N. I. Turgenev: The First Political Emigré

Nikolai Ivanovich Turgenev has been more the victim of neglect than of misunderstanding. There is no prerevolutionary scholarship on him, and, aside from several extensive obituaries, the best piece of work on his life before 1917 is Semevskii's biographical essay in the Brockhaus-Efron encyclopedia.\(^1\) After the revolution, two biographies, appeared, though one dealt only with the pre-emigration period of Turgenev's life,\(^2\) and the other, aside from interpretive problems, is too brief to adequately treat his entire career.\(^3\) There have been some specialized articles and chapters of books on specific aspects of Turgenev's thought.\(^4\) Recently, a Soviet historian has assumed the task of rescuing Turgenev from historical oblivion; taken together, her articles represent the equivalent of a monograph on Turgenev, with the concentration being placed on the émigré period of his life.\(^5\)

Turgenev's own writings also are comparatively unknown, even to students of Russian history. He published two books, widely separated in time. The first was a serious analysis of the Russian tax structure and a critique of the serf system which appeared in 1818, when he was only twenty-nine years old.\(^6\) The other, a massive three-volume study written in French and published in Paris in 1847, was divided into an autobiographical volume, a volume devoted to a criticism of the existing political and economic system in Russia, and a third volume concerned with proposals for the future.\(^7\) In addition, Turgenev published a brochure on Russia's response to the 1848 crisis, and many articles on the emancipation problem in Russia during the 1850s and 1860s, including several that Herzen printed in his influential émigré paper *Kolokol*. There is also the voluminous correspondence that Turgenev carried on with individuals as diverse as Russian ministers and American abolitionists.\(^8\)
Indeed, Turgenev's letters are so rich and informative that they must be accorded a high priority as source material in any future study of his life and thought.9

Interpretations of Turgenev have undergone some perceptible changes in the century since his death. He was correctly designated as "the first Russian political émigré" as early as 1905, though few historians have noticed this.10 Turgenev has also generally been considered a liberal in most accounts, a term meant to refer both to his political orientation and to his economic ideas.11 There has been disagreement however, over two issues of some significance. One concerns Turgenev's awareness of Russian developments during his years abroad, and the other involves the nature of his relationship to the more revolutionary Russian émigrés of his time. In addition, any assessment of Turgenev's political and economic positions would have to stand ultimately on an interpretation of his writings, and here, too, there is no unanimity of opinion among the secondary studies. Some have argued that Turgenev lived an isolated existence abroad and that his views remained frozen in the framework of the 1820s, the period when he was a member of the Decembrist movement.12 Other students of Turgenev have emphasized his idealization of European democracy, his attachment to aristocratic circles, and the influence of English radicalism on his thinking.13 All of these interpretations have been challenged by recent scholarship, however, where it is argued that Turgenev had ties to Bakunin, Herzen, and the more revolutionary émigrés, that he gained firsthand knowledge of Russian conditions through his three trips back to Russia at the time of the Emancipation discussions, and that he took a highly critical position on the question of peasant emancipation in his published articles.14

Turning to the opinions of Turgenev's contemporaries, we find that Herzen and Bakunin both expressed highly ambivalent attitudes toward him. They had positive things to say about him despite the fact that they considered him far too moderate on most issues. In Bakunin's "Confession" to the tsar, written in 1851 while he was in prison, he described Turgenev as a lonely and isolated man who "lived with his family, far from all political activity and, one might say, from any society." According to Bakunin, Turgenev "wished for nothing so passionately as for forgiveness and permission to return to Russia . . . which he remembered with love and, not infrequently, with tears."15 In addition, Bakunin claimed that Turgenev "was, after all, not a little frightened by the revolution that
was taking place."  

Yet in a freer context, after his Siberian escape and return to Europe, Bakunin wrote Turgenev this inspired note: “Today I’ll be coming to Paris and I must tell you that one of the most ardent of my desires and hopes is to see you, our patriarch, as soon as possible.”

Herzen, who seemingly did not consider Turgenev important enough to mention in his autobiography, publicly praised him in an article on Russian émigrés publishing their work abroad: “Each time we encounter the name of Nikolai Ivanovich Turgenev among the ranks of progressive fighters for freedom of the peasants, for judicial freedom, for the freedom of the Russian people in general, it is with a feeling of profound respect.”

Perhaps the most accurate contemporary evaluation of Turgenev was the one given by his cousin, the writer Ivan Turgenev. In an obituary article, Ivan Turgenev attempted to describe a complex but consistent personality—a man who combined respect for his government and its ruler with an abiding love for the Russian people and an uncompromising devotion to the amelioration of their condition. He was, Ivan Turgenev wrote, “primarily a political person, a man of the state” (chelovek po gosudarstvenyi) whose strength of conviction was expressed in his “love for justice, impartiality, and rational freedom [razumnai a svoboda] together with an equal hostility toward oppression and injustice.” Beyond this problem of presenting an opposition figure as an individual who was at the same time deeply loyal to the state and the existing regime, Ivan Turgenev expressed one further paradoxical characteristic of his relative: “Despite his many-year sojourn abroad, N. I. Turgenev remained a Russian, a Muscovite. This fundamental Russian essence was expressed in everything—in manners, in all his movements, in all of his habits, in his very pronunciation of French... Exile, permanent resident of France, he was a [Russian] patriot primarily... And thus it is that a completely Russian individual was condemned to live and die abroad... Russia will never forget one of her best sons.”

Nikolai Ivanovich Turgenev was born on 11 October 1789 in Simbirsk. He spent his childhood years there before the family moved to Moscow. His father, Ivan Petrovich Turgenev, belonged to a Masonic group and was an associate of N. I. Novikov, for which he was sent to live on a remote estate by order of Catherine II. Death struck Nikolai Turgenev’s immediate family with alarming frequen-
cy during his early years. Both his parents died when he was in his teens, his older brother (Ivan) died in infancy, another brother (Andrei) died in 1803, and a third (Sergei) in 1827. His remaining brother, Alexander, with whom he conducted one of the century's richest correspondences, died in 1845. Nikolai Turgenev studied at Göttingen University in 1810–11 after attending Moscow University. He concentrated on history, juridical science, political economy, and financial law. After a trip to Paris in 1811, where he witnessed Napoleon at the height of his power, he was recommended to the prominent German reform minister Baron Stein in 1813. In the year that followed, he worked closely with Stein as his assistant in the central administration department, and the association left a life-long positive imprint on Turgenev. His admiration for Stein emerges in numerous instances in his later writings. Turgenev served in the Russian army during the campaigns of 1814–15, then returned to Russia to take up the post of secretary (shtats-sekretar') in the State Senate in 1816.

Under Stein's influence, Turgenev wrote his first book, *Opyt teorii nalogov*, which was published in November 1818. The book is essentially an attack on serfdom, using data on the Russian tax system to argue the case. Turgenev recommended the sale of state estates to peasants and a reformulation of the peasants' financial obligations on these estates which he hoped would serve as a model for the country's private estates to follow. He also favored introducing free trade and lowering all high tariff barriers, together with a lightening of financial burdens on the peasantry. He opposed granting the gentry immunity from taxation. Citing the experiments carried out in Prussia under Stein's plans, he argued that taxation should be based on income and wealth, not on peasant labor. The estate, not the persons working on it, should be the source of taxes. He also proposed the abolition of corporal punishment of peasants. He concluded his book with a statement on the sensitive issue of the kind of politics that might best accompany his economic suggestions. In addition to recommending the extension of the tax base into the wealthier sector of the population, he argued that the success of the taxation system also depended on the forms of administration and government which applied these measures. "[There is] a readiness to pay taxes that is all the more evident in republics, and an aversion toward taxes in despotic governments," he wrote. He then ended his book with these words: "The improvement of the credit system develops directly in conjunction with the improve-
ment of political legislation, particularly with the improvement of popular representation.”

In 1819, at the request of the St. Petersburg governor-general, Miloradovich, Turgenev composed a memorandum on serfdom which was to be presented to the tsar. In this 1819 memorandum, titled “Nechto o krepostnom sostoianii v Rossii,” Turgenev indicated to the government of Alexander I the necessity of assuming the initiative in bringing about reforms regarding excessively burdensome peasant obligations. Specifically, he proposed contractual limitations on peasant debts and on taxes levied against landowners, opposed the sale of individual peasants apart from their families, and advocated granting the right of petition to peasants in order that they might bring their complaints and suggestions for improvement directly to their landlords. He also recommended reducing private landlords’ exclusive rights of possession over their serfs by allowing peasants the right of free movement—a right they had not had since the seventeenth century. Although there is some indication that Alexander I resolved to “do something” about the peasant situation after reading Turgenev’s memorandum, none of the memorandum’s proposals were acted on until the 1840s.

That same year, 1819, Turgenev joined the Union of Welfare, a secret society concerned with the constitutional reform of the autocracy and with measures to emancipate the peasantry. Turgenev remained with this group (which in 1821, under Nikita Murav’ev, became known as the Northern Society) until his departure from Russia in 1824. He went abroad for reasons of health in 1824, but the following summer received an offer to work under Count Kankrin as director of the department of manufacturing in the Ministry of Finance. Alexander I was already suspicious of Turgenev’s “extreme opinions,” but he believed him to be “an honest person and that is sufficient for me.” Turgenev turned down the position and thus was not in Russia at the time of the uprising of 14 December 1825, which led to the execution and exile of the members of the Northern and Southern societies. Turgenev was nevertheless implicated in the Decembrist movement according to the conclusions reached by a special state commission appointed to bring evidence against the Decembrists. He was ordered back to Russia by imperial decree, and when he refused to return to face trial, he was sentenced to death in absentia by the highest judicial tribunal.

The court argued that it had the evidence of twenty-four co-conspirators to prove that Turgenev had been an active participant
in an illegal organization dedicated to fomenting uprisings in Russia in order to establish a republican form of government. In addition to the sentence of capital punishment, Turgenev was also deprived of his rank and title. It was this decision that created the new category "political émigré." Turgenev, "the Decembrist without December," thus became the first member of an exile community in Europe that would grow to include increasingly large numbers of opposition figures.

Turgenev lived for a time in London, but was continually hounded by secret agents and efforts by the Russian government to extradite him as a common criminal. He went to Paris in 1831 and made his home on an estate near the French capital for the remainder of his long life. In 1833 he married the daughter of a veteran of the Napoleonic army, with whom he had three children. Financially, he remained secure as he received an income from his family estates in Russia.

In 1833 he began to work in earnest on a large study of Russia, which was completed in 1842 but not published until 1847—La Russie et les Russes; he delayed publication until the death of his brother Alexander, against whom he feared the Russian government might take reprisals. This book was followed by a number of other writings during Turgenev's later years, including his contributions to Herzen's Kolokol (which will be discussed below). After the death of Nicholas I, the new tsar, Alexander II, rescinded the previous sentences against Turgenev, and in 1856 he granted him a conditional amnesty. This led to a series of visits to Russia by Turgenev in 1857, 1859, and 1864. He used these trips not only to see his relatives but also to gather material for further critical studies on the peasant problem and to initiate an emancipation experiment on one of his family estates prior to the 1861 Emancipation Decree. No other émigré of his generation managed to travel between Russia and Europe as Turgenev did in these years. His last published work, "O naravstvennom otnoshenii Rossii k Evrope," was issued in 1869 and he died at his French estate on 29 October 1871, in a world that had changed dramatically since his emigration began almost a half-century before.

The impact of England on Turgenev's ideas is still a matter of dispute among scholars who have examined this problem. Though he lived in England only a short time—between 1826 and 1831—he was there at a critical period in England's history as well as in his
own life. He was an admirer of England's government while still a student in Göttingen, but as one scholar has put it, "Turgenev's political views were altered significantly" as a result of his experiences during his years of residence there. Traces of the perceptions of British state and society that he formed at this time were to appear in his writings throughout his career. England was the country in which Turgenev essentially began his émigré existence. He had no precedent, and no community to aid him in the difficult process of adjustment. He seems to have used his correspondence and diaries to help him absorb and comprehend the world around him. His private opinions of England during his first years there were decidedly critical. To his brother Alexander he wrote: "Here all the advantages are only for the upper classes," whose privileged position is owed largely to their wealth.

He noticed that the paths to privilege appeared to be open, but that access to these paths was in practice denied to the majority of the population, whom he described as being in "a horrible situation." Turgenev turned his attention to "the thousands of unemployed workers" and the many more who worked in factories for wages that barely kept them above the level of starvation. The poverty he saw was so widespread and omnipresent that "there are no firm hopes or probabilities for improvement." He informed his brother Alexander that the situation of the workers was even worse in some areas outside London; he noted the city of Manchester in this regard, where Engels was soon to write in detail of such conditions.

To this perception of the class divisions in English society Turgenev added a critique of the country's legal and political systems. The judiciary, despite pretenses to providing justice for all, in fact defended the interests of the wealthy aristocracy. He explained to his brother that lawyers' fees were so extravagant that no member of the lower classes could possibly afford to hire a proper defense in a court. Similarly, he described Parliament as a political organization "composed only of the rich and for the rich." The lower house, which is supposed to represent the nonaristocratic majority, "acts solely according to the House of Lords, and cannot act otherwise [since] the greater part of its members are sent there, directly or indirectly, by the Lords."

At the same time that Turgenev was expressing this critical view of his host society, he had to face additional problems. Not only were there persistent attempts by the Russian embassy in London to extradite him; there was also a coordinated effort by the Russian
diplomatic and aristocratic community in London to bar Turgenev from joining English literary and social clubs to which he applied for admission. Under the immediate impact of these difficulties Turgenev asked himself in his diary the classic questions of his generation: “To whom can I be useful? For whom can I work?” Disoriented, he wondered where he could find an outlet for his desire to work for the good of others. Cut off from the problems of the Russian peasants, he asked himself, “Where is the fire of hope” in this land of exile? He could not contain his anxiety over the possibility that he would no longer be able to find significance for his “lost and useless life.”

One of the ways in which he resolved this depression was by becoming involved in British utopian socialism. An important role in this reorientation was played by William Thompson, the English economist, industrialist, and disciple of Robert Owen. Through Thompson, Turgenev was introduced to the writings of Jeremy Bentham, Saint-Simon, and Robert Owen. Moreover, Thompson showed Turgenev instances of applied industrial reform in his own factory. From this, Turgenev concluded that the desperate condition of the English working class was directly connected to the nature of the factory system, and that this situation could be alleviated through appropriate industrial reform. This conclusion was more convincingly felt by Turgenev after his visit to the Owenite community in New Lanark, with which he was already familiar as a result of his meeting Allen William, the Quaker and Owenite leader. Turgenev’s descriptions of New Lanark in his diary are rhapsodic in praise of Owenite methods of overcoming the excesses of the industrial revolution.

Turgenev also threw himself into the agitated discussions on the proposed Reform Bill, clearly identifying with the radical viewpoint of Jeremy Bentham, James Mill, and William Cobbett. In his letters to his brother Alexander, it is clear that he was particularly impressed by the critique and suggestions offered by Cobbett in his pamphlets and speeches. Throughout this period, Turgenev recorded in his letters the upheaval that England was undergoing; he detailed protests by rural farmers as well as by urban workers and intellectuals against the opponents of full democratic representation. For him, the two issues of industrial and political reform were inseparable; any compromise on permitting popular rule in Parliament was directly related to resistance to improving the economic condition of the poor.

Turgenev was also keenly interested in the Irish Question and
the Chartist movement; his letters are filled with firsthand observations and analyses of these protest movements. Despite his acknowledgment of the benefits of the realization of full parliamentary democracy in England, the dominant mood in his thinking at this time was one of criticism of the existing situation. Turgenev, the exile from autocratic Russia, was not unaware of the obvious superiority of this system over the Russian and French monarchical forms of government, but he preferred to ally himself with the people, the oppressed, the "internal exiles" of his host society, rather than with the privileged interests of his own social class.

If the influences in England were significant, the revolution in France in 1830 and Turgenev's experiences in Paris once he relocated there were to affect him even more powerfully. Indeed, the impact of the 1830 revolution on Turgenev can properly be compared to the more well known effects of the 1848 revolution in France on his émigré successor, Alexander Herzen. Interestingly, the uprising of 1830 was not unexpected by Turgenev. He had been following French events from newspaper reports since his arrival in England. Beginning in 1828, his comments on France in his diary and letters increased as his attention turned more and more toward the Continent. In December 1829 he wrote to his brother, in a remarkably accurate prediction, that in France "they expect the start of the struggle between the court and the people." On 20 July 1830, a week before the outbreak, he went further: "The menace of a coup d'état fills the newspapers from Paris. This will turn into a revolution. And the Russian government may interfere in this revolution and forbid Russians to be in France." Once the revolution was a reality, Turgenev began to clarify his overall interpretation of the events in Paris as he became increasingly absorbed by them. He was convinced that conditions in France would substantially improve, and indicated that he was seriously considering moving there. By August, the news from Paris had "captured [his] complete attention." He considered the July upheaval "a merchants' revolution" (revoliutsiia v pol'zu kupechestva). The popular forces opposing the Restoration convinced him that neither a Bourbon ruler nor a Bourbon administration would be acceptable to the French population. He called the July Revolution "an unparalleled achievement of the people of Paris. . . . The world must see the foundation of the people's salvation and prosperity that has emerged in France as a result of the July
He also speculated on the international significance of these events, considering separately the possibilities for Belgium, Holland, Germany, England, and Russia. His view of Europe was of an interconnecting web of centralized nation-states subjected to similar opposition forces from within. The results of the explosion in Paris, therefore, not only would decide the fate of France but would stir parallel outbreaks elsewhere, which was the case in Poland even as he wrote.

Turgenev hoped that the change of regimes in France would result in the new government’s granting him permission to enter the country. Upon receiving a positive response to his request to visit Paris in the fall of 1831, he went there immediately. He was welcomed in Paris as warmly as he himself had welcomed the July Revolution. Unlike his more isolated relationship to English society, which he had not really managed to overcome, in France he had access to several key figures in power. He quickly made the acquaintance of Lafayette and Guizot in spite of his awareness of “the greater likelihood that the Russian government will be more concerned about me. . . . That is obvious.”

Turgenev’s initial enthusiasm for the July Revolution was soon tempered, however. Gradually, he began criticizing the new regime of Louis Philippe. In November 1830 he wrote his brother that Guizot and his party wanted “to stop the [revolutionary] movement, but that is not in their power. The movement from the start was strong only in Paris; but with Paris, almost always, moves the fate of France.” By 1832, Turgenev noted that as the government continued to suppress opposition journals, popular anger, “especially against the king, continues to strengthen. . . . The position of the government is becoming more and more difficult.”

As was the case in his critique of the English situation, his attack on the July Monarchy in France was a blend of political and economic objections. On the one hand, he found the new regime moving further from, not closer to, a commitment to widening the electoral representation of the country; on the other hand, he criticized the government’s economic policies of protectionism in international trade while ignoring the growing plight of the factory workforce. The popular uprisings in Lyon in 1831 and 1834 further convinced him of the dangers to the regime from below if it continued on its present course. Throughout the 1840s, Turgenev explored alternatives that might help resolve this conflict. He read the utopian socialists more seriously, but found the disciples of Saint-
Simon to be too removed from everyday problems; he was equally critical of the followers of both Lamartine and Lamennais. He met frequently with Louis Blanc in the early 1840s and was more positive in his opinion of Blanc's book, *L'Organisation du travail*, than he was about any other socialist work. However, the revolutionary events of 1848 shattered Turgenev's hopes for a peaceful evolutionary path from economic crisis to social improvement and from monarchy to a republican government.

Turgenev's interest in European affairs remained connected to, but never replaced, his involvement with Russia. This concern for Russia, which increased markedly in the 1840s, was consistently expressed in his writings throughout his long career abroad. All of his published works on Russia revolve around two central themes: the realization of a constitutional government and the abolition of serfdom. Although these themes can be found in his first book, *Opýt teorii nalogov*, they were discussed in greatest depth in the third volume of his most substantial work, *La Russie et les Russes* (1847). This book, clearly Turgenev's magnum opus, was completely neglected by both Western and Soviet historians until quite recently; one scholar who has studied it has called it "the first monograph devoted to the history of the Russian liberation movement, its roots and prospects."

In *La Russie*, Turgenev divided his suggestions into two periods of reform. The first period would bring the enactment of those reforms judged to be "compatible with the autocracy." These included, above all else, peasant emancipation, with land arrangements for former serfs and provisions for indemnity to former landlords. In addition, he included a number of associated reforms, such as the reorganization of the judiciary and of local administration. A new administrative order, based on an elected local self-government, was to be established at this time. This period would then be followed by a second stage, "the creation of a representative constitutional regime," with guarantees of equality before the law, freedom of the word (private conscience, the published press, and public meetings), ministerial responsibility, and an independent judiciary with judgment by peers. Turgenev also proposed national elections to establish a parliament with full legislative authority. He envisioned a group of 200 persons, elected on the basis of education and property qualifications out of a population of 50 million, sufficient to work out the initial problems of making the transition to a constitutional government. Ultimately, there were to be two houses in the
parliamentary body, modeled on the English system of an aristocratic upper house and a popular lower house, which would represent the needs and aspirations of the entire nation. Turgenev's explicit constitutional model, to which he refers repeatedly in this discussion, is Russkaia pravda (Russian Justice), written by his former Decembrist comrade Pavel Pestel. Pestel himself had been strongly influenced by French revolutionary and British political institutions, and Turgenev is clearly endorsing this earlier document as a framework for the development of a constitutional structure in Russia.  

Turgenev was aware that there would be resistance to his plan, but he firmly believed that only those who profit individually from employment in an absolutist government would be irreconcilable opponents to such a political order. As for revolutionary opposition to the proposed regime, Turgenev assumed that this would be an unnecessary phenomenon so long as the institutions of the constitutional government remained truly representative and continued to perform their fundamental tasks—ensuring "the material well-being of the people and the moral perfection of the individual." He also took note of the danger that existed in Russia with regard to the peaceful realization of a constitutional government in a country where the population had known only absolutism. Russia may not proceed, as Turgenev put it, at a pace and with the regularity "that one admires among the peoples most advanced in civilization." Nevertheless, he concluded, all these difficulties can be overcome if the Russian people sufficiently desire this new political system and if they are willing to act on their desire in good faith to achieve it.

This, then, would assure Russia's participation in the progress of European civilization, which Turgenev believed was a necessary condition for advancement beyond forms of political and cultural barbarism. Europe, for Turgenev, was the apogee of modern civilization, and the future liberty of the Russian people depended on their ability to end their isolation from Europe. The very concept "civilization" was at the heart of Turgenev's world view. Other nations had to decide whether to embrace advanced forms of European civilization, to imitate them, to select discriminatingly among various influences, or to resist all such forms. Those who chose the latter course of action—and here he indicted the rulers of Russia for centuries—were what he called the "anticivilisateurs," whose efforts led to decadence and backwardness.

Why did Turgenev not only abandon but reverse his critical
attitudes toward Europe in his major published work? While there is no conclusive explanation in his writings, it seems reasonable to assume several possibilities. First, the sheer passage of time was quite significant between the period 1826–34, when he was most critical of Europe, and the middle 1840s, when he wrote his praise of European civilization in La Russie. During the first period, Turgenev was in an insecure psychological state as a recent émigré trying to cope with the personal problems of life in exile. At this point, he was still planning to return to Russia and did not imagine that he would spend the rest of his life in Europe. In his criticism of England and France, he may have been projecting some of the inner hostility he felt at his inability to return to his homeland, his resentment of his enforced (albeit initially voluntary) confinement in Europe. By the time he was writing La Russie, his personal circumstances had altered considerably. He had adjusted to his émigré existence in Europe and had come to depend on Europe for his own future; without a free, advanced “civilization” in Europe, Turgenev would have had to face the prospect of surrender to the tsarist “anticivilisateurs.”

Second, Turgenev had different notions of Europe in mind in each of these periods of his career. In the earlier period, particularly during his residence in England, he wrote primarily about the English economy and government; he did not at that time examine the foundations of his criticism to the point of trying to understand the relationship between economic and political forms on the one hand and levels of civilization on the other. In the 1840s, when he did do this, he saw that industrial capitalism and parliamentary representative government were aspects of a historically evolving civilization which determined the distinctive kind of politics and economics (as well as cultural forms such as levels of education, science, the arts, etc.) a free society desired and its government guaranteed.

Third, Turgenev sensed he was a front-line witness to a struggle of extraordinary proportions. As a Russian, he stood on the battleground of the future in London and Paris, where societies of the most advanced civilization were fighting to determine the destiny of nations. The rest of the world, Russia included, waited in the wings, where policy decisions on democracy and capitalism had not yet been made. Thus, the aspects of European states and societies which he criticized in the late 1820s and early 1830s were individual components of a large-scale process that was to involve Russia as well. By the 1840s, when he was writing La Russie, his
purpose was to address himself exclusively to Russia in this context. He conceived of his task here as not to compare Russian and European forms of government but to place Russia's more primitive political structure in the framework of Europe's higher civilization.

After trying to come to terms with the tumultuous international situation in 1848, Turgenev began turning his attention to the peasant problem in Russia. He published a political brochure during that revolutionary year, *La Russie en présence de la crise européenne*, in which he expressed his fears of a world divided between the two extremes of destructive socialism from below and repressive monarchism from above. He was disappointed by the weakness of the liberals in the Frankfurt Parliament, whom he believed to be the main constitutional current in Europe. Turgenev was also deeply concerned about the rising influence of the "socialist and communist doctrines that would return the people to barbarism." 50 A few years before, he had written to his brother somewhat more favorably about socialist ideas, admitting that they represented the "first bursts of the human conscience toward the farthest completion of the condition of man and of human society." 51 Now, however, confronted with the reality of socialism in a revolutionary situation, he foresaw great dangers as governments, threatened and provoked by socialism, would respond with more repressive measures against the citizenry as a whole. Nowhere was this danger greater than in Russia. The practical lesson of 1848 for Turgenev was that Russia was falling further behind Europe in the development of constitutionalism. While Europe managed to incorporate aspects of the new popular demands into the existing framework, Russia reacted by strengthening the institutions of autocracy. Russia seemed to be moving away from the possibilities of constitutional politics while Europe increasingly moved away from the politics of monarchical authority. Turgenev concluded that he must devote himself to the transitional phase he had outlined in *La Russie*—peasant emancipation—without which constitutionalism could never be realized.

Turgenev's concerns for the abolition of serfdom were articulated in a series of brochures and articles. In an 1859 brochure, he wrote that the abolition of serfdom was for Russia "the most major problem, more important than all others, and without the resolution of which it is impossible to proceed toward further improvements. . . . Prosperity, honor, let us say directly—the salvation of government—depend upon the destruction of serfdom!" The lib-
eration, he continued, must be completed at one time, it must be total, and it must be done without further delay.\textsuperscript{52} He also emphasized the importance of emancipating the peasantry with land, and advised against a process of gradual transfer of land from lord to peasant; the latter, he believed, would produce only discontent and the continuation of the landlords' exploitation over their former serfs for decades to come.\textsuperscript{53}

Once the Emancipation Decree was announced in 1861, Turgenev focused his criticism on the inadequacies of the government's plan. He objected to the financial arrangements, which favored the landlords and led to enormous peasant indebtedness. He was also unhappy with the allotments of land made available for peasant purchase since they were usually too small to support the families working them, and were often in comparatively unproductive areas. In addition, he was critical of the authority given to the peasant communes. Having been freed from servitude to private landlords, Turgenev predicted, the peasantry would now face a similar servility under the rural communes. As a result, a class of individual peasant landowners, bound neither to the aristocracy, the state, nor the commune, would be prevented from coming into existence in the foreseeable future.\textsuperscript{54}

In the late 1850s and early 1860s, during Turgenev's most prolific period of publishing articles criticizing the terms of the emancipation in Russia, he also published a number of smaller essays on this subject in Herzen's \textit{Kolokol}.\textsuperscript{55} Despite Herzen's ambivalent attitudes toward Turgenev, which we have already noted, he did respect Turgenev as a figure who had knowledge of the peasant situation in Russia. Herzen (with Ogarev) wrote Turgenev a congratulatory letter on the occasion of the announcement of the Emancipation Proclamation in 1861. It was a tribute to Turgenev's entire career:

You were one of the first to begin to speak about the emancipation of the Russian people; recently, deeply moved, with tears in your eyes, you celebrated the first day of that emancipation. Permit us, disciples of your union [i.e., the Decembrist Union of Salvation, to which Turgenev belonged], brotherly, or better filial love, to clasp your hand and to embrace you warmly, in the fullness of [our] heart[s]. . . . With vibrant, tender emotion, we have written these lines and have signed our names with that profound religious devotion which we have retained throughout our lives for the veteran activists of Russian freedom.\textsuperscript{56}
Turgenev responded with praise of his own for the editors of *Kolokol* in his return letter to them. "The Russian people," he wrote, "will recognize someday your feats, and your passionate zeal for their well-being." In this same letter, he also discussed some further aspects of the problems facing landlords and peasants which certainly were concerns of Herzen's as well. Beyond all the financial and institutional arrangements lay the personal and psychological difficulties that had to be overcome if individual peasants were to gain respect from their former masters. He noted how hard it would be for landlords to learn to address peasants in the more formal language used for peers. He believed it was necessary to abandon familiar forms of address when speaking with peasants (to shift from *ty* to *vy* in Russian) if the existing class barriers were to be transcended in the reality of everyday life. Perhaps it was the experience of emigration itself which lay behind this comment by Turgenev—a rather personal perspective, incidentally, which one does not find very frequently in the literature on the emancipation of the Russian peasantry.

There are two other aspects of Turgenev's career which should be mentioned. Both also happen to be characteristic of a number of émigrés of his generation. The first is his persistent effort to persuade the tsarist government of his innocence of the original charges made against him in 1825, and to return to Russia as a citizen of his homeland. The series of letters which Turgenev wrote to Alexander II poignantly reflects his unsettled conscience and his refusal to accept the identity of a political criminal confined to exile for crimes committed against the state. He repeatedly attempted to argue his case in his desperate search for imperial forgiveness. He denied that he had ever been a member of a secret society dedicated to provoking an uprising for the purpose of replacing the autocracy with a republican form of government, as the commission of inquiry had stated in 1825. The group he did belong to was concerned instead with a problem that, Turgenev wrote, he had "dedicated his entire life" to solving—"the emancipation of enserfed people." He also emphasized his support of the preservation of the autocracy because of his belief that it was necessary for the tsar to initiate and carry out the emancipation of the peasantry.

At this same time, he also spoke to Prince A. F. Orlov, the Russian ambassador, who was leaving Paris, about the circumstances of his case. Orlov, upon his return to St. Petersburg, repeated the substance of his discussion with Turgenev to Alexander II.
This personal influence, together with Turgenev's letters, helped convince the tsar to permit Turgenev to return to Russia under limited conditions.60

After his three visits (in 1857, 1859, and 1864), Turgenev wrote another letter to Alexander II. This time, he attempted to persuade the tsar that he should move forward with a more ambitious reform plan. Now that the serfs were liberated, Turgenev argued, it was possible and desirable to begin plans for a national assembly.61 This proposal, needless to say, was not received favorably by the tsar.

Nevertheless, the letters to Alexander II indicate Turgenev's need to be redeemed by the autocracy as well as his continued faith in its legitimacy and in the necessity for the tsarist government to play an active role in reform. Although he conceived of the politics of imperial rule as a transitional stage prior to the introduction of representative government in the future, Turgenev remained bound to the tsarist regime to justify much of his own political identity and to carry out the responsibilities of guiding the country toward "higher levels of civilization." He was not ready, as later generations would be, to renounce theautocracy completely and devote himself to a new political alternative.

The second aspect concerns Turgenev's familiarity with members of his social class in Russia despite his legal status as a pariah. Although he had relations with Herzen, Bakunin, and other radical émigrés who passed through Paris,62 he also maintained contacts with aristocratic Russians and government officials whom he met either through family or through friends from the pre-Decembrist period of his life. During his visits to Russia in 1857, 1859, and 1864, he renewed and expanded many of these associations, and left very positive impressions on various members of upper-class society in Russia. F. N. Glinka, speaking on behalf of a number of people, was ecstatic in a letter to Turgenev at this time: "Your authority, your name, have remained in your fatherland . . . and have not been blotted out from the depths of the hearts of your friends.63 Turgenev also corresponded with representatives of official circles such as A. F. Orlov, chairman of the state Committee on Peasant Affairs; A. V. Golovin, Minister of Education; N. A. Mili­utin, Minister of Interior; and many others.64 This activity is another indication of Turgenev's recognition of the legitimacy of the existing regime, regardless of his criticism of its methods of handling certain problems. Moreover, he believed that he could influence prominent men in positions of power in directions he desired. He
chose to maintain these contacts in the hope of bringing about change in Russia in a peaceful, orderly manner rather than through more drastic measures. He did not want to see 1848 erupt in Russia.

Turgenev never joined an opposition organization during his four and a half decades abroad. The last political society he belonged to was the first he ever joined—the Union of Salvation, during the 1820s in St. Petersburg, before he emigrated. He remained, to the end, an independent reformist critic, at once suspicious of applying socialist theories and opposed to the eternality of autocratic authority. He often wrote that there was something of greater significance for him, beyond governments and theories of change. He called it "the desire for the good of mankind." Yet despite this humanistic hope, Turgenev's letters reveal the hopelessness he felt in his life-long attempt to play a role in ending serfdom and bringing Russia into the higher world of European civilization. In one such letter, written in 1859 to the Russian Minister of Interior, A. M. Gorchakov, Turgenev reviewed his work on peasant emancipation and openly expressed the twin malaises of pessimism concerning his reform proposals and despair over his émigré existence. He had not found a way to connect his life in exile with a means to affect social change in Russia:

Russia is distinct from other countries by its continuance of the redemption system (le système de rechat). . . . God knows where Europe would still be at this hour if redemption had been the sine qua non of the emancipation of the agricultural class in different countries. . . .

I still desire that my writings and my emancipation plan would be better known in Russia, that they would be examined, discussed. But that is precisely the difficulty. This publicity is not permitted among us. I have written well, published, but no one reads me, no one knows what I have written. . . .

In touching on the delicate question of publicity, which is at the foundation of my thought, I feel that I will never finish if I enumerate all the advantages. It hardly bears repeating my passionate regret that the efforts and works of my whole life, which have been summarized recently in numerous publications . . . remain sterile and without access to my country. And that is why, my Prince, I am a discouraged man.66