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RUSSIAN MATERIALISM:

AN INVESTIGATION OF THE PRE-REVOLUTIONARY MATERIALIST TRADITION

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PH.D. THESIS

1977

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ABSTRACT

The principal aim of this thesis is to take a step towards a fuller coverage in this language of the history of Russian materialism and atheism. It is divided into Three Parts. The first discusses the transition from German idealism in the 1830s to materialism and atheism from the 1840s onwards amongst the intelligentsia; particular attention is given to the vogue for Feuerbach, and it is suggested that his appeal for the Russians lay in a materialism which admitted the mental but debarred the spiritual, i.e., allowed for a moral critique of Tsarism not only outside of, but in opposition to, religion. The first part ends with an analysis of Lenin's Materialism and Empiriocritisism, both to compare his own stance with that of Feuerbach, and to understand the presuppositions of the historiography of the 'materialist tradition', which provides a framework for Parts Two and Three. These parts seek to establish when it makes sense to speak of the origins of a 'materialist tradition' in the sense that materialism and atheism are connected with antagonism towards the political order. Part Two is a brief rebuttal of the view of Soviet historians that the tradition originates with Lomonosov and is continued, amongst others, by Radishchev. Part Three claims that the tradition may be said to have begun with the Decembrists, and discusses the extent to which their materialism and atheism can be seen as a response to Alexandrine educational policy and attitudes towards religious organisations and groups, as a result of contact with the West, and as a function of their own political ideas. This Part forms the bulk of the thesis, and in so doing, evinces its most important secondary aim, to attempt as far as possible to explore the historical significance of Russian materialism and atheism.

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INTRODUCTION

The subject of this thesis first began to take shape in my mind when as an undergraduate student I was introduced to the remarkable philosophical journey of Vissarion Belinsky. It became clear that his intellectual development could be seen as an exaggerated and highly personal reflection of a transition, quite widespread in both Russia and Western Europe, from a conservative or apolitical transcendental philosophy to almost what was its diametric opposite, a conjunction of materialism and socialism. There seemed on the basis of this general phenomenon, and in the particular case of Belinsky, to be a correlation of some kind between ontological and political views. It goes without saying that connections of this nature, and in particular the connection between materialism and progressive political views, are axiomatic in Marxist philosophy of history; without in any way wishing to adopt a hostile posture towards that approach, I have nevertheless preferred to confront my subject without the benefit of any strong prior theoretical commitment.

It is not however the primary aim of this study to investigate the relationship between materialism and radicalism. My first consideration has been to take a step towards a fuller coverage of an aspect of Russian intellectual history which has not in my view been adequately dealt with by Western historians of ideas, namely, the history of materialist and atheist thought. As far as I know, there is no work in English comparable to the wealth of monographs and essay collections generated by Soviet authors specialising in this field.[1] There are probably several reasons for this disparity of attention, but the most obvious seem to be following.

The first is what might be called the poverty of Russian philosophy. Although care must always be taken to avoid, or at least to recognise, the prejudices likely to be instilled by a Western European education, it can scarcely be denied that there is no Russian metaphysical, epistemological or ethical work of the nineteenth century to rank with, for example, Hume's Treatise of Human Nature, or Kant's Critique of Pure Reason, in terms of originality or rigour. Why this is so could itself be the subject of another thesis, but it is worth noting that there are defects in the most obvious explanation, which is that Russia's philosophical backwardness is correlative to and consequential upon the political, economic and cultural backwardness induced by centuries of Byzantine isolation. In the first place, the choice of Kant as an exemplary philosopher brings to mind the opposite conclusion, that in the case of Germany, admittedly far less isolated from the rest of Europe than Russia, political and economic backwardness seemed if anything to promote rather than hinder a remarkable efflorescence of original aesthetic and philosophical activity. More importantly, Russian could be seen as being philosophically backward not only in relation to certain West European nations, but also in relation to its own rapidly increasing strides in, for example, literature, music, mathematics and natural science. It may be that there was some intrinsic cultural factor inhibiting original philosophising; for example, it might be that the modern Russian idiom pioneered by Karamzin in the early nineteenth century proved particularly apt, for instance, for poetic expression, but, like Latin, lacked the morphological mechanisms conducive to the coining of abstract terms which, so the argument might run, are characteristic of Greek or German. This would impede the generation of other than imitative philosophical thought, but would have little or no effect on the pursuit of abstraction in music, mathematics and natural science which in different ways have their own lingua franca.

The argument would be more convincing if Russian intellectuals from the time of Radishchev had proved more or less indifferent to pure philosophy. Not only is that not the case, but at times they have exhibited a near mania for philosophical abstraction. This suggests that the reasons for the imitative or eclectic nature of Russian philosophy are partly institutional. For the sake of the virtue of brevity and in spite of the vice of over-generalisation, it might have been expected that our non-existent major nineteenth-century Russian work of pure philosophy would in the light of West European philosophy have been produced by a gentleman of leisure or by a professional teacher of philosophy. The Russian nobility did however, as we shall see, for a long time regard education, and particularly higher education as a plebeian activity, and in any case was a most reluctant consumer of any kind of tuition which did not bear the fruits of advancement in the military and civilian service hierarchy; it was not until the 1830s that the sons of the nobility began to attend the new universities in any appreciable numbers. We shall also see that after the expiry of the spirit of reform during the reign of Alexander I, departments of philosophy were often the prime targets of the academic repression which characterised most of the remainder of the nineteenth century. So far were the universities from developing an indigenous philosophical culture that it was the very foreigners who had been recruited to make up for the lack of native teachers of philosophy who became the first victims of government persecution. Thus in the midst of the nobility's general intellectual apathy, and the enforced orthodoxy of the academic philosophers, the vital spirit of philosophical enquiry was kept alive in the rootless groups of young students, journalists and misfits who were the first members of what was later termed the intelligentsia. It was the minds of these individuals which were obsessed by a mania for abstraction, successively of a Schellingian and a Hegelian stamp, but it cannot be inferred from this that discussions of a purely metaphysical or epistemological nature were paramount. The appeal of German philosophy to the generation which followed the Decembrists was that it raised questions about the essence of nationhood and the meaning of history, questions which the acutely nationally self-conscious Russians, forever measuring themselves against the Western European nations, were as unavoidable as they were to the Germans with their own particular obsession about the French. This is not to deny that in individual cases the logic of the Hegelian dialectic acquired its own momentum, but as a generalisation, the inception of the Russian intelligentsia was marked by a powerful interest in philosophy not so much for its own sake, but as means to finding metaphysical solutions to practical, that is historical and then political, problems. Not only does this underline the connection between ontological and political views, at any rate in the Russian context, mentioned earlier, but it also diminishes the relevance of the poverty, or unoriginality, of Russian philosophy to the question of its importance in Russian history. I shall argue at greater length later on that even in an eclectic or reactive philosophical culture, it is the choice of ideas which is historically significant, and that moreover that logically that choice cannot be explained simply in terms of what is chosen.[2] At this point though, I would only suggest that given the close relationship between philosophical and political views in Russian history, the historical significance of the former is guaranteed by the fact that neither can be fully understood without recourse to the other.

To say that the poverty of Russian philosophy is a reason why there is unequal treatment of Russian materialism and atheism by Soviet and non-Soviet authors is to point specifically to an attitude more likely to be held by non-Soviet authors, and therefore to attempt to account for one side only of the inequality. To offer as a second reason preconceptions about the truth of materialism and atheism could of course apply to both sides, and it would scarcely be consistent with the neutrality avowed in the first paragraph to offer judgements about which side's preconceptions were the strongest. It goes without saying that Marxist-Leninist authors' acceptance of the truth of historical materialism and the historical importance of earlier 'metaphysical' forms of materialism is explicit, axiomatic and at first sight monolithic. There is, as we shall see, some room for debate and difference amongst Soviet historians of ideas over which thinkers are to be accounted part of the Russian 'materialist tradition,' but what debate there is takes place fully within Lenin's definitions of materialism, and categorisations of intellectual history. On the other hand, there is no basis for inferring that non-Soviet students of Russian intellectual history have not regarded materialist thought as worthy of separate study because it is false or vulgar or both, even though that view is undoubtedly held by some of that variegated set. The others may, quite reasonably, not be interested in the philosophical, rather than political views, of the intelligentsia; there is, indeed, no reason why the political views of the Decembrists, or a Herzen, should not be considered with profit in isolation from their metaphysical views, but such an approach would at least be historically incomplete, and would, in my view, lack an important perspective of the whole object, rather in the way that to comprehend Newton's mechanics, one need only study the Principia Mathematica, but to understand Newton, one must also study his theology. It should also be remembered that the earlier the work, the less material the historian will have been able to consult which might have suggested the full significance of atheism and materialism in Russian history, even though, as in the case of T. G. Masaryk's evergreen The Spirit of Russia, which scarcely considers Russian thought prior to Chaadayev, he might have seen it as one of his most important tasks to account for the importance of materialism, atheism and anticlericalism in Russian thought.[3] Masaryk, though, shared with the historian of materialism F. A. Lange a predilection for Kantian criticism which theorectically should have rendered him impartial with respect to competing systems of metaphysics. The same cannot be said of certain Russian émigré intellectual historians whose preconceptions come closest to mirroring those of their Soviet opponents, and in whose works on Russian thought, the balance between materialism and idealism is in like manner approximately the reverse of equivalent Soviet histories. This is particularly evident in the case of N. O. Lossky and V. V. Zeñkovsky, whose primary aim has been to chronicle the various systems of Russian Orthodox philosophers in the tradition of V. S. Solov'ev (including, in Lossky's case, himself). Zeñkovsky utterly repudiated the Marxist-Leninist interpretation of the history of Russian philosophy as the struggle between materialism and idealism over the "basic question of philosophy", one of the formulations of which is the relationship between thought and matter, this struggle being a reflection of the underlying struggle between opposing social classes. Zeñkovsky for his part was reluctant to accept materialism and atheism as properly Russian:

"The past and present contributions of the Russian emigration in the various fields of cultural creativity are evidence that Russia's spiritual path, to the extent that it is free, without the pressure of state power, remains today what it was before. In this respect the sharp outburst of Russian secularism which developed in Russia into 'active atheism' and an officially organised anti-religious propaganda - the whole militant atheism of Neo-Marxism - is, without any doubt,

a superficial phenomenon, a product of fanatical ideocracy. It did not and does not have any roots in the past".[4]
One cannot help thinking that what Zeñkovsky said about "free" cultural creativity amongst the émigré idealists, as opposed to official propaganda, could equally well be said about, for example, the materialists and atheists of the 1840s, who were confronted with the official ideology of "autocracy, Orthodoxy and nationality". In any event, it is indisputable that preconceptions about what counts as Russian philosophy, or about the essence of Russian philosophy, be it "mysticism", "mystical realism", "realism" or "materialism",[5] will colour the scholar's approach to materialistic and atheistic thought in Russian history.

More specifically such preconceptions will inevitably influence the scholar's attitude towards what Soviet historians of ideas have called the 'Russian materialist tradition', a concept which has helped to direct the approach adopted in this work. Since much of the research which sought to establish this tradition was carried out during the Stalin era, and is notable for an excess of zeal both in portraying some of the best-known Russian thinkers and scientists as progressive in social and political philosophy, and materialist in metaphysics, and in attempting to derive these views from indigenous sources in preference to West European influences, it might be doubted whether it can be regarded as characteristic of Soviet philosophy of history in general. In fact, the broad view, that the materialist traditon in Russia can be traced back into the eighteenth century to the works of Lomonosov and Radishchev in particular has survived.[6] This is not to be wondered at, since although much of the earlier research is tainted with peculiarly Stalinist violations of history, much of the impetus for such research comes both from Lenin's conception of materialism, which is sufficiently broad (though at some cost, as I intend to argue) to accommodate many who might have been surprised by the honour, and also from Lenin's own specific reference to the existence of such a tradition in his article "On the Meaning of Militant Materialism", published in the third number of the journal Pod znamenem marksizma. He was dissatisfied with the superficiality and vulgarisation of anti-religious propaganda, and encouraged the use of eighteenth-century atheistic literature, despite its shortcomings:

> "The sharp, vital, gifted and incisive publications of the old atheists of the eighteenth century, openly hostile to the ruling priesthood, are without a doubt a thousand times more suitable for wakening people from religious sleep than the boring, dry expositions of Marxism, illustrated by virtually no skilfully selected facts, which predominate in our literature, and which (there is no need to hide the sin) often distort Marxism".[7]

Given that in the same article, Lenin wrote that "there is, fortunately, within the principal tendencies of progressive social thought in Russia, a solid materialist tradition",[8] the findings of subsequent research might appear to have a basis in chapter and verse. It would, however, be wrong to confuse the atheists of the eighteenth century with the Russian representatives of the materialist tradition, of which latter, only Chernyshevsky and Plekhanov were mentioned. Oddly enough, to that extent, one of the fiercest opponents of the historians of the materialist tradition, Zeňkovsky, we find in agreement with Lenin. To judge from the composition of his two-volume history, it was only towards the end of his studies that Zeňkovsky was alerted to attempts to establish a materialist tradition, and in particular to A. A. Maksimov's work, in which, according to Zeňkovsky, he represents wrongfully as materialism the views of certain Russian scientists, such as the "vitalism" of I. I. Mechnikov and the "naturalism" of I. M. Sechenov.[9] This is Zeñkovsky's comment on the school of thought represented by Maksimov:

"Books devoted to a survey of Neo-Marxist philosophy attempt - in conformity with the current tactical trends of the Soviet régime - to represent 'dialectical materialism' as a *completion* and culmination of the development of the materialistic ideas which have allegedly manifested themselves ever more sharply and persistently in the history of Russian thought. On this interpretation, materialism becomes virtually a Russian national movement, independent of Western influences... The first real Russian materialist - besides Chernyshevski - was Plekhanov, who persistently combined philosophical and historical materialism".[10]

There could hardly be a clearer opportunity here for an exercise in *aurea mediocritas*, and indeed I neither share Zeñkovsky's belief in the superficiality of materialism as a phenomenon of Russian history, nor am I convinced by the efforts of Maksimov, Vasetsky, Sidorov, Shchipanov, Iovchuk *et al.*, to extend the roots of the materialist tradition back into the eighteenth century. It is not however a primary purpose of this work to engage in polemics, and the benefit of the concept of a 'materialist tradition' is that it suggests a framework in which to begin to ask why materialism has come to attain its present significance in Russian society. Talk of intellectual 'traditions' is, I believe, to be regarded with suspicion, since it may draw a verbal veil over the unexplained phenomenon of the *persistence* of a certain set of ideas, and deflect the attention to an exaggerated extent to ideological *revolutions* only. Nevertheless, in this instance, it has seemed helpful to respond to Soviet scholarship, and ask when it is proper to speak of the *origins* of a materialist tradition in the sense implied by Lenin, and then to judge whether the historical conditions adjudged to favour the selection of materialist and atheist ideas by progressive social groups may tell us anything further about the persistence, or better the continued occurrence, of that selection by similar groups in the future. I have to that end, included a brief rejection of the notion that any such selection took place in the eighteenth century (Part Two), and a much longer investigation of the reasons why this selection took place amongst the rebellious army officers of 1825 known retrospectively as the Decembrists (Part Three). My intention has been not so much the not always difficult refutation of some of the more extreme claims made by Soviet scholars during the Stalin era, though this has to be done to some extent, but rather to come to grips with some of the problems raised by an attempt to locate philosophical ideas in a historical setting, using as an example a group put forward as the perpetuators of a national materialist tradition. This, and the aforementioned step towards a fuller coverage in this language of the history of Russian atheism and materialism, are the primary objectives of this work. Whether or not my concentration upon the Decembrists will go any way to illuminate Zen'kovsky's dim view of the historical significance of atheism and materialism in Russia, will depend on one's estimate of the importance of the Decembrist movement, and we shall see that a polarity of opinion exists on that matter. Zen'kovsky, it should be noted, did not consider the Decembrists' philosophical views in his history, and doubtless they were beneath his gaze. But although it would be difficult to press the inclusion of such views upon a historian who was discriminating about intrinsic philosophical value, when however it comes to the question of the general historical significance of materialism and atheism, their importance seems to me self-evident from the simple fact of the numbing numbers of world's population now living under the ideological hegemony of dialectical and historical materialism. From this fact alone, there is, I believe, though the proponents of both world-views might not thank me for saying so, a logical case for equating in terms of their historical significance, the origins of both materialism and Christianity. In response to Zen'kovsky's reference to Neo-Marxist atheism as a superficial product of "fanatical ideocracy", it would of course be ludicrous to blind oneself to the obvious coercion and propaganda which has attended the dissemination of Marxism-Leninism in the socialist republics and people's democracies; national religions, it cannot be denied, have been deposed by revolutions, but it would be one-sided not to recognise that the eventual success of those revolutions offers more evidence of popular support for materialism and atheism than can be said for Christianity in, for example, the conversions of the Roman Emperor Constantine or of Vladimir, Prince of Kiev.

I have already referred to the purpose of Parts Two and Three of this study; the aim of Part One is briefly to discuss certain characteristics of what I have termed 'classical' Russian materialism, particularly the development of a certain kind of materialism during the 1840s out of German idealism, and also some related features of Leninist materialism. I hope that this Part is of some value in itself, though it may also help to throw some light on the presuppositions of research on the materialist tradition conducted in the Soviet Union. Needless to say, this Part is far from comprehensive, and it would take at least a further study of this length to do anything like full justice to the views sandwiched by the Decembrist rebellion and the October Revolution.

Finally, some mention should be made of problems of definition. Firstly, I have followed the Soviet practice of grouping together materialistic and atheistic ideas, although there is less justification in my case than for a scholar committed to the view that the history of philosophy is the history of the struggle of two opposing camps, materialism and idealism. According to this view, materialism entails atheism, and any rejection of God which did not embrace a materialistic world-view, would be reducible to such a view when stripped of its inconsistencies. My own belief is that atheism, by which I understand a commitment to the non-existence of a powerful supernatural being, as opposed to agnosticism, or scepticism with regard to the knowability of its existence, can logically co-exist with metaphysical beliefs other than materialism; indeed, there need be no other metaphysical stance of any kind, if, for instance, the non-existence of God were deduced a priori in the same way that His existence has been deduced in the past. There are inevitably in these matters of definition borderline cases; one of the most obvious with respect to this study is the status of certain highly influential systems of objective idealism, such as those of Schelling and Hegel, which in their different ways regard the natural world as a kind of concrete realisation of an ultimate spiritual reality. Whether or not this is atheistic, depends upon the breadth with which the deity is defined. This brings to mind the possible status of pantheism as a borderline case weakening the link of entailment from materialism to atheism: perhaps the opposition of matter and spirit can be overcome by supposing nature to be a deity, or even by investing the ultimate particles of matter with divine qualities. It is however always as well to remember that whatever else borderline cases prove, they prove that clear-cut cases exist, and it is these cases which I have chosen to lump together under the materialist tradition, a necessary element of which is some kind of hostility towards religion and idealism. This is no doubt an inexact procedure, but it seems to work at any rate as far as the Decembrists are concerned, where in any case the kind of atheism and materialism to which they were attracted did not infringe upon the problematic borderline areas.

A related problem concerns the extent to which one should as a historian of ideas impose one's own definitions upon the thoughts of historical figures. For example, if a person regarded himself as an atheist or a materialist, this would seem sufficient to guarantee the relevance of his ideas to a history of atheism and materialism; on the other hand, if the historian had arrived at an explanation for the incidence of views which held that everything was either material or dependent upon material reality, then it would scarcely make sense to include a self-confessed 'materialist' who meant by that nothing other than sensory experience is a precondition of all knowledge. I have in mind here the tendency not only of Marxist-Leninist scholars, but also of earlier thinkers, such as Herzen, to use materialism to cover empiricist theories of knowledge.[11] There is a problem here for the historian to decide whether to disregard this usage as having no bearing on his own study, or whether to criticise it if he feels that two conflicting connotations are being loaded on to the term. Another problem consists in the tendency of defenders of Orthodoxy to be rather indiscriminate in their applications of "materialism" and "atheism", to the extent that they come to signify anything heterodox with respect to that confession; clearly this kind of declamation has to be regarded with suspicion as evidence for the views it imputes. But even in saying that, one is implicitly appealing to connotations of the terms apparently other than those inherent in the usage of the defenders of Orthodoxy. Rather than allow these difficulties to confound the entire exercise, I have proceeded in a somewhat pragmatic way; this has involved the appeal to the definitions of Leninist philosophical materialism where the validity of the 'materialist tradition' is being discussed; and where as is usually the case, a potential 'materialist' has chosen not to advertise himself in such terms, I have had to ask of his views whether in any broad sense they would happily cohabit with the proposition that all reality is in an ultimate sense material. If this were not the case, it would seem that materialism is scarcely worth the name. The final point I wish to make in relation to definitions is that I have been concerned with the historical significance of purely ontological beliefs, beliefs about the ultimate nature of reality or being, and not with any of their supposed extensions to uncover the basic mechanisms of social relations, or the dynamics of historical development. This is perhaps an artificial distinction, since a world-view should embrace all the phenomena in the world. It does, however, have the merit of helping to keep this study within limits, and is also, I believe, justified when it comes to a closer consideration of, for example, 'historical materialism', which although it is undoubtedly compatible with materialist metaphysics, has in itself no bearing upon the problems of the existence of God or the human spirit, or of the ultimate constituents of reality or human experience. Exactly the same logical gulf exists between metaphysics and those implicit or explicit theories of historical causation dubbed 'idealist' by Marxist-Leninist theoreticians; to say for example that historical progress is promoted by 'enlightenment' or hindered by 'ignorance', is not necessarily to regard them as immaterial, hypostatised agencies.

PART ONE : CLASSICAL RUSSIAN MATERIALISM

The title of this Part has been selected faute de mieux, not only because the epithet 'classical' has been well nigh sucked dry of meaning in the variety of its applications and its antonyms, but also because it engenders the possibility of a confusion with 'classical' Marxism, which forms only a later part of the kind of thought which I wish to denote. However, the description is more than an arbitrary way of slicing up Russian materialist thought. It does, admittedly, have advantages as far as this particular work is concerned, in that it forms boundaries between on the one hand the so-called 'materialist tradition' extending from Lomonosov, through Radishchev and his followers to the Decembrists, the existence of which, as I claim in Parts Two and Three, is based in part on tendentious arguments; and on the other the jockeying between ontological materialism and Hegelian dialectics characteristic of the development of Soviet philosophy, which falls outside the scope of this undertaking. For the purposes of this chapter, classical Russian materialism is understood to be that class of ideas, other than modern Soviet materialism, which was first articulated from the early 1840s, and which differs from earlier ideas formed in the eighteenth century and during the reign of Alexander I in being undeniably and self-consciously materialistic. Moreover, the relationship between materialist and atheist convictions on the one hand, and radical political views on the other, is as clear as it is strong from the 1840s onwards, and I have in consequence foreborne from giving the amount of consideration to each thinker's political ideas, and to the historical context in which their philosophical thought developed, than will be the case to a lesser extent in the chapter on the eighteenth century, and to a greater extent in the chapter primarily devoted to Decembrism, where the existence of such a relationship is in my view more contentious. This is not to say that the attempt to ground Decembrist thinking in its political, economic and social environment could not with profit be applied to the ideas which form the subject of this chapter; this would indeed be my preferred method in attempting fully to understand the source and impact of any set of ideas and attitudes. To apply the approach to be used in Part Three to the span of thought which is the subject of this chapter would, though, expand this work to an extent insufferable to both author and reader. In any case, it does not necessarily follow from a commitment to what might be called an 'externalist' interpretation of the origin and significance of kinds of thinking, that nothing is to be gained from an investigation of the affinities and characteristics of sets of ideas conducted rather more independently of the historical environment of those ideas than that commitment would seem to demand, provided that, for example, any affinities detected between one person's intellectual artefacts and those of a predecessor are not presented in such a way that the latter appears as a complete explanation of the former. The critical, or simply descriptive treatment of ideas largely in isolation from history may indeed be of value in itself, though it could also be argued that any conclusions or generalisations arrived at in the process might furnish some material for a grander kind of speculation about the relationship between history and ideas across the sweep of Russian history, than any I have dared to venture.

That act of faith having been committed, it must at the outset be recognised that great care would be needed to prevent an account of the development of materialist thought in Russia during the 1840s from appearing as an exercise in genealogical intellectual history, by which I mean that approach to ideas which would interpret or analyse them in terms of their affinities with preceding ideas. This might not on the face of it seem a likely model to account for the replacement, sometimes within the development of one and the same individual, of a transcendental world-view by its apparent antithesis, materialism, unless that model were, in the way that popular estimations of offspring in terms of parental components often are, sufficiently flexible to accept either similarity or dissimilarity equally as grist to the explanatory mill (the similarity needing no further comment, the dissimilarity being explained in terms of a 'reaction' induced by that against which the reaction occurs). My own belief is that such flexibility flourishes in the absence of sound explanation, a necessary characteristic of which is that it should not be able to account for both one set of characteristics and that set's antithesis. To be more specific, I should be surprised if purely intellectual inputs could throw much light on that which induced V. G. Belinsky to adopt socialism and materialism instead of German idealism, and to retain those convictions, arguably for the remainder of his life, whereas a succession of idealist skins were sloughed off during the 1830s. It is doubtful, moreover whether a purely 'internalist' explanation could convincingly be given of the period of ideological upheavel in which Belinsky was successively induced by Hegelianism to accept reality, and then induced by reality to reject Hegelianism. It could, however, be argued that the reason why Belinsky was forced to reject Hegel was that he never properly understood his works in the first place (which would not be surprising, since he did not read German, and acquired most of his intellectual stock-in-trade second-hand); had he done so, he might never have undergone the 'reconciliation with reality' which ultimately revolted him, and might like M. A. Bakunin have arrived at radicalism and atheism within a Hegelian framework, by subjecting the master's conclusions to the rigour of his own dialectical logic. Bakunin was such an ardent disciple of Hegel that he departed for Berlin in 1840 to attend lectures by Hegelian professors at the University; but he also met Young Hegelians, such as Arnold Ruge and Herwegh, who undoubtedly opened his eyes to the possible radical implications of Hegelianism, and must have constituted a strong influence in his own turn to radicalism. It is, however, insufficient to attribute the appeal of the negative implications of the Hegelian dialectic to chance acquaintances, or to the internal logic of the Hegelian system as a whole, even though this sought to explain the development of intellectual history, and might even be capable of providing an explanation for its own demise. The fact is that Right-Wing Hegelians existed, both in Germany and in Russia, and Bakunin was at first in agreement with them. Therefore some other factors should be included in any explanation of the remarkable effect of the radical wing of the inheritors of the Hegelian legacy upon this formerly apolitical Russian.

But even if it is accepted that the pairing of materialism and socialism in the 1840s within the Russian radical intelligentsia cannot be accounted for solely in terms of the internal history of Hegelianism, it is difficult to see how the origins of this phenomenon can be described in isolation from the philosophical debates of the Moscow student circles (kruzhki) during the 'remarkable decade', as Annenkov described it. During the 1830s and early 1840s, abstract philosophical discussions occupied the minds of educated young Russians to an extent and with an intensity probably unparalleled at any other time or in any other place in modern European history. There is no simple explanation for this. In general terms, a preoccupation with abstractions was both necessary in view of the attentions of Benckendorff's Third Section, and understandable on the heels of the Decembrist débacle. The German idealist philosophy in vogue contained diverse elements, pointing to a variety of interpretations of its appeal, all of which may be valid. On one level, the metaphysics of Schelling or Hegel were received by many, including Belinsky and Bakunin, as a kind of secular pantheistic religion which provided an intellectually more satisfying alternative to the Christianity of the Russian Orthodox Church. On another level, growing national self-consciousness amongst the Westernised nobility found its expression in an obsession with questions of narodnost' or nationality, and in particular with the existence of an independent Russian literature. This goes some way to accounting for the attraction of Herder's theory of nationality, whereby each nation is regarded as a distinct, organic manifestation of universal humanity, but with its own peculiar characteristics, and also for the Schellingian vogue of the 1820s and early 1830s. Schelling's Naturphilosophie, in particular its concern with the problem of the relation of the individual ego to the world of nature, and its accordance of prime position to the process of artistic creation as the means to reconcile the two, could provide a rationale for the existence of politically neutered intellectuals alienated from Russian reality.

It is tempting to dismiss the mania for German transcendentalism as sheer escapism, reaching its apogee in the infatuation of Bakunin and his then disciple Belinsky for Fichte's subjective idealism in 1836. This rests partly on an unsympathetic interpretation of Fichte as a solipsist, a misapprehension based on a failure to recognise his distinction between the individual ego and the Absolute Ego, or God. For Bakunin and Belinsky, the doctrine that the Ich initially posits, or creates the nicht-Ich or the external world, did not so much deny the reality of an uncongenial world as afford to man a kind of ultimate metaphysical control over it. However, there is undoubtedly in all this a good deal of consolatio philosophiae and a powerful otherwordly impulse, which for Bakunin and Belinsky were equally satisfied in the subsequent craze for Hegelian absolutist metaphysics. But although Fichte, Schelling and Hegel can all be seen as developing the transcendental elements of Kantianism,Hegel's works were remarkable in that they provided from about 1837 onwards in Russia the intellectual framework for successive and antithetical periods of 'reconciliation with reality', and rejection of the existing order. As was mentioned above, for Belinsky, the student critic of serfdom, his own 'reconciliation' took on such a conservative character (to the extent that in 1839 he could see a profound mystical meaning in the very word Tsar, and preached "unconditional submission to Tsarist authority") that in his subsequent cathartic rejection of it, he repudiated Hegel in toto:

"Most humble thanks, Egor Fedorovich (Hegel), I bow before your philosophic nightcap, but... I must respectfully assure you that if I should succeed in climbing to the topmost step of the developmental stairs I would demand, even there, that you account for all the victims of the conditions of life and of history, all the victims of misfortune, of superstition, of the Inquisition of Philip II, and so on - and in default, would hurl myself headlong from the topmost step."[1]

As was also mentioned above, Bakunin too experienced a 'reconciliation', but with a more consistently Hegelian reality, that is a reality other than the world of sense-experience, an absolute Mind or Being towards which all individual minds are developing in the course of history. The reconciliation, then was between the subjective ego and objective reality, which at that time Bakunin equated with God. It was the first leader of the student kruzhok which Bakunin eventually dominated, N. V. Stankevich, who pointed out that Belinsky's error was to confuse actuality, or the reality of immediacy and accident, with the reality which is the essence of the Absolute.[2]

We have seen that by his emigration, Bakunin became a part of the process whereby Hegelian philosophy took on radical form after the death of its perpetrator in 1831, a process which viewed in isolation could be seen as an extension of the dialectical dynamics of the system itself. The postulate that each concept contains its own contradiction which is reconciled in a higher synthetic concept, itself involving a contradiction until the Absolute (i.e. 'real' or non-contradictory) Idea is reached, was applied by Hegel in the spheres of morality, religion, history, politics and art. Hegel, however, believed, at any rate in his later years, that the Absolute Spirit had attained its ultimate concrete manifestation in philosophical idealism, Christianity, monarchy and bourgeois culture. To put it simply, the left-wing Hegelians saw no reason to halt the process at this stage in the development of European civilisation, and much of the justification of their standpoint found its expression in Germany in Arnold Ruge's series of philosophical journals in the late 1830s and the 1840s. It was in Ruge's Saxon journal Deutsche Jahrbücher that Bakunin's article "Reaction in Germany" appeared under the pseudonym Jules Elysard. Bakunin's closing dictum, "The passion for destruction is also a creative passion",[3] which would be the motto of Prince Kropotkin's anarchist circle at the end of the century, was an exaltation of Hegelian negation, i.e. of the critical moment in the dialectic. There is, however, none of the Hegelian reconciliation of opposites: the negative is supreme, and must completely obliterate the positive. In its socio-political application, this principle manifests itself in the anticipation of a revolution which will sweep away all vestiges of the old order. Thus we have a second 'reconciliation with reality' in the sense that Bakunin now understood better what 'reality' meant in Hegelian terms: the present, and the existing order, is real to the extent that it represents a stage towards the self-realization of the Absolute, but the same can be said of its negation, or its destruction. Belinsky recognised that the existence of the executioner was real, but none the less repulsive, Bakunin substituted for Belinsky's moral rejection a philosophical inversion of Hegel. The Absolute Idea was replaced by 'absolute negation'. Contradiction "survives to the end, and the energy of its all-pervading vitality consists in the ceaseless self-incineration of the positive in the pure flame of the negative".[4]

The fact that the materialism of the 1840s was an inversion of idealism rather than a stark repudiation of it is, I believe, instructive not only for that period, but also for the remainder of the pre-revolutionary era, since the materialism of Chernyshevsky, Plekhanov and Lenin owes much to Hegelianism, albeit mediately by way of Feuerbach and Marx. Even A. I. Herzen, to whom Belinsky and Bakunin gravitated after their transition to a philosophy of action, and whose radical sympathies, by his own account, went back at last as far as an adolescent oath, taken with N. P. Ogarev on the Sparrow Hills outside Moscow, to continue the Decembrists' struggle,[5] felt duty bound to pick his way through the Hegelian labyrinth. Herzen as a student at Moscow University had distanced himself from N. V. Stankevich's idealist philosophical circle, in which Belinsky and Bakunin acquired their taste for Teutonic transcendentalism, and his early affinity for the precursors of French socialism, particularly Saint-Simon, had run foul of Count Benckendorff's Third Section in 1834, when on the slightest of evidence,[6] he and five fellow students were exiled. On his return to Moscow in 1839, he was accused of being behind the times, and although in his memoirs he painted a well-known ironical picture of the young Muscovite Hegelian going for a walk in the Sokolniky park in order to give himself up to a pantheistic feeling of his unity with the cosmos,[7] he nevertheless dutifully ploughed through the Berlin professor's works.[8] Indeed, elsewhere in his memoirs he wrote that no-one who had not vitally experienced Hegel's Phenomenology or Proudhon's Contradictions of Political Economy could be regarded as a complete, or contemporary, human being.[9] This is in no way incompatible with his radical political attitudes, because he perceived in the Hegelian dialectic the "algebra of revolution", in the same way as Bakunin, whose article 'Reaction in Germany' he read and described in his diary as "perfect from beginning to end".[10] Herzen presented his conclusions from his study of Hegel, and then of Feuerbach, in two philosophical articles, 'Dilettantism in Science' (1843) and 'Letters on the Study of Nature' (1845-6), both published in the journal Notes of the Fatherland. In the first article, Hegel's influence is clear:

"[Science] itself is a process of nature's self-concentration and the development of the full self-cognition of the cosmos; by this means the Universe comes to consciousness after the struggles of material being, life, steeped in the immediate".[11]

But Herzen criticised Hegel, who, unlike Hume, lacked "the heroism of consistency", the courage to accept the full logical implications of his own ideas. He achieved the reconciliation of thought and being in philosophy, but what was now needed was the reconciliation of philosophy and action:

"It is only in the rational, morally free and passionately energetic action that man arrives at the actuality of his personality and immortalises himself in the phenomenal world. In such action, man is eternal in the transient, infinite in the finite, a representative of both his genus and himself, a living and conscious organ of his epoch".[12]

This 'philosophy of action' owes much to Ruge, and also the Polish thinker Count Cieszkowski, and Herzen became acquainted with it through correspondence with Ogarev, who studied in Germany from 1841 to 1846. The 'action', for most, consisted in political theory, notably of French origins (Saint-Simon, Fourier and his disciple Victor Considérant, Louis Blanc, P. J. Proudhon and Etienne Cabet); the transition to socialism was accompanied by materialism and atheism, though the coincidence of these views was not, I believe, axiomatic. The historical foundation of this phenomenon would need thorough and separate consideration, though in my opinion much can be learnt from the policies which began to mature at the very end of Alexander I's reign (to be discussed in Part Three), and which were consolidated, not to say ossified, in the thirty-year reign of his younger brother. As for the intellectual peculiarities of these metaphysical bedfellows of radicalism, peculiarities with which any historical analysis would have to come to grips, some light can be thrown upon them by a consideration of the pervasive, though by no means exclusive, influence of the 'anthropological materialism' of Ludwig Feuerbach. The indirect influence of Feuerbach on the Russian Marxist circles of the 1880s onwards would scarcely need to be pressed upon cognoscenti of the development of Marx's thought, but there is in addition hardly any broad category of oppositional political thought from the 1840s until the appearance of the first Marxist groups which does not owe a debt of some kind to Feuerbach. It is not so much the fact itself, but what it signifies, which might prove instructive across the sweep of Russian materialist and atheist thought; suffice it to say at this juncture that the works of Feuerbach, notably The Essence of Christianity, appealed to differing extents to a variety of Russian radical theorists; Belinsky, Herzen and Bakunin; M. V. Butasevich-Petrashevsky, N. A. Speshnev and F. G. Tol' of the petrashevtsy, the Fourierist group numbering the youthful Dostoevsky amongst its members, and which was exiled in the wake of 1848 revolutions elsewhere in Europe; N. G. Chernyshevsky, N. A. Dobrolyubov and M. A. Antonovich, the radical journalists of the 1860s; and even if the mention of Herzen, Bakunin and Chernyshevsky were not in itself enough to connect Feuerbach's name with the narodniki of the 1870s and 80s, one of the foremost spokesmen of narodnichestvo, P. L. Lavrov, was at least sympathetically disposed towards Feuerbach. But not only can the

Young Hegelian's philosophical participation in the history of the Russian intelligentsia be extended, at a pinch, beyond his death in 1872, but it can also be traced back beyond the three men of the 1840s so far discussed to N. V. Stankevich, the transcendentalist mentor of Bakunin and Belinsky, and the most immaterial of men, if we accept the admittedly questionable hagiography of later intelligenty.[13] I am referring here to some brief references to Feuerbach in Stankevich's correspondence to Bakunin after his departure for Germany three years before his premature death in 1840. He likened Feuerbach to the old Schelling without Fantasterei, and alluded to his deep respect for Hegel, but the Russian was unconvinced:

"He has a mighty nature, there is something full and whole in his essence, but this fire, this force has sometimes led him too far, so that he is inconsistent".[14]

Despite some of the more extreme Soviet interpretations,[15] this is hardly grounds to see Stankevich as an imminent materialist. From the fact, however, that Feuerbach's thought held some kind of appeal for men as remote both from each other and from materialism and atheism as the idealist Stankevich, and the Neokantian critic of materialist and other metaphysical systems, Lavrov, at least two inferences may be drawn. The first is that this phenomenon suggests the inadequacy, though it does not provide in itself a refutation, of the notion that Russian thought can be analysed in terms of intellectual influences from abroad. The second, and this is apparent from the extract from Stankevich's correspondence, is that Feuerbach's own standing as a materialist and atheist is not at all clear, atleast so far as his position at the time of the writing of The Essence of Christianity, his most famous and influential work in Russia, is concerned. The fact that Feuerbach were not a materialist at that stage would not necessarily diminish his importance in the history of materialism; Feuerbach started as a Hegelian, and his inversion of Hegel may be seen as an important determinant in the eventual acceptance of materialism and atheism by the erstwhile Russian Hegelians already mentioned. He could, in other words, be seen as the midwife of both Russian idealist-parented materialism, and, to stretch the metaphor even further, of his own later 'medical' materialism. If, however, as I wish to argue, the 'materialism', such as it was, inherent in his earlier position, held more appeal for the radical intelligentsia, than the also fashionable 'scientific materialism' of Büchner, Vogt and Moleschott from the 1850s onwards, then some of the problems of definition referred to in the Introduction might raise their heads, and the way be opened for a swashbuckling polemicist armed with a stringent definition of materialism[16] to explode the entire Russian materialist tradition, rather than abbreviate it, as I shall seek to do. These questions can hardly be clarified without a closer look at Feuerbach's thought.

It would be impossible within the limitations imposed upon this Part to convey the complexity of the cycle of intellectual history represented by Kant's reaction to Hume's empiricism, the elaboration of the noumenal world of Kantian criticism by Fichte, Schelling and Hegel, and the return to empiricism by the Young Hegelian Feuerbach; this is a loss, since without this context, the reason why the German philosophers set themselves the questions that they did is likely to be as mystifying as the answers which they provided. It will nevertheless have to suffice to say that Feuerbach first came to prominence in that turn of the wheel which saw some of the Hegelians exchange their idealist interpretation of the metaphysical implications of Hegel's dialectic for materialism or atheism. He made one of the earliest contributions to the debate over the compatibility of Hegel's works with Christianity, and in particular, beliefs in a personal God and personal immortality: in 1830 his anonymous Thoughts on Death and Immortality rejected these Christian beliefs as egoistic and individualistic, and therefore incompatible with the universality of the Absolute Spirit. The fact that the explanation of religion remained the central aim and core of his philosophy, at the expense, despite his liberal leanings, of any contribution to political thought, may constitute an important factor in the rapid waning of his star in Germany after the failure of the 1848 revolutions, though it is worth keeping in mind that it may also have contributed to his relatively more prolonged appeal to the Russian radicals, for whom the rejection of absolutism almost inevitably involved a critique of the Orthodox Church. That appeal resided in more than the presentation of Hegel's philosophy of religion in a pantheistic or atheistic light, in which Feuerbach's Essence of Christianity was preceded by the work of his contemporaries D. F. Strauss and Bruno Bauer. Feuerbach, for what it is worth, liked to deflect charges of atheism by saying that the question of the existence or non-existence of God is nothing but the question of the existence or non-existence of man, once the language of religion has been translated out of "the Oriental language of imagery into plain speech".[17] There is no doubt, though, that the consistent Russian disciple of Feuerbach must be accredited an atheist in the senses in which that term is normally used; the question remains as to whether an adherent of this 'religion of man' is as such a materialist. It should be remembered that a distinction has already been made between this kind of world-view, and the scientific materialism of Büchner, Vogt and Jakob Moleschott. There is no doubting Feuerbach's materialism at one stage of his intellectual career in the second sense, for, as is well known, Moleschott attended Feuerbach's series of public lectures on the essence of religion given at Heidelburg from December 1848 to March 1849, and the latter, having befriended the physiologist, was won over to his views. In a review of Moleschott's The Science of Foodstuffs published in 1850 (a review, incidentally, whose notoriety and vulgarity have incensed many a historian), Feuerbach's aphoristic flair finally secured him that kind of immortality, however dubious, which he was prepared to admit:

"From this we can see immediately how much ethical and political significance the science of foodstuffs has for the nation. Food becomes blood, blood becomes heart and brain, the stuff of thoughts and attitudes. Human sustenance is the basis of human education and attitudes. If you want to improve the people then give it, in place of exhortation against sin, better food. Man is what he eats".[18]

In case the distinction between Feuerbach's metaphysics and German scientific materialism seems unreal thus far, it should be stressed that the Russian reader of The Essence of Christianity could hardly have inferred from the magnum opus this later gastronomical philosophy. Indeed, although Feuerbach had already elaborated a critique of the presuppositions and method of Hegelian, and all speculative idealist philosophy in a number of writings predating The Essence of Christianity, the reader might have gained the opposite impression from his opening remarks on the essential nature of man, in which he distinguished his position from that of the "obtuse materialist" who saw man as an animal with consciousness superadded:

"Reason, Will, Love are not powers which man possesses, for he is nothing without them, he is only what he is by them; they are the constituent elements of his nature, which he neither has nor makes, the animating, determining, governing powers - divine, absolute powers - to which he can oppose no resistance".[19]

The reader would not have been misled by Feuerbach's emphasis, if he had had the advantage of the author's statement of his opposition to idealism in the preface to the second edition of 1843:

"I unconditionally repudiate absolute, immaterial, self-sufficing speculation, - that speculation which draws its material from within. I differ toto coelo from those philosophers who pluck out their eyes that they may see better; for my thought I require the senses, especially sight, I found my ideas on materials which can be appropriated only through the activity of the senses. I do not generate the object from the thought, but the thought from the object; and I hold *that* alone to be an object which has an existence beyond one's own brain".[20] Although this passage makes clear one of Feuerbach's eventual objections to idealism, that it starts by asking how matter can arise out of mind or spirit (whereas the converse should be the first question), it offers no entailment in terms of a materialist monism, but rather opposes empiricism to rationalism as a means to knowledge. Nevertheless, he soon went on to explain that in rejecting the *omnia mea mecum porto* of speculative philosophy, he was attaching himself to the direct opposite of the Hegelian philosophy, "to *realism*, to materialism in the sense above indicated". This sense can be none other than that contained in the quoted passage, and yet it is clear that Feuerbach's opposition to Hegel was just as much ontological as epistemological, and that the unique claim which he made for his 'philosophy of the future' lay in its choice of ultimate metaphysical principle:

"This philosophy has for its principle, not the substance of Spinoza, not the *ego* of Kant and Fichte, not the Absolute Identity of Schelling, not the Absolute Mind of Hegel, in short, no abstract, merely conceptional being, but a *real* being, the true *Ens realissimum* - man; its principle, therefore, is in the highest degree positive and real. It generates thought from the *opposite* of thought, from Matter, from existence, from the senses, it has relation to its object first through the senses, i.e. passively, before defining it in thought".[21]

But even though in his critiques of speculative philosophy and religion, Feuerbach demolished all Mankind's metaphysical usurpers and dismissed them as projections, objectifications or hypostatisations of human attributes, the nature of the anthropological Absolute thus far remains unclear, and the nature of its metaphysical realm could logically be dualist, as well as materialist. It shortly becomes evident that man is not totally subject to the laws of matter, in Feuerbach's discussion of the human understanding, which, he explained, was the *ens realissimum* of the old 'onto-theology', and by which alone, man is free and independent:

" To be without understanding is, in one word, to exist for another, - to be an object: to have understanding is to exist for oneself, - to be a subject. But that which no longer exists for another, but for itself, rejects all dependence on another being. It is true we, as physical beings, depend on the beings external to us, even as to the modifications of thought; but in so far as we think, in the activity of the understanding as such, we are dependent on no other being. Activity of thought is spontaneous activity... The understanding alone enjoys things without itself being enjoyed; it is the self-enjoying, self-sufficing existence - the absolute subject - the subject which cannot be reduced to the object of another being, because it makes all things objects, predicates of itself, - which comprehends all things in itself, because it itself is not a thing, because it is free from all things".[22]

Although Feuerbach contrasts the independence of the understanding with the interdependence of physical life, it seems from the context that he is at least as anxious to stress the exclusivity of thought as a predicate of an individual subject, and consequently not of a superhuman entity. It should also be noted that in a footnote,[23] Feuerbach explained that in applying such expressions as "self-subsistent essence" to the understanding, he was not using them in his own sense, but showing from the standpoint of onto-theology how metaphysics was resolvable into psychology. It would be very odd, though, if in the light of this small note, we should discount all of what Feuerbach expounded at some length on the nature of the human understanding.

The implication in Feuerbach's interpretation of the God of metaphysical theology that there are elements in man distinct from the material or physical was reinforced when he explicated the anthropological essence of the Christian God:

"Love is God himself, and apart from it there is no God. Love makes man God and God man. Love strengthens the weak and weakens the strong, idealises matter and materialises spirit. Love is the true unity of God and man, of spirit and nature. In love common nature is spirit, and the pre-eminent spirit is nature. Love is to deny spirit from the point of view of spirit, to deny matter from the point of view of matter. Love is materialism; immaterial love is a chimaera".[24]

Love must have "flesh and blood" for Feuerbach, but that is not to say that man is flesh and blood alone; evidently, by 'materialism' something more is meant. The difficulty of reading Feuerbach literally can readily be appreciated when in his explication of the human significance of the mystery of the Trinity, he appeared to re-state his initial definition of the spiritual essence of man:

"God the Father is I, God the Son Thou. The I is understanding, the Thou love. But love with understanding, and understanding with love is mind, and mind is the totality of man as such - the total man".[25]

One could still be persuaded on this evidence that Feuerbach regarded the spirit of man as his essence, and that it operated independently of material or natural causation. Even if this inference were justified, it would plainly be inconsistent with many of the work's later judgments. For example, in rejecting what he took to be an implication of personal immortality in the Christian sense, that heavenly existence was entirely supernatural and sexless, he opposed the abstraction of mind from body:

"But just as little as the real man can abstract himself from the distinction of sex, so little can he abstract himself from his moral or spiritual constitution, which indeed is profoundly connected with his natural constitution. Precisely because he lives in the contemplation of the whole, he also lives in the consciousness that he is himself no more than a part, and that he is what he is only by virtue of the conditions which constitute him a member of the whole, or relative whole. Everyone, therefore, justifiably regards his occupation, his profession, his art or science, as the highest, for the mind of man is nothing but the essential mode of his activity... In brief, the occupations of men determine their judgment, their mode of thought, their sentiments... In general, whatever a man makes the essential aim of his life, he proclaims to be his soul; for it is the principle of motion in him".[26] The reader should, on the basis of these words, discard the immaterialist interpretation just suggested, though it is not clear that the view now accepted of man's spirituality as a function of the whole man's activity can be squared with Feuerbach's earlier assertion of the spontaneity of the human understanding. We were presented with what seemed the logical impossibility of the understanding's being a predicate, and therefore of its operations being determined by anything external to it; the author, it must be said, at least confronted this paradox, even though he did not explicate it:

"Man is what he is through Nature, however much may belong to his spontaneity; for even his spontaneity has its foundation in Nature, of which his particular character is only an expression. Be thankful to Nature! Man cannot be separated from it".[27]

On the same page, Feuerbach alludes to the reviewer who tears a passage from its context that he may hand it over to ridicule, and I may have been guilty of the first, without wishing the second, though to talk of spontaneity having a natural foundation seems logically akin to attributing a cause to the uncaused. The source of Feuerbach's difficulty was that to substantiate his idée maîtresse that the God of religion and theology was the alienation of mankind from its own essence, he needed to tie man to nature to an extent necessary to render impossible the independent existence of the hypostatised essence, but also in such a way as to chart a course between the Scylla of gross matter and the Charybdis of pure spirituality:

"In the first instance, the mind is occupied with the separation of the soul from the body, as in the conception of God, the mind is first occupied with the separation of the essence from the individual; the individual dies a spiritual death, the dead body which remains behind is the human individual, the soul which has departed from it is God. But the separation of the soul from the body, of the essence from the individual, of God from man, must be abolished again. Every separation of beings essentially allied is painful. The soul yearns after its lost half, after its body; as God, the departed soul yearns after the real man. As, therefore, God becomes man again, so the soul returns to its body, and the perfect identity of this world and the other is now restored".[28]

The central idea of Feuerbach's 'materialism' is, then, the unity of body and soul, but not the materiality of soul, "for as man belongs to the essence of Nature, - in opposition to common materialism; so Nature belongs to the essence of man, - in opposition to subjective idealism; which is also the secret of our 'absolute' philosophy, at least in relation to Nature. Only by uniting man with Nature can we conquer the supernaturalistic egoism of Christianity".[29]

I have preferred to devote some pages to an attempt to understand the function of Feuerbach's earlier 'materialism', and to the problems implicit in it, rather than devote the space to sifting the works of each Russian thinker claimed to have been influenced by him for signs of that influence. The latter is easily enough done in a superficial way, by establishing a favourable attitude to Feuerbach at some stage of the thinker's development, and citing quotations, indicative of materialism and atheism, at random from their writings. For example, there can be no doubt that the appearance of _The Essence of Christianity_ in 1841 takes its place alongside Bakunin's acquaintance with Arnold Ruge in opening the eyes of the dutiful Russian student of the orthodox Hegelian Werder to the existence of the small circle of heterodox Left Hegelians. But although Bakunin could at one stage regard Feuerbach as one of the greatest thinkers of his time, he soon left him behind as his destructive urge fed upon the new philosophy. Of all the Russian _intelligenty_, Bakunin was _sui generis_, and for all his voracious appetite for ideas, can least of all be quantified in terms of his intellectual debts to those with whom he came into contact (though the same cannot be said of his financial debts). And yet because in many ways he was the most unlikely of materialists, in that he had been the most enthusiastic inhabitant of Hegelian spiritual levels and the least avid consumer of the world of flesh, his own espousal of materialism is the most exaggerated manifestation of its utility for Feuerbach and his Russian followers, and of the dualism which lies concealed beneath its monist exterior. Feuerbach's avowal of the unity of man's moral and physical constitution was necessary to buttress his anthropological version of religion, but he did not, in liberating man from theological illusion, wish thereby to enmesh him in physical necessity. By emphasising spiritual qualities (love, reason, will), and man's essentially social behaviour in contradistinction to animal behaviour, in his attempt to elevate man from what he took to be his abasement in religion, Feuerbach threatened the monism which was the foundation of his anthropological edifice, and raised all the difficulties about the interaction of logically distinct substances which so exercised

Malebranche and Leibniz in their endeavours to salvage Cartesian dualism. Not that such niceties troubled Bakunin; in retrospect, an inexorable continuity can be discerned in his successive philosophical and political standpoints: starting with a desire to liberate the self from the constraints of the material world, he moved on to conspire towards the liberation of the Slavs from the Habsburg yoke, until finally all mankind was to be delivered from enslavement by divine and temporal authority in an orgy of destruction. Matter was Bakunin's final metaphysical absolute, and he took full advantage of materialism's atheistic implications, while at the same time investing the fundamental substance with all the spontaneity, energy and creativity which he required for his own creed of revolution and individualism. He no more wished himself, and by extension the rest of mankind, to be forced to submit to scientific law than to dogma or decree. This is, though, to present him as more of a systematist than his writings permit; although he was given to outbursts of the most abstract theorising, these were generally the evolutions of a volatile substance reacting with historical events. It would be possible by the selection of quotations to present him either as the most hard-nosed of reductionist materialists or the most transported of mystics; this, I believe, is partly the erratic manifestation of the inherent dualism to which I have referred, though it attests also to the related survival of his formative Fichtean and Hegelian romances, and to the devotional character of his own atheism. Thus while it would be vain to seek to summate Bakunin's philosophical stance in a few apt phrases from his own pen, one can scarcely forebear from mentioning his refutation of God's existence, which is nothing if not characteristic. Oddly enough, he unwittingly echoed the conclusion of the Decembrist Baryatinsky's poem about God (to be discussed in Part Three).

"For if God is, he is necessarily the eternal, supreme, absolute Master, and if such a Master exists, man is a slave. Now if he is a slave, neither justice nor equality nor fraternity nor prosperity is possible for him. Therefore if God existed, he could be of service to human liberty in one way only - by ceasing to exist... I reverse Voltaire's aphorism and say: If God really existed it would be necessary to abolish him".[30]

Bakunin's militant atheism did not assert itself until after his decade of imprisonment and exile (1851 - 1861), and it became most prominent in his views towards the end of his life, for example, in his activities on behalf of "federalism, socialism, and anti-theologism" in the League of Peace and Freedom (1867-69), and in his work God and the State, composed after his participation in the Lyons disturbances of 1871, by which time Feuerbach's ideas had long ceased to be of relevance to him. There is a closer affinity between the materialism of The Essence of Christianity and the various pronouncements on the relationship between mind and matter, and between man and history, made by Herzen, an affinity which survives the Russian's evident indebtedness to Feuerbach in his afore-mentioned philosophical articles, notably his Letters on the Study of Nature. Perhaps more consistently than in Bakunin's case, Feuerbach's religion of man served to assert for Herzen man's freedom from objective standards, physical laws, universal logic or historical necessity. Initially, this was expressed as a rejection of one-sidedness, even where in his most Hegelian work, Dilettantism in Science, he had yet to resolve the co-existence of his affirmation of the value of morally free action with the logical determinism of the Absolute Spirit, and could argue that "we may predict the future, because we are the premisses on which its syllogism is based, - but only in a general abstract way".[31] Nevertheless, though he praised Hegel for his achievement in reconciling thought and being in science (i.e. philosophy), what was now needed was the reconciliation of science and action:

"... thought must be clothed with flesh in order to descend into the bustle of life, to reveal itself in all the splendour and beauty of transient being without which there can be no exciting, passionate and fascinating action".[32]

For the time being, Herzen was prepared to accept that moral freedom lay in the recognition of necessity, and in the Letters on the Study of Nature was primarily concerned to argue for the unity of thought and being, mind and nature, and to reject as equally one-sided idealism on the one hand, and on the other empiricism and materialism, which in many cases he hardly differentiated, or at any rate saw as extensions of each other. He rejected Hobbes, Locke (whose epistemology Herzen characterised by the sensationalist tag nihil est in intellectu quod non fuerit in sensu, overlooking the fact that ideas of reflection, as well as sensation, were sources of knowledge for the English empiricist) and Hume, who according to Herzen had taken materialism to its logical extreme, and had "compelled materialism to confess the impossibility of actual thought from its one-sided point of view". At this point in his development, Herzen rejected "materialism, which understands nothing but substances and bodies, and, for that very reason, understands neither substances nor bodies in their real meaning." As for empiricism, he accepted that experience stimulates consciousness, but not that it produces it, "because consciousness is not a tabula rasa but an actus purus, the activity not external to the object, but on the contrary, its innermost interior (vnutrenneishaya vnutrennost'), for in general thought and object constitute not two different objects, but two moments of something whole".[33]

Herzen's attitude towards materialism at this juncture maybe likened to Feuerbach's middle course between "common" or "obtuse materialism" and subjective idealism. The appeal of Feuerbach for Herzen was, I believe, that the former's philosophy of man both satisfied Herzen's rejection of one-sidedness, and provided a rationale for his belief in man's absolute freedom, and his lack of religious faith, which are almost the only remnants of his former beliefs to survive the disillusionment he underwent during his first-hand experience of the 1848 revolutions. Herzen drew away from religion during the 1840s, despite a flirtation with the mystical ideas of Boehme, Swedenborg and Eckartshausen, introduced to him during his exile at Vyatka in the 1830s by the artist and architect A. L. Vitberg. Herzen played this episode down in his memoirs: "I was not destined to rise into the third heaven, I was born a completely earthly creature".[34] He traced his rejection of Christianity to the kruzhok of his days at Moscow University, when "the religion of death" and of "flagellation and mortification from fasting and prayer" gave way to Saint-Simon's religion of life and beauty, and "réhabilitation de la chair". Elsewhere in his memoirs, he described Christianity as that "complete apotheosis of death; contempt for earth, contempt for the body, has no other meaning"; he also recounted how in 1846 it was over religious convictions that a split occurred between himself and the liberals, notably T. N.Granovsky, amongst the 'Westerners', evidence, it may be noted, for a correlation between degrees of political and religious heterodoxy which will be put more fully to the test in Parts Two and Three.[35] The most vivid statements of Herzen's Feuerbachian materialism, beliefs in moral autonomy and historical indeterminacy, and rejection of religion and the Church can be found in the collection of essays entitled

From the Other Shore, written largely during and after the 1848 revolutions:

"There is no future, it is made up of the totality of a thousand conditions, necessary and contingent, and the human will, which provide unexpected dramatic dénouements and coups de théâtre... In history everything is improvisation, everything is will, everything is ex tempore... There will be no liberty in the world until everything religious and political is transformed into something human and simple, subject to criticism and negation. Mature logic hates canonised truths, it demotes them from the ranks of the angels down to the people's level, it makes plain truths out of sacred secrets... In history it seems to man that the will is free to do what it wishes. All this is the bitter trace of dualism, from which we have long seen double and wavered between two optical illusions... Had we not known, from the age of five, that history and nature are completely separate, we would have no difficulty in understanding that the development of nature passes imperceptibly into the development of man; that these are two chapters of a single novel, two phases of a single process, very far from one another at their perimeters, but extremely close at the centre. We would in that case not be surprised to find that a share of all that happens is subject to physiology and obscure urges... Could you, for example, convince me that the spirit of man is alive after death, when it is so easy to realise the absurdity of this division of body and spirit?... Everything about us is in flux, everything is unsteady... we shall find no haven but within ourselves, in the consciousness of our unlimited freedom, of our autocratic independence... Of man's dependence on his environment and epoch there is no doubt. It is all the stronger since half the ties have been fastened behind the back of the consciousness, here can be found the physiological link against which the mind and the will can rarely fight, here is the hereditary element, the thing we have carried with us from birth, like the facial features, and which links the last generation with the line of its predecessors, here is the morally physiological element, upbringing, which instils into man a sense of history and his own times, and finally, there is the conscious element... Man's moral independence is as irrefutable a fact and reality as his dependence on environment, with the only difference that they stand in inverse relationship: the greater the consciousness, the greater his independence; the lower the consciousness, the closer his link with the environment and the more his personality is absorbed by it... The morality of all religions is based on obedience, i.e. on voluntary slavery, and that is why they have always been more harmful than any political system. The latter is marked by violence, the former by the corruption of the will... Dualism is Christianity elevated to logic, Christianity freed of tradition and mysticism. Its chief method consists of dividing into fictitious opposites that which is in reality indivisible, for example, the body and the spirit, in antagonising these abstractions and artificially reconciling that which is joined in an inseparable whole. Such is the Evangelic myth of God and man reconciled by Christ translated into philosophical language... The church made its peace with the soldiery as soon as it became the church of state; but it has never dared to admit such treachery, it has always realised how much falsity there is in this union, how much hypocrisy".[36]

Herzen, like Feuerbach, was not immune from the scientific materialism of the 1850s, as can be seen from his Essay of Conversations with Young People, but although he was on friendly terms with Karl Vogt, he argued against his kind of reductionist materialism in his correspondence with his son Sasha.[37] Once Belinsky had passed the apogee of his absorption in German idealism, he was reconciled with Herzen, and paralleled his intellectual development during the 1840s until his untimely death in 1848. As Herzen recorded, "the news of the revolution of February found Belinsky still alive, he died taking its glow for the flush of rising dawn".[38] The young literary critic's repudiation of Hegel, however emphatic it may have been, was not initially as decisive as his letter to Botkin suggested, and although, as Annenkov remembered,[39] he was soon introduced to The Essence of Christianity by Herzen and Ogarev, his idealism continued to emerge in his published articles; it seems that he became a decided materialist and atheist only during the last two or three years of his life. This materialism can be inferred from his 'Review of Russian Literature of 1846', where he equated the human mind with the "brain's mass, where all mental functions originate," and attributed to modern chemistry the capacity to trace the physical process of moral development in the embryo; "a psychology which is not based on physiology is as inconsistent as a physiology which ignores the existence of anatomy".[40] These sentiments smack more of Vogt than of Feuerbach in his prime, and there can be no denying the increasing receptivity of the intelligentsia to scientific materialism, particularly in the later 1860s. Nevertheless, in Belinsky's case, these phrases sit rather awkwardly in the very article in which they appear, let alone against the background of his intellectual development, and in conjunction with his affirmation of the uniqueness and independence of man's personality. It should be remembered though that like Herzen and Bakunin, Belinsky developed an increasingly fervent and moral attachment to atheism, and could write to Herzen that he saw in the words "God" and "religion" - darkness, gloom, chains and the knout.[41] This negative passion sometimes impelled, albeit often briefly, the Russian radicals to a fashionable reductionist materialism which appeared incompatible with their positive passion for man's free will and revolutionary activity. To satisfy both passions, Feuerbach's materialism was more appropriate in that, as Walicki has already pointed out, it performed an "ethical function":

"The most essential similarity between the author of The Essence of Christianity and Herzen and Belinsky lies precisely in the fact that the materialistic solution of 'the basic problem of philosophy' was for all three of them the ultimate result and not the starting point. The starting points were: Man, his personality and his moral autonomy in relation to all alienated deities: the patriarchal personified God as well as the Hegelian impersonal Spirit... Belinsky and Herzen, while opposing idealism, tried not to break away from dialectical historicism. However, they did not reach the point of making materialism 'historical' nor the dialectics - 'materialistic': they fell back on materialism (identified with naturalistic materialism) as a storehouse well supplied with arguments against the hypostatisation of universals, but turned their back on it when contemplating sociological and historical matters".[42]
This is a way of saying that neither Herzen nor Belinsky were historical materialists, but it does not follow from that that their materialism was of no consequence in their attitudes to society and history, for although they were not persuaded that social and historical development was governed by scientific laws, their materialism nevertheless enjoined their own moral protest against their social and political environment.

It seems to me that Walicki did not recognise the idealist element in Feuerbach's materialism, and only made the point I am applying to the Russian adherents of Feuerbach in the case of Herzen, whose standpoint he characterises, quite rightly, I believe, with reference to his philosophical articles of the 1840s, as a synthesis of Hegel and Feuerbach:

"The fusion of materialism with dialectics was to produce a philosophical formula for an autonomous rational personality realising itself through free and creative action".

Walicki later referred to "a specific distribution of functions" between idealism and materialism in Herzen's philosophy: "idealism called for a rationalisation of acts, materialism, on the other hand, stressed that personality cannot be reduced to the universality of reason, rationalism (idealism) within the framework of the 'philosophy of action', represented the general; materialism fought for the rights of the individual being; idealism was to place the individual in society and history, materialism was to bring him back into the world of nature and vindicate 'the natural immediacy' of human being".[43]

Although Walicki's article contains many valuable insights, I cannot make use of these conclusions without altering some the terminology. In the first quotation, I should change "dialectics" to "idealism", and apply the proposition to the metaphysical viewpoint of The Essence of Christianity. Otherwise the fusion of materialism with dialectics would, as, I think, the quotations from Herzen demonstrate, ultimately squeeze the autonomous personality in a vice composed of physical necessity and universal logic. This vice, I would also argue, exists potentially in Marxism, and it was partially in the same opposition to vulgar materialism by means of which Feuerbachian man was exempted from causal strangulation, that that philosophy outstripped even Hegel and Feuerbach is satisfying the intellectual needs of the Russian radical intelligentsia, which found in dialectical and historical materialism not only a vindication of their political opposition, but a theory of religious and ecclesiastical bankruptcy, and a justification of revolutionary activity. I shall touch on this again when we come to consider Lenin's Materialism and Empiriocriticism, but to return to the second quotation from Walicki, I should change "idealism" for "objective idealism", and instead of "materialism", speak of "the idealist element in Feuerbach's materialism, or belief in the unity of man", except perhaps in the last juxtaposition of materialism and idealism.

The prolonged appeal of Feuerbach in Russia,[44] and to some extent the notable success of Marxism, can, I believe be put down to the peculiar nature of the intelligentsia itself, a peculiarity which stems from the historical development of the interrelationships of the different social estates in pre-revolutionary Russia. More detailed discussion of these interrelationships will be deferred until Parts Two and Three, and I shall only say here that the peculiarity resides in the development of the dvoryanstvo as a service class, with an ethics of service, rather than as a landowning class, with a basis of local political power; the nature of Russian agriculture and of the Russian economy as a whole, together with the autocracy's role in it, conditions which not only defined the special role of the nobility, but also the chronic weakness of the Russian middle classes; the tension between the increasing inefficiency and obsolescence of servile agriculture and industry (the foundations of autocracy) and the difficulties of changing those institutions because of the autocracy's suppression of political debate; as a consequence of the previous condition, the almost unrelieved defensive stance of the autocracy from about the middle of the reign of Catherine the Great, which ultimately, towards the end of the reign of Alexander I, after a century of secularism, saw the ideological reunion of monarchy and church, the Orthodox Church, it must be added, being for historical reasons particularly suited to the justification of state control. The absence in Imperial Russia of economic interest groups opposed to the autocracy, the service ethics of the dvoryanstvo, and the censorship of political debate, all contributed to a political opposition reared upon philosophy, with a distinctively moral, rather than economic, critique of the status quo, and with a distinctively economically disinterested class composition. Given therefore, that this alienated group of dvoryane and raznochintsy looked to philosophy for a justification of moral protest and a weapon against the alliance of throne and altar, it becomes easier to see the particular appeal of the 'materialism' of The Essence of Christianity. The conclusion is at best a surmise, even for the period in which I have attempted to describe, on the intellectual level, how the idealists of the 1830s came to adopt Feuerbachian materialism, since no historical analysis of the kind to be offered in Part Three has been attempted here. As for its extension across the entire span of what I have termed "classical Russian materialism", including pre-revolutionary Marxism, this is not so much a conjecture, as a proposition to be tested against further research. In the first place, the premise that Feuerbach's appeal was prolonged has not been fully substantiated, and more work would be required on the purely ideological plane in connection with the Petrashevsky circle, Chernyshevsky, Dobrolyubov and Lavrov. In Chernyshevsky's case, his partial debt to Feuerbach is not in doubt, and can easily be seen in his most significant philosophical work The Anthropological Principle in Philosophy (1860); but for all his adherence to the characteristic Feuerbachian belief in the basic unity of the heterogeneous moral and material phenomena of man's nature, he came consistently closer to a reductionist materialism than Bakunin, Belinsky or Herzen:

"The principle underlying the philosophical view of human life with all its phenomena is the idea of the unity of the human organism, an idea elaborated by the natural sciences; the observations of physiologists, zoologists and physicians have driven away all thoughts of dualism in man. Philosophy sees in him what medicine, physiology and chemistry see... It is positively known, for example, that all the phenomena of the moral world originate from one another and from external circumstances in accordance with the law of causality, and on this basis all assumptions that there are any phenomena that do not result from preceding phenomena and from external circumstances are regarded as false... The phenomenon that we call will is itself a link in a series of phenomena and facts joined together by causal connection".[45] There is little enough support here for the view that Chernyshevsky took advantage of an implicitly dualistic 'materialism' in order to salvage free will; rather, he sought to derive his moral prescriptions from a fairly routine utilitarianism, which held that all men are egoists, and all altruistic acts disguised egoism.[46]

There is, I suppose, no logical reason why scientific materialism and utilitarianism should not have performed the same dual antitheological and ethical function as Feuerbachian materialism, though one wonders whether 'man' as conceived by the former would have seemed worth the liberating to the Russian radicals. In any case, to present Chernyshevsky as representative of the former combination of views, is to accept a superficial and one-sided version of his ideas, or at least to portray him as far more consistent a thinker than he really was. A closer reading of his works reveals a far less "crudely" materialistic or deterministic world-view than the above quotations imply; indeed his belief in the qualitative difference between mind and body, and the view that "quantitative difference passes into qualitative difference"[47] could be depicted as part of a strand of Russian thought from the Decembrist Yakushkin to Lenin. But far more obviously consistent with Feuerbachian materialism was Chernyshevsky's younger collaborator on The Contemporary,

N. A. Dobrolyubov, whose "rational egoism" and dislike of moral systems was more in keeping with man's moral autonomy, and whose own materialism was clearly differentiated from the 'vulgar' variety, as he wrote in his article of 1858, The Organic Development of Man in Connection with his Mental and Moral Activities:

"We find ridiculous and pitiful the ignorant pretensions of crude materialism which degrades the lofty meaning of the moral side of man by attempting to prove that a man's soul consists of some kind of very fine matter. The absurdity of such arguments has been proved so long ago, and so irrefutably, it so directly contradicts the findings of the natural sciences themselves, that at the present time only the most backward and ignorant of men do not despise such materialistic arguments".[48]

There is, in any event, no need to attempt to force the men of the sixties into a particular philosophical mould merely to substantiate a rather simplistic theory of the intellectual appetite of the Russian intelligentsia in general; there is no intention, at least, in this work, to turn a blind eye to the complexity of circumstance which surrounds the formation and development of each individual's ideas. Although it may be a useful generalisation to observe a tendency amongst Russian radicals to opt for the kind of 'person monism' described in this Part, and to offer reasons for it, it will scarcely be surprising to find thinkers like the positivist Lavrov, whose 'anthropologism' seems not quite to fit the bill, or like D. I. Pisarev, who seems to constitute a clear counter-example, a consistent manifestation of Chernyshevsky's periodic affirmations of reductionist materialism, determinism and utilitarianism. But even in the case of Pisarev, who placed more faith than any in the power of the natural sciences (he was one of the first to introduce to the Russian reading public Darwin's theory of the origin of species by natural selection in his article of 1864 Progress in the Animal and

Vegetable Worlds), who was the leading Russian exponent of the reductionist materialism of Karl Vogt, Georg Büchner and Jacob Moleschott, rather than Feuerabach's philosophy of man, and could aver that "a man thinks only with his brain in the same way as he digests food only with his stomach or breathes only with his lungs"[49] - even he found room in his "realist" world-view (though whether it was realistic is another matter) to affirm man's freedom and independence, at any rate in an article of 1861:

"To emancipate one's own personality is not so easy and simple as it may appear; we have many intellectual prejudices, much moral timidity, which hamper our desiring, thinking and acting freely; we of our own free will constrain ourselves by our own influence on our personality; in order to escape this influence and live by our own reason and pleasure, we need a considerable amount of natural or acquired strength, and in order to acquire this strength, we must, perhaps, go through a whole course of moral hygiene, which will end not in man's approaching the ideal, but in his becoming an individual, obtaining the rational right and recognising the blessed necessity of being himself".[50]

The philosophical trappings of narodnichestvo are rather too variegated to be described here, though it might be mentioned in passing that if it is permissible to talk in general terms of the commitment of the radical intelligentsia to an antireligious materialism and a revolutionary voluntarism, then it might be argued that within the movement as a whole, the 'nihilists' of the 1860s leant most of all towards the former, and the 'subjective sociologists' of the 1870s, P. L. Lavrov and N. K. Mikhailovsky, leant most of all towards the latter. The argument might then run on that a balance more like that struck in Feuerbach's philosophy of man was achieved in the philosophical foundation of Marxism-Leninism. Whether the historical conditions briefly outlined at the start of this discussion still hold by the 1890s, and would favour a similar balance, would be the subject of further study: clearly the picture is to some extent complicated by rapid industrialisation, the decline of the nobility after the emancipation of the serfs, and the rise of a large professional intelligentsia. I shall confine myself to a brief consideration of Lenin's major contribution to the philosophical basis of Marxism-Leninism, Materialism and Empiriocriticism, both from the point of view of any affinities with Feuerbach's philosophy of man, and also to throw some light on the preconceptions of Soviet research on the Russian "materialist tradition", research which provided some of the stimulus for the writing of Parts Two and Three.

Lenin's book was written in 1908, and is something of a theological tract, being an orthodox defence of philosophical materialism as expounded by "the not unknown collaborator of Marx" Engels, and an intended refutation of the attempts by A. A. Bogdanov, V. Bazarov, A. V. Lunacharsky, P. S. Yushkevich and others, to replace it with some version of the phenomenalist epistemology or empirio-criticism of Ernst Mach and Richard Avenarius. Lenin was particularly incensed by the revisionists' heretical characterisation of a materialism which combined empiricism and realism as being dualist in the Kantian sense, in that it cleaved sensible appearances from unknowable "things-in-themselves". Lenin replied by identifying Machist phenomenalism with Berkeleian subjective idealism. Without becoming too involved in this particular dispute, we may note that the kind of dualism with which the Machists charged materialism enabled Kant to reconcile moral autonomy and man's free will with scientific necessity, the same function performed by the different kind of dualism which, I have argued, exists in Feuerbachian materialism.

It is, however, the parallel between Lenin's materialism and the latter which is of concern here, and despite the lapse between the waning of Feuerbach's star and the appearance of Lenin's book, the parallel is by no means far-fetched; indeed, Lenin complained that Mach ignored the great materialists (Diderot, Feuerbach, Marx and Engels), who dissociated themselves from the 'vulgar' materialism of Vogt, Büchner and Moleschott.[51] Against the Machists' rejection of objects existing independently of sensations, Lenin marshalled a number of quotations from Feuerbach which convey what for purposes of brevity and distinction might as well be called his "refined materialism"; for example:

"Of course, the products of fantasy are also products of nature, for the force of fantasy, like all other human forces, is the last analysis (zuletzt) both in its basis and in its origin a force of nature, but nevertheless, man is a being distinct from the sun, moon and stars, from stones, animals and plants, in one word, from all those beings (Wesen) which he designates by the general term: Nature, - and, consequently, man's ideas (Bilder) of the sun, moon and stars and all the other beings of nature (Naturwesen), although these ideas are products of nature, are yet other products, distinct from their objects in nature".[52]

Again, having called upon Feuerbach to testify against the Kantian 'thing in itself', he adduced a quotation from Albrecht Rau, a disciple of Feuerbach, which encapsulates refined materialism:

"For the materialist a distinction between a priori knowledge and the 'thing in itself' is quite superfluous: he nowhere breaks continuous connections in nature, he does not regard matter and spirit as fundamentally different things, but as sides of one and the same thing, and therefore does not need any special devices in order to bring the spirit together with objects".[53]

None of this necessarily makes Lenin himself a refined materialist. His esteem of Feuerbach could be seen as more of an obligation than an affinity, since Marx "was able through Feuerbach to take directly the materialist road against idealism"; in any case, his esteem was not unqualified, since he repeated Engels' charge of "pusillanimity" for Feuerbach's occasional repudiation of materialism in general because of the errors of particular schools of materialist thought.[54] The criticism, however, displays their agreement in rejecting 'vulgar' materialism. Feuerbach, as we have seen, in his 'refined' period distinguished between the mental and the material, even though they were aspects of the indivisible nature of man. Lenin followed Engels in repudiating the notion that the brain secretes thought *in the same way* as the liver secretes bile[55]; he later went into Engels' critique in more detail, explaining that the fault of Büchner, Vogt and Moleschott was that none of them advanced beyond the limitations of eighteenth-century French materialism. These limitations, which are met with constantly in the literature of the 'materialist tradition', were that the views of the old materialists were *mechanical* (they "applied exclusively the standards of mechanics to the processes of chemical and organic nature"), *metaphysical*, meaning "anti-dialectical", and *idealist* in the realm of the social sciences (they did not understand historical materialism).[56] Feuerbach himself would presumably stand accused of the second and third, and it is in the first that he finds agreement with Engels and Lenin. But it does not follow from that that Lenin's opposition to vulgar materialism was motivated by a desire to preserve man's moral autonomy. At one point, he appeared to approve of Hans Cornelius' charge that materialism destroys freedom of the will, moral value and responsibility, and reduces man to an automaton, [57]

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though in fact he accepted the theory of freedom by Engels out of Hegel:

" 'Freedom does not consist in an imaginary independence from the laws of nature, but in the knowledge of these laws, and in the possibility based on that knowledge of systematically making the laws of nature work for particular ends. This is in relation both to the laws of external nature and to the laws which govern the bodily and spiritual existence of man himself - two classes of laws which we can distinguish from each other at most in our ideas but not at all in reality. Freedom of the will therefore means nothing but the capacity to take decisions with knowledge of the matter... Freedom therefore consists in control over ourselves and over external nature, a control based upon knowledge of the necessities of nature...'

Engels takes the knowledge and will of man, on the one hand, and the necessity of nature, on the other, and instead of giving any definitions, simply says that the necessity of nature is primary, and the will and consciousness of man secondary. The latter must inevitably and necessarily adapt themselves to the former".[58]

One can hardly imagine the mature Herzen, who originally accepted Hegel's concept of freedom, making these statements, and yet despite their overriding determinism, there is no question of man being reduced to a puppet; he is more like the puppeteer who must learn to manoeuvre the puppet within his own, and the strings', limitations. There is still a remnant of dualism in the concepts of the human will as opposed to external nature, and knowledge, decision-making and control as opposed to natural necessity. This is perhaps freedom as conceived by the conspirator who seeks to understand reality in order to change it, as opposed to the publicist who seeks to detach himself from the reality which he finds so repugnant.

Having come this far, it is as well to remember the reservations already made about any extension of the earlier theory (of the dual function of Feuerbachian materialism in the views of Russian radicals) to cover the success of Marxism in Russia, in the absence of a thorough examination of historical developments during the periods in which both sets of ideas became popular. The same reservations should equally be made about the absence of any careful consideration of the political views which accompanied the two varieties of materialism; it could, for instance, be argued that 'refined' materialism with its emphasis on moral autonomy was a natural bedfellow of utopian socialism, which prescribed how society ought to be changed; dialectical materialism, with its stress on natural necessity, complements scientific socialism, which predicts how society will change. The argument is, however, easily refuted by pointing to the numerous diversions of opinion over the most fitting philosophical basis for Marx's philosophy of history (materialism, idealism, Christianity, Kantianism, existentialism, phenomenology and so on), and it is still in principle open to speculate that the "Machists" notwithstanding, the fusion of dialectics and materialism elaborated by Engels, and initially rejected by Lenin, took root in Russia not only because of changes in Russian society, but also because of certain persistent peculiarities of Russian history by dint of which talk of a Russian materialist tradition makes sense. Walicki has already pointed out the significance of the fusion of materialism and dialectics in Herzen's world-view, and we know that Herzen found in Hegelianism "the algebra of revolution". Zen'kovsky has argued that the importance of the dialectic in Marxism-Leninism was that it justified the 'leap' (Zusammenbruch) into the dictatorship of the protetariat.[59]

The problem, then, in any attempt to portray Leninist materialism as representing a continuity in classical Russian materialism, apart from any investigation at the historical level, revolves on the intellectual plane around the tension between the human will and natural necessity.

Any attempt to resolve that problem in isolation would in my opinion be unreal, and I will pass on to a discussion of those concepts and doctrines embodied in *Materialism and Empirio-criticism,* within which Soviet historians of the 'materialist tradition' have operated. The categories utilised for the critique of pre-Marxist materialism have already been mentioned, and what will now be considered are those features of Leninist materialism which may have contributed to the development of a sixth sense for the detection of materialist leanings in pre-revolutionary thought on the part of many Soviet scholars. In the first place, it must be kept in mind that *Materialism and Empirio-criticism* was a highly polemical work, not to say one side of a slanging match in comparison with the studied politeness of academic circles; what we learn of Leninist materialism is what emerges from a prolonged joust, much of it aimed against phenomenalist theory of knowledge. Consequently, much of Lenin's effort was concentrated upon establishing a truly materialist epistemology, an important result of which has been the confusion of metaphysical and epistemological views in Soviet historiography. Lenin himself led the way in this confusion by defining matter in such a way that its content was epistemological rather than ontological: for him the truth of philosophical materialism resided not so much in what the world is made of, but whether or not it exists beyond our consciousness:

"...the basic proposition not only of Marxian materialism but of *every* materialism... is the recognition of real objects outside us, to which objects our ideas 'correspond'... Matter is a philosophical category which signifies objective reality, which is given to man in his sensations, and which is copied, photographed and reflected by our sensations, while existing independently of them... Natural science leaves no room for doubt that its assertion of the existence of the earth before mankind is the truth. This is quite compatible with the materialist theory of knowledge: the existence of that which is reflected independently of that which reflects (the independence of the external world from consciousness) is the basic premiss of materialism... To be a materialist means to acknowledge objective truth, which is revealed to us by our sense-organs... For the *sole* 'property' of matter with whose recognition philosophical materialism is bound up is the property of *being an objective reality*, of existing beyond our consciousness... The electron is as *inexhaustible* as the atom, nature is infinite, but it infinitely *exists*, and it is this sole categorical, this sole unconditional recognition of its *existence* beyond the consciousness and perception of man that distinguishes dialectical materialism from relativist agnosticism and idealism."[60] The functions of Lenin's definition are clearly brought out in the last quotation; not only is materialism distinguished from idealism *and* scepticism, but matter is made impregnable to advances in theoretical physics. Lenin cites approvingly Engels' assertion that with each epoch-making discovery in the realm of natural science, materialism has to change its form, but the fact is that on the basis of the definitions given above, provided the objective reality of nature is accepted (a fact which in any case is accepted by "every healthy person who has not spent some time in a lunatic asylum or studied the science of idealist philosophers"), then its materiality is not subject to verification, but is a tautology.[61]

This epistemological materialism (or more accurately, empiricist theory of knowledge with a realist metaphysical commitment, as in Locke's case) has more than one ramification. In the first place, Lenin's claim that all A's (materialisms) are B's (imply realism) has led to the logical error in Soviet scholarship that any B (affirmation of the objective existence of external nature) is held to imply A (materialism). This inference is tacitly validated by the additional clauses, not - B (the denial of the existence of nature independently of the senses) is C (idealism), and one of Lenin's (by way of Engels) most significant bequests to the historians of the materialist tradition, the doctrine that all there really are in the history of philosophy are A's (materialism) and C's (idealism):

"In his Ludwig Feuerbach, Engels declares that the fundamental philosophical tendencies are materialism and idealism. Materialism regards nature as primary, spirit as secondary, it places being first and thought second. Idealism believes the converse. This basic distinction between the 'two great camps' into which the philosophers of the 'various schools' of materialism and idealism are divided Engels puts as the corner-stone, and he directly charges with 'confusion' those who use the terms idealism and materialism in any other sense... Between the one and the other, Engels places the adherents of Hume and Kant, who deny the possibility of knowing the world, or at least of knowing it fully, naming them agnostics".[62]

Lenin, however, refused to accept 'agnosticism' as an independent position, regarding it as concealed idealism, and it is that view which has remained a feature of Marxism-Leninism. The 'two great camps' represent antagonistic social classes, and Lenin did not refrain from drawing certain conclusions from the Russian Machists' attempts to smuggle idealism into Marxism:

"... behind the epistemological scholasticism of empirio-criticism one cannot fail to see the struggle of parties in philosophy, a struggle which in the last analysis reflects the tendencies and ideology of the antagonistic classes of modern society. Recent philosophy is as partisan (partiina) as it was two thousand years ago. The contending parties are at the heart of the matter, concealed by a pedantic charlatanry of new terms or by a weak-minded impartiality, materialism and idealism. The latter is merely a subtle, refined form of fideism, which stands fully armed, has vast organisations at its disposal and steadily continues to influence the masses, turing to its own advantage the smallest vacillation of philosophical thought. The objective class role of empirio-criticism boils down to servile assistance to the fideists in their struggle against materialism in general and historical materialism in particular".[63]

The metaphysical standpoint which most obviously subverts the diarchy of materialism and idealism is dualism; but this is rejected in Marxist-Leninist textbooks as half-hearted, and generally leading to idealism, or else inconsistent, in that in regarding matter and spirit as logically distinct, it is unable to explain either how bodily changes affect consciousness, or how thought results in bodily motion.[64] On the other hand, the definitions of matter and materialism already selected from Lenin's book strictly speaking imply a dualistic world-view, for since matter is defined as that which exists independently of the mind, then the mind itself cannot be regarded as material. This inference was quite acceptable to Lenin, who as we have seen distanced himself from 'vulgar' materialism; he upbraided Joseph Dietzgen for appearing at one point in his writings to equate thought and matter:

"That both thought and matter are 'real', i.e., exist, is true. But to call thought material is to make a false step towards the confusion of materialism and idealism".[65]

Dietzgen's view that the concept of matter must be broadened to cover all the phenomena of reality, including man's mental powers is also dismissed:

> "That the concept of matter must also include thoughts... is a confusion, for if such an inclusion is made, the epistemological contrast between matter and spirit, idealism and materialism, a contrast upon which Dietzgen himself insists, loses its meaning. That this contrast must not be 'extreme', exaggerated, metaphysical, is indisputable (and the great merit of the dialectical materialist Dietzgen was to emphasise this). The limits of the absolute necessity and absolute truth of this relative contrast are precisely those limits which define the tendency of epistemological investigations. To operate beyond these limits with the opposition of matter and spirit, physical and psychical, as though with an absolute opposition, would be a great mistake".[66]

In other words, the contrast between non-material mind, and matter, is posited in opposition to 'vulgar' materialism, but the gap between the two has to be restrained in order that dialectical materialism be distinguished from dualism or even idealism. But without a commitment to the validity of dialectical logic, it is difficult to see how Lenin's theory bridges the gap between material and non-material phenomena any more successfully than dualism. On this point there is little by way of argumentation in Materialism and Empirio-criticism:

> "Sensation depends on the brain, nerves, retina, etc., i.e., on matter organised in a definite way. The existence of matter does not depend on sensation. Matter is primary. Sensation, thought, consciousness are the supreme product of matter organised in a special way...

The psychical, consciousness, etc., is the highest product of matter (i.e. the physical), it is a function of that special complex portion of matter which is called the human brain... In Ludwig Feuerbach also we read that 'the general laws of motion of the external world and of human thought are identical in substance but differ in their expression only insofar as the human mind can apply them consciously'... And Engels reproaches the old natural philosophy for having replaced 'the as yet unknown but real interconnections' (of the phenomena of nature) 'by ideal and fantastic ones'".[67]
The extent to which an act of faith enables dialectical materialism to hold its ground is clearly demonstrated by the latter quotations from Engels.

The final Leninist determinant of the historiography of the 'materialist tradition' to be considered here is in fact an extension of his equation of materialism and realism, in accordance with which the vast majority of natural scientists are herded into the 'materialist' pen. This 'natural-scientific materialism' is instinctively held by the mass of scientists, and is indeed nothing more than the 'naive realism' to which, we have already been told, only the insane and idealists are immune.[68] It will be seen in Parts Two and Three how useful this concept is in extending the longevity and scope of the 'materialist tradition', and it is as well to raise the objection now that this kind of connotational extravagance threatens to bankrupt the entire philosophical enterprise. Apart from the internal difficulties so far discussed, the equation of materialism with empiricism and realism leaves open the possibility that 'materialists' may accept the existence of God and anticipate the immortality of their soul. These beliefs, however, cannot be held by materialists, since they are proper only to the idealist side of the great philosophical divide.

Therefore either the definition of materialism, which helps to swell the ranks, or the doctrine of the two great camps, which helps to identify the enemy, must be given up.

In summary, then, the establishment of a materialist tradition in Russian thought has been based upon the following Leninist doctrines: the equation of materialism with empiricism and realism; the existence in the history of philosophy of two opposing camps, materialism and idealism; the partisan nature of philosophy, which holds that materialism and idealism are the world-views of antagonistic social classes. These doctrines have led Soviet scholars into two kinds of excessive zeal, the first being the tendency to recruit 'progressive' natural scientists, and empiricist epistemologists (transformed as 'materialistic sensualists'), to the materialist ranks, the second being the attribution of materialistic leanings to many of the better-known opponents of Tsarist autocracy. It might be worth adding that the confusion of materialism and sensationalism, although largely inspired by the definitions and epistemological preoccupations of Materialism and Empirio-criticism, is not justified by all that Lenin wrote in that work. He quoted Hegel's affirmation of empiricism and materialism as distinct, though related (in the sense that materialism is the "development" of the principle of empiricism), and for his own part recognised that the standpoints of empiricism or sensationalism (Lenin distinguished between the two, though Soviet scholars rarely do) give rise to both subjective idealism (Berkeley) and materialism (Diderot):

"Starting from sensations, one can follow the line of subjectivism, which leads to solipsism ('bodies are complexes or combinations of sensations'), or one can follow the line of objectivism, which leads to materialism (sensations are images of objects, of the external world)."[69]

Once again, it could be argued here either that by making empiricism and sensationalism neutral with regard to materialism and idealism, the doctrine of the camps is undermined, or that by forcing a commitment either to idealism or materialism by sheer breadth of definition, the distinction between the camps is removed. Be that as it may, of the two kinds of zeal mentioned above, no better examples could be found than the two best-known representatives of the 'materialist tradition' in the eighteenth century, M. V. Lomonosov and A. N. Radishchev, and it is mainly to them that we shall turn in Part Two.

PART TWO: THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Although the history of the Russian Orthodox Church up to and including the time of the Great Schism includes notable heresies, and internal confrontations, the very fact that issues at stake tended to be liturgical, moral and political (such as the purity of the liturgy, the possession of land by the Church, and the Church's relationship with the State), rather than the often profoundly theological debates which further split the Western branch of Christianity, helps to explain why it was that not until the eighteenth century did social and cultural developments permit even the possibility of philosophical system-building independently of ecclesiastical dogmata, let alone in violation of them. The process by which secular philosophy was enabled to take root in Russian culture was given an impetus of critical significance during the reforming years of the reign of Peter the Great. This is not to say that the first Russian Emperor by an act of will singlehandedly pitched an Asiatic Muscovy into the mainstream of West European civilisation, for the seventeenth century was notable for expansionist aspirations and for the growth of foreign trade and international diplomacy, as well as for the importation of foreign technique. The segregated "German settlement" (Nemetskaya sloboda) in the east of Moscow, revived in 1652, provided contact with Western culture not only for the adolescent Peter, but also for progressive seventeenth-century aristocrats such as Fedor Rtishchev, who in the face of great opposition organised a school at the Andreevsky Monastery outside the capital. The confirmation of serfdom in 1649 can scarcely be construed as a progressive measure, though it can to some extent be seen as a complement to the rise of the dvoryane, a phenomenon which is closely related to the State's increasing need for their service function as the administration of the realm became more complex and as military duties grew. These demands might in their turn have been expected to stimulate more educational experimentation, but the fact remains that at the outset of the eighteenth century, the only existing educational establishments numbered a few church schools, and two institutions of higher education, the Kievan Academy in the newly-annexed Ukraine, together with the philologically named Slavonic-Greek-Latin Academy formed in Moscow in 1687 out of two opposing 'Latinist' and 'Hellenist' schools. For the purposes of this work, it is worth noting that at that time any expressions of doubt at the Moscow Academy in relation to the dogmata of the Orthodox Church were punishable by deportation to Siberia, and unfavourable comparisons of the True Faith with other creeds risked the stake.[1] In general, the Westernising tendencies mentioned above did not penetrate to the core of Muscovite consciousness, which was xenophobic and antirationalist, and much of the credit must go to Peter's brutal purpose in his attempt to hasten those social forces which resulted in the complete reversal of this attitude amongst a section of the metropolitan dvorianstvo during the course of the eighteenth century, thereby, albeit unwittingly, facilitating the entertainment of secular metaphysical beliefs.

Whatever the ultimate cause or causes of the first manifestations of materialist and atheist thought in Russia, it is difficult to see how these can operate independently of the following social factors, which attain a special prominence in Peter's reign: (i) the promotion of education (ii) the spread of Western philosophical and scientific ideas, and (iii) the increased subservience of the Orthodox Church to the State. Moreover, when it comes to the question of the origin of the Russian 'materialist tradition' in the Marxist-Leninist sense of the development of an ideology by progressive groups in opposition to the idealism of the ruling classes, then consideration must be given to the extent to which Russian historical conditions in the eighteenth century were conducive to the growth of articulate political opposition.

To start with education, the reforms within that sphere grafted on to Russian society by the 'crowned revolutionary', in Herzen's phrase,[2] were doubtless motivated sooner by a need for technically more efficient and advanced state service than by a desire to people the realm with cultivated gentlemen of refined manners (notwithstanding the oft-quoted decrees penalising the traditional Muscovite beard and dress). The technical schools in the two capitals were intended to staff the army and the navy, and the ill-fated provincial 'cipher' schools lay stress in their curricula upon the teaching of mathematics. In practice, the new institutions met with almost universal resentment and widespread evasion, despite a decree in 1714 which made a certificate of education obligatory for noblemen if they wished to marry. Peter had neither sufficient resources nor qualified personnel even to make the success of his educational measures obligatory by law, and his failure set a precedent for the remainder of the century. In some cases, educational innovation took root, notably the founding of the St. Petersburg Kadetsky Korpus in 1731, intended for the education of future army officers, the decree of 1737 which led to the foundation of seminaries for the training of priests, and the establishment in 1755 of Moscow University, with its associated gimnazii (one at Moscow, the other at Kazan). The universities would eventually become the focus of political discontent, from the 1830s onwards, and even the theological seminaries would produce radical raznochintsy, such as Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov, in the 1850s and 1860s. For the time being, the only disquiet fomented by these institutions, especially as far as the rank-and-file nobility was concerned, was the prospect of attending them, and it was this attitude, as much as lack of teachers and equipment, which stunted the development of the ambitious project spawned by Catherine's Commission on Schools, and set up in 1782. The resultant system of elementary and high schools grew somewhat, but only to the extent that by the year of Alexander I's accession, less than 20,000 students were being taught in them. The most important reason for the unpopularity of the new schools amongst the nobility was that years spent in education were years less of advancement within the service hierarchies; and in any case state service itself still enabled the young nobleman to attain a passable level of technical skills, and moreover to some extent familiarised him with Western culture.

One by-product of the steps taken to staff the new educational institutions was the increased dissemination of Western ideas in Russian society, brought about by the influx of foreign teachers to the schools, of foreign professors and scientists to the University of Moscow and the St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences, and of foreign tutors for the children of the wealthier noble families. But contact with West European culture was facilitated not only by the immigration of foreign teachers, technicians and traders, but also by the practice of sending a small number of students abroad. In Peter's reign, the purpose of these excursions was the study and acquisition of foreign techniques, but by the time of Catherine II, several students, for example Radishchev at the University of Leipzig, were being given the opportunity to obtain a broad grounding in contemporary European thought. Travel abroad was part and parcel of military and diplomatic service, but in addition, one of the provisions of Peter III's Manifesto of 18 February 1762 relieving the nobility of the obligation to serve the state, was that passports should not be denied by the College of Foreign Affairs to anyone who, after his release from service, wished to visit other European countries.[3] The development of the printing of books (the first textbook on arithmetic to be printed appeared in 1703), and the encouragement of journalism under Peter were necessary conditions of the widespread dissemination of the writings of leading Western thinkers and scientists, but it was not until the reign of Catherine the Great that familiarity with Western ideas became an end in itself. Catherine herself conducted a literary and mutually congratulatory correspondence with Voltaire and other representatives of the European Enlightenment, and her own satirical journal Vsyakaya vsyachina, which appeared first in 1769, opened the door to a comparative flood of journalistic and publishing activity in the 1770s and 1780s. The outstanding figure in this field was the freemason N.I. Novikov, who responded to Catherine's journal in the same year with the first issue of The Drone (Truten'), and went on in his publishing ventures to try to lead the nobility to devote part of its recently acquired leisure time to reading not only French novels, but also serious ethical, religious and political works. Novikov was free to publish a wide range of religious works, from the patristic writings of Augustine, Lactantius, Gregory of Nazianze to the works of English Puritans, nonconformists and freemasons, such as Milton, Bunyan, John Mason, William Derham and William Hutchinson. Works of pure mysticism, such as those of Jakob Böhme, were usually circulated in manuscript form only, on pain of confiscation.[4] Although the philosophe most readily identified with the intellectual history of Catherine's reign was the opponent of materialism, Voltaire, the new Russian reading public also had access to the works of Montaigne, Bayle, Fénelon, Montesquieu, Diderot, d'Alembert, Rousseau, Condillac and Condorcet. The popularity of such thinkers is certainly testimony to a sceptical attitude in Russian society towards traditional religious belief and practice, though of those mentioned, only Diderot arrived at materialism in his later years. No complete translations of any of the works of the materialists d'Holbach and La Mettrie was permitted by the censors, although we know that the sensationalist Helvétius' De l'Esprit was available in the original; parts of that work appeared in the journal Innocent Exercise in 1763. In the journal Mirror of Light (1786-7) extracts from d'Holbach's Social System appeared, as well as an article expounding his social philosophy, although the author of the article, who signed himself 'N.D.' was criticised by G.P. Makagonenko for excluding d'Holbach's anticlerical attacks. Oddly enough, it was not until the xenophobic reign of the Emperor Paul that extracts from Baron d'Holbach's 'Bible of atheism', Système de la Nature appeared in The St. Petersburg Journal (1798), published by I.P. Pnin and A.F. Bestuzhev.[5]

The fact that both mystical and materialist works could not be published in full, but only if at all in anonymous segments, demonstrates that although the rise of a secular literature and reading public had destroyed the Church's intellectual monopoly, the hierarchy was still able to exercise considerable control over the availability of Western philosophy and science. This was least of all true in the reign of the Peter the Great, whose enthusiasm for science led to the foundation of the St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences in 1726, a year after his death; the Academy became responsible for the censorship of secular literature, whereas after Peter, the Holy Synod's jurisdiction was in principle confined to theological works. Had this arrangement remained as stated, there might have been no friction between scientific discovery and the eternal truths of the Bible and ecclesiastical tradition. As it was, Russia sidestepped the acrimony of Galileo's confrontation with the Roman Catholic Church over the truth of Copernicanism, and this was in no small measure the result of Peter's sponsorship of heliocentric ideas, in the form of Huygens' Cosmotheoros, which appeared in translation in 1717. But as the century wore on, the Church gained sufficient influence to delay the publication of Kant's theory of cosmogony, which like Laplace's later nebular hypothesis, gave a naturalistic account of the origin and development of the solar system; the Russian translation of Buffon's Histoire Naturelle which appeared during the 1780s did not include his well-known essay on the degeneration of animals; it may also have been fear of the censure of the Church which led Caspar Wolff to give up his researches in embryology.[6]

But although the Church circumscribed public intellectual debate, the manner in which it did so was often perfunctory and ill-informed, and it was not until the very end of Catherine II's reign in 1796 that an attempt was made to control private opinion by the suppression of the private printing-presses, and by the establishment of a uniform system of censorship.[7] It is at this point that Russia and the other European absolutist régimes begin to strike out on a path markedly different from some of their West European neighbours; but as far as the eighteenth century is concerned, the limitations imposed upon metaphysical speculation in Russia were not untypical, and we need not be surprised to learn that throughout this period, open avowals of materialism and atheism were not permitted. What is more peculiarly Russian during the eighteenth century, and equally as important to any consideration of the significance of those kinds of thought at the historical level, is the apparently dramatic upheaval of Church-state relations initiated by Peter's legislation of 1721, through which the Church was absorbed into the collegiate system, and the Patriarchate replaced by a lay procuratorship general. It is easy enough for the dazzle of the Petrine reforms to obscure their Muscovite background, but the meekness with which the hierarchy submitted to its assimilation cannot be understood in isolation from the history and traditions of the Orthodox Church. This is not the place to go into it, but it can at least be mentioned in passing that Peter's assertion of temporal supremacy could be seen as no more than an episode in a process stretching from the debate between the followers of Nil Sorsky and Joseph of Volokolamsk over the virtues of church property in the first half of the sixteenth century, and the resultant Josephite justification of autocracy in the doctrines of Moscow as the third Rome and the divine right of kings; the Great Schism in the seventeenth century over the Patriarch Nikon's attempt to purify Orthodox ritual of Russian deviations from the Greek, followed by the departure from the Church of the Old

Believers, who represented one of the most vigorous and independent spiritual forces in Russia; the failure of Nikon to galvanise the Church into the adoption of a papocaesarist stance; beyond Peter's Dukhovny Reglament and Holy Synod to the seizure of all ecclesiastical lands by the command of Peter III and his wife and successor Catherine the Great. It will be seen in Part Three that the process was taken further by Alexander I, but that the subordination and assimilation of an ailing Church by a thriving monarchy very soon became a mutual dependence once the optimistic thrust of autocracy had spent itself. The immediate cause of Peter's action may have had much to do with his own leanings towards Protestantism, and his animosity towards his Orthodox son Alexis, but the fate of the national Church under the Romanov dynasty as a whole stemmed partly from its own traditional renunciation of the world, which could mean in practice either submission to the state, or the hesychast asceticism of Nil Sorsky, and in the eighteenth century Paissy Velichkovsky and St. Tychon of Zadonsk.

Since one of the presuppositions of the 'materialist tradition' is the partisan nature of philosophy, in that materialism is the world-view of progressive social classes faced with the ruling ideology of idealism, it should be noted that although Orthodoxy had dedicated itself to the vindication of the political status quo before the reign of Peter, and although its services would again be called upon at the end of the reign of Alexander I, for much of the intervening period, the throne was not strongly identified with any denomination in particular, and rather promoted secular knowledge than defended theism. Peter the Great allowed a measure of religious toleration, although repressive measures were taken against the Jews and the staroobryadtsy (which latter were subject, amongst other things, to double taxation, a burden not unconnected with their later entrepreneurial flair). The persecution of the Old Believers was continued during the incumbencies of the Empresses Anne and Elizabeth, but so long as Catherine the Great was prepared to pay lip-service to the secularist rationalism of the French and German Enlightenment, a policy of inter-confessional equality was pursued. This is not to say that a degree of religious toleration provided for any questioning of the government's conduct of ecclesiastical affairs, for when Arseny Matseevich, the Archbishop of Rostov, raised the only significant voice of protest against the secularisation of church domains in 1764, he was tried by the Holy Synod, unfrocked, sent to a monastery and finally held in solitary confinement in a Siberian prison. However, as has already been shown by the range of the publishing activities of the freemason Novikov, a wide spectrum of religious, as well as philosophical and political ideas was accessible to the educated Russian public, until the accumulated effects of the Pugachev Rebellion of 1773-4, the American Declaration of Independence and the French Revolution led the Empress to slough off her liberalism. The masonic lodges had been introduced into Russia in 1731, and had become particularly active during the 1770s and 80s, but were suppressed as the monarchy turned to reaction. Novikov's publishing activities were terminated in 1791, and in the following year Catherine had her erstwhile opponent in satire locked up in the Schlüsselberg Fortress.

Novikov's fate was shared by A.N. Radischev, whose attack on serfdom and officialdom, and advocacy of civil rights in his Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow, published in 1790, prompted Catherine to dub him "worse than Pugachev". Novikov was not a radical in the usual sense of that term, since he was not critical of political and social institutions, holding instead a belief characteristic of Russian freemasons that desirable social change could only be brought about by changes in the hearts of individual men. Nevertheless, the serious masons' commitment to a living out of the moral implications of Christian love and charity, manifested in the striving for moral self-perfection and participation in philanthropic works, constituted an element in the consciousness of educated Russians which was likely to promote aversion to the abuse of man under the existing order, notably in its grossest institutionalised form, serfdom. But those who were not attracted to the ritual of the lodges could call upon the secular ethics of natural law theory, which had deliberately been introduced into Russia by Peter the Great; he had ordered the translation of the works of Hugo Grotius and Samuel Pufendorf, mindful of the value of natural law in the justification of absolutism, and in the provision of an ethics of service for the *dvoryanstvo*. Natural law theory continued to be promoted by government institutions, and especially by the German academics who were to be found in such numbers in the new educational establishments; it was, however, a two-edged weapon, as the history of political thought testifies, and attempts to derive sovereignty from consent and contract brought with them a rationale of political revolt. Much of Radishchev's critique of autocracy and serfdom was derived from that source, though whether he was a revolutionary or merely a harbinger of doom is a matter for debate. Whichever is the case, it can hardly be denied that he had much in common with the Decembrists and the first representatives of the radical intelligentsia, in a number of ways, notably in his description of autocracy as a state affairs most contrary to human nature, in the introduction to his first book, a translation of Mably's *Observations sur l'histoire de la Grèce*; in his praise of Cromwell and Washington in the ode *Liberty*; in his anticlericalism as expressed in that ode, and in the *Journey*; in his affirmation of the greatness of man and equality of all men; in his concern with metaphysical problems, notably in his treatise *On Man, his Mortality and Immortality*.[8] All this makes Radishchev a likely candidate for inclusion in the 'materialist tradition' which holds that materialism is an ideological weapon, and he will accordingly be given separate consideration.

Before the existence of materialism and atheism in eighteenth-century thought is considered both in itself and, as demanded by the presuppositions of the materialist tradition, as an expression of class antagonism, it would be as well to discuss in general terms the likeliest source and form of political opposition amongst the various 'estates' (sostoyaniya). The most openly rebellious estate during the eighteenth century was the peasantry, which bore the brunt of the financial and physical burden of the growth of the Russian Empire, and saw the bargain by which the nobility had secured its rights over them in exchange for its own obligations to service gradually eroded in the nobility's favour after Peter I's death. It is easy enough to exaggerate the miserable condition of the peasants: not all of them were enserfed, and of those that were, notably those working outside the profitable 'black earth' regions of the south and south-west, many paid their landlord in rent (obrok) rather than labour (barshchina); nevertheless in the era of serfdom, the vast majority of the peasants and therefore of the entire population, were tied to the land, and enjoyed no legal rights. It would be easy, too, to overestimate the gulf between the peasantry and the nobility engendered by the Petrine reforms, since these affected most of all the richer, metropolitan minority; however, so far as they were concerned, in their everspreading adoption of foreign culture, manners, dress and even language, they must have seemed increasingly like a race, rather than a class, apart. Finally, it might also be easy to exaggerate the number and importance of peasant uprisings throughout the era of serfdom,[9] but the violence and importance of the revolt of Stenka Razin in the second half of the seventeenth century, the rebellions in Astrakhan and of the Don Cossacks in the reign of Peter the Great, and the Peasant War of 1773-4, cannot be gainsaid. These uprisings were doomed to failure because of poor organisation, lack of adequate munitions and the scattered nature of the rural population in the outer regions in which they originated, but what is more interesting about them for these purposes is the conservatism of their objectives. In general, the peasants had no argument with Tsarism, and indeed both Razin and Pugachev justified their authority by claiming to be the rightful monarch; amongst the aims of the Pugachev rebellion were the return to the old faith and the old dress and beards of the pre-Petrine era. There would be no point in perpetuating the misconception of the nineteenth-century populists that the communal rural institutions, the mir and artel', contained the seeds of socialism; rather they were a bulwark for the peasants against any kind of social or economic (especially agricultural) innovation. It is therefore not only because of the almost universal illiteracy of the peasantry that one looks in vain for any kind of articulate, dissenting ideology in their periodic convulsions. For all this, it was the peasantry which produced M.V. Lomonosov, the so-called founder of the Russian materialist tradition. Whether or not this description is justified, and whether or not he was quite the da Vinci of Russian hagiography, his outstanding contributions to science and literature cannot be ignored. He was untypical of the peasantry as a whole, in that he came from a literate family: his father was a well-to-do fisherman and trader from the delta of the Dvina in the north, an area which had escaped the Tartar invasion and was relatively free of serfdom. Lomonosov was in many ways unique in his own right, but was also in his social background far removed from the 200,000 peasants who were in open rebellion, after Peter III's Manifesto of 1762 had exonerated the nobility from their obligation to service, but had done nothing to satisfy the peasants' traditional claim to the ownership of the land they worked.[10]

A more radical kind of opposition, in the political and economic sense, might in the light of West European history have been expected to have found its source amongst the Russian merchants and artisans; but the political weakness and conservatism of the middle classes is a chronic and well-known theme of Russian history. The aetiology of their malaise could doubtless be extended to the relative unprofitability of agriculture, which itself prevented the accumulation of sufficient surplus agricultural produce to allow the spontaneous development of largescale manufacturing, though oddly enough it contributed to the traditional peasant occupation in smallscale rural crafts and industry (promysly). The fact remained that the low level of purchasing power of the majority of the population stunted the domestic market, and the merchants were mainly engaged in exchanging raw materials for the imported luxuries desired by the nobility. In consequence the Russians were outstripped by other European nations in the production of manufactured goods, and when the Romanov rulers conceived a military and political need to consume more of these goods, native production had to be stimulated by government grants, licenses, initiative, and even coercion, and facilitated by the import of foreign technique, management and investment. Furthermore, the crown's attempts to stimulate the merchant class were always complicated by its own interests, and also those of the nobility. It always sought to make a monopoly of the most profitable exports and the imports in greatest demand; furthermore, the nobility's rights of ownership over the serfs perpetually hindered the merchant factory owner's access to hired labour, and he often had to make do with convicts and runaway serfs. Peter the Great in a decree of 18 January 1721 extended to merchants the right to purchase villages populated with serfs, provided that the villages remained permanently attached to the factories for which the serfs were required;[11] he also abolished a number of the royal monopolies, and introduced a protective tariff on imports. His attempts to create an independent entrepreneurial class failed, however, as under his successors, the dvoryanstvo set about consolidating its privileges and divesting itself of all its obligations to state service; the crown recovered many of its monopolies, and by 1762, the nobility had acquired exclusive rights to the ownership of serfs, thereby enabling the noble factory-owner to outstrip his merchant counterpart. It might seem from this brief account that the merchants had plenty to grumble about, but the fact that they relied so heavily on government concessions to maintain their own social position, and on government legislation to protect them from foreign competition, contributed to, or at any rate reinforced, their well-known conservatism of dress, manners, religion and politics. Generally speaking, the bearded, xenophobic and often illiterate merchant was not associated with radical political views or with religious heterodoxy. An exception in some ways was I.T. Pososhkov, whose Book on Poverty and Wealth advocated free trade for merchants, and criticised the nobility for its treatment of peasants and ruinous taste for imported luxuries; but his views were no more than a reflection of Peter's policies, and he was deeply religious man and supporter of the monarchy. It is significant that shortly after Peter's death, Pososhkov was arrested and spent his last days in prison.[12] An even sharper contrast with the overall picture has been claimed for the religious views of the Karzhavin brothers, to be considered later.

None of the Russian thinkers discussed in Part One came from the kind of comfortable middle-class background that produced Marx and Engels, and for that matter Feuerbach (though of those mentioned in passing, Botkin was the son of a tea-merchant), and it will be seen in Part Three that the overwhelming majority of the Decembrists were of sons of dvoryane. The first generations of the radical intelligentsia were largely drawn from noble families, or else were raznochintsy, the déclassé sons of priests, non-noble civil servants and army officers, impoverished noblemen, and so on. The latter were in a sense genuine misfits, but it is less easy to understand how it was that the nobility would produce a succession of outstanding opponents of its own class interests (Radishchev, Pestel', Herzen, Bakunin, Kropotkin, Lenin, to name but a few). It might seem strange to look for some of the reasons in a discussion of the eighteenth century, since after Peter had opened up the hereditary nobility to plebeian merit, and confirmed service of the state as its primary function, the nobility had seemingly made a number of successful attempts to cut its ties to the throne. To all intents and purposes, by the time of Catherine the Great's Charter of the Nobility of 1785, it could indeed be said that "the only obligation of a Russian gentleman was to shave his face."[13] But beneath a succession of favourable decrees lay a more complex reality. By the seventeenth century, the new class of dvoryane, formerly servants and military retainers of the Grand Duke of Moscow, had swamped the traditional landowning aristocracy of boyars and princes. The foundation of their ascent was the receipt of estates in return for state service; these estates were split equally between male heirs on the occupant's death (in theory they returned to the crown), and the consequent dissection of the estate led to the pursuit of fresh land grants, thereby reinforcing the system of state service. The service function of the nobility was confirmed firstly during the reign of Fedor II by the destruction of mestnichestvo (which allowed the status of serving members of a family to be determined by that of its head). Secondly, in an attempt to exploit personnel to the maximum, Peter I decreed in 1712 that social status and personal rights were to be dependent on state service alone, and laid down an appropriate structure in 1722 by the promulgation of the Table of Ranks, which provided the opportunity for a commoner to achieve ennoblement on attaining the eighth grade of the fourteen-grade service hierarchy.[14]

The new openness and service orientation of the nobility was resented by the old aristocracy, and the suspicion between the two groups to a large extent explains their failure to translate an apparent political supremacy into a limitation of the autocracy, notably when the attempt by the Supreme Privy Council in 1730 to impose an 'aristocratic' constitution upon the new Empress Anne was almost unanimously opposed by the dvoryane. Even so, the nobility proceeded to acquire well nigh absolute power over their serfs, and to have what was permanent compulsory state service under Peter successively reduced under Anne and Elizabeth, until the obligation was removed by Peter III in 1762. But what seemed like the triumph of the nobility was partly a hollow concession, because the great majority of the nobility would have been unable to support themselves outside of state service, and partly an expression of the crown's decreasing need for the service of an estate which was traditionally so averse to education. At any rate so far as the bureaucracy was concerned, the state was turning increasingly to literate foreigners and native plebeians. Resentment of the bureaucracy, and particularly of foreigners, certainly played its part in the Decembrist movement, and might be put down as a contributing factor to the increasing incidence of noble revolutionaries. I would argue, though, that a more important source of noble disaffection lay in the very means by which the state had so successfully prevented the nobility from converting its economic position into political power. In the first place, by making the service function paramount, and sponsoring an ethics of service, the state, as has already been suggested, sowed the seeds of the moral rejection of its own institutions. But although this was hardly likely to be a general characteristic of a class which had a vested interest in those institutions, the very nature of state service and of the rewards of state service conspired to produce a large number of rootless individuals whose only sense of 'solidarity' was with their peers. To take the rewards first, the state consistently pursued a policy of small, scattered land grants, which prevented any noble family from building a local power base, a phenomenon which was reinforced by the system of inheritance already referred to. As for the service pattern of the nobleman's early life, his childhood would be marked by the long absences from home of his serving father; he himself would then possibly leave the estate to attend a boarding-school in one of the capitals or in a provincial centre. His own period of service would in all probability include frequent transfers from place to place, and from one type of service to another and he was likely to be rewarded by an estate far away from that of his parents. The social upshot of all this was that allegiance to family or locality was minimally developed, and this fact, in conjunction with the orientation towards the capitals and national issues engendered by the nature of state service, prevented the transformation of the nobleman's role into that of a gentleman farmer or local politician. The allegiances that did exist largely centred on shared school or service experiences, and this goes some way towards an explanation of the predilection of young educated noblemen for intellectual discussion groups, which played a critical role in the Decembrist movement, and in the intellectual development of the first Russian socialists.

The first radical critique of Russian society was in many ways an epiphenomenon of the service function of its foremost class. But it has not up to this point been shown that the rejection of serfdom and autocracy is in any way likely to include the rejection of God, a critique of the Church, or be accompanied by a 'progressive' metaphysics. Although it would be wrong to disassociate the state from the Church in eighteenth-century Russia, that period is marked by a relative diminution of the Church's role in political and intellectual life, and in the person of Catherine, the autocracy could even be seen as recommending for a while a measure of anticlericalism in court circles. Thus, even though Peter had more or less reduced the Church to a branch of the state administration, this was an expression of the crown's endorsement of secularism and of its relative independence from Orthodoxy; consequently it is less true of this century than of the next to say that the expression of atheistic and materialistic views was eo ipso a challenge to the political authorities, or that any attack on the monarchy automatically involved a critique of the national Church. It could then be argued in advance of any consideration of metaphysical beliefs in eighteenth-century Russia that to extend the 'materialist tradition' back to the time of Lomonosov is to do violence to the historical record. This observation is not the same as an _a priori_ refusal to admit the existence of materialism and atheism in that period, but merely an opinion that any 'partisan' significance which they might be held to have is at most minimal in comparison with the juxtaposition of radicalism and materialism which appeared first amongst the Decembrists, and which became commonplace within the radical intelligentsia. It would almost have been a statistical oddity had there been no evidence whatsoever of atheism or radicalism in eighteenth-century Russia, given the qualified official toleration of Voltairian freethought, and the circulation of manuscript copies of some of Voltaire's more acerbic anticlerical and anti-Christian tracts, and d'Holbach's _Christianisme dévoilé_.[14] In general terms, such metaphysical daring as can be found (and it must always be kept in mind that because of censorship, the historian is never able to assess the true extent of political and metaphysical views which exceed the limits of a government's toleration) takes it place in a wide range of views which reflect the intellectual backwardness of the Church, the promotion of secular learning by the state and the imitative enthusiasm of the Russian intellectual neophytes. The range includes freemasonry, natural law theory, natural theology, mysticism, and above all Voltairianism, with its deism, irreverence towards tradition, castigation of organised religion, advocacy of civil liberties, and preference for a benevolent, secular monarchy. Any attempt to account for particular predilections would, I suggest, call upon factors other than political antagonisms, class friction or economic interests.

The origin and strengthening of the materialist tendency in Russian thought in the eighteenth century is based by Soviet historians upon the scientific researches of M.V. Lomonosov, the philosophical views of certain _prosvetitely_ of the second half of the century such as Ya. P. Kozel'sky and D.S. Anichkov, and of A.N. Radishchev, and to a certain extent official records and anonymous manuscripts, such as The Mirror of Atheism (Zertsalo bezbozhiya) and Moral Letters to Friends (Pis'ma nravouchitel'nye k druz'yam). The title of founder of the Russian materialist tradition has been awarded to Lomonosov,[15] and this designation is a good example of the minimal requirements needed by a scientist to be classified as a 'natural - scientific materialist'. Much is made of Lomonosov's claimed discovery of the law of the conservation of mass and energy as early as 1748, and his rejection of phlogiston theory as early as 1744, not to mention his anticipations of the kinetic theory of heat and atomism, and his advanced work in astronomy and geology[16]; there is however in his conception of nature in terms of matter and motion, and his attribution of that natural world to an "all-wise architect and omnipotent mechanic", as well as his derivation of the existence of God from the immutability of matter, nothing which would appear out of place in the voluminous writings of Robert Boyle dedicated to demonstrate how conducive the new experimental philosophy was to Christianity. Lomonosov, incidentally, read some of the works of Boyle whilst he was a student of Marburg University, and although I have no intention of becoming involved in the exaggerated priority claims made on his behalf, particularly in Stalinist literature, there seems no more reason to single out Lomonosov as a precursor of Dalton in the field of atomic theory than there does in the case of Boyle and his corpuscular philosophy. It would not, though, be justified to infer from a superficial similarity between Lomonosov and Boyle that they held the same views on the relationship between science and religion; the former was less concerned to try to derive the existence and attributes of God from the natural world, and was more, like Galileo, concerned to demarcate the areas proper to science and theology respectively. He felt that everyone was obliged to avoid or to explain conflicts between science and religion, the "two blood sisters, the daughters of the supreme parent", and adhered to the doctrine of the two Books, the first, nature, to be studied by physicists, mathematicians and astronomers, and the second, the Holy Scriptures, for the use of prophets, apostles and church leaders. Like Galileo, Lomonosov was particularly concerned that biblical texts should not be used in experimental matters:

"The mathematician reasons incorrectly, if he wishes to measure the divine will with a pair of compasses. So does the teacher of theology, if he thinks that one can learn astronomy or chemistry from the psalter".[17]
I have argued in Part One that the broad definition of materialism implied by the Marxist-Leninist equation of naive realism with natural-scientific materialism is incompatible with the doctrine of the two great camps in philosophy, and this difficulty has resulted in much talk in the historiography of the materialist tradition of thinkers and scientists holding materialist positions with certain idealist inconsistencies, oscillating between materialism and idealism, or clothing their materialism in deistic form. It is of course open to those with a less generous definition of materialism to speculate about the true beliefs of scientists who profess to believe in God, even though they exclude Him from participation in natural phenomena when seeking scientific explanation (I have chosen a tendentious formulation, to show how rich a field this is for tendentious speculation). But if the possibility of Lomonosov's materialism is to be admitted on the available evidence, then all the philosophers and thinkers identified with the expulsion of Aristotelian teleology and Renaissance naturalism from scientific enquiry - Bacon, Descartes, Galileo, Boyle and Newton, to name the summits of the range - would have to be placed in the materialist line, the sincerity of their beliefs in God and an immortal soul notwithstanding. But although the anticlericalism of Lomonosov's Gimn borode has been emphasised in Soviet scholarship, amongst his other poems, apart from the

laudatory odes dedicated to the succession of Russian monarchs from Anne to Catherine II, were his own versions of the psalms, the speech of God to Job, and his Evening Meditation on the Divine Majesty.[18]

This critique of the 'materialist tradition' unfortunately does not permit, in isolation from modern claims made on his behalf, any attempt to convey the remarkable nature of Lomonosov's achievements in the *infancy of indigenous Russian science and letters*, and we must pass shamefacedly on to the 'enlighteners' of the second half of the eighteenth century. Rather less shamefacedly, I will forego a detailed consideration of the philosophical views of figures such as D. S. Anichkov, P. A. Slovtsov, Ya. P. Kozel'sky and P. S. Baturin, not because they are of no historical interest, but because any connection mooted between their ideas, and materialism and atheism, is clearly tendentious. Furthermore not all Soviet scholars are prepared to follow the judgements of I. Ya. Shchipanov, a pioneer in the historiography of the 'materialist tradition', and a leading scholar in this particular area of study. He has been able to detect in the somewhat run-of-the-mill recycling of moderate French and German Enlightenment epistemology contained in Kozel'sky's Filosofskie predlozheniya (1768), both 'materialistic sensualism' (in that he argued that all human knowledge began with the senses), and 'materialism clothed in deistic form' (in that he accepted the existence, greatness, wisdom and omnipotence of God).[19] Much, too, is made of Baturin's repudiation, produced anonymously on his own printing-press in Tula, of Louis Saint-Martin's mystical work Des Erreurs et de la Vérité; Baturin's opposition of a mechanistic view of nature to Saint-Martin's idealism is not unusual for its time, and of the anonymous works of that year, it seems better timed and directed than Radishchev's Journey. A more likely subject for speculation is P. A. Slovtsov, a seminarist who was twice arrested for seditious ideas, and finished his life, having by then renounced his vows in exile in Siberia. The best evidence for materialist views in his poem Materiya, which extols the variety of inanimate and animate nature, the "infinite chain of beings", is not so much the content of the poem, as the way in which he felt called upon to clarify his position in a footnote, so that he should not be taken to be denying spiritual beings, or the Creator, and should not be "reproached with meddling in materialism".[20] By far the most clamour was raised by a dissertation, read by D. S. Anichkov in August 1769, entitled A Discourse based on Natural Theology concerning the Origins of Natural Religion, in which the candidate attempted to show how the polytheistic beliefs of pagan peoples had their origin in 'fear', 'apparition' and 'wonder', **though he stressed the distinction between such beliefs, and the belief of the most enlightened** peoples in the omnipotent and all-wise Christian God. On publication, the dissertation contained a number of references to Lucretius' poem De Rerum Natura, and a list of propositions derived from the preceding discourse, including the following:

"All the perfections ascribed to God originate from human thoughts, and therefore they do not conform to His essence, and cannot be proof of his perfections".[21]

Although Anichkov always included revelation as a source of knowledge, his naturalistic approach incensed some of the professors at Moscow University, and most of the copies were seized and burned. Nevertheless a second edition, with suitable excisions, including the aforementioned propositions, was published. On the basis of his published work, he seems to have been a sincere believer who wished to reconcile his beliefs with the empiricism then in vogue:

"experience demonstrates to us that we enter the world without any understanding of anything, but then we gradually acquire ideas of material bodies, from which we ultimately abstract concepts of immaterial things, i.e. : our mind, by means of an innate capacity comes to know invisible things from the visible, abstracts general concepts from particular things, reasons about the future on the basis of the present, and gains an understanding of immaterial things from the existence of material entities. In this way, for example, from the existence of visible things, which cannot themselves bring about their own existence, we conclude that there is undoubtedly to be found such a being, upon which they would depend, as upon a primary cause. In the same way, from the wonderful order discerned between objects in the visible world we conclude that God is one and all-wise; we receive the idea of spirit, when, having excluded all those properties, which we observe in bodies, such as division into parts, figure and so on, we add to it reason and will".[22]

This passage is taken from Anichkov's Speech on the Properties of Human Knowledge and on the Means by which the Mortal Intellect is Protected from Errors... delivered in 1770; later in the same piece[23], he attempted to describe the close relationship between body and soul, a philosophical enterprise which was to form the subject of a subsequent address, his Speech on the Various Means of Explicating the Very Intimate Union of the Soul with the Body. In this work, delivered in 1783, he opposed those who deny the existence of material bodies, the idealists, and those who believe that thought is material, whom Anichkov describes, perhaps euphemistically, as "monists". He went on to a discussion of three kinds of dualistic account of the relationship between spirit and body, the Cartesian, under which he included the occasionalism of Malebranche, the Leibnizian doctrine of pre-established harmony, and the view which he favoured himself, the Peripatetic belief in the union of body and soul by means of a physicus influxus.[24] He also described this standpoint as "Aristotelian-scholastic", and used Aristotelian terminology to convey the notion that body and soul were two completely different but imperfect entities which combined to form a third, man. He was aware that in calling the spirit the form of the body, in the Aristotelian sense, he might be seen to be casting doubt upon the immortality of the soul, particularly as he had already emphasised the necessity of physical organs in perception; the inference, however, was resisted, the immortal life of the spirit being raised above the level of sense-perception, and the departure of the soul from the body being compared with the release of a prisoner from jail.[25] At that point any glimmerings of an affinity with Feuerbachian materialism are extinguished. Even so, it cannot be denied that Anichkov was inclined to walk rather near to the bounds of acceptability, a fact which provides scope enough for the exercise of a predisposed imagination. Indeed Shchipanov speculates that Anichkov, Kozel'sky or S. E. Desnitsky may have been the author of Zertsalo bezbozhiya, one of a collection of hand-written essays dating from the end of the eighteenth century, and discovered in Kostroma in 1941. The essay consists of a number of rather superficial attempts to show how God's existence runs counter to experience, conscience, and right reason, and in particular attempts to demonstrate His non-existence from His imperfections. The essay ends in a way reminiscent of Bakunin, but without his passion or panache:

"It is true that God is imperfect. For to have limits to the actions of one's reason and will, not to be the creator and architect of the world - that means to be imperfect. An imperfect being is not God. For imperfection is incompatible with perfection. Consequently, there is no God..."[26]

Another anonymous manuscript, Moral Letters to Friends, written in 1773 - 74, has been invested with much significance by Yu. Ya. Kogan in his work on eighteenth-century Russian atheism. It was found in a collection of manuscripts owned by the merchant F.F. Mazurin, and although Kogan admits its clear masonic origin, he is still able to detect in it "materialist and atheist positions, albeit terminologically inconsistent."[27] It would be unfair to criticize Kogan's judgements without a careful consideration of the manuscript itself, and I will only comment that the confidence with which the positions mentioned above are inferred would only be possible with a commitment to the Leninist presuppositions of the 'materialist tradition', particularly the doctrine of the two camps. Consequently, even though the Letters' author is committed to the existence of God and indulges in Pythagorean number mysticism and Hermetism, his affirmation that "everything that exists is material", including the soul, which is regarded as a very fine kind of matter, and his not uncharacteristically masonic rejection of traditional Christian doctrines, such as the divinity of Christ, and the notion of God as the creator of the world ex nihilo ("I do not know which brainless head thought up the quite ridiculous and irrational proposition that God produced the world from nothing"), are summated and described as a pantheism "under the lid of which lie atheistic and materialistic contents."[28] Rather less theory-laden inferences of the existence of atheistic sentiments can be drawn from official records of blasphemy (bogokhul'stvo) trials conducted during the eighteenth century; indeed, the glimpses they afford of an element of the popular consciousness, however fragmentary they may be, are better evidence for the existence of a broadly defined and partisan 'materialist tradition' in that period, than the scientific and literary works which are predominantly drawn upon in support of that claim. For example, the old soldier Mikhail Shchukin was charged with the observation that "there is no truth either in God or in the Tsar", and the merchant Sidor Korol'kov in an "atheistic letter" wrote: "I revolt against the heavenly and earthly Tsar."[29] Similar sentiments were attributed to the merchants V. N. and E. N. Karzhavin in an anonymous denunciation sent to the Secret Chancellory in St. Petersburg from London in 1756; in this case, the Karzhavins were accused of slandering the heavenly Tsar and the earthly (not to say earthy) Tsaritsa Elizabeth, and her ministers, with the result that Vasily Karzhavin was imprisoned (his brother Erofey was in Paris at the time). These brothers were by no means typical of the _kupechestvo_; they were both relatively highly educated (Erofey embarked upon a comparison of the Russian and Greek languages when in Paris, and translated Swift's _Gulliver's Travels_ in the early 1770s), and their father was a leading 'priestly' Old Believer. The case for the Karzhavins' atheism rests entirely on the anonymous denunciation, which handwriting checks showed to be the work of Petr Dement'ev, a runaway Old Believer merchant whose acquaintance the Karzhavins had made in London, and between whom relationships had soured. This, and the fact that the Karzhavins had renounced _staroobryadchestvo_ might have seemed enough to deter the historian from hasty conclusions; but Kogan turns the uncertainty to his own advantage, and argues that the fact that Vasily Karzhavin denied Dement'ev's accusions and affirmed his Orthodox belief, does not necessarily mean that he was sincere in so doing.[30]

This kind of special pleading is eloquent testimony to the inadequacy of the foundations upon which the edifice of the eighteenth-century 'materialist tradition' has been erected, and Kogan himself has noticed some of the cracks:

"When reading some, even the most radical works of the Russian Enlighteners of the 18th century, one cannot fail to notice in them the presence of deistic or other kinds of departure from consistent materialism and atheism. Precisely this characteristic can be seen, for example, in some of Lomonosov's statements in his work The Appearance of Venus on the Sun (1761) in the spirit of the doctrine of the 'two truths' and also his two poetic Meditations on 'divine majesty' (1743), where in accordance with deism, he speaks of the 'untold wisdom of divine activity'. Declarations of a deistic kind are to be found in the works of Anichkov, one of whose speeches is actually entitled: This World is a Clear Proof of the Wisdom of God. We find this kind of departure in the works of Kozel'sky. Finally, they are met with in Radishchev, for instance in A Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow, in the chapter Bronnitsy, where meditating about God, the traveller reaches the conclusion that the 'immutable law of nature' is nothing other than the result of a divine creative act".[31] Having thus disarmed the critic of the 'materialist tradition', Kogan locks him up in the category of "diplomatising lackey of clericalism", having charged him with falsification of the actual materialistic and atheistic content of the world-view of the progressive Enlighteners of the eighteenth century. "Lomonosov, Radishchev and Kozel'sky were undoubtedly materialists".[32] Undoubtedly, because no other conclusion is possible according to the presuppositons of the 'materialist tradition'; it is, however, without the benefit of such presuppositions that attention will now be turned to A. N. Radishchev.

The work for the anonymous publication of which Radishchev was initially sentenced to death, A Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow, was concerned with social and political questions, rather than metaphysical problems, though it is clear from the extract from his ode Freedom (Vol'nost') which he included in the book, that in accordance with the requirements of the 'materialist tradition', he could be interpreted as having connected the two :

> "The power of the Tsar protects the faith,
> Faith (vera) confirms the power of the Tsar;
> Together they oppress society;
> One seeks to enchain reason,
> The other strives to erase the will"[33]

To engage for a moment in that potentially distorting talk of 'precursors' and 'anticipations' which is part and parcel of the independent logic of 'traditions', it can nevertheless hardly be overlooked that the poet's condemnation of the unholy alliance of Church and state is echoed throughout the following century amongst Russian radicals. Whether or not, though, the sentiments in these lines amount to atheism or anticlericalism depends in part upon whether he was using 'faith' in a national or universal sense. No judgment can be made in isolation from consideration of the treatise he devoted to metaphysical and epistemological questions, but it might be worth mentioning that in her comments on her copy of Radishehev's Journey, the Empress Catherine expressed the opinion both that the author was not a true Christian, and that he was probably a Martinist; furthermore it can be seen from a letter she wrote to Prince Golitsyn in 1791 that the appellation 'Martinist' was not a general term of abuse. She advised him not to send his children to a German school "for nowadays in many of them the academics are divided into two classes, equally harmful to society: on the one hand, there are outright atheists, on the other, hypocritical Martinists".[34]

Radishchev's treatise On Man, his Mortality and Immortality was begun only twelve days after his arrival in January 1792 at his place of exile, Ilimsk, and seems to have provided him with some consolation for the absence of his friends. The format of the work follows Moses Mendelssohn's Phaedon, oder über die Unsterblichkeit der Seele, a free version of Plato's dialogue which was published in Leipzig in 1767, whilst Radishchev was a student there. Any attempt to locate Radishchev in one or other of the 'two great camps' would have to cope with the eclecticism of the work, which draws upon Locke, Leibniz, Rousseau, d'Holbach, Caspar Wolff, Maupertuis, Herder, Helvétius and Joseph Priestley, to name a few.[35] The contents of the work have already been adequately summarised in this language, and there is nothing that I can add to the impression that any uncommitted reader (if any such there are) would gain, that Radishchev's treatise represents a careful consideration of certain arguments for and against the mortality of the spirit, followed by an unequivocal declaration in favour of the latter. It is, of course, reasonable to observe that he took the former arguments seriously, and to infer from their context in his other writings and his life in general that he found them attractive; but it is difficult to avoid tendentiousness in speculating about his 'real' sympathies, even though one accepts that he might have thought twice about committing his 'true' religious thoughts to paper after the ordeal of imprisonment. It must also be borne in mind that the quasi-dialectical presentation of the treatise, in which arguments for and against the soul's immortality are often presented categorically, lends itself to witting or unwitting misrepresentation of the argument of the entire treatise. Thus, Soviet scholars are wont to concentrate upon Book One,. in which Radishchev considers the similarities and differences between man and the brutes, calling upon physiological data on the way, and Book Two, in which the case against the spiritual nature and immortality of the soul is put forward; on the other hand Allen McConnell, who regards Radishchev as a deist, but is undogmatic about the meaning of the treatise ("of Radishchev's desire to believe in the soul's immortality there can be little doubt, but whether he really did so believe is open to question"[36]), quotes out of context the argument that since the soul is necessary to unify our perceptions, and being in consequence itself a unity is therefore indestructible, it follows that "it must be concluded that the soul, upon the destruction of the body, will be indivisible, consequently it is immaterial, and therefore, immortal".[37] Although McConnell points out that Radishchev had used this argument before, in this case it is mentioned by Radishchev's materialist spokesman, who immediately proceeds to offer his refutation of it. It might be as well to demonstrate how two distinct metaphysical standpoints can be culled from this treatise; first of all, the fervent theist:

"It seems to be characteristic of man in accordance with his sensible constitution, and perhaps of animals in general, to have an inner sense of right and wrong. Do not unto others what you would not have done to you, if it is not a rule proceeding from the sensible constitution of man, then it is perhaps inscribed in us by the finger of the Eternal... Man alone amongst all the earthly creatures has succeeded in knowing that there exists an All-Father, the origin of everything, the source of all forces... the concept of the Supreme Being is in him... It is true that when reason and especially the heart are unclouded by passion, the entire flesh and all the bones feel a power over them, which transcends them. Name this what you will, but Hobbes and Spinoza felt it, and if you are not a monster, O Man! you must sense your Father, for he is everywhere; he lives in you, and what you feel is a gift of the All-loving... and setting out upon the path of enlightenment with the aid of social life, linking action to causes beyond the limits of the visible and the invisible world, man realised by the strength of his own reasoning what before he could only sense, that there is a God."[38]

Secondly, the materialist:

"... you think by means of a bodily organ, how can you have any conception of anything other than materiality?.... And so, if the brain and head are necessary for thought, the nerves for sensation, how can one so foolishly dream that the spirit can act without them?.. And so, O mortal man! Abandon the empty dream that you are a part of the Deity. You were a phenomenon necessary to the world in accordance with eternal laws. Your end has come, the thread of your days has broken, time has ended for you, and eternity has begun."[39]

It might even be possible to present Radishchev as a representative of the third kind of philosophy allowed by Engels, agnosticism. At one stage he asserts that "reason is nothing other than a supplement to our experiences, and it is impossible to be certain of the existence of things otherwise than through experience", an epistemological axiom from which he goes on to deduce both that "matter in itself is unknown to man, but some of its properties are accessible to the senses, and on his knowledge of them rests all his philosophising about matter", and that since spirits are inaccessible to the senses, knowledge of their existence can only be "probable, not certain".[40] Clearly Radishchev, like Locke and unlike Hume, was unwilling to take his presuppositions to their logical conclusion, for he added a footnote to his assertion about spirits saying that "speaking of spirits, I meant only the so-called human soul"; and earlier: "we sometimes know of the existence of things without experiencing from them any changes in our power of cognition".[41]

Any option for the second of these positions as Radishchev's true world-view would have to leap-frog more than one obstacle. Firstly, all of the above quotations are taken from the first two Books of the treatise, which are the most favourable to materialism. Book Three, which sets out to refute materialism, begins by stating that arguments favouring the soul's mortality had been presented to make the weak side, if there were one, more obvious: "Let us try to restore man to that true radiance for which he seems to have been created".[42] Book Four, which includes speculations on the possible nature of the after-life, ends thus: "you determine your future with the present; believe, I repeat, believe, eternity is not a dream".[43] Secondly, the majority of the statements of a materialist nature in Book Two are sanitised by quotation marks, and when the hypothetical spokesman has finished, the author rounds upon his creation, calling him a cruel tyrant, worse than Tiberius, Nero or Caligula.[44] Thirdly, Radishchev, for what it is worth, dissociated himself from philosophers who would liken man to a plant, and obviously had in mind La Mettrie.[45] G. P. Makagonenko attempted to allow for such obstacles by averring that "without taking into account that the tract was preceded by a long struggle between Novikov's practical, and Schwarz's masonic-mystical and ecclesiastico-religious, points of view, it is impossible to understand correctly the political orientation of Radishchev's philosophical statement"; despite its deistic limitations, the tract represents "the developed basis of materialism as the only world-view which gives man the powerful weapon of the knowledge of nature, society and himself".[46] Such perspectives are not confined to Soviet historians, for the poet Pushkin, in his suppressed biography of Radishchev, concluded that "although Radishchev takes up arms against materialism, he is still seen as a student of Helvétius. He sooner expounds than rejects the arguments of pure atheism". It should, though, be remembered that Pushkin himself took "lessons in pure atheism".[47]

Assuming for the sake of argument that McConnell was wrong in suggesting that Pushkin, who found the treatise trite and lifeless in style, did not bother to read beyond the first two books, one could speculate that he might have been impressed by the argument that the independent existence of the soul was inconceivable, since feeling and thought are dependent upon bodily organs, and not so impressed with the confusion of logical problems and matters of fact in one of the rejoinders, that to deny on those grounds the possible independence of the spirit from the body, is like an Egyptian who has lived all his life beside the Nile denying that water could ever be hard.[48] On the basis of the evidence, the safest conclusion with regard both to Radishchev's political stance and to his metaphysical views, is that he is a transitional figure between decorative Voltairian freethought and Decembrist political action in the history of dvorianstvo attitudes. In his liberalism, moral and economic rejection of serfdom, hostility to autocracy, anticlericalism, rational doubts about religion, but overriding emotional need to believe, he is reminiscent of the more moderate wing of the Decembrists, the Northern Society, and to N. I. Turgenev, in particular. We shall now turn to the Decembrists, but by way of recapitulation, the fact that Radishchev had articulated views antagonistic to the interests of his own class may be seen as the first manifestation of the kind of dvoriantsvo dissent which was described earlier, in default of a more convincing explanation at the level of individuals, as an epiphenomenon of that estate's service function; it might also be argued, albeit perversely, that the fact that the evidence is against any ascription of materialistic or atheistic convinctions to Radishchev, supports the view that in general (the fragmentary evidence of the bogokhul'stvo trials apart), such either overtly atheistic views or metaphysical freethought as can be found in the eighteenth century are not so much the companions of a critique of the political, economic and social order, as, again, an epiphenomenon, this time of a state-led secularism.

PART THREE: THE REIGN OF ALEXANDER I AND THE DECEMBRIST MOVEMENT

Introduction

We have seen evidence that materialistic and atheistic sentiments existed amongst the non-noble estates in eighteenth-century Russia, and also that a member of the nobility as cultivated as Radishchev was prepared to take such notions seriously. This in itself is scarcely enough to support a claim that a Russian 'materialist tradition' extends back into the eighteenth century. In any case, if it is to be argued that materialism is the metaphysical soulmate of a political ideology opposed to the existing semi-feudal and Orthodox order, then the absence before Alexander's reign of any such recognisable and systematic political ideology makes it, in terms of that argument alone, out of the question that such a materialist heritage should exist. Nevertheless, it is of circumstantial interest that amongst the educated nobility, liberal political views were accompanied by a fashionable scepticism, which if it touched upon metaphysics at all, was most often deistic. And where, in the case of Radischev, that liberalism was so sincerely and insistently stated as to approximate to a reformist political stance, we find that problems to which materialists offer solutions weigh heavily with him. This, as far as it goes, is at least consistent with the thesis that the stronger or more extreme the political opposition to a regime which in some way justifies its authority on the basis of a theistic ideology, the more likely it is that that opposition will be associated with materialism and atheism.

It cannot be doubted that this thesis applies to Marxist revolutionary groups and political parties, and that fact in itself may throw some light on the tendency of many Marxist-Leninist historians to look for materialistic leanings in earlier radical movements. It may however be that the fundamental position of materialism in the Marxist philosophical edifice is no more than contingent upon the peculiarities of its own historical development. The primary theoretical concern of the following Part will be to consider the prevalence of materialist and atheist thought amongst the Decembrists, whose plans for reform, expressed within a recognisable framework of beliefs and values, set them aside from the palace conspirators of the preceding century's crises of succession. As well as describing some of those ideas, I shall consider those historical events and developments during the reign of Alexander I which may help us to understand the appeal of such ideas to the conspirators.

Even though the twin threat to Catherine's Russia posed by internal peasant revolt, and the transatlantic voyage of republicanism into Europe, had been enough to strip the liberal veneer from her policies, Alexander nevertheless in his accession manifesto declared his resolution to govern in accordance with his grandmother's "laws and heart".[1] The well-known "liberal beginnings" of the first decade of the nineteenth century added to the Alexandrine melting-pot the vital historical ingredient of rising expectations, which, after the national sacrifices of the Napoleonic campaigns grew throughout the army into a sense of unremitted debt. The frustration engendered by the barren outcome of Alexander's flirtations with constitutional projects for Russia grew into bitter resentment upon the apparently preferential granting of a constitutional charter to the Poles, and according to I.D. Yakushkin, it was in direct response to this act that a group of future Decembrists planned regicide.[2] The constitutional carrot continued to be dangled before the nobility as late as 1818, when the Tsar announced to the recently established Polish diet his desire to spread "liberal institutions" over all the regions entrusted to his care.[3]

It scarcely needs a proponent of the Great Man Theory of History to agree that under an unlimited monarchy the deeds, personality and beliefs of one man form an unusually powerful determinant in the course of events and on the climate of opinion. Both the upheaval of Peter's reforms, and later on, Nicholas I's thirty-year feat of historical marking time, are unthinkable without a Tsar possessing or lacking ordinary human qualities to a remarkable degree. Although Alexander had little of the unswerving and irresistable sense of purpose of a Peter, or the constant and immovable sense of duty of a Nicholas, this very inconsistency and infirmity of purpose unmistakably flavours his reign. It may be that Alexander's vicissitudes of policy reflect a basic duality within his own personality, and that the elements of this duality stem from his youth, where his instruction in the spirit of the French Enlightenment by his Swiss tutor César Laharpe was set against a predilection for Prussian militarism discovered at the Emperor Paul's estate Gatchina. Be that as it may, the development of the Decembrist secret societies cannot be fully appreciated in isolation from Alexander's personal role. Given his impressive appearance, and the traditional feeling amongst the army officers of loyalty towards the monarch, heightened amid the patriotic fervour at the outset of the Napoleonic Wars to a near-idolatrous reverence, there is in the early history of the Decembrist movement, alongside formal aspirations towards the liberalisation of the Empire's political and economic institutions, something akin to the emotions of a spurned lover.

Consideration of the Tsar's personality alone will take us only so far, particularly in view of his own impressionability, which brought alternately to the fore the influences of his early liberal friends and advisers, such as Prince Adam Czartoryski and Count Paul Stroganov, and then of reactionaries and mystics like Arakcheyev, Prince Alexander Golitsyn and the Metropolitan Serafim of St. Petersburg. But the political and philosophical views of the Decembrists were more than a reaction to the Tsar's character and choice of advisers, and at the risk of a certain schematicism with regard to this rich and seminal period in European history, I propose, as in the first section on the eighteenth century, to examine historical events and social conditions which may throw some light on the reasons why some thinking Russians were attracted to the kinds of world-view of primary concern here. I shall deal with reform, expansion and subsequent oppression in the field of education; the continuing interaction between West European and indigenous ideas; the role of the Church, of mysticism and religion, particularly during the years of reaction, and finally the development of conditions promoting clandestine opposition to the government.

Section I - Education

We have already seen how, during the eighteenth century, attempts to prod the nobility out of its mediaeval slumber with an educational stick were met with resentment and evasion by the intended beneficiaries, and perhaps more importantly, how the development of an educational system suitable at the very least for the growing bureaucratic and military appetite of the Empire was impeded by inadequate resources and a shortage of qualified teachers. Although towards the end of the period the demeanour of the educated dvoryanin, comparative rarity though he was, differed marvellously from the pathetic incomprehension of his Petrine prototype, even so, at the turn of the century, elementary and secondary education was, despite Catherine's early attempt at a national system, practically non-existent. Amongst the first of Alexander's reforms was the establishment, as part of the reorganisation of the old collegiate state machinery, of a separate Ministry of National Education, headed by Count Zavadovsky, the former president of Catherine's Commission for the Establishment of Schools. On January 26 of the following year, 1803, the Preliminary Regulation concerning National Education was published.[1] This was a landmark in the history of education under the Romanovs, in the sense that the four-tier framework of institutions which the regulation laid down, was scarcely modified throughout the duration of the Empire.

The regulation called for the establishment of an elementary school in every parish, or prikhod, or two combined; two levels of what we should term secondary schools were to operate, the first in every district, or uezd town, and the second in the capital of each province or guberniya. The provincial schools, or gymnasia, were intended amongst other things to provide training for future entrants to the universities, which, as well as teaching the arts and sciences at the highest level, were given jurisdiction over all the schools in the region, or okrug to which they belonged. In practice, three new universities at Kazan', Khar'kov and eventually St. Petersburg were founded after the publication of the regulation, making six in all. Moscow University was the only operative school of higher education at the time of Alexander's accession, for although the university at Dorpat was founded by Paul in 1798 to reconcile the Baltic Germans to his prohibition of study abroad, it was not until 1802 that it was opened by Alexander. This year also saw the founding of the Polish University at Vilna.[2]

The increase in the number of public educational institutions in the early years was accompanied by a stimulation of literary and scientific activities which augured well for an enhancement of the intellectual life of the country. The universities were authorised to sponsor learned societies, such as the Society of Russian History and Antiquities, the Society for the Comparative Study of the Medical and Physical Sciences and the Society of Naturalists, all founded at Moscow University within two years of the granting of its new model charter in 1804. In addition to the learned societies' journals, the university presses also published periodicals such as the Messenger of Europe at Moscow University, as well as textbooks and numerous translations of Western works. The private printing-presses which had been closed down by Paul were re-opened, and his prohibitions on the import of Western books and study abroad were rescinded. New life was breathed into the Russian Academy, the Free Economic Society and the Academy of Sciences. The last-named body was granted in 1803 a new charter which amongst other things encouraged it to renew relationships with foreign learned societies, and to publish an annual volume of scientific works.

The failure of the Academy to fulfil its promise in the first quarter of the nineteenth century in many ways epitomizes the sterility of Alexander's educational reforms within his own lifetime. The Academy suffered successively from a shortage of funds stemming from the Napoleonic Wars, a reluctance of eminent foreign scholars to come to Russia in the fiercely nationalistic climate which surrounded the French invasion, and a strongly antiscientific and generally anti-Western sentiment which prevailed in the years of reaction. The second and third factors impinged upon the universities in an acute form. At the very outset these institutions were hamstrung by the chronic shortage of qualified teachers, but those foreign teachers brought in to fill the breach were often incapable of mastering the Russian language, which was at any rate still a difficult medium for advanced scientific and literary discourse. This was compounded by a sharpening of the perennial strife between the foreign and indigenous professors, occasioned by the latter chauvinism of the reign. After 1815, certain of the universities were destined to become the guinea pigs for the some of the most obscurantist experimentation in Russian educational history. Although this can be seen as the high tide of militant antirationalist Christianity beginning with the multiplication of the Russian Bible Society, it was, by way of historical irony, to a large extent brought about by an adverse report on the German universities, the very institutions which had provided the model for the proliferation of their Russian counterparts.

The freedom and autonomy guaranteed by the model charter of 1804 did not however go untouched by the spirit of reaction before the appearance of A.S. Sturdza's *Mémoire sur l'état actuel de l'Allemagne*. The first victim in the Universities was the former monk Johann Baptist Schad, who was appointed professor at Khar'kov University on the recommendation of Fichte and Schelling. But whereas his association with the latter was initially advantageous, it would bring about his downfall as circumstances rapidly changed. In 1814 Schad survived a jealous colleague's denunciation of his Schellingian views, but by 1816 Prince A.N. Golitsyn had been appointed Minister of Education. Golitsyn was also procurator of the Holy Synod, and was allegedly Alexander's first mentor in Bible Study in the darkest months of 1812. In any case, Schad's supposedly Schellingian metaphysics of liberty and natural law theory were now unacceptable, and at the end of 1816 he was actually deported.[3]

Systematic harassment of academics really began in 1820, the year in which M.L. Magnitsky was appointed superintendent of the Kazan school district, thereby giving him effective control of the local University. Magnitsky had earlier been a friend of Mikhail Speransky, Alexander's adviser on internal affairs until his downfall in 1812 and subsequent exile, a fate shared by Magnitsky himself. It was in very different guise that he returned to favour in 1817 as governor of Simbirsk, from which position he conducted a campaign against what he perceived as the atheism and immorality rife at Kazan University. Magnitsky's remarkable inroads into professorial freedom have understandably exercised a horrible fascination for many general historians; but for our purposes, the Magnitsky era is of great significance, because it depicts a connection alleged by the authorities between atheism, materialism and revolution, and demonstrates a felt need by the same authorities to defend autocracy on an intellectual level by an appeal to Christianity. According to Magnitsky himself:

"The present war of the spirit of evil cannot be stopped by armies, for against a spiritual attack, an equally spiritual defence is needed. A prudent censorship, together with the establishment of national education on a basis of faith is the only stronghold against the depths which are inundating Europe with unbelief and degradation."[4]

It may be doubted whether such sentiments are fully consistent with Magnitsky's initial recommendation, written in the report to the Ministry of Education which preceded his appointment as curator of the Kazan educational district, that Kazan University should be "publicly destroyed". A clearer notion of his spiritual defence can be obtained from the directives which he issued to Kazan from St. Petersburg. The teaching of philosophy was henceforward to be based on Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and Timothy, and the principles of political science to be derived largely from Moses, David and Solomon. Magnitsky was particularly suspicious of philosophy and political science, which he termed the "dreamy sciences", and ordered that the teaching of these subjects should stress the limitations of human reason in comparison with divine omniscience. The same applied also to the "exact" or "real sciences", which as well as natural science and mathematics also included theology and law. Divine omniscience was again to be demonstrated in the teaching of physics, together with "the limitations of our senses and instruments for the understanding of the wonders which eternally surround us."[5] Fuchs, the professor of anatomy, aware perhaps of the kinds of ontological inferences that, for instance, F.J. Gall and G. Spurzheim[6] could draw from early nineteenth-century research on the brain and nervous system, prefaced his course at Kazan University in the following manner: "The aim of anatomy is to discover in the structure of the human body the wisdom of the Creator, who has created man in his own image and likeness. Our body is temple of the soul, and it is therefore necessary to know it and to keep it pure and unviolated; on the intimate link of body and soul one must beware, not to fall into awful materialism..."[7] Though Magnitsky scarcely emerges from the evidence provided thus far as a champion of scientific progress, it cannot be argued that a belief in the divine origin, design and sustenance of the universe, coupled with an adverse estimation of the powers of human reason are in themselves inimical to the methods of modern scientific enquiry as it is commonly understood, notwithstanding the rigorous scepticism and rejection of traditional authority which appear to underlie them. Indeed there is almost a tradition of literature[8] which seeks to show that the development of the physical sciences in the latter part of the seventeenth century was in some sense facilitated by ascetic Protestant evaluations of the study of nature as being to the greater glory of God and the relief of man's estate. Add to this the obvious inadequacy of man's reason in comparison with the Creator's omniscience, and the replacement of an eternal Platonic world arranged in accordance with a rational necessity, by a subject universe dependent on the infinite will of the Hebrew God, and by a process of ideational generation there emerges the modern experimental scientist in whose suspicion of hypotheses lies the transformation of the world. At any rate the statistics suggest that in Western Europe a disproportionate number of Protestants have been engaged in scientific research, and it can plausibly be inferred that there is more to the relationship between Protestantism and science than the mere discarding of the Aristotelian yoke entailed by the Reformed theologians' return to the Word and Works of God. Nevertheless this biblicist rejection of revelation through tradition was extended by Protestant leaders like Melanchthon to literalism with regard to the truth of the Scriptures, an exegetical standpoint which in his case served as an impasse to Copernicus' heliocentric cosmology. What was also needed was an alternative set of exegetical principles in the vein of Galileo's Letter to the Grand Duchess Christina [9], either to separate the provinces of the Bible and of Nature, or to reconcile apparent differences over matters of fact by arguing that in the Bible they were accommodated to the understanding of its original audience. But if, as we have already seen, Russia had its Galileo in the shape of Lomonosov, clearly Magnitsky was no disciple of Calvin's teaching that the Bible is a book for laymen.

For historical reasons the Russian Church did not view the Bible through Neoplatonic or Aristotelian spectacles, and hence, as we have seen, there was no opposition to heliocentric cosmology of the kind which Galileo encountered in the Catholic Church's defence of the Church Fathers' Ancient Greek perception of the universe. Furthermore, throughout the eighteenth century, and indeed during the first decade of Alexander's reign, the monarchy enthusiastically sponsored science as the instrument of Russia's Europeanisation and modernisation. It has been suggested that Newton's ahistorical mechanistic 'absolutism' had more appeal for an autocrat than subsequent theories of change, such as the nebular hypothesis of Kant and Laplace, Wolff's theory of epigenesis, Buffon's transformism and Lyell's historical geology.[10] Leaving aside any deliberation over the discrepancy between what Newton said and the many interpretations of his disciples, it cannot be overlooked that the growth of an evolutionary or historical perspective in several branches of science runs parallel with a decline in the optimistic dynamism generated by the Petrine reforms, and a growing preoccupation from about the middle of Catherine's reign with external and internal subversion. That the conduct of scientific instruction and research during the eighteenth century was impeded more by intrinsic inadequacy and material wants than by ecclesiastical censure says more for autocratic self-confidence than any mature theological reconciliation between the Revelation of God and the revelations of scientists. Thus when a defensive autocracy allowed the unsophisticated conservative elements of the Orthodox Church and the mystical religious fringe full rein in the scientific world, the result was a bull-in-a-china-shop episode in Russian intellectual history which almost makes the trial of Galileo and the Darwinian debates conciliatory by comparison.

But lest the academic be accused of over-reacting to intellectual injury, it should be stressed that Alexander's reign, as in so many other ways in Russian history, marks a turning-point in the history of materialist thought, and the period of reaction is the fulcrum. As Bertrand Russell comments in his Introduction to Lange's The History of Materialism entitled 'Materialism, Past and Present':

> "Accusations of materialism have always been brought by the orthodox against their opponents, with the result that the less discriminating opponents have adopted materialism because they believed it to be an essential part of their opposition ... Historically we may regard materialism as a system of dogma set up to combat orthodox dogma. As a rule, the materialistic dogma has not been set up by men who loved dogma, but by men who felt that nothing less definite would enable them to fight the dogmas they disliked. They were in the position of men who raise armies to enforce peace."[11]

The extent to which one is prepared to accept Russell's generalisation may depend upon one's sympathy with his beliefs that materialism is philosophically unable to cope with the facts of consciousness and that its scientific basis has in any case been demolished by relativistic physics. In other words, although or because Russell is at one with the materialists' opposition to dogmatic Christianity, he feels that excuses must be made for them. Nevertheless, one point that he makes may throw some light on the significance of the Alexandrine spiritual reaction. Materialism is dogmatic, in the sense that it makes a claim which, although largely based on scientific knowledge, transcends it in every sense of the word. If it is in the nature of science (if not of scientists) to be undogmatic, and to adhere to any paradigm only insofar as it appears to conform with observable data, then materialism itself is unscientific, in that it claims universality, and more so, in that it implicitly predicts scientific discoveries in its own favour. We have not yet reached a stage in the development of scientific knowledge where no one inexplicable phenomenon in nature would stand in the way of the sceptic's acceptance of materialism; it can indeed be argued that in the light of modern subatomic physics, the possibility of such a stage has disappeared for good. This raises a number of questions. Why, if the link between science and materialism is so dubitable, has materialism appeared so attractive, as it undoubtedly has at certain times? Why again has its imputation alarmed so many natural philosophers and clerics if its dubiety is so manifest? Russell suggests that the answer to the former is the unexplained fact in the latter, and in the case of the Alexandrine reaction, this explanation, as far as it goes, seems at least consistent with what we know. It is difficult to imagine that, for example, the crudity of Magnitsky's assault on supposed atheism and materialism was an equal and opposite reaction to rampant godless freethought in the universities. The problem for the historian is though, as it is with all unorthodox thought, that it inevitably shuns public disclosure, and that such overt or covert expressions of it that we have are by inference only the tip of an iceberg. Therefore it can be an arbitrary judgment as to the extent to which heterodox opinions are a response to official attitudes, or if not, whether the reactions of the existing order are exaggerated or not.

It might also be added that the scepticism necessary to dissolve the connection between science and materialism (at any rate in the nineteenth century) could also be turned against dogmatic Christianity itself, and that this may account for the cleric's horror of materialism. Be that as it may, Magnitsky's branding of natural science, philosophy and political science as atheistic and materialistic, would, if Russell is right, serve to recommend them as such to his enemies within Decembrist circles.

Magnitsky's regime was not unique in the last years of Alexander's reign. In 1819 the study of theology was made obligatory in all universities, and a special decree called for the expulsion of those professors whose views were found incompatible with religion and morality. We have already seen how Schad of Khar'kov University incurred the wrath of Golitsyn's Academic Committee, set up in 1816 to censor scholarly works; similarly Professor A.S. Lubkin of Kazan University incurred opposition, despite the fact that his Metaphysics contained a realist rebuttal of Kant's apriorist treatment of time and space. The irony was that although Kant's critical philosophy was reviled by Magnitsky for its corrosive effect on theological arguments, Kant's doctrine of the unknowability of 'noumena' or 'things-in-themselves' accorded more with Magnitsky's emphasis on the limitations of human powers in understanding the mysteries of the world than Lubkin's rationalist optimism with regard to the ability of the human intellect to arrive at the essence of things. It was rationalism above all which was the common factor in the dismissal of Kunitsyn, Arsen'ev, Raupach, Hermann and Galich from the new University of St. Petersburg. This professorial purge was initiated by Magnitsky's soulmate Dmitriy Runich, who in 1821 succeeded Count Uvarov as curator of the new University of St. Petersburg. One of Galich's offences was to believe, like Lubkin, that the essence of matter was accessible to human reason, though unlike Lubkin, his rationalism derived from Schelling's

Naturphilosophie. The removal of Kunitsyn is particularly significant, since he represents one of the strongest indigenous intellectual influences on the Decembrists, several of whom either attended his public lectures or were taught by him in his capacity as professor of moral and political sciences at the Tsarskosel'sky Lyceum. Kunitsyn's work Natural Law (1818-20) was condemned for its Rousseauist version of the contractual theory of political power, which was judged, not illogically, to be incompatible with the official view that the Tsar's power derived from God.[12]

In 1817, Z.I. Karneev became curator of the Khar'kov educational district, and two years later instructed all the professors at the University that their teaching should conform not only with the Bible, but with the interpretation of Christianity given by the Swiss theosopher, J.P. Dutoît-Membrini.[13] The rector of the University, T.F. Osipovsky, was dismissed in 1820 for an alleged comment to a student that it was more appropriate to say "God exists" rather than "God lives".[14] Osipovsky offers a parallel with Lubkin, in that before his pioneering work in the advancement of mathematics in Russia, he delivered a sharp attack on Kant's 'a priori' treatment of time and space. Thus opposition to Kant was no safeguard, despite the loathing in which he was held by the militant mystics of the Russian Bible Society.

I have dwelt upon the reaction as it affected the universities because one can see, albeit in exaggerated form, the inauguration of a new kind of antirationalist, and specifically anti-materialist ideological aggression on the part of the government, and in its broadest sense the Orthodox Church. It must be said however that Magnitsky and his imitators represent one aspect only of a broad cultural and political reaction which persisted up until the time of the Crimean War, long after the zeal of Magnitsky and Runich had become an embarrassment to the authorities. Although the relatively short-lived ascendancy of these men in the universities gives the episode the air of an aberration, their demise, like the earlier resignation of Prince Golitsyn in 1824, was due not to a change of heart but to a change of hue, that is, the re-establishment of the ascendancy of the Orthodox hierarchy in place of the somewhat latitudinarian mysticism which had flourished in the Emperor's mind and realm since 1812. As far as public educational institutions were concerned, there grew within government circles out of this heterogeneity of conservative, reactionary and mystical ideas an outright suspicion of philosophy and the emergent social sciences alongside a new ambivalent attitude towards the natural sciences, which was nothing less than a volte-face in comparison with the curricular innovation incorporated into the educational reforms. This is all the more remarkable when it is remembered that the expansion of the teaching of mathematics and the natural sciences which characterised this innovation was even for a time mimicked by the theological academies.

I have already made the point that the fruits of the new system of public education were more potential than actual. The number of students at gymnasia and similar secondary schools had risen from approximately 5,600 in 1809 to only some 7,700 in 1825. The rise in enrolments at the universities was proportionately greater, though the numbers involved even smaller: the figures for 1808-9 at the Universities of Moscow, Dorpat, Khar'kov and Kazan combined were 450, while in 1823-24 they had risen to a little over 1,600. It is noteworthy, though probably coincidental, that the lowest figures were in Magnitsky's stamping-ground at Kazan.[15] Although the University professors were clearly not overburdened with teaching and lecturing responsibilities, it was not a propitious period for intellectual achievements. It is fortunate that N.I. Lobachevsky, who was dean of the physical-mathematical faculty at Kazan University from 1820 to 1825, was no more than delayed by Magnitsky's incumbency in his epoch-making elaboration of a non-Euclidean geometry.

It would be impossible to argue that the Decembrist rebellion was even partially a direct outcome of the educational reforms, though this in itself is connected with the relative lack of vigour of the new institutions. The Decembrists were almost entirely young army officers of noble stock, and many were born into rich aristocratic families from Moscow and St. Petersburg. Consequently they participated in the nobility's moves to avoid public schools, and were generally educated in alternative private establishments, or existing institutions reserved for the nobility. An exception must be made for the Society of United Slavs, which was first called by that name in 1823, and was grafted onto the Southern Society of the Decembrists as late as September 1825. Its members were in many ways the prototypes of the radical raznochintsy of the 1860's, and were generally the sons of small landowners, ruined noblemen, minor government officials or clerics. One was the son of a Ukrainian peasant, but ran away from home at the age of 17 and exchanged his family name of Duntsov when he managed to obtain documents in the name of a dvoryanin P.F. Vygodovsky.[16] He had received some education at a Catholic school, whereas some of his future comrades had benefitted from the new system of public schools. I.I.Gorbachevsky, for example, attended the Vitebsk gymnasium, while V.A. Bechasnov was educated at its counterpart in Ryazan' before proceeding to the Cadet Corps. N.A. Kryukov, who was a member of the Southern Society, spent some time at the Nizhegorod gymnasium, but this was because his father was governor of Nizhegorod.[17]

Kryukov was at once unusual amongst the membership of the Northern and Southern Societies in having attended a public secondary school, and also typical in that he received his first instruction at the aristocratic boarding school of Moscow University, an experience he shared with V.F. Raevsky (the first 'Decembrist' to be arrested), F.F. Vadkovsky, M.A. Fonvizin and P.G. Kakhovsky, one of the five to go to the scaffold in 1826.[18] Although this particular 'school within a school' was a legacy of the previous century (Novikov is numbered amongst its graduates), the proliferation of boarding schools catering exclusively for the nobility was more characteristic of the first two decades of the nineteenth century, particularly after 1809, when the government issued two decrees, inspired by Speransky, the first of which abrogated the preferential entitlement of the sons of aristocratic families to exemption from the lower grades of state service, and the second of which made the attainment of a whole range of higher grades conditional upon graduation from a university, or passing an entrance examination administered by a university.[19] This could be seen as legislation following logically from the educational reforms, from the state's pressing need for qualified personnel in education, medicine, government, the armed forces and industry, and from Peter's original conception of a nobility entirely defined by service. But it was also at loggerheads with the nobility's increasing attempts to throw off its service obligations and replace them with service privileges, and thereby achieve some kind of corporate status. But the extent to which the government felt in a position to enact such unpopular legislation is an indication of the increasing dissonance between the goals of the bureaucracy and the nobility, and moreover of the increasing social distance between the two. This is particularly well illustrated by Speransky himself, whose non-noble origins (he was the son of a village priest) and non-noble training (he was educated at the Vladimir and St. Petersburg theological seminaries) made him a natural lightning conductor for aristocratic resentment.[20] The differences should not, however, at this time as well as in the latter years of the eighteenth century, be overemphasised, since underlying the decrees is a continuing need by the state for the service function of the nobility, and since the evasion of public educational institutions to which the legislation was an attempted countermeasure was on the part of the nobility a manifestation not only of class prejudice towards their open nature, but also of a justifiable judgment that the years spent in secondary and tertiary education would be worth considerably less to a young *dvoryanin* than the same years spent in state service.

Generally speaking, the aristocratic boarding schools proved inadequately staffed to fulfil their twofold function of preserving the social isolation of the nobility and enabling them to meet the new qualifications for high state service. An exception must be made for the aforementioned state-sponsored Tsarskosel'skoe Lyceum, which was founded in 1811, and which was attended by the future Decembrists I.I. Pushchin and V.K. Küchelbecker, and also the poet Pushkin, who moved in Decembrist circles but was considered too unreliable for initiation.[21] Exception cannot be made for the Jesuit boarding schools, which multiplied after 1810, the year in which Count A.P. Razumovsky became Minister of Education. It is no coincidence that Razumovsky was heavily influenced by the Catholic reactionary philosopher and founder of Ultramontanism Joseph de Maistre, who had been since 1803 the King of Sardinia's minister plenipotentiary in St. Petersburg. In 1820, the Jesuits were expelled for their proselytising zeal on behalf of Catholicism, though they seem to have been singularly unsuccessful in this respect in the case of the Decembrist A.P. Baryatinsky, who attended one of their St. Petersburg establishments.[22]

Several leading Decembrists were educated in the traditional aristocratic manner by private tutors, and some enjoyed the benefits of learning abroad. Sergey Murav'ev-Apostol, for example, before he became a student at the Institute of Communications which was founded in Alexander's reign, was educated at a Parisian private boarding-school with his brother Matvey. M.P. Bestuzhev-Ryumin, who with Murav'ev-Apostol negotiated the union of the Southern Society with the Society of United Slavs, was fortunate enough to be educated at home by foreign tutors, and professors from Moscow University. P.I. Pestel', like Radishchev, was a student in Germany (in Hamburg and Dresden) and his example undeniably gives some substance to Sturdza's and Magnitsky's horror of the German universities. Many Decembrists (including K.F. Ryleev, A.A. Bestuzhev-Marlinsky, N.A. Bestuzhev and D.I. Zavalishin) received a traditional noblemen's training in the Corps of Cadets.[23]

Although few Decembrists were actually educated in the new public schools, and very rarely in the new universities, their theoretical and practical concern with education is fully consonant with the spirit of the reforms. This is perhaps no more than would be expected from a group whose theoreticians gave virtually unanimous tacit endorsement to a philosophy of history which like that of the eighteenth-century French philosophes accorded primary causative status to a concept like 'enlightenment', and conversely to ignorance, illusion, superstitution and so on.[24] It was this endorsement which would earn the reproval of successive generations of historical materialists, expressed in the judgment that those Decembrists who were materialists were in this respect 'inconsistent', or at best that their materialism was 'metaphysical'. But given that they shared in the Enlightenment's rationalist optimism that proper education and the advance of knowledge would inevitably lead to greater happiness, the solution of social problems and the elaboration of the true principles of morality (the entire complex of inferences resting on a kind of Socratic moral determinism), it is scarcely surprising to find education included in the four "fields of activity" designated by the moderate Constitution of the Society of Welfare.[25] However since one of the other fields is 'philanthropy', it could be argued that this early concentration on education reflects more a masonic belief in change by individual conversion, rather than a belief in education as a vehicle of social reform. Indeed there is in later manifestoes like the Northern Society's Constitution or the Southern Society's Russkaya Pravda a concentration on the details of political, economic and social measures to the detriment of a fresh and constructive educational policy. One cannot help but relate this alteration in emphasis to an emergent distrust, even fear, within the two major societies of anything akin to popular participation in the movement, which can be put down to the unwitting class prejudices on the part of their members, or exceptionally to the estimation of a hard-headed strategist like Pestel' that a military uprising should precede social reform. This tends to lend a hollow ring of abstraction to declamations in Decembrist writings about "the goddess of enlightenment" and inspired in Gorbachevsky of the more plebeian Society of United Slavs suspicion of Pestel's highhandedness and Sergey Murav'ev Apostol's cynical "Machiavellian" appeal to the simple faith of the troops in his Orthodox Catechism.[26]

Against this, it should be pointed out that the reason for Major V.F. Raevsky's arrest on 6 February 1822 was that he was suspected of disseminating revolutionary propoganda in his capacity as teacher in Major-General M.F. Orlov's divisional Junkers school and Lancastrian school for soldiers of the ranks. After his eventual exile in 1828, Raevsky married a peasant woman and founded a school at the village of Olonki, near Irkutsk.[27] By far the most impressive pedagogic achievement amongst the Siberian exiles was to the credit of I.D. Yakushkin, whose two single-sex schools at Yalutorovsk produced more than 1600 graduates.[28]

It may be more than coincidental that the two foremost Decembrist educationalists were also two of the Soviet pantheon of convinced atheists and materialists claimed to have continued the tradition of Lomonosov and Radishchev. I do not wish to argue that the educational reforms were in any sense responsible for the emergence of such views in any individuals; it may be however that the reforms and subsequent reaction form part of a complex of social factors, and are also the vivid expression of shifting social patterns, which although they do not provide a causal explanation of a given individual's views, at any rate throw light on the fact that those views attain cultural significance. The first point I wish to make does not relate to the Decembrists, though it does to their immediate successors. This is that the reforms, in conjunction with Speransky's decrees of 1809, eventually, from the 1820's onwards, succeeded in diverting the nobility into the universities, which despite the attentions of Magnitsky and Runich for a few years, became repositories of German learning in general, and specifically German idealist philosophy. This cluster of conditions, provides the intellectual kernel for the development of the true radical intelligentsia, of which the Decembrists are justly considered the prototypes.

As far as the Alexandrine period and the Decembrists are concerned, it is probably the failure of the reforms and the reaction against them which tells us more. Apart from the lack of personnel and of resources, both in their own ways to a large extent brought about by the Napoleonic Wars, the nobility's preference for the dancing classes and etiquette of the private boarding-schools represents not only an intellectual frivolity inherited from the previous century but also a widening gulf of similar vintage between the goals of the nobility and the monarchy as executed by its bureaucracy. It has been argued that the ill-fated Decembrist uprising was the last of three significant attempts only of the service élite to restrain the autocrat's unlimited power, the first being during the so-called Time of Troubles spanning the turn of the 17th century, and the second the occasion of the Empress Anne's accession in 1730.[29] The high social standing of many leading Decembrists and their families certainly favours such an interpretation, though to accept it wholesale would be to lend little weight to the sincerity of the principles underlying their reformist projects and manifestoes. In any case, this grand level of theorising is difficult to assess, particularly where one's own depth of knowledge across a broad sweep of history is lacking. I can only reiterate that in the case of the Decembrists, unfulfilled, not to say rejected, expectations play a major part in their eventual opposition to the monarchy, either in practice or in principle, and it may be that materialism, if indeed it is an academic interpretation of the world which goes hand in hand with a political desire to change it, became that much more likely in association with an educational policy which during one decade was an enthusiastic sponsor of curricular innovation, and in the next branded it as corrupt and godless. In conclusion, suffice it to say that it was in the educational area that the government made its first public assault on the evils of atheism and materialism, and in so doing fully recognised for the first time the double-edged weapon that advanced education represented for the maintenance of unlimited power. In other words, if recognised quite early that in order to produce both highly qualified and highly obedient personnel, an intellectually acceptable ideology was necessary, moreover one which was opposed to materialism, perceived as coterminous with revolution.

Section 2 - Western Ideas

The rather artificial and schematic choice of subheadings referred to in Section I is nowhere more apparent when contact with Western Europe is considered in implied isolation from the other factors selected as the possible conditions of the increasing significance of materialist thought in Russia. As we have already seen, the new universities were modelled on their German counterparts; the four-tier system of public schools can be derived from the Frenchman Condorcet's philosophy of education; and even the rhetoric of the reaction, directed as it was against the flood of depravation from the West, can be linked to the presence in Russia of de Maistre. It would indeed be difficult to select any major act of legislation, work of philosophy or science, or any element of the entire intellectual superstructure of Alexander's Russia as entirely independent of some kind of Western influence. It might follow from this that a separate consideration of the role of the West were redundant, were it not for the peculiar intensification of contact with it during Alexander's reign, and did it not raise an important question of theory as to how far such external influences can be accepted as an explanation of what they influenced.

Magnitsky's aquatic metaphor for the spread of Western ideas seems particularly appropriate when one considers the reign of the Emperor Paul, in comparison with which the first decade of his son's rule seems like the opening of the floodgates. Paul's apparently liberal gesture in releasing Radishchev and Novikov from prison may have been more in defiance of Catherine's memory, and it seems that the only thing he had in common with his mother was a thorough detestation of the French Revolution. His xenophobic prohibition of both study and travel abroad for Russian subjects, and of the import of foreign publications and music contrasts vividly with his eldest son's avowed ambition as a young man simply to live as a private citizen with his wife beside the Rhine.[1] Indeed it was Alexander's suspected scorn for Russians which wounded many potentially loyal young Decembrist army officers. That a new stance had been adopted towards Western Europe during the first years of Alexander's reign can be seen from the membership of the short-lived Anglophile "Unofficial Committee". Count Paul Stroganov was taught by the radical French mathematician Gilbert Romme, a member of the Jacobin Club, who used to take his pupil to its meetings during the first years of the Revolution. Stroganov was also a member of the select English Club, and the other three members of the Committee, Prince Adam Czartoryski, N.N. Novosil'tsev and Count Viktor Kochubey passed several of their earlier years in England. It is noteworthy that two other liberals of a rather different hue, Speransky and Admiral N.S. Mordvinov, married Englishwomen.[2]

It is natural that while the proto-Westerners of the "Unofficial Committee" had the monarch's ear, the censorship should be relaxed, particularly as this was also the wish of older statesmen and literary figures like Zavadovsky, Count A.R. Vorontsov, G.R. Derzhavin and N.M. Karamzin. The new law concerning censorship of 9 July 1804 exempted foreign books sent to private individuals, but ordered that manuscripts intended for publication be submitted to the Ministry of Education.[3] The limitations of this measure were soon apparent, when in the same year, I.P. Pnin's Essay on Enlightenment with regard to Russia was prohibited and withdrawn from all libraries when the author in the second revised version argued against serfdom.[4] Although the new Tsar had abolished

Catherine's "Secret Expedition", Russia's participation in the Third Coalition against Napoleon's France prompted the revival of the security police, thereby accelerating the end of a pause in surveillance and censorship. In 1805 a provisional committee of public security was set up under the Ministry of the Interior, and made permanent at the beginning of 1807. The committee, which incidentally included Novosil'tsev in its membership, was charged with the surveillance of individuals and societies, especially the masonic lodges, a function which was carried out by the Special Chancery of the Ministry of Police from 1811 to 1819, the time in which that ministry existed separately from the Ministry of the Interior. Thus we can see that even before Golitsyn's Academic Committee and the Magnitsky era in the universities, an alliance, albeit often notable for its lack of cooperation and communcation, had been formed between the educational authorities and the police for the control of Western influences. Nevertheless, a dramatic expansion took place during the first years of Alexander's reign in the publication of books, a large proportion of which were translations of foreign works. It is perhaps not surprising, not only in view of the Anglophile complexion of Alexander's earlier counsellors, but also given the fact that, unlike its French neighbours, England had managed to combine monarchy with liberal political and legal institutions, that the throne lent its weight to an unusual Russian vogue for English and Scottish thought by ordering the translation of Jeremy Bentham's Discourse on Civil and Penal Legislation and Jean Louis Delolme's The Constitution of England. Admiral Mordvinov chose Bacon, Newton, Adam Smith and Bentham as the four greatest contributors to human welfare; Newton's Principia Mathematica, Sir William Blackstone's Commentaries on the Laws of England, and Adam Smith's The Wealth of Nations were all translated.[5]

It need hardly be pointed out that much of what was advocated in these works was at complete loggerheads with economic, legal and political practice in autocratic Russia, and that it was equally clear from the earliest years of the nineteenth century that the monarchy had no intention of yielding up any of its absolute legislative power, either to the Senate or later on to the State Council proposed by Speransky. Could it not be, then, that the influx, sponsored by the government, of Western literature espousing liberal political systems, planted seeds of reform in the minds of the young Decembrists, and that in the oppressive climate of censorship and surveillance which followed, these seeds grew into attitudes of radical opposition? There seems to be a clear analogy here between the educational model for the development of materialist thought and the literary model for the growth of political opposition, and not only an analogy but a connection in that the literary model provides that degree of opposition which makes the government's own opposition to materialism and atheism a recommendation of them. Needless to say, the applicability of a similar literary model to the acceptance of materialist ideas themselves could be investigated, whether in conjunction with the growth of oppositional political views, or indeed as in itself the simplest explanation possible for the existence of materialists in Russia; the fact that certain individuals had access, for example, to the writings of Epicurus or d'Holbach, might be singled out as the necessary and sufficient antecedent condition of their views.

Whatever approach one favours, the questions begged by each one concern the relationship between the accessibility of certain views in books and periodicals, and their acceptability to certain individuals and groups. Alexandre Koyré, in a work spanning this period, makes the following observation:

> "En effet, on peut dire que toute l'histoire intellectuelle de la Russie moderne est dominée et déterminée par un seul et même fait: le fait du contact et de l'opposition entre la Russie et l'Occident, celui de la pénétration de la civilisation européenne en Russie."[6]

It would be hard to imagine a Magnitsky gainsaying the implied potency of Western thought; indeed to that extent the sentiment was apparently shared by the Investigating Commission set up by Nicholas I to interrogate the Decembrist insurgents. For instance, in the standard questionnaire to which the prisoners were required to submit written answers, the following questions were put:

> "From what time and from where did you acquire liberal thoughts, i.e. were they communicated by other people, or by the reading of books or works in manuscript, and which ones? Who helped to implant these thoughts in you?"[7]

It must be said that the Decembrists were not reluctant to answer this question, and that their replies give plenty of valuable information about the kinds of books and authors by which they were undoubtedly influenced. But it should be noted that they were led by the question's assumption that liberal ideas were acquired, either by contact with others or by reading books and manuscripts, and moreover that it was palpably in the interest of the accused to ascribe their criminal beliefs and activities to some kind of contagion from abroad, rather than to their own deepest convictions.

Unfortunately, this kind of explanation failed to mitigate their crimes as far as their judges were concerned, in all probability because the latter were unable to conceive of any other kind of explanation. Apart from those considerations, the replies of the Decembrists to this particular question are striking as much for the diversity, within certain limits, as the similarity of the books and authors which they single out as the culprits. A penitent Bestuzhev-Ryumin mentions the tragedies of Voltaire and the "empty-worded" de Pradt, while Pestel' attributes his transition from a constitutional to a republican way of thinking to, amongst other things, reading Antoine Destutt de Tracy. A.A. Bestuzhev-Marlinsky cites Bentham and the historian Heeren, whereas both Ryleev and E.P. Obolensky choose Bignon and Benjamin Constant. More traditional fare is selected by the religious convert A.N. Murav'ev, who read Machiavelli, Montesquieu and Rousseau's Contrat Social, and by the leader of the Society of the United Slavs, P.I. Borisov, who went back to the Lives of Plutarch and Cornelius.[8] Moreover, this diversity does not correlate with divergencies of opinion over the principal disjunctions of Decembrist social and political philosophy (republic or constitutional monarchy, federation or strong central government, emancipation of the serfs with or without land, and so on).

The most fundamental objection that can be made against Koyré's observation is that to treat the history of ideas as a process of cross-pollination, or an exercise in genealogy, is ultimately unsatisfying. Apart from the fact that as a general procedure it would sooner or later logically short-circuit, since not every writer's thoughts could all be derived from the others', it also tells us very little to say, for example, that Pestel' was a republican because he read Destutt de Tracy. We may never be able to explain why an individual like Pestel is attracted towards republican views, but his admiration of Destutt de Tracy is part of that attraction, and not the cause of it. The same can be said about groups and philosophical vogues. It is true in a sense that modes of philosophical thinking in Russia were determined at various points in its history by the prevalence of the works of Voltaire, Schelling, Hegel, Feuerbach and Marx. But there is obviously more to the particular appeal of each thinker to its generation than the availability of their works and the passage of time. For one thing, and this is increasingly true from 1801 onwards, each thinker or school of thought is but one of a variety of West European intellectual inputs, and however unoriginal the Decembrist theorists may have been, one can still ask why certain views had more appeal than others. It should be borne in mind that in the masonic lodges, future and even actual Decembrists, and other young men of much the same social background were taken with the mysticism of Jung-Stilling and Eckartshausen. Just as the Schellingians of the 1820's and 30's could swallow the indigestible imperfections of the empirical world by an appeal to a higher reality, so some of the freemasons were comforted by Jakob Boehme's sedative doctrine that evil is God's creation necessary for the realisation of the good; similarly, they could by obedience of the commandments prepare themselves for elevation to the ranks of the angels in Emanuel Swedenborg's Spiritual World. In other words, from the same generation, one group of the educated nobility when presented with theoretically the same Western European intellectual menu could opt for a metaphysic diametrically opposed to another group's choice, even though Russian reality were apparently equally unacceptable to both. In this respect, on one hand the masonic mystics, and later on the Young Men of the Archives and Wisdom-lovers, and on the other the Decembrists, anticipate the opposing views of the Slavophiles and Westerners of the 1830's and 40's. It may be that this is a paradox of dimension only, and that finer focussing on family background, psychological make-up, personal acquaintances and chance contact with a particular sort of philosophy at an opportune point of personal development might prove more revealing, but such divergent reactions present at least a _prima facie_ logical obstacle for Koyré' thesis.

The contact, or contagion theory not only fails to explain why similar groups are attracted towards opposing ideas, but also why one group is particularly infected by one set of ideas rather than another. That a historically significant group in the first quarter of the nineteenth century should in part turn towards materialism is both in itself and in terms of the contact theory surprising, since the period marks a low ebb in the history of materialist thought generally. By this time the optimism and speculative bravado, generated by the Newtonian synthesis in mechanics and culminating in the materialism of La Mettrie and d'Holbach, had lost their vigour, and interest was being focussed upon what could _not_ be explained by the world-view of Newton's disciples, rather that what could. Newton's demonstration that the gravity of falling bodies could also account for the observed paths of the heavenly bodies lent itself to an atomism which rendered obsolete the crude mechanistic analogies of Boyle's _philosophia corpuscularis_. Although Newton himself was loath to speculate about the mechanism by which bodies gravitate towards each other with a mathematically describable regularity, this did not deter some of his followers from an easy ascription of an attractive force to the very material nature of the bodies themselves, a hypothesis expressly rejected by the author of the Principia. In Britain this standpoint was adopted by, for instance, the mathematician Cotes, though he, like most other contemporaries and followers of Boyle and Newton, such as Samuel Clarke, Richard Bentley, William Whiston and Colin Maclaurin, were at pains to demonstrate the compatibility of theism with the mechanical philosophy. This was less the case on the continent of Europe; although the French were impressed by Newton's achievements, they were not like his compatriots overawed. Mathematicians like Clairaut and Laplace tidied up some mathematical inaccuracies in the Principia, and in conjunction with more accurate empirical data, were able to dispense with Newton's appeal to "active principles" or agencies of God to overhaul the system from time to time. Add to the new atom not only attractive but repulsive forces, and one can with a few mental leaps envisage a materialist metaphysic which could in principle digest all observed physical phenomena, including heat, light, gravity, magnetism and what was known of electricity. Add again an even greater problem-hopping attribution of sensation to matter, and there emerges the materialist strand in French Enlightenment thought dating from La Mettrie's Natural History of the Soul in 1745.

But the very development of French materialism was paralleled by scientific developments which would undermine its theoretical foundations. Although the emergence of chemistry as an exact science, following the elucidation of the nature of combustion, Lavoisier's modern nomenclature and Dalton's atomic theory, promised to add colour and depth to the materialists' world-view, the nature of chemical affinity remained obscure. Humphry Davy, after his electrolytic decomposition of potash and soda, suggested that chemical affinity might be electrical in nature. Davy, though, was no materialist, and baulked at Dalton's atomism; his intimation of the relationship between chemistry and electricity may not be unconnected with a taste for German idealist philosophy nurtured in his youthful friendship with the Romantic poets Southey and Coleridge. But that Schelling's Naturphilosophie should have influenced the development of chemistry, though not in itself surprising, is less likely than in the case of physics, where quantitative experimentation upon the phenomena of heat, light, electricity and magnetism rendered their material and mechanical interpretation in terms of "imponderable fluids" less tenable, and left open the way for a dynamic world-view. This goes some way towards accounting for the considerable influence amongst scientists of Schelling's views on the fundamental unity of nature, despite the patent opposition to empiricism in his methodology. Russian science, particularly in the person of D.M. Vellansky, a professor at the Medical and Surgical Academy at St. Petersburg who had attended lectures by Schelling in Germany, proved an enthusiastic host for German idealism, though it was not thereby inspired to emulate the achievements of Davy or of Hans Christian Oersted, who discovered electromagnetism in 1819.

It might at this point be argued that the contact theory still holds for the Decembrists, since the reaction against empiricism and materialism was largely German led, and in Russia German influence was still largely confined to the administration and to education, both of which fields were not favoured by a still

Francophile nobility. Hence they would not be expected necessarily to enjoin the opprobrium which the Young Goethe and his companions heaped upon Baron d'Holbach, whose Système de la Nature, according to Goethe, appeared to them "as the very quintessence of senility, as unsavoury, nay, absurd."[9] Nevertheless, the aforementioned Moscow circle of Schellingian 'Wisdom-lovers' were equally anxious to dissociate themselves from the views of the French Enlightenment, and their very name 'Lyubomudry' was a conscious Slavonic substitution for 'filosofy', which carried at that time the connotation of 'philosophes'. The foremost wisdom-lovers, Prince V.F. Odoevsky, D.V. Venevitinov, I.V. Kireevsky, A.I. Koshelev and N.M. Rozhalin were contemporaries of the Decembrists, and there were undoubtedly connections between the groups. Koshelev, for instance, was at one stage induced by Ryleev to read French writers like Benjamin Constant; V.K. Kuchelbecker co-edited the journal 'Mnemozina' with the conservative Odoevsky, whose cousin A.I. Odoevsky was also a Decembrist.[10] There is certainly no question, either, that the Decembrists were unaware of the German philosophers. Indeed, E.P. Obolensky, who was one of the most radical and politically active of the conspirators, and who took command of the mutiny in Senate Square on 14 December 1825, declared himself a Schellingian in an admittedly defensive letter to S.N. Kashkin. According to the future conservative F.N. Glinka in his testimony to Nicholas I's Investigating Commission, Obolensky was also interested in Indian mythology and the Zend-Avesta, and therefore it should be kept in mind that he presents a clear counter-example to any attempt to establish a one-to-one relationship between radical political views and materialist philosophy.[11] Amonst the other Decembrists, Raevsky was familiar with German philosophy, though he preferred Condillac to the systems of Kant and Schelling.[12] Yakushkin, on the other hand, apparently preferred the critical philosophy to empiricism: Locke's epistemology, which Yakushkin confused with Condillac's sensationalism, makes twice two equal five, the correct computation being provided by Kant's a priori categories.[13]

This is not to deny that there was in general amongst the Decembrists a leaning towards French rather than German authors, but it must be stressed that their preference is not blind, and whether consciously or not, some selection must have taken place. Furthermore, if materialist views are to be attributed to the influence of the philosophes, it needs to be explained why the materialists rather than the deists held sway, particularly when insofar as one can talk of a tradition in Russian intellectual history during the eighteenth century, the nobility's taste was predominantly for Voltairian freethought. Although Voltaire was an ardent proselytiser of Newtonian natural philosophy in France (his Eléments de la Philosophie de Newton appeared in 1738), what he apparently prized in the English mathematician's work was what Newton himself argued, namely that it pointed to the existence of an all-powerful Creator. Voltaire favoured design over an Epicurean chance concourse of atoms, and wondered that Lucretius' De Rerum Natura, which he described as a course in atheism, was sold to the public and could even be found in the libraries of cardinals and archbishops.[14] It might also be worth mentioning in passing that in France there were some who saw that the new atom invested with attractive and repulsive forces which had been derived from Newtonian mechanics could be stripped of the notion of extension which it had inherited from the past. Thus a dynamic point-atom representing a halfway house to Schelling's objective idealism was posited as early as 1758 by R.G. Boscovich, the Italian Jesuit astronomer who spent his last years in Paris, and a similar immaterialist view was adopted in the following century by the mathematician A.L. Cauchy and the physicist A.M. Ampère. Cauchy, incidentally, was a devout Catholic and Royalist who defended the Jesuit Order which d'Alembert had attacked, and Ampère's father was guillotined by the Republican Army after the rising at Lyon in 1793, evidence for a trinity of immaterialism, religiosity and conservatism converse to the one under discussion here.

It would be unfair to Koyré to infer from one statement taken from his writings on Russian intellectual history that his interest in the ideas of the Alexandrine epoch extends only as far as their perpetrators' bookshelves. For one thing, he refers to the "opposition" between Russia and the West as well as contact between them, and I intend in a later subsection to consider whether it is not rather the opposition between certain groups within Russian society which better explains what might be called differential selectivity from a broad-fronted "penetration of European civilisation into Russia." There comes a point in all this discussion about Russia and the West, which has so dogged Russian historiography, even in speculation about the emergence of the first East Slavic state in the ninth century, when one wonders if it does not rest on a rather unconvincing West European identity which owes its existence simply to Russia being the focus of attention. It is hardly surprising in the wake of this to find with regard to the Decembrists a countervailing imbalance in Soviet scholarship on the side of their undoubted patriotism, rejection of a blind worship of the West and resentment of the participation of foreigners in the government, together with an undue emphasis on indigenous sources in the present concern with the genealogy of their thought.

The via media might be as follows. The truth which underlies Koyré's observation is that the raw material of Russian philosophical thought was almost always imported. But it is not the raw material alone which determines the finished product. For example, some of the ideas of bourgeois France and Germany would, during the course of the nineteenth century, take on forms adapted to and moulded by Russian conditions, and of course by Russian thinkers, as in the case of Bakunin's anarchism, Herzen's agrarian socialism, and Lenin's Bolshevism. The Voltairian fad may have been largely a form of servile imitation for the benefit of the autocrat; but at the same time, a firmly rooted eclectic or reactive philosophical culture was developing, and it is the processes of selection and adaptation which offer most to the student of Russian intellectual history. To this end even mistakes, inconsistencies and misunderstandings of Western authors can be instructive, as is well illustrated during the first decade or so of the penetration of Hegelian philosophy into Russia. Put simply, the burden of the argument is that foreign books, and for that matter foreign affairs in general, including the experiences of travel or service abroad, are neither collectively nor a fortiori in themselves sufficient to explain the Decembrist movement, but as raw material, or ingredients, are undoubtedly necessary.

I have so far concentrated largely on the foreign or translated written word in this discussion of the West's impact upon the Decembrist movement, in the main because Koyré's statement is applied to the entire span of modern Russian intellectual history. But to confine the discussion to literary influences would be negligent in view of the decisive importance in the formation of Decembrist attitudes accorded by some historians, and indeed by some of the Decembrists, to the army's European campaign following Napoleon's disastrous invasion of Russia in the autumn of 1812. Although some of the leading Decembrists, notably Mikhail Bestuzhev-Ryumin, Kakhovsky, Borisov, Kryukov and Baryatinsky were too young to take part in the Napoleonic Wars, many of their elders, such as Pestel', Sergey Murav'ev-Apostol, Ryleev, Fonvizin and Yakushkin, joined in the pursuit of the French Army across Prussia and Saxony, a pursuit which culminated in March 1814 with the entry of Tsar Alexander and Frederick William of Prussia into Paris itself. Yakushkin recalled that when he first joined the select Semenovsky regiment in 1811, the officers would play cards, drink and carouse, but that in 1814 after the formation of an artel' of 15-20 officers, they were given to playing chess, reading foreign newspapers and following European events. He spoke of the inevitable effect on thinking Russian youth of a whole year in Germany and some months in Paris, an effect expressed in a profound dissatisfaction with many aspects of Russian society on their return:

> "In 1814, existence for young people in Petersburg was tedious. In the past two years, we had seen with our own eyes great events which had decided the fate of nations, and in some measure had taken part in them; now it was unbearable to look upon the empty life of Petersburg, to hear the chatter of the old men, extolling all the old things and deriding every move forward. We were now 100 years ahead of them."[15]

These sentiments were echoed and amplified by Fonvizin, who was enrolled into the newly formed Society of Salvation by Yakushkin shortly after his transfer from the Semenovsky regiment to the regiment of chasseurs of which Fonvizin was colonel. He gave the following account of the effect of the Great Patriotic War and the European campaign of 1813-14 on the young Russian army officers:

"In the course of two years of fraught military life, amid constant danger, they were accustomed to strong emotions, which for the brave ones became almost a necessity.

It was in this frame of mind, with a feeling of their own worth and an elevated love of the fatherland that the majority of the guards and general staff officers returned to Petersburg in 1815. In the campaigns across Germany and France, our young people had become familiar with European civilisation, which had made such a strong impression upon them, that they were able to compare everything they had seen abroad with what faced them at every turn in their own country - the enslavement of the vast majority of Russians, the cruelty of superiors towards their subordinates, the abuse of power in every form, everything governed arbitrarily - all of this shocked and disgusted educated Russians and their patriotic feelings. During the campaign many of them had become acquainted with German officers, members of the Prussian secret union (Tugendbund) which so beneficially organised the rebellion in Prussia and brought about its liberation, and with French liberals. In candid conversations with them our young people unconsciously adopted their liberal ways of thought and aspiration towards constitutional institutions, and were ashamed of Russia, such a deeply humiliated autocracy."[16]

Fonvizin goes on to ask how the young liberals could be satisfied after all this with the petty tasks of a vulgar regimental life, and worse still, be repaid for their dazzling exploits by the rigorous discipline of the drillground favoured by Alexander and his brothers.

Both Yakushkin's memoirs and Fonvizin's essay on Russian history were written after many years of penal servitude and exile in Siberia, and it may be that even in the case of participants in important historical events the perspective of hindsight can impose upon the memory an artificial causal framework. Their estimation of the seminal importance of the army's European adventures was however shared by some of the insurgents, for example Ryleev and A.N. Murav'ev, in their testimony to Nicholas's Investigating Commission, though the quality of these submissions as evidence of motivation is subject to the same reservations made earlier in this section.[17] Bestuzhev-Marlinsky took it upon himself in a letter addressed to Nicholas to explain to the monarch the historical development of freethinking in Russia, and in so doing anticipated his fellow conspirators' conclusions:

> "In the end, Napoleon invaded Russia and it was then that the Russian people first felt their own strength, it was then that there arose in every heart a sense of independence, at first political, and afterwards national. This was the beginning of freethinking in Russia."[18]

It would be an easy matter in the light of such evidence to opt for a simple explanation of the Decembrist rebellion phrased in terms of a dissatisfaction with Russian reality engendered by first-hand experience of culturally and economically more advanced West European neighbours, a hasty assimilation of their political theory and a naive imitation of clandestine political organisations like the *Tugendbund* and *Burschenschaften* in Germany, or the Italian *Carbonari*. The young Decembrists' newly acquired liberalism would in addition be bolstered after the Napoleonic Wars by further heroic exploits from abroad to add to the inspiration of the ancients from reading the works of Plutarch and Cornelius Nepos. Favourites amongst the Russian students of foreign affairs were the German student Karl Sand, who, in March 1819, assassinated the reactionary German dramatist and long-serving Russian agent Augustus von Kotzebue; the young army officers Diego Riego and Quiroga who led an unsuccessful attempt in 1820 to overthrow the restored absolute monarch Ferdinand VII of Spain; the liberator of Spanish America Simón Bolívar; but most of all, the early hero of Greek War of Independence, Alexander Ypsilanti, who had served in the Russian Army and was known to some of the Decembrists.[19]

It is a small step to argue firstly from the undoubted quality of youthful idealism and romanticism in the Russian officers' reaction to their experiences on the European campaign and in their thirst for news of the surge of rebellion during the years 1819-21 in South America, Spain, Portugal, Piedmont, Naples and Greece; and secondly, from the lamentability of the failure of their own uprising in comparison with the sacrifices of their heroes, to a conclusion that the Decembrist movement was a pale imitation of West European models quite inapplicable to Russia. Richard Pipes, for example, in a recent general history of Russia, gives the following verdict, in the context of a description of the normally apolitical and profligate Russian aristocracy:

"In 1813-15 many younger members of these rich families, having spent time in Western Europe with the army of occupation, came under the spell of liberalism and nationalism. It is these people who founded the Russian counterparts of the German Tugenbunde and in 1825, inspired by uprisings of liberal officers in Spain, Portugal and Naples, made a move to abolish absolutism in Russia. But the Decembrist revolt had no antecedents and no issue, it was a solitary event, an echo of distant happenings."

Later on, he gives this opinion:

> "The Decembrist movement ... was for sheer drama and the number and eminence of persons involved not equalled until the socialist-revolutionary turmoil of the 1870s. Yet it is difficult to make a case that it was a Russian movement properly speaking because its inspiration, ideals and even forms of organization came directly from Western Europe. They were all derived from the experience of post-Napoleonic France and Germany where many Russian dvoriane spent two or three years during the campaigns of 1812-13 and the occupation which ensued. It was testimony to the cosmopolitanism of young Russian aristocrats that they felt so completely at home in the political ferment of the Restoration era they thought it possible to transplant to their native land the political programmes of a Benjamin Constant, Destutt de Tracy, or the American constitution. Once the conspiracy failed, these ideas evaporated, and the next generation of intellectuals turned to an entirely different source."[20]

This judgment raises some points of difficulty. As to the first line of the first paragraph, it is doubtful whether even a Magnitsky or a Runich would appeal to enchantment as an explanation of the liberal views of the scions of the aristocracy. Secondly, the most interesting aspect of the Decembrist movement as a part of Russian history is precisely that it does have antecedents and issue, but that the latter are so different from the former. The Decembrists are transitional figures in that their methods are clearly within the tradition of the army's role in the preceding century's crises of succession, but their political aims equally clearly foreshadow those of the intelligentsia. This duality is encapsulated in the chant of the soldiers in Senate Square: "Constantine and a Constitution!" (even though, it has been said, some of the soldiers thought that "Konstitutsiya" was the name of Grand Duke Constantine's wife).[21] What is more, some members of the intelligentsia saw themselves as the inheritors of the Decembrist cause, notably Herzen and Ogarev, and also men of the 1860s like N.V. Shelgunov and M.L. Mikhailov. Herzen attended as a fourteen year old the singing of a Te Deum in Moscow in celebration of the hanging of Pestel', Ryleev, Kakhovsky, Murav'ev-Apostol and Bestuzhev-Ryumin, and recalled in his journal Polar Star:

> "Never have the gallows been celebrated so much...
> There before that altar desecrated by bloodstained prayer, I swore to avenge the murdered, and dedicated myself to the struggle with that throne, with that altar, with those cannons."

It was in the wake of the Decembrist débacle that he and Ogarev made their childhood oath on the Sparrow Hills near Moscow to sacrifice their lives to the struggle for freedom.[22]

Thirdly, to deny that the Decembrists were a Russian movement "properly speaking" sounds like the higher redefinition fallacy, or logically akin to saying that no true Scotsman puts sugar on his porage.[23] More seriously, it places the martyrs of 1826 on a level with the imitative Francophiles of the drawing-rooms of Catherine's St. Petersburg, a comparison which does little justice to the sincerity and universality of the young officers' critique of a whole range of political, social and economic ills and malpractices in their own beloved fatherland. On a theoretical level, since only the most hard-headed Stalinist would not turn his good eye towards the undeniable indebtedness of nineteenth-century oppositional thought to Western sources, it must represent a fine judgment where to draw the line beyond which a school of thought becomes truly Russian. Fourthly, the question of the applicability of Western institutions to Russian conditions marks a Berlin Wall in much of Russian political thought subsequent to the Decembrists which few individuals straddled with ease, and if an affirmative answer to the question was a mark of cosmopolitanism, then that was a characteristic of many amongst the intelligentsia as different as Chaadayev, Butasevich- Petrashevsky and Plekhanov. But to argue that the Decembrists were little more than importers of Western political theory and practice devalues the significant differences of opinion within and amongst the secret societies, and the debates over serfdom, an institution which by then was almost peculiarly Russian. Furthermore, Decembrists were not unaware of, or uninterested in, Russian history, as can be seen from Raevsky's glorification of "free" Novgorod and Pskov in his poem "Singer in the Dungeon" written after his arrest in 1822.[24] Finally, although it is quite true that most thinking Russians of the 1820s and 30s turned away from the ideas associated with the rebellion of 1825, the study of French liberal thought was preserved at Moscow University within the student circles of Herzen, Ogarev, N.P. Sungurov and the Kritsky brothers. More importantly, the predominance in Nicholas' first years of rule of the kind of idealist metaphysics sponsored under Alexander by Vellansky, Galich and the Wisdom-lovers is arguably due more to an other-worldly retreat in the face of the crushing of the Decembrists' attempt to better the real world, or simply to the fact that such aspirations were manifestly perilous, rather than to the mere "evaporation" of alien ways of thinking. It is noteworthy that by the 1840s German idealism, almost as if by the impetus of its own internal dialectic, had led many young Russians back to materialism and French radical thought.

Obviously, the last few points imply an interpretation of the significance of Decembrist political and philosophical thought opposed to that of Pipes, which however, despite its almost stark clarity, is not open to simple refutation. The basis of my own opposition will become clearer throughout the next two sections. This section has been partially intended to show that what the Decembrists lacked in education, they made up for in their reading of Western literature and service abroad. Its principal aim though was to argue that this contact with the West was a necessary but not sufficient element in the formulation of their political and philosophical views. It would be difficult to imagine the rebellion of 1825 happening when and how it did without the French invasion and its aftermath; but it would be equally difficult to equate any mere transient imitation of the West with the intensity of opposition to throne and altar which can from time to time be felt through the extant writings of the army officers, and which Herzen colourfully calls up from his adolescence.

Section 3 - The Church and Religion

Remembering that one of the principal objectives of this work is to investigate the existence and possible nature of a relationship between materialism and atheism on the one hand and radical political opposition on the other, it has already been suggested that the growth of political opposition, whatever its reasons, might add considerable weight to the earlier hypothesis that the government's possible over-reaction to what it took to be materialism and atheism might have recommended such a world-view to some sections of the nobility. It was also pointed out that the government's sponsorship of liberal ideas before and even during the Great Patriotic War, only to be followed by energetic censorship and surveillance directed against them presents as a sequence of events an analogy with the Ministry of Education's curricular reforms, followed by its rejection of the new subjects as godless, or materialistic. More than one theoretical line of approach remains open. It could, for instance be argued that the entertainment of materialist views by the Decembrists suggests a broad-fronted disaffection with official Russia that makes the contact theory of the origin of their social and political views seem even more remotely tenable. There are some difficulties with this hypothesis: the contact theory could be extended to cover the adoption of materialism, though this would raise all the objections of the previous section, and would not account for the connection of materialism and radicalism; more seriously, if as well as regarding materialism as part of an overall disaffection one also wanted to maintain the position that opting for materialism is all the more explicable within an intellectual climate of growing political opposition, then the overall argument would be open to the charge of circularity, in that materialism and radicalism are alternately shuffling between the dock and the witness box in support of each other. Although this sounds like contempt of the court of logic, one wonders if history does not muddle along like this. There may be between political and metaphysical philosophy a reciprocal or mutually reinforcing interrelationship which rules out of order any ascription of causal primacy to either. Leaving aside ahistoricist views which would exempt men's mental artefacts from discussions of this nature, there remains at least one alternative to the aforesaid metahistorical mélange (or at its tidiest, advocacy of alternating causal primacy) which as a class of views subsumes Marxist historiography, and which would make both ontological and political theories dependent upon some underlying preceding or primary factor. Hypotheses framed in accordance with this explanatory structure will be examined in the next section.

This section's purpose is to continue the discussion begun under the heading Education. The point has already been made that the Magnitsky era represents one facet only of the reaction which set in after the Napoleonic invasion. But although it makes sense to speak of a broad cultural, political, philosophical and religious alignment against whatever the French armies were held to stand for, finer focussing reveals as is so often the case that useful historical generalisations may gloss over the real complexity of intellectual cross-currents. In this case, the reaction conflates at least two perceived antitheses, the opposition of materialism and religion on the one hand, and the opposition of the masonic lodges and the Orthodox Church on the other. That these antitheses could be reformulated in other ways is yet more testimony to the richness of the period, a fact which may give pause to any easy characterisation of materialism as the natural metaphysical response of political radicals to a State-administered Church.

As far as the Orthodox Church is concerned, its fortunes under Alexander may be encapsulated in two apparently incompatible ways. Firstly, almost for the very reason that educational standards, if not very high, had never been higher, equally, dissatisfaction had never been more acute with the weak theological tradition and antirationalist posture of the Church. Secondly, by the end of Alexander's reign, the Orthodox Church was arguably the most powerful ideological force within the Empire, a position to be consolidated under Nicholas, and crystallized in Count Uvarov's formula of autocracy, Orthodoxy and nationality. Such a historical reversal cannot be put down simply to the spirit of reaction, since that would be to overlook an event which on the face of it marked the lowest point in the Church's standing since the erosion of the formal independence had been initiated by Peter the Great. In 1817, a Ministry of Spiritual Affairs and Public Education was formed out of the existing Ministry of Education, and the Holy Synod.[1] This could be viewed as no more than an act of bureaucratic streamlining, since Prince Golitsyn had been ober-prokuror of the Holy Synod since 1803 and Minister of Education since 1816. What however rankled with Orthodox conservatives and clerics was that the new department of spiritual affairs was divided into four sections, one concerned with the Orthodox Church, and the others with Roman Catholics, Protestants, Jews, Moslems and so on. Apparently the religious tolerance practised under earlier Russian monarchs like Peter and Catherine was now a doctrine of inter-confessional equality formalised in government structure.

That there was no clear dividing line between Alexander's liberal honeymoon and the onset of reaction can be ajudged from Alexander's speech to the first session of the Polish Diet in 1818, and Novosil'tsev's constitutional project of 1820. There is evidence though more convincing than with the Tsar's flirtations with political reform that an attitude in official circles of religious toleration and even ecumenism had withstood the shock of the Napoleonic invasion. The simplest explanation for this is that religious heterodoxy cut across the spectrum of political views. In other words, even the obscurantist educationalists Magnitsky, Runich and Karneev had to look beyond the doctrinal inertia of the State Church in their search for an adequate spiritual defence against the intellectual threat from the West. The most obvious official underwriting of a supraconfessional Christianity was the Tsar's authorisation in 1812 of the formation of a Russian Bible Society. Its model was the British and Foreign Bible Society, founded in London in 1804 for the distribution of Biblical translations 'without note or comment'. The Roman Catholic Church found such doctrinal neutrality hard to swallow, and Catholics were eventually forbidden to join the Russian Society. The growing opposition of the Orthodox Church was characteristically less theological; indeed, the Society's first committee included two metropolitans, and the St. Petersburg Ecclesiastical Academy's modern Russian version of the New Testament completed in 1818, was sponsored by the Holy Synod. Shortly after Nicholas's accession, however, the Bible Society was suppressed, and it was decided that it was dangerous to allow a spoken Russian version of the Bible to circulate.[2] This reversion to traditional Orthodoxy had begun in the last years of Alexander's rule, when the Tsar had yielded to the arguments of the young archimandrite of the monastery of St. George near Novgorod, Photius Spassky. The unfortunate Golitsyn, who in addition to his ministerial rank, was also President of the Bible Society, soon toppled under the weight of the Church's opposition and the jealousy of Alexander's long-standing servant, Arakcheev.

The reasons for the decline and fall of the Bible Society are by no means clear. Soviet scholars tend to regard the difference between the _bibleitsy_ and the _ortodoksy_ as the difference between two forms of obscurantism in Russian idealism, and perhaps the exchange of Golitsyn and Magnitsky for Arakcheev and Photius seems a minor tremor in comparison with subsequent upheavals. It is at least interesting though that the Bible Society, at any rate in its avowed objectives, represented a supersacramental religiosity which in its overlap, both physical and ideological with the masonic lodges, contrived to collect under one ideological roof such unlikely collaborators as P.I. Pestel' and the Grand Duke Constantine. The relationship is of course tenuous in the extreme, though it illustrates the furthest thrust of optimistic eighteenth century autocracy, which had burst the Muscovite theocracy asunder. The Orthodox Church was clearly the worse politically and materially for this process; but its subordination to the State at the same time bound it closer to it. Thus it was quite natural that when the autocracy recoiled in the face of external and internal opposition, it fell back upon the Church. As an explanation for what happened, this would be glib and too abstract, but as a way of dealing with complex historical interactions, it gives an explanatory structure. A fuller understanding of the relationship of the Russian throne and altar would demand close consideration of the interrelationships of autocracy, nobility, bureaucracy and clergy, matters more appropriate to the next section, concerned with the growth of political opposition. Further attention will, however, be given in this section to the revival of the Orthodox Church when the internal implications of the Holy Alliance are examined. An interim qualification is that the autocracy is at any one time one person, whose strengths and weaknesses weigh more than most in the historical balance.

In the case of Alexander, this raises a question of a familiar rhetorical type: was the changing nature of the autocrat a determinant of, or merely a faithful reflection of, the changing nature of the autocracy? The question is dubious in more than one way, not least because it cannot be considered in isolation from the political interrelationships just mentioned; moreover, it suggests a kind of thought experiment in which, say, a Peter the Great or Nicholas I is imagined as a substitute incumbent. Such a historical transplant begs more questions than it sets out to answer, the most obvious being how one could divorce either of those monarchs from his own environment. Nevertheless, it should be possible to ask to what extent Alexander's own inconsistency and impressionability are responsible for the kaleidoscopic religious patterns of his reign, even though one's theoretical bets are hedged by the recognition that such characteristics are to some extent to be expected when the territory of a "liberal" autocrat is violated in the name of "liberalism". A similar hardening of policy is to be seen amongst the Romanovs in the cases of Catherine II and Alexander II, where the threat to the dynasty, if not in the latter case to the monarch himself, is less critical than the overwhelming reality of the French invasion. Thus despite all the evidence of conflicting forces in Alexander I's personality, caution should be exercised in deciding the relationship between undoubted reversals in government policy, and an apparent volte face in the Tsar's personal attitudes, especially if the latter turns out to be a historian's perception based on an exaggeration of the extent of his liberalism when a young man, and a failure to recognise a persistence, albeit attenuated, of his earlier sympathies throughout the reign.

This is by no means to deny that a considerable change in Alexander's outlook came about in the years 1812-15, or that his own example played an important part in the intellectual life of his times, as he acknowledged himself on receipt of a report on the activity of secret societies in 1821.[3] This is nowhere clearer than in the realm of religious belief and practice, which in turn affected to some degree the gamut of metaphysical views in early nineteenth-century Russia. We have seen that the Grand Duke Alexander and his circle of friends imbibed a wide variety of Western ideas in a half-baked fashion, including the works of currently popular heterodox and mystical writers such as Böhme, Swedenborg, Madame Guyon and her defender, Archbishop Fénelon. But their thinking was still fully in the mainstream of Russian eighteenth-century secularism, and it was not until 1812 that the kindling took place of the religious fervour which characterised the architect of the Holy Alliance. Alexander was recommended by Prince A.N. Golitsyn to seek solace in reading the Bible, during a period in which the Tsar, having been persuaded to relinquish command of the army in the field, and confronted with the entry of Napoleon's troops into Moscow, had reached a nadir of personal popularity throughout the nation. The steps by which the near-recluse in search of consolation was transformed into the bearer of a grand religio-historical mission are inextricably bound up with the resurgence in the fortunes of the Russian army and of Alexander himself, though typically, personal contacts appear to have played no small part in the development of the Tsar's religious views. He was clearly attracted by the emphasis onthe inner, spiritual life emphasised in varying degrees by English nonconformity, German pietism, and contemporary mysticism, and in 1814 had long discussions with the Quakers William Allen and Stephen Grellet in London, and with Jung-Stilling in Bruchsal. The following year marked his first meeting, at Heilbron, with the Protestant mystic Baroness Julie von Krüdener, with whom he corresponded, and met again in Heidelberg and Paris. Another native of the Baltic German states, Madame Tatarinova, occupied apartments in the imperial palace and played host to a distinguished selection from St. Petersburg society who shared the conviction that a state of mystic ecstasy could be arrived at by dancing in circles. Such giddy heights of religious fervour by no means marked the limits of Alexander's and Golitsyn's religious toleration: Golitsyn's own nephew was converted by the Jesuits, and a number of sects offered paths to religious fulfilment, and liberation from sin and carnal desires by more than one means - the Khlysty, for example, by orgiastic revelry, and the Skoptsy by castration.[4]

The sensational extremes of minority cults should not be allowed to obscure the fundamental point that Alexander's personal example encouraged the exploration of forms of religious activity by groups often outside the Orthodox Church, and often at odds with it, most notably the branches of the Bible Society, and the masonic lodges. Admittedly, amongst the freemasons and the members of the Bible Society were many who saw no contradiction with the Orthodox faith, and the same can also be said of Madame Tatarinova's sect. Nevertheless, the raison d'être of the Bible Society was to create a supradenominational Christianity, and this could not but run counter to the interests of the Orthodox Church as the church of state. As for the freemasons, the very diversity of their beliefs and practices makes it impossible to perceive any basic incompatibility with Orthodox doctrine; yet although some of the lodges were little more than social clubs for the nobility, freemasonry was at this time also associated with rather more radical quests for a universal religion than that of the Bible Society. There is some overlap in this respect between the Society and the lodges, notably in the person of A.F. Labzin, best known for the spasmodic appearances of his journal "The Messenger of Zion", while the censorship permitted. However, Labzin's quarrelsome and arrogant nature, together with his uncompromising mystical views, became an embarrassment to Golitsyn and the Bible Society, and he was eventually exiled. Golitsyn's ideal, a kind of eclectic theology derived from the existing doctrines of the Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Protestant Churches, was not on the face of it anticlerical, even though it threatened the Orthodox Church's political status; Labzin's mystical aversion towards the material world, and advocacy of an inner, spiritual Christianity as a means to avoid contact with it, made him unequivocally hostile to the Church as a tangible institution: "The outer church is a crowd of public, inferior Christians, like Job on the dung heap."[5] There is some affinity between these acerbic words and the private views of Alexander's adviser Speransky.

The son of a village priest, he probably came into contact with the transcendentalism of Fichte and Schelling in his years as both student and teacher at theological seminaries, a fact which at a later time might have thrown some light on the charge of atheism levelled at him by enemies. By that time, however he had become a freemason, and his views had been modified, particularly, it seems, in the light of his correspondence during the years 1804-6 with I.V. Lopukhin, who introduced him to the ideas of Böhme, St. Martin, Fénelon and Madame Guyon. Speransky had little in common with Labzin, apart from a reluctance or inability to ingratiate himself with the imperial court, and an adverse estimate, admittedly in his own case less vocally articulated, of the Church as an institution, which for him, as he wrote in a letter to his daughter, represented "a weak, deviating, compromising Christianity which differs only verbally from pagan moral doctrine."[6]

Such anticlerical sentiments are typical of freemasons in Italy, Spain and France, where an ambivalent attitude towards the lodges on the part of the Roman Catholic Church throughout the greater part of the eighteenth century gave way to unmitigated hostility after the French Revolution, and where, especially in the case of the French *philosophes* and the Italian *Carbonaria*, strong links existed between the lodges, liberalism and nationalism. Despite Speransky's unremitting labour on a number of stillborn constitutional projects, the choice of Labzin and him as representative of a current of masonic mysticism antagonistic to the Church in no way suggests the union of anticlericalism and political radicalism under the roofs of the Russian lodges. More characteristic of Russian Freemasonry in any case than anticlericalism was a concern with personal morality, charitable works and an undoctrinal Christianity, a concern which had more in common with the Germanic than the Latin lodges. Speransky himself articulated the implications of such a religious attitude across the whole span of an individual's activity: "I do not know a single question of state which cannot be referred to the New Testament."[7] Although this avowal is theoretically in harmony with the reactionary programme of the Holy Alliance, its rejection of any divorce between public and private morality, between matters of the temporal and spiritual realms, is completely at odds with the theory and practice of the Orthodox Church, whose weak theological tradition left it without the distinctive stance towards the state of its Western Christian counterparts. This inherent predisposition towards subservience to secular political power may even have been strengthened by the orientation of such vigorous spiritual elements as there were within the Church towards extremes of irrationalism, or of renunciation of the material world, with the result that conflicts within the Church tended to be resolved by the departure from the Church by the dissidents, rather than by compromises within, or changes of, Church policy. The revival of hesychast asceticism in the eighteenth century continued throughout the Alexandrine era and beyond, but its very nature (despite or because of the experience of Nil Sorsky and his followers in the debate over church property in the sixteenth century), and its confinement to the monasteries, precluded its direct relevance in the development of the Church's relations with the state.[8]

The simplest interpretation of the appeal of freemasonry to the nobility is that it filled the spiritual vacuum left by the State Church, whose dogged adherence to Eastern Christianity offered little to the dvoryanin and his successfully grafted Western

European sensibilities. Freemasonry, it could be argued, offered in its time a similar kind of substitute for the official faith to that provided by German idealism for the conservative young Schellingians of the 1820s and 1830s. The parallel, though, is suggestive, because if apolitical transcendentalism would be transformed, sometimes in one and the same individual, into Neo-Hegelian radicalism, might not a comparable line of descent exist between the masons and the Decembrists? There are two kinds of evidence for this contention. In the first place, the authorities' growing suspicions about the activities of secret societies culminated in their prohibition, in 1822, a measure which also covered the lodges. This act does not in itself guarantee any affinity on the freemasons' part with the conspirators of the Carbonari, the French Charbonnerie, or indeed with Walerian Lukasinski's National Freemasonry society within the Polish army; the legislation need be seen as no more than a further example of the spectacular reversal of earlier policy which highlights the period of reaction. The high tide of the lodges' activities in the preceding century had taken place in the 1770s and 80s, whereupon they were suppressed by an increasingly jittery Catherine II. After the assassination of Paul, the revival of the lodges was tolerated, to the point where a kind of deal was made in 1810 between the elders of the Grand Lodges and the ministry of police, which in return for the official recognition of the lodges' existence demanded reports of their activities and scrutiny of their documents and rules. Several officials of the ministry, including the minister himself, Balashov, were admitted to the freemasons' ranks, a fact which is testimony as much to freemasonry's natural part in the liberal religious activity of the period, as to the ministry's evident policy of careful surveillance.[9] There is nothing to suggest that the leading masons baulked at the partnership required by the authorities. This is not to say that they always saw eye to eye amongst themselves. From the first years of Alexander's reign, virtually all the lodges had united under the Grand Directorial Lodge of Vladimir, but in 1814 a split took place between those who practised the French system of masonic organization and ritual, and those, influenced by contemporary German practice, who objected mainly to the superimposition in the French system of a galaxy of 'higher degrees', such as the knights of the Orient, or the princes of Jerusalem, in addition to the three traditional degrees of freemasons. It would be tempting in the context of the present discussion of the relationship between religious beliefs and political persuasion to look for the emergence of a significant reforming group, particularly as the controversy centred around an issue reminiscent, albeit quite remotely, of the rejection of the episcopacy by many of the West European Reformed Churches. The inaptness of this comparison is best demonstrated by the fact that the differences between the two Grand Lodges (the Grand Provincial Lodge and the Grand Lodge Astrée) which formed as a result of the split, were patched up in little more than a year.[10].

The most plausible explanation of the fate of the lodges is that they fell foul of a blanket retaliation to the known political activities, in the mildest sense, of secret societies which had no direct affiliation to freemasonry. It can, though, still be argued, (and this is the second kind of evidence promised earlier), that an umbilical cord exists between the lodges and the blameworthy secret societies, in that some members of the latter were formerly masons.

Amongst the Decembrists, Pestel', in the company of the aforementioned Balashov, was a member of the Loge des Amis Réunis. As it happened, Pestel', and an inhabitant of the fringes of the Decembrist circles, P. Ya Chaadayev, were members at about the time when their particular lodge left the Grand Provincial Lodge to join the Grand Lodge Astrée. If the split which resulted in the formation of these two lodges were given the significance which the previous paragraph was reluctant to grant it, this move might have suited Pestel's supposed Lutheran inclination. Instead, it appears that he left the Loge des Amis Réunis to join the Loge des Trois Vertus, which continued to be part of the union of the Grand Provincial Lodge. It is unlikely that Pestel's movements at this time (1817) were governed by masonic principle, particularly as his membership of the second lodge was of short duration; of far more significance is that amongst his fellow masons of the Loge des Trois Vertus were several politically like-minded young guards officers, including S.I. and M.I. Murav'ev-Apostol, N.M. Murav'ev, A.N. Murav'ev and Prince Sergey Trubetskoy, the future head of the Decembrists' Northern Society, who was to be dictator after the uprising and before the installation of a provisional government. Of these, only Prince Trubetskoy and Alexander Murav'ev continued their masonic activities for any appreciable length of time after the foundation of the first Decembrist secret society; in Murav'ev's case, his religiosity soon overcame his radicalism, a transition which Yakushkin attributed to his wife, who as Murav'ev's fiancée would sing the Marseillaise with him, but after a few months of marriage had turned him from a "desperate liberal" into a "desperate mystic". He left the Society of Welfare in 1819.[11]

It would be wrong to infer from Murav'ev's example that a taste for the spirituality of freemasonry precluded commitment to the secret societies. Decembrist-masons who combined a religious or idealist world-view with a radical political stance were M.S. Lunin, and the Baltic German V.K. Küchelbecker, who, as we have seen, was a close associate of Prince Odoyevsky's 'Wisdom-lovers', notably in his capacity as co-editor of the journal Mnemozina. Both Küchelbecker and the martyr Ryleev were masons in the early 1820s, in the former's case until the year of the lodges' suppression; Ryleev appears as a member of the Loge de l'Etoile Flamboyante in its records for the years 1820-1.[12] Amongst the other Decembrist freemasons were N.I. Turgenev, well-known as one of the Alexandrine advocates of free trade, and whose timely departure for Western Europe in 1824 delivered him from the fate of his fellow conspirators; and G.S. Baten'kov, who in 1863 (also the year of his death) wrote at the request of the historian S.V. Eshevsky a short memoir on the freemasonry of Alexander's reign. Baten'kov was by no means typical of the Decembrists: he joined a lodge whilst on state service in Siberia, where he also befriended Speransky during the latter's governorship of the province. Speransky's patronage and partial return to favour opened Baten'kov's way to a promising service career in St. Petersburg, and he was even at one time prominent in the central administration of the hated military settlements, under the equally hated Arakcheev. It was not until the death of Alexander that he joined the Northern Society, and even then he shortly renounced his constitutionalist views and took no part in the Senate Square revolt of December 14. This is not to say that his Decembrist affiliation was a complete aberration in the face of the crisis of succession. According to his own testimony to the Investigating Commission, he acquired his liberal ideas through friendship with V.F. Raevsky during their service in the Corps of Communications Engineers, and according to the historian of ideas A.N. Pypin, the reason for his distant dispatch to Siberia shortly thereafter was his reputation as a 'restless person' (bespokoinyy chelovek).[13]

Pypin warns us that Baten'kov exaggerates the significance of freemasonry in his memoir, which moreover was written hurriedly and informally by an old man distanced from his subject by decades, and within a few months of his death. To this it may be added that Baten'kov had to endure a punishment arguably even more severe than the hard labour of many of his more heavily implicated fellow conspirators: he was held in solitary confinement in the fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul for a period of twenty years.[14] Pypin's judgment that the memoir is imprecise and nebulous need therefore come as no surprise, though he admits that the obscurity of Baten'kov's exposition is partially intentional. It is in any case hard to disentangle any alleged vagueness on Baten'kov's part from the inherent obscurity to the rationalist mind, of the religious foundations of freemasonry to which he alludes. Furthermore the obscurity is compounded by the secrecy by which he evidently still felt bound, to the extent that his account of masonic beliefs and internal organization is presented as having been related to him by an adept befriended in his youth. Although this might seem a rather casual way to observe secrecy, it should be noted that in the midst of his descriptions of the masonic degrees, Baten'kov is at pains to justify the obligation which he has just circumvented. Secrecy is necessary for the lodge to preserve "the great light of knowing the cosmic cause of everything - the existence of a self-sufficient and all-powerful God. This is a secret from the world, unable to organise itself in accordance with knowledge of the truth. It is desecrated by the speech used in society, with its halftruths and ambiguities. Therefore no account of freemasonry can give a clear and precise concept: for this one must be a mason, and use those defined terms, that language, which, like mathematical language, has been developed and refined by the work of many generations of thought. The obligation of secrecy is to preserve throughout the passing of generations the concepts which have been achieved, to maintain them in their entirety and purity."[15]

Such epistemological esotericism, not to say atavism, is a far cry from the French Enlightenment thought (especially the empiricist or sensationalist strand of it represented by Condillac, Helvétius and others) which informed some of the more ambitious philosophical excursions of Decembrists, for example those of V.F. Raevsky and N.A. Kryukov. The disdain expressed for everyday speech, the choice of mathematical language as an analogy, albeit a historical one, with the desired idiom, and the references to clear and precise concepts, both in the quoted passage and elsewhere in the memoir, are reminiscent of the seventeenth-century rationalist theories of knowledge which partly stimulated Locke's rejection of innate ideas and doctrine of the mind as a tabula rasa. The implicit antagonism towards empiricism of Baten'kov's defence of secrecy cannot so readily be extended to rationalism's other antonym, fideism, principally because Baten'kov does not elaborate on the source, rather than the transmission of the all-important concepts. This leaves open the possibility either that they are attained through some sort of direct mystical apprehension of the deity, or that they are similar to those contained in the propositions of natural theology, and are derived as well as conveyed by means of reason. This is not an unrealistic disjunction, since the works of Boehme and Saint-Martin exist side by side with William Derham's Physico-Theology in the eclectic reading-list of the Russian masonic tradition.[16] But whether or not any incompatibility can be found between certain masonic views and revealed theology in general, the relationship between freemasonry and Christianity, as we have already seen, is by no means clear-cut, and Baten'kov's guarded statement is interesting in this respect: "[The masons] regard the Revelation, the word of the prophets and the Gospel with veneration, without constraining the mind, and ascribing law and doctrine, like a trusteeship, to the reqirements of an external discipline of thought; they avoid disputes, and do not consider themselves confined to any particular circle; they see no use in fanatical propaganda, which does not produce inner concentration and stability."[17]

Baten'kov's qualified endorsement of the Christian Revelation and reservations about "external" religion hint at the aforementioned views of his patron Speransky; at the very least what follows is consistent with the supraconfessional spirit of Prince Golitsyn's religious administration, and this, if it were typical of masonic views, would be sufficient to incur the enmity of the Orthodox prelates and conservatives of the hue of Admiral A.S. Shishkov, whose attitudes began to dominate in the early 1820s. The Church's opposition to freemasonry would serve as a qualification at least to the contention that the lodges were the innocent victims of legislative grapeshot primarily intended for secret political societies. And as we have seen, several prominent Decembrists had connections with the lodges, and some found the masonic world-view congenial. It would be hard to refute the assertion that the original stimulus and organisational model for the first Decembrist secret societies were at least partly provided by freemasonry: apart from the trappings of secrecy, including the taking of an oath, the projected activities of the first societies were redolent with the spirit of masonic philanthropy, as was observed earlier. The founder-members of the Union of Salvation, with the notable exception of Yakushkin, were all masons. But we are still far from establishing anything resembling a parental relationship between freemasonry and Decembrism, for a number of reasons. Firstly, those Decembrists who were active conspirators and remained practising masons were a very small minority, and both activities appear independent of each other. Secondly, the lodges until quite shortly before their prohibition enjoyed the government's tacit approval, and indeed the participation of many of its officials; there seems no reason to doubt that the lodge masters co-operated willingly with the government, and that the majority of masons supported it. Thirdly, although masonic religious notions appealed to some of the Decembrists, they were at odds with the epistemological and metaphysical views of a significant proportion of the rest. This is self-evident in the case of atheism, and I have argued that the implications of Baten'kov's characterisation of masonic beliefs are incompatible with empiricism. Baten'kov is explicit about the kind of world-view which is the principal subject of this study:

"Isolated materialism, however ingenious and utilitarian are the fruits of its labour, is considered [by the masons] insufficient to explain the wonders of nature, by means of their dynamic process; and for the analysis of phenomena, they consider to be genuine those concepts in which there can be perceived the presence of the light of the cosmic cause and exact unity with the word."[18]

It should be remembered that these words were written in 1863, and may betray too much of the influence of Hegelianism to be accepted as an accurate representation of masonic antipathy to materialist thought in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Furthermore, in 1863, materialism was far more publicly upheld, as well as imputed, and it may therefore have been its current popularity which prompted Baten'kov's comment, or led him to exaggerate in his own mind its importance during the period of the lodges' activity. On the other hand, he could have had in mind some hostility between materialists and masons amongst the Decembrists, similar to the division which is known to have existed between believers and non-believers amongst the exiles in Siberia after 1825. Yakushkin, for example, made no attempt to conceal his scorn for masonic ritual in a passage from his memoirs describing a meeting of the philanthropic Union of Welfare at St. Petersburg in 1818. The meeting, likened by Yakushkin to a "bad comedy" in comparison with previous meetings in Moscow, was attended by many "ardent freemasons", and an argument took place as to whether the oath for entrants to the society should be taken on the Gospel or on the sword. Yakushkin regarded the whole thing as quite ridiculous, and commented that the masons wished to introduce their own practices into the society because "in the lodges they were accustomed to play the fool."[19]

In fairness to Baten'kov, reservations similar to those applied to his own reminiscences may be expressed with regard to Yakushkin's historical perspective. His raillery at the masons' expense comes from the first of the first two parts of his memoirs dictated to his two eldest sons in 1853-5. The available evidence does not in any case permit the direct inference that Yakushkin's opinion was representative of the views of the hard core of political insurgents which survived the early Decembrist regroupings.[20] The most that can be said is that freemasons diverting the energy of reforming zeal into disputes about the paraphernalia of entrance ritual must have been amongst the likeliest candidates during the purge of unsuitable or "untrustworthy" members, which, if we accept Yakushkin's account, was the real purpose underlying the decision to dissolve the Union of Welfare taken at the Moscow conferences of 1821.[21] To make a related but more general point, the constitution of the new secret society (the embryonic Northern Society, but as yet lacking a southern counterpart to justify the epithet), although it retained masonic overtones, in that the first part, intended for new recruits, restricted itself to philanthropic objectives, nevertheless contained a second part intended for the consumption of members of a "higher category" (shades of the lodges again) in which there was for the first time spelt out a clear political objective, to limit autocracy in Russia. This is where the Decembrists clearly depart from the traditional theory and practice of the Russian freemasons, in that their programme implicitly enjoins the belief that social change can, or perhaps should, be brought about by first modifying or replacing (a disjunction at the centre of Decembrist differences) political institutions, whereas the masons took the view that the betterment of man could only be effected by changes of individual hearts.

We may now return to the suggested umbilical nature of the connection between the masonic lodges and the Decembrist secret societies. To begin with, if we accept that the secret societies sprang directly out of the lodges, this suggests a model of the development of Decembrism which might relegate materialism to the status of an extremist minority viewpoint. The argument could, at a stretch, be made monocausal, the fundamental factor being the spiritual vacuity of the Orthodox Church. The breach, the argument might run, was most adequately filled by the vigorous eclecticism of the masonic lodges, whose clandestine method of organization provided a natural basis for the proliferation of secret societies bent upon the subversion of a régime which relied increasingly for its ideological nourishment upon a symbiotic union with the Orthodox Church. Amongst the objections which could be levelled at this particular formulation is the fact that establishment of the first Decembrist secret societies preceded the renunciation by the government of its policy of interconfessional equality in favour of Orthodox supremacy. If the rejoinder were made that the decline of this policy, although it does not explain the origins of the secret societies, nevertheless intersects at that point in its history where political attitudes began to harden, then the final objection must be that the evidence does not support the view that the source of political opposition is antagonism towards the Church. What the sources of such opposition are is the subject of the next section; but it can still be argued that whatever the reasons for opposition to the government, its cohesion and articulation were dependent upon the prior formation of a network of lodges morally and theologically at odds with the State, as the State itself recognised in the act of prohibiting them in 1822. The most plausible conclusion then to be made in relation to this investigation of the affinities between metaphysical beliefs and political attitudes is that dissatisfaction with the status quo in early nineteenth-century Russia is a natural extension of the masonic ethical precepts of the fraternity and equality of man. The expression of materialist and atheistic views by certain Decembrists would, it is true, have been deplored by masons. But the hostility of a Yakushkin presents no more of an embarrassment to an otherwise plausible general thesis than does the idealism of a Baten'kov to the alternative thesis that it is materialism which, at least in the Russian context, is the natural metaphysical correlative of political radicalism.

It may be impossible to practice to unravel, or even to identify, all the strands, be they social, political, economic, psychological, intellectual, perhaps even ethnic, geographical, climatic, physiological or historical, which may influence, or determine (the semantic bridge depending probably as much on the confidence or prior theoretical commitment of the analyst as the strength of the evidence) the possibly inconsistent collection of ideas and attitudes attached to the history of one individual. How much more unlikely it is, then,that the shades of political opinion and nuances of metaphysical speculation embraced by the Decembrists as a group may be explained in toto by one or other of the crudely polarised models given above. In any case, even one who argued that a political rejection of the ideological presuppositions of Tsarism was most likely to be matched by a repudiation of the basic tenets of Orthodoxy, need find nothing logically objectionable in the corollary that a desire only to limit autocratic power in some way was most readily associated with affiliation to a religious grouping, unlike the Orthodox Church, which offered some ethical criteria for the conduct and organization of political life. As we have seen, such an association exists in the case of the reforming bureaucrat Speransky. If then, we accept that the two apparently polarised models are not mutually exclusive, then the role of freemasonry as midwife to a moderate, reforming kind of Decembrism is, given its subsequently declining relevance as attitudes hardened within the secret societies, almost an indirect affirmation of the affinity between republicanism and materialism, in that even the most supradenominational kind of Christianity, or even super-Christian kind of religion, falls by the wayside as reformism gives way to revolution. This is not to say that after 1821 there were no more constitutional monarchists or religious believers, but merely to observe that as republican views crystallised, the Decembrist secret societies became further removed from the masonic lodges. This phenomenon, incidentally, favours the view that the prohibition of the lodges was less an expression of government disapproval of their philosophy, than, as was suggested before, a general attack on secrecy as a means to suppress suspected political opposition.

The reason for this fairly full discussion of freemasonry and its implications is that because of its connections with revolution, indirectly in the case of the Decembrists, and more immediately, for example, in the case of the _philosophes_ in the France of the _ancien régime_, it has to be taken seriously in any discussion of the political relevance of a metaphysic with which it, in a sense, competes. It should be admitted that in this discussion, no strong links have been established between masonic and materialist ontologies on the one hand, and political views on the other. It could be argued that many Decembrist-masons left their respective lodges, not because masonic ethics became incompatible with their developing political stance, but because their increasing opposition to the government rendered unacceptable the deal which had been made between the lodge masters and the ministry of police; or, on a more practical level, because the presence in the membership of many government officials made the lodges an unsuitable forum for the exchange of radical views. It would not follow directly, if this were the case, that there would be a shift, where metaphysics were considered, towards materialism and atheism. Nevertheless, if government sponsorship is taken as the yardstick by which the acceptability of ideas and ideologies is judged, consciously or otherwise, by political dissidents taken as a group, then it is worth noting that hardly any version of Christianity failed at one time or another to win approval in ruling circles in Alexander I's Russia.

A final point to be made in relation to freemasonry is that much of the preceding discussion has granted for the purposes of argument that the lodges played a significant role in the inception of the Decembrist movement. That they played some part is undeniable, though it has already been argued that the masons' world-view, and their implicit approach to social and political questions, were at odds with the most characteristic elements of Decembrism. The least that can be said, that the lodges provided an organisational model for the secret societies, is by no means the exclusive honour of freemasonry, since, as we have seen in M.A. Fonvizin's account of the army's campaign in Germany and France in 1813-14, the influence of the lodges has to be balanced against the impact of West European political societies like the Prussian *Tugendbund*.

The starting-point of this section was the assertion that the period of reaction which set in after the invasion by the French army, and which is so readily associated with Magnitsky's irrationalist onslaught on the curriculum of the new university at Kazan, turns out upon closer inspection to contain its own tensions and oppositions. Although the Orthodox Church on the face of it plumbed the depths of its fortunes under the Romanovs upon the establishment of the Ministry of Spiritual Affairs and Public Education in 1817, by 1825 Orthodoxy had become a cornerstone of Tsarist ideology. Although it was not until 1833 that Count S.S. Uvarov, in his first memorandum as Minister of Public Education to the curators of the educational districts, made his now famous proclamation that education was to be conducted in the joint spirit of Orthodoxy, autocracy and nationality, the new ideology was anticipated in the paeans of Admiral A.S. Shishkov to Orthodoxy, absolutism and patriotism, which can be found, for example in his article of 1812 "Discussion of love of the fatherland" published in Conversations of lovers of the Russian language.[22] Indeed it was Shishkov, known earlier in Alexander's reign for his opposition to Karamzin's attempts to mould a modern Russian literary idiom, who followed Golitsyn as Minister of Education, a change accompanied by the restoration of the Holy Synod's responsibility for the administration of the Orthodox Church. The Church's political recovery reflects the growing stature at court of the archimandrite Photius: in Masaryk's phrase, "Arakcheev and Photius represent theocratic caesaropapism at the close of Alexander's reign."[23] However, it was autocracy not theocracy which the Church advocated, and any ascendancy which it enjoyed over the throne was likely to result from the weakness of one of its temporary incumbents.

The fact that the political rehabilitation of the Church prelates was at the expense of Golitsyn, Magnitsky and Runich indicates a marked shift in the conduct of religious affairs in Russia from the Tsar's own favoured policy of interconfessional liberty, though it should be noted that he was not prepared to renounce the policy to the extent of actually abolishing the Russian Bible Society (a measure which his severely Orthodox younger brother Nicholas would lose little time in enacting). This is not to say that the fall of Golitsyn marked an ideological upheaval in the reign of Alexander: it was more that the chickens hatched in Alexander's conception of the Holy Alliance had come home to roost. The logic of the Tsar's self-appointed role as the champion of legitimism led away from his personal predilection for moonlight mysticism and English nonconformity. More fitting to Alexander's international mission would have been the tirades against freemasons and the disciples of Saint-Martin indulged in by Count F.V. Rostopchin, the governor-general of Moscow, who with Shishkov was responsible for much anti-French propaganda during Napoleon's Russian campaign. It might be objected that this hardly fits in with the inspiration allegedly provided by Mme. von Krüdener in the formation of the Tsar's views at that time; indeed the eventual partnership of monarch and patriarch cannot be read from the wording of the document signed by Alexander, Francis II of Austria and Frederick William III of Prussia. Its spirit is characteristically all-embracing and ecumenical; the act makes public the intention of the monarchs to conduct their domestic and foreign affairs in accordance with "the precepts of justice, Christian charity and peace, which, far from being applicable only to private life, must have an immediate influence on the will of monarchs and guide all their steps ..."[24] a pronouncement far more in keeping with Speransky's masonic ethics, than with Orthodoxy's resignation in the face of the temporal world, and consequent lack of censure in it. The contrast though is instructive, for although the participating nations were exhorted to regard themselves as part of the same Christian nation, and subject to one divine sovereign, the problem remained for each monarch as to the source of the validation of his dynasty and its policies. In Alexander's case, the kind of religious free-for-all over which he had willingly presided was ultimately inconsistent with the need of the autocracy after 1815 to entrench and defend itself against antagonistic ideologies. Christianity in a general sense could not be expected automatically to favour the actions of the Tsar rather than those of his subjects or of other nations. This potential contradiction is glossed over in Article I of the Holy Alliance, which declares that the monarchs will be united to each other by a bond of fraternity consistent with the words of the Holy Scriptures, which command all men to consider each other as brethren, but that "regarding themselves as Fathers of families [my underlining] in respect to their subjects and armies, will lead them, in the same spirit of fraternity with which they themselves are animated, in preserving religion, peace and justice."[25]

Alexander would probably have been surprised if anyone had dared to suggest that a cunning switch to a related metaphor had been used to absolve monarchs from the implications of their relationship with their fellow men, though at the time this might not have been lost on a Metternich. Eventually, however, Alexander overcame his own lukewarm attitude towards the Orthodox Church, and the fact that he yielded to the influence of Photius and Arakcheyev is at least consistent with the recognition that the Christian justification of an autocracy based on serfdom is less likely to come from a rootless, international, urban-based variety of heterodox sects than from a national Church of State bound to every level of the social and political structure. The notion of an alliance between the Church and the legitimate temporal powers is hardly peculiar to Russia in the Restoration epoch; indeed the presence at the Russian court from 1803-17 of de Maistre could hardly have lessened the likelihood of some kind of welding of spiritual and temporal interests, though his connections with the Jesuits make his contribution to the final outcome somewhat ambivalent. His rejection of Protestant science, philosophy and theology as "materialistic" is fully consonant with the educational policies of the Magnitsky era, though it is not at all clear that Magnitsky, Runich or Karneev would have echoed the following sentiments from de Maistre's works, which however foreshadow the official ideology of Nicolaian Russia:

> "There should be a state religion just as there is a state political system; or rather, religion and political dogmas, mingled and merged together, should together form a general or national mind sufficiently strong to repress the aberrations of the individual reason which is, of its nature, the mortal enemy of any association whatever because it gives birth only to divergent opinions."[26]

De Maistre could, as a Roman Catholic, call upon the tradition of Augustine and Aquinas for his spiritual defence. As we have said before, no comparable tradition existed within the liturgically-orientated Orthodox Church, and the state's increasingly perceived need for religious support could not immediately be met. Thus the first volleys to be fired against liberalism in the reactionary period of Alexander's reign were fired in the name of Christian theism in general rather than of any particular denomination's theological tradition. It might therefore be expected that amongst the Decembrists atheism and materialism would weigh more heavily in the balance against mere anticlericalism than would otherwise be the case within a political grouping not totally opposed to the existing sociopolitical order, the reason being that the government itself associated political reform with atheism. Whether or not this is so will depend in part on the ideas of individual Decembrists, to be discussed later. At this juncture, it might be interesting to consider the secret societies' corporate attitudes towards religion and the Church.

It has already been pointed out that freemasons were active in the Decembrist secret societies at least until the dissolution of the Union of Welfare in 1821, and it would therefore be out of the question that any constitutions or manifestoes drafted before that date should betray any antireligious sentiments that might have existed amongst the other members. The constitution of the first society, The Union of Salvation, or the Society of True and Faithful Sons of the Fatherland, founded in 1816, has not survived, but the Regulations of its successor, the Union of Welfare, state as a condition of entry that members should confess the Christian faith. This is apparently no mere gesture to convention, since later on amongst the duties falling under the educational 'field of activity' we read that "the confirmation of a young man in the principles of religion and his devotion to it are the most powerful means for the formation of his morality."[27]

Although the dissolution of the Union of Welfare coincided with a toughening of political objectives and with the cessation of most of the leading Decembrists' masonic affiliations, the definitive political prescriptions of both the Northern and Southern Socieites' policy documents were derived not only from natural law theory, but also from Christian principles. The first version of N.M. Murav'ev's constitution for the Northern Society was drafted in 1821-22 and makes the following statement:

"The experience of all nations and all ages has demonstrated that autocratic power is equally ruinous for rulers and for societies: that it is inconsistent both with the tenets of our holy faith, and with the principles of right reason."[28]

The second, more radical version of the constitution, drafted in 1824, makes a related point about the existing class structure:

"The distinction between the well-born and the simple people is not accepted as it is contrary to faith, according to which men are brothers, all are born well by the will of God, all were born for good, and all are simple people, for all are weak and imperfect ."[29] There is little support in these statements for the general proposition that materialism is the world-view of progressive social groups, but they do lend weight to the foregoing argument that the logic of the Holy Alliance led the autocrat away from potentially subversive Christian idealism to ecclesiastical pragmatism, that is, to the national Church.

If the appeal of the egalitarian implications of Christian ethics was powerful enough to survive the hardening of opposition to the *status quo* which spanned the two drafts of the Northern Society's constitution, what then of the Southern Society, whose plans for the destruction of the imperial family and the abolition of class privileges made its members uneasy allies of the constitutional monarchists in the north? The Bible of the Southern Society was *Russkaya Pravda*, a work begun by P.I. Pestel' shortly after the defeat of Napoleon in 1814, and completed and titled in about 1824. It would be wrong to regard it primarily as a representation of Pestel's own views, not only because, to paraphrase its grandiose title, it was intended as a legacy of the Great Russian people for the improvement of the state structure, and as an instruction for the anticipated

Provisional Government, but also because a number of other conspirators collaborated in its compilation, notably Obolensky, the brothers Murav'ev-Apostol, Kryukov, Turgenev and N.S. Bobrishchev-Pushkin. Like Murav'ev's drafts, Russkaya Pravda appeals to Christianity in order to undermine the proprietary rights of absolutism:

"... the government exists for the good of the people, and has no other basis for its form and existence than the people's welfare, whereas the people exists for its own good, and for the fulfillment of the will of the All-highest, who has commanded men on this earth to glorify his name, and to be virtuous and happy. This divine law was decreed for all men in equal measure, and, consequently, everyone has a right to its fulfillment. And therefore the Russian people is not the possession or property of any one person or family."[30]

The teaching of Jesus, having disposed of slavery, is less convincingly, though arguably with some good historical grounds, called to the defence of the individualistic ethics underpinning laissez-faire capitalism:

"The primary duty of man, which serves as the source and origin of every other duty, consists in the preservation of his own existence. Apart from natural reason, this is demonstrated by the words of the Gospel, which contain the whole of Christian law: love God, and love thy neighbour, as thyself, - words implying that self-love is a necessary condition of human nature, a natural law, and consequently, our duty ... The obligations which God has imposed on man through faith are the most fundamental and indispensable. They connect life on this earth with eternal life, and therefore all state decrees must be related to and made consistent with man's duties towards his faith and the all-highest creator of worlds. This first kind of duty concerns the spiritual world. They are known to us from the Holy Writ. The second kind of duty concerns the natural world. They are known to us from the laws of nature and natural needs. God, the creator of the universe, is also the creator of the laws of nature and of natural needs."[31]

The words of the Scriptures are invoked again in a powerful indictment of serfdom:

"To own other people, like one's own property, to sell, mortgage, give away and bequeath people, just like objects, to use them according to one's own whim, and with no prior agreement with them, and merely for one's own profit, and sometimes amusement, is a shameful business, contrary to humanity, contrary to natural laws, contrary to the holy Christian faith, contrary, finally, to the will of the All-highest, proclaimed in the Holy Writ, that all men are equal before him, and that only their deeds and virtues constitute the difference between them."[32]

At one level of interpretation, certain of the sentiments expressed above, especially the doctrine of the two Books suggested by the distinction between duties known from the Scriptures and those known from the natural world, could be placed in the tradition of Reformed theology, and therefore ascribed to Pestel's supposed Lutheran leanings.[33] But Russkaya Pravda represented a significant section of Decembrist thinking, and the appeal to Christianity is presented as the moral foundation of the manifestoes of both the Northern and Southern societies. Thus far, the inescapable impression is one of continuity with masonic ethics, provided one is prepared to accept that under the prevailing conditions in Russia, there was bound in the minds of some freemasons to be a transformation of the traditionally apolitical nature of Russian masonic philanthropy into direct political action, not through any rejection of the fundamental precepts of the masons' religious world-view, but rather through a more sharpened and impatient desire to see Russian reality conform to them. If it seems odd that arguments for the paternity of the lodges in relation to Decembrism should reappear so soon after the generally negative judgment reached after the discussion of freemasonry earlier in this section, it should be remembered that the influence of the masonic world-view was by no means excluded; indeed its parturition of the moderate reformists amongst the Decembrists could be taken as an indirect affirmation of the affinity between materialism and radicalism. That interpretation now seems highly tendentious in the light of the documents so far considered, which support the view that Christian egalitarianism provided the moral impetus across the entire range of Decembrist political thought. A further extract from Russkaya Pravda suggests that this egalitarianism was derived from the supraconfessional spirit of freemasonry:

> "We are obliged to prohibit all those actions of the laws of other faiths which are contrary to the spirit of Christian laws; but we may at our discretion permit everything which is not contrary to their spirit, even though different from them. - The Christian law has one and the same spirit in all its different confessions, and political laws are only required to defend it, and to be consistent with its spirit."[34]

There is a danger here that by alluding to quotations taken out of context, false impressions will be created, and we shall lose sight of the fact that the documents so far considered are in the mainstream of West European political liberalism, with little or nothing to do with theology. For example, the last extract's affirmation of the unity of the Christian law follows closely upon a similar assertion of the unity of political and civil laws; one of the reasons given for this assertion is that "being a moral or theoretical truth, political truth is everywhere the same", an axiom which owes much to the rationalism of the political thought of the Enlightenment era. The paradox of the twofold Newtonian legacy of sceptical empiricist epistemology on one hand, and on the other a belief on the part of Newton's French admirers that universal laws could be discovered by reason in the fields of morality and politics, was as apparent amongst the Decembrists as in the French liberal thinkers whose ideas they found so attractive. It is noticeable in the extracts given above that the ideas of natural reason and natural law (concepts of some antiquity in political philosophy whose origin it would of course be quite wrong to attribute exclusively to a belief in the existence beyond natural science of laws of the simplicity and universality of Newton's laws of mechanics) go hand in hand with direct appeals to Biblical texts. These appeals notwithstanding, the general rhetoric of _Russkaya Pravda_ is stocked with conceptions, such as the inalienable right of property, the existence of government for the people's welfare, the derivation of rights and duties from the nature of man, which testify to an _a priori_ confidence that practical and moral truths may be deduced by reason. This cast of thought has been seen by later philosophers, especially those elaborating Hume's observation that all systems of morality encountered by him passed from "is" to "ought" statements without explanation, as a failure to distinguish between logically distinct kinds of proposition; interestingly the very title of the work in question shows how what is now called the naturalistic fallacy was embedded in language itself, since _pravda_ meant both "justice" and "truth". This is not to say that language is a determinant rather than a reflection of philosophical presuppositions, since deductive morality in the shape of natural law theory formed the basis of the political philosophy of a variety of European thinkers attractive to the Decembrists, such as Montesquieu, Spinoza, Locke and Rousseau, as well as Antoine Destutt de Tracy, the commentator on Montesquieu, singled out by Pestel' for the benefit of Nicholas' Investigating Commission as a strong influence in the formation of his opposition to despotism.[35] Mention should also be made in this connection of the Russian prosvetitely of the Alexandrine era, notaly V.V. Popugaev, I.P. Pnin, A.S. Kaysarov and A.P. Kunitsyn, whose publications have strong affinities with the theoretical presuppositions of the Decembrist documents; as was pointed out in Section 1, Professor Kunitsyn was persecuted by Runich for the views expressed in his lengthy work Natural Law, and exercised personal influence over certain of the Decembrists educated at the Tsarskosel'sky Lyceum.

Beliefs in natural law and natural rights, and the contractual origin of states, are described by Soviet historians as "idealistic" (in contradistinction to historical materialism), but leaving aside any consideration of basic inconsistencies, affirmations of natural rights have historically coexisted with metaphysical views usually regarded as materialistic, notably in the case of certain of the eighteenth-century French philosophes, and of the Englishman Hobbes in the seventeenth century. Although Hobbes' laws of nature seem to have more in common with the analysis of rights as useful conventions given by Hume, the opponent of natural law theories, than with the a priori rights invoked by the Decembrists, it should be remembered that utilitarianism, derived from the philosophes and from Bentham, exists alongside rationalism in the gamut of their political views. This is not an attempt to demonstrate a similarity between the political philosophy of the Leviathan and Russkaya Pravda, but the example of Hobbes brings to mind the usual estimation that his characterisation of natural laws as the commands of God is to be taken with a pinch of salt: it might similarly be possible, without much groundless and endless speculation about the sincerity of Pestel's and Murav'ev's invocations of Scripture, to show that at least some of the Decembrists were prepared to present their views in religious clothing in order to divert religious approbation to their own cause rather than to the justification of the Romanov dynasty. The most obvious proponents of this strategy were Sergey Murav'ev-Apostol and Mikhail Bestuzhev-Ryumin, whose negotiations on behalf of the Southern Society with the Society of United Slavs led to the alliance of September 1825. According to the memoirs of I.I. Gorbachevsky, a dispute took place during the course of the negotiations, in which he and Major Spiridov of the Slavic Union opposed Murav'ev's opinion that the best means of influencing Russian soldiers was to arouse religious fanaticism in them, and that reading the Bible could inspire hatred of the government.

It is important to distinguish the question of the sincerity of the allegiance to Christianity of Murav'ev and Bestuzhev from their evaluation of the Bible as propaganda material, based on an estimation of the susceptibilities of the ordinary Russian soldier, to which Gorbachevsky was totally opposed. Murav'ev's argument, in Gorbachevsky's account, was that notions like republican government and the equality of estates were "the riddle of the Sphinx" to the soldiers, but that if they were made aware of the divine injunctions in certain chapters of the Bible against the election of kings and obedience to them, they would not hesitate "to take up arms against their lord."[36] Gorbachevsky replied that "tolerance" was the distinctive mark of the Russian people, who were not influenced by priests and monks, and doubted the utility of the language of ecclesiastics on whom the people looked askance:

"I think that you can find more freethinkers than fanatics amongst our soldiers, and it could easily turn out that common sense would make some of them say that the proscription of the election of kings was not a divine command to the Israelites, but a cunning ruse on the part of the Levite priests who wished to support theocracy."

Murav'ev felt that this was to overestimate the soldiers: "... the simple people are good, they never use their reason, and therefore they must be the instrument for the achievement of our aim."[37]

There seems no reason to doubt that Murav'ev-Apostol was capable of making such a statement, despite all the normal reservations about the reliability of memoirs, and in this case about the evident class friction obtaining between the relatively low-born and low-ranked members of the Slavic Union and the aristocratic delegates of the Southern Society.

"The members of the Southern Society for the most part functioned within a circle of people from the highest estate; wealth, connections, rank and outstanding service were considered an essential condition for entry into the society ..."[38] Gorbachevsky felt that their desire to avoid the participation of the people and to conceal their real intentions from the lower ranks stemmed from their social position and habit of commanding, which made it difficult for them to accept equality in society, or to trust people lower in the state hierarchy. It may be that the greater social gulf between Murav'ev and the common soldiers explains why his respect for their intellectual powers is less developed than Gorbachevksy's; be that as it may, the fact that Murav'ev recommends Scripture rather than political education for people who do not use their reason seems as poor a reflection on the text as its readers, since he is clearly not in this context making a theological distinction between reason and faith. This implication was taken up by Spiridov, who claimed that anyone imbued with religious feeling would not use such a holy object as the Bible as an instrument for the attainment of some outside aim.[39] Spiridov was obviously aiming below the belt, but whether or not Murav'ev's attitude was merely, in Gorbachevsky's phrase "the cunning of Machiavellianism,"[40], or was based on Christian conviction cannot be resolved. His advocacy of religion, in response to Gorbachevsky's characterisation of the Russian army's attitude towards it, does not help us, since it was utilitarian rather than spiritual. "Believe me, religion will always be a powerful stirrer of the human heart; it will show the way to virtue, it will lead to great exploits by the Russian, who according to you is indifferent to religion, and will bestow on him the martyr's crown."[41]

During the course of this debate, Murav'ev-Apostol showed his opponents a paper which Gorbachevsky described as including a translation from the Old Testament of the Israelites' election of Saul as king. This was in all probability Murav'ev's "Orthodox Catechism", written in collaboration with Bestuzhev-Ryumin, a major portion of which was devoted to a summary of I Samuel 8. In this chapter, the prophet, having heard the Israelites' request to make them a king, warns them of the expropriations of their children and property which would ensue: "And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you, and the Lord will not hear you in that day."[42] One of the quotations from which the profanity of kingship is inferred is taken from the same passage: "And the Lord said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee, for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them."[43]

Murav'ev concludes, in a manner which seems anachronistic to the historian, if not the theologian, that "the election of kings is contrary to the divine will, because our one king must be Jesus Christ."[44] The catechism, presented in traditional question and answer form, invokes Biblical quotations in support of the thesis that monarchy contravenes God's law. A typical passage is the following:

"Question How can one take up arms with a completely pure heart?

Answer By taking up arms and courageously following those who speak in the name of the Lord, remembering the words of our Saviour: Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled; and having crushed the injustice and dishonesty of tyranny, by setting up a government in keeping with divine law.

Question What kind of government is keeping with divine law?

Answer One without kings. God created us all equal, and having come down to earth, chose the apostles from the common people, not from kings and worthies."[45]

The catechumens, or "the Christ-loving Russian army" are finally instructed that it is their duty to oppose tyranny and to restore faith and freedom in Russia, and that anyone who lags in his duty, will bring anathema upon himself, like Judas the Betrayer.[46]

The paper cut little ice with the sceptical Gorbachevsky, who pointed out that it could equally be deduced from the New Testament that to oppose the monarch meant to oppose religion;[47] this point had clearly not worried the catechists, who had not only quoted from the Sermon on the Mount, as above, but also had used the words of the Apostle Paul. In any case, Spiridov and Gorbachevsky omitted to draw the attention of the other members of the Slavic Union to the catechism, on the grounds that they knew beforehand that they would be opposed to it. This might seem like the rationalisation of personal prejudice, though when we come to consider the views of individuals within the society of United Slavs, such an interpretation will become less plausible. The Society's collective pronouncements shed little light on the metaphysical views of its membership, though, unlike those of its new allies, they are compatible with freethought. The regulations of the society are couched in religious terminology, though the religion is somewhat eclectic, and the tone not without a hint of mockery; for example:

"6. Let the goddess of enlightenment be your penates, and happiness shall settle with love in your household ...

8. Ignorance and its children - pride, superstition and fanaticism - they will be your evil spirit Beelzebub.

9. Be tolerant of all the confessions and customs of other peoples, be obliged to make use of only the truly good."[48]

The society's blood-curdling oath makes one reference to traditional Christian demonology:

"Hell itself with all its horrors will not be able to compel me to reveal to the tyrants my friends and their aims."

Otherwise the oath invokes only a secular religion of enlightenment, and punishment for violation of the oath is conceived in terms of earthly existence:

"Upon joining the United Slavs for the liberation of myself from tyranny and for the restoration of freedom, which is so precious to the human race, I solemnly pledge myself on this weapon to mutual love, which for me is a divinity, and from which I expect the fulfillment of all my desires ... Should I violate this oath, then let remorse be the first vengeance for my oath-breaking, let the point of this sword turn against my heart and fill it with hellish torment; let the moment of my life that is injurious to my friends be the last one; let my existence be transformed into a chain of unprecedented misfortunes from the fatal moment that I forget my pledge."[49]

According to Gorbachevsky's account of the society's objectives, the Slavic Union saw no role for Christianity in fostering the acceptance of its grand federative design amongst the people. This is significant, since its members distrusted military revolutions, which "may become, not the cradle, but the grave of freedom, in whose name they were carried out", and advocated that no revolution take place until the people had been adequately prepared for the new type of civic life:

"To fulfill these intentions [the United Slavs] decided to allot a certain portion of their funds to buy serfs their freedom; to attempt to organize or aid in the organization of small village and rural schools; to instil in peasants and soldiers a feeling for the necessity of knowing justice and a love for the fulfillment of a citizen's duties, thereby arousing in them the desire to alter the degrading condition of slavery, and so forth."[50]

There is evidently no intention here of drawing the serfs' attention to the unacceptability of their social condition by referring them to the Bible, and the contrast afforded by the passage with Murav'ev-Apostol's propaganda makes the latter appear patronising rather than evangelical. But the examples of Yakushkin and Raevsky should deter any simplistic cleaving between the secular populism of the Slavic Union's _proto-raznochintsy_ and the mock-pious aloofness of their aristocratic fellow-conspirators. That having been said, the wish to win over the rank-and-file soldier by playing upon his supposed religious prejudices extended beyond the "Orthodox Catechism" within the aristocratic societies.[51] Bestuzhev-Ryumin's "Proclamation" echoes the catechism's denunciation of slavery as a contravention of Christ's teaching, and welcomes the death of the Tsar as a merciful release by God from tyranny. The Russian army, as "true sons of the Church" will fulfill its sacred task and without committing any sin will establish a popular government based on divine law. "And the servants of the altars, till now left in poverty and held in contempt by our wicked tyrant, will pray to God about us, who have restored the temples of the Lord to all their former glory."[52]

How far the Southern Society and the Slavic Union were able to put their opposing theories into practice is a matter of conjecture. Once the United Slavs had committed themselves to the proposed insurrection, despite their suspicion of military revolution, their propaganda appears to have been hasty and inadequate. If we accept the testimony of Grigoriy Kraynikov, in return for their support, he and his comrades were promised by Andreevich and Bechasny of the Society of United Slavs the alleviation of their service duties, the present severity of which was blamed on an administration composed mostly of Germans.[53] According to the testimony of a former soldier of the life-guards of the Semenovsky regiment, Fedor Anoychenko, Murav'ev-Apostol was particularly interested in former soldiers of the disbanded Semonovsky regiment like himself; on several occasions he gave Anoychenko's comrades and himself money for vodka, and blamed the Tsar for the severity of their military service. Anoychenko, however, denied taking any oath, and disclaimed any knowledge of the "Orthodox Catechism."[54] There is no doubt that the Catechism was circulated, and several copies have been preserved, though one wonders how far Murav'ev and Bestuzhev were prepared to put their religious propaganda to the test in their personal contacts with their subordinates, particularly in the light of the youthful Bestuzhev's "Proclamation", which would see the rebellion almost as a liberation of the clergy. We have already seen that Gorbachevsky and Spiridov regarded this approach as a failure to recognise the traditional anticlericalism of the Russian soldier and peasant. Gorbachevsky's generalisation must be viewed in the light of his own religious indifference, but it has some plausibility from what we know of the spiritual and material impoverishment of the clergy under a Romanov dynasty manifestly unsympathetic to the national church from the reign of Peter the Great until the last years of Alexander I's incumbency. Not only did the church suffer by comparison with the zeal of the schismatics and sectarians amongst the people, but its supposed moral leadership was impaired by the increasingly exclusive and hereditary nature of the priestly class, and also the growing reliance of the rural clergy on local charity. The need to improve the parish clergy's conditions was set down in Russkaya Pravda; a similar point was made by A.A. Bestuzhev in his letter to Tsar Nicholas, where in an exhaustive inventory of the ills afflicting the fatherland, he pointed to the wretched condition of the rural clergy, held in disrespect and forced to beg:

"Having no stipend, they are totally reliant upon the kindness of the peasants and are compelled to ingratiate themselves with them; they have fallen into the very sins for the removal of which they were intended."[55]

Although on the face of it, the lot of the clergy as portrayed by Bestuzhev might have commended them to the peasants, it is easy to see how they risked being regarded as superfluous parasites. It is probably no coincidence that the propaganda which Bestuzhev helped to compose differed markedly from the Southern Society's appeals to Christianity and the Orthodox Church. The prime instigator was the poet K.F. Ryleev, who was enrolled by I.I. Pushchin into the Northern Society as late as 1823, but whose leadership had an invigorating effect on the society's activities and recruitment. The propaganda referred to takes the form of simple couplets which could easily be sung by the soldiers, and is aimed usually at the Tsar himself, as well as other figures representing the government, such as Arakcheev, Volkonsky, Magnitsky, Grech and Bulgarin, a good example being the verses beginning "Our Tsar, the Russian German". Each couplet is followed by a refrain in which the Tsar is ironically referred to as the "Orthodox Lord", a hint at the anticlericalism which is a significant emotional element of more than one of these songs. Ryleev, as was mentioned earlier in this section, was a member of a masonic lodge, and one of the couplets of "Our Tsar, the Russian German", written in 1823, a year after the prohibition of the lodges, accuses Alexander of being afraid of laws and of freemasons ("_Trusit on zakonov, trusit on masonov_")[56]. The most graphic identification of the people's oppressors is given in the worksong beginning "This is how the blacksmith works" ("_Uzh kak shel kuznets_"), in which the blacksmith hammers in three nails, one for the _boyar_, the second for the priests and hypocrites, "and having said a prayer, the third nail for the Tsar."[57] The verses commencing "Oh, where are those islands" are an invocation of a utopia, where, incidentally, Faddey Bulgarin fears not the claws of his wife's aunt, and where Magnitsky is silent and Mordvinov (proposed by the Northern Society as one member of the Provisional Government) cries out freely. Of all the songs, these verses contain the strongest anticlerical feeling. The islands are envisaged as places where people read Voltaire's poem "The Maid of Orleans" and "the church calendar lies under the bed", and "where the hussars scald the priests, like bed-bugs, with wax." The final lines consist of the following exhortation:

"To the islands, to the islands, brothers,
We'll throw the church calendar in the priests' ugly faces!"[58]

Enough evidence may already have been presented to undermine any proposition that Christianity is a fundamental or necessary element of the social and political philosophy of the Decembrists; it can be inferred that a significant number of the policy-making conspirators saw the need at least publicly to guarantee the truth of their moral and political prescriptions by invoking a supernatural creator and legislator, though given that an appeal is also made to an analogy between moral laws and laws of nature, the former invocation is, at any rate logically, unnecessary. Admittedly, God is held, for example in Russkaya Pravda, to be the source of obligations and natural laws, but to say that God guarantees moral standards may be an attempt to legitimise group values and objectives, whereas to advocate God's authorship of natural laws is more likely to be an attempt to explain a regularity or legitimacy already sufficiently attested by reason and experience. In other words, the appeal to a Creator in this case need be no more than a device to encourage the acceptance of an analogy between natural and moral laws with enough logical power to secure one's own political objectives. Be that as it may, there can be no denying that religion played a significant, if diverse, role in the development of Decembrist thought, or that the secret societies numbered amongst their members sincere believers. The purpose of the final part of this section, which has in presenting only the relatively public manifestoes and propaganda material of the

Decembrists and leaving aside consideration of the private views of individuals, given a one-sided impression, has been to show that there are good grounds for not accepting even this one-sided impression at face value. There is a serious danger here of tendentiousness, a danger which may not have been removed merely by recognising it. The tendentiousness would be based upon a prior commitment to a correlation between attitudes towards the prevailing religious world-view and attitudes towards the existing mode of government. We have seen that scepticism, deism and anticlericalism were often associated with a reformist political stance towards the end of the eighteenth century. A similar association exists in what we have so far seen of the anticlericalism within the Northern Society, the most moderate politically of the Decembrist secret societies, whereas religious indifference characterises the more egalitarian and populist society of United Slavs. The major stumbling-block to the acceptance of the correlation of degrees of opposition to the religious and political *status quo* is presented by the Southern Society, whose programme of republican government to be attained by revolutionary means seems to be the toughest political line of all, and yet whose attitude towards religion and the Church could in some instances be described as conservative.

The coexistence of political, social and economic radicalism with religious conservatism in, for example, the pages of *Russkaya Pravda* could simply be accepted and regarded as an important counterexample refuting the universality of the correlation of degrees of opposition to the political and religious *status quo*. Certain qualifications ought however to be made. There is no doubt that *Russkaya Pravda* was more radical than Nikita Murav'ev's constitution in that it called for the abolition of the monarchy, a political objective incidentally to be achieved by a *garde perdue* of assassins dedicated to the destruction of the imperial family.

Pestel' and his collaborators were also on the face of it economically more radical than their northern comrades, who while agreeing that serfdom should be abolished, defended the nobility's existing ownership of the land. A well-known passage from Russkaya Pravda suggests that this would have met with the total opposition of the Southern Society:

"A characteristic feature of the present century is marked by the open struggle between the people and the feudal aristocracy, in course of which there begins to arise an aristocracy of wealth, far more harmful than the feudal aristocracy, for the latter can always be shaken by public opinion, and consequently is to some extent dependent upon public opinion, whereas the aristocracy of wealth, through possessing wealth, finds in it an instrument for its views, against which public opinion is completely powerless, and is able by means of it to keep the whole people ... in a state of total dependence."[59]

It seems clear, though, from Pestel's testimony to the Investigating Commission, where he reiterates his dislike of hereditary aristocracy and aristocracy of wealth, that he is concerned with political rather than economic rights, and that Herzen's description of him as "a socialist before socialism"[60] is not on this count justified. What Pestel' objected to in Murav'ev's constitution, according to his testimony, was that the right to hold public office was made dependent upon property, and it was precisely that which he dubbed "this dreadful aristocracy of wealth."[61] As far as the ownership of land was concerned the difference between north and south was not great, since both allowed for some communal ownership, and where the Northern Society defended existing rights, the Southern Society planned to give over half the land to private ownership and development. In general, both societies were committed to the sacred and inalienable right of property, and both wanted the abolition of estate and guild institutions inimical to the growth of free enterprise. Apart from disagreement about the form of government, the greatest gulf between the Southern Society and the Northern, and for that matter the Slavic Union, concerned the extent of political control, rather than the extent of social and economic reconstruction. For example, we read in Russkaya Pravda that "members of society are divided into those who give orders and those who obey. This division is inevitable, because it proceeds from human nature, and consequently exists everywhere, and must exist."[62] The appeal to human nature as a fixed quantity, though not incompatible with the psychological determinism of French Enlightenment moral and political philosophy, has at any rate to modern ears the ring of conservatism, and these statements taken out of context could sit comfortably in a justification of autocracy.

In the same tract, the option of federative government is rejected in favour of a united and indivisible state, on the grounds that the right to nationhood of the subject peoples is secondary to the general welfare of the dominant people. The balance between the two principles is determined by a third, which rules that the general welfare be concerned with the security of the state and not with any "vainglorious expansion of the boundaries of the state."[63] Thus, it might be said, the Southern Society was, at least on paper, dissociating itself from any further imperialist expansion, but would rest content with the fruits so far gathered. The Northerners favoured federalism, though some were not only opposed to Pestel's proposed Russification policies but also to the exception he was prepared to make in the case of Poland, which was held to be capable of independence. Objections of a similar kind were made to the alliance concluded in 1824 between the Southern Society and the Polish Patriotic Society. It was only to be expected that centralised government should be a sticking-point in the negotiations with the Society of United Slavs in the following year, since the first axiom of the Slavic Union was the establishment of a federation of all the Slav peoples, or at any rate those peoples considered by the society's members to be Slavonic. It could be argued that in reaching agreement, the United Slavs were forced to sacrifice their own political identity; Gorbachevsky, with the benefit of hindsight, was in agreement with this judgment:

"The fate of the Slavs had been decided. From that moment, the Slavic Union existed in the hearts and minds of a few, who could not forget the grand and elevated, though perhaps in the opinion of some, unrealistic, ideal of a federative union of the Slavic nations."[64]

A further point of disagreement in the course of these negotiations was again a question of the extent of political control, and again the antipathy of the Slavic Union was reciprocated by the Northern Society. Both groups were highly suspicious of the role of the Provisional Verkhovnaya Duma for which Russkaya Pravda was intended as an instruction, and which was to enjoy unlimited legislative power for a limited period, in order that the proposed changes be brought about gradually and in consequence with the minimum of social upheaval. This non-representative interregnum met with the opposition of Nikita Murav'ev in St. Petersburg and Petr. Borisov of the United Slavs in Leshchin. Borisov, whose scepticism and self-control upset the impetuous and naïve Bestuzhev-Ryumin, asked by what right and whose consent the Supreme Duma would govern Russia for the proposed ten-year period:

"What constitutes its power, and what safeguards will you introduce in order to prevent one of the members of your government, chosen by the army and supported by bayonets, wresting autocratic power?"

Bestuzhev was outraged by the question, but as Borisov, who was given to classical allusions, pointed out:

"Julius Caesar was murdered in the middle of Rome, struck down by his own greatness and glory, but over the murderers, over the ardent patriots, triumphed the faint-hearted Octavian, an eighteen-year-old youth."[65]

It would be easy enough to accept the Southern Society's rationalisations of the ten-year interregnum in terms of the avoidance of bloodshed, were it not for the authoritarianism which is evident elsewhere in Russkaya Pravda. This attitude undoubtedly owes a great deal to the personality of Pestel', who shares something of Lenin's unswerving and unyielding subordination of means to ends. Yakushkin's portrait is particularly instructive:

"Pestel' always spoke intelligently, and obstinately defended his point of view, in the truth of which he always believed, as one normally believes in mathematical truth; he was never carried away by anyone, and perhaps in this fact lies the reason why of all of us he alone during the course of almost ten years, without weakening for a single moment, worked zealously on the business of the Secret Society. Having once demonstrated to himself that the Secret Society was the true means for the achievement of the desired end, he merged his existence with it."[66]

The appeals to Christianity in Russkaya Pravda and in the propaganda of Bestuzhev-Ryumin and Murav'ev-Apostol must be seen in the context of a clear desire within the Southern Society to impose radical reform and to preserve the natural division between those who give orders and those who obey, be they individuals or nations. Thus Pestel' and his comrades at Tul'chin, although more hostile to autocracy than N.M. Murav'ev and the other constitutional monarchists of the Northern Society,[67] were at least initially prepared to contemplate methods of political control previously associated with the exercise of the Tsar's unlimited sovereignty. It has already been argued that the policies of the Holy Alliance impelled an otherwise ecumenical Alexander to recognise the value of the national church for the stability of his régime. It might similarly be argued that the desire to enact reforms without the unpredictable participation of the ordinary soldier and peasant led a possibly indifferent Southern Society to a similar conclusion, that the traditional faith was the best means to maintain the masses in a state of pious acceptance of authority, in this case that of the rebels. The validity of the argument is open to doubt, though, the truth of its main component propositions is well attested. We have already seen how Gorbachevsky ascribed the Southern Society propagandists' desire to avoid the participation of the people in the revolt, and their concealment of their real intentions from the lower ranks, to their social status. Apart from the religious propaganda, and the previously quoted extracts from Russkaya Pravda (one of which advocated qualified toleration of religious faiths), we read in the first version of the latter work:

> "Christian Orthodoxy, the Graeco-Russian faith must be recognised as the ruling faith of the Great Russian State."[68]

In the second version, the assimilation of the Church into the state organs begun by Peter the Great is fully endorsed. Although the conditions of the rural clergy are to be improved, the clergy as a whole are to be considered as "a part of the government...a branch of the state administration, a division of the bureaucracy."[69] The capital of the Russian state is to be transferred to Nizhniy Novgorod, which is to be renamed Vladimir, in memory of the great man who introduced the Christian faith into Russia:

> " ... and let Russia's centre by its very name forever bear witness to the Russians' eternal gratitude for this act of virtue and beneficence".[70]

One measure of the limitation of the extent to which the Southern Society was prepared to tolerate non-Christian faiths is afforded by their attitude towards the Jews, whom they regarded as an exclusive "state within a state", hostile to Christianity; it was suggested that the Polish and Russian Jews should get together and set up a state in Asia Minor.[71]

This policy of Russification and the extension of Orthodoxy, taken in isolation from the Southern Society's programme of political, social and economic revolution, is hard to distinguish from official theory and practice during the reign of Nicholas I. I am not in saying this attempting to salvage the thesis that radical opposition to a government justifying itself in the name of religion is likely to be accompanied by antireligious metaphysics, by arguing that an apparently radical Southern Society is in reality more conservative than its apparently more moderate northern counterpart. Nevertheless, it becomes clear that the extent of opposition to a feudal or semifeudal autocracy cannot be measured in a simple linear fashion. If the Southerners can be accused of wishing to retain Tsarist methods of coercion, the Northerners can be seen as defenders of the existing privileges of the landowning nobility. These are generalisations derived from Russkaya Pravda and Murav'ev's Constitution, and it should immediately be noted that, for example, some prominent Northerners like Ryleev and E.P. Obolensky were attracted by Pestel's advocacy of the destruction of the imperial family, and took exception to Murav'ev's insistence upon a propertied electorate.[72] But to pursue generalisation further, the moderate Northerners were primarily concerned with economic and political liberty, whereas the Southerners added to these goals the imposition of a measure of social equality, for the attainment of which they looked to the same means by which the Tsars sought to maintain inequality. The paradox that the inversion of an oppressive régime engenders an equal amount of oppression has been noted by countless Western liberals emphasising, for example, the continuity between the ancien régime and the revolutionary Terror in eighteenth-century France or between Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union. The implied parallel between the Southern Society and the Bolsheviks in terms of political control does not on the face of it throw any light on the Southern Society's appeal to Orthodoxy, since the ideology of the Bolsheviks was antireligious au dernier point. Leaving aside debating points about the function of

Marxist-Leninist materialism as a secular religion, one of the many differences between the Bolsheviks and the Southern Society was that for the former popular participation was not only desired and encouraged, but regarded as an ideological essential of revolution, whereas for the latter, exactly the opposite was the case. The Bolsheviks saw as part of their role the fostering of class consciousness amongst the industrial workers and peasants, a process which included the identification of religion as an expression of the ideology of the exploiting classes; clearly the Decembrists were theoretically poles apart from such a characterisation of revolutionary purpose, and the difference between the two sets of social, political and economic goals could be offered as a simple analogue of the conflicting approaches to religion adopted by the Bolsheviks and the Southern Society. In other words, the similarity between the groups' perceived need for strong centralised political control is neither here nor there. This conclusion however, seems unsatisfactory, since the location and strength of advocated political authority has been put forward as the measure by which to gauge the differing attitudes towards religion and the church which we have found amongst the three principal Decembrist groupings. It should nevertheless be noted that although it is difficult to find a criterion derived from their political philosophy, other than the degree of control to be exercised, which would illuminate the different approaches evinced by the Southern and Northern Societies towards the use of religion in the service of the revolution, it appears that the degree of popular participation in the revolution is a matter of policy which not only separates the Southerners from the Bolsheviks, but also from the Slavic Union, a group which it is a little less far-fetched to compare with Lenin's party than in the case of their aristocratic allies.

In summary, the Bolsheviks favoured popular participation and strong political control, and attempted to replace Orthodoxy with a state-sponsored secular metaphysics; the Slavic Union favoured popular participation but opposed strong political control, and were, so far as we have seen, indifferent to religion,[73] and the Southern Society wished to keep popular participation to a minimum and favoured strong political control, and wished to retain the religion formerly sponsored by their political antagonists. It could be inferred on the basis of the foregoing caricatures of three differing sets of political attitudes, that at any rate in the context of Russian history, the affinities between ontological and political beliefs may be determined by a balance of the respective desires to win the people's heart and to claim the people's mind. Whether or not this is the case is independent of whether the Southern Society's corporate appeal to Christianity was founded upon religious conviction or whether it was more "the cunning of Machiavellianism", though were it the case, it would render the truth of either of the latter less critical for the salvation of the thesis that materialist metaphysics went hand in hand with political opposition; it would merely entail that the nature of that political opposition would have to be specified more closely. Suffice it to say, then, that as far as this discussion of the Decembrists' corporate attitudes towards religion and the Church has been concerned, no atheistic sentiments can be found, but that there are some grounds for not accepting at face value even the most enthusiastic avowals of support for the Orthodox Church. No final judgments about the relationship between Decembrism and religion can be given until the insurgents' individual views have been considered.

In conclusion to this section, and in connection with its initial recognition that the Magnitsky era was but one facet of a rather complex period of reaction, it should be borne in mind when it comes to a fuller assessment of the Decembrists' metaphysical views that insofar as they can be shown to have been shaped by governmental attitudes and activities, they must have been shaped as much, if not more, by the variety of supraconfessional religious configurations either sponsored or tolerated by the state, than by the latter-day Orthodox hegemony, personified in the archimandrite Photius Spassky. Thus although it might still be the case that atheism and materialism would constitute an expected response on the part of at least some political dissidents within a society where religion was monopolised by a state-controlled Church, the fact that religion was not controlled by the state through the national church for the majority of Alexander's reign, and the associated fact that his administration was likely to be associated more with Christian theism in the abstract, than with a concrete estate of ecclesiastics, makes it logically attractive that atheism should be associated with rejection of the State, for otherwise there is no reason to expect that the response on the part of the state's opponents to a state-administered church should be anything more extreme than the anticlericalism which we have already encountered in the propaganda songs of Ryleev and Bestuzhev-Marlinsky. This is not to say that as a general rule atheism and materialism are only to be expected, or at any rate are more likely, when the government is more easily associated with theism than with any particular denomination. Such a simple conclusion could easily be undermined by pointing to the generation of radicals and atheists, including Belinsky, Bakunin and Herzen, whose repudiation of temporal and spiritual authority developed in an official atmosphere of Orthodoxy, autocracy and nationality. It is, however, at least likely from what we have seen of the corporate attitudes towards religion and the Church manifested by the three Decembrist factions, that the metaphysical views of political radicals, to the extent which they depend on either, and for that matter to the extent which either can be separated, depend as much upon the extent and nature of their own political opposition, as they do upon the policies of the government towards religious confessions other than those of the State Church. Thus in the case of Bakunin, his rejection of authority was so extreme, profound and upon so many levels, that his anarchism was bound, psychologically if not logically, to have been accompanied by atheism, regardless of the religious policies of the Russian government, or indeed of any other government whose scrutiny he happened to attract. But Decembrism, as we have seen, was not the absolute negation of existing political reality which was the dynamo of Bakuninism; instead, varying degrees of opposition coexisted on the political, economic and social levels. It is therefore only to be expected that government policy towards religion and the church would play a more critical part in the formation of the metaphysical views of an oppositional group whose rejection of the existing order was far from total, or even consistent. To be more specific, I am suggesting that the peculiar nature of Alexander's conduct of spiritual affairs contributed to a balance amongst the Decembrists between anticlericalism and agnosticism or deism on the one hand, and atheism and materialism on the other, which was less towards the former than would be expected from a consideration of their political views alone. This expectation assumes an appeal to the simple correlation between degree of political opposition and degree of departure from Orthodoxy which seems to be confirmed as a workable generalisation for the liberal nobility of the late eighteenth century, and the intelligentsia which inherited the Decembrist cause.

This is to speculate in advance of the evidence to be provided, for example, by an analysis of the surviving views of Decembrists such as Yakushkin, Baryatinsky, Borisov and Gorbachevsky. It might therefore be worthwhile, at a point where it has been observed that of all the liberal policies associated with Alexander's reign, the sponsorship of a comparatively high degree of interconfessional equality proved slightly hardier than the educational and political reforms, to recollect that such were the connections between the masonic lodges and the embryonic Decembrist secret societies that it seemed not unreasonable to entertain an alternative correlation between metaphysics and political opposition to that assumed above. The alternative, that the masonic world-view at least initially provided the intellectual stimulus in the process whereby growing disillusionment with the Tsarist regime began to be articulated, could not be totally discarded, and served as a reminder that any attempt to argue for an exclusive union of Decembrism with any particular class of metaphysical views would number amongst its presuppositions a unanimity of Decembrist social, political and economic objectives which did not exist.

Section 4 - Political Opposition

The previous section's rejection of the claims of any one kind of ontology to a monopoly of trade with Decembrist political philosophy brings to mind the demise of more than one possible monocausal explanation of such atheistic and materialistic sentiments as found expression amongst the insurgents. It has already been pointed out that in the sphere of education, the Tsar and his advisers promoted against the odds philosophical and natural scientific instruction as part of their curricular reforms, only for many of the doctrines thereby introduced to be branded as atheistic and materialistic by subsequent officials in the Ministry of Education. It was suggested that this might serve to recommend atheism to students of the new philosophical and scientific disciplines. One of the difficulties of this line of reasoning is that so many Western ideas were covered by, for example, Magnitsky's application of "materialist" and "atheist", that it becomes implausible to suppose that a disciple of Kant or Schelling would renounce views which we should now consider opposed to materialism or atheism, simply because they were described as such by an administrator not renowned for philosophical acumen. This is not to say that the official attitudes put into practice by Magnitsky for the benefit of the students at Kazan' could have had no real impact on the development of Decembrist thought; Magnitsky, it will be remembered, was nothing if not sensitive to the possible materialist implications of contemporary physics, cosmology and anatomy, and we shall see that metaphysical views which Borisov and Yakushkin founded upon data from these sciences could be interpreted as at least compatible with the acceptance of materialism. Nevertheless, even though the fact that the official assault on materialism and atheism was first publicly mounted during the reign of Alexander I in the sphere of education is vital to my contention that the latter stages of that period mark a turning-point in the history of

Russian materialism, the fact is not in itself sufficient to explain why that world-view was more prevalent in certain social groups rather than others. The same charge of insufficiency was levelled against the argument that political and metaphysical freethought in Russians was the direct result of contact with politically and metaphysically freethinking West Europeans or their publications. If freethought were a contagion, it needed to be known why some sections of society were more immune than others.

Leaving aside the not inconsiderable arguments of the previous section that the true intellectual progenitor of Decembrist political philosophy was masonic ethics, the implication being that the materialism and atheism of certain of the insurgents, if it were to be explained at all, should be explained in purely individual terms, the preferred hypothesis was that the government's association with most forms of Christian theism was likely to recommend atheism to its staunchest opponents. In other words the arguments become more plausible upon the insertion of a clause implying that the proponents of materialism and atheism, or at any rate those whose attitudes may have been stimulated by those factors mentioned above, were also opponents of the Tsarist régime. This takes us back to the opening paragraph of the previous section, where it was suggested that related metaphysical and political views might be dependent upon some underlying, preceding or primary factor or set of factors. It need not follow, of course, that the factor or factors should be responsible in the same way for both the metaphysical and political views; provided that they accounted for the growth of political opposition, the arguments for the appeal of materialism would thereby be made sufficient.

I mentioned in the aforesaid paragraph that to seek to explain the relationships between ideas by reference to some underlying factor or factors would as a class of historico-philosophical views subsume Marxist interpretations of history. It would therefore be impossible to investigate in any depth this general methodological approach without at least recognising that it raises the question as to how far Decembrist ideas can be traced back ultimately to changes in economic relations of production, or mediately to conflict between social classes. I propose to decline the invitation either to validate or to falsify Marxism, primarily on the grounds of incompetence in economics and economic history, but secondarily because there are enough factors in the Russian Alexandrine context to account for the development of political opposition within the army and consequently enough indigenous factors to render untenable the view that Decembrism was mere imitation of the West, without having recourse to a commitment to economic determinism. Nevertheless, some observations should be made. Firstly, I could not rule out *in principle* explanations of the ultimate or mediate kind given above. The fact that the Decembrists were scarcely less homogeneous in terms of class origin and occupation than they were in terms of sex and age make it unlikely that any explanation which excluded considerations of class could be given of the fact that of all the sections of Russian society they were the most attracted to certain kinds of political and metaphysical thought. (However, an explanation in terms of class alone could not be sufficient, since by no means all of the nobility shared these views). Again, the unanimity with which the Decembrists condemned serfdom and protectionist trade policies, and all institutions inimical to *laissez-faire* renders it implausible to treat their ideas independently of economic developments within Russia, unless it is argued that such condemnations stem from an ingenuous and unrealistic imbibing of Western political economy; such an argument would, I believe, fly in the face of the harsh criticism of specifically Russian economic practices and institutions expressed in several corporate and individual Decembrist writings.

The second kind of observation I wish to make concerns not so much the truth of economic determinism as the validity of the claims of Soviet historians that the Decembrist rebellion represented an abortive bourgeois revolution, an interpretation completely at odds with Professor Pipes' two viewpoints referred in Section 2, and apparently inconsistent with each other, either that the Decembrist revolt represented the last of three attempts by the service élite to restrain autocratic power, or that it was an event without antecedents or issue in Russian terms but merely an imitation of distant happenings. In the words of I. Ya. Shchipanov: "Objectively, the Decembrists' struggle was a struggle for a bourgeois basis and a bourgeois superstructure corresponding to it."[1] This statement at first sight poses a logical oddity, in that according to the Marxist-Leninist conception of history, the superstructure (for example, social relations, institutions, political, legal, philosophical and religious ideas) is determined by the relations of production, or the material basis of society; it would therefore be difficult to see how the ideas of the Decembrists could be a struggle for a basis and a corresponding superstructure when they should form part of the latter and be in the final analysis determined by the former. Clearly what is meant is that the existing feudal basis had already entered a transitional stage on its way to being replaced by a capitalist socioeconomic formation, and Shchipanov indeed argues that the second half of the eighteenth century had seen in Russia the development from a natural economy of a market, commodity and money economy. He quotes figures given by M. Zlotnikov comparing the number of manufacturing enterprises with more than 16 workers in 1804 with the corresponding number in 1825, together with the total number of workers and proportion of hired as opposed to serf labour in each case. Although the percentage increase in the number of enterprises is fairly high (about 50%), the number is small to begin with, and moreover the proportion of hired labour rises very little (about 6%).[2] It consequently becomes a matter of fine judgment as to whether the remarkable excrescence of ideas opposing the official 'superstructure' in the years after the Napoleonic Wars can be put down to what seems to be a rather slow shift in the economic basis of Alexandrine society. This is not to say that Shchipanov wishes in any way to deny the peculiar significance of the campaigns of 1812-14 in the Decembrist movement; rather they are accorded a vital role in increasing the national self-consciousness of the people. Indeed many of the factors which might have been emphasised in contradistinction to economics by historians antipathetic to Marxist-Leninist philosophy of history are readily included in Shchipanov's analysis: for instance, the disillusionment of the army after their successful campaigns, the harsh discipline imposed upon soldiers, the unpopularity of the military settlements, patriotic motives, the effect of revolutionary events in France, Spain, Portugal, Naples, Piedmont and Greece, and the influence of liberal and materialistic ideas (though with the emphasis on indigenous rather than Western European thinkers). The difference is that in the case of the Marxist-Leninist interpretation, what is described as the superstructure is in the final analysis determined by the material basis of society. It would be a vulgarisation of the theory of basis and superstructure to claim, for example, that a particular philosophical doctrine was determined directly by economic relations of production. But although the Marxian belief in the dependence of intellectual production on material production was considerably refined after the early, somewhat bald statements by Marx and Engels in The German Ideology and the Communist Manifesto, it could be argued that the resultant increased flexibility was bought at a price, in that some ideas were allowed a measure of independence, the possibility of the reaction of the intellectual superstructure back upon the material basis was admitted (thereby blurring what was formerly an unequivocally monocausal theory), and the material basis so distanced from the superstructure that the ultimate dependence of any set of ideas upon economic relations of production became effectively immune from refutation; in other words, it was in danger of becoming more a matter of definition than a historical insight.

But the difficult question as to whether Marxist-Leninist analyses of the conditions determining the production of thought need differ pragmatically from certain non-Marxist attempts to place particular sets of ideas in their social and historical context, does not, fortunately, need to be resolved in order to account for the growth of political opposition in certain sections of Russian society during Alexander's reign. Indeed, to dwell on the economic basis alone is unlikely to shed any light on why it was that those groups of individuals who were, to use Marxist-Leninist terminology, struggling for a bourgeois basis and superstructure, were almost exclusively young army officers, and to a considerable extent drawn from some of the most favoured aristocratic families. This is not however to say that the opposition towards autocracy expressed by those groups was not in part stimulated by the economic structure and by the government's financial policies. We have already met with objections to serfdom founded upon Christian ethics and natural law theory, for example in Russkaya Pravda, but Pestel' also argued the economic benefits of the substitution of serfs by free labourers in Russian agriculture in his unfinished work Prakticheskie nachala politicheskoy ekonomii,[3] and Yakushkin, in his Mnenie smolenskovo pomeshchika ob osvobozhdenii krest'yan ot krepostnoy zavisimosti, written about 1820, put forward the view that it would be to the advantage of both if serfs were able to rent their lord's land. Yakushkin was one of the few landowners to attempt to take advantage of the decree of 20 February 1803 which provided for the conversion of serfs into a new class of 'free farmers', subject to the landlord's agreement, though he concluded that this measure was not the means to end serfdom, and that to free serfs without a sufficient quantity of land was no guarantee of their independence.[4]

There is little point in continuing to illustrate a general point which is not in dispute: the fact that throughout Decembrist literature we find a more or less articulated desire to abolish or to modify institutions which were seen as obstacles to the liberalisation of trade, agriculture and industry in Russia, a desire which, however, could be put down to the impressionability of young army officers armed with a superficial knowledge of the ideas of political economists, such as Adam Smith, J.-B. Say and Sismondi, and dazzled by a brief encounter with industrially more advanced nations in Western Europe. It would be wrong though to suppose that such ideas and experiences did not provide a suitable basis for the critique of Russian reality. The widest audience was reached by N.I. Turgenev, who, as was mentioned before, escaped his comrades' fate by emigration, and whose devastating book La Russie et les russes was published in Paris in 1847. A useful compression of Decembrist dissatisfaction with the government's conduct of the economy can be found in A.A. Bestuzhev-Marlinsky's letter to Nicholas I on the development of freethought, cited in the section on Western ideas. He claimed that after the Napoleonic invasion, a third of Russia's labour was occupied in the construction of unstable roads, while crops were left to rot in the ground. The introduction of a state monopoly of alcohol in 1817 was held responsible for the disappearance of markets for the sale of grain in many provinces, while the multiplication of drinking houses was corrupting morals and destroying the peasant way of life.[5] The economic ill-effects of the military settlements were alluded to, though moral indignation was the most powerful reaction amongst the rebels to a measure which captured best of all the characteristic mixture of idealism and militarism in the Tsar's personality. Yakushkin, who described the post-war obsession of Alexander with the military settlements and with the construction of bigger roads throughout Russia ("on account of which he spared neither the money, the sweat nor the blood of his subjects"), told of the disgust inspired in the army officers in Moscow by reports of the regimentation and harsh discipline imposed upon the peasants dragooned into the settlements, and in particular of the cruel manner in which Arakcheev supervised the suppression of a revolt amongst peasants allocated to settlements in the province of Novgorod.[6] It would be misleading, though, to concentrate upon this aspect of the decade of arakcheevshchina in order to understand why radical opposition found its expression amongst the young army officers, since, if we accept M.A. Fonvizin's memoirs, the forced establishment of the settlements was hated "not only by liberals, but by the whole of Russia"; the measure even, we are told, ran counter to the convictions of the officials charged by the Tsar with its implementation, including Arakcheev himself, who although he did not approve of the policy, saw to its execution as the sacred will of his lord and benefactor.[7] It is scarcely to be marvelled at that all the estates directly affected, from the peasants either subjected to military drill and discipline or punished for their resistance to it, to the merchants and landowners dispossessed of their property and meagrely compensated for it, should have been opposed to the settlements, but the nobility, as the most powerful estate of the realm, was evidently the most likely in its entirety to be hostile to what it could interpret as an attempt by a Russophobe autocrat to create an independent military caste. Bestuzhev-Marlinsky, for his part, pointed out that apart from their socially destructive effects, the military settlements, which were apparently intended by Alexander to reduce the burden of the armed forces on the exchequer, in fact paralysed the economies of the regions into which they were introduced, and led the peasants into tax arrears.[8]

Bestuzhev then considered those estates which might have been expected to produce strong advocates of the development of private enterprise in Russia, the artisans and merchants. I have already mentioned in the previous chapter on the eighteenth century some of the factors which go to explain the chronic political weakness of the prerevolutionary Russian middle classes, and these in general obtained during Alexander's reign. The decrees of Peter III and Catherine II in 1762 effectively abolished the merchants' monopoly of trade and manufacture granted by Tsar Alexei's Code of Laws promulgated in 1649, but more importantly rescinded the decree of January 18, 1721 whereby merchants were given the right to purchase serf labour for their factories and mills.[9] This meant that the dvoryanstvo's monopoly of serf ownership, also formalised in the 1649 Code, had been restored, and henceforth merchants could only hire forced labour from the Crown or from the nobility. Naturally, the nobility with its privileged access to the cheapest (sometimes free) labour, soon outstripped the merchants as factory owners in the second half of the eighteenth century. It was also in the interests of the dvoryane to encourage the development of industry within another social estate to which the freedom to engage in trade and commerce had in effect been extended by the decrees of 1762, namely the peasantry. The growth of peasant industry in the latter half of the eighteenth century had been slow, but in Alexander's reign, when the cotton industry had become established in Russia, significant fortunes began to be amassed by peasant entrepreneurs. Since many of the factories were situated in villages owned by the nobility, and since their products did not compete with those of the nobility's own factories, the owners of the new capitalists were content, as ever, to exact their tribute. Likewise, the government was not slow to utilise peasant wealth as a source of revenue.

The merchant class in the reign of Alexander I was caught between two classes, and between two alternative systems of industrial production, of which latter it found itself in a relatively weak position to take advantage. Once its monopoly of trade and manufacture had been abolished, it was at a disadvantage in relation to the new dvoryanin factory owner when it came to the characteristically eighteenth-century mode of industrial production, which was primarily directed towards meeting the needs and demands of the state (in particular its militaristic appetite for iron and woollen cloth) on a basis of servile labour. Not only were the merchants in a poor position with regard to labour, but unlike his noble counterpart, the relations between the merchant factory owners, and the workers he was able to gain access to were tightly controlled by the government. Peter I's original concession of 1721 of the right to purchase villages and their population was made only on the condition that they remained permanently attached to the factory or mill and not to the merchant factory owner himself (hence the designation "possessional" factory worker). This meant that the factory owner was unable to sell the peasants separately from the factory, and he was in addition prevented from either ceasing production or changing the nature of production. The effect was that the owner was bound to produce the same number of goods each year, regardless of demand, and to employ the same number of workers at the same wages regardless of profit. Now if the availability of free or very cheap labour was a disincentive for the nobility to introduce machines into agriculture or industry, it was the unavoidability of servile labour that rendered mechanisation unprofitable for the possessional factory owner. The serf entrepreneur, on the other hand, for all his total want of civil rights, was at least in a position to benefit from the unregulated nature of his relations with his noble owner, to the extent that he was able to used freely hired labour and introduce machines, such as cotton printing machines, and much later, spinning machines. But even when cotton manufacturing, the largest area of peasant capitalism, was restricted in the main to small manufacturers using weaving looms and printing stands, such was its success in comparison with enterprises operating along traditional eighteenth-century lines, that the proportion of factory workers producing cotton goods rose from 7% in 1804 to 21% in 1825, and must have been the most significant contributor to the rise in overall number of factory workers, and the proportion thereof of hired workers, which either characterises this period or does not, according to ideological preference.[10]

The courtiers and intellectuals of the first decade of Alexander's rule, imbued as they were with the teaching of Adam Smith, and engaged as the Russian army was in costly European adventures, could hardly be expected to have been less sensitive than eighteenth-century ruling circles to the need to stimulate trade and industry. But in the same way that Peter the Great's successors allowed noble privilege to take priority over the encouragement of the traditional trading and manufacturing classes, the Alexandrine policy-makers, despite their lip-service to the axioms of Western political economy, remained decidedly loyal to the interests of their own estate. The Emperor Paul, in his short but remarkable reign, had, it must be said, restored to the merchants the right to purchase peasants for factories and mines in the limited numbers decreed by Elizabeth in 1752. This amounted to one of the several curtailments of recently awarded noble privilege enacted by Paul, and far from being motivated by a desire to liberalise trade and industry, it was to a considerable extent part of an attempt to efface his mother's memory. The liberal ideas current in the early years of Alexander's rule might seem to have taken legislative form in the decree promulgated on the Tsar's birthday in 1801 granting merchants, townspeople (meshchane), state peasants and freed peasants the right to purchase land without serfs. This was, however, a hollow concession, since the middle classes required access to labour above all; the government was not so generous in this respect, for as soon as July 3, 1802, a decree was issued which had the right restored by Paul to purchase peasants limited to transactions which did not involve the peasants' resettlement.[11] The production of woollen cloth for the army, which as I have said was carried out largely in mills employing servile labour, was so sluggish, that in 1808 an exception to that limitation was made in the case of such mills. The conditions of the exception proved unattractive and on November 6, 1816 the purchase of peasants for factories was prohibited altogether.[12] We may detect here, as well as the preservation of the interests of the rural classes which acts as such a powerful determinant of legislation in the wake of the Petrine reforms, the first glimmerings of the realisation that industrial productivity was being restrained by the use of servile labour. It was not until the 1830s that the conservative merchants, accustomed by tradition to dependence upon the state for markets, licenses, trading and industrial concessions and protective tariffs, began to press for the dismantling of the possessional factory system, but the requests of several factory owners to free their workers led to the law of December 20, 1824, whereby factory peasants, at the owner's request and subject to the permission of the Committee of Minister, could be transferred to another status.[13] Only by such steps were possessional factory owners enabled to make the transition to the use of hired labour.

Bearing in mind the inevitable shift of manufacturing from town to rural estate which accompanied the rise of the nobleman and peasant factory owner, let us see what Bestuzhev had to say about the estate of townspeople (meshchane):

"The townspeople, a respected and important class in all other states, in our country are insignificant, impoverished, burdened with duties, deprived of the means to earn a living. In other nations they populate the towns, in our own, since towns exist only on the map and freedom of trade is hampered in their corporations (tsekhi), they peregrinate like gipsies, occupying themselves with petty trade. The decline in trade had the most powerful effect on them, on account of their poverty, for they depend upon the merchants like petty tradesmen, or like workers on the factories."[14]

The political impotence and economic weakness of the meshchane is, as Bestuzhev intimated, closely bound up with the conditions which prevented the development in Russia of the autonomous, incorporated type of town and city wherein the politically triumphant West European bourgeoisie was nurtured. Bestuzhev himself, in a footnote to the above quotation, explained the emptying of the towns by the tendency of the ambitious nobility to evade unrewarding provincial duties and seek service in the capital, moreover retaining their home-grown craftsmen. With the advantage of a historical perspective, we can add the rise of rural manufacturing mentioned at the beginning of this paragraph, and remark upon the failure of Catherine's City Charter of 1785 to overcome the traditional disunity engendered by the rigid estate allegiances of the urban population, a factor which at least accounts for the towns' failure to flourish.

When his attention turned to the merchants (kupechestvo), Bestuzhev pointed to the stifling effect of the surviving guilds (the manifestoes of both Northern and Southern societies were united in calling for the abolition of craft and merchant guilds), but directed most of his criticism at the government's conduct of the economy, in consequence of which "many colossal fortunes were destroyed." Particularly damaging was the series of tariffs imposed upon imported goods, which as well as being protectionist, thereby "enriching smugglers", were also changeable, thereby leading to instability:

"The unsteadiness of the tariff reduced many factory owners to poverty, and alarmed others, and undermined the confidence of both our own and foreign businessmen in our government. On account of this, there began an even greater decline in our rate of exchange (i.e. external credit), the result of government debts, and the complaint was universal, that there was no cash."[15]

There is little point here in seeking to chart the labyrinthine turns of Alexandrine financial policy in order to substantiate Bestuzhev's observation. Suffice it to say that underlying the inherited public debt worsened by recurrent budget deficits, the growth in tax arrears, and the depreciation of the increasing volume of inconvertible paper currency against the silver rouble, was an unbridgeable gulf between the wealth produced by an economy still overwhelmingly dependent upon low-yield agriculture, and the exorbitant demands of the administrative and military machine. Within this overall framework, temporary political alliances could have the most remarkable effects: for example, Russia's participation in the Continental Blockade after 1807 meant that imports of English manufactured goods ceased, a vital factor in the initial expansion of the domestic cotton industry; but at the same time, the loss of the foremost consumer of exported grain was a considerable blow to Russian agriculture, a blow which, moreover, was sustained, as Britain was forced to intensify the capitalisation of its own farming. As for the various tariff acts of the Alexandrine period, it was perhaps only to be expected the Decembrists, political and economic liberals as they were, should have opposed the more or less protectionist regulation of external trade after 1807.[16] There are, however, two points of qualification that need to be made. Firstly, although the Decembrists shared the opposition to protectionism expressed by liberal economists, such as the one-time tutor to the Grand Dukes Constantine and Nicholas, Heinrich Storch, and the aforementioned Professor Kunitsyn, a proponent of the policy could be found who was not only one of the most prominent advocates of the teachings of Adam Smith during Alexander's "liberal honeymoon", but in addition was sufficiently respected by the Northern Society to be earmarked (along with Speransky and General A.P. Ermolov) as one of the presiding triumvirate of the provisional government to be established after the revolution.[17] This was none other than Admiral N.S. Mordvinov, sometime minister of the navy, who argued the need for a prohibitive system in his work first published in 1815 Nekotorye soobrazheniya po predmetu manufaktur v Rossii. It was not that Mordvinov had renounced his espousal of free trade altogether, but argued that it was only desirable if universally practised by all nations taking part in foreign trade. That not being the case, and accepting what many of the advocates of free trade did not, that the only way to improve the economy in general and agriculture in particular was to encourage the growth of industry, he came down in favour of protectionism.[18] And it seems unlikely, in defence of Mordvinov's conclusions, that even the most conspicuous Russian industrial success of the period, the cotton industry, notwithstanding its more liberal mode of production, could have competed with the machine-made products of its English counterpart, without the protection of tariffs. The second qualification is not unrelated to the reasons which lay behind the opposition to Mordvinov's stance: it is that the Decembrists, far from being exceptional in favouring the liberalisation of trade, were to that extent in harmony with most of the rest of the landowning class. The harmony does not, however, stand up to analysis, for the landowners' esponsal of free trade was not based on liberal arguments. They did not, for example, put forward the view of the Minister of Finance, D.A. Gur'ev, that tariff barriers harmed domestic industry by removing the incentive to compete and thereby improve its products[19]; rather, they took the view that Russia was primarily and naturally an agricultural nation, and that the growth of factories was to be condemned and discouraged. (This was hardly a progressive viewpoint, and yet is remarkably similar to the latter conclusions of Herzen, and to the views of N.G. Chernyshevsky and the Populists). If the nobility as the beneficiaries of servile labour naturally preferred agriculture to industry (excepting, of course, the factories on their own estates), the nobility as the consumers of imported Western luxuries equally naturally were opposed to the imposition of tariffs which raised the price of such goods (notably cotton and woollen cloth, sugar, dyes, liquor, tea and salt).

Thus it can be seen that for peculiarly Russian reasons, the majority of the dvoryanstvo could uphold a view of international trade more often associated with the West European bourgeoisie, whilst clinging tenaciously to a servile form of agriculture which had already begun to disappear from the social map. It was precisely in this respect that the Decembrists, the opponents of serfdom, and for that matter liberals (in some respects) like Storch and Kunitsyn, were most at odds with the members of the nobility who also happened to promote the virtues of free trade. Storch, as a matter of fact, shared some of the nobility's antipathy towards industry, but recognised the superiority of the free labourer over the slave in both industry and agriculture.[20] Kunitsyn was nearer to the Decembrists in intellectual affinity, and could indeed be called one of the movement's mentors, though his age and occupation destined him to suffer at the hands of the Ministry of National Enlightenment, rather than be dealt with by Nicholas I's Investigating Commission. But apart from the qualifications made, it is fair to say that on matters of finance, the Decembrists were out of step with the majority of their class, and that in consequence their economic views and responses to their government's economic practices can hardly be left out of account in any consideration of the sources of their political opposition. To underline the alienation of the insurgent army officers from the interests of the landowning class, Bestuzhev's letter is again illuminating. He divides the nobility into three categories, themselves redolent of the perceptions of the legacy of eighteenth-century thought: the "enlightened", amongst whom Bestuzhev would no doubt include himself and his comrades; "the literate, who either torment the others as judges, or themselves indulge in lengthy lawsuits, and finally, the ignorant, who live in the countryside and serve as church elders or are now in retirement, occupying themselves, God knows how, in agriculture. Of these, the smallholders constitute the ulcer of Russia: always guilty and always complaining and, wishing to live according to their pretensions rather than within their own means, they torment the poor peasants mercilessly. The rest waste their time in hunting ... in the social life of the capitals or in lawsuits."[21]

It could be argued that Bestuzhev is simply manifesting an hauteur characteristic of the small, wealthy metropolitan élite towards the indigent, provincial dvoryane which made up the great majority of his estate; in other words, the prejudice which coloured Gorbachevsky's perception of the Southern Society's negotiators in the autumn of 1825. This brings again to mind one of Professor Pipes' characterisations of the Decembrist rebellion, that it was one of only three significant attempts by the service élite to restrain the monarchy's unlimited power, all of which failed because they were led by the topmost élite, and in consequence did not enjoy the support of the masses of provincial dvoryane who valued the crown not only as a source of jobs and estates, but also as protection against the interests of the great landed families.[22] My own view would be that the failure of the uprising was in the event due more to the Decembrists' own unwillingness to enlist a firm basis of support, and also to the precipitate turn of events which followed Alexander's unexpected death, though I have little doubt that had the rural nobility been called upon to support the insurgents, they would almost certainly have displayed all the conservative suspicion mentioned. But it is a different matter to infer from that hypothesis that the Decembrists actually did represent the interests of the grand seigneurs. I would not wish to exclude entirely that kind of motivation from any survey of Decembrist attitudes and ideas across the spectrum, but feel that the foregoing discussion of their political, social and economic views rules it out as the movement's defining characteristic. Another way to assess the significance of the Decembrists in Russian history, and a way which moreover can be incorporated into Pipes' own model of the growth of opposition to the patrimonial state, thereby rendering the issue independent of whether or not they were struggling for a bourgeois basis and superstructure, is to regard the rebels as the military precursors of the civilian intelligentsia. Now according to Pipes the reason why the intelligentsia assumed political importance in imperial Russia was because none of the social or economic groups was able or willing to challenge the crown's monopoly of political power, largely because the surest way to short-term material benefits was by collaboration with the state, or because they sought the protection of the state from one of the other groups:

"Throughout Russian history, 'interest groups' have fought other 'interest groups', never the state. The drive for change had to be inspired by motives other than self-interest, as the word is conventionally used - motives more enlightened, far-sighted and generous, such as sense of patriotism, social justice and personal self-respect. Indeed, just because the pursuit of material rewards was so closely identified with the constitution of the old regime and subservience to the state, any aspiring opposition was bound to renounce self-serving; it had to be, or at any rate appear to be, utterly disinterested. Thus it happened that in Russia the struggle for political liberty was waged from the beginning in exactly the manner that Burke felt it ought never to be waged: in the name of abstract ideals."[23]

The author rather mars his case in a subsequent discussion of the applicability of certain definitions of "intelligentsia", finding too narrow one confined to political radicals, and too broad one more or less equivalent to the Western term "white-collar" workers; he chooses instead the defining characteristic that an intelligent have a "commitment to public welfare" which takes precedence over his own interests.[24] But this sounds remarkably like limiting the membership of a group to those alone who by their example confirm one's earlier analysis of the contingent nature of political opposition in Russia. Leaving aside the question of circularity, and accepting the definition for the purposes of argument, there seems no reason to exclude the Decembrists from the intelligentsia. Their writings abound with altruism; according to V.F. Raevsky, "the aim of politics is the welfare (blagodenstvie) of the people", and one of the aims the fulfillment of which would be necessary for the well-being of the Russian people was "to expose the sophism of insensitive egoists and the tyrants of the people". Also typically, Raevsky extols in his poem "Satira na nravy", "the pure love of the fatherland".[25] Indeed all these sentiments are the common currency of the Decembrists' individual and corporate pronouncements, and this is scarcely to be marvelled at in a group nurtured in French Enlightenment thought, masonic philanthropy and the patriotic fervour of the war of 1812. Professor Pipes himself distinguishes the morality of the young army officers from the traditional profligacy and self-indulgence of the very rich families which produced many of them. The Decembrist revolt "shattered the spirit of the great families who had no inkling of its approach and could not understand what madness had siezed their youth. In general, the rich liked to enjoy life, without much thought for their own tomorrow, let alone for the general good."[26] This interesting gulf is offered as illustration of a conclusion that the movement "had no antecedents and issue", though earlier in his discussion of the political impotence of the dvoryantsvo, Pipes points out that although the nobility were never able to translate their social and economic advantages into political power, the bulk of the opposition to the imperial régime in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries derived from members of that estate:

"But the liberals and radicals were not struggling for the interests of their class ... They were struggling for national and social ideas of society as a whole - a struggle which sometimes compelled them to move against the interests of their own class. Surely, Bakunin, Herzen, Kropotkin, Lenin, Struve, Shipov, though of dvoriane background, cannot be said to have been in any sense exponents of dvoriantsvo causes."[27] There seems little enough reason, within the author's own terminological bounds, to exclude from this list Pestel' and his comrades.

Why was it that the dvoryane were prone to produce such selfless opponents of Tsarism? Some of the reasons have been discussed in the preceding discussion of the eighteenth century: the very rootlessness and lack of corporate spirit of the service class, which lay at the heart of the nobility's political dependence upon the throne, themselves had the result that instead of allegiances to family or locality, or in an economic sense the pursuit of landowners' interests, the young nobleman's sense of group solidarity was with his schoolmates and fellow servitors, and this sense was most likely to be inflamed by his perception, for example, of the admission of large numbers of literate non-noblemen, and particularly foreigners, into the state machine, rather than any measures taken by the government to favour the interests of the merchant class. In fact, cosmopolitan though many of the Decembrists undoubtedly were, they were also ardently patriotic, and were incensed by what was held to be Alexander's neglect of Russia, contempt for Russians, and undisguised preference for foreigners. Yakushkin recorded, moreover, that when the idea of a secret society was first put forward by Alexander and Nikita

Murav'ev at the house of Matvey and Sergey Murav'ev-Apostol in 1816, its aim was proposed by Alexander Murav'ev to be "the counteraction of Germans to be found in the Russian service."[28] This turned out to be a pretext for the formation of a society with the broader aim of securing the welfare of Russia, but is instructive as a choice of an opening gambit likely to inspire the approval of all. The Constitution of the Union of Welfare lent to foreigners the distinction also enjoyed by women and serfs of exclusion from that body.[29] This particular form of resentment was, however, not restricted to the young army officers, though it could be argued that because of the historical propensity of the nobility to produce young, rootless groups without estate allegiances, and with the morality of service, even the sharing of grievances with the remainder of an estate compromised by age and position, would be sufficient to explain the growth of political opposition in those groups rather than elsewhere in the estate.

Many of the shared grievances have already been mentioned: dissatisfaction with the government's management of the economy, repugnance inspired by the military settlements, resentment excited by the numbers of foreigners admitted to the service ranks, hatred of serfdom. To these could be added the corruption of the law courts and the universal venality of state officials,[30] and the hatred of the personalities and policies of those of Alexander's advisers most associated with the period of reaction, such as Arakcheyev and Magnitsky. Instances of the latter's cruelty are referred to as early as 20 June 1818 in N.I. Turgenev's diaries.[31] Recourse must also be made to the element of dashed expectations, not only because of Alexander's failure to implement his promise to extend free institutions to Russia, a promise taken very much to heart by the Decembrists,[32] but also because the Decembrist generation had been brought up in one of those occasional liberal interludes in Russian history, and matured in the ambiance of patriotic self-sacrifice of the Napoleonic Wars.[33] It would be difficult to underestimate the critical significance of such a train of events; not only were expectations raised, but the fulfillment of those expectations was seen by many as morally binding on the Tsar, autocrat or not.[34] Naturally this sentiment was felt most acutely amongst the educated army officers, who had experienced the sacrifice at first hand, who were the most receptive to the influence of ideas and institutions encountered during the European campaign, and were in the best position to form an adverse estimate of the liberties enjoyed by the Russian citizen in comparison with his West European counterpart. It is in this broad Russian social, economic, political and historical context that it becomes more apparent why the young noble army officer was of all the national types the most likely to translate the abstractions of post-Restoration political thought into concrete action.

That the defence of the fatherland should have been rewarded by the policies of the period of arakcheyevshchina might have been sufficiently crushing to the guards officers' faith in autocracy, but it should also not be left out account that a common cause of complaint amongst the Decembrists bore particular relation to conditions within the army. I have already referred in the section on Western ideas to the contrast drawn by M.A. Fonvizin between the momentous events of the Napoleonic Wars and subsequent army life. This is the way in which he expresses this sentiment:

"On their return to St. Petersburg, how could our liberals be satisfied with the vulgarity of regimental life and with the boredom and pettiness of the tasks and details of army drill which were strictly required of them by their commanders to gratify the penchant innate in Alexander and his brothers for drill, men at attention, individual training, and so forth, despite the fact that the experience of two years of bitter warfare with a most accomplished enemy might, it seems, have convinced Alexander that it is not on these trifles that victory depends."[25]

It was exactly this kind of discipline which occasioned the mutiny in October 1820 of Alexander's favourite Semenovsky Guards Regiment. The report of the mutiny reached the Tsar at an international conference at Troppau, and although investigations revealed the provocative nature of the harsh régime imposed by the commander, Colonel Schwarz, Alexander, abetted by Metternich, was by now so embattled by what he perceived as the interrelated threats of irreligion and revolution sweeping in from abroad, that he attributed the revolt, in a letter to Arakcheyev, to the activities of secret societies, and to foreign, non-military inspiration. Whether or not the Tsar was at this stage justified in his diagnosis, his reaction to the event may have gone some way to fulfilling his own fears, since some of the officers of the disbanded regiment who were transferred to the Second Army in the Ukraine went on to form the nucleus of the Southern Society.[36]

This, I believe, is as far as I can get, without seeking out details of particular individuals as a basis for indulgence in psychological speculation, to an estimation of the historical conditions necessary for any claims about the origins of the Russian 'materialist tradition' to be convincing. Many questions remain unposed, let alone ananswered. I have been severe on interpretations which seem to imply that the Decembrist movement owed its existence to the fact that its participants were influenced by the West, for a number of reasons, but mainly because that influence, though undeniably important, is not a sufficient condition. Nevertheless, no argument constructed from the historical conditions and events selected as having a bearing on the acceptance of materialism and atheism in Russia, can explain why certain individuals rather than others were attracted to that kind of world-view. Neither do they explain why only a small number of officers belonged to the secret societies when, if we accept what P.G. Kakhovsky wrote:

> "... among my many acquaintances who do not adhere to any secret societies, very few are opposed to my opinions. Frankly I can state that amongst thousands of young men there are hardly a hundred who do not passionately long for freedom."[37]

It would be inconceivable that the resolution of such problems, if it were possible, should not revolve in large measure upon the contingencies of individual circumstances. But to continue with generalities, the grounding of the origins of the 'materialist tradition', by which I mean the advocacy of materialist and atheist metaphysical views alongside radical political commitments, within the Decembrist movement, raises difficulties stemming from that movement's very diversity, a phenomenon which for these purposes is best illustrated by the quite bitter opposition between the materialists and the theistic "Congregation" amongst the Siberian exiles. Leaving aside the implications of class differences (the poor noble or even non-noble members of the Slavic Union alongside the Southern and Northern Societies' scions of the rich) and political convictions (constitutional monarchists as opposed to republicans, centralists as against federalists), one avenue which might repay the exploration of a sociologist of religion is the complication of the Decembrists' liberalism with nationalism; although one is undoubtedly treading upon Soviet corns here, there is in the Decembrist programme alongside the aspiration to modernise and liberalise the political and economic status quo, something of the desire to evict an alien ruler and his retinue, by which, of course, is meant not Napoleon and the French army but Alexander and his foreign advisers and officials. It might be going too far to supplement this point by reference to the Decembrists' powerful interest in and sympathy with the national movements in, for example, South America, Italy and Greece, since this could be put down simply to their own avowed universal hatred of oppression, or to their recent experience of occupation by a foreign power. If, however, it were admitted that some sections of the Decembrists were motivated more by the desire to expel foreign elements from their country than to replace the existing socioeconomic order and its ideology, then it could be inferred that as far as those sections were concerned, anticlericalism or atheism would be more unlikely than not, provided that the national Church were perceived as uncontaminated by foreign elements. To illustrate this point, even as ideologically challenging and politically ambitious as the Roman Catholic Church has been in European history, it can within a nationalist context provide some kind of focus or symbol for opposition to alien rule,notably in the cases of Ireland and Poland. With some qualifications, an ecclesiastically closer parallel may be drawn with the Greek Orthodox Church during the *tourokratia*.[38]

A further footnote should be added to what has emerged as a general historical framework within which to place the emergence of a significant group of atheists and materialists amongst the Decembrists. The general framework rests upon the prior conclusion that in the eighteenth century there was no cohesive group bound by an ideology rejecting autocracy, and the related fact that the Romanov dynasty did not at that time have recourse to a defensive ideology of its own, and that therefore the political and intellectual climate simply was not conducive to the outgrowth of a materialist tradition, in the Marxist-Leninist sense (though individuals may have arrived at materialist or atheist positions in their own ways). The turning-point in the history of Russian materialism occurred round about the formation of the Holy Alliance, from which time the Tsars were more or less permanently on the defensive, and sought to justify absolutism in the name of Christianity and to castigate liberalism by identifying it with godlessness. Since this official attitude came in the aftermath of the French invasion, and in the course of the Russian government's increasing interest and interference in the internal affairs of other European states (Alexander was already urging Metternich to accept the principle of intervention in the affairs of other states to quell revolt, when news of the Semenovsky mutiny reached him at Troppau[39]); and since the oppression in the sphere of education, which was provided with its clarion call by Magnitsky's invocation of a "spiritual defence" against the flood of European atheism, was well under way before the government began to be alarmed by the clandestine activities of members of its own army, there is a good case for the view that the concrescence of political and metaphysical heterodoxy was at least partly stimulated by the government's anticipation and forced by its over-reaction. To put it another way, the emergence of hostility to autocratic rule in Russia, whatever its causes, was likely to be accompanied by atheism, materialism, or at any rate anticlericalism, since it began at a time when the government was impelled to look to the national church for its public sanctification. As long as the autocracy continued to defend itself in the name of Orthodoxy, and as long as the Orthodox hierarchy was seen to be an enthusiastic advocate, then the marriage of atheism and materialism with the kind of implacable rejection of Tsarism associated with the inheritors of the Decembrist cause, the radical intelligentsia, was rendered more probable, and is in my opinion the single most potent condition of the continuation of the Russian materialist tradition.

The promised footnote to this general scheme pertains to the origin of this tradition in the materialist wing of the Decembrists. The point has already been put forward that the Decembrists' orientation towards atheism and materialism may be more than would be expected, if the kind of correlation of political and metaphysical distances from implicit or explicit official ideology, suggested by the periods considered before and after the reign of Alexander, is accepted as a useful generalisation.

In the first place, the truth of the generalisation cannot be determined independently of the views of the Decembrists, and the difficulty with which the views of the Southern Society were squared with the hypothesis, might in any case be grounds to dispose of it. But accepting that the difficulty was overcome, the problem remains as to why the absolute rejection of supernatural authority should have accompanied what was often an ambivalent attitude towards monarchy. The simplest solution would be that the less opposed an individual was to the existing political régime, the less likely he was to hold atheist or materialist views. This, and its converse, may be highly probable, if the numbers of the Northern Society and the Slavic Union are sufficient to palliate the apparent counter-example of the Southern Society; but there are certainly enough individual exceptions to withold universal application from the rule. We have already seen that E.P. Obolensky, a republican in the Northern Society, was a student of German idealism; and we shall see that P.I. Pestel's unswerving certainty in political matters stood beside some indecision in the realm of religion. If, though, it is still admitted that it makes a broad kind of sense to say that within the sweep of the history of imperial Russia, the materialist wing of the Decembrists is more evident than would be expected, then the offered explanation, briefly that the Alexandrine government was, during the nurturing of political opposition, more associated with Christian theism in general than the national Church, can now be re-examined. Despite the oddity of the explanation, in that it gives as a reason for the *origin* of the materialist tradition an aspect of government policy which in many ways is the antithesis, within the bounds of religion, of the policy put forward as a primary agent in the *continuation* of that tradition, the apparent paradox should be balanced against a recognition of the difference rather than the similarity between the Decembrists and the *intelligenty* who succeeded them. It is the similarity which has been stressed hitherto in opposition to the view that Decembrism was an imitative phenomenon alien to Russian conditions, but it can scarcely be denied that a chasm separates the formative years of the rebellious army officers from those in which the first representatives of the civilian intelligentsia learned to take up their pens. Many of the Decembrists were at the threshold of a career promising the highest honours that Tsar could bestow upon his servants; they were raised in a climate of religious toleration and relatively untrammelled political debate; their expectations were sharpened in the violence and emotion of the defence of the fatherland, and subsequent pursuit of the invader across the frontiers of Europe. How different were the 1830s in Russia, by which time the convulsion of reaction in the tail of Alexander's reign had become the dreary rigidity of "the joint spirit of Orthodoxy, autocracy and nationality", an intellectual climate in which the new generation of dvoryanstvo university students struggled earnestly with an always unacceptable Russian reality. The Decembrists, and the intellectuals of the student kruzhki, arrived at materialism by diverse routes and from different starting-points (though in both cases, the hardening of political attitudes leaves a form of metaphysical idealism behind it, respectively masonic mysticism and Hegelianism); indeed the Decembrists themselves, by their fate and impact constitute an important historical ingredient in the distance between them and the Nicolaian generation which was immediately subjected to the persistent if not always effective, hostility of the representatives of the newly forged alliance of monarch and the Orthodox hierarchy. Since their experiences are so different, it can at least be accepted in principle that antithetical governmental attitudes towards religion may have played vital roles in the origin and the continuation of the Russian materialist tradition. It must, though, be admitted that if the government's sponsorship of liberal political and economic ideas in the reforming decade of Alexander's reign is to be accounted a recommendation of them to the Decembrist generation which survived the eventual repudiation of such ideas within official circles, then the same might be said of the government's policy of religious toleration and a supraconfessional kind of Christianity. There is an important distinction to be made, in that the policy of interconfessional equality was one of the most durable elements of Alexander's reign and cannot be distinguished from the period of reaction; indeed the non-partisan Christianity of the Bible Society was associated with some of the most illiberal government figures, such as Prince Golitsyn and Magnitsky.[40] Thus in saying that it is more probable that the Decembrists' materialist wing was stimulated by the official approval of Christian theism, rather than by the rather late appearance in Alexander's reign of the symbiotic political relationship of the embattled autocrat and the subservient national church, it does not thereby follow that they should have been hostile themselves to religious toleration, as opposed to an attempt to overcome religious differences which came to be seen by certain denominations as a threat to them. In fact, religious tolerance for all faiths was a common feature of corporate Decembrist declarations, for example the manifesto of 13 December 1825 drawn up by Prince Sergey Trubetskoy.[41] It is perhaps only to be expected that as important a factor in the historical significance of metaphysical thought as an eventually unpopular government's conduct of religious affairs, should have bequeathed a multi-faceted legacy, particularly in the light of the spread of Decembrist opinion about the truth of religious beliefs. That spread of opinion must now be considered.

Section 5 - Indigenous Ideas

Before any discussion of the metaphysical views of the Decembrists, and in particular their materialism and atheism, some consideration must be given to those writers earlier in Alexander's reign who, as the followers of Radishchev, are incorporated by Soviet intellectual historians into the materialist tradition founded by M.V. Lomonosov. These are the thinkers of the last years of the eighteenth century, and first of the nineteenth, such as Kunitsyn, Pnin, A.S. Kaysarov, V.V. Popugaev, F.V. Krechetov and A.S. Lubkin, now labelled 'Enlighteners' (prosvetitely), and indeed whose work is characterised by the kind of Enlightenment rhetoric of natural rights, popular welfare and popular sovereignty, freedom, reason and justice which studs Decembrist moral and political prescriptions, and which took its most influential indigenous form in Kunitsyn's Natural Law. But although Kunitsyn and his fellow liberals were theoretically in tune with much of Decembrist political thought, they were in no sense revolutionaries, and if the correlation between degrees of rejection of the temporal and spiritual domain holds, would not be expected to have been associated with materialism and atheism. Nevertheless, the most diligent Soviet excavators of the materialist tradition have found some materialist treasure in this unpromising area, for example, I. Ya. Shchipanov in his treatment of Pnin, Lubkin and T.F. Osipovsky, the rector of Khar'kov University, who, like Lubkin, rejected some of the basic premises of Kant's critical philosophy. It is interesting to note that while the reactionary elements of Alexandrine official circles saw atheism in Kant, his critics would later be elevated to the materialist pantheon by the opponents of Tsarism. Although he attributes materialism to the three mentioned, Shchipanov qualified his case:

"The materialist views of Osipovsky, Pnin, Lubkin and other enlighteners are not free from deistic inconsistencies. This is particularly noticeable in Lubkin's case in his Enquiry as to whether it is possible to give a firm foundation to ethics independently of religion (1815) and Outlines of metaphysics (1818-19), and in Pnin's case in his philosophical elegies."[1]

Shchipanov's interpretation of Lubkin was singled out for criticism in a review in the journal Voprosy Filosofii of the first two volumes of Istoriya Filosofii v SSSR. Although the authors of the work were congratulated by the reviewers (V.S. Gorsky, V.I. Gubenko and V.M. Nichik of the University of Kiev) for avoiding the extremes to which certain intellectual historians had gone in an attempt to reveal the antagonistic ideology of progressive classes covertly expressed in areas of "non-philosophical" knowledge (scientific, sociological, ethical and aesthetic views), they warned against the dangers of "vulgarisation" in analysing the connection between philosophical and non-philosophical knowledge, and a too "literal" approach, whereby "mention in the work of some physicist or another of the term 'matter' is seen as a statement in connection with the basic question of philosophy."[2] In the same way, the characterisation of certain biologists of the first half of the eighteenth century as representatives of "mechanical materialism", because of their application of mathematical and mechanical models to biological phenomena, is subjected to unimpeachable logic:

"However the fact itself of the application of mathematical methods in certain sciences, especially in biology, is not denied by the philosophy of dialectical materialism. Even evidence of biological methods at a certain level of mathematics still does not of itself say anything about the philosophical positions of the scientist, for biological phenomena by no means exhaust the qualitative variety of the world, and a denial of the qualitative pecularity of one component is still not a denial of the qualitative differences in the whole".[3]

The reviewers declared themselves unconvinced by the interpretations given of the position of various thinkers with regard to the resolution of 'the basic problem of philosophy', and give as an example the representation of Lubkin as a materialist. In this particular chapter, Shchipanov claims that although Lubkin's ideas were "not free of deism", this was a "convenient form" for the propaganda of materialistic ideas."[4] The evidence for this contention is derived largely from the epistemological views set out in his Outlines of logic (Nachertanii logiki), in which Lubkin presents the familiar mixture of realism and empiricism which the philosophes inherited from Locke. We have already encountered in the previous chapter the difficulties thrown up by classifying Lockean theory of knowledge as "materialistic sensualism", and need only note here that the reviewers make specific reference to the statement used to support the conclusion that Lubkin resolved the problem of truth in a materialistic manner:

"Truth is nothing other than the similarity of our thoughts with the very objects about which we are thinking."[5]

The statement implies the existence of objects existing independently of our thoughts, but does not, according to the reviewers, entail materialism:

"But it is clear that belief in the presence of things existing objectively outside of our consciousness, in just the same way as conviction as to their knowability, can equally consistently accompany both materialistic positions, and, we submit, the standpoint of objective idealism."[6]

One who did not subscribe to the doctrine that all philosophical views are reducible to the metaphysical monisms of idealism and materialism, might also add dualism, and indeed Lubkin's statement about truth, if applied to propositions rather than things, would be quite consistent with the Correspondence Theory of Truth of contemporary Western logicians, many of whom, I suspect, would regard metaphysical system-building as an obsolete mode of philosophical activity. But while the Kievan reviewers' objection seems to me to be irrefutable, it is difficult to see how it could be sustained if they adhered to Lenin's broad definition of matter, which was that it had the sole property of being an objective reality, or existing outside our mind. But whether or not the objection undermines the philosophical basis of dialectical materialism, the implications of a further comment by the reviewers are severe for the concept of the materialist tradition as elaborated in the last years of the Stalin era. They speak of the difficulties of systematising philosophical tendencies on the basis of the sociopolitical life of society, on the grounds that "philosophy, whilst being subject, without a doubt, to great influence from political ideology, possesses relative independence. This is manifested by the fact that the resolution of not all philosophical problems is unequivocally connected with specific political views. And this leads to the generally known facts, that commonly held political positions are accompanied by differences in philosophical views, and vice versa."[7] As it happens, the Decembrists are chosen as one example to substantiate this generalisation, from which the following conclusion is drawn:

"But this being the case, it is natural to cast doubt upon the suitability in the history of philosophy of such a systematisation, which takes into account the unanimity of thinkers in the resolution of non-philosophical problems, while excluding it when dealing with those problems which actually constitute the subject of the research."[8]

Just how far-reaching are these criticisms depends upon the degree of independence accorded to philosophical views. Orthodox Marxist-Leninist theory holds that they are in the final analysis dependent upon the material basis of society, and that within the superstructure, philosophy is divided into two hostile camps, materialism and idealism, the one a scientific, optimistic, progressive world-view, the other pessimistic and reactionary, designed to keep the people in a state of ignorance and obedience. This makes it hard to imagine a materialist tradition in Marxist-Leninist terms which did not couple philosophical views of one broad kind with social and political views of some degree of opposition to the existing order. But whatever its ultimate destination, the Kievan review illuminates the difficulty of the twin defence of the doctrines of the opposing philosophical camps, and of materialism as a progressive world-view, the attempted resolution of which results in logical solecisms to the effect that Pnin's philosophical ideas "are notable for limitations and inconsistencies. However it must be said that on the whole he inclined towards materialism in its deistic form."[9]

This kind of circumlocution is avoided in a more recent book by Z.A. Kamensky, which falls within the tradition of works seeking to establish the long pedigree of Russian materialism, but which qualifies its case in a way which distinguishes it from some of the more brazen efforts of the Stalin era. Although a sharp distinction is drawn between the deistic-materialistic and the idealist schools of thought of the first half of the nineteenth century, the former is further subdivided into the "actually materialistic" and the "close to materialism - deistic."[10] If this seems a negligible syntactic shift from "materialism in its deistic form", it is at least conceded that deism takes on more than one form itself, from a sincere belief in a Creator of the world and Author of natural laws, to a convenient vehicle for the rejection of conventional theism. It is also recognised, and the authority of Engels invoked to guarantee the recognition, that the revolution in the transition from feudalism to capitalism may have a religious character, and cites, amongst others, the influence of Rousseau, and Robespierre's cult of Reason in the French Revolution, and the opposition of aristocratic materialism and middle class religion in the English revolution of the seventeenth century.[11] In his discussion of the philosophical views of the Russian

Enlightenment, Kamensky identifies Pnin and Lubkin as deists, and under the heading of the "materialistic variant" of the deistic-materialistic school, groups a number of Russian scientists, such as Osipovsky, S.E. Gur'ev, M.G. Pavlov (in his early days, before he used his physics lectures to impart Schelling's Naturphilosophie to the students of Moscow University[12]), N.P. Shcheglov, I.E. Dyad'kovsky and the mathematician N.I. Lobachevsky. This classification is open to much the same kind of objection that the Kievan reviewers levelled against the categorisation of the eighteenth-century biologists as materialists, but even if the failure of Osipovsky to observe Orthodox religious practice, or Dyad'kovsky's physiological approach to sensation and thought, suggest atheistic and materialist views, they do not in themselves entail them, and inference is made more difficult (and speculation easier) by the fact that as academics they were in a worse position than most to air their personal heterodox metaphysical views. It can scarcely be doubted that throughout the period covered by this work, we receive no more than a glimpse of the real extent of atheism and materialism, but lest this highly probable statement give license to build an edifice of conjecture, it should be noted that even in relatively well documented cases like Radishchev, Yakushkin and Belinsky, there is still room for varying amounts of debate as to whether they really were materialists.

Although the Marxist-Leninist belief in the incompatibility of materialism and idealism, while it does not equate materialism with atheism, implies that a materialist must be an atheist, Kamensky does not present his materialist prosvetitely in this way, and indeed selects atheism (which "only to a very weak degree" characterised the philosophy of the Russian Enlightenment), as well as revolutionary political positions, as the two intellectual marks which differentiate them from the Decembrists.[12] It would be as well as this juncture to consider the evidence for the existence of atheism amongst the Decembrists as a group.

As we have already seen in the case of Lomonosov, Radishchev and the Russian Enlighteners, the establishment of the origins of the materialist tradition by Soviet writers depends to a large extent on inferences from philosophical writings which at the most reject some, but not all, claims for the existence of independent spiritual reality, and at the most argue that some, but not all, phenomena are themselves material or dependent upon a material reality. Indeed, some of the inferences are from the realist metaphysical implications of empiricist theories of knowledge, which, although they affirm the existence of perceived objects independently of the perceiving mind (unwarrantably, according to Hume, and illogically, according to Berkeley), do not necessarily make any statement about the ontological status of the perceiving mind, nor for that matter about the constitution of the objects perceived. These techniques are also applied to discern the metaphysical standpoints of Decembrists such as V.F. Raevsky and N.A. Kryukov, and if these were the only methods of establishing the currency of materialism and atheism amongst the insurgents, then the scepticism which I have applied to the historical record up to the turning-point of Alexander's reign would delay the origins of the materialist tradition even more. There is, however, harder and more direct evidence than in the previous cases, and one area for debate amongst students of Decembrist philosophical views is not so much the existence as the extent of materialism and atheism. Naturally, Soviet proponents of the tradition of materialism as the world-view of progressive thinkers have been motivated to maximise the extent, and have on the one side ushered 'materialistic sensualists' into the fold, and on the other, excused the relatively meagre evidence by allusions to the number of freethinking and materialistic papers either destroyed, whether by the rebels prior to their arrest, or subsequently by the Investigating Commission and the Third Department, or lost, whether by the rebels themselves or in the state archives. But although the direct evidence is meagre, it is, I think, conclusive, at any rate as far as the existence of materialism and atheism is concerned. Since the evidence comes from reminiscences, and moreover reminiscences about the period of exile after the abortive rebellion and the trial, it is far from ideal, and it can only be inferred that the views referred to were a continuation of those held before December 1825.

The most important source material is to be found in the memoirs of A.P. Belyaev, published in 1882. Belyaev was far from being a typical Decembrist. He was the son of a government official, and was not in fact a member of any of the secret societies. He was born in 1803, and therefore still very young at the time of the rebellion; his only part in those events was as a soldier of the ranks in the army which mutinied in Senate Square on December 14. His isolation from the developments which surrounded the formation of the secret societies might be argued to have afforded him relative objectivity in relation to his fellow exiles, but it should be borne in mind that with regard to the division between believers and non-believers which he described as follows, both he and his brother were firmly committed to the former (their faith having been confirmed by reading Gibbon, of all people[13]):

> "Without a doubt, in the intellectual clashes of serious people, pride of place almost always went to religious and philosophical ideas, since there were many unbelievers there, who rejected any kind of religion; there were modest sceptics, and systematically ardent materialists (yarye materialisty), who had studied this subject in all the then known and already widely distributed philosophical works.
>
> On the other side stood people with pure Christian convictions, also well versed in all the sources of a materialist character, and who possessed philosophical knowledge, and knowledge of both ecclesiastical and secular history."[14]

Belyaev's distinction between shades of unbelief, from scepticism to outright materialism, suggests that he was not prone to the blanket use of the latter term which has been encountered in the confrontations of, on the one hand, representatives of Tsarist ideology from Shishkov onwards, and on the other, certain Marxist-Leninist historians of ideas, with ideas less than harmonious with Russian Orthodoxy. This is by no means to say that he had no axe to grind. He reported that the intellectual debates had been provoked by the mocking of religious belief and ecclesiastical ritual, but that the opponents had measured each other's strength and recognised that "the religion of Christ has on its side not only history, but also sound (zdravuyu) philosophy." The outstanding representative of Christianity, P.S. Bobrishchev-Pushkin (amongst the other representatives were named N.A. Kryukov and Obolensky) was "a true and worthy champion of Christianity, both through his life, the strength of his faith, and through the power of his logic."[15]

According to Belyaev, the intellectual struggle between the two groups settled around the question of the origin of human speech:

"The materialists put forward the idea that beast-man (skoto-chelovek), who had been produced at that time from clay, but now from the apes,[16] by the forces of matter, like all other living creatures, invented language himself, beginning with sounds of interjection, and building it up from monosyllabic sounds, disyllabic, and so on. Pushkin without doubt upheld the creation of man by an immediate divine act, a necessary consequence of which was that man received the gift of language together with his rational soul at the moment when the latter was inspired in him by the divine spirit."[17] The memoirist then contradicted himself by relating that Pushkin wrote a huge article, which was recognised by all, including those who were indifferent to the question, as victorious, but that his opponents remained unconvinced. Belyaev referred to an article written in refutation of Pushkin's piece by Prince Baryatinsky. In Belyaev's opinion it was weak, and moreover it was written in French "probably because he knew French better than his mother tongue"; unfortunately neither article has survived, and there is no means of questioning this judgment.

Turning to the United Slavs' source of intellectual inspiration, Belyaev wrote that "... in Borisov, the ruling thought was that it was possible to be virtuous, while rejecting God." He takes Borisov and I.V. Kireev to task for characterising Christianity as a "timid" religion, and, it seems, cannot resist a wry comparison between the Christian end in Tula of Kireev, who was eventually converted to Christianity, and the fate of the Borisov brothers, whom he described as having been unfortunately burned to death in Siberia.[18] Much of what Belyaev remembered about the opposing metaphysical groups was corroborated in Yakushkin's memoirs, though from a markedly different point of view. In an attempt to categorise the Decembrist exiles amongst whom he found himself in Chita, in South-east Siberia, he had this to say:

> "One of these circles,jokingly called the 'Congregation', consisted of men whose circumstances during their imprisonment had turned them to piety. Among their various other occupations, they often met together to read edifying books and to discuss the subject which was closest to them. Pushkin, formerly an officer of a retinue, and possessing remarkable intellectual powers, stood at the head of this circle. Pushkin had come to value the beauty of the Gospels during his imprisonment, and at the same time, returned to the superstitions of his childhood, trying in every way to give them meaning. The members of the 'Congregation' were very gentle,meek men who bullied nobody, and who were therefore on the best of terms with all our other comrades."[19]

The interesting implication of Yakushkin's recollection is that the flowering of Christianity amongst the Decembrists was a result of the spiritual crisis which many of the insurgents underwent at the time of their trial, and during their imprisonment in the Fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul, and was not a characteristic of the period during which the secret societies were active, despite what we know of the religious mysticism which alienated A.N. Murav'ev from the Decembrist cause, and of the conversion to Catholicism of the strong-minded M.S. Lunin. According to one of the first Marxist historians of the Decembrist movement, B.E. Syroechkovsky, Bobrishchev-Pushkin himself was an atheist before his arrest; though since he also describes P.I. Borisov as a deist, his judgment in this respect may be a little suspect.[20] A further implication of the quotation touches upon a subject which I have already disqualified myself from speculating on, namely, the role of individual personality in the selection of philosophical standpoints. Clearly, however, revolutionary movements embrace people with a variety of motives, and even though in general terms one might expect a group of people totally opposed to the existing political order, and moreover one actively supported by the national Church, to adopt a range of views from anticlericalism to outright atheism, this might not be so in the case of the "gentle, meek men", who, to speculate even further, might in their radical political views be motivated more by a feeling of compassion for those seen to suffer as a result of the political order, than by anger or bitterness towards the representatives of that order. This would hardly help us to understand the volte-face which Bobrishchev-Pushkin may have undergone, but it brings to mind E.P. Obolensky, another member of the 'Congregation', who even though he discovered the Gospels during his incarceration, had before his arrest, as we have seen, acquired a predilection for Kant, Schelling and the Zend-Avesta, and served as an obvious counterexample to any one-to-one correlation of republicanism and materialism. It would be easy to envisage Obolensky as a bloodthirsty enemy of Tsarism in view of the fact that he assumed the leadership of the Senate Square mutiny, but in fact he was very much as Yakushkin described the members of the Congregation, a man of gentle disposition and high principle. His eventual leadership of the revolt in the north was an inadvertent result of the chaos which surrounded those events, and did little to prevent the chaos from continuing.[21]

Yakushkin's portrait of Borisov was infinitely more sympathetic than Belyaev's remarks, but was quite consistent with them:

"Having entered the artillery as a junker at the age of eighteen, he was stationed for some time on the estate of a wealthy Polish landowner who possessed a library. Knowing some French, and taking advantage of the books which had fallen into his hands, Borisov read Voltaire, Helvetius, d'Holbach and other eighteenth-century writers of that type, and became a dogmatic atheist (*dogmaticheskim bezbozhnikom*). But although he preached unbelief to his comrades amongst the Slavs, many of whom took his word for it, he was of the most modest and gentle disposition; no-one had heard of his ever having raised his voice, and, of course, no-one noticed vanity in him."[22]

Yakushkin then gave examples of Borisov's benevolence and altruism, as if to establish the truth of the 'ruling thought' attributed to him by Belyaev, and arrived at the following conclusion:

"Following all his actions very closely, it occurred to one involuntarily that *this* man, unreasonably for himself, was imbued with the true spirit of Christianity."[23]

If Yakushkin's picture seems to render redundant what has just been said about Obolensky (which was in any case a speculative aside), it would be worth making the point that his memories may have been unduly glowing. For example, Borisov's fellow United Slav Gorbachevsky mentioned in his own memoirs his comrade's "cold scepticism" and the "caution and suspicion of his character". He also reported Bestuzhev-Ryumin's initial objection to Borisov's admission to the secret ranks of the conspirators because he was too cold, and lacked the enthusiasm for such a decisive undertaking.[24]

Before discussing in further detail the beliefs of Borisov, Yakushkin, Gorbachevsky and others, we shall take a brief look at the views of two outstanding Decembrists who, perhaps like the majority of their fellows, occupied the middle ground between the theists and the materialists, but who nevertheless took the materialist or atheist standpoint seriously, like Radishchev, and hovered on the edge of unbelief. In this respect they are representative of what I take to be a somewhat better phrase to cover the whole span of political opposition in Imperial Russia, which is the metaphysical tradition of Russian dissent, rather than simply the materialist tradition. This tells us more about a wider range of alternatives to the status quo (including, for example, the reactionary radicalism of the Slavophiles) that they were so often nurtured by, or at any rate accompanied by, deliberations about the ultimate nature of existence. To be sure, as radical opposition sharpened against an increasingly embattled autocracy, it became in general terms more exclusively identifiable with materialism. Be that as it may, the two Decembrists I had in mind were N.I. Turgenev and P.I. Pestel'. Turgenev's diaries are of great value as a fresh and articulate reflection of his times, unmuted by censorship, and undimmed by the frailty of memory. They show his preoccupation with the plight of the serfs and the question of emancipation, and the need for a Russian constitution; they manifest his consuming interest in the revolutionary events taking place in Spain and Greece, and advocacy of laissez-faire economics. Perhaps the most abiding impression they leave is of his hatred of egoism, and his invocation of the ideal of patriotism, and selfless service of the fatherland, which for Turgenev had a seemingly religious significance:

"People have for a long time sought the end of their existence and will seek it for a long time yet. But there will eventually come a time - if, that is, it is possible to hope for the perfection of man - there will come a time when people will realise their true purpose and find it in love of the fatherland, in striving for its welfare, in sacrificing themselves and everything in its service. The feeling of this love is an innate feeling in man. It is the spark of divinity; by its actions alone are we transported, and our souls elevated."[25]

The last night of 1819 found the diarist in a gloomy state of mind in which to greet the New Year. The barbarism, egoism and hypocrisy by which he felt himself surrounded, "the abyss and chaos of calamities from which Russia is persisting" had led him to question his hopes for his native land, and consider emigration. Nevertheless, he was moved to exclaim:

> "And so, with thoughts of you, O Russia, my beloved and unfortunate Fatherland, I see out the old, and meet the new year. You are my only god, which I comprehend and which I carry in my heart. You alone can inspire powerful feelings in my heart! What are people? Where are they? I do not know them. I know only your sons! But where are your sons! Where can I look for them amidst triumphant vice and oppressed virtue?"[26]

This extract says much for the importance of patriotism for Turgenev's psychological well-being, and also says a lot about its highly abstract nature, but it would be far-fetched indeed to deduce atheism from the literal meaning of such a fulsome outburst. Quite the opposite conclusion is to be drawn from an earlier passage which comes at the end of one of several attacks on the cruelty and obscurantism of Magnitsky (about whom he wrote in 1821: "And really, it is impossible to think about this man without loathing! It is a pity that it is necessary to call him a man"[27]):

> "Is this a truly religious man? No, true Christians will say. Is this a man who loves his country and mankind? No, no! they will say who desire the welfare of mankind, and who have received from heaven the sacred feeling of patriotism."[28]

But Turgenev's rather pious version of patriotism, and the fact that he attended Orthodox services,[29] should not conceal the extent to which his mind was exercised concerning the truth of religion. This is particularly apparent from a number of entries in his diary for the year 1817, by which time he was in his late twenties. It is interesting that two of the Western philosophers who stimulated his thoughts about religion, Kant and Rousseau, presented in their different ways what might be termed a minimalist version of religious truth. The influence of Kant may be evidenced in his estimation of theology:

"If in philosophy there are things in which we believe, without knowing them, then the cause of our belief is the fact that we see their effects (deystviya). The same cannot be said about theology: in theology effects are untrustworthy, consequently here there is no basis for belief"[30] This smacks of Kant's rejection of speculative theology, and Turgenev specifically declares his agreement with the former in his belief that no positive religion would arise if Christianity ceased to be observed.[31] He may also have shared Kant's view that ecclesiastical institutions in general, and the particular historical circumstances of Christianity were unimportant; in any case, there seems to be an affinity between Kant's interpretation of the Incarnation as the triumph of the good principle over the bad, and Turgenev's balance sheet of Christianity's history:

"The spread of Christianity is greatly to the credit of mankind, and proves despite the people's enemies, that it consists more of good than of evil; if it had been otherwise, then the spread of the Christian religion, based on good and love, would not have been anything like so successful"[32] Rousseau is well-known for his advocacy in The Social Contract of a civil religion, involving belief in a retributive God and afterlife, to which all citizens should subscribe in order to be deemed trustworthy. It was, however, his Emile which triggered some of Turgenev's religious thoughts, and since the latter found Rousseau's version of Christianity "admirable and convincing", it might reasonably be surmised that he was attracted to the utilitarian, undogmatic and undemanding Christianity preached by the Savoyard Vicar. He wrote this after reading Emile:

"The thought came to me that religion originated, because of the fact that people, sensing a deficiency in everything that surrounded them in this world with regard to their moral existence, strove to fill this spiritual void and turned to what was beyond this world, to the supernatural, and attempted to appropriate the supernatural to themselves, or to merge themselves with the supernatural. Little by little, they created out of it an ideal, out of the ideal a system, and living by it or within it, attempted to embellish it with all the delights of the imagination, with everything that could make it more attractive, more captivating to them, like a man who decorates his home, in order to make it more pleasant and charming to live in"[33].

Turgenev's "thought" is neutral with regard to the truth of religion, though as we saw in Anichkov's case in the eighteenth century, any speculation about the natural origins of religion would risk the odium of the Orthodox prelates. The diaries show a consistent anti-clericalism, whether towards those unnamed priests who were cruel and scornful to the people, and indulged in flattery and imitation for their own gain, or towards lay defenders of the Church such as Shishkov, or above all Magnitsky, at one time governor of Simbirsk, Turgenev's (and Lenin's) birthplace.[34] He did not, however, generalise these antipathies into a rejection of religion, of Christianity, or even, like Speransky and Labzin, of the external Church, but instead compared the onslaught on science of the Magnitsky era with "those venerable Christian-hermits, monks, who in the depth of their cells preserved the light of learning amidst universal barbarism."[35]

Whatever his own views, Turgenev made it clear where he stood when it came to a choice between atheists and between the contemporary lay preachers of Christianity, "the governors, officials of departments, directors, - knowing no science, but knowing what was to their own advantage." Their advantage was that their own ignorance was justified by their obscurantist policies:

"They cry, like Omar, 'Let's burn all the books!' If they are similar to the Bible, they are unnecessary; if they are against it, then they are harmful."[36] In an earlier passage, he asked:

"... aren't those who with a good heart, do not believe in the existence of God usually honourable people, whose conscience is clear, who are not afraid of doomsday, and consequently do not think about the Judgment? ... they do not fear God , but if they have no special reasons to love him, then faith will not be born in them. If they neither fear nor love, then all that is left to them is reason and wonder, which lead them to the idea of a Creator; but not to the idea of Providence, which is what is understood here by the name of God ... such atheists are no worse than today's religious people, who are covering the whole of Europe like a tidal wave (morskoy pesok). God knows what in the end will come of the spread of mysticism, which has now swept Europe like a fever"[37] It is ironic to note Turgenev's choice of the same kind of aquatic metaphor to describe the contemporary flood of religious mysticism as that used by Magnitsky, referring to materialism and atheism. It would also not be unreasonable to infer from Turgenev's defence of atheists on moral grounds that some at least of his friends and like-minded liberals were of this persuasion, though it should be borne in mind that he includes deism within the compass of the term 'atheism'. As far as the diarist himself is concerned, it is difficult to judge whether the passage betrays any attraction towards atheism, or whether he is simply either attempting to portray his friends' beliefs as morally acceptable, or perhaps explaining to himself why he personally rejects them. Whatever the case may be, he is evidently not without his own doubts, as is indicated in an extract from his diary of 1822 written after he had read about the Sultan's atrocities in the Greek War of Independence:

> "My God! My God! What are these horrors for? Can it be that in the final analysis life and fate must all depend on the caprice of the warped mind of a despicable tyrant? There are moments when one involuntarily thinks that faith was invented by some benefactor of the poor human race; where, if not in faith, can one look, if not for consolation, then at least for some obstacle to the imagination when thinking about the acts of tyranny, injustice and arbitrariness to which millions of people are subjected by a few despicable villains? It was always so! And that is some kind of consolation. But it is not consoling to think that it will always be so! When one doesn't understand that the only way to save oneself from oneself is to believe."[38]

The conclusion suggested by Turgenev's diaries is that although he was sceptical on rational grounds, he needed his faith for emotional and psychological reasons, exactly opposite to the implications of the dictum attributed by the poet A.S. Pushkin to Pestel': "Mon coeur est matérialiste, mais ma raison s'y refuse."[39] It is naturally harder in Pestel's case to make a judgment about his metaphysical stance, since unlike Turgenev, so little on the subject comes from his own pen. If it is agreed that the appeals to Christianity, which were part of the underpinning of the prescriptions of Russkaya Pravda, are an unreliable source for Pestel's private metaphysical leanings, we have to rely to a considerable extent on the judgments of others, like Pushkin, though as can be seen from the following remark by N.P. Ogarev, no conclusive picture emerges. Ogarev shared with Herzen a childhood oath on the Sparrow Hills outside Moscow to continue the Decembrists' struggle, after the news of the execution of Pestel', Kakhovsky, Ryleev, Murav'ev-Apostol and Bestuzhev-Ryumin. In an article entitled "In memory of the men of 14 December 1825", he commented on the first-named of those five martyrs:

"Before the execution, they all took communion, except Pestel', who remained true to his own sensible cast of mind. Official reports and even unofficial memoirs try to establish that this was because Pestel' was a Lutheran; we are convinced that this was because Pestel' was a strong man"[40]

Ogarev's verdict is corroborated by the reminiscences of P.N. Myslovsky, Archpriest of Kazan' Cathedral, who was midwife to a number of Decembrist recantations and conversions in the Fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul, but who found his efforts wasted on the strong-minded Pestel':

"Pastor Reinboth ... a man of excellent mind, stayed with Pestel' for several hours and came away from him with nothing. The criminal did not wish to hear about the secrets of faith; he would only engage in debates with his priest and would never cease to argue the correctness of his thoughts and actions ...

On the evening of July 12, Reinboth went to see him in the casemate, in order to prepare him for his death. Once again, the debates began about the dogmata of faith, and about political matters. The pastor with tears in his eyes left the cruel-hearted man."[41]

Although atheism cannot be formally deduced from Myslovsky's account, it may be that by that time Pestel' had resolved for himself the dilemma which he expressed so succinctly to Pushkin in 1821. For the intervening years, we possess the nearest to Pestel's own statements on religious questions in the form of replies to his letters from his mother. It is clear that in some instances, she was quoting his own words, for example, in a letter dated 15 April 1823:

"You say, my good friend, that God is not omnipotent, if he has not made us happy. This is exactly the same as in the case of children, who do not understand why their parents do not give them all the sweets they want to eat ... However, the secrets of religion seem to you more consoling, than ideas about inescapable, or, so to speak, material necessity. You say that this is more consoling, but you doubt whether it is true. The answer to that doubt is contained in that doubt itself. Since you ask whether it is true, that means that you cannot prove to me the non-existence of God, and everything that relates to God; and so, even if it were supposed that it were also impossible to prove the existence of God, you must agree that the unproven opinion which consoles me, upholds me and guides me must be preferable to the also unproven opinion which grieves me, makes me lonely, deprives me of everything and gives me nothing. Here already is one great advantage to be derived from faith.

And how is it that pride and the human heart have not found it more advantageous for themselves to stick to the infinitely supreme being, to submit to the all-powerful and all-good Father, than to ascribe the whole of their existence to the arbitrary motion of atoms, which chance, a whirlwind or I know not what else, has united, moreover with a wonderful and inconceivable form! How is it that the mind and soul of man has not been stirred up by this meaningless verbiage, which must replace the words 'Father' and 'Creator', - words which nature has drawn in the hearts even of savages!"[42]

It seems likely that as well as suggesting that the existence of God is doubtful, doubts which were met with an earthbound version of Pascal's wager, Pestel' may also have proposed an Epicurean explanation of the universe, and in response to it his mother was able to supply the easy and justifiable invective which such theories attracted in the absence of any convincing theories of evolution. Pestel may have thought better of these objections than of her rather motherly attempt to resolve the problem of evil; in any case, he had evidently returned to the latter problem, and asked why evil existed in a world which God could have constructed as he wished, to judge from his mother's reply written in September, 1825:

> "I do not know why, and do not try to find this out. Instead of wasting time on indignation as to why I do not understand why the little grains placed in the ground produce so many different plants, I use my own and others' experience to cultivate my flowers, and when my garden, decorated by a thousand colours, and fragrant with the most pleasant odours, manifests the wonders of nature and brightens my senses, I prostrate myself before the All-highest, and convey to him my gratitude, without asking him for an 'account' either regarding the scarlet colour or sweet smell of the rose, or concerning the thorns with which its stem is studded."[43]

She went on to warn her son of the dangers of forbidden fruit in his vain desire to understand everything, and in a subtler kind of warning explained that she wished him to follow the teaching of Christ to ensure his happiness in this world, and his eternal happiness in the world to come. She ended thus:

> "I will be sorry if I have bored you, but will be very happy if I have been able to answer some doubts or to replace them with religious feeling."[44]

Although the indirect evidence is far more suggestive of atheism than in the case of Turgenev, it cannot be stated with certainty that Pestel's position hardened after his statement of indecision to Pushkin. The uncertainty lies in the respective values as evidence of Myslovsky's recollections and the letters of Pestel's mother. It could of course be argued that Pestel' was unlikely to state his unbelief with full force to his mother in the knowledge of her deep religious convictions; on the other hand, Pestel's stand on his political views was such that he was unlikely to reveal his doubts about the irreligious standpoint to a priest sent to him by the authorities. Which is the more reliable source of Pestel's views, what he said or wrote to his friends or family, or his behaviour in a Tsarist dungeon?

Pestel and Turgenev are by no means the only Decembrists whose views can be located on the boundary of belief and unbelief, as will be seen to some extent when those figures considered by Soviet writers as open materialists and atheists come to be considered. Before that, it is worth mentioning briefly certain conspirators not normally quite so highly honoured. Syroechkovsky distinguished between those sceptics who had arrived at "full atheism" (Baryatinsky, Kryukov, Bobrishchev-Pushkin, and M.D. Lappa) and those who "stood on the borders on unbelief", including Yakushkin, A.V. Poggio, I.A. Annenkov and, questionably, most of the leading members of the Society of United Slavs.[45] In the latter group he named N.P. Repin, who according to Yakushkin's memoirs shared many discussions with him on Buhle's history of philosophy. Yakushkin recorded that Repin, who never read the Bible, had a poor view of Christianity, but on being persuaded by Yakushkin to read the New Testament, found, much to the memoirist's amazement, on affinity between Christians and Neoplatonists. Yakushkin, incidentally, also told how Repin and a fellow exile Andreev met a similar end to the Borisov brothers by being burned to death in a house.[46] Shchipanov claims Repin for the materialist and atheist camp, but stops at deism in the case of K.F. Ryleev and A.A. Bestuzhev-Marlinsky, whose anticlerical propaganda songs have already been discussed, and S.N. Kashkin, all three of whom are given as disputing with Obolensky over Christian doctrine.[47] Their opposition to Obolensky's idealism is clearly referred to in a letter written by him to his cousin Kashkin (a marginal Decembrist figure) which offers some insight into not only his philosophical views, but also his rather distinctive personality. This is where he presented an idealised picture of the perfection of the feminine personality, alongside a horrified portrayal of a life, stained by the "illicit desires of men", observed in St. Petersburg. His own desire for a woman who could respond to him with her purity and her feelings may have been fulfilled later by his marriage to a plain peasant girl in Siberia. But to return to his idealism, he defended himself to Kashkin, and perhaps to Bestuzhev, who was also an opponent of Schelling's philosophy, in the following terms:

> "You and the others scold me for my occupations, are indignant at my partiality for Schelling, and so far have not wanted to see the aim of my occupations. My reply to you, dear friend, will be very simple. There are certain spiritual needs which man cannot push aside. There is a certain thirst for knowledge which demands satisfaction, in order to satiate the soul with everything lofty and moral. So far the sciences have not given me satisfaction; they presented me with separate ideas, which wandered in my head without a plan and without a goal: Schelling's system has united into one these different ideas, and partially satisfied my demands. I am trying to bring into order what I had in disorder, and you, my friends, upbraid me for that!"[48]

The final figure I shall deal with under this borderline heading is a slightly bizarre member of the Slavic Union, the runaway peasant from Volhynia who, as recounted in the earlier section on Education, succeeded in exchanging his family name Duntsov for the documents of a dvoryanin P.F. Vygodovsky. After the completion of his sentence to hard labour, Vygodovsky had more than one recorded brush with the authorities during his exile, and on one of these occasions, in 1854, when he was eventually arrested and imprisoned in Tomsk for "disobedience and insolence" towards the local authorities in the course of an investigation into "outrageous expressions" he was reported to have used, a voluminous manuscript of 3588 pages was confiscated. It contained Vygodovsky's thoughts of some twenty years, and according to the authorities in Tomsk, the pages were "filled with the most insolent and extravagant ideas about the government and social institutions, with false interpretations of certain passages of Holy Scripture and even the basic truths of the Christian religion."[49] The manuscript was sent to St. Petersburg, where it was apparently lost in the archives of the Third Section of His Majesty's Own Chancery, Nicholas I's censors and secret police, but not before an official had made a short summary (in fact, completed after Nicholas' death) including quotations from the original. Although reference has been made to "philosophical reasoning of materialistic content",[50] it is evident from the summary that underlying Vygodovsky's colourful invective against the monarchy, the nobility and the Church, was a belief, presumably originating from his peasant background, that the temporal and spiritual authorities in Russia were the representatives of the Antichrist, and that the truth lay "in the God-word, that is in the peasants who constitute the church of the suffering Christ."[51] It cannot be denied that on to his peasant Christianity had been grafted the eighteenth-century freethought of his fellow-conspirators in the Slavic Union, and it is no doubt to these heresies that the Tomsk authorities were alluding. For example, he argued that the "truths" of the Old Testament were unnecessary for "enlightened" people, and fit only for "beggars and rabble"; moreover, if an enlightened government were to banish poverty by prosecuting the beggars and idlers, and by obliging the landowners, factory-owners and speculators to feed the peasants, the "the Bible would become quite superfluous."[52] But even though the runaway peasant shocked the provincial officials by his comparison of Biblical events and Christian doctrines with the legends of mythology, for instance, his comparisons of the birth of Christ with the appearance of Apollo, and the Trinity with the

Roman gods Saturn, Jupiter and Juno, his opposition to the *status quo* is framed in terms of true and false religion:

"... *to give out as decorations the image of the Cross to the thieves who serve the Antichrist as a despicable instrument of the enslavement and torment of the poor people spread out under the Cross of Christ, is exactly the same as if the Cross of the Saviour had been transformed by the power of the Lord into the murderous cudgel of Cain ... The church and religion are on lease to the most wicked Jewish-Christ-betrayers of the Synod*, who trade in all the sacred things in the churches, and practise bribery and predation just like the earthly powers, *not to mention their swindling miraculous icons, doors, powers, because this is pure godless charlatanry* and the abuse of truth ... The rich - that retinue of the Antichrist - worship only Mammon ... The Church of Christ has no need of rich loafers, thieves and slaughterers; Christ and the Apostles have pronounced anathema on them ... *The king of the world is the one God, the earthly kings are almost always the power and instrument of the one Devil*."[53]

Although Vygodovsky's world-view was singular amongst the Decembrists, it is nevertheless interesting to note the similarity of his own characterisation of the origin of freethought in Alexandrine Russia with some of the views put forward by myself in this Part, or even with Bertrand Russell's observations about the motivation of materialists in general, included in the section on *Education* (however unlikely a trio this may appear):

"The powers of the world, at the end of the eighteenth century, alarmed by the freethinkers, in order to avoid this evil in the future, compelled everyone to occupy themselves with the reading of Holy Scripture, supposing through this to suppress freethought in them; but the reading of the Bible and theological works by the freethinkers, confession and communion, did not in fact give the results that the powers had promised themselves, and the freethinkers became even more convinced that the powers, lost in godless and brutal politics, as in mortal darkness, must surely perish from their own actions, for the most freethinking conspiracies against them are the product of the powers, and do not originate from the freethinkers. The sceptres and thrones of the earthly powers rule not in God and the word of His wisdom, but in the Devil and the word of his earthly-political darkness of unreason; this is the abuse of the Cross and power, and of the divine wisdom and truth given by the Son of Man."[54]

I have already referred to the scorn which I.D. Yakushkin heaped on the part played by freemasons in a meeting of the Union of Welfare, and to his sympathetic account of the atheist Borisov's conduct and personality. This might be taken as evidence pointing towards Yakushkin's own atheism, and yet it should be remembered that he was also very generous in his estimation of the members of the "Congregation"; furthermore to speak of Borisov as a "dogmatic" atheist, and to remark upon his benevolence and altruism almost in spite of his metaphysical beliefs, suggests at any rate that at the time this part of his memoirs was being dictated, he would have wished to distance himself from Borisov's extreme views. This is by no means to say that he wished to portray himself as a religious man, as can easily be judged from his comment upon Bobrishchev-Pushkin's return to the "superstitions of his childhood." Again, Yakushkin made his antagonism towards Christianity quite clear in his account of his confinement in the Fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul, for example, in the following conversation begun by Archpriest Stakhy of the Cathedral of St. Peter and St. Paul:

"'Have you been to confession and holy communion every year?'

'I have not been to confession or to communion for fifteen years.'

'Of course, that was because you were occupied by the duties of service, and did not have enough time to fulfill this Christian duty?'

'I have already been in retirement for eight years and have not confessed or taken communion because I did not wish to fulfill that duty as a ritual, knowing that there is more toleration of religious beliefs in Russia than anywhere else. In a word, I am not a Christian.'"[55]

The difficulty which we face in interpreting Yakushkin's world-view is encapsulated in his dealings with a cleric rather more complex than the simple-hearted Stakhy, the aforementioned Archpriest P.N. Myslovsky of Kazan' Cathedral. Myslovsky appears to have taken an entrepreneurial interest in the minds of the captive conspirators, and although he had given up Pestel', he was seemingly more hopeful in the case of Yakushkin, despite the latter's initial brush-off:

"As a priest you can bring me no comfort, whereas for a number of my comrades your visits may be very comforting, and you may alleviate their situation."[56]

Eventually, though, Yakushkin asked Myslovsky if he could take confession and communion, though he presented this in his memoirs as the outcome of a rather academic debate as to whether the observation of this ritual was required by the government. On hearing Yakushkin's request, the Archpriest asked if he believed in God, and he replied that he did. With heavy irony, Yakushkin recorded that Myslovsky "could not resist temptation and told everyone that he had just converted the most stubborn atheist to Christianity."[57] The problem here is not so much whether Yakushkin is using his memoirs to recommend himself to posterity over his ecclesiastical adversary, but rather what was the source of his irony. He could hardly take credit for misleading the Archpriest as to his belief in a deity, and so the simplest interpretation is that Myslovsky's own inferences, that Yakushkin was formerly an atheist and now a Christian, were mistaken; and that Yakushkin the memoirist wished it to be recorded that throughout his confinement he was a consistent deist. This would also conform with his apparent neutrality with respect to the "Congregation" and the atheistic United Slavs. Whatever his motivation in deciding to observe Orthodox ritual, we know that this was not the last time he did so, since a list drawn up by the members of the Decembrists' prison artel' has Yakushkin amongst those taking confession and eating lenten fare in 1835. Incidentally, in a corresponding list for lent in 1834, Gorbachevsky and the Borisov brothers indicate that they will not participate.[58]

To call Yakushkin a deist would be to swim against the current of most Soviet scholarship, and for that matter Mazour's history of the Decembrist movement, which, although it scarcely touches upon these matters, labels Yakushkin a "positivist" and an "atheist", seemingly because of his ridicule of freemasonry.[59] It would, though, be consistent with Syroechkovsky's location of Yakushkin on the borders of unbelief; but one wonders if either he or Mazour were able to consult the essay which provides the amplest justification for calling him a materialist, since it was not actually published until 1949, well after the first appearance of either Syroechkovsky's article or Mazour's book. The fair copy of Yakushkin's original manuscript was untitled, and the essay has been given more than one title by different scholars, but of the two titles on the draft of the manuscript, "What is Man?" and "What is Life?", the editors of the three-volume collection of Decembrist philosophical works have chosen the title of the second section. This is quite reasonable, since the opening discussion of the nature of man quite quickly reaches the conclusion that there is no essential difference between man and the animals, and that it is their common property, life, which is in need of explanation. To get to this point, Yakushkin had dismissed the almost universally held belief that the characteristic which distinguishes man from the animals is the possession of an immortal soul as "a legend of deep antiquity."[60] In order to substantiate his point, the author, as befits a former officer of the Semenovsky regiment, marshalled his forces and described the pitched battles in which human reason had defeated the enemy of mediaeval scholasticism. The first battle was won by Descartes, a "daredevil of French daredevils", who made all of God's creatures, apart from man, no more than dolls constructed by a special kind of art and set in motion by external impressions. Human reason had in this way received "the rights of citizenship in the beautiful divine world," and had become the "owner of the universe," but the price paid was alienation from the whole of nature.[61] But then "Mr. Locke proved that twice two is five, that all our concepts are obtained only through external impressions", and reduced man to the level of the animals, bringing to the ground many decayed mediaeval buildings.[62] Yakushkin likens the new doctrines to "castles of air, like soap bubbles", and by a bizarre coupling of Locke's empiricist epistemology with the physiological speculations of Cabanis and Saint-Vincent, concludes that the Englishman's contribution carried the following implication for the human being:

> "The fact that he is a man is compelled by external circumstances; if he had hatched from an egg, he would have been, perhaps, a cock; if he had been born in a pool or an ocean, he could have taken on the appearance of a mosquito or a whale."[63]

Yakushkin dissociates himself from this extreme environmental determinism which surely had little to do with Locke's attempts to set the limits of human knowledge. Nevertheless, this brief journey through the history of philosophy ends in favour of Kant:

> "Human reason, tired after such devastating exploits, and unavailing efforts to create something stable out of itself, rested; and the German Kant with his cunningly woven categories proved in his turn that twice two is four, that pure reason is a great braggart and often takes on things which are not its concern and are beyond its powers."[64]

It seems at this juncture that far from evincing himself a materialist, Yakushkin has rejected empiricism as leading to a physiology which could identify thoughts with secretions of the brain, and come down in favour of a philosophy which denied to the human understanding the systematic synthetic a priori knowledge which Kant defined as the pretension of ontology. This does not amount to an explicit repudiation of materialism, since Yakushkin does not refer to Cabanis as a materialist (an appellation which the pupil of Condillac would himself have resisted), and in any case may only have been dissociating himself from a particular brand of "materialistic" physiology; nevertheless, he has settled upon the specifically anti-metaphysical implications of Kant's critical philosophy, and if he were to be consistent in his approval of them, he could not be deemed a materialist. Consistency is, however, not obligatory for mortals, and Yakushkin is not unduly inhibited in the exercise of his speculative powers when he turns his attention from the nature of man to the nature of life. He arrives at this point by rejecting the notion that man is "the alpha and omega of the world" and affirming that "he constitutes only a link in the infinite chain of creations";[65] the chain of being is, of course, a notion of some longevity, and it is worth remarking that despite its association with Robinet, it has also served as an expression of a religious world-view, not only by conveying the appearance of order and design, but also by its extension to cover angels and other spiritual beings. Yakushkin bases his case for man's place in the chain on embryological data, in particular, the similarity in the stages of development of the chicken embryo and the human foetus:

"And so, observations of the embryo clearly prove that the initial organization of all animals is in general accomplished in one and the same order; but that in spite of this each of them in the details and the degree of its development differs infinitely, and that each animal exists separately from all the other animals as an individual, and at the same time constitutes a link in the unbroken chain of all beings."[66] He does not, however, believe that "positive science" can tell us who or what is responsible for the wonders of embryonic development, and feels that the question can only be resolved by the application of reason, taking care only to avoid contradictions. Reason, he informs us, infers that all bodies are made up of indivisible and invisible "units", which constitute the essence of each body, as distinct from its sensible form, and that the causes of motion in bodies are invisible forces:

> "No mortal has actually seen with his eyes either units or forces, in precisely the same way that no mortal has seen with his own eyes his ears, whereas each one knows that he has ears, and no-one doubts the existence of his self (Ya), as a unit, possessing vital force and the force of thought, which are both the same force in different stages of its development."[67]

It is not clear whether Yakushkin, in calling the self a unit (edinitsa), is using the term in the sense in which he introduced it, to denote the stage of minuteness at which matter ceases to be divisible. In the seemingly unlikely event that he wished to identify the self with an invisible particle, this at any rate would be consistent with materialism; whether this was his intention is not established by a number of psychological speculations about the role of the self in perception and in the formation of concepts of external objects, and so on.

Obviously, to make sense of Yakushkin's view of the ontological status of the self, we need to know more about his units. He reminds us that they constitute the essence of an object, and are inaccessible to "our empirical observations"; remembering his earlier dig at the innumeracy of empiricism, we should not be surprised that the latter property does not discourage the author from giving us a fairly clear notion of the entities which we are told are the cause of the appearances of objects:

> "A unit in a state of rest, like a mathematical point at rest, has no extension, and therefore nothing in common with the objects which we know about by means of our external impressions, but the former in motion becomes accessible to our understanding as the principles which form the objects visible to us. A moving line can form a line, a line a plane, a plane a solid, which now has all three dimensions. All the units in the world, having no extension, can in no way be differentiated one from another, except in their motion, which can vary infinitely in its direction and in the velocity with which the motion is effected. Each unit in a given time has a particular mode of motion, peculiar to it, by means of which it excites a particular motion in units lying nearby, peculiar to them in that time, on account of which the units either come together into some kind of order and can form something perceptible to us as a whole, or else draw away from one another and remain inperceptible to us ... All the phenomena in nature which are the subject of our observations, originate from the motion and combination of units in some or other order, perceptible to our senses; the cause of every motion is called a force, and is contained in the units themselves, which have the power to come into motion and to excite motion in nearby units ... The cause of phenomena, which always originate in one and the same order, is called by a special name; thus we speak of the force of attraction, cohesion, heat, light, electricity, magnetism, life, thought, and in all these instances the word force signifies only a special mode and order of the motion of units."[68]

Yakushkin, by designating thought as one of those natural forces which are no more than a special kind of motion of his ultimate particles, appears to have removed the res cogitans which Descartes placed as a barrier to a materialistic and mechanistic account of God's Creation; indeed the foregoing extracts could easily be seen as the scientifically up-dated offspring of d'Holbach's Systême de la Nature. This is by no means to say that the arguments are convincing: it tells us little about the essence of a visible object that it is the visible combination of invisible particles, and when it transpires that these particles are not contingently but necessarily invisible, in that they have no extension, then it becomes hard to see how their invisibility can logically be overcome. It does not follow from the fact that an unextended point moves in a second dimension that the resultant line is visible; it seems more than usually appropriate to say that there are a number of holes in Yakushkin's geometrical argument. More importantly, though, for our purposes, the denial of extension to the units makes it a moot point whether his account of natural phenomena is strictly materialistic; it brings to mind what Lange termed in contradistinction the dynamical world-view implied by the point-atoms of Ampère, Cauchy and the Jesuit Boscovich.[69] Thus although there appear to be only minute differences between Yakushkin's unextended unit, d'Holbach's professed agnosticism about the nature of the ultimate constituents of matter, or to choose a later materialist, Büchner's belief in infinitely small atoms, in the first place, we are talking about degrees of minuteness, and secondly, over these minutiae was fought one of the battles beloved of Marxism-Leninism between materialists and idealists, of whom in this regard Yakushkin is to be found in the ranks of the latter. This is, of course, the argument of an advocatus diaboli, and it would be quite inconsistent with the drift of the essay's argument to represent the author as seeking to find an alternative to materialism, but the fact that there are real difficulties in describing him as a materialist cannot be overlooked.

Yakushkin illustrates his thesis that the infinite variety of natural phenomena is exactly matched by the infinity of possible directions and rates of motion of units, by allusions to chemical affinity, celestial motions, the various manifestations of energy, and finally the forms of life. If the various kinds of chemical and physical properties stem from variations in the "force of cohesion", the differences in life forms are to be ascribed to stages in the development of the life force:

> "In exactly the same way life in its manifestations, from the mushroom to man, has its degrees of development, and just as at a high degree of heat, light appears, so also at the highest development of life, thought appears."[70]

All the differences between plants and animals, between invertebrate and vertebrate animals, and so on, reside in the varying degrees to which combinations of units have been "excited to life". The different capacities for premeditated movement that exist between the lower and higher animals depend upon the degree of development of the nervous system:

> "Thought, which is immediately dependent upon this organ [the brain] appears in consequence of the development of life; but the manifestations of thought themselves are as distinct from the manifestations of life as the manifestations of light are from the manifestations of heat, although heat and light can appear together in one and the same object. The very world life in fact signifies a special mode and order of units, according to which a plant or an animal is formed. Both the one and the other are formed from units, from which the force of life, as from a central point, acts upon neighbouring units and excites them to life. Each unit, excited to life, receives new force for its combination with the other units from which it forms the living being and for the counteraction of the destructive action of alien units. In this respect, a man, a cock, an oyster and a mushroom are all subject to one and the same law, and in no way differ amongst themselves."[71]

This does not mean that Yakushkin overlooks the differences between man and the other animals. The animals act by instinct, whereas the human infant must learn his abilities. The individual human being is weak, and must unite into families and then into nations, whereas even bee-hives function independently of each other. Indeed a difference between man and the brutes is, in the author's optimistic phraseology, the fact that "all mankind is striving to be united in one whole."[72] It is clear, however, that no list of differences of this nature could shake his a priori conviction that all human behaviour is reducible to the motion of units, and it would be difficult, reservations about the ontological status of units notwithstanding, to regard this as other than a materialistic stance. It should, though, be remembered that his memoirs suggest that he accepted the existence of God, at any rate at the time of his imprisonment, and there is nothing in the essay either for or against the standpoint of deism, which banishes God to the role of disinterested Creator.

The only outright and forthright expression of atheism by any of the conspirators which has survived is a not always decipherable poem written by Prince A.P. Baryatinsky, who, after service as a translator, in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, joined the army, and eventually, like Pestel', became an aide-de-camp to General P. Kh. Wittgenstein, commander-in-chief of the Second Army. Despite his linguistic abilities, Baryatinsky wrote the poem in French, because of his poor knowledge of Russian. We have already heard of this from Belyaev, and the poet himself admitted it 'to his own shame' in his testimony to the Investigating Commission, and put it down to the fact that he had been educated by Jesuits.[73] Short of reproducing the work, it will be impossible to convey satisfactorily the colourful imagery with which the Russian anticipated the depiction of "nature red in tooth and claw", well-known to readers of Tennyson's In Memoriam. The poem can, however, be taken seriously in philosophical terms, particularly as a rejection of a beneficent God on the grounds of the manifest cruelty in the world. Baryatinsky adopts the device of addressing God, in order to demonstrate to Him the impossibility of His own existence because of the nature of His creation. He points out to the angry God, who has drunk the blood of sacrifices, and in whose name blood has flowed from the earliest times, His responsibility for the sharpening of the lion's claw, the extension of the black boar's fangs, the snake's poison, the teeth of the mad dog, and the hiding of the cat's claw in treacherous velvet. He describes how the hawk with bloody claws tears the dove from the air, and how in its turn the dove crushes an insect in its beak, and how the insect destroys a "living atom", and after a stomach-turning description of the slow death inflicted on its prey by the "disgusting spider", concludes:

"Let the wise man see the Deity in these tissues [of the web]
But my heart rejects him for such cruelty.
In truth, - what glory for the heavenly master,
That a living being can exist only at the cost of another!"[74]

Baryatinsky is not insensitive to the kind of awesome phenomena that inspired, for example, Lomonosov's Evening Meditation on the Divine Majesty, and speaks of the setting sun flooding the universe with an ocean of fire, thunder rolling over the trembling mountains, lightning illuminating the entire heavens, the multitude of stars in the night sky leading him to recognise God's greatness:

"But the cry of the bird dying under the sharp claw
Suddenly repels my sinking heart from You.
The cruel instinct of the cat, in spite of all your vast creation,
In denying Your goodness, denies Your existence."[75]

The sense of much of the remainder of the poem is obscured, because large chunks are illegible, though one clear passage shows that he is gracious enough to include an opponent of his own views, who argues that the destruction of life is justified to preserve the whole of nature, especially as God grants eternal life after death. No direct reply to this objection can be made out, but subsequent fragments suggest that fear, infirmity and suffering make it difficult for many a sage, having strained "the finest fibres of his brain", to remain constant in his rejection of fables and erroneous beliefs. Later, Baryatinsky has evidently referred to the well-known paradox that the evil and cruelty means either that God is not good, or that if He is, then this must "diminish His providence and bind His will."[76] At the end of the poem (which, incidentally, was written on paper with water marks for the year 1824), Baryatinsky returns to this paradox, and with a final flourish, inverts a Voltairean apophthegm:

"Oh, break an altar which He has not deserved
Either He is good, but not omnipotent, or omnipotent, but not good
Consult nature, interrogate history,
You will then understand, that for God's own glory,
Seeing so much evil covering the entire world,
Even if God existed, it would be necessary to reject Him".[77]

Two other members of the Southern Society claimed by Soviet historians as representatives of materialist tradition are N.A. Kryukov and V.F. Raevsky. These claims to some extent rest on the fallacy of describing sensationalist epistemology, and affirmations of the objective existence of perceived objects, as "materialistic", but in Kryukov's case, we also have his own testimony to his materialism and atheism. As he wrote for the benefit of the Investigating Commission:

"For a long time I was undecided about whether to reject God; in the end, by animating matter (*ozhivotvoriv materiyu*) and attributing all that exists in nature to the action of chance, I extinguished the scarcely glowing light of pure religion".[78]

Kryukov recanted these views after his arrest, and his name is amongst the membership of the Siberian "Congregation". As for the views he later regretted, any attempt to systematise them would have to rely upon a collection of notebooks filled by Baryatinsky and himself, which are a mixture of their personal philosophical views, and notes on works by philosophes, such as Condillac, d'Holbach and Helvétius. Clearly there are difficulties inherent in such a source when it comes to deciding which views contained therein represent the author's own convictions, and which are simply an aide-mémoire, but this is not for our purposes a distinction of vital importance, since the published extracts do not necessarily imply a materialist world-view, but present, rather, a familiar confection of French Enlightenment ethics and epistemology. Thus we find an optimistic appraisal of the potentiality of the "science of man" or "social science" in the promotion of personal and public welfare, faith in the capacity of "enlightenment" to put an end to civil strife, and to dispel the illusions fostered by tyrants and clerics to keep the people in bondage, lengthy analysis of the touchstones of Enlightenment naturalistic ethics, "happiness" and "welfare", and adherence to the categories of sensationalist psychology and theory of knowledge.[79] Some of this is consistent with materialism, though does not entail it. The closest to a materialistic standpoint is a section entitled "What thinking means":

> "We have now enumerated all the conditions of our sensibility and have seen that each vibration of one or several nerves leads to motion in the brain, stimulates our consciousness. If the connection between the brain and the nerves is interrupted then we cease to have any feeling ... And so, if we did not have either nerves or a brain, or if they did not possess the property of rendering us sensitive, then we should be insensitive objects, like, for example, stones, metals and so on."[80]

As it happened, Kryukov was not prepared to rule out the possibility that plants might feel pain when eaten, or that an acid might experience pleasure on combining with alkali, on the grounds that we could not know one way or another. Be that as it may, to postulate that sensation is a necessary condition of mental activity, and that sensation is entirely dependent upon the nervous system, is not formally to make mental activity a function of the nervous system (though since it makes mental activity logically dependent upon the nervous system, this could at least be regarded as a plank in a broadly-defined materialist platform). This is what Kryukov noted elsewhere on the relationship between the spirit and the senses:

"All spiritual faculties are contained in the faculty of sensation. The spirit does not act independently in us, but acts only by means of the senses, and we do not know, and cannot know, the actions which are proper to the spirit as such."[81]

These pronouncements could be taken either as an affirmation of materialism, or of the existence of an essentially inaccessible soul or spirit. This might seem a false dilemma, since Kryukov has left us in no doubt as to his beliefs when a member of the Southern Society. It is, however, by no means unlikely that a person who considered himself a materialist at one time should not at that time have thought through his metaphysical standpoint; it is perhaps less than surprising to detect idealist elements in the freethought of one who would later take to religion.

The fairest conclusion would be that from what we know of it, certain aspects of Kryukov's avowed materialism are unclear. What is clear, though, is that he was dissatisfied with conventional religion and wished to replace it with a more satisfactory philosophical system. He had this to say about Russian society's reaction to talk of philosophy and politics:

"And the hypocrites will take up arms against you with all their might, to try to convince everyone that you are a dangerous man, that you are riddled with vice, that you do not - to use their expression - give a fig for faith and the law, finally, that you are a fallen man who needs to be avoided, in order to escape such a dangerous example, because, they say, freethought fascinates most of all by the fact that it gives full rein to the passions. People, they say, for no other reason than to give themselves up to vice, reject all religion, the only support we have in our weakness, - as if religious rites were sufficient to point us along the path of virtue, as if virtue consisted only in blind beliefs."[82]

He later defended the value of adherence to a philosophical system against the sceptical standpoint that all such systems contained some errors:

> "In my opinion, it is better to have some system (of one's thoughts), than none. And so, I always prefer, after investigating as far as I can several different systems, to choose the best one of them and to follow it in my judgements, rather than have none. Even if I did not have time to get to know more than one, I would even then agree that it was better to adhere to one than none, for in the latter event I would not have a firm basis to which I could relate all my thoughts."[83]

This is perhaps too personal a statement to permit any generalisations to be induced from it regarding the propensity of Russian radicals to indulge in metaphysics; perhaps at most its rather pragmatic attitude towards the value of a world-view is an important element in Kryukov's eventual metaphysical about-turn.

It is harder than in Kryukov's case to establish V.F. Raevsky's commitment in such matters. I mentioned in the section on Education that he was the first member of any of the secret societies to be arrested, almost four years before the rebellion took place, and because he was forewarned of his impending fate by the poet Pushkin, with whom he was on good terms in Kishinev, he in all probability took the opportunity to destroy incriminating papers. Arriving at a judgment about his metaphysical stance is thus a question of balancing relevant fragments of those poems, lecture notes and letters which have come down to us. In the poem he wrote after his arrest, Singer in the Dungeon (Pevets v Temnitse), in which with characteristic use of classical metaphor, he described himself as having opened the book of Clio, and found the pages covered with blood, he gave this characterisation of the role of religion in the oppression of the people:

"Like an idol, the mute people
Dozes beneath the yoke in silent fear:
Above them the bloody family of whips
Places vision and thought on the chopping-block,
And faith, the steel shield of kings,
A bridle for the superstitious masses,
Before the anointed head,
Subdues daring reason."[84]

In two earlier poems, he questioned the immortality of the soul. One of these, an Elegy, was written in 1818-19, on the death of his brother. Having raised the question whether his spirit would be reborn after death, or whether his thought and reason would be destroyed by worms, he admits that the order and grandeur of nature and the universe reveal a God, and that life in general leads to the coffin, but nevertheless asks why mankind is afflicted with sorrow, suffering, persecution, poverty and destruction, why a young man's life is cut short by a savage death, why corruption, greed and tyranny triumph over goodness and innocence, why the blood of the unfortunate victims flows like a river and the wailing of widows and orphans does not subside:

"The murderer is sheltered by the Government's hand,
And superstition, awash with blood,
Lures the innocent to a death by a bloody path,
Reading a hymn of reconciliation and love!...

Earthquakes, murders and fires
Sickness, poverty, and the sores of severe punishment
Who in the world could produce such an arrangement?
Can it be a creator of good, can it be a powerful God?"[85]

Strictly speaking, Raevsky does not supply the answer to this question in the remainder of his poem, though his scepticism is underlined by a comparison between a river entering the sea, and the thoughts of man leaving the earthly ashes. He envies his brother his deliverance from this abyss of evil, vice, envy and venomous opinions, and with heavy irony remarks that only a villain would tremble at his survival, since "the immortality of the soul is an execution for a crime!"[86]

Raevsky returns to this theme in his Satire on Morals (Satira na Nravy), a poem written between the years 1817-22 notable for its excoriating denunciation of the superficiality and immorality of Russian society, and anticipation of the great debate of the 1820s and 1830s:

"Of all the civic evils, the most dangerous evil of all
For the spirit of a nation is the imitation of foreign things."[87]

Subsequently the poet's target is German idealism and the immortality of the soul:

"I would in vain have begun to create for you a system
Following Kant, Schelling and many like them
Its subject - downright nonsense. The object demands silence
About all the rich foolishness of all the creatures of the earth.
I know my goal, and this insignificant gift,
The gift of life, the link of the soul with the source of destruction,
And my feeble talent and enthusiasm for singing
Grow weaker with the thought of a momentary existence.
No-one has explained what awaits us beyond the grave,
Neither thousands of magicians, nor the books of Moses,
Nor the miracle-workers, speaking to the noisy rabble,

Nor the genius of Leibniz on the pages of the Theodicy.
And the worm, and I, and you, and the whole of the human race
Will pass on for future times, like the brilliance of Eida
Tell me, where are the people of vast Atlantis ?..

And the stupid human race, letting out its stupid moan,
In fetters of avarice, villainy, murder, treachery,
Howls every day at the altar of the Chimaera ...
And expects by this empty entreaty to secure its salvation
It awaits immortality now here, now there in the unknown
And perishes a victim of sorrows and evil ...
The madmen, defending themselves with rites, with prayer
And with faith - the consequence of the fetters of prejudices,
The nearer they come to the roof of the tomb
The stronger their wickedness, the more frequent their punishments ...

Oh how many times do I take fright and flee society and the judges,
Where I hear the threatening, ape-like opinion,
The words of meaningless speeches,
Where everyone cries out against me with bitterness,
He does not believe in cats, he does not believe in garlic,
He does not believe in the omnipotent mummy,
He dared not to believe in the saviour-ox,
And has forgotten the sacred temples of Memphis."[88]

It is to the detriment of neither that poetic expression and philosophical rigour do not easily cohabit, and even though these extracts from Raevsky's poetry might speak volumes of atheism to those more adept at literary criticism, I for my part must be consistent in applying the same mundane scepticism to which hitherto considered prose has been subjected, and conclude that despite Raevsky's obvious doubts about the existence of a beneficent God because of the evil in the world, we can only be certain of his rejection of organised religion, and that in all probability he did not believe in the after-life. Admittedly, to talk of faith as "the consequence of the fetters of prejudices" suggests atheism, but whether or not it is entailed depends upon whether faith connotes any belief in a supernatural being, or denotes the Christian religion or the Orthodox denomination. To demonstrate the snares which poetic expression leaves for the liberal-minded, it would be worth including an extract from Raevsky's pillorying of Russian society:

"Everything can be permitted in the world
But to be the plaything of fools and monkeys
Is for us in this glorious age shameful and godless (bezbozhno)."[89]

I am not seriously suggesting that the poet's rejection of the "orang-utan" world he found himself in as godless for him is necessarily anything other than an emphatic figure of speech; but there are other places in his prose writings which give one pause in deciding the real extent of his religious freethought. In his essay On the Slavery of the Peasants, he pointed out the unwanted effects of the serfs' lot:

"Constant and intense work, which overburdens all a man's physical strength, exhausts him prematurely, and opens the way to an early death; before this, the failure to observe the Church's regulations and ceremonies (for they are often required to work on Sundays and feast days) weakens the strength of faith, man's only support and consolation, for without the time to fulfil his Christian duty, he will without fail become unused to sacred obligation and, being compelled by his first origins, will sink into the most awful position of coarse unbelief."[90] Again, in another essay On the Soldier, which like the former was written shortly before his arrest, he declaimed in tones familiar from the Decembrists' corporate manifestoes, that the alleviation of the soldiers' duties was required by "religion and the code of honour!"[91] Elsewhere in Raevsky's papers, we find a number of definitions of forms of government, notes on geography and cosmology, and the following observations about religion:

"Religion is the acceptance and worship of the supreme being, who created the universe.

The existence of the creator is based on the logical truth, that there is no effect without a cause, whence since there is a world, then there must be a creator of the world."[92]

It could in this instance be argued that these lines do not necessarily represent Raevsky's private views, but were merely notes for a lesson at one of the military schools where he taught. Even if this were so, it would not render any less remarkable Shchipanov's interpretation that Raevsky's categorisation of God's existence as a logical truth only, and reference to the differing characteristics of pagan, Judaic, Christian and Mahommedan religion, "suggests the conclusion that God is not a reality, but only an invention of a dry mind, a logical supposition."[93]

Lest it be thought that Raevsky the poet, and Raevsky the essayist and lecturer were completely different people, it can at least be shown that the derision he felt for Kant and Schelling in his verses was also prosaically uttered, to judge from some jocular remarks in a letter to K.A. Okhotnikov, dated 1 May 1821:

"Nevertheless, the essence of the existing in its unity with heterogeneous harmony consists in the actual, which in its empirical action through the active movement of ancillary organised beings, can both subjectively and objectively give all matter that property which Newton (Nevton ili N'yuton) proved to be central attraction.

However, does the dissolute in relation to the absolute not have its action in mystical-technical production, as the parabola in its extremity leads to the earth's crust?

From this it can clearly be seen and understood, that Kant + Schelling + Eckartshausen + Fichte + Stilling + Vellansky - constitute that single metaphysical-spherical body, which by combining the ellipse with the parabola, makes one doubt the understanding, for:

"'The doubt of wisdom is the ripest fruit' ... Batyushkov"[94]

Raevsky would no doubt have been surprised at the confusion which his own views have engendered. There can be little doubt that his poems cannot be ignored in the history of Russian atheism, but if we take what evidence there is of his thought as a whole, he was either inconsistent, or at best adhered to a poetic esoteric and a prosaic exoteric philosophy.

If we accept Yakushkin's testimony, atheism was widespread in the Society of United Slavs, largely through the personal influence of P.I. Borisov. His own rejection of all religion was corroborated by Belyaev, who also recorded that I.V. Kireev was a supporter of Borisov before his own conversion to Christianity. What Yakushkin remembered of Borisov's influence during the Decembrists' exile also held for the period of the Slavic Union's activity, as Gorbachevsky testified:

"From the beginning Borisov himself wrote verses and prose and gave us to read his own papers on various matters, but which were always freethinking; then, having learned French in one year so that he could easily translate any book, he gave us to read his translations from Voltaire and some articles by Helvétius."[95] As for Borisov's atheism, his own testimony could be held to contradict this imputation:

"The general good is the supreme law, this is the maxim which was the foundation of my religion and my morality. My parents did not try to instil in me extreme piety; they often said to me that it is more pleasing to God than all the sacrificial offerings to see that a man is honourable and doing good, that God looks not on full, but on pure hands, and even more on a pure heart; however they did not inspire freethought in my soul. For my doubts regarding certain parts of the Old Testament, and certain ceremonies established by the Church about which Jesus Christ did not speak, I am indebted to certain French authors and to my own reason, which in everything has fallen into error. I was strengthened in my freethought by the oppressive acts which many priests of both our own, and the Catholic Church, displayed towards their parishioners, and also by the bad morals of some of them. However I am not without faith."[96] Borisov went on to say that one of the aims of the first predecessor of the Slavic Union, the "Society of the First Accord", which was modelled on a Pythagorean sect, was "the purification of religion from prejudices". Its successor, the "Society of the Friends of Nature", was based on the republic of Plotinus, the Neoplatonist who was so far removed from materialism as to be ashamed of his own body, and withhold the names of his parents.[97] There is no reason to doubt that the United Slavs found their origins in a passion for classical antiquity; Borisov claims that his liberalism originated from reading the Lives of Plutarch and Cornelius Nepos, and it might also be noted that of the classical names which the United Slavs affected up to the rebellion, Borisov chose the sensationalist Protagoras, the name which Voltaire applied to the materialist d'Holbach. But as for Borisov's rather grudging avowal of faith, the fact that it was accompanied by a penitent admission of error makes one reluctant to discard the opinion of the memoirists.

As to whether Borisov was a materialist, it should be mentioned that in a letter to P.K. Golovinsky, dated 21 September 1825, he asked for a copy of d'Holbach's Système de la Nature to be sent to Kireev or himself;[98] but the likeliest source of evidence is an essay contained in a notebook found amongst his letters from the beginning of 1840. It amounts to a review of a geological work passed by the censor in 1829, and written by

A.A. Deykhman, a member of the St. Petersburg Mineralogical Society. It is not known how Borisov obtained this obscure work, though it may have been from Deykhman's son, who was an acquaintance of Raevsky. The essay has been given the title On the Origin of the Planets, and Borisov was particularly struck by Deykhman's hypothesis that the earth and similar bodies had formed under the "force of attraction" out of "primary atoms" originally widely dispersed through space.[99] Borisov mentioned the meteorite found by P.S. Pallas near Krasnoyarsk, and argued that such bodies were evidence that the process of formation was continuing; he speculated that the sun and planets would in time unite with a star from the constellation of Hercules to form a new world with new beings, and that they might even have been formed themselves out of the unification of heavenly bodies populated with different species of animals and plants.[100] The idea of the plurality of worlds was a common subject for speculation in seventeenth-century non-Catholic Europe, and goes back as far as Nicholas of Cusa in the fifteenth century, and Giordano Bruno in the next; moreover the evolutionary view of the heavens which so struck Borisov had been put forward by Kant as early as 1755, and by Herschel and Laplace later on in that century. This is not to say that Borisov relied on eighteenth-century science: for example, he mentioned the asteroids discovered between 1801 and 1807; nevertheless, none of these phenomena in themselves entail a materialistic world-view, though they would naturally be of interest to a materialist. More suggestive, perhaps, in that respect, is Borisov's atomism: he considered the "primary atoms" to be spherical, and his ideas cannot therefore be linked with the immaterialism of Boscovich, as we saw in Yakushkin's case. However, it seems on the basis of this essay that the metaphysical inference which Borisov drew from Deykhman's hypothesis was not so much universal materiality, as universal sphericity, a notion which appears to have less in common with materialism than with the Pythagoreanism of the Society of the First Accord. It would though be ludicrous to suggest that Borisov was an adherent of number mysticism rather than materialism, but the fact that his first love was Greek philosophy, and moreover, at any rate initially, the immaterialism of the Pythagoreans and Plotinus, may go to explain why he was so enthusiastic about the notion that all natural phenomena conformed to the perfection of the sphere:

> "...the spheroid form is the primary form; we encounter it in the primary atoms which constitute crystals, and all the bodies so far analysed by chemistry; they astonish our gaze in the boundless space of the ether, where the planet-spheroids, of greater or lesser density, revolve with the speed of a stormy wind around the vast fiery ball."[101]

For Borisov, the value of Deykhman's theory was that it brought geology into line with other sciences, such as chemistry, physiology and anatomy, physics and botany which recognised that the elementary bodies with which they dealt, such as blood corpuscles and pollen, were spherical. It should be noted that Borisov stressed that the theory was only a hypothesis, which should be rejected in favour of any more probable;[102] it should also be noted that even though Borisov was prepared to entertain the hypothesis, that fact alone does not make him a materialist any more than it does Deykhman. It is however an addition to the weight of evidence, which although far from colossal, renders it perverse to deny Borisov's probable atheism and materialism. One wonders if Pavlov-Sil'vansky, in his pioneering essay on "The Materialists of the Twenties", would have been less likely to doubt Yakushkin's description of Borisov as a dogmatic atheist (on the basis of the latter's testimony to the Investigating Commission), had he been able to consult this piece.[103]

One of Yakushkin's other recollections, that many of the United Slavs took Borisov's word on the subject of atheism, is at the very least not contradicted by the other evidence, though we have already seen that

Vygodovsky was a believer of an individual kind. Syroechkovsky, who placed Vygodovsky on the borders of unbelief alongside the Borisov brothers, and Gorbachevsky, also located in that no-being's land the Pole Lublinski, whom P.I. Borisov identified as the initial influence in the desire of his brother and himself to set up the Society of United Slavs. However, in a letter from Borisov to Vygodovsky, in which he refers to the fact that Catholic priests were up in arms over Lublinski's failure to attend confession for three years, the Pole's belief is apparently confirmed:

> "You and I are agreed that this is not good, but it is necessary to see what lies behind the actions of the defendant. My friends and I will guarantee with all our wordly goods that this L., persecuted by everyone, is a pious man, worshipping God with all his heart, with all his spirit and with all his reason."[104]

Taken literally, the extract would suggest that Borisov disapproved of Lublinski's failure to fulfil his Catholic duties, but would have been prepared to vouch for the sincerity of his religious convictions. The tone is, however, clearly ironical, and any reference by Borisov to religiosity has to be taken in conjunction with his own belief in a secular religion of morality, the flavour of which is conveyed in the previously cited Regulations and Oath of the United Slavs, and which can also be tasted in an earlier letter to Vygodovsky:

> "We must perfect ourselves in the sacred rules of morality, not of false but of true morality, which considers that the first duty of man is to prefer social utility (obshchestvennuyu pol'zu) to everything in the world."[105]

I have already mentioned Kireev's support of Borisov, and also the opposition of Gorbachevsky and Spiridov to the religious propaganda of Murav'ev-Apostol and Bestuzhev-Ryumin, as well as Gorbachevsky's failure, along with the Borisov brothers, to observe Lent in 1834. Further circumstantial evidence for Gorbachevsky's atheism is provided by a complaint made by Archbishop Nil of Irkutsk to the Governor-General of Eastern Siberia V. Ya. Rupert, dated 17 August 1846, with regard to the behaviour of Gorbachevsky and A.E. Mozalevsky, a former officer of the Chernigov regiment and member of the Southern Society, from the time of their installation in Petrovsky Zavod. According to the Archbishop, neither during this time had been to church, let alone to confession, and moreover "from the lips of Gorbachevsky more than once had been heard blasphemous words, exposing his atheism."[106] Rupert ordered an inquiry, but the investigating official Lokhov reported that the "state criminals" had a good record of behaviour in the factory, and that there had been no reports or complaints about Gorbachevsky's blasphemous words.[107] The Archbishop responded to these findings by claiming the original complaints had been made to the local priest Kapiton Shergin by some of his parishioners, but that they did not wish to testify since Gorbachevsky enjoyed the patronage of the factory's director, and they themselves were dependent upon the factory officials. Moreover, the priest did not feel that he could release the names of the complainants, since they had spoken to him as a spiritual father; clearly this confidentiality did not extend to the content of the complaints.[108] Since the Archbishop supported Father Shergin's conscientious refusal to disclose his sources of information, and since Gorbachevsky himself refused to confess to the blasphemy, the matter was closed.

Needless to say, most of the conspirators whose views or at any rate some of whose views are suggestive of materialism, or atheism, have been accepted readily by Soviet historians of the "materialist tradition" in Russia. Shchipanov enumerates as atheists, with "clearly expressed materialistic positions on the explanation of the phenomena of nature and knowledge of the world," the following (though the list is open-ended):

Yakushkin, Borisov, Baryatinsky, Kryukov, Raevsky, Gorbachevsky, Repin, S.M. Semenov, I.A. Annenkov, I.I. Ivanov and V.A. Bechasnov.[109] Although I accept the existence, and importance, of atheism and materialism within the Decembrist movement, I hope to have shown that it is by no means certain in all the instances given that the existence of God was rejected, and in some of them, materialistic positions were not only not clearly expressed, but indeed not expressed at all. As for the later figures in the list, who have not so far been considered, I.I. Ivanov's atheism is derived from the testimony of Kostyra,[110] whom Ivanov introduced into the Society of United Slavs. The case for S.M. Semenov's materialism rests on an extract from the memoirs of D.N. Sverbeev, who was acquainted with several of the Decembrists. Semenov, perhaps more than the members of the Society of United Slavs, was a prototype of the raznochinets representative of the intelligentsia, having graduated from a theological seminary, and spending a number of years both as a student and as a candidate for a professorship at Moscow University. Along with I.I. Pushchin, Semenov was one of the principal members of the Moscow section of the Northern Society, by which time he had left the University for service in the Department of Spiritual Affairs, rather an odd move for a "convinced materialist."[111] It was during his time at the University that Sverbeev was struck by Semenov, whom he as a student considered the most outstanding of the "patricians". His record of Semenov's philosophical preferences is doubtless the best evidence for the views attributed to him:

"He devoted his entire spirit to the Encyclopaedists of the eighteenth century; Spinoza and Hobbes were his favourite writers."[112] It was evidently not Hobbes' political philosophy which appealed to him, since much of Sverbeyev's memoir is given to Semenov's part in opposing a public dissertation in favour of the notion that monarchy was the most excellent form of government, and that in Russia unlimited monarchy was the necessary and only possible form.[113] Whether or not Semenov was really a materialist depends upon which of the Encyclopaedists he was attracted to, and in what light he interpreted Spinoza. Since we do not know this, it is pinning rather too much on the mention of Hobbes to make any categorical affirmation of Semenov's materialism. Shchipanov does not substantiate his inclusion of V.A. Bechasnov and I.A. Annenkov in his list of atheist-materialists, though it can be assumed that in the latter's case, the conclusion is based upon a report in the memoirs of A.S. Gangeblov of a lengthy dispute between Annenkov and M.S. Lunin on the subject of Lunin's faith.[114] We may infer from this that Annenkov was ill-disposed towards Catholicism, or perhaps Christianity in general, but since similar views may be attributed to as wide a selection of thinkers as Speransky, Labzin, Ryleev (who took a hostile stance towards Catholicism in an article on the decline of Papal power[115]), A.D. Ulybyshev (a member of the 'Green Lamp' literary society on the Decembrist fringes, whose 'Dream' foresaw a religion purified of superstitions, and without bishops, priests, monks and idolatry[116]) and A.I. Koshelev (one of the Schellingian "Wisdom-lovers" who considered Christianity adequate only for the masses, and considered Spinoza's works far superior to the Gospel and the rest of the Scriptures[117]) - it is perhaps going too far to impute materialism to Annenkov on this basis alone.

Some of the most zealous work in the historiography of the Russian "materialist tradition" has been carried out by G.I. Gabov in respect of the Decembrists' philosophical views. Gabov was scarcely heterodox in regarding the Decembrist movement as a reflection of the crisis in the feudal-servile order, precipitated by Russia's embarkation upon industrial capitalism in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, or in interpreting the materialist resolution, by the most revolutionary and republican Decembrists, of the basic question of philosophy concerning the relationship of thought to matter, as a weapon in the struggle against servile ideology, idealistic philosophy and religion, and a continuation of the materialist tradition, already firmly established by Lomonosov and Radishchev.[118] However their outlook was weakened by their class limitations (as Lenin had shown), and their materialism failed to recognise subsequent discoveries, such as the unity of the infinite and the finite, the law of the transition of quantity to quality, or the fact that man was differentiated from the animals by labour.[119] Although orthodox, Gabov displayed unusual ingenuity in detecting materialist standpoints. Some of the evidence for his conclusion that the Decembrists recognised the law of motion and development as essential to all matter, consists in observations by Turgenev, and even Baten'kov, on historical development; and amongst the conspirators who came to a correct "materialist" conclusion, that the objective world is subject to its laws, and does not depend on any supernatural forces, we find Pestel', Turgenev, Kornilovich and Pushchin, of whom the last two did little more than mention the word "cause."[120] Gabov's judgments are not only extreme, but at times clearly false, as in the following references to German idealism:

> "The Decembrist were the first to submit to criticism German idealism, and above all the idealism of Schelling and Kant ... Nebulous German philosophy had no success in Russia because it could not express the immediate needs of the historical development of the country, and was a contradiction to the clear mind of the Russian people. All the attempts of the Tsarist government to spread this philosophy in Russia, and use it in the struggle against the materialistic, progressive world-view proved unsuccessful."[121]

The first statement is refuted by the examples of Lubkin and Osipovsky; the second ignores the all-pervading vogue for Schelling and Hegel in the 1820s, 30s and 40s; the third leaves out of account the government's attempts to extinguish that philosophy.

It would be pointless to continue to tackle Gabov judgment by judgment, or to quote every generalisation about Decembrist thought derived from the views, or at any rate some of the views, of one or two men. Nevertheless, it might be instructive to concentrate upon some details of his interpretation of Yakushkin, who, as well as Pestel' and Bestuzhev-Marlinsky, takes his place with some of the more obvious materialist candidates. The inclusion of Bestuzhev is, I believe, an unwarranted extension of his scientific beliefs (such as his belief in the infinity of the universe and the continuing destruction and creation of heavenly bodies, and his acceptance of an evolutionary history of the earth's crust), as well as of his mockery of Obolensky's idealism.[122] Be that as it may, there are clearer instances of error and misrepresentation when Yakushkin is considered. In the first place, having been described as an atheist, which is at least open to doubt, it is stated that he refused all the Archpriest Myslovsky's attempts to make him observe the ceremonies of the Church, which simply is not true.[123] The case of misrepresentation concerns Yakushkin's invocation of the familiar notion of the chain of being:

> "He considered man ... to be a link in the general chain of the evolution of living organisms"[124].

Apparently, Yakushkin also regarded the appearance of the brain as the result of a "long process" of development, in consequence of both of which it was concluded that he had anticipated some of the most important outlines of evolutionary theory more than twenty years before the publication of Darwin's Origin of Species.[125] Now it will be remembered that Yakushkin's case for the inclusion of man in the natural chain was largely based upon the similarity of his embryological development with that of other animals; there is not the smallest hint in his essay of the theory of speciation which is associated with Darwin and A.R. Wallace. I have no desire whatsoever to defend the originality of those two on chauvinistic grounds, but leaving aside the question as to whether Yakushkin is even to be considered as a contributor to the history of biology, his attachment to the familiar notion of a hierarchy of living things of increasing complexity hardly elevates him to the ranks of those naturalists and thinkers, such as Maupertius, Buffon, Erasmus Darwin, Lamarck and Lyell, who, however debatably, may in some senses be seen as "precursors" of Darwin's account of the transformation of biological species. Gabov's misrepresentation lies in the unjustified insertion of the phrases "evolution" and "long process" in his summary of Yakushkin's views. A further instance, though not of misrepresentation, and of rather more relevance to Yakushkin's standing as a materialist, concerns the nature of his elementary edinitsy. Gabov confronts the fact that he denied them extension, though not in my view in a convincing manner:

"Foreseeing the attempts of idealists to present the aforementioned units in the guise of spiritual substances, Yakushkin gave a detailed account of his position on the materiality of the units. He wrote that it is possible to grind any object into a powder, into separate particles which would be invisible; however in a large quantity these particles can be perceived by us. Just as not all the vibrations of the air are perceived by us in our hearing, but only the movement of large masses becomes perceptible, so bodies perceptible to man's sense organs are formed from particles inaccessible to the senses."[126] It is perhaps an exaggeration to say that Gabov confronts the problem of Yakushkin's point-atoms; rather he is aware of the dangers. Thus he contents himself with arguing that invisibility does not imply immateriality, whereas it could be argued that Yakushkin's case is that immateriality does not imply invisibility. The question begged is whether these unextended units can be counted as material entities. A final example from Gabov's analysis concerns not so much his inference from Yakushkin's work, as his over-generalisation on its basis. He was understandably struck by Yakushkin's comparison between the appearance of thought, and the manifestation of light as being qualitatively different than life and heat respectively:

> "Considering thought as a property of living matter at the highest stage of its development, the Decembrists did not identify thought and matter. They stressed the specific nature of thought, and came out against vulgar materialism, according to which thought is a material product of a special kind. The property of matter which is expressed in the ability to think is only the phenomenon of life, said the Decembrists, without signifying by this equality between matter and thought."[127]

If Yakushkin was a materialist, then it is certainly unlikely that he was a vulgar materialist, remembering also his deprecating attitude towards Cabanis, though he can hardly speak for all his fellow conspirators on the matter.

Despite these criticisms of Gabov's methodology, I do not differ from him as to the extent of materialist and atheist leanings amongst the Decembrists nearly so much as I have done with respect to Soviet historians of eighteenth-century Russian ideas. Exactly what the extent was is, as we have seen, dependent upon philosophical preconceptions as well as the availability of evidence, but in any case the latter is insufficient to resolve the matter quantitatively, even were such a resolution likely to meet with universal agreement. Nevertheless, it can be inferred from Belyaev's recollections that a practising commitment to Orthodoxy was even after the conversions in the Fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul a minority pursuit amongst the conspirators, since of some 100 exiles in Chita, he believed the thirteen he named as belonging to Bobrishchev-Pushkin's group to be an exhaustive list.[128] It may also be inferred that evidence of religious affiliation would be much more likely to have survived than affirmations of atheism, since the Decembrists would obviously have wished to conceal or destroy any incriminating material (as we know to have been the case with Kryukov's notebooks, Pestel's Russkaya Pravda and the notebook containing Baryatinsky's atheistic poem, which were all buried in a bundle near the village of Kirsanovka[129]), and, perhaps more contentiously, since the authorities may have destroyed papers they considered to be sacrilegious (Baron Diebitsch assured the Grand Duke Constantine that many of the insurgents' papers had been burned by him on the orders of Tsar Nicholas[130]). Thus, even though the hardest evidence for religious and idealist ideas on the one hand, and atheism and materialism on the other, is in both cases somewhat isolated, it seems more likely in the former than in latter case that this approximates to reality. We have already seen that Obolensky's idealism was under attack from some of his comrades in the Northern Society, and it should also be noted that it was not until November 1825, that the idealist co-editor of Mnemozina, V.K. Küchelbecker, joined the Society under the influence of Ryleev and Prince A.I.Odoevsky.[131] Furthermore, the Catholic M.S. Lunin was a peripheral figure in events leading to the rebellion, having moved to Warsaw in 1822, and in any case he disapproved of it,[132] whereas A.N. Murav'ev complained that he was despised for his conversion by the other members of the Society, and held up as a hypocrite and a religious fanatic.[133] Finally, Nikolay Bobrishchev-Pushkin, when informed by his younger brother Pavel of his admission to the Southern Society, commented:

> "Yes, God knows whether this society is good, for the majority of its members are atheists"[134]

This last remark, while not in itself conclusive as to its own truth, must be added to what we have already learned in this section of the views of certain individual members of the Southern Society, all of which, I believe lends weight to the attempt made in the section on The Church and Religion to deal with the corporate appeals to Christianity favoured by that branch of the movement. These, it will be remembered, constituted a prima facie counterexample to the suggested correlation between degrees of political dissent and the extent of religious heterodoxy, but it was argued that such appeals may have been less a reflection of religious conviction, than of authoritarianism allied with remoteness from the people. That having been said, it may also be remembered that the previous sections were concerned with a discussion of the historical factors which surrounded the birth and development of a significant wing of atheist and materialist thought within the Decembrist movement. It may therefore not come as a complete surprise that the conclusion of this final section is that such a wing did exist, and was significant; and moreover that, despite my reservations about the usefulness of such designations, it can be said that this phenomenon constituted the origins of the Russian materialist tradition.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. For example, M. T. Iovchuk, *Razvitie materialisticheskoy filosofii v Rossii XVIII-XIX vekov* (Moscow, 1940); Yu. Ya. Kogan, *Ocherki po istorii russkoy ateisticheskoy mysli XVIII veka* (Moscow, 1962); L. A. Kogan, *Krepostnye vol'nodumtsy (XIX v.)* (Moscow, 1966); A. A. Maksimov, *Ocherki po istorii bor'by za materializm v russkom estestvoznanii* (Moscow 1947); I. Ya. Shchipanov, *Russkaya materialisticheskaya filosofii XVIII-XIX vekov i ee istoricheskoe znachenie* (Moscow, 1953); G. S. Vasetsky and M. T. Iovchuk, *Ocherki po istorii russkovo materializma XVIII i XIX vekov* (Moscow, 1942); *Iz istorii russkovo materialisticheskovo filosofii XVIII-XIX vekov* (Moscow, 1952). The best discussions of nineteenth-century materialism and atheism in this language are to be found in E. Lampert, *Studies in Rebellion* (London, 1957) and *Sons Against Fathers: Studies in Russian Radicalism and Revolution* (Oxford 1965), and Masaryk (see note 3).

2. Even inconsistencies, or misunderstandings of Western ideas, can be of significance in the history of Russian thought; for example Belinsky's 'reconciliation with reality' (see Part One).

3. T. G. Masaryk, *The Spirit of Russia* (London, 1955). I have in mind his summary of Russian philosophy, Vol. 2, p. 465 ff.

4. V. V. Zen'kovsky, *History of Russian Philosophy* (London, 1953), vol. 2, pp. 729-30.

5. See, for example, the discussion in E. Radlov, *Ocherk istorii russkoy filosofii*, (Petrograd, 1920), pp. 7-8.

6. See, for example, Yu. Ya. Kogan, *op.cit.*, and the general works *Istoriya filosofii v SSSR*, 5 vols., (Moscow, 1968-71), and A. A. Galaktionov and P. F. Nikandrov, *Istoriya russkoy filosofii XVIII-XIX vekov* (Leningrad, 1970).

7. V. I. Lenin, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii* (1958-70), vol. 45, p. 26.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

9. A. A. Maksimov, *op.cit.*, pp. 341-50; Zen'kovsky, *op.cit.*, vol. 2, pp. 725, 732-3.

10. Zen'kovsky, *op.cit.*, pp. 732, 733.

11. For example, Herzen's description of Bacon as a materialist in his *Letters on the Study of Nature* (see Part One).

PART ONE CLASSICAL RUSSIAN MATERIALISM

1. The quotation comes from a letter written in 1841 to his friend V. P. Botkin, who like Belinsky and Bakunin was a member of N. V. Stankevich's idealist philosophical circle. V. G. Belinsky, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii* (Moscow, 1953-59), vol. 12, pp. 22-3.

2. *Perepiska Nikolaya Vladimirovicha Stankevicha 1830-1840* (Moscow, 1914), p. 486.

3. M. A. Bakunin, *Sobranie sochinenii i pisem* (Moscow 1934-5) vol. 3 p. 148.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 140.

5. A. I. Herzen, *Sobranie Sochinenii v 30 tomakh* (Moscow 1954-64), vol. 8, p. 81.

6. For example, the police impounded Ogarev's copy of Cuvier's *Discours sur les révolutions du globe terrestre* as revolutionary literature! *Ibid.*, p. 207.

7. Herzen, *op.cit.*, vol. 9, p. 20.

8. According to Koyré, Herzen was the only Russian of his generation to master Hegel by starting with *The Phenomenology of Mind*, his first and most obscure major work. A. Koyré, *Etudes sur l'histoire de la pensée philosophique en Russie*. (Paris, 1950), p. 113n.

9. Herzen, *op.cit.*, vol. 9, p. 23.

10. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 257.

11. *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 21.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 71.

13. A corrective to the idealisation of Stankevich by people who had not actually met him, such as Herzen and P. V. Annenkov, as well as to his intellectual idealisation by Chizhevsky in *Gegel' v Rossii* (Paris, 1939), can be found in E. J. Brown, *Stankevich and his Moscow Circle. 1830-40* (Stanford, 1966).

14. *Perepiska*, op.cit., pp. 669-70.

15. For example, M. M. Grigor'yan has speculated that Stankevich might have become a materialist on the basis of similarities between his and Feuerbach's personality. *Russkaya Progressivnaya Filosofskaya Mysl' XIX veka (30-60 gody)* (Moscow, 1959), pp. 16-18.

16. It could perhaps be argued that I have applied just such a definition in Parts Two and Three; this is, I think, true only to the extent that it is unavoidable, especially in a case where the evidence is relatively scarce, the thinker in question does not declare his own metaphysical commitment, and the historian must reach his own verdict, or at least define his inability to do so. In general, I hope to have been sceptical, rather than dogmatic, in those Parts, and to have avoided a definite categorisation of materialism or atheism, where a thinker's views are consistent with an unstated, and perhaps even unlikely, deism or theism.

17. E. Kamenka, *The Philosophy of Ludwig Feuerbach* (London, 1970), p. 17; L. Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity* (New York, 1957), xxxiii.

18. Kamenka, op.cit., p. 111. As is well known, the closing dictum is a pun in the original German: "Der Mensch ist was er isst". Kamenka refers to the review as "notorious", and quotes Sidney Hook's references to "degenerate sensationalism" and the "most 'vulgar' of 'vulgar materialisms'." It seems to me that although the most reductionist of materialist world-views has not convinced me that feelings, thoughts or sensations are material entities, the refutation of that viewpoint requires more than the choicest patrician pejorative, indeed it demands the assimilation of a far deeper penetration into the mechanisms of body chemistry and brain physiology than that which prompted Feuerbach's beliefs that sustenance is the only substance and that the link between body and soul is food and drink. This is not to say that even those who in deference to scientific procedure remained agnostic about its truth, might not find something risible in his hypothesis that the seeds of a slower and more gradual revolution in Germany were beans (Kamenka, op.cit., p. 112). Why is it, though, that the most reductionist idealist metaphysic is never called 'degenerate', 'crude'or 'vulgar'? Is this not the alienation of man from his own corporeality?

19. Feuerbach, op.cit., p.3.

20. Ibid., xxxiv.

21. Ibid., xxxv.

22. Ibid., pp. 39, 40.

23. Ibid., p. 40.

24. Ibid., p. 48.

25. Ibid., p. 67.

26. Ibid., pp. 170-171.

27. Ibid., p. 180.

28. Ibid., p. 183.

29. Ibid., p. 270n.

30. M. Bakounine, Oeuvres (Paris, 1895-1913), vol. 3, p. 48

31. Herzen, op.cit., vol. 3, p. 88.

32. Ibid., pp. 75-6.

33. Ibid., pp. 308, 314, 297.

34. Herzen, op.cit., vol. 8, p. 288.

35. Herzen, op.cit., vol. 8, pp. 161-2, vol. 9, pp. 25, 209-10; P. V. Annenkov, Literaturnye vospominaniya (Moscow, 1960), pp. 274-5.

36. Herzen, op.cit., vol. 6, pp. 31-2, 36, 46, 66-7, 105, 119, 120, 125, 126, 139.

37. Herzen, op.cit., vol. 13, pp. 50-62, vol. 20, pp. 438-43, vol. 26, p. 215.

38. Herzen, op.cit., vol. 9, p. 34.

39. Annenkov, op.cit., p. 274n.

40. Belinsky, op.cit., vol. 10, p.26.

41. Belinsky, op.cit., vol. 12, p. 250.

42. A. Walicki, 'Hegel, Feuerbach and the Russian "Philosophical Left" 1836-48', Annali dell'Instituto Giangiacomo Feltrinelli, Anno Sesto, 1963, p. 124.

43. Ibid., pp. 131, 134.

44. As late as 1877, Chernyshevsky, in a letter to his sons from Siberia, still accounted himself a disciple of Feuerbach (although he had not read him in fifteen years), and regarded him as the only thinker of those days who had truly understood the nature of man. N. G. Chernyshevsky, Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii (Moscow, 1939-50), vol. 15, p. 23.

45. Chernyshevsky, op.cit., vol. 7, pp. 240, 267, 268.

46. Ibid., p. 291 ff.

47. Ibid., p. 242.

48. N. A. Dobrolyubov, Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii (Leningrad, 1934-9), vol. 3, p. 92. This passage, although not the last word on his materialism, is indispensable for a full understanding of it, and it is to be regretted that almost the entire paragraph in which it occurs, where Dobrolyubov also asserts man's spiritual nature, calling the body "an instrument for the service of spiritual activity", has been excised from the latest collection of his works (Sobranie Sochinenii (Moscow 1961-4), vol. 2, p. 430).

49. D. I. Pisarev, Sochineniya (Moscow, 1955-6), vol. 1, p. 87.

50. Ibid., pp. 86-7.

51. V. I. Lenin, Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii, (Moscow, 1956-70), vol. 18, pp. 41-2.

52. Ibid., p.119.

53. Ibid., p. 211.

54. Ibid., pp. 357-8, 252.

55. Ibid., p.42.

56. Ibid., p. 253.

57. Ibid., pp. 228-230.

58. Ibid., pp. 195-6.

59. V. V. Zen'kovsky, History of Russian Philosophy (London, 1953), vol. 2, p. 747.

60. Lenin, op.cit., vol. 18, pp. 105, 131, 124, 134, 275, 277-8.

61. Ibid., pp. 265, 65.

62. Ibid., pp. 98, 25.

63. Ibid., p. 380.

64. Osnovy marksistskoy filosofii (Moscow, 1964), p. 11; for much the same argument, see G. V. Plekhanov, Izbrannye filosofskie proizvedeniya (Moscow, 1956-8), vol. 1, p. 510.

65. Lenin, op.cit., vol. 18, p. 257.

66. Ibid., p. 259.

67. Ibid., pp. 50, 239, 161.

68. Ibid., pp. 46, 372-3.

69. Ibid., pp. 128-9.

PART TWO THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

1. W. H. E. Johnson, Russia's Educational Heritage (Pittsburgh, 1950), pp. 23-4.

2. A. I. Herzen, Sobranie Sochinenii v 30 tomakh (Moscow 1954-64), vol. 7, p. 40.

3. Polnoe Sobranie Zakonov Rossiiskoy Imperii 1649-1825 (St. Petersburg, 1830), (PSZR1), vol. 15, p. 913

4. A. N. Pypin, Russkoe masonstvo XVIII veka i pervoy chetverti XIX veka (Petrograd, 1916), pp. 233-9.

5. G. P. Makagonenko, Radishchev i evo vremya (Moscow, 1956), pp. 293-5: Yu. Ya. Kogan, Ocherki po istorii russkoy ateisticheskoy mysli XVIII veka (Moscow 1962), pp. 41, 43.

6. A. Vucinich, Science in Russian Culture. A History to 1860 (Stanford, 1963), p. 183.

7. PSZR1, vol. 23, pp. 933-4.

8. For his footnote to Mably's treatise, see A. N. Radishchev, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii* (Moscow-Leningrad 1938-52), vol. 2, p. 282n.

9. See R. Pipes, *Russia under the Old Regime* (London, 1974), p. 155, for the range of incidents covered by the term *volnenie*.

10. On Lomonosov's background and early life, see B. I. Menshutkin, *Zhizneopisanie Mikhaila Vasil'evicha Lomonosova* (Moscow-Leningrad, 1947), pp. 7-17.

11. *PSZR1*, vol. 6., pp. 311-2

12. See I. T. Pososhkov, *Kniga o skudosti i bogatstve* (Moscow, 1951); B. B. Kafengauz, *I. T. Pososhkov. Zhizn' i deyatel'nost'* (Moscow-Leningrad, 1951).

13. D. S. Mirsky, *Russia. A Social History* (London, 1931), p. 205.

14. Kogan, *op.cit.*, pp. 43-47.

15. Note, for example, the essay by G. S. Vasetsky and B. M. Kedrov, '*M. V. Lomonosov - osnovopolozhnik materialisticheskoy filosofii i peredovovo estestvoznaniya v Rossii*' in *Ocherki po istorii filosofskoy i obshchestvenno-politicheskoy mysli norodov SSSR* (Moscow, 1955-6), vol. 1, pp. 119-171, and one of the books commemorating the bi-centenary of Lomonosov's death, I. D. Glazunov, *M. V. Lomonosov - osnovopolozhnik russkoy materialisticheskoy filosofii* (Moscow, 1961).

16. See, for example, E. K. Azarenko, '*Bor'ba za estestvenno-nauchnoe i filosofskoe nasledstvo M. V. Lomonosova*' in *Iz istorii russkoy materialisticheskoy filosofii XVIII-XIX vekov*, (*Uchenye zapiski Akademii obshchestvennykh nauk*, no. 5), especially pp. 5-17.

17. M. V. Lomonosov, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii* (Moscow-Leningrad, 1950-57), vol. 3, p. 239, vol. 4, pp. 373-5.

18. For his Morning and Evening Meditations, and his *Gimn borode*, see Lomonosov, *op.cit.*, vol. 8, pp. 117-23, 617-29. For a case that he was a Wolffian in metaphysics, see V. Boss, *Newton and Russia. The Early Influence 1698-1796* (Cambridge, Mass., 1972).

19. See Shchipanov's article in vol. 1 of *Izbrannye proizvedeniya russkikh mysliteley vtoroy poloviny XVIII veka* (Moscow, 1952) (*IPRMVP*), p. 38, and his *Filosofiya russkovo prosveshcheniya. Vtoraya polovina XVIII veka* (Moscow, 1971), where he describes deism as the "form of expression of timid and inconsistent materialism" (p.104). V. E. Evgrafov, though, distinguishes from materialism the deism of Anichkov, Kozel'sky and Baturin (*Istoriya filosofii v SSSR* (Moscow, 1968-71), vol. 2, p. 26).

20. *IPRMVP*, p. 407.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 132.

22. Ibid., pp. 136-7.

23. Ibid., pp. 140-1.

24. Ibid., pp. 172-3.

25. Ibid., pp. 183-4.

26. Ibid., p. 545.

27. Kogan, op.cit., p. 293.

28. Ibid., pp. 312, 297-8, 310, 300.

29. Ibid., p. 55.

30. Ibid., p. 116. Extracts from the denunciation are given on pp. 116-20.

31. Ibid., pp. 67-8.

32. Ibid., p. 72.

33. Radishchev, op.cit., vol. 1, pp. 3-4.

34. Pypin, op.cit., p. 310.

35. See G. A. Gukovsky's notes, Radishchev, op.cit., vol. 2, p. 372 ff.

36. A. McConnell, A Russian Philosophe. Alexander Radishchev 1749-1802 (The Hague, 1964), p. 157.

37. Ibid., p. 155: Radishchev, op.cit., vol. 2, p. 90.

38. Radishchev, op.cit., vol. 2, pp. 58, 65.

39. Ibid., pp. 43, 95, 96.

40. Ibid., pp. 60, 73.

41. Ibid., pp. 74, 60.

42. Ibid., p. 97.

43. Ibid., p. 141.

44. Ibid., p. 96.

45. Ibid., p. 46.

46. Makagonenko, op.cit., pp. 509, 510. In the first reference, he was referring to a debate between Novikov and Professor I. G. Schwarz over the nature of immortality.

47. A. S. Pushkin, Sobranie Sochinenii (Moscow 1959-62), vol. 6, p. 216, vol. 9, p. 96.

48. Radishchev, op.cit., vol. 2, p. 103.

PART THREE THE REIGN OF ALEXANDER I AND THE DECEMBRIST MOVEMENT

Introduction

1. N. K. Shil'der, Imperator Aleksandr Pervyy, evo zhizn' i tsarstvovanie (St. Petersburg, 1897-8) vol. 2, p. 6.

2. Zapiski, stat'i, pis'ma dekabrista I. D. Yakushkina (Moscow, 1951), p. 17.

3. Shil'der, op.cit., vol. 4, p. 87.

Section 1 Education

1. PSZR1, vol. 27, pp. 437-41

2. M. I. Sukhomlinov, Issledovaniya i stat'i po russkoy literature i prosveshchenii (St. Petersburg, 1889), vol. 1, p. 58 ff.

3. See A. Koyré, La philosophie et le problème national en Russie au début du XIXe siècle (Paris, 1929), pp. 52-65.

4. M. I. Sukhomlinov, op.cit., vol. 1, p. 186.

5. N. P. Zagoskin, Istoriya Imperatorskovo Kazanskovo universiteta za pervyya sto let evo sushchestvovaniya, 1804-1904 (Kazan, 1902-4), vol. 3, p. 350. For his advocacy of "public destruction" see p. 303, for his distinction between the sciences, p. 316, and his directives concerning languages, history and literature, as well as philosophy and the mathematical and physical sciences, see pp. 347-53.

6. Although Gall and Spurzheim's origination of a primitive attempt at the localisation of brain function, phrenology, is permanently stained with the charge of baseless speculation and quackery, it cannot be left out of account in the history of modern materialism, as the following extracts, from a memorandum entitled "Research on the Nervous System in General and on that of the Brain in Particular", dated 14 March 1808, shows:

"In the same way as the functioning of the different viscera and the feeling in the different senses depend upon a particular nervous mechanism, every instinct, every intellectual act, both in Man and in animals depends upon some part or other of the nervous matter in the brain. Therefore if the mind itself is intangible we can at least find in its organs the mental capacity of every species and individual...

It will not be long before, defeated by the evidence, people will agree with Bonnet, Condillac, Cabanis, Prochaska, Soemerring, Reil, etc., that all the 'phenomena' of living matter depend on the system in general, and that 'mental phenomena' depend upon the brain in particular.

Several drops of extravenous blood, or several grains of opium, in the brain's ventricles, are sufficient to show that in this life, will and thought are inseparable from their physical foundations.

Whosoever wishes any longer to remain in total ignorance about the mainsprings which make him function; whosoever wishes to grasp somehow or other, with a single glance, the nature of Man and of every animal, as well as their relationship to external matter; whosoever wishes to establish a firm doctrine on the functioning of the intellect and the mind, as well as its disorders, should know that it is now vital to carry out study of the brain's structure hand in hand with that of its functions.

In this way naturalists, teachers, moralists and legislators who are still uncertain and irresolute about the real reasons for Man's bents and passions, his gifts and their differences, will be able to rectify their ideas and convince themselves with tangible and clear evidence, that the human structure is connected to a superior order of intellectual and moral qualities, that consequently education, legislation, morality and religion are essentially linked to Man's nature, and that far from being merely useful to him, they are inseparable from his well-being, because they are sources from which he derives the sublime motivation (to counterbalance evils which inevitably veer towards evil) which allow him to realise more and more the possibility of determining for himself free and moral actions." K. H. Pribram (ed.), Brain and Behaviour, 1. Moods, states and mind, Selected Readings (Harmondsworth, 1969), pp. 25-6.

I have included this rather long quotation from a non-Russian source for two reasons. One, it shows that even though the opponents of materialism so often regarded it as synonymous with immorality (a conclusion which La Mettrie may have strengthened, and which finds one of its milder expressions in Locke's and Rousseau's would-be refusal of civil rights to atheists), the proponents of the doctrine, albeit in a modified form in this instance were often anxious, perhaps by way of self-justification, to derive a naturalistic ethics from it. It is important to accept this in order to understand how materialism could have held any appeal to a group like the Decembrists for whom moral vindications of their political attitudes were so important. Secondly, we know that the Decembrists were to some extent influenced by Gall's physiology, to judge from the testimony of N. A. Kryukov. N. P. Pavlov-Sil'vansky, Ocherki po russkoy istorii XVIII-XIX vekov (St. Petersburg, 1910) p. 272.

7. Sukhomlinov, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 228-9.

8. For example, R. K. Merton, 'Puritanism, Pietism and Science', Sociological Review, 28, part I (January 1936), and R. Hooykaas, Religion and the Rise of Modern Science (Scottish Academic Press, 1972).

9. See Discoveries and Opinions of Galileo, translated with an introduction and notes by Stillman Drake (New York, 1957), pp. 175-216.

10. A. Vucinich, Science in Russian Culture. A History to 1860 (Stanford, 1963) p. xii.

Notes to pp. 107-121

11. F. A. Lange, The History of Materialism and Criticism of its Present Importance, (London, 1925), pp. v, xi.

12. Sukhomlinov, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 264-6, Koyré, op. cit., pp. 55-68, 78-87.

13. Koyré, op. cit., pp. 76-78.

14. Sukhomlinov, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 86.

15. M. T. Florinsky, Russia. A History and an Interpretation (New York, 1960) vol. 2, p. 726.

16. Izbrannye sotsial'no-politicheskie i filosofskie proizvedeniya dekabristov (Moscow, 1951) [ISPFD], vol. 3, pp. 441-3.

17. ISPFD, vol. 3, pp. 407, 419, vol. 2, p. 554.

18. ISPFD, vol. 1, pp. 693, 709, vol. 2, p. 545, vol. 3, p. 422.

19. Shil'der, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 259-60.

20. See M. Raeff, Michael Speransky: Statesman of Imperial Russia 1772-1839 (The Hague, 1957).

21. ISPFD, vol. 1, pp. 694-5; Zapiski . . . I. D. Yakushkina, op. cit., p. 42.

22. ISPFD, vol. 2, p. 558.

23. N. M. Lebedev, Pestel'-Ideolog i rukovoditel' dekabristov (Moscow, 1972), pp. 65-6; ISPFD, vol. 1, pp. 703, 711; vol. 2, pp. 527, 531.

24. This is nowhere clearer than in Kryukov's philosophical notebooks, ISPFD, vol. 2, p. 402 ff.

25. ISPFD, vol. 1, pp. 237-76.

26. Ibid, vol. 3, p. 44.

27. ISPFD, vol. 2, p. 547; A. G. Mazour, The First Russian Revolution 1825, pp. 244-5.

28. Mazour, op. cit., p. 244.

29. R. Pipes, Russia under the Old Régime, (London, 1974), p. 184.

Section 2 Western Ideas

1. Shil'der, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 277.

2. H. Seton-Watson, The Russian Empire 1801-1917 (Oxford, 1967), pp. 73-83.

Notes to pp. 121-39

3. Shil'der, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 108-9.

4. For a long essay on Pnin, see V. Orlov, Russkie prosvetitely 1790-1800 godov (Moscow, 1953).

5. Shil'der, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 107-8; V. S. Ikonnikov, Graf N. S. Mordvinov. Istoricheskaya Monografiya (St. Petersburg, 1873), pp. 74-5.

6. Koyré, op. cit., pp. 9-10.

7. Vosstanie Dekabristov. Materialy (Moscow-Leningrad, 1925-75) [VDM], vol. 1, p. 8.

8. VDM, vol. 1, pp. 156, 226, 430, vol. 3, p. 8, vol. 4, p.91, vol. 5, p. 22, vol. 9, p. 49.

9. Lange, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 149.

10. On the relationships between the Wisdom-lovers and the Decembrists, see Koyré, op. cit., pp. 38-9; N. P. Pavlov-Sil'vansky, op. cit., pp. 245-7; G. I. Gabov, Obshchestvenno-politicheskie i filosofskie vzglyady dekabristov (Moscow, 1954), pp. 232-5.

11. ISPFD, vol. 1, p. 702.

12. See his letter to K. A. Okhotnikov, ISPFD, vol. 2, pp. 389-93.

13. Zapiski . . . I. D. Yakushkina, op. cit., p. 181-182.

14. It should be noted, though, that Voltaire referred to Newton as a follower of Democritus, Epicurus and Gassendi (Lange, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 267).

15. Zapiski...I. D. Yakushkina, op. cit., p. 9.

16. ISPFD, vol. 1, p. 371.

17. VDM, vol. 1, p. 156, vol. 3, p. 8.

18. ISPFD, vol. 1, p. 491.

19. For Ipsilanti's appeal to Alexander's religious sympathies in order to secure his support for the revolt against the Turkish authorities in 1820, see A. Palmer, Alexander I. Tsar of War and Peace (London, 1974), p. 377. For his masonic affiliations in Russia, see A. N. Pypin, Russkoe Masonstvo. XVIII i pervaya chetvert' XIX veka (Petrograd, 1916), pp. 387, 427.

20. Pipes, op. cit., pp. 188, 259.

21. See the discussion in M. V. Nechkina, Dvizhenie dekabristov (Moscow, 1955), vol. 2, pp. 323-4.

Notes to pp.139-59

22. A. I. Herzen, Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v 30 tomakh (Moscow, 1954-64), vol. 12, p. 300, vol. 8, p. 81.

23. I am indebted for this image to Professor A. G. N. Flew, in a lecture to undergraduates at the University of Keele.

24. ISPFD, vol. 2, p. 342. See also Fonvizin's memoirs (ibid, vol. 1, pp. 368-9), though these were admittedly written well after the insurrection.

Section 3 The Church and Religion

1. Shil'der, op. cit., vol. 4, p. 10-11. It was formed "in order that Christian virtue should always form the basis of a true education".

2. On the Bible Society and other religious movements mentioned in this section, see A. N. Pypin, Religioznye dvizheniya pri Alexandre I (Petrograd, 1916). See pp. 235-6 for objections to the translation of the Bible.

3. He wrote to the author of the report, Prince I. V. Vasil'chikov: "Vous savez que j'ai partagé et encouragé ces illusions et ces erreurs. Ce n'est pas à moi à sévir" (Shil'der, op. cit., vol. 4, p. 205).

4. See Pypin, op. cit., and for a large collection of correspondence relating to Alexander's relationship with Baroness von Krüdener, see F. Ley, Mme. de Krüdener et son Temps 1764-1824 (Paris, 1961)

5. V. V. Zen'kovsky, History of Russian Philosophy (London, 1953), vol. 1, p. 110.

6. Ibid., p. 112.

7. Ibid., p. 113.

8. See, for example, G. Fedotov, A Treasury of Russian Spirituality (New York, 1952).

9. A. N. Pypin, Russkoe masonstvo XVIII i pervaya chetvert' XIX v. (Petrograd, 1916), pp. 380-387.

10. Ibid., pp. 398-412.

11. Ibid., pp. 426-427; Zapiski . . . I. D. Yakushkina, op. cit., p. 20.

12. Pypin, op. cit., p. 526.

13. Pypin, op. cit., p. 458-61.

14. Pypin, op. cit., p. 468.

15. Ibid., p. 463.

16. Ibid., pp. 233-239.

Notes to pp.159-75

17. Ibid., p. 465.

18. Ibid., p. 467.

19. Zapiski . . . I. D. Yakushkina, op. cit., p. 24.

20. As is pointed out in Section 5, there is evidence to suggest that, if not freemasonry, the religious conversion of A. N. Murav'ev, and E. P. Obolensky's predilection for Kant and Schelling met with some considerable opposition within the Northern Society.

21. Zapiski . . . I. D. Yakushkina, op. cit., p. 44.

22. For Shishkov's part in opposing Golitsyn and the Bible Society, and Golitsyn's anathematisation by the archimandrite Photius, see A. N. Pypin, Religioznye dvizheniya pri Aleksandre I (St. Petersburg, 1916), p. 198 et seq.

23. T. G. Masaryk, The Spirit of Russia. Studies in History, Literature and Philosophy, (London, 1955, 2nd. edition), vol. 1, p. 94.

24. PSZRI, 1st series, vol. 33, p.279-80

25. Ibid.

26. The Works of Joseph de Maistre, trans. J. Lively (London, 1965).

27. ISPFD, vol. 1, p. 268. On the question of whether the secret societies were no more than an imitation of West European models, we read on the same page: "In education they should as much as possible avoid everything foreign, so that not even the smallest partiality for foreign things should dim the sacred feeling of love for the fatherland."

28. Ibid., p. 295.

29. Ibid., p. 301.

30. Ibid., vol. 2, p. 80.

31. Ibid., pp. 77-9.

32. Ibid., p. 101.

33. According to the memoirs of Baron V. I. Steinheil, Pestel' said to the Archpriest of Kazan' Cathedral, P. N. Myslovsky: "Though I am a Lutheran,Father, I am a Christian all the same; bless me too" (Obshchestvennyya dvizheniya v Rossii v pervuyu polovinu XIX veka (St. Petersburg, 1905), vol. 1, p. 461). Some doubt attaches to this recollection, since, as will be shown in Section 5, the Archpriest's own recollections give quite another impression.

34. ISPFD, vol. 2, pp. 93-4.

Notes to pp. 177-85

35. VDM, vol. 4, p. 91.

36. ISPFD, vol. 3, pp. 44, 45.

37. Ibid., p. 45.

38. Ibid., p. 49.

39. Ibid., p. 46.

40. Ibid., p. 44.

41. Ibid., p. 45.

42. I Samuel, 8 : 18.

43. I Samuel, 8 : 7

44. ISPFD, vol. 2, pp. 192-3.

45. Ibid., p. 192.

46. Ibid., p. 193.

47. Ibid., vol. 3, p. 46.

48. Ibid., p. 71.

49. Ibid., pp. 73-4.

50. Ibid., p. 23.

51. The "Orthodox Catechism" was itself probably based upon N. M. Murav'ev's "A Curious Conversation", which was also approved by Ryleev as a convenient means for influencing public opinion. Here is an example from it:

> "'How did liberty originate?'
>
> 'Every blessing is from God. Creating man in His own image, and deciding to make good an eternal gift, and evil an eternal torment - He granted liberty to man!'" (VDM, vol. 1, p. 321)

52. ISPFD, vol. 2, p. 259.

53. Ibid., pp. 508-510.

54. Ibid., pp. 503-506.

55. Ibid., vol. 1, p. 495.

56. Ibid., p. 538.

57. Ibid., p. 542.

Notes to pp. 186-206

58. *Ibid.*, pp. 538, 539.

59. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 98.

60. Herzen, *op. cit.*, vol. 7, p. 70.

61. *VDM*, vol. 4, p. 86.

62. *ISPFD*, vol. 2, p. 76.

63. *Ibid.*, pp. 87-92.

64. *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 21.

65. *Ibid.*, pp. 36-37.

66. *Zapiski . . . I. D. Yakushkina*, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

67. I am referring here to the attitudes expressed in Murav'ev's draft constitution, rather than to his personal convictions. See Mazour, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

68. *ISPFD*, vol. 2, p. 157.

69. *VDM*, vol. 7, p. 153.

70. *VDM*, vol. 7, p. 129. This quotation has not been included in *ISPFD*.

71. *VDM*, vol. 7, p. 148.

72. Mazour, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

73. This discussion, it should be remembered, is based upon the corporate pronouncements of the secret societies. As will be seen in Section 5, individual members of the Slavic Union and the Southern Society were hostile to religion.

Section 4 Political Opposition

1. *ISPFD*, vol. 1, p. 10.

2. Shchipanov uses figures from Zlotnikov's article '*Ot manufaktury k fabrike*', *Voprosy Istorii*, 1946, 11-12, pp. 36, 37, 39. See also M. I. Tugan-Baranovsky, *The Russian Factory in the 19th Century*, translated from the third edition of 1907, (Homewood, Illinois, 1970), pp. 68, 70, for the figures for all factories.

3. *ISPFD*, vol. 2, p. 19.

4. *Zapiski . . . I. D. Yakushkina*, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

5. *ISPFD*, vol. 1, pp. 492, 493.

6. *Zapiski . . . I. D. Yakushkina*, *op. cit.*, pp. 14-15.

Notes to pp.206-219

7. ISPFD, vol. 1, pp. 372, 373.

8. Ibid., p. 493.

9. PSZRI, vol. 6, pp. 311-12.

10. Tugan-Baranovsky, op. cit., p. 71; see also pp. 90, 98.

11. Ibid., p. 69.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid., p. 99.

14. ISPFD, vol. 1, pp. 493-494.

15. Ibid., p. 494.

16. There was, of course, a 'liberal' tariff in 1819-22 (Tugan-Baranovsky, op. cit., p. 228).

17. For Mordvinov's relationships with the Decembrists, especially Turgenev and Ryleev, see V. S. Innonikov, Graf. N. S. Mordvinov, op. cit., pp. 432-42

18. Tugan-Baranovsky, op. cit., pp. 218-9.

19. Ibid., p. 216.

20. Ibid., pp. 132-3.

21. ISPFD, vol. 1, p. 495.

22. Pipes, op. cit., p. 184

23. Ibid., p. 251.

24. Ibid., p. 253.

25. ISPFD, vol. 2, pp. 374, 364, 357.

26. Pipes, op. cit., p. 188.

27. Ibid., p. 186n.

28. Zapiski . . . I. D. Yakushkina, op. cit., p. 12.

29. ISPFD, vol. 1, p. 246.

30. For example, Bestuzhev's letter and Yakushkin's memoirs, ISPFD, vol. 1, p. 495, and Zapiski . . . I. D. Yakushkina, op. cit., p. 11.

31. Dnevniki i pis'ma Nikolaya Ivanovicha Turgeneva (St. Petersburg 1911-21), vol. 3, p. 134.

32. For example, Bestuzhev's letter, Raevsky's article on 'The Slavery of the Peasants', the testimony of N. M. Murav'ev and Prince Sergey

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Trubetskoy, ISPFD, vol. 1, p. 492, vol. 2, p. 364; VDM, vol. 1, pp. 9, 295.

33. See again Bestuzhev's letter, ISPFD, vol. 1, p. 491.

34. See the extract from Fonvizin's memoirs, *ibid.*, p. 370.

35. *Ibid.*, pp. 371-2.

36. Shil'der, *op. cit.*, vol. 4, p. 185; for the soldiers' proclamations during the revolt, see ISPFD, vol. 1, pp. 586-90.

37. Mazour, *op. cit.*, p. 274.

38. For a revision of the traditional view of the close link of the Greek liberation movement and the Church, see R. Clogg, 'Anti-clericalism in pre-independence Greece c.1750-1821', *The Orthodox Churches and the West* (Oxford, 1976), pp. 257-76.

39. Shil'der, *op. cit.*, vol. 4, p. 184.

40. It might seem odd to bracket these two in view of the latter's conniving role in Golitsyn's downfall, an event which, despite a reluctant Alexander, signals the affirmation of the bond of Russian throne and Orthodox altar, but it should be remembered that Magnitsky was an enthusiastic official of Golitsyn's Ministry, and set up a branch of the Bible Society when governor of Simbirsk.

41. ISPFD, vol. 1, p. 363-4.

Section 5 Indigenous Ideas

1. *Russkie prosvetitely* (*ot Radishcheva do dekabristov*), (Moscow, 1966), vol. 1, p. 36.

2. *Voprosy filosofii*, 1969, 5, pp. 163-4.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 164.

4. *Istoriya filosofii v SSSR* (Moscow, 1968), vol. 2, p. 145.

5. *Russkie prosvetitely*, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 37.

6. *Voprosy filosofii*, *op. cit.*, p. 164.

7. *Ibid.*, pp. 164-5.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 165.

9. *Istoriya filosofii v SSSR*, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

10. Z. A. Kamensky, *Filosofskie idei russkovo prosveshcheniya* (Moscow, 1971), p. 4.

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11. Ibid., pp. 189-90.

12. Ibid., p. 4; for an account of Pavlov's lectures in the 1830s, see Herzen, op. cit., vol. 9, pp. 16-17.

13. ISPFD, vol. 3, pp. 122-3. See p. 123 for the plan of Kireev and Borisov to seize the Belyaevs' translation of Gibbon.

14. Ibid., p. 121.

15. Ibid., pp. 121, 122.

16. Belyaev's memoirs were, of course, written after the publication in Russia of Darwin's Origin of Species.

17. Ibid., p. 122.

18. Ibid., p. 123. In fact, after Petr Borisov's death, his brother Andrey burned their house, and then hanged himself (Ibid., p. 418).

19. Zapiski . . . I. D. Yakushkina, op. cit., p. 111.

20. B. E. Syroechkovsky, 'K kharakteristike religioznovo vol'nodumstva dekabristov', Katorga i ssylka, 1929, 2, pp. 82, 83, 84.

21. See Nechkina, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 328-9.

22. Zapiski . . . I. D. Yakushkina, op. cit., p. 112.

23. Ibid.

24. ISPFD, vol. 3, pp. 20, 40, 47-48. It would be as well to mention here M. V. Nechkina's view that the anomymous memoirs attributed to Gorbachevsky were in fact written by Borisov himself (Nechkina, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 136-42).

25. Dnevniki, op. cit., vol. 3, p. 81.

26. Ibid., p. 220.

27. Ibid., p. 264.

28. Ibid., p. 134.

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid., pp. 108-9.

31. Ibid., p. 109.

32. Ibid.

33. Ibid., pp. 29-30.

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34. *Ibid.*, p. 134.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 188.

36. *Ibid.*

37. *Ibid.*, p. 97.

38. *Ibid.*, pp. 325-6.

39. A. S. Pushkin, *Sobranie Sochinenii* (Moscow, 1959-62), vol. 7, p. 304.

40. N. P. Ogarev, *Izbrannye sotsial'no-politicheskie i filosofskie proizvedeniya*, (Moscow, 1952-6), vol. 1, p. 788.

41. *ISPFD*, vol. 2, p. 502.

42. *Ibid.*, pp. 498-499.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 500.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 501.

45. Syroechkovsky, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

46. *Zapiski . . . I. D. Yakushkina*, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

47. *ISPFD*, vol. 1, p. 45.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 426.

49. Nechkina, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 166.

50. *ISPFD*, vol. 3, p. 443.

51. *Ibid.*, p. 218.

52. *Ibid.*

53. *Ibid.*, pp. 221, 222, 223.

54. *Ibid.*, pp. 217-218.

55. *Zapiski . . . I. D. Yakushkina*, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

56. *Ibid.*, p. 68.

57. *Ibid.*, p. 77.

58. Syroechkovsky, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

59. Mazour, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

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60. Zapiski . . . I. D. Yakushkina, op. cit., p. 180.

61. Ibid., pp. 180-1.

62. Ibid., pp. 181-2.

63. Ibid.

64. Ibid., p. 182. Shchipanov quite wrongly states that in calling pure reason a braggart, Yakushkin is opposing Kant (ISPFD, vol. 1, p. 67).

65. Ibid., p. 182.

66. Ibid., p. 186.

67. Ibid., p. 187.

68. Ibid., pp. 190-1.

69. Lange, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 366.

70. Zapiski . . . I. D. Yakushkina, op. cit., p. 192.

71. Ibid., p. 195.

72. Ibid., p. 196.

73. ISPFD, vol. 2, p. 446.

74. VDM, vol. 10, p. 302.

75. Ibid.

76. ISPFD, vol. 2, p. 439. This quotation comes from the Russian translation by M. V. Nechkina, which is not consistent with the original French version in VDM.

77. VDM, vol. 10, p. 304.

78. VDM, vol. 11, p. 372.

79. ISPFD, vol. 2, pp. 402, 404-10, 422.

80. Ibid., p. 410.

81. Ibid., p. 423.

82. Ibid., p. 414.

83. Ibid., p. 422.

84. Ibid., p. 341. A. S. Pushkin, who was on friendly terms with Raevsky in Kishinev, was particularly struck by some of these lines, especially Raevsky's description of the Romanov dynasty as "the bloody

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family of whips" (ibid., p. 548).

85. Ibid., p. 352.

86. Ibid., p. 353.

87. Ibid., p. 357.

88. Ibid., pp. 358, 359.

89. Ibid., p. 357.

90. Ibid., pp. 367-368.

91. Ibid., p. 376.

92. Ibid., p. 382. It should be mentioned that elsewhere in these papers are some notes on the life of Lucretius, including this summary: "No man has ever rejected Providence with such boldness as he; he spoke of God with contempt and audacity. In all his works he says that God does not concern himself or interfere with anything. In his verses are juxtaposed great beauty and significance." (Ibid., p. 384).

93. Ibid., vol. 1, p. 59.

94. Ibid., vol. 2, p. 392.

95. VDM, vol. 5, p. 192.

96. Ibid., p. 22.

97. Ibid., pp. 50, 52; Lange, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 167.

98. ISPFD, vol. 3, p. 78.

99. Ibid., p. 79.

100. Ibid., p. 80.

101. Ibid., p. 80.

102. Ibid., p. 82.

103. Pavlov-Sil'vansky, op. cit., p. 259.

104. ISPFD, vol. 3, pp. 77-78.

105. Ibid., pp. 75-76.

106. Syroechkovsky, op. cit., p. 86.

107. Ibid., p. 87.

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108. *Ibid.*, p. 88.

109. *ISPFD*, vol. 1, p. 45.

110. *Ibid.*, p. 51. The extract quoted by Shchipanov (M. V. Nechkina, *Obshchestvo soedinennykh slavyan*, (Moscow-Leningrad, 1927) p. 41) in itself implies no more than scepticism towards Christian tradition.

111. *ISPFD*, vol. 1, p. 669n.

112. *Ibid.*, p. 654.

113. *Ibid.*, pp. 656-657.

114. Pavlov-Sil'vansky, *op. cit.*, pp. 257-258.

115. *ISPFD*, vol. 1, pp. 561-562. G. I Gabov argued tendentiously that Ryleev had in mind the Orthodox Church, but confined his remarks to Catholicism in order to avoid censorship. *Obshchestvenno-politicheskie i filosofskie vzglyady dekabristov* (Moscow, 1954) [*Gabov 2*], p. 238.

116. *ISPFD*, vol, p. 289.

117. Koyré, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

118. 'Materializm v filosofskikh vzglyadakh dekabristov', *Voprosy filosofii*, 1950, 3, [*Gabov* 1], pp. 259-62.

119. *Gabov 1*, p. 262; *Gabov 2*, p. 278.

120. *Gabov 1*, pp. 262-3; *Gabov 2*, pp. 245-6, 248, 250.

121. *Gabov 2*, pp. 231, 234.

122. *Ibid.*, pp. 245, 247-9, 283-8.

123. *Gabov 2*, p. 237.

124. *Ibid.*, p. 250.

125. *Ibid.*, pp. 261-262.

126. *Ibid.*, p. 259.

127. *Ibid.*, pp. 250-251.

128. Pavlov-Sil'vansky, *op. cit.*, p. 284.

129. *Ibid.*, p. 273.

130. *Gabov 2*, p. 228n.

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131. Pavlov-Sil'vansky, op. cit., p. 247.

132. See G. Barratt, M. S. Lunin: Catholic Decembrist (The Hague, 1976).

133. VDM, vol. 3, pp. 23-4.

134. Pavlov-Sil'vansky, op. cit., p. 259.

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