Police Surveillance at Herzen’s House in London, 1862

The document discussed below highlights one of the most difficult problems confronting the emigrés in their political activities: how to find methods of secrecy in order to avoid infiltration of their operations by the tsarist police agents stationed in Europe for this purpose. This particular police report has been selected because it shows that the tsarist agents were able to gain access to émigré meetings in Herzen’s own house:

On 24 June (6 July) 1862, on the eve of the departure of Vetoshnikov from London, a meeting was held at Herzen’s home. Attending were: Ogarev, Bakunin, Vetoshnikov, [Vasiliy] Kel’siev, Perets, Stasov, Albertini, Kovalevskii, the Suzdal’tsev brothers, Chernetskii, Tkhorchievskii, Count Branitskii, the Plautin brothers, Ogarev’s relatives, plus 2 [unidentified] Poles and 3 [unidentified] Russians. Vetoshnikov spoke a long time with Bakunin in another room. Herzen read to us an article about the fires [in St. Petersburg] and the proclamation “Young Russia.”

On 5 July 1862, Pavel Aleksandrovich Vetoshnikov was interrogated upon his return to St. Petersburg. The police report states that he was “quite cooperative” in giving details of the meeting at Herzen’s house. He claimed he himself ended up at Herzen’s meeting “by chance” through Kel’siev, who took him there “for reasons he claims were not clear to him at the time.” Among the materials found in the possession of Vetoshnikov at the time of his apprehension were 57 copies of various issues of Kolokol (nos. 118 through 138), an essay by Ogarev in French, an anthology on the raskolniki by Kel’siev, a brochure by Nikolai Serno-Solov’evich, and 3 photo-

Source: TsGAOR, fond 112, opis’ 1, ed. khran. 50.
portraits of Bakunin. As a result of these pieces of incriminating evidence, Vetoshnikov, Serno-Solov'evich, and Chernyshevskii were placed under arrest, which ended the careers of the latter two significant activists in the opposition movement.