The Russian Revolutionary Emigres, 1825-1870

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THE FIRST GENERATION

In all of Europe, I, with my Russian anguish, was the only free man.

DOSTOEVSKY
The World of Emigration in Nineteenth-Century Europe

Emigration as a Problem of Historical Investigation

The presence of émigrés from Russia in the capitals of Western Europe has been a source of continual fascination for over a century. Vivid representations of these escapees from tsarist oppression in the years prior to World War I have appeared in literature, in journalistic reportage, and in political discussions in every country in which they resided. The Russian revolutionary émigré has furnished the world with a special prototype—the fiercely committed intellectual who lives abroad for the express purpose of preparing himself for the revolution he seeks at home. The fanatics in the novels of Dostoevsky and Conrad left indelible impressions on many minds, echoes of which can be found in numerous empathic contemporary accounts such as the following:

We recognize at once a man for whom the outside world scarcely exists, the dreamer who sees not forms, but problems, the inveterate bookworm who daily escapes only by miracles from the snares that carts and omnibuses lay for his absent mindedness. . . . His life is an exposition of principles or a perpetual discussion, and all the time we spend with him he is theorizing, comparing dates and events, describing a skeleton Russia wherein there seems to be neither men, women, nor children, but only an abstract population of problems.¹

Initial efforts by Europeans to try to comprehend the motivation and mentality of these uninvited political guests began, for the most part, in the 1860s, when the word nihilism was used as a comprehensive descriptive term for all Russian émigrés who were at odds with the Russian autocracy.² During the 1870s, when the revolutionary movement in Russia was gathering momentum and the numbers of Russian political exiles increased markedly in the cities
of Western Europe, the imagery of the Russian emigration assumed almost mythic proportions. Europeans observed with great attention the spread of closed communities of these émigrés, who insisted upon speaking their own language, living in their own neighborhoods, meeting at specially designated cafés and restaurants, and operating their own publications intended for use in the homeland left behind. Abroad, the émigrés refused the possibilities of assimilation and, instead, as a recent commentator has put it, re-established "the same cadres of militant activism" they had been forced to abandon in Russia. The response of the European governments to this new political subculture varied, but their concern over the émigrés was evident. In France and England, police agents were assigned to watch the activities of the Russian émigrés closely. In addition, pressure from the Russian government to extradite the émigrés was a constant threat.

The importance of the emigration and its continuity as a force for change in Russian history was recognized by Russian revolutionaries at this time. Prior to the arrival of Lenin in Europe, Russian émigrés were already at work on the adaption of Marxist theory for use as a strategy for the transformation of Russia. Moreover, the émigrés were conscious of the foundation for revolutionary activity which had been solidified by an earlier generation of Russian émigrés. According to one source writing about this period,

By necessity, all work which arose in connection with social democracy was concentrated at first on the intelligentsia, and the intelligentsia first and foremost, was abroad, studying in advanced foreign schools. Here in the 1880s, in Geneva and in Zurich, small circles gathered around Plekhanov, Akselrod and Zasulich, just as they had grouped about Bakunin and Lavrov in the 1870s. In this way, young people gradually became imbued with the ideas of contemporary socialism and from that point, upon returning to the homeland, they began to disseminate these ideas little by little among Russian student youth.

Few would dispute the fact that the major theorists of revolutionary populism were émigrés—Bakunin, Herzen, and Lavrov were all abroad when they formulated their concepts of an agrarian socialist revolution in Russia involving an aroused and disaffected peasantry. Similarly, it is understood that Russian Marxism was forged abroad by émigrés from Plekhanov through Lenin and Trotsky, just as Russian anarchism was developed by Bakunin and Kropotkin during their émigré years. What has not been fully ap-
preciated, however, is the overall context in which this work was
done. The Russian emigration throughout the nineteenth century
took on a life of its own. It emerged as a kind of society-in-exile, a
second Russia abroad. The emigration became the repository of the
dreams of thousands of people who believed that a day would some-
day dawn when the tsarist autocracy would be abolished and re-
placed by a more humane system of rule. It also became the focus of
a violent battle between state and society for control of the political
destiny of Russia. As the Russian émigré communities expanded
and grew more committed to the eventual destruction of the tsarist
regime, the Russian government took the unprecedented step of
creating a foreign branch of the political police. From the offices of
the Okhrana headquarters in Paris, Russian agents infiltrated émi-
gré meetings, gathered reams of information on their tactics and
plans, and sent back reports to the central government in St.
Petersburg.

The Russian emigration was a distinct phenomenon that pro-
foundly influenced developments at home. It acted as a testing
ground, as an experimental laboratory for new ideas and strategies
for radical change in Russia which could not possibly be developed
within the restrictive borders of the empire. Especially during the
second half of the nineteenth century, the emigration became an
alternative for many Russians committed to social and political
change. For these people, there had previously been only two
choices: they could renounce radical political solutions in order to
compromise with the regime and resume a legal life, or they could
face capture and life in Siberian exile after the hardships of an
underground existence. There was now a new possibility—to flee
abroad and continue to work there for the revolutionary future. This
book is an inquiry into the origins of this alternative, the formation
of the Russian emigration.

The materials used in this study are largely archival sources
from the Soviet Union and primary published sources, many of
which have not been previously studied in this framework. Chronologically, the book deals with the period between 1825,
when Nikolai Turgenev was declared the first "émigré" by an act of
the Russian government, and 1870, the year of Alexander Herzen's
death and the eve of the emergence of the populist revolutionary
movement which significantly altered the composition, numbers,
and guiding ideas of the Russian emigration. Methodologically, this
book is based on a series of biographical chapters on the pioneering émigrés—the first two generations of Russians abroad—who are analyzed within the overall context of a social movement in formation.

Before moving on to a discussion of the early Russian émigré communities in Western Europe, it will be useful first to examine the word émigré in a broader historical context. Some questions come immediately to mind. What is the difference between an émigré and an immigrant? When does the individual cease to be the former and begin to assume the status of the latter? How is the émigré distinguished from the refugee, the expatriate, the exile, or the so-called internal émigré, a term which was popularized (if not actually invented) by Trotsky during the 1920s? These terms are not mutually synonymous, although they generally have been used that way rather carelessly. The primary thread which runs through all these terms is the notion of an individual's (or group's) separation from his (its) country of national origin. This separation may be one or more of four kinds: physical, legal, ideological, or psychological. Furthermore, the separation may be either voluntary or compulsory, and it may be as much a question of self-protection as an act of government.

The term refugee implies a legal category of people who have been forced to abandon their homeland against their will for a variety of reasons. These include natural disasters, political or religious persecution, and economic poverty. Villagers who are caught in war zones and are forced to move to another country are considered refugees. Refugees include persons displaced during World War II and the masses of poor people from Eastern Europe who sought refuge in England or America. The word itself (réfugié) seems to have originated in 1685 to describe the French Huguenots seeking asylum in England after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. Refugees are considered helpless and in need; efforts are usually made to resettle them. If these efforts are successful, the refugee becomes an immigrant, that is, a member of an uprooted social group whose expressed purpose is to become absorbed into the framework of a new homeland. It is not the length of time one resides abroad that determines this distinction, but rather the host country’s legal definitions on the one hand, and the intent or perception of the individual or group on the other. Many writers, such as Nabokov, have lived outside their native land for decades, but have
never considered themselves immigrants and have never truly assimilated.

An expatriate is the opposite of the refugee. He is abroad entirely by his own choice, and generally does not belong to a large exile constituency. He tends to be an isolated, apolitical intellectual. The classic expatriate is the individual writer or artist who, like James Joyce, has forsaken his homeland in order to pursue his craft and his life style in a manner judged more satisfying and freer, or at least less constraining, than his former way of life. He ordinarily has no desire to return home, though—and this is crucial—legally he may do so if he wishes.

The exile, by contrast, cannot return home, though he may devote his entire life to this end. He has been driven from his homeland for political or ideological (national, religious, racial, etc.) reasons, and refuses to resettle anywhere permanently.

All of these categories have varying relationships to the host society. The refugee-cum-immigrant respects the host society and willingly adopts its language and values during the transition. The expatriate tolerates the host culture but need not be dependent upon it for nourishment. The exile avoids the host society as completely as possible. His mission is to work to alter conditions in his homeland so that he may return without compromising his convictions.

The term émigré is a specific subcategory of the exile grouping. Internal émigré is applied almost exclusively to certain individuals in the Soviet Union who strongly disagree with the existing regime but who have chosen to remain. (In some cases, they have no choice.) They are, therefore, isolated—or, to use my earlier phrase—separated by the regime from their homeland while physically still within its boundaries. Despite strict limitations on their actions, they are permitted to function as though conditions were normal. The internal émigré is “a man who has taught himself to behave as if he had already crossed a frontier while refusing to leave his house.”

Similarly, émigré as a political term has a specificity that refers to two revolutionary dates: 1789 and 1917. In the earlier instance, the émigrés were Royalists who fled France in the wake of the collapse of the Old Regime, particularly during the Jacobin Terror. In the second case, the classification refers to a longer time period punctuated on either side by 1917. Before the revolution, Russian émigrés were primarily antitsarist radical intelligentsy, whereas in the post-
revolutionary era, emigration from Russia has been composed of a variety of anti-Bolshevik groupings, from monarchist to anarchist in ideology. The factor of ideology is perhaps the most significant one in both of these groups in defining the nature of the separation of the individual émigré from his homeland.

In addition, the term émigré has been used to refer to the political exiles of other revolutionary upheavals. The Poles who fled their homeland after the victory of Russian troops in 1831 were followed by émigrés who appeared in European countries as part of resistance movements opposed to regimes in their native lands, especially in the aftermath of the revolutionary events of 1848.\(^\text{10}\)

The émigrés have always been in a precarious position, wherever they have decided to settle. They are deprived of any legal protection, have no claims to the civic rights accorded members of their host society, and find access to employment extremely difficult. They are defenseless and unable to make demands on their own behalf because they have been outlawed by their country of origin and refuse to be assimilated into the society in which they live. In short, émigrés are stateless and without citizenship anywhere. Moreover, because of their political commitments, which remain their primary concern, they are regarded with great suspicion by European government officials, who frequently see them as a potential threat to the stability of their own regimes. In an age when nation-states were demanding political loyalty as a defining feature of citizenship, no social group was more suspect than the émigrés, who were becoming fiercely committed to ideologies that challenged the legitimacy of those governments. Thus, even in countries where they were permitted to live, they were under constant surveillance by local police.\(^\text{11}\)

The psychology and sociology of the émigré remain to be conceptualized by social scientists, but a few characteristics of the émigré mentality seem to be generally agreed upon in the existing literature. As a result of the physical transition and resettlement process, a number of problems inevitably arise, albeit at different levels of intensity and awareness in each individual case. Insecurities, anxieties, and frustrations emerge in the transition process as the émigré realizes the finality of his decision to abandon his homeland and confronts for the first time the difficulties of coping with the social, cultural, economic, and political forces in the new society. Familiarity with the new language, a network of waiting comrades, and a strong sense of purpose all help to mute these
anxieties, but the change nevertheless affects the migrating émigré in many ways, as we shall see shortly in the case of the Russian emigration.¹²

For any émigré, the shift from homeland to foreign land involves a challenge to his relationship to political authority, economic system, social structure, and cultural values. In most cases, these involvements, commitments, and familiarities are disrupted. Once abroad, the émigré must either find a way to continue his former pursuits and uphold his values or face the inevitability of assimilation and acculturation. Isolation from the culture and politics of the homeland may result in estrangement, alienation, and dysfunctionalism if the émigré does not learn to fuse important aspects of his former world with the new culture and politics of his host society and government. In some instances, when host society influences are overwhelming or the individual is particularly vulnerable, a recasting of goals and strategies takes place. The émigré’s chief political objective is to utilize the resources of his host society as a vehicle toward the realization of his goal of working for the reconstruction of his homeland and its transformation into a new order to which he can return. The degree to which the theories developed in emigration are compatible with the forces of change at work in the homeland is one of the important indicators of the survival and perhaps the success of the émigrés. One of the great trends in the Russian emigration during the nineteenth century was the continual effort to bring together theory abroad and reality at home.

A significant reflection of the ability of the émigré to function meaningfully abroad can be seen in the effort to establish an institutional structure to carry out the tactics of radical change similar to what was left behind. Russian émigrés, for example, found that they had to set up (or re-create) a revolutionary organization that resembled the formal structure of their underground existence in tsarist Russia. Ultimately, a “colony” of radical émigrés developed, with individuals forming into groups professing similar goals. In some cases, these activities and organizations were based on Western models more than they were on prior Russian ones, and in other instances, a combination of the two emerged. The émigrés generally were not seeking to reevaluate their fundamental loyalties and commitments but were looking for new and freer means to realize already formulated goals. The colony had to resist efforts that threatened to disturb or disrupt its unity and vitality. A social substructure was therefore created abroad which eased the pain of loss and the
terror of the unfamiliarity of the new milieu within which the new organizational activities were set in motion.

Language is of the utmost importance to the émigré. It is the medium of communication for ideals, strategy, and tactics. Because of the importance of language, ideology achieved a transcendent significance for émigrés in the nineteenth century. Language permitted the émigré to continue his revolutionary work abroad and gave him both an identity and a career. Revolutionary journalism, as we know, became the most prevalent form of expression for the émigrés at this time. Utilizing the written word to aid the revolutionary cause while abroad was a way of overcoming what one writer on this subject has called “emigration as a state of suspension.”

Emigration itself was difficult to sustain, and in many cases led to repatriation (the “renegades” of the Russian emigration such as Kelsiev and, later, Tikhomirov, for example) or assimilation as immigrants. Through language and ideology, many émigrés were able to hold on to what frequently had become obsolete political beliefs, while others formulated notions that were in advance of their time. At some point, however, the choice of returning to Russia or assimilating abroad had to be confronted by every émigré.\textsuperscript{13}

\textit{The Beginnings of the Émigré Communities in Western Europe}

The history of exile and emigration has yet to be written, but the evidence indicates that there is a great deal of material to analyze. Exile has existed as long as recorded history. According to one authority, the first known exile occurred two thousand years ago when, as Sinuhe wrote in a document describing his situation, “I tore myself by force from the soil upon which I stood.”\textsuperscript{14} In the ancient world, ostracism and banishment were common; Ovid’s well-known exile remains one of the most familiar instances from this era. The names of prominent exiles in history, especially those who made their lasting contributions while abroad, is indeed a long and distinguished list. Dante, Machiavelli, Erasmus, Grotius, Voltaire, and Rousseau are among the most significant prior to the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{15} During the nineteenth century, Etienne Cabet, Louis Kossuth, Giuseppi Mazzini, Karl Marx, and Alexander Herzen all achieved fame as political figures in Western Europe away from their homelands, and established the networks and modes of operation for later generations of émigrés.
The nineteenth century was the century of exile and emigration until it was surpassed by the events of the twentieth century. Not only were there increasing numbers of individual exiles, but there were also groups and organizations of exiles completely dedicated to the transformation of their homelands. They were, as a recent historian has put it, committed to "a continuation of war by other means." Earlier examples of exiled groups include the Marian exiles, the Puritans, the Huguenots, the Royalists from Cromwellian England, and the aristocratic exiles from revolutionary France in the 1790s, but it was not until the nineteenth century that nationalist and socialist emigrations developed with permanent organizations designed to resist and transform the existing governments in their homelands. The reason for this development at this time was, primarily, the conjecture of events involving the formation or redefinition of nation-states and multinational empires. Increased emphasis was being placed on national characteristics of peoples and countries. At this historical moment, émigrés in the modern sense came into existence as transnational or revolutionary nationalist figures, exiled from their homelands and compelled to survive in the context of an alien nationality. This sense of national consciousness abroad leaps from the pages of every émigré memoirist in this period. Each nationality abroad portrayed the surrounding world in terms of nationalist stereotypes which, had they been within their own borders, would have been the source of irreparable division. Abroad, facing similar experiences of discomfort, alienation, and sometimes harassment, they learned to transcend their own nationality identities to a degree. Without this process, international movements of socialists, for example, would have been impossible. Still, it is important to keep in mind that the emigrations remained largely separate groups organized along nationality lines, committed to their individual causes and to visions of a desired future reconciliation in their respective homelands.

The first large modern emigration originated in Italy. The unsuccessful revolutions in Naples (1820), Piedmont (1821), and the Central Provinces (1831) sent the first wave of Italian émigrés to London, which, in the course of the century, was to become one of the major centers for political exiles. Many of these Italians returned to their homeland to fight in the 1848 revolutions, only to flee into exile once again after the defeats of the following year. The treatment of the Italians in London varies with the account, but there was a certain fascination in educated society with these per-
secuted figures from abroad who were romanticized to some extent by wealthy English families sympathetic to the goals of national independence. Balls, parties, and dinners were given in their honor, and certain Whig institutions such as Holland House and Lansdowne House were known to be especially hospitable to the Italian émigrés. The family of William Henry Ashurst is frequently cited as an example of this hospitality and sympathy for the Italian cause, largely because their most illustrious guest and friend among the émigrés they welcomed was Mazzini.17

Moreover, Mazzini provided the model for all future revolutionary émigré organizations with his Young Italy group, which he formed in exile in 1831. The international body based on this organization was established in Bern by Mazzini three years later under the name of Young Europe. Delegations from several countries in Europe were invited to join in the growing world-wide structure for radical and nationalist transformation. Mazzini moved to London in 1837 and continued his work there. We shall note Mazzini’s specific influence upon Alexander Herzen shortly, but it is hardly an exaggeration to state that, particularly in the years prior to 1848, no one within the emerging émigré communities in Western Europe surpassed Mazzini’s stature.18

Another important exile community during the period prior to the 1848 revolutions was the German emigration. In addition to the currents of national independence which so animated the Italian émigrés, the Germans developed more radical socialist themes and were more closely in touch with the growing working-class protest movements in Switzerland and France. German émigré organizations can be traced to the early 1830s, when the German People’s Union and the Mazzini-oriented Young Germany were established. In 1834, Theodor Schuster, a German émigré in Paris, formed the League of Outlaws, which has been called “the first international organization of social revolutionaries.”19 During the 1840s, many German émigrés moved to London, where émigrés from other countries, including Russia, were later to congregate. There they organized new groups under the leadership of Karl Schapper, Wilhelm Weitling, and others. Once in London, the Germans began to cooperate with the Chartist movement and eventually created the foundation for the socialist international organizations that developed later. At this time also, it should be noted, the German Workers’ League was organized in Brussels by Wilhelm Wolff; he established contact there with another German émigré, Karl Marx, who to-
together with Friedrich Engels had recently set up the Communist League in Brussels.  

Of all the exile nationality groups abroad at this time, the largest and most active by far was the Polish emigration. Beginning with the 1830 uprising against the Russians, Poles fled in increasing numbers to Paris, Brussels, and London, where they set up networks and organizations that were to act as models for the Russian émigrés who arrived later. Estimates from official data show that there were between 8,000 and 10,000 Poles abroad in the years of “the great emigration.”  

The Polish émigrés were divided into many factions, with varying notions of nationalism and socialism in militant competition. Although this factionalism was true for all of the émigré communities, the problem was magnified in the case of the Poles because of their vast numbers. Among the most important groups, the Polish Democratic Society, formed in 1832, was the largest of the early organizations of émigré Poles. Three years later, a more radical group was formed, the Polish People, led by Stanislaw Worcell, who later was to become a close friend of Alexander Herzen’s. Another important figure in the Polish emigration was the romantic poet Adam Mickiewicz, who also befriended Herzen. The Polish émigrés functioned at their zenith in the period between 1830 and 1848. After the 1848 revolution and through the revolt in Poland in 1863, the Polish emigration declined in numbers and influence, according to a leading historian of this movement.  

It is of interest for comparative purposes to keep in mind that the Polish and Russian emigrations moved at counterpoint in the 1850s and 1860s. At the historical moment when the Polish emigration was in decline and losing its influence, the Russian emigration was just starting its ascent, which would continue throughout the century and climax in 1917, when the émigrés returned home to witness the problems and prospects of their ultimate dream—a revolutionary society.

The period following the defeat of the 1848 revolutions was a watershed not only for the governments of Europe but for the émigré communities as well. For the émigrés, the despair over these failures culminated when Louis Napoleon seized control of France and established the Second Empire. Their mood was perhaps best expressed by Proudhon, who was at the time already in the Sainte-Pelagie prison: “On December 2, 1851, a great outrage was committed, in circumstances that left an indelible stain on the morality of our nation.” A significant change took place among the revolution-
ary exiles of Europe in the wake of Louis Napoleon's coup d'état. At first there was confusion, demoralization, and disorientation. "Socialists, communists, Jacobins, and Red Republicans were reduced to the status of journalists without newspapers, speakers without rostrums, politicians without parties, and patriots without a country." This situation quickly changed, however, as new forms of radical thought and action evolved. As governments reconsolidated their authority, radical émigrés were forced to migrate en masse once more, this time to London, which had already become the new center of émigré politics. The émigrés refused to renounce their causes, but did change their strategy significantly. The nationalism of the pre-1848 era was replaced by a new internationalism, just as the republicanism of that earlier period, defined by Mazzini and Ledru-Rollin, had been overtaken by new and more radical notions of proletarian and socialist societies of the future. While the émigrés established new organizations dedicated to the destruction of the existing order, governments on the Continent increased their police forces and their methods of surveillance of the activities of the émigrés in London. Often, reports of invasions by émigré forces which appeared in smuggled pamphlets and leaflets were believed literally by government officials.

The first major organization set up by the émigrés after the 1848 debacle was the Central Democratic European Committee, launched by Mazzini in the summer of 1850. He managed to obtain the support of several important émigrés, including Ledru-Rollin of France, Albert Darasz of Poland, and the German Arnold Ruge, but efforts to convince Herzen to join and represent Russia failed. Herzen's critique of this effort is significant as a reflection of the problems facing the émigrés in general and of those facing Herzen in particular. He was quite clear-sighted in his refusal to accept Mazzini's invitation. "I tremble for Mazzini," he wrote to a German friend at the time; "one more step and he will be, not ahead, as he always has been, but behind." Herzen described the new organization as devoid of profundity, unity, and necessity. In an especially insightful passage, he wrote: "The aspect of the movement that the Committee represented, that is, the reestablishment of oppressed nationalities, was not strong enough in 1850 to give life to an open organization. The existence of such a committee only showed the tolerance of English legislation." He also objected to the alternative of setting up a secret society along Mazzini's lines. The risk was great, Herzen argued, that such an organization would degenerate
into “a revolutionary bureaucracy.” By this he meant that the group would become dominated by the formalism of meetings, protocols, votes, resolutions, and manifestoes, “just as our chancellery bureaucracy does.” Herzen decided to remain apart from this effort organized by people he respected but considered “incomplete revolutionaries.” His reply to Mazzini ended with this personal proclamation: “From the age of 13 to the age of 38, I served only one idea, I had only one flag: war against all authority, against all slavery in the name of absolute independence of the individual. I will continue this little partisan war, like a real Cossack, auf eigene Faust, as the Germans say, attached to the great revolutionary army, but without enlisting myself on the rolls—until it is completely reorganized, that is, revolutionized.”

Herzen’s response, however accurate it may have been in its critical analysis, was not typical of the émigrés in London at that time. Mazzini and Ledru-Rollin did manage to publish a statement of principles and, for a short time, a newspaper in which they proclaimed their dedication to the tenets of republicanism (universal suffrage, progressive taxation, free association, abolition of royalty, etc.), but as Herzen had predicted, support for their enterprise was too weak for the organization to survive. The Central Committee disappeared in 1853, by which time it had already been surpassed by a rival and more socialist group, the Commune revolutionnaire. The Commune, formed in 1852 by Felix Pyat and a number of other French exiles in London, took its name from the Paris Commune of the 1790s and considered itself the heir of the Jacobin revolutionary tradition. The Commune publicly condemned the more moderate ideas held by Mazzini and Ledru-Rollin after being attacked by Mazzini in print.

In addition to the Commune, the other major émigré groups in the early 1850s which commanded the allegiance of the almost 4,400 émigrés from all countries in London were the Deutsche Arbeiterbildungsverein, led by Karl Schapper and Heinrich Bauer; the National Charter Association of Great Britain, under the leadership of Ernest Jones; and the Lud Polski-Gromada Rewolucyjna of the Polish socialists. These four organizations combined forces to form the International Committee at St. Martin’s Hall in London on 27 February 1855 in what was the largest gathering of revolutionary émigrés ever to take place in Europe. Mazzini refused to participate, but Herzen came and gave one of the many speeches on the agenda of the meeting. Hopes ran high among the émigrés of
Europe as, a year later, the International Committee was transformed into the International Association, a more permanent body composed of members from all countries representing working-class socialist constituents. The attacks on Mazzini continued as the new organization attempted to forge its own distinctive ideology in dealing with the major problems of the age. Mazzini was by now clearly identified with the discredited notions of nationalism and bourgeois republicanism, which were being superseded by strategies and tactics oriented around the theories of class conflict and a proletarian social revolution. During the next several years, these ideas were developed further, attracting more adherents among the émigrés, the working class, and socialist intellectuals as well. The main result of these currents was the formation of the International Workingmen’s Association in 1864, which under the leadership of the German exile Karl Marx inaugurated another chapter in the history of Europe’s radical émigré communities.

Herzen among the Emigrés

Alexander Herzen, an aristocrat whose name is synonymous with the development of Russian socialism, arrived in Western Europe on the eve of the outbreak of revolution in France in 1848. Herzen’s role abroad, where he spent the most creative years of his life, was so overwhelming that he has come to be seen as the epitome of the entire Russian emigration during the nineteenth century. In the world of emigration, Herzen assumed a multidimensional role among the exiles of Europe. This role was appreciated in particular by later Russian émigrés, who worked in the same cities and for many of the same causes that Herzen had proclaimed as so necessary decades before. Plekhanov, who as an émigré conceptualized for the first time the fusion of Russian radicalism and European Marxism, spoke most knowingly of Herzen when he wrote that Herzen could never have achieved what he did had it not been for the “free conditions of West-European life” and the “rich supply of impressions that he received in the West.” Herzen’s role was formed gradually during his years abroad, not suddenly upon his arrival. Once he did come to a coherent formulation, it was both specific and complex. He became, in the words of one of the most perceptive commentators on Herzen’s career, “the first and as yet unsurpassed mediator between democratic Europe and the Russian intelligentsia.”
Herzen achieved this significance because of his unusual personal gifts and because he arrived in Western Europe at a critical moment in the separate but interacting histories of Russia and Europe. Herzen left Russia voluntarily, but the circumstances of his life made it imperative that he abandon his homeland if he was to continue to think, write, and act in the manner he had chosen. As is well known from the many studies of his pre-émigré career, Herzen had, on unsubstantiated charges, been exiled to Viatka, near the Urals, during his student years, had begun writing articles critical of the autocratic regime under Nicholas I, and had, since his childhood, looked to the West as a source of inspiration in studying the kind of political and social change he believed to be necessary in his own country.

Herzen's first years abroad were shattering, disruptive, stimulating beyond even his own wildest dreams, and also depressing in a way he had not anticipated. He arrived in Paris as the revolution broke out, and made his initial contacts with friends and comrades as well as opponents and enemies in the context of this upheaval. He had come from a country where critical thought and action were severely restricted, and found himself suddenly thrust into a world where boundaries of all kinds were being broken down and redefined. Thus, not only was he experiencing the impact of the historic difference between "backward" Russia with its enserfed peasantry, entrenched aristocracy, and exclusive autocracy, and the "modern" West with its political pluralism, industrialized capitalist economy, and rich culture which set standards of quality and excellence for the rest of the world; he was also encountering the cracking apart of a historical paradigm that had dominated Europe and Russia since the defeat of Napoleon. The conservative structure of traditional Europe, fashioned out of the Congress of Vienna in 1814 and watched over by the Holy Alliance, had undergone many challenges in the ensuing decades. It was not until the outbreak of revolutions across the continent of Europe in 1848, however, that the extent to which the Old Order and its values had been undermined by the opposition currents of the preceding years was fully realized.

Herzen's involvement with the revolution in France is told in great detail in his own memoir and has been discussed by the historians who have written about him. There is no doubt that the revolution left him profoundly disturbed about Europe, Russia, and his own future. Because the revolution was defeated—and because of
the particularly violent way in which it was—Herzen left Paris for Switzerland and Italy. He knew only that he could not return to Russia, and that fact, combined with the revolutionary failure in France, forced him to begin to evaluate his entire system of values and convictions. He has left a lengthy record of this process of self-discovery and self-redefinition in his many writings from this period.33

During the years of his wandering from France to Switzerland and Italy before finally settling in London, Herzen met some of the most prominent members of the European exile community. These included Mazzini, Felice Orsini (who later gained notoriety in 1858 when he attempted to assassinate Napoleon III), Aurelio Saffi (a member of the ruling Triumvirate in revolutionary Rome during 1848 and later a literature professor at Oxford), and Garibaldi among the Italians, Proudhon, Victor Hugo, Louis Blanc, and Ledru-Rollin among the French, as well as Arnold Ruge and Georg Herwegh from Germany, Louis Kossuth from Hungary, Wörck and Edmund Chojecki (Charles Edmond) from Poland, and numerous others who are described in depth in Herzen's memoir.34 Herzen mentions in passing that he also met three Russian émigrés in this period—Michael Bakunin, Nikolai Sazonov, and Ivan Golovin—but he has little to say about them, for reasons we shall examine shortly. In his own individualistic and somewhat removed manner, Herzen was, for the moment, at one with the cosmopolitan and internationalist mood, movement, and emerging vocabulary being generated among the exiles. These émigrés, “colonies of compatriots in an alien land,” were seeking to transcend their national differences by inventing a new international nationality of humanity. This sense of a new and higher kind of national identity oriented around a radical vision of the future order was symbolized by the expressions often used in the letters the émigrés wrote to each other. Hugo, for example, addressed Herzen as “Dear Fellow Citizen” because of their shared desire for a society based on “the unity of humanity” rather than the divisive aspects of contemporary governments.35 In a sense, Herzen played a role among the émigrés at this time not unlike that of Alexander I at the Congress of Vienna. He brought the reality of Russia to the consciousness of Europe by his presence, his involvement, and his activities. He became, through his writings and his wide-ranging contacts among the émigrés of Europe, a participant on the “general staff of the European revolution,” and the “representative of Russian democracy” abroad.36
As Herzen compared and contrasted Russia and the West in his writings, which were, to a large extent, reflections of the struggle he was undergoing to establish a role and a new identity as an émigré, he observed with a penetrating eye the exiles around him whose difficult situation so resembled his own. No one has expressed the anguish and the significance of emigration as eloquently as Herzen did. After leaving Paris, Herzen went to Geneva, “the old haven of refuge for the persecuted.” “Switzerland,” he wrote, “was at this time the meeting place in which the survivors from European political movements gathered together from all parts. Representatives of all the unsuccessful revolutions were shifting about between Geneva and Basle, crowds of militiamen were crossing the Rhine, others were descending the St. Gotthard or coming from beyond the Jura.”

As for the emigres themselves, he was painfully aware of the influence of the circumstances of their lives. Exile, he wrote, checks development and draws men away from the activities of life into the domain of fantasy. Leaving their native land with concealed anger, with the continual thought of going back to it once more on the morrow, men do not move forwards but are continually thrown back upon the past; hope prevents them from settling down to any permanent work; irritation and trivial but exasperated disputes prevent their escaping from the familiar circle of questions, thoughts and memories which make up an oppressive, binding tradition. . . .

All emigres, cut off from the living environment to which they belonged, shut their eyes to avoid seeing bitter truths, and grow more and more acclimatized to a closed, fantastic circle consisting of inert memories and hopes than can never be realized.  

Herzen’s portraits of individual émigrés reacting to these stresses and strains are both scathingly critical and uncritically admiring. He was also aware of the difficulties these émigrés placed upon the governments that accepted them. In Geneva, for instance, exiles streamed in because the government was under the control of James Fazy, who had for years been involved with radical causes in Switzerland. The émigrés, Herzen wrote, “tormented Fazy and poisoned his existence. . . . The passions loosed during revolutionary movements had not been appeased by failure and, having no other outlet, expressed themselves in an obstinate restiveness of spirit. These men had a mortal longing to speak just when they should have held their tongues, retired into the background, effaced themselves and concentrated their forces.” Instead, out of necessity and desperation, they produced inflammatory pam-
phlets, held public meetings, and "frightened the foolish govern­ments with impending insurrections." Herzen knew about this firsthand. He himself had been expelled from Nice less than a month after the demonstration of 19–20 May 1851, which terrified local government officials blamed on radical exiles.

The émigrés, according to Herzen, could not immediately find a way to direct their energies into effective paths of action. They became "absorbed in wrangling among themselves, in personal disputes, in melancholy self-deception, and, consumed by unbridled vanity, they kept dwelling on their unexpected days of triumph" in "the revolution of the past." They then broke into small groups dominated less by principles than by petty hostilities. As they retreated more and more into their own exclusive camps and became more obsessed with the glories and the mistakes of the past, they began to express themselves—to dress and to act—in a distinct manner that, according to Herzen, created "a new class, the class of refugees." Although Herzen himself did not express all these traits and moods, he did undergo a period in which his personal life overwhelmed his political concerns. This was the time he considered his greatest tragedy—the loss of his mother and son at sea, and the discovery of his wife's affair with his friend Herwegh.

Herzen came to London in the summer of 1852 to begin what became the first stable period of his émigré years. Many of the émigrés whom he had seen and known on the Continent also had come to London around the same time. He still saw many of the problems that had riddled the émigré communities in Italy and Switzerland in the aftermath of 1848. "Meeting the same men, the same groups, in five or six months, in two or three years, one becomes frightened: the same arguments are still going on, the same personalities and recriminations; only the furrows drawn by poverty and privation are deeper; jackets and overcoats are shabbier; there are more grey hairs, and they are all older together and bonier and more gloomy . . . and still the same things are being said over and over again." He also admitted his own state of confusion. Thinking at first that he would stay in London only briefly, "little by little I began to perceive that I had absolutely nowhere to go and no reason to go anywhere." He reestablished contact with his émigré comrades from the Continent—Mazzini, Ledru-Rollin, Kossuth, and others. Now, however, he began to ask himself, "Are not these men becoming the sorrowful representatives of the past, around whom another life and different questions are boiling up?" After meeting
with Worcell, whom he continued to respect, he nevertheless won­
dered, “How could he imagine that England would incite Poland to
rise, that France of Napoleon III would provoke a revolution? How
could he build hopes on the Europe which had allowed Russia into
Hungary and the French into Rome? Did not the very presence of
Mazzini and Kossuth in London loudly remind one of the decline of
Europe?” The absurdities of this fading mode of existence struck
Herzen as well. He noted that Ledru-Rollin and Kossuth, who had
friends and a general cause in common, had lived in London for over
three years before meeting personally because it could not be decid­
ed to their satisfaction which of them should visit the other accord­
ing to the dictates of émigré protocol!

Herzen was determined not to become part of this ossifying
generation. He therefore began to turn his attention more directly to
his homeland as he made plans to set up an émigré printing press in
London. He was aided in this process of reestablishing his identity
as a Russian in an émigré context by the curious manner in which he
was treated in his new milieu. The English regarded Herzen with
both more respect and greater distance than he was accustomed to
experiencing since his departure from Russia. He made a great and
lasting impression on some English radical figures, particularly W. J.
Linton and Ernest Jones, who helped him gain entrée into the world
of British publishing. Linton wrote in his memoir that Herzen “was
short of stature, stoutly built, in his last days inclined to corpulence,
with a grand head, long chestnut hair and beard, small, luminous
eyes, and rather ruddy complexion. Suave in his manner, courteous,
but with an intense power of irony, witty, choice as well as ready in
speech, clear, concise and impressive, he was a subtle and profound
thinker, with all the passionate nature of the ‘barbarian,’ yet gener­
ous and humane.”

During the 1850s, Herzen reached the height of his fame. His
home became a visiting site for streams of people from Russia, from
Western Europe and from London. This is how Herzen’s home was
described by one of his comrades:
The visitor to London generally informed Trübner [Herzen’s London
publisher] of his desire to have the honor of making Herzen’s
acquaintance. Trübner would give him the address and offer to write a
note. In answer to this note, Herzen would arrange a meeting, either
at his place or at that of the visitor, if the latter for some reason did
not want to be seen in Herzen’s house. Such cases were very
frequent. . . . People did not use their real names in Herzen’s house,
or used them very rarely. Whoever did not wish to conceal his visits gave his own name; with those who were uncertain or asked that their names not be given out, we either changed them (which, incidentally, happened rarely) or dealt with indiscreet questions by saying that we didn't remember, didn't know, it was a difficult name, etc. And in fact it was hard to remember all those who came to worship, there were so many of them. They flashed by, one after the other; they came in, trembling with reverence, heard every word of Herzen and engraved it in their memory; they gave him information, either orally or in the form of prepared notes; they expressed their sympathy to him and the sympathy of their acquaintances; they thanked him for the benefits conferred upon Russia by his unmasking and for the fear which the *Bell* inspired in everything dishonest and unclean; then they took their leave and disappeared. Whom did I not see at Herzen's in my time! There were governors, generals, merchants, litterateurs, ladies, old men and old women—there were students. A whole panorama of some kind passed before one's eyes, really a cascade—and all this without taking into account those whom he saw tête à tête. Many a time, standing at the fireplace in his study in Fulham, I laughed inside to hear some retired captain, who had travelled to London expressly to see Herzen from some backwater like Simbirsk or Vologda, declare his sympathy, explain that he was not a reactionary.50

With the death of Nicholas I in 1855, the arrival of his close friend Nicholas Ogarev, and the creation of his Russian Free Press, Herzen achieved an international reputation. He still believed he was acting in concert with progressive opponents of reactionary regimes everywhere, but now he had found an appropriate instrument through which to act on his principles. He had become, as he said, Russia's "free, uncensored voice," which only an émigré could raise and transmit.51

Herzen's influence not only coincided with, but was integrally related to, the decidedly changed atmosphere under the new regime in Russia, that of Alexander II. For the first time, a commitment to abolish serfdom was made publicly and the process of how to work out the least disruptive manner of emancipation was set in motion. Hopes for change were aroused on many levels throughout Russian society, and the demand for an open discussion of the issues intensified. Nowhere, at least in the Russian language, was the problem of peasant emancipation and a variety of associated problems as freely discussed as they were in Herzen's émigré press, particularly in his newspaper, *Kolokol* (The Bell). We shall return to an analysis of this publication in our treatment of the émigré press in
general, but suffice it to say at this point that Herzen's place and authority in the wide-ranging currents of reform that swirled during the late 1850s and early 1860s were solidified through the prestige of his *Kolokol*. Herzen found himself in indirect contact with his country through the vast number of letters he received for his paper, and through the large number of visitors who came to his door with information about the hidden and horrible events that lay behind the official shadows of the autocracy. As a prominent writer of the time put it, not only was Herzen's paper "read in Russia by people of all social grades, from the Winter Palace to the smallest police official," but Herzen was the person "who gave the chief impulse to political and social radicalism in Russia."52

The Original Portrait of the Early Russian Emigrés

Our knowledge of the origins of the Russian emigration beyond Herzen, however, remains both limited and distorted. It is limited because the subject has not been investigated sufficiently. Much of what we know about the early émigrés comes from E. H. Carr's engaging but rather melodramatic portraits of Herzen and his entourage in *The Romantic Exiles*, or from Franco Venturi's monumental history of revolutionary populism, *Roots of Revolution*, which includes discussions of individual Russian radicals abroad but not of the emigration as a phenomenon of the revolutionary movement. In addition, we have for too long accepted, virtually uncritically, the perception and interpretation of the early emigration as presented by two of its original chroniclers—the literary critic Pavel Annenkov and Herzen himself—who probably without conscious intention seriously distorted the entire subject in their writings.

Annenkov's elegant and insightful memoir is unquestionably a monument to the highest achievements of this literary genre. Herzen's is even more so, because to elegance and insight must be added its ringing evocation of passionate commitment and its vast scope. The two writers knew each other quite well, were born in the same year (1812), came from the same aristocratic background, and created similar portraits of the emigration's beginnings; for both of them, that historical moment occurred when Herzen arrived in Western Europe in 1847.

Curiously, Annenkov says that when he arrived in Paris late in the spring of 1846, he "found a whole Russian colony already estab-
lished there,” although he concludes that “no such thing as a Russian political emigration was even thought of yet.” He names Bakunin and Sazonov as the colony’s “outstanding members.” He also mentions “the well-known Golovin” as the man who became the first Russian political émigré when he refused the tsar’s request to return to Russia in 1843. Somehow, though, he managed to completely ignore the career of Nikolai Turgenev, who had been abroad since 1824 and was in fact the first émigré from Russia in the nineteenth century.

A good example of Annenkov’s attitudes toward this generation of Russian émigrés can be seen in his description of Golovin. Golovin, Annenkov writes,

had received an official recall to Russia because of a trifling little book which he had published in French in Paris without permission. The book, an essay in political economy, was something even less than a textbook—it was a simple set of extracts from student notebooks, and not altogether coherent extracts at that, but in any case quite innocuous. I would venture to say that I have never in my life met a writer less worthy of attention than this Golovin, who simultaneously played the stock market and a role in the opposition, wormed his way into the Jockey Club, into the world of libertines, and into democratic consiliabula—a brazen and childishly craven man. Despite the recall, he remained in Paris and became, before anybody else, a Russian political emigre, and at that, on a very special principle—out of fear; he was haunted by terrors of all possible kinds, which were simply unthinkable in connection with him.

Of greater interest is Annenkov’s description of the Paris to which Herzen came and the impact the city had on him and other émigrés. Paris, in the fall of 1847, was on the eve of a revolutionary transformation that was to influence Herzen as much as the social and cultural forces of the city had affected him immediately upon his arrival. It was a city of political development and power, a city in which opposition movements were being spawned more quickly than they could be assimilated by a constituency of followers. “One could not resist feeling drawn to this activity,” Annenkov writes. For Russians, their peculiar situation made them more vulnerable than other nationalities to the magnetic attraction of the city.

Owing to various aspects of its political life, Paris had a captivating effect on Russians who made their way there always in a more or less secret, stealthy way, since it was officially forbidden in those days to have the word France inscribed in one’s passport. The impression
Paris produced on the travelers from the North was something like what ensues upon a sudden windfall; they flung themselves on the city with the passion and enthusiasm of a wayfarer who comes out of a desert wasteland and finds the long-expected fountainhead.\(^{55}\)

The results of this interaction between traveler and metropolis was the submission of the former to the latter. Russians absorbed the influences around them as they involved themselves in the activities of the new environment, and they underwent what Annenkov calls a process of “external and internal metamorphoses.”\(^{56}\) Annenkov is scornful of the debates, meetings, and writings that animated his countrymen; “there was no other term by which to call this type of concern with European issues such as existed then among Russians than—an amusement.” It consisted primarily of “the manufacture of the endless, variegated gold-embroidered fabric of conversations, arguments, conclusions, propositions and counter-propositions” in which “no one had any notion yet of a responsibility to one’s own conscience.”\(^{57}\) Herzen, however, joined the searchers for integrated doctrines of socialism and “threw himself into that sparkling sea of daring assumptions, merciless polemics, and high feelings of every sort, and came out of it a new and extremely nervous man. . . . There was not another person who would have reacted against the insubstantiality of the European order of life more mercilessly and who would have at the same time so decisively adjusted himself to it,” Annenkov says.\(^{58}\) Herzen soon formed a circle of admirers around himself, and his house “became a sort of Dionysius’ ‘ear’ where all the noises of Paris, the least movement and perturbation playing over the surface of its streets and intellectual life, were clearly echoed.” Gradually the Russian past faded under the onslaught of the new forces. For Herzen’s “impressionable wife, with her refined nature and character,” the embrace of the new, together with the disintegration of the past, “utterly made her over.”\(^{59}\)

Annenkov could not restrain himself from judging the cruelty of this dilemma. Europe, he believed, ultimately destroyed the Herzens; he was issuing a warning to all émigrés that a similar fate awaited them.

Neither he nor any of his Russian friends thought at all about the possibility of a moment coming when the opportunity of living like an amphibian between two worlds—the Western and Russian worlds—would disappear and one would have to choose between the two spheres, each as powerfully and jealously as the other, although on
different bases, claiming rights to possession of the whole man. That moment was not far distant . . . but when it came, there ensued bitter reckonings, painful sacrifices, compulsory and unnatural repudiations which utterly ruined Herzen's life and the lives of many other persons together with him.60

In another passage, Annenkov evoked even more powerful images to show how Herzen’s genius was shattered by Europe, the implication being that this is the inevitable price one must pay for abandoning one’s homeland and pursuing the spurious dreams of Western progress: “Thus, the raging, foaming wave of European life carried that precious nugget [Herzen] thrown into it from some remote, unknown planet—carried it to one side and to another, pounding it to pieces, and, of course, unconcerned about where it could be placed, where made to fit.”61

Annenkov did not make explicit his distinction between the Russian “colony,” which did exist, and the “emigration,” which had not as yet been born. Yet it is clear from his memoir that what he had in mind was the boundary between travelers and exiles. The first is a visitor to the West who will return to Russia after satisfying his cultural curiosity and will continue to accept the political status quo in his homeland. The second is a permanent alien abroad who will not—or cannot—return to Russia, who not only refuses to accept the existing tsarist regime but who commits himself to wage war against it from afar. Actually this was the difference between Annenkov and Herzen. At their last meeting together, as Annenkov was preparing to return to Russia, Herzen warned him, “You’ll be wretched in Russia.” To this Annenkov replied with his own warning: “You may regret staying.”62 They had made their choices, but each was also projecting his own fears upon the other.

The distinction is again revealed in Annenkov’s discussion of Bakunin at this time. Annenkov describes Bakunin as “one of the Russian prospectors for political causes,” which he now found among the Polish exiles in Paris. “Not a single Russian before him had so boldly cut himself off from his household gods, his former cast of mind, his old remembrances and conceptions in favor of the clandestine religion of the Polish cause.” This ability of Bakunin to abandon himself completely to “revolutionary romanticism, where apparitions took precedence over logic,” did not convince Annenkov of Bakunin’s sincerity.63 In a letter to Annenkov in October 1847 Bakunin wrote of the chasm between them. Annenkov quoted from the letter to emphasize his point: “I know that you take a somewhat
skeptical attitude toward all this; and you, from your own stand­
point, are right, and I, also, at times shift to your point of view. But
what can one do—there is no changing one’s nature. You are a
skeptic, I a believer; each of us has his own work cut out for him.”

The image of these early Russian émigrés in Annenkov’s writ­
ings is of a lost generation fanatically committed to illusions of social
change which have separated them from Russia irrevocably and
doomed them to isolated self-destruction. For a time they live like
“amphibians” in both worlds, but ultimately they lose their na­
tionality and, with that, their identity. These émigrés, Annenkov
concluded, could never belong to Europe and never return to
Russia.

Judging from his extraordinary autobiography, Herzen’s own
attitudes toward the émigrés he knew during his first years abroad
were not far removed from Annenkov’s. Nikolai Turgenev and P. V.
Dolgorukov are mentioned in passing but are not discussed in any
depth. Herzen did devote a small chapter to Nikolai Sazonov, his old
friend from Moscow whom he remet in Paris, but it is not a charita­
ble portrait. “Sazonov has passed without leaving a trace,” Herzen
writes, “and his death has been as unnoticed as the whole of his life.”
Sazonov was endowed with “conspicuous gifts and conspicuous ego­
ism”; the latter trait led him to seek to dominate his comrades
continually. He was, Herzen continues, an idle man who “wasted his
immense abilities frittering his life away in all sorts of trivialities
abroad.” Herzen compared Sazonov to a lost soldier “who is taken
prisoner in his first battle and never comes home again.” Sazonov
surrounded himself “with a retinue of various mediocrities, who
listened to him and followed his lead.” Once in a conversation in
which they had a disagreement over Belinskii, Herzen exclaimed to
Sazonov:

But do tell me please: you now, who are not under the
censorship, who are so full of faith in yourselves, so full of strength
and talent, what have you done? Or what are you doing? Surely you
don’t imagine that walking from one end of Paris to the other every
day to talk over the boundaries of Poland and Russia once more with
[some Polish exiles] is doing something? Or that your talks in cafes
and at home, where five fools listen to you and understand nothing,
while another five understand nothing and talk, is doing something?

Wait a bit, wait a bit, Sazonov said, by now considerably nettled:
you forget our situation.

What situation? [Herzen replied.] You have been living here for
years in freedom, in no dire extremity: what more do you want?
Situations are created. Strong men make themselves acknowledged
and force themselves in. Enough of that: one critical article of
Belinsky's is of more value for the younger generation than playing at
being conspirators and statesmen. You are living in a delirium,
walking in your sleep; you're in a perpetual optical illusion with which
you deceive your own eyes.⁶⁵

These are strong words, and they are not tempered by a bal­
anced picture of Sazonov's positive contributions. The only aspect
of Sazonov's political career mentioned by Herzen is his involve­
ment with several French radical newspapers run by Proudhon and
Lamennais in 1849. We are told nothing of Sazonov's political views
except that he exercised poor judgment and continuously quarreled
with his editors.

Herzen also devotes a brief section of his memoir to another
émigré from this period, Ivan Golovin, but the tone is similar to that
of his discussion of Sazonov.⁶⁶ He describes Golovin at the time of
their first meeting in 1848 amid the bloody “June Days” in revolu­
tionary Paris as a man “known to me only from his mediocre writings
and from his exceedingly bad reputation as an insolent and quar­
relsome man.”⁶⁷ Golovin literally forced himself upon Herzen.
“Twice a week he would come to see us, and the moral level of our
home was at once lowered” as quarrels and slander ensued.⁶⁸ His
writings, according to Herzen, were an amalgam of rhetoric, liber­
alism, anecdotes, and platitudes, “with no logic, no definite view, no
coherence. . . . Golovin thought in minced ideas.”⁶⁹

There was more. Herzen wrote that Golovin combined all the
hateful qualities of a Russian officer and landowner, “together with a
mass of petty European defects,” and without any redeeming traits.
For Herzen, Golovin was the epitome of the lost Russian occupied
by the mindless “amusements” of Western Europe, who is “known
by everybody, and about whom everything is known except two
things: what they live on and what they live for.” Herzen explains
that Golovin came to Europe because his superior in state service
was offended by his handwriting, and that he stayed abroad to write
La Russie sous Nicholas, “in which he offended Nicholas most of all
by saying that he made mistakes in spelling.”⁷⁰ Golovin had no
talent, no curiosity, and no serious occupation. He was a poseur who
“retained the habits of an ill-bred landowner of the middling sort all
his life,” living “the nomadic life of the semi-exile and semi-Bohe­
mian.” Later, in England, Golovin “unsuccessfully attempted to get
into various political circles, made the acquaintance of everyone in the world and published inconceivable trash.”

Herzen had several more contacts with Golovin, but he never changed his opinion. The letters from Golovin which Herzen includes in his memoir reveal less about Golovin than they do about Herzen's relentless effort to discredit him. Perhaps the severity of Herzen's character assassination of Golovin is at least partly related to the fact that he was afraid of being associated with or mistaken for Golovin in certain circles. This, he admits, he could not tolerate: “Europe and the Poles themselves have such a superficial view of Russia, especially in the intervals when she is not beating her neighbors or annexing whole kingdoms in Asia, that I had to work for ten years to escape being confused with the famous Ivan Golovin.”

Herzen's contempt for his émigré compatriots was even more savage than Marx's well-known scorn for and suspicion of the Russians he met abroad. Marx was convinced, as Annenkov relates after meeting with him, “that any Russian who came to them should be looked upon first of all as someone sent to spy on them or as some conscienceless deceiver.” In a similar vein, at one point during a meeting of workers at which Marx spoke, he pointed to Annenkov and said: “Look here, we have a Russian with us. In his country ... associations of nonsensical prophets and nonsensical followers are the only things that can be put together and made to work successfully.” Marx was merely repeating the common prejudices of European intellectuals about Russians (a view he was, of course, to change drastically later in his life); Herzen, however, had deeper motives behind his attacks on his émigré contemporaries. This is particularly perplexing when one realizes that at the same time that he was so harshly criticizing Russian émigrés he was also formulating a new definition of the Russian emigration in a revolutionary context. In a passage which he published in the original (1851) edition of *Du développement des idées révolutionnaires en Russie* (but which was omitted in subsequent editions), Herzen for the first time conceived of the notion of the emigration as a revolutionary force integrally connected to the emergence of a tsarist opposition movement in Russia. Admittedly influenced by the Italian and Polish exile communities in Paris, the formulation nevertheless deserves more attention than it has received. It reads:

The emigration is the first indication of a revolution which is in preparation. It is astonishing in Russia, where one is not accustomed
to it. And yet in all countries, at the beginning of reforms, when thought is weak and material force is unlimited, the men of strong conviction, of real belief, of true devotion, have found refuge in foreign countries in order to make their voices heard. The banishment, the voluntary exile, have lent their words a superior force and authority; they have proven that their convictions were serious.

Thus, the emigration is the most significant act of opposition which a Russian can engage in at this moment. The government knows this quite well. It has come to realize, with difficulty, that there are people who, summoned to return, have the audacity to remain abroad, the courage to renounce their fatherland and their property.

Who does Herzen have in mind when he speaks of émigrés acting as revolutionaries? Surprisingly, they are the very individuals we have just seen him speak of in such a critical manner. Referring first to Bakunin and Golovin, Herzen says that "both of them gave up assured positions and brilliant careers in Russia." He also explains that proof of the impact that their agitational and publicistic work is having in Russia can be seen in the increasingly more severe measures enacted by the tsar to curtail the émigrés' activities; these include passport restrictions, seizure of private estates, and efforts to obtain extradition of émigrés from Western European countries. Herzen notes that the radical activities of Bakunin and Golovin have "been equally appreciated in France, Germany, and England." Sazonov also is mentioned as active in the cause of realizing democracy in Russia. "The Russian emigration is only a germ, but a germ bearing a great future. The Russian emigration is growing stronger because its opportunity is evident, because it represents not hostility or despair, but love of the Russian people and faith in its future."

Thus, what appears to be a contradiction in Herzen's writings between a negative image of individual émigrés as nonrevolutionaries and a positive image of the emigration as a revolutionary movement of social protest is further complicated by the added contradiction of his portrayal of the same émigrés as nonrevolutionary in his memoir and as revolutionary in his memoir and as revolutionary in Du développement des idées révolutionnaires en Russie. Our task, therefore, is not only to try to understand Herzen in this regard but also to come to a consensus on the political nature of the emigration at mid-century. We must ascertain more clearly the identity of these "amphibians," as Annenkov called them, who had to choose between commitment and country, and who, by living Russia abroad, functioned between two worlds instead of within either one. Further, we need to know
whether the process of migration and the impact of resettlement abroad on these early émigrés was as profound and as destructive as Annenkov claimed.

What follows is a series of analytical biographical sketches of the first Russian émigrés which seeks to solve these problems. As the reader will soon see, such an inquiry involves the retrieval of a lost generation, and a reevaluation of the contribution of these original émigrés to the history of Russian opposition movements and social thought.