Encounters with Lenin*, p. 241; Liebach, *From the Other Shore*, p. 39 and p. 21.

²⁰⁷ Liebach, *From the Other Shore*, p. 39.

²⁰⁸ Bakunin, quoted in Yarmolinsky, *Road to Revolution*, p. 164.

(‘Sorokin’) for a supposed lack of moral feeling, and recalled some kind of scandalous exile story’ (see Chap. [Exile: The Bolsheviks after 1917](#)).²⁰⁹

Lastly, it is worth noting that besides anxiety about sexual immorality, there was another strand of concern about the inter-relationship between family ties and political affiliations. In 1911, after the discovery that Azef, the leader of the SR terrorist organization, was in fact an Okhrana spy, Iankel’ Iudelevskii of the SRs wrote a pamphlet entitled ‘The Azefshchina on Trial’. One of the reasons for the problems in the party, he argued, was that the party had become too centralized and ‘the members of the centre grew accustomed to regarding the party as their own private preserve’, handing out ‘posts to their wives, family members and close friends’. He asserted that ‘a revolutionary dynasty’ was developing which was ‘engendering in turn sycophants and revolutionary careerism’.²¹⁰

This accusation had strong resonances in the attacks on family networks in the 1930s in particular, but does not seem to have been acted on in the underground. Family connections were far too valuable to the daily running of revolutionary parties to be abandoned, and as the next two chapters will show came into their own in enabling prisoners and exiles to survive Tsarist persecution.

²⁰⁹ Krupskaja, *Vospominaniia*, p. 74.

²¹⁰ Iankel’ Iudelevskii’s pamphlet ‘The Azefshchina on Trial’, quoted in Nurit Schleifman, *Undercover Agents in the Russian Revolutionary Movement: The SR Party, 1902–1914* (Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1988), pp. 111–112.



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