

LEV SHTERNBERG

Anthropologist, Russian Socialist, Jewish Activist

— **SERGEI KAN** —

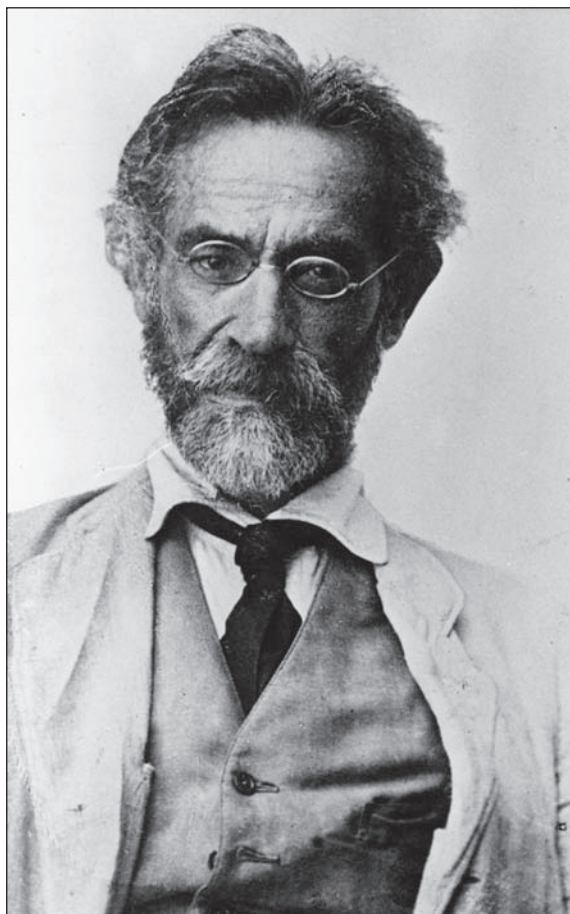
Lev Shternberg

Critical Studies in the History of Anthropology

Series Editors

Regna Darnell

Stephen O. Murray



LEV SHTERNBERG

Anthropologist, Russian Socialist, Jewish Activist

— **SERGEI KAN** —

UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA PRESS | LINCOLN AND LONDON

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Portions of this book previously appeared in: "Evolutionism and Historical Particularism at the St. Petersburg Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography," *Museum Anthropology* 31.1 (2008): 1–19; "The Mystery of the Missing Monograph; or Why Shternberg's 'The Social Organization of the Gilyak' Never Appeared among the Jesup Expedition Publications," *European Review of Native American Studies* 14.2 (2000): 19–38; and "The 'Russian Bastian' and Boas; or Why Shternberg's 'The Social Organization of the Gilyak' Never Appeared among the Jesup Expedition Publications," pp. 217–48, in *Gateways: Exploring the Legacy of the Jesup North Pacific Expedition, 1897–1902*, ed. William K. Fitzhugh and Igor Krupnik (Washington DC: Arctic Studies Center, Smithsonian Institution, 2001).

Manufactured in the United States of America



Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Kan, Sergei.

Lev Shternberg : anthropologist, Russian socialist, Jewish activist / Sergei Kan.

p. cm. — (Critical studies in the history of anthropology)
Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-8032-1603-7 (cloth : alk. paper)

I. Shternberg, Lev Iakovlevich, 1861–1927. 2. Anthropologists—Russia—Biography. I. Title.

GN21.S5K36 2009

301.092—dc22

[B]

2008049065

Set in Quadraat by Kim Essman.

Designed by Ray Boeche.

Jacket and title page: Photograph of Lev Shternberg taken in Leningrad in 1924 for his foreign travel documents. St. Petersburg Branch of the Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences, 282/1/194:22.

In Memory of
Yuli Moiseevich Glazman (1911–2001)
Joseph Ostashevsky (1945–2003)
Mikhail Fainshtein (1948–2003)
genuine representatives
of the Russian-Jewish intelligentsia

Each person's life should be like a work of literature, regardless of whether it has been completed or not. Hence, it can break off at any moment but still represent a story that is instructive, beautiful, and rich in content.

From a letter by Lev Shternberg to Ivan Iuvachev

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Series Editors' Introduction

REGNA DARNELL AND STEPHEN O. MURRAY

Because it is based in North America, Critical Studies in the History of Anthropology faces severe risks of inadvertent ethnocentrism in presenting an international view of the anthropological sciences. Sergei Kan offers a biographical account of the career of Lev Shternberg, the late tsarist and early Soviet anthropologist. He elucidates the Russian ethnographic tradition while simultaneously framing Shternberg as a socialist and Jewish activist, roles that greatly complicated his personal life but remain inseparable from his anthropology. Kan is possibly the only scholar who could weave together this story. He is Jewish, Russian-born, well-informed on Russian politics and history, and a North Pacific ethnographer (of the North American side). Kan has collaborated extensively with Russian scholars and institutions to assemble the documentation of this extraordinary figure, who links the study of Siberian indigenous groups by a generation of exiles to Siberia (including Vladimir Bogoraz, and Vladimir Iokhel'son) to Franz Boas's Jesup North Pacific Expedition.

Shternberg was best known to western anthropologists for a 1925 evolutionist-comparativist paper on "Divine Election in Primitive People" delivered at the Twenty-first International Congress of Americanists. From the mid-1930s to the mid-1980s, Western scholars had limited access to work within this tradition, which was central at Leningrad State University (the once and future St. Petersburg). Kan recovers both the substance and the context of a largely eclipsed professional memory of Shternberg and the Leningrad school.

Kan is particularly effective in setting out how anthropology and its

practitioners were perceived at various times during Shternberg's career. He sketches an overview of his contemporaries, of whom few are known at all—let alone well—in the West.

Shternberg fought for the survival of his discipline, often very effectively, at a time when the study of indigenous minorities moved from museums to Soviet-era universities, and also maintained strong ties to colleagues outside Russia and the Soviet Union. He was an organizational as well as an intellectual leader.

Kan's biography is very much a "life-and-times" book that includes the "biographies" of institutions with which Shternberg was associated and describes the politics of non-Bolshevik, democratic socialists. Shternberg had extensive connections with anthropologists elsewhere, and Kan does an excellent job of explaining the multiple contexts—national anthropological, international anthropological, political, and Jewish—in which Shternberg operated.

Many of the dissident socialists during the tumultuous regimes of the early twentieth century were Jews like Shternberg who maintained a scholarly as well as personal interest in the Jewish intellectual and ritual tradition. He attempted to protect colleagues and protégés from the vicissitudes of national and international politics and was also a central figure in the study of the culture of Russian Jews, work that had a brief florescence during the first Soviet decade and the last decade of Shternberg's life.

This volume offers a fascinating portrait of how professionalization occurred in a location outside the Anglo-American and French traditions. While much anthropological work was accomplished outside these central places, this is not always obvious from previous histories of anthropology. Kan's portrait invites comparison. As in North America, the nascent anthropology of Russia (generally labeled "ethnography") dealt primarily with small indigenous groups encapsulated within the nation-state and blocked from assimilation (to varying degrees at different times) by their geographical and cultural isolation. Political exiles, often already public intellectuals, were responsible for many of the initial professional-quality studies of the "small peoples of the north" and gave the Russian national tradition some of its particular character. Shternberg's own work dealt with the Gilyak, now known as the Nivkh, and other groups of far eastern Siberia (the Amur River delta) and Sakhalin Island, including the Ainu.

Acknowledgments

Many individuals deserve my most sincere words of gratitude for their help and encouragement. First and foremost are my University of Chicago mentors Raymond D. Fogelson and George W. Stocking. It was in Stocking's seminar thirty years ago that I first began exploring the life and scholarly legacy of Lev Shternberg. A special *spasibo* (thank you) goes to my colleague and friend Igor Krupnik, who has strongly supported my plan to undertake this project, kept abreast of it from start to finish, and given me endless assistance and advice. In fact, my work on this project began in earnest in the early 1990s, when Krupnik and William Fitzhugh initiated the "Jesup-2" project. Another impetus for this book was Bruce Grant's publication in 1999 of Shternberg's English-language manuscript "The Social Organization of the Gilyak" (see Kan 2000, 2001). Finally, my own research was paralleled and further stimulated by the work of Vladislav Latyshev, Tat'iana Roon, and other staff members of the Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk Regional Museum toward publishing the legacy of Lev Shternberg, Bronislaw Pilsudski, and other ethnologists of their era (Roon and Prokof'ev 2003; Latyshev 2005).

Other colleagues who have read and commented on the various sections of this manuscript or papers based on it include Matti Bunzl, Regna Darnell, Christian Feest, William Fitzhugh, Harvey Goldberg, Sergey Glebov, Simon Rabinowitch, Petra Rethman, George W. Stocking, Nikolai Vakhtin, Jeffrey Vedlinger, Deborah Yalen, and Andrei Znamenski.

The archival research this project is based on would not have been possible without the help and advice of the late Mikhail Fainshtein, associate director

of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences. He helped me not only review and duplicate an enormous number of documents from that archive but also locate additional pertinent materials from several other documentary depositories in St. Petersburg. In addition he offered insightful interpretations of several key events described in this book. Misha's untimely death in 2003 has been a terrible loss not only to his family and friends but also to many of the scholars who have done archival research in his city. Special thanks are also due to the entire staff of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences, who helped me during my two visits to their institution. More recently, my tireless and highly professional research assistant Ludmila Kovalchuk, from St. Petersburg, has combed several additional archives in that city. Her efforts and insight helped uncover important new facts that pertain to the history of ethnological education in Leningrad and Shternberg's role in it.

Many Russian, Ukrainian, Israeli, and American colleagues also helped me procure additional documents, photographs, and publications for this project. They are Rafail Sholomovich Ganelin, Bruce Grant, Viktor Efimovich Kel'ner, Simon Kogan, Vladislav Latyshev, Christer Lindberg, Benjamin Lukin, Efim Melamed, Simon Rabinovich, Aleksandr Mikhailovich Reshetov, Tat'iana Roon, Irina Sergeeva, Vivian Spoliansky, Nikolai Vakhtin, and Deborah Yalen. Special thanks go to my father, Aleksandr S. Kan, and my friend Betty Lauer for translating materials from German, Polish, and Swedish. In St. Petersburg I enjoyed the kind hospitality of Larisa and Viktor Novikov and Anna and Nikita Maslennikov. My colleagues at Dartmouth, especially Colin Calloway, Kirk Endicott, Kenneth Korey, and Robert Welsch, offered encouragement during my long journey to the finish line.

Over the years, several granting agencies helped cover the costs of this project. They include the National Endowment for the Humanities, the American Council of Learned Societies, the International Research and Exchanges Board, the Nelson A. Rockefeller Center at Dartmouth College, and the Claire Garber Goodman Fund of Dartmouth's Department of Anthropology. I would also like to thank my copyeditor, Christopher Steinke, for very careful and thoughtful work on this manuscript.

Last, but not least, a special word of deep gratitude goes to my entire family for its unwavering support and love.

Introduction

I am often asked why, after two decades of researching and publishing on the culture and history of the Tlingit people of Alaska, I decided to write an intellectual biography of a Russian ethnologist who lived a century ago. There are several answers to this question. To begin with, ever since I took a graduate course at the University of Chicago on the history of Anglo-American anthropology with George W. Stocking and wrote a paper on Lev Shternberg's scholarly legacy, I have been interested in the history of my discipline. In fact, several of my articles and edited volumes deal with various topics from the history of North American and Russian anthropology (Kamenskii 1985; Kan 1990, 2000, 2001a, 2001b, 2003, 2004a, 2006; Kan and Strong 2006). More importantly, as a Russian-speaking, American-trained anthropologist, I have always wanted to bring the fascinating and often tragic history of Russian-Soviet anthropology to an English-speaking audience. As Darnell and Gleach recently pointed out, "While the number of books and articles on the history of anthropology has increased significantly in the last decade, most of them continue to deal with the central place models" involving the development of anthropology at central locations in the United States and Great Britain (Columbia University, Washington DC, London), and to a lesser extent in France and Germany (Paris and Berlin) (2005:vii–viii). I fully agree with these authors that such an approach is indeed a major shortcoming, since the history of anthropology should encompass a "diversity of practitioners; diversity of national, theoretical, and methodological traditions; diversity of subdisciplines and ways to merge and cross them" (Darnell and Gleach 2005:vii–viii).

One national tradition that has so far remained largely outside the scope of Western academic research is the Russian one. The language barrier is only one reason for this omission. Equally important is the intellectual gap that existed between Russian and Western anthropology from the early 1930s to the mid-1980s. Western anthropologists knew little about the work of their colleagues in the USSR, while the latter had to study the history of their own discipline mainly within the ideological constraints of Soviet Marxism and Russian nationalism (see Tokarev 1966; Gellner 1979; Koester and Kan 1982). In addition, access to many of the major archives had been closed or restricted for foreign and even domestic researchers for decades. During the perestroika and the current post-Soviet periods, however, a number of works on the history of Russian anthropology have appeared in English. Written by both Russian and Western scholars, they tend to concentrate on the Stalinist and post-Stalinist eras and largely ignore the prerevolutionary Russian and early Soviet periods, when the foundation for much of twentieth-century Russian anthropology was laid (Gellner 1988; Slezkine 1991; Tishkov 1992; Tishkov and Tumarkin 2004).

Moreover, even in the post-Soviet era, significant differences between Russian and Western approaches to the history of Russian cultural anthropology (“ethnography”) remain.¹ Western scholars working in this field are mainly historians who examine their subject within a larger context of Russian political, social, and intellectual history (Slezkine 1991, 1992; Clay 1995; Knight 2000; Geraci 2000, 2001; Hirsch 2005). Most of the new Russian works in this area are by anthropologists. With surprisingly few exceptions, these studies have not critically examined the scholarly legacy of Russian-Soviet anthropologists. Much of the current Russian work on the subject remains purely descriptive and follows the Soviet hagiographical tradition, despite the removal of ideological pressure on the work.² Many of the publications on the history of Soviet ethnology are written by scholars who matured during the Soviet era and tend to be reluctant to criticize their former teachers and colleagues (for example, Kozlov 2003; Tishkov and Tumarkin 2004). Particularly disappointing is the fact that two more recent collections of essays on the lives of Soviet ethnologists who were persecuted by Soviet authorities include several works about scholars who had played a significant role in destroying their colleagues’ careers and even lives prior to their own arrests (Tumarkin 1999, 2003; cf. Knight 2000). Finally, there is not a single monograph on the history of late imperial Russian or early Soviet ethnology.³

In addition to the scarcity of substantial works on the history of Russian anthropology, there are no book-length biographies of Russian or Soviet ethnologists except for Nikolai Miklukho-Maklai (1846–1888). An early explorer of New Guinea and a controversial amateur ethnographer, he has long had an iconic status in Russian scholarship.⁴ As a result, none of his Russian biographers have attempted to examine critically his life and works (see, for example, Putilov 1985).

This is indeed a major shortcoming, since “biography holds a particular place in the critical history of anthropology” (Darnell and Murray 2004:xi). Of course, this observation is true of the history of any discipline. However, anthropology is distinct in its “long-standing professional concern with the impact of culture on personality” (Darnell and Murray 2004:xi). As Hallowell argued four decades ago, the history of anthropology is, in a sense, an anthropological problem (1965). By closely examining a particular scholar’s life, a historian of anthropology can demonstrate the relationship between his or her ethnographic practice and ethnological theory, on the one hand, and his or her personal background, political views, and larger worldview, on the other. This observation applies particularly to those who did not limit their activities to academic pursuits and might be described as public intellectuals. Among an increasing number of biographical works on Western anthropologists, several deal precisely with such scholars. They include George W. Stocking’s essays on the life and work of Franz Boas, Sol Tax, and Irving Hallowell (Stocking 1992, 2000, 2004) and book-length biographies of Alice Fletcher, Ruth Landes, Melville Herskovits, Leslie White, Jaime de Angulo, and Marcel Mauss (Mark 1988; Cole 2003; Gershenhorn 2004; Peace 2004; Leeds-Hurwitz 2004; Fournier 2006). As Stocking wrote about Boas, “From the time of his entry into science in Bismarckian Germany until his death in the midst of a military struggle against German Nazism, the anthropology of Franz Boas evolved in a political milieu, and during much of that time he sought to use it to modify that milieu. Consideration of the reciprocal relation of science and society in his work may help to ground our understanding of Boas in particular historical contexts” (1992:94). Even more politically engaged than Boas was the father of French ethnology, Marcel Mauss. As his biographer pointed out, Mauss had been actively involved in politics since his university days and was a member of various socialist organizations and parties throughout his life (Fournier 2006:4). His influential essay “The Gift” (Mauss 1967) “attests not only to the research

concerns of a specialist in the history of religion and in ethnology but also to the sensibility of a politically engaged intellectual. A sociologist, ethnologist, and Jewish militant committed to socialism, Mauss felt the ambivalence specific to his position and his milieu” (Fournier 2006:4).

Taking my cue from these scholars, I explore the life and work of Lev Iakovlevich Shternberg (1861–1927), a leading figure of late imperial Russian and early Soviet anthropology. Like several other Russian Narodniks, or Populists, who in the late nineteenth century were arrested for their revolutionary activities and exiled to Siberia, Shternberg conducted ethnographic research among the indigenous people in whose midst he had been forced to reside. Unlike the work of most of these ethnographers, however, his own ethnology was theory-driven rather than merely descriptive. Upon returning from exile in the late 1890s, Shternberg obtained a curatorial position at the St. Petersburg Museum of Anthropology and Ethnology (MAE), where he remained for the rest of his life. During the last two decades of the tsarist regime he not only played a key role in modernizing this museum but also devoted much of his time and energy to disseminating ethnological knowledge in his country by means of academic publications, encyclopedia articles, and (largely) informal teaching. In the post-1917 era he finally received a full-time appointment at an institution of higher education and became (along with his friend, colleague, and fellow Populist Vladimir Bogoraz) the founder of the so-called Leningrad school of Soviet ethnography, training an entire generation of field researchers.

Besides all these activities, Lev Iakovlevich became deeply involved in left-wing journalism and progressive Jewish activism. In fact, one cannot fully understand his scholarship without examining his Populist ideology and strongly philo-Semitic views. These two commitments not only heavily influenced his views but also contradicted and undermined them. His Populist admiration for the social organization of precapitalist societies and his firm belief in the uniqueness of Judaism as a system of moral philosophy clashed with his classic nineteenth-century evolutionism.

Because of Shternberg’s central role in the development of late imperial and especially early Soviet cultural anthropology, his life also serves as a window on an important period of his discipline’s history in a country experiencing some of the most radical upheavals and transformations in modern Europe. Some of the key issues considered in this study are the Russian political exiles-

turned-ethnographers' "independent discovery" of fieldwork two decades prior to Bronislaw Malinowski, the historical reasons for evolutionism's much longer survival in Russia than in the West, the various causes of the relative underdevelopment of prerevolutionary Russian ethnology, and Soviet ethnography's rapid rise in the 1920s and dramatic decline in the 1930s.

Despite Shternberg's importance in the history of Russian-Soviet anthropology, there exists no adequate study of either his scholarly work or his life in general. After a series of articles were published between the late 1920s and the mid-1930s in the wake of his death, there was a long hiatus until the 1970s, when two articles on Shternberg's contribution to museum work and Soviet anthropological education appeared (Staniukovich 1971; Gagen-Torn 1971). His former student and admirer Nina Gagen-Torn wrote one of these articles and later produced a biography of her mentor (1975). Despite its great value as a rich source of biographical information, her book has its flaws. Writing during the Brezhnev era, Gagen-Torn avoided a discussion of many of Shternberg's "ideologically incorrect" ideas and activities; moreover, she wrote the book as fictionalized history, inventing monologues and conversations (see chapter 9). During the 1980s, a period of intellectual and political liberalization, only one new article on the founder of Soviet ethnology appeared in Russia (Staniukovich 1986).

When post-Soviet Russia finally opened up to Western anthropologists, a young American scholar, Bruce Grant, was able to conduct ethnographic research on Sakhalin Island, Shternberg's old stomping ground. Throughout the 1990s Grant published several articles and a book in which he discussed Shternberg's field research and theoretical ideas (1993, 1995, 1997). Grant was the first to subject the Russian scholar's evolutionism to a thoughtful and very critical examination. In 1999 he published an annotated edition of Lev Iakovlevich's manuscript on the Gilyak (Nivkh) social organization, which had been commissioned by Franz Boas for his Jesup Expedition Series but never saw the light of day (Shternberg 1999; Kan 2000, 2001a). Grant's introduction and commentary to this work contain valuable biographical facts.⁵ In addition to using Shternberg's published works, Grant researched some of his manuscripts located at the St. Petersburg Branch of the Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences. However, Grant's neglect of some key aspects of Russian and Soviet political and intellectual history as well as the fact that he had trouble

deciphering Shternberg's difficult handwriting resulted in a number of factual errors and inaccuracies creeping into his account and analysis of the Russian ethnologist's life and scholarly contribution.

Only after my own work on Shternberg's life and work appeared in the early 2000s were his political sympathies and activities, and his contribution to the development of an ethnological study of Jews in Russia, finally discussed in detail in several American and Russian publications (Kan 2000, 2001a, 2003, 2004a, 2004b, 2006, 2007; Sirina and Roon 2004).⁶ My research for this book draws on Shternberg's entire corpus of published works as well as a thorough investigation of his letters, diaries, and manuscripts located in several archives in St. Petersburg and the United States. In addition, my work utilizes selected manuscripts from the Bogoraz collection located in the St. Petersburg Branch of the Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences as well as the archives of the three institutions with which Shternberg was affiliated for his entire professional life: the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnology, the Geography Institute, and the Geography Faculty of the Leningrad State University. Moreover, I incorporate data from unpublished materials found in several other St. Petersburg archives: the St. Petersburg Branch of the Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences (SPFA RAN); the Central State Archive of the Historical-Political Documents of St. Petersburg (TSGAIPDSP); the Central State Archive on the History of Political Movements, St. Petersburg (TSGIASP); and several others. (All the translations of archival documents cited in this book are my own). The work on this biography also involved a great deal of reading on the history of the revolutionary and liberal political parties of pre-1917 Russia, Soviet political history, and the history of the Jewish liberation movement in Russia. Finally, because of my subject's extensive collegiate ties with Western anthropologists and my wish to examine his own work in the context of the history of anthropology as a whole, I also draw upon some archival materials dealing with the history of American, French, and Swedish ethnology.

Lev Shternberg

I. The Early Years

Born Khaim Leib Shternberg on April 21 (May 4, new style), 1861, Lev Iakovlevich grew up in Zhitomir, the capital of the Volyn' Province (*guberniia*) in central Ukraine.¹ One of the oldest towns in the region, Zhitomir was first part of the Kingdom of Lithuania and later Poland. By the time it was incorporated into the Russian Empire in 1778, its Jewish population was quite large, and it was well known as a major center of the Hassidic movement. In 1861 it had over 13,000 Jews out of a total population of 40,500, while thirty years later Jews accounted for 24,000 of its 70,000 inhabitants. The Russian government regarded the city as the central point of Jewish life and learning in southwestern Russia. In the mid-nineteenth century only Zhitomir and Vilno (Vilnius)—another major center of Jewish life and learning—were allowed to have a Hebrew printing press. Zhitomir also had one of the few rabbinical schools in the country. Despite its relatively large population, Zhitomir of the 1860s–1970s remained a very provincial town: the nearest railroad station was fifty-five kilometers away.

Khaim-Lev, as Shternberg was called, was the oldest son of Iankel Moishe (Iakov Moiseevich) Shternberg (1831–circa 1910), a local businessman whose fortunes rose and fell over the years. Iakov Shternberg was not a typical mid-nineteenth-century provincial Russian Jew. During the reign of Tsar Nicholas I, when the government attempted to speed up Jewish assimilation by encouraging the Jews to practice agriculture, he was among the first to try farming. Although he did not remain a farmer for long, he did retain a strong affection toward nature and animals, which he tried to impress upon his children. Because of these sentiments Iakov Shternberg eventually moved from Zhitomir's



1. Lev Shternberg and his family, ca. 1872–73: (top row left to right) Lev, Lev's father with brother Aron, Lev's sister, Shprintsa, Lev's mother; (front) Lev's brothers Savelii and David. Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 280/1/194:21.

Jewish ghetto to a better neighborhood, one where he could build a nice small house and have a vegetable garden and an orchard (on a plot of land he would lease from the Jewish community). Every summer he rented a cottage outside the city where his children could enjoy swimming, boating, and hiking. His son Lev, who was always fond of swimming and long walks, shared his father's love of the outdoors with a passion.

Other characteristics distinguished Iakov Shternberg from most of the local Jews. He appears to have had a better command of Russian than many of his neighbors, even though his first language was definitely Yiddish. He was also more open-minded than many of them when it came to educating his children; once his sons had finished their traditional Jewish education in the religious school (*kheder*), he enrolled them in the local Russian gymnasium. At

the same time, he was a respected member of the local Jewish community who not only attended synagogue services but also offered financial support to it and other charitable organizations, such as the local hospital (where he also served as a trustee). At Sabbath and holiday meals there were usually several people at the Shternbergs' dining table whom Lev's father had brought home from the street. His children inherited his compassion for the less fortunate and concern for helping the poor. One time when Lev was only six, his mother saw him in tears and asked him why he was crying. The boy replied that he felt sorry for the family's servant for having to carry a heavy burden on her back (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/140:301).

Lev's mother (?–1905) was much more pious and traditional in her outlook. The only existing picture of the Shternberg family shows Yenta Vol'fovna wearing a wig prescribed for observant Jewish women. Unlike her husband, she could only speak Yiddish; in fact she learned to write only in her later years so she could communicate with her imprisoned oldest son. Impressed with how good a *kheder* student he was, she dreamed of his becoming a rabbi and religious scholar. If Iakov Shternberg had shared her views, Lev could have fulfilled her dreams. Having started his classes at the age of five, he spent long hours in the *kheder*, where he excelled in Hebrew, Bible, Talmud, and other subjects. Many years later he drew on this treasure house of knowledge while working on his lectures and essays dealing with the history of religion.

Besides acquiring a solid education in Judaism, the young boy was deeply affected by the stories he heard from his teachers about the suffering endured over the centuries by the Jews as a whole and those of Zhitomir in particular. He was especially moved by the accounts of the slaughter of innocent local Jews by eighteenth-century Ukrainian peasant rebels. The victims' mass grave, located next door to Lev's school and synagogue, fascinated and moved him (see Shternberg 1913a). According to his best friend, Moisei Krol' (1863–1943) (1929:215), the young Shternberg imagined himself a heroic savior of the Jewish people, a new Bar Kokhba or Judah the Maccabee. Shternberg's special sensitivity to all forms of injustice and senseless violence was also greatly influenced by the biblical prophets who forever remained his heroes. According to his own reminiscences (cited in his wife's memoir), when one of his teachers told him about the number of French soldiers killed by Prussian troops in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, the nine-year-old boy exclaimed indignantly,



2. Lev as a gymnasium student, mid-1870s. Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 280/1/194:1.

“I don’t understand these Germans! Haven’t they read the Bible and haven’t they thought about the need to beat swords into plowshares!” The teacher’s reply—that this famous pronouncement by Isaiah would not be fulfilled until the coming of the Messiah—did not satisfy him: the boy became convinced it was his duty to do something about such cruelties (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/4/9:105–106). Krol remembered Lev as a shy teenager with soft brown eyes and an energetic gait who was very fond of adventure books by Jules Verne, James Fenimore Cooper, and Thomas Mayne Reid (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/4/9:105–106).

The Shternberg house was located on Starovinnitskaia Street, which happened to be a place where a number of prominent future progressive leaders and writers grew up. With the exception of the great Russian novelist, progressive journalist, and public figure Vladimir Korolenko (1853–1921), they were all Jews.² As Shternberg reminisced years later,

All the residents and frequent visitors to this street knew each other, spent a good deal of time together, and influenced each other. All

of them were drawn, on the one hand, to revolutionary ideas, and on the other, to Jewish emotions. Their gatherings became especially lively during the summer months, when university students came back for vacation and when all the young people, regardless of age, organized their outings in the scenic environs of Zhitomir on the banks of the Teterev River. There they noisily discussed the burning questions of the day. (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/4/9:105–106)

In 1872 Lev's father enrolled him in the local rabbinical school. One of only two such schools in the Russian Empire, it combined instruction in Judaica with secular subjects taught in Russian (see Melamed 2001). A year later, after the school was closed, Lev was transferred to a local gymnasium. All four of his brothers followed in his footsteps.³ In the gymnasium he discovered a whole new world of secular learning, including current western European as well as Russian literature, with its heavy emphasis on social justice and the intelligentsia's duty to serve the masses.⁴ For a time Shternberg was absorbed by the work of Heinrich Heine. He was especially fond of the great poet's articles and poems on Jewish subjects. In the upper grades he began reading Western philosophers and social scientists like Darwin as well as left-leaning Russian literary critics such as Vissarion Belinsky, Dmitrii Pisarev, and Nikolai Dobroliubov, who first introduced him to progressive ideas and encouraged him to view Russia's political and socioeconomic system critically. In the late 1870s forbidden works by foreign and domestic radicals, including Marx, occupied his attention.

During this period, young Russian revolutionaries known as the Populists (*Narodniks*) began "going to the people"—settling among and trying to educate and radicalize peasants. Even such a provincial town as Zhitomir had its share of such propagandists, including several students in the upper grades of Shternberg's own gymnasium who were eventually expelled or even arrested (Krol' 1929:221–222). By the time Lev Shternberg finished high school, he had already become a committed *Narodnik*.

Populism (*Narodnichestvo*) was a uniquely Russian version of mid-to late-nineteenth-century utopian socialism. The Populists believed that social transformation in Russia did not have to follow the western European model of a rapid development of industrial capitalism and democratic bourgeois revolutions

but would depend on the peasantry (*narod*, or the people), and that a modern socialist society could be constructed on the basis of the peasants' traditional communal social institution, the *mir*. The Narodniks hoped that Russia could make a transition directly from "feudalism" to socialism, skipping over capitalism and all of its socioeconomic problems and injustices. The movement was composed mainly of professional people, students, and intellectuals from nongentry classes (*raznochintsy*). In the 1870s most populists moved from theorizing to political action. When their campaign of trying to incite rebellion among the peasants by mingling with them failed, many of the Populists turned to terrorism as a more immediate and effective way to undermine the regime and stimulate radical social change. Inspired by several leading Populist intellectuals, the young revolutionaries became convinced that it was the intelligentsia's duty to repay its "debt" to the "people" by overthrowing the tsarist government and establishing a democratic republic "of the people." By the late 1870s the differences between the minority of the Populists who still believed in using propaganda among the working people in order to create a broad-based revolutionary movement and the majority who advocated using terror as the main method of undermining and eventually bringing down the regime became so sharp that the main populist group, Land and Freedom (*Zemlia i Volia*), split into two. The more radical faction, People's Will (*Narodnaia Volia*), became a centralized conspiratorial organization that produced underground publications and carried out several successful assassinations of top government officials. The assassination of Tsar Alexander II in St. Petersburg on March 1, 1881, was the most famous terrorist act of the People's Will, yet it also marked the beginning of the group's demise, leading to massive arrests of its leaders and rank-and-file members.

Lev Shternberg and his friend Moisei Krol' were not the only Jewish high school students in Zhitomir who became attracted to Populism. Between the 1870s and 1880s a significant number of young Russian Jews not only became fascinated with secular learning and non-Jewish "high" culture but also were drawn into various underground revolutionary activities. In fact, as a number of this movement's participants as well as historians have argued, their own formative influences, which included messianism and a peculiar "Jewish socialism" of the biblical prophets, created fertile soil for both socialist theorizing and revolutionary action (Haberer 1995).

For Shternberg this action began with becoming a teacher, a vocation he remained deeply committed to for the rest of his life. In the late 1870s a significant number of poor Jews from the outlying villages and small towns began arriving in Zhitomir in search of secular education and “new ideas.” Most of them, however, could not get into the local Russian high schools because of a lack of money and the Jewish quota system. Shternberg and several of his friends found cheap housing for these young people and began instructing them in the Russian language, mathematics, and various other secular subjects. The next step in his revolutionary career was the procurement and distribution of illegal Populist literature among these students and other local young people, most of them Jews. It is worth noting that despite their revolutionary zeal, Shternberg and Krol’ refused to get involved in an armed robbery plot (euphemistically called “revolutionary expropriation”) concocted by visiting Populists from the nearby city of Kiev (Krol’ 1929:222–223). The ethical standards of the two radicals remained forever very high. By the summer of 1881, when he graduated from the gymnasium, Shternberg had not only read many of the key works by the Western and Russian liberal and socialist thinkers (from Adam Smith and Ferdinand Lassalle to Karl Marx and Nikolai Chernyshevskii) but had fully embraced the platform of the People’s Will, including its use of terrorism.

University Studies and Revolutionary Activities

A very bright student, Shternberg chose to attend St. Petersburg University, the leading institution of higher education in the country. Despite being particularly interested in the social sciences, he opted for the Physical-Mathematical Faculty to strengthen his knowledge of the natural sciences. His professors included many of the country’s leading mathematicians, physicists, chemists, and biologists. Their lectures and the books they assigned emphasized materialism, positivism, and Darwinian evolution. At the same time Shternberg continued his independent studies in philosophy, history, and political economy.

Despite long hours spent on his studies, Shternberg devoted even more time to various clandestine revolutionary activities (see Shternberg 1925a, 1925b; Krol’ 1929, 1944:22–46). His friend Krol’, who had enrolled in the same faculty a year earlier, quickly introduced him to the main radical student organization, the Central Circle of the People’s Will. For several years this group had maintained

close contact with the Executive Committee of the People's Will and carried out its assignments aimed at radicalizing the students and recruiting them for revolutionary struggle. Among the party's assignments for its student affiliates was an open opposition to the new "university rules," introduced in 1879 in order to curtail many of the privileges granted to the universities in 1863. Another one was revolutionary propaganda among the city's industrial workers. While Krol' had had a chance to interact with some of the famous top leaders of the People's Will, by the fall of 1881, when Shternberg arrived in the capital, the Populist Party was in disarray following the assassination of the tsar and the arrest of most of the members in its central committee.

One of the biggest challenges for the radical student leaders like Krol' and Shternberg was to save their circle from destruction during this period of intensified police surveillance and entrapment by *agents provocateurs*. To accomplish this, Shternberg, who within a year became well known among the revolutionary students for his enormous energy and organizational skills, tried to discourage circle members from taking part in student demonstrations. One such demonstration occurred in November 1882, when radical and conservative students clashed angrily over the issue of whether to accept financial assistance from one of the city's millionaires. During a rally held on November 9, Shternberg managed to convince the radicals to cancel a planned large-scale demonstration, arguing that such an action would lead to wide-spread arrests and expulsions and thereby undermine the already weakened revolutionary movement. When the students tried to leave the university building, however, the police prevented them from doing so unless they gave the officers their names and addresses. Angered by this apparently illegal demand, Shternberg changed his mind and was one of the first to encourage the students to resist it. After hours of waiting in a standoff, some of the weaker students began to capitulate, but about two hundred of them remained defiant. Shternberg not only stayed with his comrades; he even tried to cheer them up with his jokes and words of encouragement. Krol', who participated in the rally, later recalled how amazingly composed and upbeat his friend was (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/4/9:114). By nightfall the defiant students were arrested, and after a ten-day incarceration they were expelled from the university. Shternberg and Krol', along with the other student leaders, were prohibited from ever resuming their higher education again and found themselves back in Zhitomir.

However, in the summer of 1883 the minister of education softened this verdict by allowing the blacklisted students to apply to any Russian university except the St. Petersburg one. The two friends took advantage of the ruling and enrolled in Novorossiisk University in Odessa, a young but highly respected institution. This time they chose the Law Faculty. The change in the focus of their studies suggests that their strong interest in the social sciences, typical for young Populists of the day, prevailed. In the course of their studies, the two future ethnologists became well versed not only in the history of western European and Russian law but in “primitive” or “early” (*pervobytnyi*) law and social organization as well.

Shternberg's life in Odessa was not easy. His family's fortunes had suffered a blow, forcing him to spend a good deal of time giving private lessons. While excelling in all his studies, he devoted even more time than before to underground activities. Within just a few weeks of his arrival in Odessa, he managed to bring together a group of radical students, most of them former students, like himself, of St. Petersburg University. This new Populist circle was determined to resume the work of the People's Will, which had been further devastated by large-scale arrests. While many circle members were demoralized by the party's decline, Shternberg maintained his optimism. As Krol' recalled, the favorite rallying cry of this Jewish radical was “The God of Israel is alive!” (1929:226). By the spring of 1884 he had succeeded in establishing a southern branch of the People's Will. Iosif Gessen (1865–1943), a younger member of this group and a future leader of the liberal Constitutional-Democratic (Russian КД) Party, recalled many years later that Lev was a very influential and highly respected leader of the southern Populists. As Gessen described him, Shternberg was tall and very thin, with a thick black beard and head of hair and a tired-looking face. He spoke with a heavy Jewish accent and said little, but his orders were obeyed without questioning (Gessen 1937:49). Another fellow Populist, Anastasia Shekhter-Minor, remembered Shternberg as “a very erudite man in the sphere of the social sciences” (1928:132).

In 1884 Shternberg wrote an important brochure entitled “Political Terror in Russia” to inspire and give direction to his comrades (Lavrov 1974, 2:572–594). In typical Populist fashion, Shternberg argued that “the only solution at the moment was for the intelligentsia to use all the means available to it to overthrow the tsarist government, to seize power, and then turn it over to the

elected representatives of the people” (Lavrov 1974, 2:579). At the same time, as this brochure and the memoirs of Krol’ indicate, Shternberg was well aware of the limitations of terrorism as a method of bringing about social change (Krol’ 1929:226–227). He pointed out that in western Europe, where socialists and workers had already gained important political rights and helped establish essential democratic institutions, terrorism was no longer necessary (Lavrov 1974, 2:583). Even in Russia, it was only a temporary means to an end. In Shternberg’s words, “On the very next day after the victory of the revolution, not a single revolutionary would soil his hand with the blood of a harmless scoundrel” (Lavrov 1974, 2:589). Despite an occasional convoluted passage, the brochure was well written and demonstrated its young author’s good grasp of European and Russian history. Lacking a printing press, Shternberg and his comrades printed the brochure using a simple hectograph and distributed it mainly among other young revolutionaries. In the words of Krol’, “With the freshness of its thoughts and its optimistic revolutionary tone, it created quite a stir” (1929:227).

In the wake of the arrest of one of its leaders whose notebook contained the names and addresses of many People’s Will’s members, the Populist movement continued to be devastated by one arrest after another. Determined to keep the movement alive by linking his southern, Ukraine-based group with party members located in Russia proper, Shternberg embarked on a trip to several major southern cities as well as Moscow and St. Petersburg. In the course of this journey he conversed with a number of energetic young Populists, including Al’bert Gausman, Lev Kogan-Bernshtein, Boris Orzhikh, Anastasiia Shekhter-Minor, and his future colleague and fellow ethnographer Vladimir (Nathan) Bogoraz. While Shternberg remained committed to terrorist activities as the quickest and the most efficient method of bringing down the tsarist regime, he was already well aware of the need to prepare for a long-term struggle and produce large-scale propaganda among the masses (Shternberg 1925b:102).⁵

During Shternberg’s important trip, the other two leaders of the southern Populists, Orzhikh and Bogoraz, were busy establishing printing presses and storage facilities for explosives in two southern cities. The next major Populist gathering took place at the southern town of Ekaterinoslav, the site of the Orzhikh-Bogoraz group’s best functioning local Populist organization. In mid-September, with the preparations for the “congress” completed, delegates arrived

from Odessa, Kharkov, Taganrog, and several other southern cities and towns.⁶ Although thirteen participants had been expected, only eight were able to attend. Shternberg came as a representative of Odessa. His presentation at the meeting was an important one: it informed the participants that he had been able to establish contact with several leading St. Petersburg and Moscow Populists. The representatives also discussed the resumption of the publication of the People's Will's newsletter and its content. Shternberg wrote a lead article for issues 11 and 12 of the newsletter that generated a heated debate (Denisenko 1929:138–139).⁷ In his letter to Denisenko, written forty years after the Ekaterinoslav meeting, Shternberg summarized its essence in this fashion:

In my article I very clearly emphasized that the goal of the present moment was the struggle against the monarchy and for political freedom, and that gaining that freedom was an absolutely necessary step on the road to socialism. During this period among many of the revolutionaries, including some of the meeting's participants, there existed a kind of old-populist fear of political freedom and that led to a lack of focus in the revolutionary thinking and a decline of revolutionary energy. Only after a long argument with my comrades and a compromise passage I had to add to my article, was it finally accepted. (Denisenko 1929:139)

Despite Shternberg's attempts to the contrary, it was decided to eliminate the passage about the seizure of power from the old program of the People's Will and place more emphasis on long-term agitation and propaganda among the masses.⁸ The issue of the use of systematic terrorism also generated debate. A few of the participants expressed opposition to it and proposed eliminating its discussion from the party's new program. However, Shternberg's majority, which was strongly in favor of continuing the use of terrorism, prevailed (Krol' 1944:55–56). The group agreed that a large amount of money was needed to carry out systematic terrorist activities (the only kind that appeared to have an effect) but rejected the use of armed robbery to secure such funds (Shekhter-Minor 1928:135). It should be mentioned here that Shternberg, unlike some of the other Populists (and their successors, the Socialist-Revolutionaries), always maintained a high moral standard in his revolutionary activities. As his wife pointed out, he never viewed ordinary party workers as "cannon fodder and

hence always informed them of the dangers involved in an assignment he was about to give to them. He also never demanded absolute obedience from his subordinates within the party” (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/4/10:3). At the last meeting of the congress the representatives decided to create an executive committee to lead the so-called Southern Russian Organization of the People’s Will. Along with Krol’ and Bogoraz, Shternberg became a member.

Inspired by the Ekaterinoslav meeting, southern Populists plunged energetically into revolutionary activities, recruiting new members, establishing contacts with the leading populists living abroad, organizing two underground printing presses, and printing the next (and last) two issues of “People’s Will,” which featured Shternberg’s editorial. Some of the members began preparations for renewed terrorist activities. In the end of 1885 and the beginning of 1886, however, a series of arrests decimated the ranks of the new organization. On April 27, 1886, the police searched Shternberg’s apartment and arrested him. He had just finished his last semester at the university and was preparing for the graduation exams. By February 1887 most of his comrades, including Krol’, Bogoraz, Orzhikh and Gausman, were in jail as well (Krol’ 1944:61–64).

Historians of the Populist movement agree that the destruction of the southern group of the People’s Will marked the party’s collapse. Here is how Naimark described their downfall:

The suicides, the attempted suicides, and the hopeless uprisings in prison and exile demonstrated the terrible isolation that separated these radicals from autocratic and liberal Russia, as well as from the classic Russian intelligentsia of noble and *raznochintsy* origins. . . . Perhaps even more devastating, they were clearly out-matched by the tsarist police and judicial administration. Rejected by educated society, infiltrated by police agents, sent into Siberian exile for ten years without judicial process, the revolutionaries of the Bogoraz-Orzhikh [Shternberg—S.K.] group rarely aroused sympathy or respect from their contemporaries. The peasant masses, for whom the revolution was intended, remained docile; systematic terrorism, the starting point of revolutionary action, seemed chimerical if not completely absurd under these circumstances. (Naimark 1983:109–110)

At the same time, the young southern Populists, weak and isolated as they were, did play an important role in the history of the Russian revolutionary movement. The same scholar argued that

the historical significance of the *narodovol'tsy* in the South during the mid-1880s should not be underestimated. The government's "nihilist" phobia continued without interruption, in part because of the *narodovol'tsy*'s ability to replace their depleted ranks, form new circles, publish revolutionary literature, and plan assassinations. Many of the arguments within the Bogoraz-Orzhikh group resurfaced during the 1890s among the terrorists who eventually formed the Battle Organization of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party in April 1902, when the program of systematic terror resulted in a spectacular series of assassinations of government ministers. Continuity between the *narodovol'tsy* of the mid-1880s and the Socialist-Revolutionary Party is evident in personnel as well as in programs. . . . That Narodnaia Volia did not totally disappear despite the destruction of its organization in 1883–1884 and the terrible fate suffered by the members of the Bogoraz-Orzhikh group, attests to the ability of tsarist Russia to produce desperate young men and women who continued, with frightening regularity, to hurl themselves against the brick wall of autocracy. (Naimark 1983:109–110)

Three Prison Years

The authorities kept Shternberg in the main Odessa prison for three years, two and a half of them in solitary confinement. The conditions of the incarceration were particularly harsh in the beginning, when he was prohibited from receiving cigarettes and books.⁹ After a while, however, he was allowed to receive books and would spend long hours reading fiction and scholarly literature as well as studying foreign languages. Lev not only managed to learn English and Italian but even translated some classic Russian poems into Italian as well. He also kept a diary as well as detailed notes on his reading); in addition, he wrote poetry and short stories and completed a novel about the life of Zhitomir's Jewish community.¹⁰

Despite a rigorous daily schedule of physical exercises and reading, this very emotional and easily excitable man suffered greatly. What troubled him most

were the thoughts of having jeopardized the well-being of a certain comrade through his own revolutionary activities. After a while he caught himself thinking out loud and began to worry that the guards would overhear him and use the information against his comrades-in-arms. Eventually he developed insomnia and a nervous twitching of the face, the *tic douloureux*.¹¹ Most troubling were his occasional auditory hallucinations, during which he would hear sad news about his comrades. In one particularly disturbing episode, for several days he heard the words “Gausman and Kogan-Bernshtein have perished.” One could only imagine the emotional pain suffered by Shternberg in the summer of 1890, when he learned that a year earlier these two Populist leaders, whom he admired so much, had been sentenced to death and executed for their participation in an attempt by a group of Populists exiled to the Yakutsk region to resist being forced to march under terrible weather conditions (Shternberg 1925a:95–98, 1925b:103).¹²

Shternberg’s situation improved during his last year of imprisonment, when a fellow Populist joined him in his cell. Moreover, Shternberg’s immediate neighbor turned out to be none other than his dear friend Krol’. The two were not only able to communicate by knocking on the walls but even saw each other once face-to-face when the guards forgot to lock their cells. As Krol’ (1944:81) reminisced years later, when he saw Lev for the first time after his arrest, his childhood friend was “pale, exhausted, with sunken cheeks, a long beard and feverish eyes” and “looked like a martyr.” However, once Shternberg had a comrade in his cell as well as a dear friend next door to talk to, his physical and mental condition improved greatly. It was now his turn to cheer up Krol’, which he did by repeating the phrase “we will see better days, Moisei, our star is still high on the horizon” (Krol’ 1929:234).

The Journey to Exile

Having kept Shternberg and his comrades in jail for several years, the government decided not to hold a trial for fear of giving the revolutionaries an open forum to express their views and gain public sympathy. Instead, it simply sentenced them to various exile terms. As one of the leaders of the group, Shternberg was given a longer sentence (ten years) and was not sent to Siberia like most of the others. Instead the government sent him to Sakhalin Island, located in the most distant part of the empire, not far from Japan. Although Shternberg’s

sentence was pronounced in October 1888, he had to wait until the opening of navigation in the spring of 1889 to travel to the island.

On March 29, 1889, he and seven other political exiles sailed from Odessa on board the steamship *Petersburg*. To reach their island prison they had to travel through the Black Sea, the Mediterranean, the Indian Ocean, and parts of the Pacific. The conditions of the voyage, which lasted a month and a half, were not easy. The prisoners spent most of the time in the ship's hold, where their quarters were crammed and stuffy. Their suffering was particularly great during major storms. Several prisoners did not survive the journey. "Hodie tibi, cras mihi" (Today you, tomorrow me), wrote Shternberg in his diary. The political prisoners' suffering was exacerbated by the fact that they had been confined to the same quarters as common criminals. For the first time in their lives many of them heard dirty swearing and witnessed fighting and open sexual intercourse between men. Initially disgusted by these dregs of society, Shternberg, the eternal humanist, began to observe them more carefully and compassionately, concluding that these thieves and murderers were human beings too.

Shternberg as a Jewish Populist

Soon after his arrival on Sakhalin Island, Shternberg encountered a Gilyak (Nivkh) man, and within a year and a half he began studying the culture of these indigenous inhabitants of the island. He was now almost thirty and his ideology had already been pretty much formed. Because it had a major influence on his ethnographic research and writing, this ideology needs to be examined in some detail. A review of Shternberg's prison notebooks leads me to believe that while he was a typical Russian Populist in many respects, his views on culture and history were quite unique. The main source of this uniqueness was his strong identification with the Jewish people.

Before assessing Shternberg's own worldview, we must examine the Populist philosophy of science and sociology that inspired him.¹³ Despite the fact that "populism was a diffuse movement with no codified ideology," its adherents did share a set of basic views on the nature of society, causes of social progress, and goals of a progressive social science, formulated by its two leading thinkers, Piotr Lavrov and Nikolai Mikhailovskii, and their followers (Vucinich 1970:22). As Vucinich (1970:22) noted, Populist philosophy was consistently antimetaphysical. The two main faults of metaphysics, according to

Mikhailovskii, were a total disregard for the concrete needs of human life and a deep contempt for positive knowledge. At the same time, Mikhailovskii and especially Lavrov argued that a philosophy of modern life had to reject both idealism and materialism. While these intellectuals saw idealism as metaphysical and antipositivist, they perceived materialism as too simplistic, reducing all thought to matter and motion. According to Lavrov, a typical Populist progressive, the modern historical affirmation and expansion of “rational thought” signified the transformation of “instinctive technology” into scientific technology, religious sentiment into moral consciousness, and undisciplined intellectual curiosity into ordered, objective inquiry about nature and society (Vucinich 1970:23). Since the betterment of the human condition was the main political goal of the Populists, science for them was both a measure and an instrument of sociocultural progress. While they followed their Western and Russian intellectual predecessors in contending that all sciences were interdependent, both Lavrov and Mikhailovskii argued repeatedly that the natural and social sciences were quite different from each other. Thus Mikhailovskii asserted that since the goal of the sciences was to search for ideals or inspirational values, they could not rely on “objective principles” but had to be basically subjective. Populist sociology, usually referred to as “subjectivist,” regarded the human personality as both the product and creator of culture and made it “the central theme of its investigation and the quintessence of historical process” (Vucinich 1970:23). Although Lavrov and Mikhailovskii did not deny the existence of an objective base for the social sciences, they emphasized that these disciplines (especially sociology) were made entirely of subjective interpretations of objective data.

Well-versed in the works of Western evolutionists, including those of anthropologists, the two scholars were very interested in the progressive development of human society from its more “primitive” to more advanced forms. Committed evolutionists, they rejected attempts to apply the Darwinian theory of biological evolution to the study of social change. They were equally critical of the Marxist theory of class struggle as a key force of social evolution. In their view social evolution could not be explained by any single principle and did not affect each part of cultural equally: technological progress, for example, could be accompanied by moral decline. Moreover, with their positive view

of the traditional Russian peasant commune as a socialist institution superior to capitalist ones, their evolutionism clearly was not unilinear.

Finally, in contrast to Spencer, Mikhailovskii argued that, while an increased division of labor and decreased self-sufficiency of individual social groups marked social evolution, an increased completeness and internal unity of the individual characterized the evolution of personality. In his view the complexity of history lay in the need to reconcile the growing heterogeneity of society with the growing homogeneity of the individual (Vucinich 1970:25). As Vucinich (1970:432) concluded, "Subjective sociology [of the Populists] was a unique combination of science and ideology. As a 'science,' it was founded on the view that human society could be fully understood only when its inner workings were subjected to scientific scrutiny. As an 'ideology,' it gave philosophically articulated support for the Populist view that the individual held the keys to history, which found many converts in Russia. Together with the belief in the inevitability of social change and the secular nature of political institutions, it formed the creed of the Russian intelligentsia."

Although Shternberg's prison diaries do not refer directly to either Lavrov or Mikhailovskii, there is evidence that he was a great admirer of these intellectual leaders of Russian Populism.¹⁴ More importantly, many of the ideas recorded in his prison diaries echo those of the two scholars. These documents convey a strong impression of the prisoner's impressive erudition. In addition to continuing his reading in legal history, Shternberg carefully studied a large number of works in economics, philosophy, sociology, and western European and Russian history. His notes make frequent references to such evolutionist scholars as Anthony F. C. Wallace, Charles Darwin, and Herbert Spencer, whom he was reading in both English and Russian. He also appears to have been well acquainted with leading Western socialist thinkers like Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and Karl Marx.¹⁵ His strong interest in social evolution is obvious: his notebooks contain not only a summary of some key works on the subject but fragments of his own essay on "the laws of human progress," in which he critiqued the existing evolutionist theories and attempted to develop his own.

Like Lavrov and Mikhailovskii, the young Populist expressed doubts about theories of unilinear evolutionism as well as mechanistic attempts to apply Darwin's theory of natural selection to social evolution. In his discussion of the evolution of culture and society, Shternberg referred frequently to "primitive"

peoples.¹⁶ In fact, the future anthropologist emphasized the importance of using ethnographic data to reconstruct the early stages of the evolution of human society and culture. This typically Populist interest in the development and the current state of the Russian rural commune encouraged him to examine other forms of precapitalist social organization, such as clans and tribes.

Despite his commitment to evolutionism, Shternberg rejected ethnocentric views of “primitive” societies, pointing out that we cannot judge them by our own standards. He argued that modern-day Western civilization “stands on top of a pyramid” built upon a foundation constructed by these so-called “primitive” societies and their successors. In contrast to some other evolutionists, he questioned the notion that members of these societies all think alike, noting that each society has its own share of sophisticated intellectuals. A progressive thinker, he strongly opposed scientific racism and criticized Western societies’ mistreatment of conquered simpler societies, such as those of North American Indians.¹⁷

Shternberg’s adherence to a “subjectivist” Populist sociology is evident in his insistence that human sociocultural progress is driven not by materialist forces but by the progressive ideas of the human mind. Here he was much closer to Lewis Henry Morgan or Edward Tylor than to Marx. Like a true follower of Lavrov and especially Mikhailovskii, Shternberg insisted that one could speak of true human progress only when social equality and justice reigned supreme. And as a typical Populist he argued that a social scientist must not only study society but also contribute to its improvement. Here, for example, is how he described what progressive political economy should be like: “The great challenge for political economy is to discover the means of spreading the general conditions of [economic] well being which would not contradict the demands of the freedom of the individual” (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/120:68). This Populist interest in the individual marked Shternberg’s entire scholarly worldview and had a major impact on the kind of ethnology he ended up pursuing.

While much of his ideology was typical of Russian Populism in the 1870s and ’80s, some of his views set him apart from both the theoreticians of Populism and their radical followers. One major difference was Shternberg’s strong interest in the role of religion in human life. As an entry in his notebooks states, a major source of religion’s persistence (despite evolutionist predictions of its

demise) has been its ability to help human beings face death by offering them hope of spiritual immortality and life after death. The young revolutionary's interest in religion, however, was more than just intellectual. As a number of passages in his diaries indicate, he retained a belief in God and (at least occasionally) sought consolation and spiritual strength in prayer. Here is one example: "My only wish is not to die in prison from disease. Today I received a consoling letter from my parents. But my greatest prayer to God is to preserve the life, happiness, and consolation of my parents and to find pleasure and consolation in my brothers and my sister. Prolong, my God, their days and reward them for their grief in me. Please, pardon me that in time of trouble and infirmity my spirit is full of doubt" (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/120:30).

It was rather unusual for a Narodnik to pray to God. Most of Shternberg's fellow revolutionaries rejected any religion, including Judaism. In fact, their enthusiastic embrace of secular learning and radical politics was usually accompanied by a turning away from the religious and cultural values of their traditional parents and grandparents. Shternberg's future colleague, the 1870s Populist Vladimir (Veniamin) Iokhel'son (1855–1937), described this attitude toward religion in his memoir: "We were as negatively disposed to the Jewish religion as to every religion in general. We considered the Jargon [Yiddish] to be an artificial language, and Hebrew a dead language of interest to scholars only. Generally, from a universalist [socialist] point of view, it seemed to us that national beliefs, traditions, and languages were worthless. . . . We were estranged spiritually from the culture of Russian Jewry and related negatively to its orthodox and bourgeois representatives from whose midst we, the adepts of the new teaching, had ourselves emerged" (Haberer 1995:84).

While he continued to pray to the God of his ancestors, Shternberg did have doubts about religion. In one poignant passage from his prison notebooks, he wrote, "It is difficult to reconcile the idea of a rational and noble Creator with a belief that poverty and humiliation, which are the lot of a substantial portion of the human race, are the results of his work" (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/120:67). Despite such sentiments, he retained a strong commitment to the spiritual and philosophical aspects of Judaism, even though he stopped observing many of its ritual commandments and ceremonies by the time he was in high school (Krol' 1929:218). He remained particularly fond of the religion of the Hebrew prophets, with its message of messianism, compassion, and social

justice. His notebooks contain a number of passages from and references to the passionate words of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and other prophets. In fact, Jeremiah's life and teaching inspired him to write a long poetic work entitled "The Prophet," which unfortunately has not survived.¹⁸ An eternal optimist, Shternberg was not fond of the Book of Ecclesiastes, considering its skepticism and pessimism to be foreign to the spirit of the Jewish people (Perel'man 1998:317).

While Shternberg, like the majority of the radical and liberal Russian and Russian-Jewish intelligentsia of the late nineteenth century, believed that science was superior to religion, he saw Judaism as a special case. For him it was the core of the Jewish culture, past and present, as well as the major source of a miraculous survival of the Jews. In his view, this persistent commitment to a religious ideology, as opposed to a common language, a piece of land, or any other tangible phenomena, made the Jews a truly unique people. Such an "idealist" interpretation of Jewish history fit well with the sociology of Shternberg's intellectual mentor, Mikhailovskii. There was also an evolutionist element in Shternberg's view of Judaism: several passages in his prison notebooks refer to Jewish monotheism as a major step forward compared to the polytheism that predominated in the ancient Near East. At the same time, this Narodnik and future ethnologist also attributed the survival of the Jewish people to the major role played by the clan in their worldview and social organization during the era of Abraham. For Shternberg, this key kinship group eventually gave rise to the unity and solidarity of the nation.

In addition to revealing a kind of philosophical or intellectual commitment to Judaism that only a few of the Jewish socialists of his era shared, Shternberg's prison writing demonstrates a strong emotional attachment to his hometown, its people, and their culture. While he found Zhitomir to be small and provincial and was eager, like other Jewish Populists, to leave it for the big cities of central Russia, there is a strong element of nostalgia in his comments about his childhood world. These sentiments are most clearly expressed in a long autobiographical novel he composed while in jail. The entire text has not survived, but a shortened version of it was eventually published under the title *Zabytoe kladbishche* (A forgotten cemetery) in a Russian-language magazine for Jewish youngsters (Shternberg 1913a). The story is marked not only by nostalgic sadness but by a certain feeling of guilt for having left the world of one's parents. This sentiment is rarely encountered in the writing of his fellow

Jewish populists. More common was the anti-shtetl feeling expressed so forcefully by Shternberg's comrade-in-arms and future colleague Nathan Bogoraz (Tan) (1865–1936), who even converted to Christianity in the mid-1880s to facilitate his revolutionary activities and changed his first name to “Vladimir.” As he noted in his autobiography, “A small nation is like a tiny spiritual prison, and the tiniest one of all is the Jewish one—a millennia-old ghetto. I thank my destiny for having left that prison early [in my life]” (Bogoraz Collection, SPFA RAN, 250/3/1:417).¹⁹

Despite these strong nationalist feelings, Shternberg was very much a universalist. He wrote that the ancient history of the Jews belonged to the history of humankind as a whole and insisted that a person had to combine affection for his own people with love for all of humanity. He also called upon the diaspora Jews to be loyal to both their own kind and the country in which they happened to live.

Shternberg's notebooks contain some interesting thoughts about the best way of writing Jewish history. Although he clearly had read a great deal on the subject, he admitted that he was not knowledgeable enough to undertake such a project. While Shternberg the scholar insisted that this history had to be “scientific,” he argued as a Jewish patriot that it also had to contribute to the moral uplifting of the Jews. For Shternberg, a scholar undertaking such a project not only had to be very well versed in the Torah and the Hebrew language but also had to be a Jew himself. Contrary to the prevailing positivism of his cohort, he insisted that because the Jews are a special people, one had to love and understand them in order to be able to write their history. This tension between Shternberg's desire to study other cultures objectively and his insistence on the need to understand them compassionately (*Verstehen*) reemerged later in his ethnographic fieldwork and writing.

Finally, Shternberg the Jewish nationalist disagreed with many of his fellow Populists who saw commercially active Jews as part of an exploiter class that had to be eliminated. Even though he wanted them to adopt agricultural and industrial work in the future, he viewed them not as “parasites” but as victims of discrimination, which had forced them to undertake such occupations.

A comparison of Shternberg to other Jewish Narodniks of his era reveals striking similarities as well as important differences. As Haberer noted, even some of the most assimilated and secular Jewish revolutionaries of the 1870s

and 1880s had been inspired at least in part by the messianic Judaism of the Hebrew prophets as well as “an idealist Haskalah [Jewish Enlightenment] glorification of progress through learning and secular knowledge, often combined with an indigenous Jewish sense of philanthropic responsibility and social justice” (1995:40). Like Shternberg, many of them believed that the liberation of the Russian Jews was an urgent task but that it would only be accomplished when Russia as a whole was liberated.

However, only a few of them retained a strong commitment to some of the core values of their parents’ culture or were interested in revolutionary propaganda addressed specifically to the Jewish masses in their own language. In 1884 another prominent Jewish populist, Chaim Zhitlovskii, proposed establishing a Yiddish-language newspaper affiliated with the People’s Will, but his idea was rejected by the party’s leadership two years later. In 1906 Shternberg, who had participated in that meeting of the party’s executive committee, told Zhitlovskii that the majority of those present were of Jewish origin and that the negative decision about the Yiddish newspaper had resulted, in his words, “not from the centralism of the Narodnaia Volia but only from Jewish assimilation” (Frankel 1981:263–264).²⁰

Shternberg’s strong commitment to a particular kind of philosophical and spiritual Judaism as well as his combination of a generic and a specifically Jewish socialism are best illustrated by his account of his sea voyage from Odessa to Sakhalin. Although published twenty years after his 1889 voyage (Shternberg 1909), it should not be treated as a flight of literary imagination because the author’s letters from the prison ship confirm his sentiments (see Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/363:6a). According to his memoir, Shternberg was able to see his parents just before sailing from Odessa. Their words of farewell and advice echoed in his ears for a long time. His mother told him, “You are a kind person, and God is just, and he exists everywhere, even on Sakhalin. He will not abandon you! . . . There probably are Jews there; whoever they are, they are Jews and there must still be something Jewish left in their souls. Do not turn away from them, remind them that they are Jews and they will listen to you!” His father, who spoke in a different style, stated, “You will travel across the same sea, which the Jews had once crossed on foot when the Pharaoh chased them with his chariots; you will see Mt. Sinai, where Moses brought his tablets of the law from. And just as the God of Israel had brought the Jews from

the house of bondage and led them to Sinai, so will He bring you back alive and allow us to rejoice upon seeing you again” (Shternberg 1909:99–102).

The young revolutionary admitted that at the time he was not thinking about Sinai at all, yet when his ship docked at Port Said, he learned from a newspaper (kindly lent to him by a ship’s officer) that this was the eve of Passover. Suddenly the only Jewish prisoner on board of the floating prison began to reminisce nostalgically about his parents’ festive Passover table, his mother preparing the food and his father reading the story of Exodus. Being in Egypt made these reminiscences especially moving.

As in the days of his childhood, when Lev liked to imagine himself as a new Moses who would save his people from slavery, he now began to think of himself as

a lonely descendant of his people, who also sought freedom, the freedom not for his own people but for another people dear to him. This descendant was now destined to make a great journey, but not to the Promised Land, but to the land of exile, thousands of miles away. What an amazing coincidence! And suddenly sadness disappeared from my soul, and a new feeling overcame me, a feeling of pride, which lifted my spirits, a feeling of a man who had suddenly came in touch with something great and wonderful. And I recalled my father’s parting words about seeing the Black Sea, the holy Sinai. (Shternberg 1909: 99–102)

While the ship sailed along the Egyptian coast, Shternberg became absorbed in the biblical landscape, and images of the biblical patriarchs who had once walked this land raced through his mind:

I passionately thought at that moment about the millions of people who thousands of years later were persecuted so painfully for being the followers of the teachings of Moses and were scattered all over the face of the earth and who continued to cherish his name and his laws; I wished that they would become worthy of his great spirit, that they would become the kind of nation about whom the great prophets dreamed—a “nation of teachers” [*narod-uchitel'*], a nation among nations, a nation of humankind! . . . And in this

moment of ecstasy, it seemed to me that a great fire had ignited my heart, so that if millions of my dispersed brothers were with me at the moment, I would have had enough strength to use my fiery words to burn away from their hearts all the impurities brought into them by centuries of oppression and slavery, and ignite a new fire in them, which would have lifted them up to the highest ideals of humankind!” (Shternberg 1909:99–102)

2. Sakhalin

On May 19, 1889, Lev Shternberg set foot on his “island prison,” where he was to remain until 1897. Located in the Sea of Okhotsk, Sakhalin Island is nearest the Amur River delta on its northern end and the Japanese island of Hokkaido to its south.¹ Sakhalin is about 600 miles long, and its width varies from 16 to 100 miles. Its area is about 30,000 square miles, which is a fraction smaller than Hokkaido. The northern part of the island is occupied mainly by low-lying taiga, while the southern end is heavily forested and mountainous. Sakhalin’s climate is rather severe and capricious, especially in its north. The winters are raw and the summers damp. The east coast facing the Sea of Okhotsk remains frozen for half the year. A warm ocean current coming from the Sea of Japan influences the west coast, but the Tatar Strait, which separates the island from the mainland, remains frozen from November to March. During the summer, thick fogs make navigation difficult, while inland travelers have to endure numerous gnats, mosquitoes, and flies. Sakhalin’s natural resources are quite rich, in fact richer than those of many parts of Siberia and the Russian Far East. Fish (salmon, herring, and cod) and game are plentiful, as are berries and edible plants. The island also contains large amounts of timber and sizable coal and petroleum deposits (Stephan 1971).

When Shternberg arrived there, the entire island had been Russian territory for only fourteen years. The Russians assumed control of the island from the Japanese, who had succeeded the Chinese. Evidence suggests that the Chinese became aware of the island and its inhabitants—the Gilyak (Nivkh), the Orok (Uil’ta), and the Ainu—as early as the beginning of the first millennium



1. Sakhalin Island, 1900. From Bruce Grant, *In the Soviet House of Culture*.

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CE, and more certainly by the sixth century CE.² When, in the late thirteenth century, the Mongols reached the mouth of the Amur River on the mainland across from the island, they attempted to control the local indigenous population. While some native groups submitted to their suzerainty, others resisted. By 1287 the Mongol Yuan Dynasty had established garrisons on the island, and by the early fourteenth century the last of the Ainu chiefs had submitted to them. However, with the decline of the dynasty, its posts on the island were abandoned. The Ming Dynasty (1368–1644) resumed China’s contacts with the island, but unlike the Mongols the Ming forces expanded into the lower Amur delta and Sakhalin without resorting to arms. Instead, they collected tributes of furs in exchange for beads and silk products. In the seventeenth century the Manchu replaced the Ming Chinese as the dominant power in the region, and

from about 1700 to 1820 the Nivkh, the Uil'ta, and the Ainu of Sakhalin sent tribute missions to Manchu posts on the Amur River.

A few years earlier, in 1635, the first well-documented Japanese landing on the island took place, although given the Japanese proximity to Sakhalin, contacts between them and the local natives might have occurred earlier. When a Japanese explorer named Mamiya Rinzo visited the island in 1808–9, he observed that the Manchurian administration made only a limited attempt to control its native inhabitants. He also noted that with the increased availability of Japanese goods on southern Sakhalin, native-Manchurian relations had weakened even further. While the Japanese offered hides, axes, cotton, kettles, tobacco and liquor, the natives, who traveled to the south to trade and sometimes work on Japanese farms, provided jewels, sable fur, and fish (Stephan 1971; Forsyth 1992; Grant 1995).

The Russians arrived on the scene in 1644, when Vasilii Poiarkov led a band of Cossacks down the Amur River to the shores of the Tatar Strait; however, there is no solid evidence that he actually landed on Sakhalin. In the early decades of the nineteenth century several Russian maritime expeditions explored the coast of Sakhalin. During the same period the Russians and the Japanese began maintaining a more substantive presence on the island, even though neither country was able to penetrate its interior. In 1849 the tsar authorized the exploration of the lower Amur, which led to the establishment of a major post (Nikolaevsk) at its mouth in 1850. Following a long period of confrontation, both countries made claims to the island. From the 1850s to 1860s several major Russian scientific expeditions explored Sakhalin and compiled information on its aboriginal peoples (see Shrenk 1883–1903). During the same period, the Japanese attempted to colonize southern Sakhalin and win over the local natives by teaching them new fishing techniques and by distributing tools and nets among them. Their campaign was carried out in a haphazard manner, however. The 1855 Treaty of Shimoda stipulated that Sakhalin be held jointly by Russia and Japan. Three years later a Russian-Chinese treaty gave the Russians control over the left bank of Amur. The 1860 Treaty of Beijing gave them additional and sizable territory from the Ussuri River to the Sea of Japan and southward to the Korean border (Bassin 1999). Weakened by the recent collapse of the Tokugawa regime, the Japanese in 1875 signed the Treaty of St. Petersburg, which granted all of Sakhalin to Russia in return for several of the

southernmost Kuril Islands and the retention of some economic and political privileges in the southern part of Sakhalin, especially fishing.

Viewing it as a difficult place from which to escape, the Russian authorities began sending small groups of convicts to Sakhalin Island in 1859–60. After ten years of failing to attract Russian settlers, the government decided that the island's economic development could be accomplished only by using convict labor and officially declared Sakhalin a "penal colony." It hoped that hardened criminals transferred there from camps in Siberia would contribute to the island's colonization and eventually settle on it as free peasants. In 1873 the island's Russian population was still only about three thousand people. In 1879, larger groups of prisoners started arriving there by ship from Odessa, and their numbers rose considerably through the mid-1880s. In 1884 Sakhalin acquired its own military governor, who resided in its administrative center, Aleksandrovsk, and presided over a dual hierarchy: the military guards and the civilian officials of the Bureau of Prisons. Starting in that same year, one thousand exiles were shipped to Sakhalin annually on cramped convict vessels. By 1888 Sakhalin had become "the largest and most important penal establishment in Siberia" (Kennan 1891:221).

The exile population of the island rose from a couple of thousand in 1875 to 25,500 in 1895 (Novombergskii 1903:456). The exiles were divided into three classes: hard labor convicts, convict settlers, and peasants who had formerly been Sakhalin exiles. The hard labor convicts, who by 1895 numbered about eight thousand, lived in the island's six prisons. Especially hardened criminals were kept in ball and chain. The rest were assigned to work gangs that built roads and bridges and performed other forms of heavy labor, often under hard conditions. Good behavior for over at least two years made them eligible for being transferred to the second class—convict settlers. The latter numbered about seven thousand in 1895. They lived in small villages and practiced agriculture as well as some hunting and fishing. The government allowed them to take common law wives and supplied them with a small homestead, seeds, tools, and clothing. If they behaved well for six years, they were transferred to the class of peasants. Individuals in this category could return to Russia proper as long as they avoided certain major cities. The fact that many of those who could leave did so indicates that few Russians identified with Sakhalin or found life there

attractive. Because of the departures, the last category remained rather small; in 1897 it numbered about two thousand. Another major obstacle to the settlement of the island was a huge imbalance in the male-female population ratio. Convict women comprised only about 10 percent of the population. When they arrived on boats at Aleksandrovska, the healthiest and most attractive women were selected by the local officials to be their kitchen maids, domestic servants, and concubines. The less fortunate ones were set aside as prostitutes for the low-level clerks and guards. The largest group was sent to the outlying settlements to become cohabitants with convict settlers (Grant 1995).

Depending on the Sakhalin exiles' status and location, their living conditions varied substantially. The most appalling situations prevailed at the Voevodsk Prison, the Dué Mines, and the Aleksandrovska Stockade. Testimonies of local and visiting observers, including Anton Chekhov (1967), described the terrible degradation, hopelessness, and violence of the convicts' lives (see Miroljubov 1901; Doroshevich 1903; Hawes 1904). While the island's climate was more moderate than that of many parts of Siberia, its isolation and bad reputation made it one of the most dreaded exile locations. In fact, officials tried to send only those convicts to Sakhalin whom they considered strong enough to survive.

Political prisoners on the island never numbered more than fifty or so, but they were also divided into convict settlers and administrative exiles. As a member of the latter group, which was much smaller than the group of convict settlers, Shternberg enjoyed greater freedom than the other prisoners. Many of the political convicts had been sentenced for terrorist plots, including an attempt to assassinate Tsar Alexander III. About a third were members of a socialist Polish "Proletariat" Party; the rest were mainly Russians. Shternberg appears to have been the only Jew among them, though there were at least a dozen Jews among the nonpolitical convicts, exiles, and settlers.

As an economic experiment Sakhalin was largely a failure. The island's rather rich natural resources were barely exploited, except for coal. At the same time, the Japanese fishing activities in the south of the island were successful.³ The educated segment of its population (besides the political convicts and exiles) was rather small, consisting mainly of military personnel and upper-level government bureaucrats. Most of the latter concentrated in the island's administrative

center. Honest and hardworking officials were a rarity and even they could not improve the situation very much.

The Nivkh, who compose Sakhalin's largest aboriginal ethnic group and also occupy parts of the lower Amur River, are considered by scholars to be the direct descendants of the region's ancient inhabitants, who had once occupied a much larger area than they did in Shternberg's time.⁴ The subject of their origin has long been a source of debate among Russian scholars. Their language is not related to any others spoken in the region. In the late nineteenth century they numbered about five thousand, with about two thousand living on Sakhalin. As Grant (1995:53) explains, the Nivkh encountered by Shternberg in the 1890s lived in an era when outside influences were deeply restructuring their access to fishing and hunting grounds. They had long been integrated into trade networks with neighboring native groups and the mainland Manchurians, but now with the Russian and Japanese fishing fleets exploiting their prime fishing grounds, they were being pressured to define their rights to resources. Some Nivkh began working for the large Russian fishing operations and consequently "took disadvantageous salary advances and fell into considerable indebtedness" (Grant 1995:53). At the same time, a few Nivkh entrepreneurs who traded fur with the outsiders were enriching themselves and consequently gaining new status within their own society. Trade with the more powerful outsiders also introduced a fair amount of alcohol into native society, causing health problems and undermining the traditional sociocultural order. The worst effect of the gradually increasing contact with the Russians was the spread of devastating epidemics to many of the island's native communities.

Some Nivkh also earned cash by serving as guides and bounty hunters who helped the prison administration catch escaped prisoners. Their dislike for these vagabonds is easy to understand—the escapees often committed acts of violence against the island's natives and disrupted their subsistence activities. Peasant settlers also felt free to appropriate some of the best native lands for their farms.

Despite these outside influences and adversities, in the late nineteenth century most of the Sakhalin Nivkh remained quite isolated from the Russians and maintained a more traditional lifestyle than their mainland kin. Most of them continued to practice traditional subsistence activities such as fishing (especially for salmon), hunting sea and land animals, and, to a lesser extent, gathering

marine invertebrates and wild plants. Although by the late nineteenth century “some Nivkh had begun to build Russian-style houses, the majority still lived a semi-nomadic life between summer and winter homes, in variance with access to seasonal fishing and hunting grounds” (Grant 1995:54). Nivkh society consisted of exogamous agnatic clans (or lineages), subdivided into extended and nuclear families. In the past an entire clan might have resided in a single village, but by the late nineteenth century clans were divided between a variety of settlements, and many clans had a significant number of adopted members from other, Nivkh and non-Nivkh descent groups. By this period, unity and solidarity of the clan was still strong as an ideal model as well as a mechanism for settling disputes and holding the annual bear festival. However, extended families appear to have become central to the natives’ economic and day-to-day social life.

The Nivkh moved between winter and summer villages, which were usually located along the rivers, in their pursuit of resources. The summer months, with their intense fish runs, were the busiest. Winter was set aside for hunting, socializing, and ceremonial activities. The most important ceremony was the “bear festival,” during which a bear raised in captivity was ceremonially slaughtered and consumed. Despite a few feeble attempts by the Russian Orthodox Church to Christianize the Nivkh, their worldview during this period “remained deeply animistic” and shamans continued to act as their key religious practitioners and healers (Grant 1995: 54). On the whole, Sakhalin’s Russian administration made few attempts to control the Nivkh and the other native inhabitants of the island. Instead, liquor and epidemic diseases had the biggest negative influence on Nivkh life during this era. The Russians initiated a rather inefficient system of appointing native elders (Russian pl. *starosty*) as leaders in the 1880s; usually non-influential natives served as putative leaders, while clan elders and wealthy men continued to wield the real power and authority (Grant 1995:63–67).

The Ainu, who inhabited the southern end of the island and spoke another totally unique language, were under even less control of the local Russian administration. Still, by 1897, when they numbered about fifteen hundred, their material culture and economy was beginning to be influenced rather significantly by Japanese fishermen and traders. The Uil’ta, another indigenous Sakhalin people, numbered only about 750 persons in 1897. In addition, about 150

Evenk had migrated to Sakhalin with their reindeer at some point in the early to mid nineteenth century.

An Administrative Exile's Life

According to Shternberg's letters home, after three years in prison and seven months on board the ship, it was truly a relief for him to be able to walk on land and breathe fresh air on Sakhalin Island. Unlike several of his fellow Populists who had traveled with him from Odessa and were now being sent to work in the infamous Dué Mines, Shternberg was relatively free. Of course, the authorities were watching him, and he had to report to them about his travel plans, but as long as he stayed on the island, he could choose his occupation and place of residence. Excited about the prospect of greater freedom, he sent enthusiastic letters to his parents in which he praised the island's beauty and moderate climate.⁵ As he said in one them, "As far as Sakhalin is concerned, I could say that I was pleasantly disappointed" (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/362:7a). His early letters describe long walks, swimming in the ocean, calisthenics, and a great deal of reading. Of course, this was the mild Sakhalin summer; when winter came he had to admit that the local climate, with its heavy snowfall, gusty winds, and ocean storms, was rather severe. Still, he considered himself to be in a more comfortable place than his comrades exiled to some of the coldest and most isolated regions of Siberia. Compared to the tiny village in the Yakutsk province where his friend Bogoraz had been sent, Aleksandrovsk, Lev's first place of residence, was relatively civilized—it had sidewalks, streetlights, and stores. Mail came in rather frequently and regularly, especially in the summer months.

Shternberg's biggest challenges were to locate a place to live, obtain a job, and, most importantly, as he put it, "find a suitable arena to satisfy his need to show sympathy to his fellow human beings and engage in some useful activity for the public good" (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/4/9:121). He soon accomplished the first task when he found room and board at the house of a political exile and fellow Populist named Vasilii Vol'nov. Another boarder there was Vasilii Brazhnikov, Shternberg's comrade from the days of the southern People's Will.

Unable to survive on the meager allowance of eleven and a half rubles provided monthly for each exile, Shternberg needed a job. Because of a shortage

of educated persons, the local administration offered him a clerical job that would have paid him twenty-five rubles per month plus another fifteen for living expenses. He turned it down, however, preferring to be more independent from the authorities. His only interaction with them occurred once a month, when he collected his allowance. After toying with the idea of entering some business venture, Shternberg settled for tutoring youngsters, an occupation he had already been involved in as a student.

Well-educated and experienced tutors were in demand on the island, and Shternberg soon had several students. They included two of his landlord's children as well as those of Ivan Vologdin, one of the island's top bureaucrats, who (along with his wife) soon became Shternberg's good friend. According to a letter sent to Shternberg's family by a captain whose ship had visited Sakhalin, Lev was adored by his students and had a reputation as an excellent teacher. Tutoring brought him an adequate income of fifty-five rubles per month (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/384:10). Occasionally Shternberg also provided his acquaintances with medical assistance, having acquired basic medical knowledge from books while sitting in jail.

Despite Shternberg's status as an exile, he was welcomed into Aleksandrovsk's community of educated government officials. Unfortunately he considered only a few of them worthy of his attention and respect. In several of his letters to Krol', Shternberg complained that with a few exceptions, the island's officials were interested only in drinking, playing cards, and womanizing. Consequently, most of his friends and acquaintances came from the ranks of the political convict settlers and administrative exiles who shared his views and aspirations.

Shternberg quickly became one of the leaders of the island's community of political exiles. Not surprisingly, he was one of the instigators of an informal trial for an exile who had betrayed his fellow Populists during the investigation. While some of the exiles asked that the accused be forgiven, Shternberg, known for his intolerance toward traitors and cowards, insisted on depriving him of honor and completely ostracizing him. Devastated by the sentence, the accused committed suicide (Latyshev 2005).⁶

The presence of a number of like-minded men and women in Aleksandrovsk and nearby smaller settlements, which he visited periodically, was significant enough for Shternberg not to feel completely alone. His letters mention dinner



3. Moisei Krol' during his exile, ca. 1890 (photo taken in Troitskosavsk aka Kiakhta).
Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 280/1/118:1.

invitations and the annual exiles' Christmas party, which he happily attended. He also discovered several Jewish families with whom he occasionally prayed and celebrated the Sabbath, despite the fact that these were by and large poorly educated Jews who did not share his intellectual or political interests (Shternberg 1909). Nevertheless, deep down the young revolutionary was lonely. As he wrote to Krol', "I lack the company of a human being who would be truly close to me" (*blizkii chelovek*) (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/363:14a). The absence of an intimate female companion added to his loneliness.⁷

Despite these occasional gloomy moods, Shternberg was determined to maintain the strength of his body, spirit, and especially mind. As in his prison days, he spent long hours reading. His particular concern was continuing his self-education in the social sciences. He did bring some books in that field from Odessa but was soon finished with them. However, with the help of his friends

and brothers back home, he was able to replenish his collection of scholarly books in Russian and several foreign languages, which he continued to study. He also was able to subscribe to several newspapers and magazines, including some regional ones as well as *Voskhod*, the main Russian-language Jewish monthly.⁸ Shternberg's interest in politics did not subside—his letters to Krol' contain references to various events in Russia and abroad—and he remained a dedicated Populist. An entry in his diary praises German Social-Democrats for their accomplishments but takes them to task for concentrating on the industrial workers and not dealing with the “agrarian question.”

Although Shternberg's own situation in Aleksandrovska was tolerable, this highly sensitive and compassionate man could not find peace of mind as long as others suffered. Deeply concerned about his exiled comrades scattered throughout Siberia, he not only exchanged numerous letters with Krol' but corresponded with other prominent Populists he had met in the mid-1880s, including Vladimir Bogoraz, Iakov Grintser, Osip Minor, Anastasia Shekhter-Minor, Anna Pribyliova-Korba, and several others. In addition, he sent letters to his Sakhalin comrades residing in the outlying settlements. In them one finds many words of encouragement for those who were in more difficult circumstances than him. A good example is a letter he sent to Ivan Iuvachiov (1860–1936), a naval officer who had been sentenced to fifteen years of exile for Populist activities. Along with several other political exiles, Iuvachiov resided in the village of Rykovskoe. During his exile Iuvachev turned to Christianity and as a result became interested in Judaism. In response to one of his philosophical and theological letters, Shternberg expressed his own “biblical socialism” in a September 10, 1889, letter:

My dear Ivan Pavlovich! Your letter reminded me of a biblical parable about the “vineyard,” where a man performs the labor assigned to him by God. I believe I would not be violating the spirit of the Bible if I take this “vineyard” to be the human society that, like a wild and overgrown vineyard, needs to be cleaned, taken care of, and rejuvenated, so as to bear fruit again. Humankind is both the vineyard and the vineyard-keeper. And so may every one of us prepare himself and others to become vineyard-keepers and then let us get to work. Our earthly existence, one of the tasks of the

immortal life of the universe, has its purpose and meaning that, however, are often forgotten in the routine activities of our everyday life, but become clear to everyone who makes a serious effort to discover them. Moreover, these things are sometimes discovered instinctively. Spiritual purity and active love of humankind—that is the program for that brief moment which we call human life. . . . The development of this world is not complete until its highest creation—humankind—is transformed into a luscious vineyard. Let us work in it and make the Creator happy. Let us improve this world and improve ourselves.⁹ (Gagen-Torn 1975:33–34)

In November 1889, a letter from his old comrade, Iakov Grintser, brought terrible news about the execution in Yakutiia of three prominent exiled Populists for attempting to physically resist inhumane treatment by the authorities. Shternberg, who knew the executed men personally, experienced intense emotional suffering as a result of the news (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/341:3–8a).

Closer to home, Shternberg watched in horror how convicts and political exiles alike suffered daily from hard labor, a lack of adequate food, and abuse by the guards. As he put it in a letter to Krol', "My own privileged position does not make it easier on me to watch the suffering of the people deprived of all of their rights" (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/363:13). His diary describes one example of this suffering:

In the winter months, supplies are being delivered to the small stations located along the Tatar Strait in the following manner. A long caravan of heavy sleds is being pulled by groups of six men who are pulling a weight of 40 *pudov* [about fifteen hundred pounds] plus the weight of the sled itself. All of the stops are in the taiga, since there are few villages along the way. Upon its return the gang rests for three days. Quite a few people die along this route or return with frozen legs and arms. And all this work could have been done in the summer! (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/2:5–5a)

For the time being Shternberg felt helpless to do anything about these forms of injustice; only in 1893 did he begin using his pen to criticize the authorities'



4. Sakhalin Island prisoners chained to wheelbarrows, ca. 1890s–1900s.
Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 280/1/133:1.

mistreatment of prisoners. One form of violence, however, he simply could not tolerate: the daily humiliations and insults to which the authorities subjected the convicts. He was particularly incensed that they treated the political and criminal convicts in the same manner. Political prisoners received physical punishments like severe whipping for even the smallest infractions. He was also angry about the rule requiring the exiles to greet any official they met in the street by baring their head. In the fall of 1891 one political exile, Piotr Dombrowski, became so upset about these and other insults that he committed suicide (Shternberg 1928b). From the early 1890s on Shternberg and a few other administrative exiles began complaining to the authorities about the humiliation and violence inflicted upon their less fortunate comrades, whose own status as convicts did not allow them to lodge such complaints (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/4/9:122).

According to reports prepared by the head of the Aleksandrovsk District, Sergei Taskin, to his superiors, Shternberg had a very bad influence on the other exiles and convicts. Eventually, the authorities became so fed up with his protests that they forced him to sign a paper stating, “In case of my illegal appeals to the authorities about the conditions of the political convicts and exiles, I will be sent to the most isolated corner of Sakhalin within twenty-four hours” (Senchenko 1963:180). Despite signing this document, Shternberg continued



5. Shternberg upon his arrival on Sakhalin Island, 1889. Sakhalin Regional Museum: Institute for the Study of the Heritage of Bronislaw Pilsudski (NA SOKM / neg. 5-31).

his advocacy on behalf of his comrades. In another one of his reports, Taskin stated that Shternberg and his fellow exile Ivan Suvorov were behaving so “disrespectfully and even defiantly” during an interrogation by the Aleksandrovsk police, and that generally speaking they were having such a bad influence on the other political convicts and exiles, that they absolutely had to be exiled from the island’s administrative center.¹⁰

Shternberg sensed that his punishment was inevitable. As he wrote to Krol’ on March 2, 1890, his behavior was “most likely going to be responsible for his exile to some distant corner of Sakhalin,” where he would be “in close contact with bears and savages of the taiga” (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/363:13). A few days later he was indeed sent to Viakhtu, about sixty-five miles north of Aleksandrovsk.

An Ethnographer Is Born

A tiny outpost on a coastal road extending northward from Aleksandrovsk, Viakhtu served as a post office and a sentry house for intercepting fugitive



6. Shternberg (second from right) among Sakhalin exiles.
Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 280/1/194:19.

criminals and vagrants as well as a way station for travelers, particularly the Nivkh. Several houses inhabited by ex-convicts surrounded the guardhouse. In his typical romantic style, Shternberg described Viakhtu as

a lonely abandoned grave in the empty taiga along the banks of the Tatar Strait. . . . The gloomy sky hung low over the snowy savannah, bordered by a thick fog, and beyond it, it seemed, was the end of the world, a kingdom of endless ice and gloom. . . . In the house [there were] three former convicts turned officers and a military supervisor. Vigilantly they kept watch through a tiny window looking out onto the shore, thinking they might find a passerby or a runaway convict. . . . Their only hope . . . was to win a three-ruble prize for each fugitive captured. (Taksami 1961:109–110)

Until he finally could move to his own house in November 1890, he had to stay at the main house, where his corner lodgings were separated from those of the guards only by a thin partition.

Determined not to give up hope, Shternberg did his best to maintain his physical and spiritual health. He prepared a daily schedule of activities and kept

himself busy by performing calisthenics, splashing himself with cold water, chopping wood, hiking, keeping a diary, writing letters, studying foreign languages, and, of course, reading.¹¹ Still, he was often lonely and depressed, with his biggest source of frustration being a lack of truly stimulating mental labor. One of his diary entries said, “I pray to God for help” (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/2:10; cf. Gagen-Torn 1975:45).

Luckily, not far from the tiny Russian settlement was a small Nivkh camp. Other Nivkh also came to visit the area, while the nomadic Uil'ta and Evenk brought their reindeer herds there in the summer and engaged in trade with the Nivkh. With his long-standing interest in sociology and ethnology and plenty of free time on his hands, the lonely political exile began talking to the visiting natives about their culture. As an entry in his diary indicates, Shternberg's observations had a comparative as well as a topical focus from very early on:

Here on the broad pasture at the mouth of the Viakhtu River, the representatives of such different tribes as the reindeer-breeding Tungus [Evenk] and the dog-breeding Gilyak [Nivkh] organized annual rendezvous. This close proximity of . . . tribes differing in language, customs, and beliefs gave me an opportunity for making a comparative ethnographic study. . . . Of all of the three native groups in the area, the Gilyak, as a tribe least known and least described, attracted my greatest attention. It is true that I was aware of the fact that an academic expedition led by Shrenk and subsequent observers managed to collect a substantial amount of ethnographic data on this tribe, but I thought that since my predecessors had been all naturalists, the spiritual and social life of these people must have attracted less attention from these observers than the external ethnographic and anthropological characteristics.¹²
(Shternberg 1999:4–5)

A decade later he wrote, “My previous scholarly studies—mainly in the humanities—naturally pushed me into an area that turned out to have been least explored by Shrenk—the social and spiritual culture [of the Nivkh] (1908a:8).

Before his arrival at Viakhtu, Shternberg had apparently only interacted with the Nivkh on one occasion, but it had made a strong impact on him. As he wrote in his diary in mid-August 1889, he came across a disheveled old Nivkh

man surrounded by Russian boys. "Look at the old shaman, he will tell your fortune, sir, he will," they shouted to Shternberg. Feeling sorry for the Nivkh, the future ethnographer recorded the following thoughts: "This old man used to and might have continued till the end of his days to serve as a priest, as his tribe's semi-god, feared by everyone. He probably comes from an ancient clan, but now the children of a local bathhouse operator are mocking him. Maybe even now, when he returns to his tent, he feels once again that he is a wise and self-assured divine figure (obeyed by old people and feared by women) from whom the gods accept the human offerings. . . . Some day I will study them [the Nivkh]" (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/195:233).

Written in Shternberg's typically lofty prose, this passage tells us two important things. First, it shows his sympathy for a native who finds himself in a foreign and hostile environment, surrounded by people who do not understand or respect him. Second, it prefigures the young Populist's interest in ethnographic research.

Shternberg's friendly attitude toward the indigenous people and willingness to offer them generous servings of tea and sugar facilitated his work, so that soon visiting Nivkh and others would stay longer than usual at the post to speak to the bearded and bespectacled Russian man. He quickly realized, however, that he would learn a lot more if he visited the nearby native camp. A respectful guest who showed kindness to the young and the old, Shternberg took part in such activities as hunting and fur-trapping and offered the Nivkh basic medical assistance, using the knowledge gained through reading while sitting in jail. Initially the local natives mistook him for a big Russian official and began asking him to settle their internal disputes. But his special interest in their social life and customs soon changed their minds, and they began sharing the more intimate aspects of their social and religious life with him. During this initial phase of his research, Shternberg encountered his first "key informant," a man named Orkun, who lived about ten miles from Viakhtu. Periodically he drove his dogsled to the post and traded fish, game, and ethnographic information for Shternberg's bread, sugar, and tobacco.

This approach to ethnographic research shortly began to pay off: within two months Nivkh myths and other data started appearing in his diary. Before long it became clear to Shternberg that in order to carry out serious ethnographic research he had to know the Nivkh language, and so he began trying to learn

it. Most importantly, he started to grasp their kinship system, which seemed to be the typical “classificatory” kind he had already read about in scholarly works (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/195:234–235, 282/1/9:124–225, 282/1/107:38; cf. 1999:5). As Shternberg’s comrade Ivan Iuvachiov (Miroljubov) reminisced years later, “The . . . Gilyak saved him [from depression]. Shternberg buried himself completely in his work” (1927:7).

Shternberg was not the only political exile interested in the island’s indigenous inhabitants. Several others sent to reside in Rykovskoe, an agricultural settlement about forty-five miles southeast of Aleksandrovsk, tried to learn the Gilyak language and record their narratives. For some this was simply a diversion and not an entirely pleasant one. Iuvachiov tried to record their “fairy tales” but had to give up because of his own poor hearing, which had been damaged during a long period of solitary confinement before his arrival on Sakhalin. He also resented the smell of the natives who came to his lodgings to trade stories for food and gifts (Miroljubov 1901:84–87). For others, such research was a noble undertaking that made the world aware of the rich culture of the island’s aborigines, who were also victims of government oppression, and gave a powerless exile some sense of power and self-respect. Here is how Bronislaw Pilsudski (1866–1918), a Polish revolutionary socialist who had arrived on Sakhalin two years before Shternberg, described his reasons for studying the local native cultures:

Always dreaming about returning to my native land, I tried, as far as it was possible, to get rid of a depressing feeling that I am an exile here, that I am in chains, and have been torn away from everything that was dear to me. Hence, naturally, I felt an attraction toward the aborigines of Sakhalin, the only ones there who felt a sincere attachment to this land, which had been their home from ancient times and which was hated by those who had created the penal colony. Having established contact with these children of nature, who had been totally cornered by the intrusion of a very different kind of civilization, I understood that I possessed certain power and that I elicit certain gratitude from them, and all this during the worst years of my existence. . . . I felt good about being able to bring joy and hopes for a better future to the minds of these

simple tribesmen, worried about their life and survival, which was becoming more and more difficult.¹³ (Pilsudski 1998:11)

Shternberg met Pilsudski, who had already been recording Nivkh folklore for quite some time, when the former visited Rykovskoe to welcome the new year of 1891. The encounter apparently gave him additional encouragement in his study of Nivkh language and culture (see Pilsudski 1998:14–15; Mirolubov 1901:84–87, 1927).

The First Expedition

Fortunately for Shternberg and for Nivkh ethnology, Sakhalin's top official, General Vladimir Kononovich,¹⁴ a well-educated, progressive, and energetic administrator, learned about Shternberg's fledgling ethnographic research and decided to use him to gain a better knowledge of the island's indigenous population, particularly in its more isolated northern part.¹⁵ Offering a monetary payment as well as supplies, a dog sled with a driver, and a native guide, Kononovich asked Shternberg to conduct a census of the northern Nivkh, the least-known inhabitants of the entire island. He eagerly jumped at the offer, although he refused the salary. Once again, the exiled Populist chose to maintain as much independence from the local authorities as possible. In January 1891 he enthusiastically described his preparations for the long journey in a letter to Krol':

Such an expedition is very much to my liking. I have long been dreaming about something like this, especially since I have already had a chance to familiarize myself with the life of the local Gilyak [Nivkh]. I have made the following plan for this journey: to go up to the northernmost point of the island and then return south along the shore of the Sea of Okhotsk, coming back to Aleksandrovsik through the Tym region. Such a journey, which will include stops needed to describe and conduct a census of the local Gilyak [Nivkh] population, would take about a month and would involve covering about one thousand versts [650 miles]. . . . Such a journey is especially attractive because the northern Nivkh are the subject of the most incredible stories, including those about them being cannibals. . . . The Nivkh, however, deny all these fables. . . ." (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/363:17–18)

Besides being eager to gather information on the mysterious northern Nivkh, Shternberg, with his passionate love of nature, was clearly trying to break the monotony of his life in Viakhtu and exchange his tiny dwelling for the open spaces and beautiful vistas of northern Sakhalin (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/4/9:125).

On February 7 a small party consisting of Shternberg, a dog sled driver (a Jew from Nikolaevsk who knew a lot about the Nivkh), and an interpreter-guide named Obon (nicknamed Gibel'ka by the Russians) left Viakhtu. Even though Obon's command of Russian was not great, the fledgling ethnographer was lucky to have recruited him for the journey. In Shternberg's words, Obon was "the wealthiest man of his tribe, enjoying great fame for his wealth and skills, and famous for his intelligence and the arts of oratory. . . . [H]e enjoyed great popularity among his tribesmen" (1999:5). In addition, the man had had a lot of experience interacting with the Russians.¹⁶

The journey was not an easy one for Shternberg. Snowstorms, heavy rains, and gusty winds were only part of the challenge. Unaccustomed to traveling by a fast dogsled, he had to keep an eye on the road at all times to avoid hitting his head on a tree branch or falling off. On several occasions he also had to travel in a tiny native boat down rapid rivers and in stormy coastal waters. Shternberg had to adjust to staying in crowded and smoky native dwellings and eating unfamiliar food. The trip had to be cut short at the end of February, without a visit to the native settlements on the eastern shore of Sakhalin, because the food supplies, especially the fish used as dog feed, turned out to be insufficient. Nonetheless, the expedition was on the whole a success. Within three weeks Shternberg had managed to visit every Nivkh winter village along Sakhalin's western shore from Viakhtu to Cape Mariia, the island's northernmost point, and conduct a census of 1,040 Nivkh—the majority of the local aboriginal population. In addition to counting the natives, he compiled detailed information on the size of each family and kinship relations among its members, the number of dogs, sleds, and boats it owned, its annual migrations, and the amount of fur it procured during the winter.¹⁷ Given the circumstances of the investigation, the data on kinship, marriage, and other aspects of Nivkh social organization and law was especially rich. Less detailed, though still rather substantial, was the information collected on their religious beliefs and practices. Finally, the trip enabled Shternberg to gather a great deal of linguistic

data and significantly improve his command of the Nivkh language. This expedition played a major role in his development as an ethnographer as well as an ethnologist.¹⁸

In most settlements the natives welcomed Shternberg and his party and willingly answered his detailed questions. What might account for such cooperative behavior? Most importantly, the Nivkh clearly saw him as a government official. After all, on this and every other one of his Sakhalin expeditions Shternberg carried an impressive-looking document, signed by the head of the Aleksandrovsk district, instructing the local “elders and chiefs” to “provide him with all forms of legitimate assistance,” including food and supplies (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/156:10). In addition, his investigation of each new settlement usually began with a visit to the dwelling of the Russian-appointed native headman or overseer (*starosta*), whom he interviewed first. This explains why on several occasions Shternberg’s hosts asked him to settle some internal dispute or relate their complaints to the Russian authorities (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/190:50).¹⁹ In fact, in several communities Shternberg himself appointed a *starosta*, something he could only do with the authorities’ permission. Efforts to create a network of such officials, who would have some command of the Russian language and could serve as intermediaries between the Russians and the natives, began in the 1880s (cf. Grant 1995:64). However, as Shternberg himself pointed out, the *starosta* system was inefficient because most native communities continued to be ruled by the traditional elders and wealthy men.²⁰ Nevertheless, whether out of fear or a desire to placate the Russians, the Nivkh were willing to have these new overseers and showed at least some respect to them. It is also possible that at least in some of the communities Shternberg visited, the traditional system of authority had already been undermined by depopulation and increased wealth differences between relatives, which might have encouraged the local natives to experiment with a new system introduced by the Russian administration.

It might seem ironic that a committed revolutionary and a strong critic of the government’s mistreatment of the local natives would act as a powerful official from Aleksandrovsk. But his conduct makes more sense in light of the fact that Shternberg, despite his radicalism, never questioned the Russian state’s right to colonize the Far East and rule over its inhabitants. Through his visits to the Nivkhs and, later, his contributions to the regional liberal press,

Shternberg was trying to improve and reform the colonial system, not abolish it. Shternberg's position is best illustrated by an incident that occurred in one of the communities he visited, when the local Nivkh elected, with his encouragement and assistance, not only a *starosta* but five judges as well. In this case Shternberg told the people that since this was his first visit to their village, he did not know anyone and had to rely on them to select their new officials. Demonstrating sensitivity as well as his Populist approach to native social organization, he asked them to select one judge from each of the local clans and told them that the chosen men had to be "wise, honest, knowledgeable about the Gilyak customs, and impartial to the rich and to his friends." He concluded his speech by stating that "if the judges would do their job justly and if the people would obey their decisions, there would be plenty of fish in the sea, plenty of game in the forest, and many opportunities to make some money by working [for the Russians]." According to Shternberg, the people present discussed his proposal "with a great deal of interest and seriousness" (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/190:63).²¹

Despite the respect and a certain amount of fear that Shternberg seems to have inspired in his hosts, not all of them were willing to cooperate with him. Precisely because they saw him as a government official, some Nivkh were afraid to give him the information requested. In one village he was accused of collecting information on the inhabitants in order to sell it in St. Petersburg. In another a man refused to give him his son's name out of fear that this would enable the authorities to draft the young man into the army.²² A few of the Nivkh feared that the census would result in their being forced to pay a tribute in furs (*iasak*) to the Russians, the way some of the other indigenous Siberian tribes had to. Finally, some of them simply found Shternberg's questions boring and either refused to respond to them or offered only brief answers.

When problems of this kind threatened ethnographic research, Shternberg was forced to rely on his interpreter, an eloquent and cunning man. Using a stick-and-carrot approach, Obon would tell the suspicious Nivkh that the goal of the census was to discover the poor people in the village in order to help them. However, he would also say that those who refused to be counted and give their names to Shternberg would be held responsible for their actions and would not be able to conduct any business with the Russians in Aleksandrovska (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/7:39–40, 282/1/190:48–49; Shternberg 1999:6).

Shternberg's guide, however, only rarely used such threats. In fact, the ethnographer's diary frequently mentions that the Nivkh gave him the information he sought "willingly and happily" and often took their time doing so.²³ They obviously liked something about Shternberg. To begin with, in good Nivkh fashion, he always generously shared his own food and other supplies with his hosts, showing particular kindness to the old, young, and infirm. He frequently offered medical assistance as one of his trump cards. Although much of his treatment was limited to distributing medications, his reputation as a "Russian shaman" spread from one community to another, magnified further by Obon's stories about his boss's miraculous healing power (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/190:48, 52).

While Obon clearly deserved a lot of credit for the expedition's success, he was not without faults. In fact, in his diary Shternberg mentioned the guide's occasional laziness as well as his fickleness, vanity, and love of womanizing. Worst of all, his command of Russian was limited. For all these reasons Shternberg also tried also to rely on local interpreters whenever he could find them. Luckily, in a number of the villages he visited, Shternberg found native men who spoke some Russian.

The fact that Shternberg had already gained some knowledge of Nivkh language and culture also helped break the ice. His hosts were invariably impressed with his ability to use simple native greetings and recognize basic kinship terms (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/190:45). Finally, one should not discount an element of curiosity.²⁴ The ethnographer was definitely a kind of Russian most Nivkh had never met before. Not only was he friendly and respectful, he was genuinely interested in their way of life. Moreover, he made an effort to learn their language and had his own interesting stories to tell. Finally, he showed them pictures from an ethnographic atlas, a beautiful book depicting the empire's various peoples dressed in their native costumes, which invariably aroused great curiosity among the children and the adults (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/190:42).

When all else failed, Shternberg would deliver a speech to his suspicious hosts, telling them that a "big god" had sent him from far away to find out how well his children were living, if they were starving to death or decimated by disease, how diligently they gave sacrifices to their gods, and whether they followed their old laws. Such speeches would usually endear his hosts to him (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/195:220).

While we can only speculate about the Nivkh's attitudes toward Shternberg, his own sentiments toward them and his entire ethnographic project are easier to gauge. On the whole he enjoyed the expedition. The austere beauty of the island never ceased to amaze and inspire him. A romantic notion that he was the first European explorer to set foot in this wild country and befriend its noble inhabitants "unspoiled by civilization" added to his feeling of exaltation. Several passages in Shternberg's diary and letters to Krol' illustrate his conclusion that the winter 1891 journey was good for him. Here are two telling ones:

The beautiful memories, full of poetry as well as very instructive, will remain with me forever. Being a nervous person, I found that my close contact with the life of barbarians had a calming effect on me and strengthened me. . . . How wonderful it is to be lying in a small Gilyak boat and going down a scenic and rapid river to the Sea of Okhotsk! How wonderful are these lively conversations with my travel companions! How wonderful are these nights spent under the canopy of the trees lit up beautifully by the bright light of the fire or spending a rainy day inside a tent, sitting on a bearskin and reading the latest book! And all this in a place where even a savage has rarely set his foot! Or those wonderful nights spent in the native tents in pleasant conversation, census taking, and making [ethnographic] observations. (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/363:27–27a)

The company of barbarians is very much to my liking. Human nature is very much the same everywhere. And in those cases where it reveals itself in a very natural and open manner, there it has a particularly good effect on one's mood. During a month of staying in their "tents," I had a chance to get a very close look at and share their life. This gave me a chance to learn that many of the things that were admired [by the westerners] in "savage" life were real and not some utopia. Their life is wholesome and full [tse'l'na i pol'na], and the individual and the group are linked together by natural bonds.²⁵ (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/363:35a)

An admirer of ordinary people, be they Russian peasants or native Siberians, Shternberg came to like the Nivkh, whom he saw as being more innocent and

natural, and consequently happier, than the “civilized” people of his own society. After listening to a group of boys playing a native musical instrument and singing, he wrote in his diary, “There is something primitively innocent [*per-vobytno-nevinnoe*] about these children who do not know and will never know either the bitterness of doubts or the failed and disappointing chase after the seductions of civilization” (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/190:62). What particularly appealed to this socialist in Nivkh life was their mutual help, the care offered to old relatives, and their generosity (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/195:223).

So committed was the young Populist to this ideology of what might be called “benign primitivism” that he would not question it even when individual natives did not fit the noble savage stereotype. Obon, whom he came to know better that winter than any other Nivkh, was not an innocent “child of nature” at all. In fact, Shternberg often found him annoyingly stubborn and quickly realized that despite the man’s friendly attitude toward the bearded Russian chief or boss (*tiangi*), he was definitely looking out for his own interests throughout the journey. Occasionally, when Obon became particularly lazy or stubborn, and especially when he talked back rudely to his employer, Shternberg would record his irritation, betraying a lingering sense of his own superiority over a man he would refer to as a “barbarian” (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/3:90).²⁶

What about his fieldwork methods as well as the nature and quality of the data his first expedition generated? Census taking clearly imposed serious limitations on Shternberg’s fieldwork because it necessitated moving rather quickly from one native settlement to another. In fact, Shternberg rarely stayed in one place for more than a day or two, except when bad weather forced him to do so. Consequently much of the data he accumulated during the expedition was derived from interviews, which focused heavily on demography and social organization. Most of these interviews were not recorded verbatim but summarized by the ethnographer (cf. Roon and Sirina 2004:55). While Shternberg tried to question every family head, a significant portion of his ethnographic data seems to have been obtained from male native elders and leaders.²⁷ His field notes did contain a fair amount of his own personal observations on various aspects of native life, but this was not exactly the kind of “participant observation” that Malinowski would advocate several decades later.

At the same time census taking was well suited for a study of kinship and marriage, or at least kinship terminology and the rules governing kinship and marriage. Having quickly mastered the basic Nivkh kinship terms, Shternberg began filling index card after index card with information on the ideal forms of their social organization. The format of his project also allowed him to collect a good deal of data on specific Nivkh clans and their history. Finally, the assignment given to him by the authorities accounts for the rather detailed information he gathered on native economy and technology. However, these aspects of Nivkh culture clearly interested him much less than social organization. Given his university training in law, it is not surprising that he also queried his hosts at length about warfare and other forms of conflict as well as their traditional system of justice.

Despite the fact that formal interviews were Shternberg's main method of data gathering, he used any other opportunity to question the Nivkh about their culture. His own non-native sled driver and especially Obon, with whom he spent a great deal of time during this journey, were his "key informants." In fact, this tireless ethnographer never missed a chance to pick up a new piece of information about the natives. Shternberg's diary entry for the first day of the expedition, for example, opens with a discussion of the Nivkh customs of blood revenge, prompted by a story he was told by his driver about a recent murder of one Nivkh man by another. This account, in turn, prompted Obon to share with his boss the details of the payment he had to make a certain Nivkh man for having accidentally killed his brother (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/3/:82).

Similarly, Shternberg's observation of native behavior and informal questioning of his guide and hosts allowed him to compile a fairly large body of information on Nivkh religious beliefs and, to a lesser extent, practices, which he either heard about or actually witnessed during his travels when they were performed by his interpreter or by other native men who joined him for part of the journey.²⁸ Despite Shternberg's interest in "primitive religion," however, his data on the subject is not as extensive as the data on social organization. He only briefly discussed the bear festival, the most important collective ritual of the Nivkh, in his published ethnography based on the winter 1891 expedition. This is particularly surprising given the facts that the bear festival took place in the winter and that on several occasions Shternberg happened to be visiting

a settlement while the ritual was actually in progress. His diary suggests that at least in one instance the natives were reluctant to have him witness this key ritual. Was it because it was too sacred, or were they simply too shy to reveal to an outsider a ceremony involving animal sacrifice, a practice that Russian officials must have considered barbaric? The latter interpretation seems to be confirmed by the fact that on this occasion, Obon himself referred to the bear ceremony as “stupid” and was reluctant to discuss it (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/190:50). Even when Shternberg was finally able to witness a portion of the bear festival, his description is brief and includes no native exegesis. Besides his hosts’ reluctance to discuss the ritual, his own inability to appreciate its centrality in Nivkh culture was responsible for his giving it short shrift.

Although, from our modern-day vantage point, Shternberg’s first ethnographic expedition clearly had its limitations, he himself was satisfied with its results. As he wrote to Krol’ on May 19, 1891, “Besides giving me personal pleasure, this journey provided me with a great deal of valuable scientific facts” (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/363:35a). After all, his first foray “into the field” had a definite focus. His earlier reading in the social sciences, his initial observations on the social practice of the Nivkh living in the vicinity of Viakhtu, and, last but not least, his reading of Engels’s *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (1884) while traveling through northern Sakhalin (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/190:97a), had given his expedition a clear topical focus: he had set out to gather data on the Nivkh social organization in general and “survivals of group marriage” in particular, and lo and behold, he had found it! He boasted in the same letter to his best friend,

My main accomplishment has been the study of their social organization and marriage system. I discovered among them a system of kinship nomenclature and a system of family and clan law [semeino-rodovoe pravo], which are identical to those, which exist among the Iroquois and to the famous Punulua family (in the Sandwich Islands). In other words, I found the remnants of that form of marriage, upon which Morgan had built his theory and which serves as the starting point of a brochure *Ursprung der Familie* [*Origin of the Family*].

At first I was afraid to believe my discovery. However, during the census taking, when I tried not to miss a single family or a

single dwelling, I asked detailed questions about the terms of address used by the various family and clan members and about their sexual rights and finally became convinced that my discovery had been correct. Despite the fact that quite a few descriptions of the Gilyak exist, none have addressed this issue, at least in the works known to me. I plan to publish a report about those aspects of the Gilyak social life that I have studied and hope that it would of interest not only to the specialists. (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/363:36–39)

The First Anthropological Publication

By the time Shternberg was writing these words, he was already living in Aleksandrovsk, where he had been allowed to return soon after the completion of his study of the northern Nivkh. With all his meager savings spent on food in Viakhtu, he was now penniless and had to move back to the house of his friend Vol'nov, where he had stayed in 1889 during his first few months on the island. It was not an ideal place to work, but Shternberg could not wait for better accommodation; he was determined to analyze his voluminous data and present a detailed report on his journey—what would become his first ethnographic paper—to the authorities.²⁹

Presumably unsure of what to do with his piece, Shternberg gave the completed essay, entitled “The Gilyaks of Sakhalin,” to Konoнович, who then mailed it to the Society of the Aficionados of the Natural Sciences, Anthropology, and Ethnography (OLEAE) in late 1891.³⁰ Established in 1864 and affiliated with Moscow University, it was Russia’s second anthropological society, the first being the Ethnography Division of the Russian Geographical Society (Tokarev 1966). On October 10, 1892, its secretary, Nikolai Ianchuk, read Shternberg’s paper at the society’s meeting. Soon thereafter a leading liberal Moscow newspaper, *Russkie Vedomosti*, published a brief summary of the “Gilyaks.” A month later Friedrich Engels read this summary and, seeing how it provided major new support for his (and Lewis Henry Morgan’s) scheme of the evolution of marriage, wrote a note about it in the German newspaper *Die Neue Zeit* (II, No. 12, Band 2:373–375), entitled “A Recently Discovered Case of Group Marriage” (Engels 1972:238–241). The entire text of the essay was finally published in the second issue of the 1893 edition of OLEAE’s journal *Etnograficheskoe Obozrenie* (Ethnographic review)

(Shternberg 1893). That same year a slightly abbreviated and edited version of the same piece was published in the September issue of *Tiuremnyi Vestnik* (Courier of prisons), the official journal of the Main Office of Prisons. This publication seems to have been aimed at promoting Kononovich's image as an enlightened administrator (Anonymous 1893).³¹

Although Shternberg conducted his second ethnographic expedition before sending "The Gilyaks of Sakhalin" to OLEAE, the text of the essay indicates that, except for its census data presented in its short fifth section, it was based primarily on his winter 1891 study. While this forty-six-page-long essay begins with an introductory section dealing with the origin of the Nivkh and their material culture, the work does not represent a comprehensive ethnography by the standards of its time. Instead, it has a clear topical focus, with the two largest sections devoted to social organization and law, and a shorter one to religion.

The essay begins with a discussion of Nivkh self-designation and their terms for and ideas about neighboring ethnic groups.³² Shternberg then speculated about the origin of the Sakhalin Nivkh. Using his own census data, he argued that the latter had to have arrived from the mainland because many of their island clans have branches there. While the question of Nivkh origins (or "ethnogenesis" in Soviet anthropological terminology) remains unresolved and hotly debated topic to this day, Shternberg's use of data from Nivkh language, oral traditions, and clan structure is a noteworthy indication of his wish to offer more than a simple descriptive ethnography (Grant 1995:49). This tendency to speculate and theorize, sometimes on the basis of limited data, remained typical for most of his ethnographic works. The author's theoretical viewpoint is revealed very early on, when he tried to separate the various aspects of material culture and economy borrowed by the Nivkh from their "more civilized" neighbors from the indigenous cultural traits, which he saw as indicators of the level of their own independent evolutionary development. As hunters and fishers the Nivkh should, in his view, be assigned to Morgan's stage of "savagery," but their reliance on the domesticated dog makes them the candidates for a higher step on the evolutionary ladder—"the lowest stage of barbarism" (1893:5). As the fledgling ethnographer put it, however, "the most important evidence for solving the problem of the level of their independent cultural development and making broad ethnographic generalizations are their family

and clan institutions [*semeino-rodovye uchrezhdeniia*], which I have studied in detail” (1893:5–6).

These institutions are the subject of a lengthy second section of the essay. Shternberg began by stating that an observer of a Nivkh family would initially assume that only a single man has legitimate marital rights to his wife or wives. However, a deeper analysis of Nivkh social life reveals that this is not the case. First, the Nivkh use a classificatory system of kinship nomenclature in which a man refers to all his father’s brothers as “fathers” and their wives as “mothers.” Moreover, he refers to all his mother’s sisters as “mothers” and their husbands as “fathers.” At the same time a man does not use the term “father” for his mother’s brothers or “mother” for his father’s sisters. Following Morgan (via Engels), Shternberg asserted that these and other “peculiar” kinship terms are not the result of the “poverty of language,” as some scholars have argued, but a reflection of actual marriage laws and social practices. He went on to say that a similar system of kinship terms exists among the Iroquois and some of the tribes of India, except that in these latter cases the terminology no longer reflects any actual marital practices. In the Nivkh case, however, he found that there is still at least some correlation between the two. In his words, “Even today every Gilyak has a marital right [a right to have sex] toward his brothers’ wives and his wife’s sisters” (1893:7). Shternberg admitted that in the present these rights were not exercised all the time and that when they were, they were often met with protests or at least displeasure on the part of the woman’s husband. Still, he insisted that such relations were not considered sinful or adulterous and that they were “at least juridically real” (1893:7). All this is sufficient for him to conclude that

The modern-day individual form of marriage among the Gilyak is an innovation, while these major survivals of their old social system make it similar to the famous Punulua family, which still existed in the first half of this century in Hawaii. . . . And what is even more surprising, just as in the case of the Punulua family, the sisters’ husbands and the brothers’ wives call each other *punulua* (companion, comrade, friend). . . . [A]mong the Gilyaks these categories of relatives call each other *navkh* (the word has the same meaning as *punulua*). This is an example of how amazingly similar the social

institutions of peoples separated from each other by oceans could be, even to the minor details. (Shternberg 1893:7)

Being strongly committed to evolutionism, Shternberg cavalierly dismissed the fact that among the Nivkh the older brother is not allowed to have sexual intercourse with his younger brothers' wives and uses a rather weak argument: "This limitation is of the more recent origin and its very existence serves to underscore, so to speak, the younger brothers' right to have [sexual] relations with their older brothers' wives as well as the wife's sisters" (1893:7).

Having briefly dealt with the "survival of group marriage" on northern Sakhalin, Shternberg moved to a detailed discussion of the composition and functioning of the exogamous agnatic Nivkh clan. Here his ethnography changes to some extent from "diachronic" (or evolutionist) speculation to what appears to be "synchronic" (a kind of functionalist) description. His interest in the clan was a reflection not only of his realization that this institution was central to the entire Nivkh sociocultural order but also of his Populist fascination with a relatively egalitarian "primitive" social unit that provided each member with help and physical protection in times of need and a strong sense of belonging. One key function of the clan that he discusses in some detail because it clearly defined clan membership is blood revenge. In addition to summarizing the clan's sociopolitical functions, Shternberg also paid serious attention to the symbols and rituals that united clan members. For example, he compared the custom of breaking up a sacred stone used for making fire whenever a clan fragments with the ancient Greek practice of a person taking a firebrand from his family's altar whenever he went on a journey (1893:10). Being focused on the clan, Shternberg interpreted the clan-sponsored bear festival as a "purely social/clan-centered" (*rodovoi*) event, rather than a religious ceremony. Thus his theoretical bias as well as the practical limitations of his first ethnographic expedition prevented him from a more comprehensive understanding and appreciation of the spiritual significance of this core Nivkh ritual.³³

One of the most interesting aspects of his discussion of the clan is his argument about the effect of participating in the life of this remarkable institution on each of its members' psyches and the entire Nivkh culture. As he put it,

This inevitable belonging of each Gilyak to a large group of relatives has made a permanent imprint on his entire spiritual disposition,

character, customs, and mental development. The habit of making all important decisions only after a group discussion and defending the interests of one's clan relatives, the custom of collective responsibility in cases of bloodshed, these common festivals and sacrificial offerings, this tight kinship connection between men of several generations, and, finally, this need and habit of dwelling in a large tent with dozens of relatives, which forces the Nivkh person to live constantly under the gaze of the others—all of this had to contribute toward the development of a personality that is sociable, talkative, serious, and sensitive in matters of personal honor. (1893:17–18)

This passage is followed by a glowing description of the lively atmosphere inside a Nivkh tent, where “no one is bored” and where guests are welcomed with great hospitality. Since Shternberg presented little concrete data on the history of specific Nivkh clans, it is difficult to establish whether he was describing the clan as it actually functioned in the early 1890s or was painting an idealized picture of this institution. The only hint that late-nineteenth-century clans might not have been as cohesive as Shternberg the evolutionist-Populist was suggesting, is his own admission of the fact that contemporary clans were already divided between different settlements. His explanation for the fragmentation of clans is the practice of the husband having to move to his wife's village, which he interprets by invoking an evolutionist (or Morganian) argument that this custom is a “survival of an archaic social order based on a matriarchal principle” (1893:16).³⁴

He continued his discussion of the Nivkh social order in the fourth section of the essay, “Law,” which for some reason comes after the one dealing with religion. Here he returned to the subject of the Nivkh marriage system, but instead of speculating about its evolution, he outlined its present-day functioning. Using several episodes from the Hebrew Bible for comparison, he described the bridewealth and bride-price system, the marriage ceremony, and ideas and practices related to sexual morality. In his discussion of the latter Shternberg emphasized that while their ideas about morality differed from those of “civilized” peoples, the Nivkh did adhere strictly to their own rules regarding appropriate sexual partner. He then proceeded to describe the relations between

family members, the rules of property ownership and inheritance, crime and punishment, and leadership.

Once again, he strongly emphasized the positive qualities of the natives, such as honesty and diligence. He claimed that theft among them was very rare and that murder, which was rare in the first place, never occurred out of greed. When murder did happen, it was usually motivated by the law of blood revenge or by passion. In his discussion of Nivkh crime and punishment, Shternberg once again demonstrated his ambivalence about the effects of the imposition of the Russian rule on the natives. On the one hand, he saw the decline of violent crime in Nivkh society (including blood revenge) as the result of their fear of the Russian justice system. On the other hand, consumption of Russian vodka had increased the number of violent crimes in recent decades (1893:40–41).

As a true Populist, Shternberg described the functioning of the traditional Nivkh courts (composed of representatives of various clans) in very positive terms. He then stated regretfully that the prestige and power of these courts was declining because the Russified Nivkh, who were the main sources of conflict and litigation, refused to show them respect. And as a Populist reformer who himself appointed several native judges, Shternberg recommended that the Russian administration give these traditional courts or a modified version of them (with members elected from different clans) its official approval (1893:40–41). As he stated, “My observations have shown the Gilyaks are capable of competently electing people to serve as judges and appreciate the value of an elected court, which has been approved by the Russian administration” (1893:41).

In contrast to his rather detailed description of the Nivkh social order, Shternberg’s analysis of their religion was rather brief. Much of this section is devoted to a discussion of Nivkh beliefs about spirits (“gods”) and ways of keeping them happy and well disposed towards humans. The author emphasized the “anthropomorphism” of this religion and offered some interesting examples of ways in which religious beliefs sanctioned social conduct and moral behavior. He also briefly described several types of rituals. Shamanism, which he did not seem to have much data on, is mentioned only in passing in the following caveat: “Shamanism, with its ecstatic behavior, appears to me to be a borrowed phenomenon, which does not fit in with the rest of the Gilyak religion” (1893:22).

On the whole, Shternberg seems ambivalent when evaluating the degree of sophistication of this particular “primitive religion.” On the one hand, as a sympathetic observer, he described Nivkh sacrifices as very serious affairs that are sometimes “touching.” In this way he appears to have been deeply moved by the offerings made by his awestruck traveling companions to the powerful spirit of the “Head of the Land” (Cape Mariia). On the other hand, as both an evolutionist and a monotheist, he saw this religion as being definitely inferior to the “great world religions.” As he put it, “There is a huge difference between the religious disposition of a Gilyak and that of a Christian, a Muslim, a Jew, or a Buddhist. . . . The soul’s yearning for the deity in our sense seems to be foreign to a Gilyak. For him everything is clear in his religion—there are no doubts and suffering in it. Religious ecstasy is foreign to him. Shamanism with its ecstasy seems to be something they have borrowed from other peoples, since it does not correspond to the spirit of the Gilyak religion” (1893:22).³⁵

While Shternberg’s 1893 essay is clearly aimed at describing the traditional Nivkh culture, or what he called its “so far undisturbed foundations,” he does not completely ignore the changes caused by the natives’ interaction with the more powerful and advanced neighbors and newcomers. As a Populist sympathetic to the natives, he saw most of these innovations as being detrimental to native life. In his discussion of the traditional Nivkh system of government, he noted that the Manchu and especially the Russian influence have almost destroyed the power of the clan elder, which was so essential to the smooth functioning of the central unit of their social order (1893:15). A passage listing generosity, hospitality, and other Nivkh virtues ends with the following observation:

Despite a long period of submission to the Manchurians and a corrosive influence of the vagabond [Russian] . . . the Gilyak moral order has retained many virtues of primitive tribes. However, their way of life is totally doomed. In one or maximum two generations the Gilyak of the mainland will become completely Russified and along with the benefits of civilization he will also acquire all its vices. The Gilyaks should be given credit for not giving up their traditional ways easily; still, willy-nilly they succumb to the new influences. At first they were puzzled and upset by the lies and exploitation they were encountering but eventually they will end up acting

in the same way. Being the most distant from the centers of sedentism [Russian settlement], the Gilyaks of Sakhalin have a chance to preserve their ways longer than others. But even they are experiencing the effects of the Russian influence. From every [Sakhalin Nivkh] community people go to Nikolaevsk to make purchases and work for wages, and every Gilyak who returns home after having worked there brings back the same ideas and values which a young man from a Russian village brings home after having worked in a large city. Moreover, the wages earned [by the Nivkh] in the towns, which go up and down all the time, are gradually destroying the primitive equality, which is the key feature of a rather simple economy of such peoples as the Gilyaks. Along with the wealth earned in a new environment, people also acquire new economic practices of this environment.³⁶ (1893:19)

Nonetheless, the 1893 essay tends to present the Gilyak culture as a timeless, “traditional” one. This is a far cry from how Shternberg, in “The Udskii District,” an essay prepared for a commercial regional publication and published in 1896, portrayed the effects of contact with the Russians on Amur and Sakhalin native life (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/10 [1896]).

The Summer of 1891 Expedition

The authorities must have been impressed with the results of Shternberg’s first expedition, because a few months later they asked him to undertake another one. This time his task was to conduct a census of the Nivkh and Uil’ta of the eastern part of the island, traveling northeast along the Tym River to the Sea of Okhotsk and back south along the seashore to the village of Ngambovo (Chamgvo) (see map in Shternberg 2001a:219). Poorly known to the administration and the island’s Russian population alike, the Nivkh inhabitants of this area were disparagingly referred to as the “Black Gilyaks” and, like their west coast neighbors, were rumored to be cannibals.³⁷

As on his first journey, Shternberg kept a diary in which he recorded his thoughts and impressions about the scenery and the people he encountered as well as some ethnographic data.³⁸ In addition, he used index cards to record census data and separate notebooks for most of the other data he collected. Like the first expedition, this one also lasted about three weeks, commencing

on June 22 and ending on August 15. In several ways this expedition was less arduous than the first one. First, the weather was obviously much milder than it was in February and summer travel by boat was faster and easier than riding a dog sled. Second, Shternberg's first expedition had already taught him a lot about how to conduct censuses and interviews and interact with the natives. Finally, he had with him his old guide and interpreter Obon, who had significantly improved his command of the Nivkh language since the last expedition by working on his Nivkh texts and brushing up on his language skills with the help of visiting native men. Still, the second expedition was no easy journey: going through rapids in a small and fragile boat while being bitten by gnats and mosquitoes was not much fun.

In addition to Obon, three young Nivkh men ranging in age from fifteen to twenty-five accompanied the ethnographer. Once again Shternberg's impressions of the natives, including his companions, were strongly colored by what I have called "benign romantic primitivism." He clearly saw himself as a heroic traveler entering "the heart of darkness" in the company of simple but noble and "wholesome" men, interaction with whom calmed the nervous personality of a much more complicated and "civilized" man:

I am lying on the bottom of the boat, allowing my thoughts and fantasies to wonder. I am in a kind of semi-daze. But then some sudden movement of the boat or some Gilyak exclamation—and you are brought back to reality. And these high riverbanks, this fragile little boat, which is taking you from the strange "there" to the odd "here" appear strange to you. They are indeed strange, these little barbarians with their dirty shirts and braids. And you too seem a stranger to yourself. How did you end up in this company? Who brought you here from the midst of civilization? (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/3:15)

These wholesome personalities [tseł'nye natyry], whose mood is not saddened or exalted by the voices of nature, exert a calming influence on the neurotic personality of a civilized man. They warm themselves near the fire and drink their strong tea with gusto while discussing me as a person from another planet. However, as soon

as I take out my pencil and notebook and begin recording my impressions, they show deep amazement. What would they say if they knew the nature of my notes? They would most likely have a good laugh at my foolishness. But they probably thought that I was using some mysterious characteristics of the weather and the landscape to establish the location of petroleum [the area was known for it] or maybe I was writing a stern order which announced that all the Oroks [Uil'ta] were to be drafted into the army, or something else like that. (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/3:39a-40)

Many, many times, while I sat with them near the fire, treating them with small shots of vodka and sharing a common meal with them, I watched their happy faces and their animated fun. And at that moment I myself became joyful, I myself became a wholesome natural man, and felt happiness. Nobody and nothing can fill me with so much joyfulness [zhizneradostnost', literally "love of life"] as barbarians and simple people in general; and for that I am indebted to them. (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/3:13-13a)

There is obviously something patronizing in these comments and confessions.³⁹ There is even a bit of condescending ethnocentric prejudice in the following portrait of one of his three guides: "As a barbarian, he is suspicious, cunning, and often gives perfunctory answers just to get rid of your questions" (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/3:11). Yet as a Populist who admired indigenous Siberian and common Russian people alike, Shternberg was ambivalent even about this man, who on a number of occasions upset him a great deal: "He is a big child, fickle and touched by civilization, yet still stubbornly committed to his barbarian virtues. Despite his love for Russian shirts, dishes, and women, he is a strong and brave man who is deeply in love with his taiga and freedom, and would never become a Russian" (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/3:11). This and other comments illustrate how Shternberg could simultaneously praise the natives for their commitment to the simple, but honest and pure, values of their aboriginal culture yet acknowledge that particular natives were not always uncomplicated, easygoing, or cooperative. It is as if two men wrote these travel notes: a romantic Populist intellectual and an astute and realistic observer of human character and conduct.⁴⁰

Shternberg's census taking and research was clearly facilitated by the fact that a number of the villages he visited that summer had already heard good things about him. A good word from Obon or his other companions upon their arrival in a village did not hurt either.⁴¹ Once again, many of the natives he visited thought he was a high Russian official. Shternberg himself promoted this image when he introduced himself to his hosts upon arrival as a "Russian *tiangi*" (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/3:22). In one village a man asked Shternberg to issue him a "ticket" certifying that he was truly married to his wife, so as to prevent others from taking her away from him.⁴² On at least one occasion he was mistaken for a Russian religious official: the local Uil'tas asked him to baptize children who had not been baptized during the last visit of a priest (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/3:54a). I suspect that Shternberg refused to perform the baptism because he was not a Christian.

Census taking remained a useful method for collecting data on economic resources and activities as well as the composition of each family and community, and Shternberg was clearly becoming an expert in it. On several occasions he noted in his diary that it took him only a couple of hours to count an entire village. Yet he clearly grew tired of this activity and preferred to do his own ethnographic research. During his visit to one coastal village, Shternberg complained in his diary that he felt worn out after several hours of "a dull repetition of the same questions and equally dull waiting for the answers, which were sometimes irritating because of their evasiveness." In many communities the people did not mind being counted, but occasionally fears like those Shternberg had encountered during his winter trip surfaced, explaining the evasiveness that irritated him so much; in one Nivkh village people asked him whether the census would result in their young males being drafted into the Russian army.

Interviewing remained his main method of obtaining ethnographic data. He was clearly becoming a more experienced but also a more aggressive interviewer. Here is Shternberg's telling description of an interview he conducted with an Uil'ta man: "The poor Feodor had to sweat it out while I conducted my lengthy inquiry, asking him over and over again about the Orok [Uil'ta] kinship terminology and other customs. . . . I must admit that I was merciless as usual. The torture and suffering that Feodor and his relatives, who tried to help him, had to endure, did not trouble my conscience" (Shternberg Collection,

SPFA RAN, 282/1/3:55). This was a peculiar comment from a man who was so fond of “simple barbarians”! At the same time Shternberg’s willingness to share information with his interviewees promoted good will and helped him gather interesting new data. In one of the Nivkh villages, for example, his inquiries about Nivkh religion elicited a question about whether the Russians believed in the same God. Drawing on his own religious background, Shternberg responded that indeed there was only one God and that the various peoples of the world were all his children who had long ago wandered away from their common birthplace and lost touch with one another (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/3:35).

In addition to these interviews and the observations of native life that he made while staying in the villages, Shternberg relied heavily on long conversations with his four companions. The fact that his command of Nivkh was improving undoubtedly helped him learn a lot from them (even though they did speak some Russian). On one occasion his young friends explained to him how their polygamous marriage system worked and how a man in their society was allowed to have sex with his brother’s wife and his wife’s sisters, thus providing him with further evidence for his reconstruction of “group marriage” among the Nivkh. The latter was clearly at the center of Shternberg’s attention throughout the expedition. On several occasions he wrote in his field notes that he was finding “brilliant confirmation of his earlier discovery” (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/4:1309).

While he focused once again on social organization, Shternberg also pursued his interest in native religion, learning a lot of new things about Nivkh cosmology, taboos, and rituals. One new religious phenomenon that he encountered was shamanism. Unfortunately the shaman he met was rather evasive in his answers and did not conduct any séances while Shternberg was visiting his village. But Shternberg used his own experience to gain a better sense of the Gilyak attitudes toward powerful spirits. Upon reaching the “Head of the Land,” the northernmost edge of Sakhalin, which the natives respected and feared greatly, he announced to his companions that he was planning to climb the top of the mountain in order to collect plants and minerals there. Despite their frightened pleas not to do that, the ethnographer insisted on making the journey and offering some candy to the spirit of the mountain. Upon his safe return, he recited an impromptu prayer “in the local native style,” which

he had supposedly offered to the mountain. His companions were very impressed (1904a:56–57).

One important difference between this expedition and the first one was that now Shternberg was spending a lot more time recording Nivkh (and to a lesser extent Uil'ta) words and trying to master Nivkh grammar. Despite the differences between the west coast dialect of Nivkh, which he had encountered earlier, and the Tym one that he was now dealing with, he was able to learn the basic grammar rules and begin speaking it. His biggest challenge was mastering some of Nivkh's more difficult "guttural and nasal sounds." His notes indicate that he was studying the language not only to speak it but because of a strong interest in linguistics.

In addition to ethnographic research, Shternberg conducted some archeological excavations and collected faunal samples. All in all, he viewed his second expedition as equally successful as the first.

The Exiled Populist as Ethnographer, Natural Scientist, and Linguist

Shternberg spent much of his time during the winter of 1891–92 analyzing his data from the summer expedition. Periodically he found the process of organizing and copying his notes rather tedious. As his letters to Krol' reveal, he was still experiencing doubts about his ability to become a full-fledged anthropologist. As he once put it, "Generally speaking, as far as ethnographic study of the islands' population is concerned, I find myself in the most favorable situation. However, I regret very much not having enough time or scholarly training to carry out this task properly" (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/362:40a). Shternberg lacked time for his research because he had to earn money by tutoring. Mood swings and health problems also interfered with his scholarly work.⁴³ Loved and highly respected by the local political exiles, he was often called upon to settle disputes among them. In fact, he complained to Krol' about the squabbling that marred the life of the small community of his friends and comrades. He was also worried about the future: one of his 1893 letters to his friend indicates that he was frustrated both by the decline of the spirit of radicalism among some of his Zhitomir friends and their preoccupation with the routine of everyday life, which someone had written him about. Finally, he was greatly concerned by "an unprecedented and savage hounding

of the Jews” that marked the early 1890s (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/201:12–14a).

However, there was another reason for the difficulty he was having with routine scholarly work. Shternberg apparently did not take very good field notes. In fact, his notes seem rather disorganized (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/4). As his letters to Krol’ indicate, he believed the time-consuming work of organizing and analyzing notes took valuable time away from reading scholarly works in anthropology and other social sciences as well as the humanities.⁴⁴ As he put it, “Much of my time has to be devoted to ethnography, while the results are still microscopic” (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/201:10a). Shternberg enjoyed ethnographic research much more than organizing his data—undoubtedly one of the reasons he completed only a handful of ethnological works on the Sakhalin natives.

In 1892–93 Shternberg had new opportunities to engage in his favorite activity. In February 1892 his old friend Obon invited him to attend a bear festival that was taking place in a Nivkh settlement not far from Aleksandrovsk (Gagen-Torn 1975:80–87). Not only did he gain a better understanding of this complex ceremony, he was able to take pictures of it.

In the summer and early fall of 1892 he visited the southern part of the island by traveling down the Poronai River to Terpeniia Bay, located across from Hokkaido. This area was inhabited not only by the Nivkh and the Uil’ta but also by the mysterious Ainu, whom he had not had a chance to observe before and whose language and culture were so different from those of the other native inhabitants of the island.⁴⁵ Once again he collected information on social organization, religion, mythology, and languages. And once again the Sakhalin administration gave him an assignment. This time, however, in addition to conducting a census, he was asked to collect handicrafts made by native women for the Committee of the Russian Department of an International Exhibit of Women’s Work as well as various artifacts for the Chicago World’s Fair.⁴⁶ For part of that journey Shternberg traveled in the company of a prominent Russian botanist, Andrei Krasnov, with whom he shared his impressive knowledge of the local flora (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/4/9:128; Krasnov 1894). This time his journey was less arduous: he was able to travel not only by boat and horseback but even by coach and steamship. Still, there were unexpected difficulties, such as the loss of his tent and supplies in a violent windstorm. Despite

this he was able to conduct a census of almost 300 Uil'ta and 1,100 Ainu plus some Nivkh. The Ainu—with their unique physical appearance, material culture, and especially religion and social organization, were of special interest to him.⁴⁷ In addition to ethnological research and some archaeological excavations, he engaged in typical activities for an amateur natural scientist, collecting botanical and geological samples. As on his previous journey, Shternberg dispensed medicine and tried to offer medical assistance to the natives.⁴⁸

In August 1893 the authorities asked him to conduct a census of the Gilyak and Evenk inhabitants of the western coast of Sakhalin between Asleksandrovsk and Sortunai. According to a brief official report on his journey (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/190:22–30; Shternberg 2001b) published eventually in the newspaper *Priamurskie Vedomosti*, he had to travel by boat along the coast. Because of bad weather, a voyage that could have been accomplished in five days took three weeks. Among his most interesting discoveries was the fact that the Nivkh were relative newcomers in the area, having displaced the Ainu. Shternberg came to this conclusion because the local Nivkh used numerous Ainu names for geographical features clearly borrowed some of their customs from the Ainu (Shternberg 2001b:285).

In his Gilyak research, he focused once again on social organization, religion, and language, learning for the first time about the institution of fictive brotherhood and recording various oral traditions in the original. Never a pure scientist, he also recorded information on the poor health conditions of the natives and shared it with the authorities (Shternberg 2001b:287–289). As in the past, he acted as a natural scientist as well—collecting minerals and plants. As an engaged researcher who cared deeply about the natives' well-being, Shternberg reported the devastation caused by epidemic diseases within several of the native settlements, and he also appointed one local man to act as a medic after leaving his supplies of medications with him. He recommended that the administration would follow his example of training native medics (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/211:26).

In July–September 1894 Shternberg conducted his last Sakhalin expedition. This time he revisited the northwestern part of the island, verifying his earlier ethnographic data and collecting new information. He also undertook more systematic archaeological excavations that yielded stone tools and some pottery,

which he relied on to speculate about migrations of the local native populations. Because the local Nivkh did not recognize these objects as being associated with their own ancestors, he concluded rather prematurely that these objects belonged to some other people—most likely the Ainu. Using this archaeological data as well as Nivkh mythology, he hypothesized that the Ainu had been the original inhabitants of Sakhalin while the Nivkh came there in more recent times from the mainland (Shternberg 1896:35–36).⁴⁹ Since he had already completed the census of the local natives in 1891, Shternberg decided to establish the rates of population growth by recording information on the number of recent births and deaths and comparing it with his earlier data. He hoped to come back to the area in 1895 to examine the population growth further but was unable to do so. Because we do not have a diary of this expedition but only a popularized description of his journey published in the *Sakhalinskii Kalendar'* in 1896, it is difficult to establish how much anthropological data he had actually collected.⁵⁰ What is clear, however, is that Shternberg was, once again, as much concerned about improving the lives of the natives by providing the administration with accurate information on the state of the native economy, health, and relations with the Russians as he was about ethnographic research. He reported on a serious loss of Nivkh population due to a recent smallpox epidemic and called for a major improvement in local medical care. He argued that the periodic springtime starvation of local natives could be avoided if the administration provided them with loans to purchase food. He also criticized the Russian authorities of the town Nikolaevsk, a major Russian population center located on the nearby mainland, for abusing the visiting Sakhalin natives. Finally, he discussed in some detail the prospects for promoting the Russian colonization and economic development of the area and recorded the locations of coal and petroleum deposits. The expedition seems to have gone smoothly except for one frightening episode: during Shternberg's return voyage, his motorized boat was almost destroyed by a typhoon. According to Shternberg's wife, his only reference to this incident was a brief entry in his diary, which said, "All of my data and collections almost got lost" (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/4/9:129). During this expedition, he employed a new and effective method of collecting folklore, exchanging Anderson's fairy tales and Shakespeare's plays for native stories (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/4/9:25).

Having accumulated many objects of native material culture, archaeological artifacts, and botanical and mineralogical samples, he donated most of them to the local natural history museum, which was in the process of being established. Shternberg himself as well as his friend Pilsudski and several other local intellectuals (from the ranks of both the officials and the exiles) worked hard to finally open that museum in December 1896 (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/4/9:132–133).⁵¹ In fact Shternberg had been appointed by the governor of Sakhalin to serve as “the main theoretician of museum-building” (Latshev 2007). Shternberg’s archive contains a six-page document entitled “The Aim of the Museum . . .,” in which he argues that the island’s museum should serve two major goals: “a comprehensive study of Sakhalin from (1) the natural historical and anthropological perspectives and (2) as a penal colony.” The museum was also to serve as “a center that would unite all the educated residents of the island interested in spending their leisure time conducting research” (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/136:17–19).⁵² Little did Shternberg know that much of his career after Sakhalin would involve working in an anthropology museum!⁵³

One aspect of his anthropological research that occupied an increasing amount of his time and that he clearly enjoyed was the study of Nivkh language and folklore. His early attempts to learn Nivkh at Viakhtu by simply listening to it and trying to speak it failed. Its phonetics and grammar were simply too difficult for this European, who complained of having only a “mediocre ear for foreign languages” despite knowing several European languages plus ancient Greek, Latin, and Hebrew.

During his two 1891 expeditions, Shternberg was finally able to begin learning Nivkh in the field. As he wrote two decades later in his major publication of Nivkh texts, his census taking and initial research on Nivkh kinship “required a meticulous repetition of the same questions over and over again and it appears that at least in the initial stages of the research it was sufficient for me to have the command of a small supply of words derived from the sphere of kinship terms and economic relations, so as to be able to communicate with the Gilyaks and test the quality of the work of a Gilyak man whom I had trained to be my interpreter” (1908a:vii–viii). However, soon the ethnographer realized that “without a substantial knowledge of the [Nivkh] language, the true life of the tribe, which I was interested in, and especially its psychological aspects

would remain hidden from me” (1908a:vii–viii). Unfortunately, learning Nivkh was a difficult task. There were no Russians around who had a good enough command of Nivkh. Nor did he know any Nivkh with a good enough command of Russian to serve as a language instructor.

It was in the winter of 1891–92, when his friend Obon visited him frequently at his home in Aleksandrovsk, that Shternberg was finally able to “penetrate the mysteries of the Gilyak language.” He was now able to ask a variety of questions in Nivkh and could, to some extent, verify the accuracy of his interpreter’s translations of Nivkh sentences. Having no access to scholarly work on this language (limited as it was), Shternberg had to improvise: using a method described in a textbook for an independent study of foreign languages, he began trying to make sense of Nivkh grammar. This was no easy task: Nivkh language has no known linguistic affiliation to any other language and is noted for its grammatical complexity (Grant 1995:54). His task was further complicated by the fact that while he had recorded most of the native narratives in the eastern (or the Tym River) dialect, he had to deal with three distinct dialects of the Sakhalin Nivkh language (plus the Amur Gilyak one that he encountered later on). Another method used by Shternberg for mastering Nivkh was to ask several Nivkh men familiar with Russian to give him a word-for-word translation of some simple folktales he had recorded earlier. Despite his “mediocre ear for foreign languages,” after a while the work on translating short Nivkh stories enabled Shternberg to begin to understand the phonetics and even the etymology of the Nivkh language (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/201:8–8a; Shternberg 1999:8). Luckily he did not have much difficulty locating linguistic informants. At first he would travel periodically to the nearby village of Rykovskoe, where his exiled friends lived and where he could work with a number of native storytellers and bilingual Nivkh. In order to test his own ability to identify Nivkh phonemes, Shternberg asked Pilsudski to participate in his own recording sessions and write down the same stories. As it turned out, the two of them often differed in their comprehension of some of the phonemes (Shternberg 1908a:ix–x).

Realizing that Pilsudski’s method of living alongside native speakers and storytellers was an excellent method for learning the language and recording the native narratives in a more natural setting, Shternberg did likewise.⁵⁴ His greatest success in this venture occurred when he took in a sixteen-year-old

Nivkh man named Koinyt. A homeless orphan and the son of a well-known local shaman, Koinyt turned out to be a wonderful storyteller and improviser who was especially eloquent when he fell into a kind of shamanic trance. Shternberg recorded many of his most detailed lyrical poems from this man (Shternberg 1908a:xi–xiii). With the help of Koinyt and several other young Nivkh men, Shternberg finally began to make major progress in learning to speak and understand Nivkh, getting a grasp on its phonology, morphology and grammar, and recording quality texts in it. Here is how he described the process:

As soon such an opportunity arose, I surrounded myself with several young Gilyaks who could somehow converse in Russian and began to write down short texts, simultaneously trying to engage in an analysis of phrases, literal translation, and comprehension of grammatical forms. Initially this work was going very slowly and with great difficulty, since my teachers had a very difficult time understanding that phrases consist of separate words and nonchalantly surprised me with very long verbal utterances that I barely had enough time to write down in the most imperfect form. Moreover, my detailed questions quickly bored them and so our sessions occurred with long interruptions.

But every day, with each analyzed phrase, my task became simpler, since not only I, but also my teachers were making progress. They not only acquired greater knowledge of the Russian language but also were learning to analyze their own. . . . Unfortunately my teachers kept changing, and often just as I had managed to train one, he was in a hurry to travel somewhere—so that an enormous amount of time was spent teaching one’s own teachers. (Shternberg 1908a:ix)

By the time of his departure from Sakhalin, Shternberg had recorded seventy-five different poems, fairytales, songs, legends, prayers, and legal formulae with interlinear translation (for a total of about four hundred pages) as well as samples of Nivkh folklore in Russian. He was now familiar with several major genres of Nivkh folklore and was able to appreciate the role of individual storytellers (see Shternberg 1908a:xiii–xxii). The folklore provided him with additional valuable information on the old Nivkh culture that was otherwise

no longer available. He also had prepared a substantial body of systematized materials for the preparation of a dictionary and a grammar of the Nivkh language (Shternberg 1900a:388–389).

In the mid-1890s Shternberg was becoming more confident about his ethnographic skills and the value of his data. In an 1893 letter to Krol' he said: "No matter what my subsequent travels be like, I have already collected a sufficient amount of data for the study of a special issue, which interests me, the issue of the clan-based [*rodovoi*], social and religious life of the Gilyaks and to some degree the Ainu. I think that once I am back in Russia, I will undertake a special study of these issues in ancient society [in general] and will write a scholarly work on the subject. I am not satisfied with the state of scientific research in this area, at least not fully" (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/201:8a–g). In fact, he felt confident enough to advise Krol' how best to undertake his own ethnographic research among the Buryat. Not surprisingly, Shternberg emphasized the importance of conducting a detailed census of the Buryat population and studying their social organization and tribal law (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/157:42–43; Krol' 1944:137–221).

Still, he continued having doubts about the best way of publishing data as well as his post-Sakhalin career. He felt guilty about not transforming his data from the 1894 expedition into some scholarly essay (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/201:20a–21). Even his extensive collecting activities gave him doubts—it seems that he was still not fully sure whether he was an anthropologist (social scientist) or a natural scientist. As he put it, "Too bad that I am such an amateur in the natural sciences, since I have seen so many interesting things but do not dare to have my own opinion" (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/201:19; cf. 282/2/157:53–53a). Shternberg was not even sure about the best format for publishing the accounts and the results of his ethnographic research. On the one hand, he was clearly pleased with the publication of his "Gilyaks of Sakhalin" in an anthropology journal and the positive reviews it was getting among scholars, and he was hoping to write other papers and maybe even a book in that scholarly style.⁵⁵ On the other hand, the journalist and the novelist in him yearned for getting his travel diary published (along with photographs) in "some thick literary magazine." In fact, being very uncertain about ways in which he could earn a living in Russia in the field of anthropology, he

was seriously considering a career in journalism (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/157:42–43, 282/1/201:18a–22). As it turned out, during his exile years he had plenty of opportunities to practice this craft.

“Conversations about Sakhalin”

Given Shternberg’s great sensitivity about the abuse of convicts and exiles by the penal colony’s authorities, it is not surprising that on several occasions during his stay on Sakhalin he passed the information about such cases to the liberal press. This was a risky thing to do, but Shternberg’s conscience compelled him to ignore the possible reprisals against him. The first known case of such whistle blowing was precipitated by the notorious “Onorsk Case,” which occurred in mid-1892 during the building of a road from the Tym region to southern Sakhalin. Due to inhuman conditions and abuse, in the course of a three-month construction project 100 out of 450 convict laborers died, received injuries, or disappeared. Thanks to Shternberg and his comrades, Pilsudski and Nikolai Perlashkevich, this tragedy, horrendous even by Sakhalin standards, reached the newspapers and shocked liberal Russian society (Pilsudski 1996:18).

Not long before this incident another one shocked the political exiles’ community on the island. On November 21, 1891, following a long series of humiliations and abuses by prison officials, a thirty-two-year-old political convict, Piotr Dombrowski, committed suicide. Some time in 1892 Shternberg wrote Dombrowski’s obituary and a biographical sketch, which included a description of all the humiliations this proud Polish revolutionary had suffered at the hands of the administration. With the help of a friendly captain of a visiting British ship, Shternberg managed to pass the manuscript (concealed inside an Ainu garment) to the *Free Russian Press* in London, which published it anonymously in 1893 (see Shternberg 1928b).

In addition to reporting anonymously the most blatant cases of administrative abuse, Shternberg wanted to document various other local problems to a wider audience, hoping that this publicity would force the local and national authorities to improve the situation on the island. And so on October 17, 1893, the first of his eight reports on the various aspects of Sakhalin’s penal colony and colonization appeared in a liberal regional weekly paper, *Vladivostok*, published in the city of the same name. Even though “Conversations about Sakhalin” was less critical of Sakhalin authorities than the brochure about Dombrowski,

it was still a risky undertaking. For that reason the articles appeared under a pseudonym, "Verus." Each one was preceded (in typical Shternbergian fashion) by an epigraph from the Book of Genesis: "Let There Be Light!"

The first article was devoted to the history of the colonization of Sakhalin and the state of the penal colony. Shternberg did not question the wisdom of sending convicts to the island. He agreed in principle with the notion that productive labor was a much better way of rehabilitating criminals than keeping them in prison for long periods of time. What he did criticize were the various abuses and deceptions practiced by the majority of Sakhalin officials, with the exception of such dedicated ones as Kononovich and a few others. The next report, which appeared one week later, contained an even harsher indictment of specific forms of prisoner mistreatment, from physical punishment to an arbitrary and humiliating demand that they bare their heads upon seeing a government official. Pointing out the many important tasks and services convicts and exiles were already carrying out, the author argued that the prisoners, if treated kindly and humanely, would work hard to develop the island's economy. In another essay "Verus" condemned one of the colony's darkest practices—the distribution of female convicts to various male inhabitants of the island, from bureaucrats to agricultural settlers. Shternberg's "Conversations" also addressed the various aspects of the island's agricultural development, exploration of its mineral resources, the lack of adequate schools as well as libraries and other "cultural" institutions, and the limitations imposed unwisely on the legal rights of the former convicts who had completed their sentence and become free settlers.

Drawing on his own observations made during visits to the various settlements on the island as well as the government publications available to him, Shternberg demonstrated a good grasp of a variety of economic, social, and legal issues. The fact that he did not question the legitimacy or the wisdom of Sakhalin's colonization was not just a way of passing his reports past the censor. Despite his very critical attitude toward the tsarist government, he sympathized with the country's colonial expansion into the Far East. All he was calling for was a more rational and humane set of colonization policies and practices.

Even with its muted criticism of the manner in which Sakhalin was being developed, "Conversations about Sakhalin" nevertheless created quite a sensation among the island's officials and exiles alike as well as the reading public

of the Vladivostok region. The essays were widely read and discussed, but it appears that the author's identity remained unknown (see Pilsudski 1996:65). The last of the "Conversations" appeared in the February 26, 1895, issue of the newspaper.

Travel and Ethnographic Research in the Amur Region

By the mid-1890s Shternberg had become a well-known figure among the intelligentsia of Sakhalin and the adjacent Amur region. The fact that he had explored the most remote regions of Sakhalin, conducted an impressive census of the local natives, and published an ethnological article in a major scholarly journal in Moscow made him a highly respected person in the eyes of the local educated public. Newspaper editors and scholarly societies of the major regional cities—Vladivostok, Khabarovsk, and Blagoveshchensk—now sought his contributions.⁵⁶ In early February 1895 he received a letter from Iakov Dombrovskii, the financial sponsor of a new regional paper about to be published in Blagoveshchensk called *Amurskaia Gazeta* (the Amur gazette). The goal of this liberal paper was to "defend the interests of the law, of truth, and [society's] well being." Shternberg was asked to contribute scholarly articles on economic, ethnographic, and legal issues as well as editorials, brief essays, news reports, and satirical pieces dealing with local life, including that of the natives (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/4/8:61–61a).

In late June 1895 the Vladivostok-based Society for the Study of the Amur Region as well as the Khabarovsk Branch of the Russian Geographical Society appealed to the Sakhalin administration to permit "the former student of the Novorossiisk University Khaim Lev Iakovlevich Shternberg" to leave Sakhalin temporarily for the purpose of studying the Amur River Nivkh as well as conducting some archaeological excavations in the area where they lived. In mid-August of that same year such permission was granted by the head of the Sakhalin administration as well as the governor-general of the Priamurskii Administrative Region [krai], the area that he was to spend two months exploring (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/108:1–4). Even though it would have been easier for Shternberg to escape his exile from the mainland than from Sakhalin, the authorities clearly trusted him. In fact a few months later this former advocate of terrorism was permitted to carry a handgun on his journeys (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/156:16)!

The permission to leave Sakhalin was undoubtedly very welcome news for the moody exile. Not only would he now be able to acquaint himself with the mainland Nivkh and other aboriginal inhabitants of the region, he could also leave the prison island at least temporarily and become exposed to a much larger and more civilized world. At the end of the summer he sailed from Sakhalin to Vladivostok. As he wrote in his diary, "I was like a prisoner who suddenly sees daylight after a long night of confinement: a new world of living, energetic, civilized life sparkled in front of me. Everything attracted me, everything brought me joy" (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/4/9:133). One problem remained: who would sponsor his ethnographic research? Fortunately, the Vladivostok newspaper, where Shternberg had a number of friends, paid him a modest advance in return for the right to publish travel notes.

The region Shternberg found himself in was quite different from Sakhalin. As I mentioned earlier, it became part of the Russian empire in 1860. However, only when China and especially Japan began flexing their muscles in the area in the 1880s was it fully "ushered into the calculus of Russian *Weltpolitik*" (Stephan 1994:55). In 1884 the Amur, the Maritime, and the Sakhalin Districts (along with the Transbaikalian one) were detached administratively from Eastern Siberia and placed under a newly created Priamurskii (Amur Region) general-governorship, which gave the Russian Far East "its first separate, unified administration and provided an institutional framework for a regional identity distinct from that of Siberia" (Stephan 1994:55).

The Russian settlement of the region, which began in the 1860s, had accelerated significantly by the time Shternberg arrived. The settlers came from a variety of backgrounds: Cossacks; religious sectarians who rejected the authority and the rites of the Russian Orthodox Church; convicts and exiles; and, most importantly, peasants in search of land. Attracted by free land grants and exemption from taxation, Russians and Ukrainians came in large numbers, especially after the establishing of maritime transport from Odessa. Between 1882 and 1907 a quarter of a million peasants came to the Priamurskii General-Governorship. Another large migrant group was composed of Chinese and Koreans. A small trickle of Chinese merchants, laborers, hunters, smugglers, and farmers became a flood after the late 1870s, when the Chinese government eased access to Manchuria. In Khabarovsk, the capital of the general-governorship, the Chinese community constituted a third of the population

until 1900. In Vladivostok the percentage was even higher. Like the Chinese farmers, the hard-working Koreans supplied grain, fruits, and vegetables to the region's cities.

In addition to agriculture, the Amur region's economic development was based on gold mining, lumbering, railroad construction, and fishing. A significant number of residents were employed by the government or served in the army or the navy, whose Pacific headquarters were located in Vladivostok. The ocean ports, Nikolaevsk and Vladivostok, served as major centers of international trans-Pacific trade, with merchants from various countries establishing banks and trading companies and even taking up residence there. Several of the region's major cities boasted large department stores with electric lights, telephone and telegraph service, and public libraries, museums, newspapers, and other "modern Western" institutions. Unlike Vladivostok, which in the 1890s still had a strong feel of being a somewhat isolated frontier city, Blagoveshchensk and Khabarovsk had broad and straight streets and handsome homes owned by Russian and foreign merchants. During Shternberg's travels throughout the area, the Trans-Siberian railroad was already under construction, so that in 1895 he was able to ride the train from Vladivostok northward to Iman. However, he could only reach his final destination, Blagoveshchensk, by using a steamboat.

In some important respects the Amur region differed from the rest of Russia. In the 1890s it still had many qualities of a rough and tumble frontier. While in much of the rest of the country (and especially in its European part), social rank and class distinctions were very pronounced, on the Amur a person's wealth played a much bigger role in social status than his or her origin and background. People of different social classes mingled more freely along the Amur, and hard-working and entrepreneurial individuals could make a fortune quickly or at least earn a lot more doing the same type of work they had done back home. The region was often compared with California during the 1848 gold rush.

The area's geographic location and the presence of a large number of people from East Asia made it feel much more cosmopolitan and Pacific rather than Europe oriented. Not surprisingly, regionalist or autonomist sentiments were quite strong among some of the members of the local intelligentsia. While they strove to build the educational and cultural institutions that were typical for a

Russian city, they also emphasized their region's unique history, identity, and destiny (Stephan 1994:91–98). As in the rest of Russia, if not more so, newspapers were the major voice of a fledgling civil society, with each of the region's major cities having at least one or two.

As far as the region's indigenous population was concerned, Russian colonization of its homeland was not particularly beneficial. While economic development brought new trade goods and occupations, the influx of outsiders from both the west and the south made the aborigines a minority in their own land. By 1911, decimated by epidemic diseases, they numbered merely forty-five thousand, or about 15 percent of the area's inhabitants. This minority was rather powerless and often fell victim to exploitation, violence, and other forms of abuse by government officials, Russian and Chinese merchants and smugglers, and peasants who appropriated their land. The majority of the Amur region's native peoples, such as the Ulchi, the Oroch, the Nanai, the Udege, and the Negidal, spoke related languages of the Tungusic family and shared many common cultural characteristics with each other and the Sakhalin Uil'ta, and to a much lesser extent the Nivkh and the Ainu. Although some ethnographic research had been conducted among these peoples by visiting scholars and travelers as well some local enthusiasts, a lot of work remained to be done (Shul'gina 1989). As Shternberg wrote in one of his articles, the Amur Region was "truly an ethnographer's Eldorado" (*Vladivostok*, 1896, no. 5:6).

In the absence of travel diaries, it is difficult to establish the exact itinerary and other specifics of Shternberg's ethnographic research in the Amur region. Nonetheless, his one ethnographic publications (Shternberg 1933a:391–450), field notes and letters (for example, Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/4:VI, 282/1/85; Shternberg 1933a, 1933b), and memoirs of both his wife, Sarra Ratner-Shternberg, and his colleague, Vladimir Bogoraz, allow us to establish at least the basic outline of his scholarly work on the mainland in 1895–1896 (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 284/2/195; Bogoraz Collection, SPFA RAN, 250/1/211, 250/1/212).

Lasting probably no more than a couple of months, Shternberg's first journey throughout the region, which began in Vladivostok and ended in Blagoveshchensk, was mainly a reconnaissance that acquainted him with the native inhabitants of the valleys of the Ussuri and Amur rivers, such as the Nanai and the Udegei. In fact, Shternberg's "travel notes" on this journey, which he

published in *Vladivostok* in October-December of 1895 (see *Vladivostok* nos. 44, 46, 48, and 51), mention him seeking out the natives whenever possible but say very little about them. Despite the fact that Shternberg did not speak any of the local native languages and probably did not venture far from the railroad line and the Amur River, his field notes do indicate he learned quite a bit about the local natives during this journey. Nevertheless he did not feel ready to make a public presentation or write about them in the local press.

What he did share with his readers was a sense of urgency that he, a committed ethnographer, developed on this trip. As his passionate article, published in *Vladivostok* in the beginning of 1896 (no. 5:6–7) stated, there was great urgency in undertaking a study of the region's indigenous peoples. In his opinion, because of their increasing interaction with a large number of Russians and other non-natives, the Amur River aborigines were experiencing cultural assimilation at a much faster pace than the Sakhalin natives. The completion of the railroad, expected in a decade or so, would further accelerate this process. Shternberg predicted that some of the local native peoples would eventually disappear totally or become so Russified that they would lose their customs, beliefs, and oral traditions. Speaking as an ethnographer, an evolutionist ethnologist, and a progressive humanist, he wrote, "These peoples, destined to disappear by mixing with others, will take with them to their historical grave many of the facts, which could help us solve the riddle of the most mysterious aspects of the history, institutions, beliefs, and the most ancient migrations of the various peoples. . . . Hence for the sake of science as well as for the sake of the unity of the humankind we cannot, dare not, should not lose them!" (*Vladivostok* 5:6–7).

Shternberg's view of the natives' future was ambivalent. While he predicted their ultimate assimilation and loss of a distinct culture, he was not sure whether they would necessarily die out altogether. In fact, using his own Sakhalin experience, he argued that one of the reasons there was an urgent need to conduct a census of these peoples was to discover whether the local natives were doomed to extinction. In his words, "It is precisely in this region, where the 'barbarians' are confronted with another culture that is not interested at all in their annihilation, [that] it would have been most convenient to destroy the prejudices of sociologists who believe that 'primitive' peoples inevitably die out when confronted with civilization" (*Vladivostok* 5:6–7).

Shternberg was equally ambivalent about the proper role of the Russian society vis-à-vis these natives. While criticizing the various abuses they suffered in the hands of the administration and the settlers alike, he insisted that it was “our duty . . . to introduce them to our culture and to the benefits of civilization, and to save them from extinction” (*Vladivostok* 5:6–7).

Drawing on his own Sakhalin experience, he advocated a systematic study of the local natives’ material, social, and spiritual culture, which included collecting their artifacts). He also insisted that only by learning the local native languages would ethnographers be able to carry out high-quality research. Finally, he argued that despite the importance of academic expeditions to the region from the country’s “center,” the local intelligentsia was in a much better position to carry out research that required long-term residence in native communities (*Vladivostok* 5:6–7).

At the end of his first trip on the mainland, Shternberg did not return to Sakhalin but remained in the area, living in Vladivostok and periodically visiting Blagoveshchensk. Clearly impressed with his writing, the staff of *Vladivostok* asked him to join them. It was probably this staff as well as Shternberg’s other friends and colleagues among the local journalists and amateur ethnographers who were able to obtain permission from the authorities to extend his stay on the mainland.⁵⁷ Shternberg did join the paper’s editorial board and, according to his biographers, became one of the top people in charge of the paper from late 1895 until his return to Sakhalin in the fall of 1896.⁵⁸ Journalism offered him an activity he enjoyed and most likely relieved him for a while of the burdensome private tutoring.

Shternberg’s second ethnographic expedition, conducted in late August–September of 1896, corresponded more closely to the kind of research he was advocating. This time he focused on a single small ethnic group occupying a rather compact geographic area: the Oroch of the Udska area, the Tumni(n) River, and the Imperatorskaia Harbor on the shore of the Sea of Okhotsk.⁵⁹ This time he was not alone; two local amateur ethnographers and archaeologists, Sergei Brailovskii and D. Diukov (Shulgina 1989:115), accompanied him. While the Society for the Study of the Amur Region was his official sponsor, he probably received little (if any) funding from it. Luckily a commercial sponsor was found. A major regional commercial enterprise, The Merchant House of Kunst and Albers (Stephan 1994:84–86) commissioned him to purchase a large



7. Shternberg with the staff of Vladivostok, ca. 1895: Ivan Iuvachiov (front row, left) and Shternberg (center). Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 280/1/194.

collection of Oroch artifacts (at least two hundred items in triplicate) that this business was probably planning to sell to museums and private collectors at home and abroad.⁶⁰ All his research expenses were covered, including food supplies, which he obtained without charge from the company warehouse. He was paid a five-hundred-ruble fee for his work. He was also given free transportation to Imperatorskaia Harbor and was picked up there one month later. He hired a Russian peasant who had lived in the area for two years and who was “somewhat familiar with its natives’ customs” to serve as his guide and assistant in packing the collection (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/156:17–18). As in his previous expeditions, the ethnographer carried with him a special document issued by the local police department which asked that “the headmen

and elders of the Russian and native villages and of the Evenk reindeer camps offer him assistance,” including transportation with dogs, reindeer, and horse (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/108:7).

Later that fall Shternberg conducted his last expedition on the mainland—a visit to the Nivkh of the lower Amur River. This expedition allowed him to supplement his Sakhalin Nivkh ethnography and compare the more isolated island natives with their coastal kin. This time his research had a definite topical focus on social organization, religion, folklore, and linguistics (Shternberg 1999:10). While traveling to that area, he also conducted some observations of the Tungusic-speaking local groups: the Nanai, the Negidal, and the Udege (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/4/9:135).

In November 1896 he was ordered to return to Sakhalin despite the appeals to the Sakhalin authorities (via the Amur region’s governor-general) by Nikolai Remezov, *Vladivostok*’s publisher and chief editor. The latter argued that Shternberg needed to stay on the mainland to write up his ethnographic data for publication in Remezov’s newspaper as well as the more scholarly proceedings of the local branch of the Russian Geographical Society. Despite Shternberg’s exemplary conduct, Sakhalin’s chief administrator, Merkazin, demanded that he return to the island, where he was badly needed to take part in the upcoming national census of 1897 (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/156:19–20, 282/1/156:78).

Shternberg’s forced return to Sakhalin and the events that followed it might explain why his ethnographic research on the Amur natives resulted in only one published work that did not even appear in a scholarly journal, unlike his 1893 essay on the Sakhalin Nivkh. Instead it was a detailed summary of a long presentation on the Oroch of the Tatar Strait (the focus of his second mainland field project), which he delivered to the Society for the Study of the Amur Region. Published in four installments in *Vladivostok* in November–December 1896, it is similar but not identical to the full text of his presentation, which was published only posthumously (Shternberg 1933a:391–450, 1933b:15–23, 1936:22–30).⁶¹ While the public presentation version is somewhat shorter and contains a number of statements aimed at refuting the notion of the Oroch being “primitive savages,” the full text is more scholarly and includes additional data and references to recent works in anthropology. Written five years after his first

ethnographic essay, this paper is worth analyzing because it reflects both major continuities and some changes in Shternberg's scholarly thinking.

The absence of field diaries and journals from the Oroch fieldwork makes it very difficult to reconstruct the circumstances and evaluate the quality of Shternberg's data from Imperatorskaia Harbor. We do not know, for example, what language he used to communicate with the natives. We do know that he carried with him an Oroch dictionary (prepared and given to him by Aleksandr Protodidakonov, a local missionary linguist) and also collected an "ethnographic vocabulary" himself, but he obviously could not have learned to speak their language within one month.⁶² It is possible that he used an interpreter—perhaps the Russian guide he was provided for by Gustav Kunst and Gustav Albers—or communicated with them in Russian (see Shternberg 1908a:222). After all, unlike the northern Nivkh of Sakhalin, the Oroch had had rather extensive interaction with the Russians and had even been nominally converted to Orthodoxy. Although one month is not long for an in-depth ethnographic study, Shternberg was now drawing on his Sakhalin experience and was conducting a focused ethnography, with social organization and religion at the center of his attention. Given his particular interest in social organization, he relied on his favored method, the census, which had served him so well on Sakhalin (1933a:16).

Like his 1893 essay, Shternberg's presentation began with a detailed examination of the various terms used to describe the Oroch (including their self-designation) and with speculation about their possible origin. Using linguistic and ethnographic data as well as oral traditions, he rejected the view of several of his predecessors and argued that the Oroch had arrived in their present territory from the north and that they had once been typical reindeer herders.⁶³ As in his discussion of Nivkh "ethnogenesis," he seemed to base some of his sweeping generalizations on rather slim evidence.⁶⁴ One very important observation was that no "ethnically pure" groups existed in the entire Amur region and that, consequently, "the only remaining stable element of the culture of this tribe [the Oroch] is their language" (Vladivostok, 1896, no. 47:13).

Despite being interested in the (pre)history of the Oroch and other indigenous peoples of the region, Shternberg spoke here primarily as a comparative ethnologist rather than a regional ethnography specialist. In fact he began his entire presentation by announcing that he was a follower of the "comparative method" and that for him, a study of a people's "ethnic composition and

origin are much less important than an investigation of such institutions of primitive society as the family, the clan, and . . . religious beliefs" (*Vladivostok*, 1896, no. 48:11).

Once he turned to Oroch social organization, he put on his evolutionist hat and stated that in his study of their kinship and marriage system he used the same method that he had used earlier among the Sakhalin Nivkhs. Invoking the work of the great evolutionists Morgan and John Lubbock (whose interpretation of the meaning of classificatory kinship terms had, in his words, "given us the key to solving the mystery of the entire prehistoric system of marriage"), he explained that the classificatory system of kinship, which he had found among both the Nivkh and the Oroch, "served as a guiding thread for understanding their past and present marriage system" (*Vladivostok*, 1896, 48:11; Shternberg 1933a:15). As in the Nivkh case, Shternberg went beyond the present-day marriage practices and used Oroch kinship terminology to argue that they too had once practiced group marriage.⁶⁵ In his interpretation, the Oroch system was similar yet not identical to the Nivkh one. He argued that the latter did not allow any sexual relations between an ascending and a descending generation, whereas the former still allowed it.⁶⁶ Convinced that "the evolution of the rules of proper sexual relations was marked by a gradual limiting of marriage with close blood relatives," he speculated that the Oroch marriage system (and all other Tungusic ones) was more ancient than that of the Nivkh. He also argued that a number of examples from Oroch folklore (which he unfortunately does not cite) supported his group marriage hypothesis and his argument that in earlier times their marriage system had even fewer restrictions.⁶⁷

Having now "discovered" the survival of group marriage in two unrelated peoples, Shternberg wrote with even greater authority than in his previous ethnographic essay. He used his findings to defend Morgan's scheme from recent criticism by such scholars as Carl Starcke (1889). It appears that in the mid-1890s he read a number of new works in comparative ethnology that were not available to him in the early 1890s, when he was on Sakhalin Island. Shternberg interpreted this new criticism of Morgan as an attempt to rehabilitate the human being by rejecting the reality of group marriage. Unperturbed himself by the existence of group marriage in humanity's ancient past, this committed evolutionist argued that "human nature does not need to be defended. It progresses from the worse to the better, from the imperfect to the perfect" (1933a:17).

Mindful of his audience, which was composed primarily of laymen, he hastened to add that the Oroch were not immoral. As in his first ethnographic essay, he noted once again the tenderness and mutual care that characterized native marital relations and emphasized that the violation of marital fidelity among them was never caused by greed, as was the case among their non-native neighbors. In fact, as he pointed out, the Oroch despised the Russian and Japanese prostitutes whom they encountered. Speaking here more as a pro-native Populist than an evolutionary anthropologist, Shternberg encouraged his audience to suspend its own ideas about morality and social order—“developed over many centuries under the influence of a higher culture, a complex state mechanism, and economic and juridical norms connected with it”—so as to properly understand the simple “savage” societies and not see them as being characterized by total lawlessness and anarchy. Sounding almost like a cultural relativist, he stated that “if we reject our own preconceived notions and carefully examine the life of the savages, then instead of chaos we would find among them a rather elegant system of social relations based on one particular principle [institution], which regulates their personal and social life up to minute details” (*Vladivostok*, 1896, no. 50:9).

Taking several earlier observers of indigenous Siberian and Amur River cultures to task for denying the existence among them of any institutions regulating social life, he asserted that such an institution did exist—it was the clan, which he had already described so sympathetically in his 1893 essay on the Nivkh. His characterization of the Oroch clan was even more effusive and sounded very much like that of a socialist-Populist as well as an evolutionist. In his words, “The clan is an amazing institution, within which total individual freedom is linked with the harmony of societal interests. It is a school, which all of the world’s people have passed through, from Rome to China. In this institution, the primitive man finds safety, help in times of need, sustenance in his old age, avengers of his murderers, and the entire content of his life. No other institution of the ‘barbarians’ social life is as important for the historian as this one” (1933a:20).

While Shternberg’s description of the main characteristics and the functioning of the Oroch clan was similar to the one he had offered in his 1893 Nivkh essay (both were exogamous and agnatic), by the mid-1890s he was beginning to develop a more general model for the centrality of the clan to all “primitive”

societies. Hence his Oroch ethnography represented an important transition from the more descriptive 1893 essay, in which he was still somewhat cautious in his generalizations, to both his 1904 published monograph on the entire Nivkh culture and an unpublished manuscript on Nivkh social organization (1999), in which he made much more sweeping generalizations about “primitive” society in general.

In the Oroch study Shternberg offered, for the first time, a clear definition of the clan as an exogamous “kinship-religious union” (*rodstvenno-religiozniy soiuz*). An important new aspect of Shternberg’s analysis of the Oroch clan, compared to his earlier discussion of the Nivkh one, was not just what he called this “scholarly definition” but his use of the native perspective. As he put it, if you asked an Oroch why someone was his clan relative, he would answer, “We have a common fire, a common bear [cult], a common penalty, a common sin, a common killer whale” (1933a:20). Shternberg was approaching what modern anthropologists would term “etic” and “emic” definitions of the key features of the clan. Having presented both concepts, he pointed out that while the native definition emphasized the clan’s “religious principles,” there were a number of social factors it did not even mention because they were taken for granted.

One important function of the clan that he explored in much greater detail in his Oroch essay than the Nivkh study was the blood revenge and ritualized warfare that the killing of one clan member by another often provoked. Once again, Shternberg’s goal was no longer simply to describe an institution of a particular culture but to draw conclusions about primitive society as a whole. In this case, he pointed out that, like the Oroch, other primitive and prehistoric peoples did not kill out of greed or vanity. Instead, “at the dawn of history warfare was a social imperative, a consequence of the principle of self-defense.” It was also a “heavy burden and not something undertaken easily.” He points out that in this type of warfare special atrocities were rare and the killing of a single enemy was often sufficient to end the war. It is not surprising that this Populist, who had been appalled by modern warfare from early childhood, concluded with the following rhetorical question: “Could the civilized people boast that their military confrontations are marked by such lack of harshness and by just motives?” (1933a:21–22).

Shternberg expressed an even greater admiration for the ritualized peacemaking of the Oroch, which he found to be quite similar to the Nivkh and called

“international law at its best” (1933a:21–22). He provided interesting details on the process of peace negotiations, conducted by special eloquent and wise men, always selected from another clan. Given his special interest in primitive law, Shternberg also offered important details about what the Oroch called—in contrast to the peace-making “big court”—the “small court” system, which dealt with disputes related to such issues as brideprice, and which he referred to as a “court of the best men” or “a court of jurors.” He concluded this discussion by expressing regret about the decline of this institution, caused by the coming of the Russians. As he put it, these “best men” passed much better judgments than Russian policemen who did not know native customs.

Shternberg discussed Oroch religion more extensively than he did Nivkh beliefs, but in both cases he took a similar approach. He portrayed the Oroch, as he did the Nivkh, as animists who anthropomorphized nature and especially animals, on whom they depended for their survival and whose habits they studied very carefully. Shternberg’s evolutionism came into play in his discussion of the beliefs about Enduri, the supreme deity of the Oroch pantheon. Shternberg’s predecessor Vasilii Margaritov, who conducted ethnographic research among the Oroch in 1886 and published an essay on them in 1888, was the first to report Enduri’s existence (see Shul’gina 1989:49–70). Lev Iakovlevich confirmed the existence of this deity but insisted that it could possibly be indigenous. In his view, the Oroch, like other “primitive” peoples, created their gods in their own image, whereas “civilized” societies did the opposite. Since there was no supreme authority in their society, they could not possibly have a notion of such a supreme being (Shternberg 1933a:22).⁶⁸

In addition to drawing on evolutionism to make sense of the Oroch religion, Shternberg occasionally lapsed into the kind of evolutionary intellectualism or practical reasoning that was typical of Tylor’s work on primitive religion. For example, he believed the significance of domestic fire as a major symbol of the Oroch clan’s unity originated in ancient times when fire was made by rubbing sticks together. Since prehistoric peoples considered the fire to be a source of life, it was “quite natural” that primitive man was afraid to share it with a member of a different clan, who could have mistreated it by putting it out. Instead, he entrusted his own clan relatives with it, since they were much more certain to treat it with great respect (Shternberg 1933a:21).

In his discussion of the bear festival, the most important Oroch ceremony, Shternberg stressed its *social* rather than religious dimensions and functions, just as he did in his 1893 Nivkh essay. He emphasized how the performance of the ceremony strengthened the bonds between clan members and how the guests invited to the festival always represented different clans, and especially the clan from which the hosts obtained their wives. According to Shternberg, the main functions of this ceremony were feasting with affines and staging an elaborate memorial ritual for a clan relative. Drawing on his conversations and possibly some observations of the ceremony itself, Shternberg also insisted that the bear, slain at the feast, was not a god or an offering to the gods. Instead it was a messenger who carried gifts to its master, a powerful spirit, which controlled all the bears.

In his discussion of Oroch religion, Shternberg once again defended the natives against accusations of savagery. Mentioning Margaritov's claim that the Oroch ate dogs, he pointed out that they ate them very rarely on special occasions, such as a sacrificial offering to the powerful master of the taiga. He also explained that the killing of the dogs during the bear festival had its cultural logic—the animals were supposed to accompany the bear to the dwelling place of its master. Shternberg argued that the natives, who firmly believed that the spirit of the dog survived and began a new life in the realm of a powerful spirit master, could not be viewed as cruel dog-killers. As he put it, “[I]f this is a sign of barbarism . . . then those people who lovingly raise chickens and then eat them with gusto are barbarians too” (Shternberg 1933a:30).

Liberal Journalism and Realistic Fiction Writing

During the mid-1890s, despite being busy with ethnographic research, Shternberg devoted a great deal of time to journalism. By publishing his articles in Vladivostok and several other regional newspapers, he was able to reach the region's educated class and influence public opinion in a way that was not possible on Sakhalin.⁶⁹ Just like his “Conversations about Sakhalin,” Shternberg's mid-1890s Vladivostok articles did not simply report the news but editorialized heavily, emphatically expressing his deeply held convictions and opinions. In that respect his writing was typical for the progressive and liberal Siberian journalists of this era, many of whom were exiles as well. For Shternberg an ideal writer of this kind was Vladimir Korolenko (1853–1921), one of the country's

most prominent and progressive realistic fiction writers and journalists, who had himself been exiled to Siberia in the late 1870s and early 1880s for Populist activities and sympathies. After reading Korolenko's work, Shternberg eventually met and became close to him (see chapter 3). Because journalism was so important to Shternberg and influenced his scholarly work, we must examine the major topics and issues he dealt with.

One characteristic of his numerous publications from this period was their breadth of coverage, especially if compared to his writing on Sakhalin. The Populist exile commented on anything from economic to foreign policy, from the weak state and narrow electoral base of local governments to the need to improve the study of East Asian peoples. Many of his articles were written as travel reports, with particularly detailed coverage given to the cities of Vladivostok, Khabarovsk, and Blagoveshchensk as well as the small locales in between them. However, every experience and encounter from his travels prompted him to comment extensively on the positive as well as the negative effects of Russian colonization in its far eastern frontier.

Another noteworthy feature of many of Shternberg's comments about this frontier was his willingness to modify his Populist views when confronted with a society in the making that was so different from a typical rural one in European Russia. As his friend Bogoraz pointed out years later, unlike many of his fellow Populists, Shternberg was not opposed to the construction of the Trans-Siberian Railroad. While the former feared that the new means of transporting goods and foodstuffs would undermine the local peasant economy, Shternberg welcomed the railroad as a major factor in the region's economic development, which he saw as inevitable and potentially beneficial to the newcomers and, to some degree, the aborigines as well (Bogoraz Collection, SPFA RAN, 250/1/211 42). As he put it, "At the moment Siberia is on the threshold of an economic and mental renaissance—it is becoming a great trade route, with the arrival of more and more people and capital here every day" (*Vladivostok*, 1896, no. 18:4).

In many of his reports, the Sakhalin exile expressed admiration for the hard-working Russian people who had come to the Far East of their own free will and worked hard not only to survive but also to prosper. He especially welcomed their sense of freedom and unwillingness to bow down to those above them in the social and economic hierarchy. Using a locally popular American

English expression, he admiringly described the frontiersmen whom he had met as “self-made men.” In fact he made several approving remarks about the “Americanism” of the new Russian frontier. He was impressed that most everyone who worked hard, even the coachmen, could earn a good living here and that “such a relatively high standard of living gives a certain look to the local population: instead of the usual Russian air of being oppressed, they show self-confidence, energy, and liveliness” (*Vladivostok*, 1896, no. 10:10–11; cf. no. 43:13, no. 46:15). Writing about Blagoveshchensk, located next to the goldmines, Shternberg observed, “Here they shake hands with anyone without paying attention to his title, social origin, or level of education, even without inquiring about the size of his capital, since today’s poor man could in one year become a millionaire” (*Vladivostok*, 1896, 10:10–11). Contrary to the dogmatic Populists, Shternberg even expressed his admiration for the local merchants, although he was more sympathetic to the independent entrepreneurs than the large commercial houses, which enjoyed a monopoly and used it to drive up prices (*Vladivostok*, 1896, no. 44:13–14).

Having described the various types of hardworking Russians, Lev Iakovlevich concluded that the prevailing notion that the Russian people were lazy was wrong. In his view, it was not an unwillingness to work hard that prevented Russia as a whole and the Russian Far East in particular from developing faster and better but the lack of education of most ordinary Russians. Hence by comparing economic development in Finland (the Russian empire’s northwestern frontier) and the Far East, he took both the Amur Region’s authorities and its intelligentsia to task for not promoting a more educated, planned, and rational economic development (*Vladivostok*, 1896, no. 11:5–7; see also *Vladivostok*, 1896, no. 22:4–5). For example, in several of his articles he criticized harshly the government policy of granting large plots of land along the railroad to wealthy landlords who neither paid taxes nor developed the land. His own proposal was to municipalize these lands and then rent them out to peasants. The money earned could be used to improve the lot of the local poor as well as the infrastructure of the local towns (*Vladivostok*, 1896, nos. 8, 10, 20). Once again, he departed from a more dogmatic Populist position opposing any capitalist development of agriculture and argued instead that “a capitalist agricultural economy cannot be developed artificially” (for example, by using foreign models that did not work on the Russian frontier). Here he expressed a preference

for small peasant farms rather than large estates not because he favored the former as a Populist but because they seemed to work better in an area where land was plentiful but machinery scarce.⁷⁰

Despite Shternberg's enthusiasm about "Russia's California," his Populist and democratic convictions nevertheless prevented him from fully embracing its new social environment. The rampant adultery and prostitution, drinking, and other forms of "sensuality" typical of a wild frontier appalled him. He was particularly critical of the poor working conditions in the gold mines and the absence of any serious system of aid for the unemployed. As a typical Russian moralizing intellectual, he criticized the local "better classes" for spending their time playing cards and chasing women instead of patronizing museums and libraries or becoming involved in the local elected government. Still, even his criticism was tinged with ambivalent admiration and a social scientist's curiosity. As he put it, "You will find little virtue here but at the same time a lot of *joie de vivre*, self-confidence, energy, and other qualities that are quite interesting from a psychological point of view" (*Vladivostok*, 1896, 8, 10, 20).

In his search for the frontier types who worked hard but were also virtuous, Shternberg sought out non-Orthodox religious sectarians. He was clearly fascinated by them as both a social critic and an ethnographer. In fact, he attended religious services of the Baptists and the Molokans and engaged them in long philosophical conversations.⁷¹ What clearly appealed to Shternberg were the Molokans' adherence to temperance and other strict moral rules as well as their devotion to the Bible, which they studied seriously in between the business transactions they conducted in the Blagoveshchensk market place. This Jewish intellectual, who himself favored belief over ritual, was also favorably impressed with the simplicity and sincerity of the Molokans' prayer service. Here Shternberg the Populist finally found his ideal—a hardworking peasant who cared passionately about moral and theological issues.⁷² The fact that the Molokans were particularly fond of Biblical prophets like Isaiah could not fail to endear them to Shternberg. His hope was that some day these ordinary peasants and merchants would consider "the broader issues of life" besides the purely religious ones. At the same time he did not idealize the sectarians; as a Populist he viewed their relentless pursuit of profit as something dangerous that might eventually undermine the egalitarian foundation of their communal living (*Vladivostok*, 1896, no. 16:13–16; *Vladivostok*, 1896, no. 18:13–15).

Other hardworking groups in the local population that attracted the attention of this journalist-ethnographer were the Chinese and the Koreans. Expressing a strong opposition to any forms of anti-Asian racism, which was quite prevalent among the local Russian population, he tried to explain why these “Oriental” workers performed better than their Slavic counterparts. In his view it was the higher level of education that an average Chinese or Korean worker had in comparison to a Russian or a Ukrainian one which gave the former an advantage. In his view, instead of harassing these Asian people, the local Russians should study and emulate their agricultural and business methods as well as their system of mutual help (*Vladivostok*, 1896, no. 24:4–5).

Being interested not only in these local Chinese and Korean workers but in the countries they had come from, Shternberg addressed another key topic of concern in the region: Russia’s relationship with its southeastern neighbors. While he was well aware of the rising competition between his own country and Japan (and to a lesser extent China), Shternberg rejected the fears of the “yellow peril” that were quite common among both metropolitan and local Russian government officials as well as many segments of the local population. Shternberg wanted peaceful coexistence and economic cooperation, but he ultimately accepted competition between Russia and its neighbors. It is remarkable that this victim of the tsarist regime spoke as a true patriot: he clearly wanted his own country to come out ahead in this international competition. One proposal that he made was for the acceleration of the expansion of Russia’s Pacific Fleet and completion of the Trans-Siberian Railroad. He predicted that China and Japan would soon rise as the world’s new superpowers and argued that the Western countries (including Russia) would have to take them seriously. Instead of colonial domination, however, the West, in his view, had to practice peaceful coexistence with these new states. Shternberg, the eternal idealist, saw Russia playing a unique role in this West-East competition. As he put it, “Russia has a different role to play [vis-à-vis China and Japan] than the Western European countries and the United States: we have been these two countries’ neighbors for a long time and will have to walk hand in hand with them as their closest neighbors, linked to them by close cultural and political ties. . . . We will not pursue colonial expansion but instead will link the two oceans with a great peaceful project, a railroad” (Bogoraz Collection, SPFRAN, 250/1/211:42).

This necessity to work with rather than against Russia's southeastern neighbors was, for Shternberg the scholar, another good reason to seriously improve the study of local languages and cultures. In addition to stressing the urgent need to record information about local indigenous cultures, which he returned to repeatedly in his *Vladivostok* articles, he also advocated a systematic and in-depth study of local East Asian languages and cultures. In his view, this work would benefit not only science but the Russian administration as well, since a government official with knowledge of local languages and cultures would become a more enlightened and efficient bureaucrat.⁷³ To offer such instruction he proposed establishing a special Oriental Institute. Using his typical lofty language, Shternberg engaged in a little bit of dreaming when he wrote: "In this most distant corner of our state, we must erect a number of fortresses but build them out of the stones of culture, education, and everything else that could make us the light of the Orient, a teacher and a friend to our [southeastern] neighbors" (*Vladivostok*, 1896, no. 23:4-5). Although language instruction was already being offered in St. Petersburg, Shternberg argued that it would be much more advantageous to establish an institution in Vladivostok, where the plentiful local, educated native speakers could teach Japanese, Chinese, Korean, and Manchurian, and where the students themselves would be more strongly committed to living and working in the area. He also proposed that future regional government officials receive instruction in the "juridical sciences." Local missionaries and ethnographers as well as anyone interested in regional languages and cultures would also be able to attend the institute, at least as auditors. Finally, Shternberg had another, more scholarly and less pragmatic agenda in his proposal: he expressed hope that at least some of the instructors and students at the institute would devote themselves to the study of the region's minority languages, "which to this day have not yet received the proper scholarly attention and whose obvious link with the other Oriental languages have not yet been explored." (*Vladivostok*, 1896, 23:4-5). Three years later Shternberg's dream came true: the government opened an Oriental Institute in Vladivostok where it trained military officers, future government bureaucrats, and occasional scholars. In addition to East Asian languages and English, it offered instruction in history, ethnography, geography, political science, and other related disciplines. Hailing the establishment of this institution from his hometown of Zhitomir (where he had arrived from Sakhalin

in 1897), Shternberg wrote, “The local population is waiting . . . to be treated with justice, care, and attention to its interests and needs and [to be offered] the best European education and culture.”⁷⁴

While remaining preoccupied with the larger issue surrounding Russia’s expansion on its far eastern frontier, Shternberg never forgot the needs of his original exile home. Throughout 1895–97 he continued to advocate a more humane treatment of Sakhalin’s indigenous population as well as its convicts and exiles and promote a more rational system of colonizing the island. In a series of articles published in *Vladivostok* under the rubric “Letters from Sakhalin,” he elaborated on many of the themes first addressed a few years earlier in his “Conversations about Sakhalin.” As in his writing about the Russian colonization of the nearby mainland, he spoke as a patriotic but cautious pro-development liberal as well as a Populist who favored preserving both the traditional Russian peasant commune on the island (*Vladivostok*, 1896, no. 26:11) and the indigenous native social institutions (*Vladivostok*, 1897, no. 18:11–12). One wonders if he saw the contradictions between the positions he advocated, like the fact that greater Russian settlement of Sakhalin would further undermine the indigenous economy and social order. These contradictions would continue to plague his own and his fellow Populists’ thinking about the best way of colonizing and “civilizing” the Russian North and Northeast and would eventually bring the Populists into conflict with a Soviet government determined to industrialize rapidly the vast region (see chapter 8). In the meantime, however, he probably believed that there was enough room on Sakhalin for both the natives and the newcomers. In the 1890s he emphasized gradually introducing new economic activities to the local natives (such as the growing of potatoes) and making a concerted effort not to disturb the aboriginal subsistence areas. One of his articles in *Vladivostok* that addressed this issue ends with a strong, pro-native appeal that invokes both law and morality: “We must remember that by virtue of the law and simple fairness/justice [*spravedlivost’*] the natives possess inalienable rights to their territory, and thus the colonization of the island ought to be carried out in such a manner so as to minimize the suffering of the aborigines” (*Vladivostok*, 1897, 18:11–12).

Shternberg did not limit his advocacy to journalism but often conversed with local government officials and visiting justice ministry representatives and advisors about the deplorable conditions of the local prisoners, convicts, and

exiles. Having spent almost a decade on Sakhalin, he became convinced that even the most hardened criminal was still a human being and a victim of special socioeconomic conditions who could be rehabilitated if treated humanely (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/4/9:231).⁷⁵

Shternberg also expressed this message of compassion toward the most hardened criminals and condemned the entire penal colony project in his realistic fiction writing, another activity in which he found inspiration but one that distracted him from scholarly work. Fiction writing was an early interest that fully bloomed during his prison years, when he worked on epic poems as well as a long novel about his hometown. Once on Sakhalin, he acquired many new topics and themes for his literary work and no longer had to rely on his memories or imagination alone.⁷⁶

Realistic fiction, which tended to portray the life of the downtrodden in order to elicit compassion toward them, was very popular among Russia's radical and liberal writers of the second half of the nineteenth century. In addition to some of the country's greatest novelists, such as Anton Chekhov, Aleksandr Kuprin, Leonid Andreev, and others, who began their literary careers working in this genre but later moved to more nuanced styles of writing, there were also several very popular authors who worked exclusively in it. Some of the best known were Gleb Uspenskii and Vladimir Korolenko. The latter had been a political exile himself and had written extensively about aboriginal Siberians as well as the Slavic people exiled there. As Shternberg was sailing from Odessa to Sakhalin in the company of criminal convicts, he read Korolenko's story "Sokolinet" (1885), a sympathetic portrayal of hardened criminals who commit a new crime while desperately trying to escape Sakhalin Island. As Lev Iakovlevich reminisced over three decades later in a memoir devoted to Korolenko, this story as well as the great humanist's other novellas taught him that "even a murderer does not just kill but also lives and experiences the same feelings as all the other human beings do" (Shternberg 1922a:62–63).

Although Shternberg lacked Korolenko's talent, his realistic short stories, such as "Tovarishch" ("Comrade"), "Skripach" ("Violinist"), and several others published in *Vladivostok* in the mid-1890s, did offer a moving (and sentimental) portrayal of the tragic lives and deaths of Sakhalin's convicts and exiles, who tried to remain human under the most horrible conditions. All of them were probably based on real incidents the author had witnessed or heard about. In

terms of his ethnological interests, his evolutionist and Populist views on culture and society (which sometimes reinforced and sometimes contradicted each other), as well as the relationship between his scholarly writing and other literary pursuits, his three most interesting stories are “Pis'mo” (“A Letter”; *Vladivostok* 1896, 1:13–16); “Otverzhennye” (“Outcasts” or “Rejected Ones”; *Vladivostok*, 1895, 37:13–17); and “Bog Smotrit” (“God Is Watching”; *Vladivostok*, 1896, 22:13–15). All three reflect Shternberg’s ethnographic research as well as his favorable, if slightly paternalistic, attitudes toward the Nivkh. In “A Letter,” Shternberg obviously bases the story of the main character on his experiences at Viakhtu, including a passage taken almost verbatim from his travel journals. The story’s protagonist finds himself at an isolated post, cut off from all his friends, and pining for a young woman with whom he had fallen in love before coming to Sakhalin.⁷⁷ His only consolation (until a love letter finally arrives from her) is the company of his Nivkh friends living nearby. As the author puts it, “Living in this horrible desert, surrounded by fallen and rejected [otverzhennye] people, he found peace of mind even in the most horrible moments among these primitive [pervobytnyi] people. Just seeing these simple people, who knew neither doubts, nor disappointments, filled his long-suffering soul with a balm of peace and calm. Their love of life infected him, and he happily played with their children, joked with their young people, and seriously conversed with the old ones. And these savages loved him” (*Vladivostok* 1896, no. 1:15).

While in this particular story the romanticized Nivkh serve only as a backdrop to the protagonist’s drama, in the other two works they are the main characters, confronted by local Russians whose moral qualities are depicted as being inferior to those of the natives. By raising the question in both stories of whether the déclassé Russian settlers who abuse the natives are the true “savages,” Shternberg ironically undermines his own evolutionist views. “God Is Watching,” subtitled “From an Ethnographer’s Notebook,” is centered around a narrative Shternberg recorded from his guide and “key informant” Obon, who appears in the story under a different name and is described as the ethnographer’s “old friend and first teacher of the Nivkh language and customs” (*Vladivostok* 1896, no. 1:13).⁷⁸ The author speaks here in the first person and, using an authoritative voice, shares with the reader his own ideas about the most efficient way of conducting ethnographic research. Regarding the ideal relationship between an ethnographer and the natives, he says, “If necessary an ethnographer

should be their physician, should share his food supplies with them if he happens to stay in a village that is starving, and should not refuse to be their judge if people having a dispute in their midst ask for his help; if necessary he should also intercede on their behalf with the administration. And if he does all that, he would gain their trust and all of the important and intimate aspects of their life would be opened to him” (*Vladivostok*, 1896, 322:13).

To illustrate his point the narrator, whom his native hosts address as “the big boss” (*akind tiangi*), goes on to describe a series of disputes he once adjudicated in a Nivkh village and relates a complaint one of his hosts lodged against a local Russian who cheats and even steals from his native trading partners. This litany of complaints prompts the ethnographer’s guide to tell him a “legend” (*tylgund*) about a rich Russian merchant who used to visit Sakhalin from the mainland in the old days when there were still no Russian settlers on the island.⁷⁹ Using intimidation and outright violence he simply seized valuable furs procured by the Nivkh or “exchanged” them for cheap trade objects. Adding insult to injury, he also used liquor along with intimidation to force native women (including married ones) to have group sex with him.⁸⁰ Having enriched himself immensely at the expense of the Nivkh, the merchant becomes well known among and highly respected by the local Russians. Ultimately, however, justice is served—not by his victims but through divine retribution. The man suffers from a long and terrible illness and, despite all of his wealth, is unable to find a cure. Moreover, further punishment awaits him after his death. His fancy grave constantly fills with water, while the grave next to his, of a righteous poor man, remains dry. Finally, a bear kills and devours his only son. The native storyteller concludes his narrative by telling the ethnographer: “God is watching. God is watching up there, while you, *tiangi*, should watch over here.” The story ends with the Nivkh man’s words “God is watching” echoing in the ethnographer’s ears.

The concluding statement—the leitmotif of the entire story—is actually absent from the version of this legend appearing in Shternberg’s field notes. In fact, the idea of God’s punishment seems to have been foreign to the Nivkh. There may be several explanations for this ending. On the one hand, it is possible that Obon, well acquainted with the Russians and their religion, modified an old story for the sake of the ethnographer, giving it an ending that would be more dramatic and make more sense to him. In the process of writing the

story down, Shternberg might have omitted this moralizing finale, considering it to be of foreign import. On the other hand, Shternberg the fiction writer might have added this ending himself. After all, it provided a link between his religious and socialist ideas about justice and those of the natives, who might have originally interpreted the merchant's fate as simple bad luck. The story also suggests that while divine punishment might occasionally strike a Russian oppressor of the natives, it is still essential for them to be able to obtain justice with the help of sympathetic outsider familiar with their ways.

"The Outcasts" also features a well-to-do Russian man, Efrem, a settler who had once been an exile.⁸¹ A shrewd trader, he forces his poor Nivkh neighbor, Lund, to exchange his furs for Russian supplies at a highly unfavorable rate. Lung is depicted as a very traditional native who adheres fully to his ancestral beliefs and customs in a simple but sincere way. Efrem, however, has many religious pictures in his home but only appears to be religious and does not act as a Christian. In fact, he is pretty much heartless; when the poor Nivkh asks if he could borrow some flour to make his dying wife's favorite dish, the settler demands to be paid in Chinese silk. For Lung this is the worst price to pay because in accordance with the Nivkh custom he had set aside this luxury cloth to wrap his wife's body when she dies.

In the second part of the story, Efrem learns about the death in Aleksandrovsk of his own female companion, an ex-criminal who, like many women on Sakhalin, had lived with him as his wife even though she had a legal husband back in Russia. Despite his hardened heart, the settler is visibly upset and suddenly becomes much more generous toward his Nivkh visitor. Following his own cultural tradition, he invites his neighbors, exiles-turned-settlers like him, for a memorial party of sorts. Although death seems to remind these men and women that they are Orthodox Christians, they are portrayed as people who only go through the motions when they pray and who do not live according to God's law. Thus one of them, a former hardened criminal, likes to speak on religious subjects, using lofty and emotional language. But, once he finishes his sermons, he forgets about piety and does not live up to the kind of morality that he preaches. "People like that exist at all levels of development, even among the barbarians," commented the author, thus contradicting his own evolutionary views (*Vladivostok*, 1895, no. 37:15). Although the guests seem to feel sorry for their host, they enjoy the party and eventually get quite drunk; one

of the “most debauched” women in the group encourages Efrem to remarry and promises to find him another “good” woman to live with. The memorial feast ends up deteriorating into a drunken argument, with several guests making nasty remarks about the deceased woman. Despite his sadness, Efrem agrees that he should find himself a new female companion.

Shternberg’s depiction of the Russians is not entirely negative. Occasionally they do display kindness, sincerity, and other admirable qualities. According to the narrator, for example, they admire the natives’ honesty and loyalty to their ancient traditions and sometimes treat them fairly. But the reality of their life is so harsh that they find it impossible to grieve deeply (like the Nivkh character does) or to be kind to each other and the natives. Forced to live in a world where most of their traditional cultural values and social relations have lost their power, the settlers clearly do not fit the romantic Populist stereotype of the Russian rural masses (*narod*). Not surprisingly, the author’s attitude towards them is ambivalent; he is appalled by their immoral and crude ways but, as a true humanist, feels sorry for them. After all, they and not the Nivkh are the true “outcasts,” the “rejected ones.” Shternberg did not draw any direct lessons from this story. The reader, however, is left with a feeling that the settlers are inferior morally to their “barbarian” neighbors, even though the latter are depicted as being naïve, improvident, and easily duped by the more cunning Russians. From a strictly evolutionist viewpoint, the latter should be superior to the former not only technologically but socially and spiritually as well—but that is clearly not the case.

Like his journalism, Shternberg’s fiction, especially in “The Outcasts,” turns out to be more realistic, nuanced, and complex than some of his ethnological writing. While certainly influenced by his evolutionist and Populist views, it seems to rise above them, providing a more accurate depiction of the life of Sakhalin’s inhabitants—natives and newcomers alike. And by doing so it also reveals the unresolved contradictions in his scholarly and political worldview.

The Last Year on Sakhalin

After spending a year on the mainland, it must have been difficult for Shternberg to return to his island prison, where he had to resume tutoring, and where the small colony of political exiles continued to be plagued by internal conflicts and squabbles. Given his idealism and the high moral standards he always set

for himself and his comrades, it was not easy for him to cope with this strife. As he once wrote to Krol', "There is no worse blow for me than to be dissatisfied with human beings, and I have been saddened quite a bit by a few people here" (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/201:3). Speaking of Krol', his own sentence, like that of many other exiles, was shortened by one third through a decree issued in November 1894 on the occasion of the Tsar Nicholas II's ascent to the throne. In late 1895 he was finally able to return home to Zhitomir (Krol' 1944:186, 200). Preoccupied with the challenges of starting a new life after a nine-year absence, he no longer wrote to his best friend as regularly as he had while in exile. This undoubtedly exacerbated Shternberg's feeling of loneliness and occasional mood swings. After all, it was only with Krol' that he could share his scholarly plans and political ideas as well as his most intimate feelings (and thus "relieve his suffering," as he put it) (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/201:1-4).

Along with all the other Sakhalin convicts and exiles, Shternberg was undoubtedly awaiting eagerly the commutation of his own sentence. Having been sentenced to a ten-year exile in 1888, he could have been released in 1895. For a while he had hope for release, but then nothing happened.⁸² Despite the recommendations from his Vladivostok colleagues and other Amur Region intellectuals and a seemingly positive relationship with the Sakhalin administration, there was something about his past or present conduct that slowed the wheels of the tsarist bureaucracy.⁸³ The fact that in late December of 1896 he was suddenly sent for two months to the village of Rykovskoe suggests that the authorities were once again unhappy with the restless exile (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/156:75).

Shternberg's status on Sakhalin was ambiguous. While punishing him for insubordination, the local administration continued to call upon him for advice in preparing for the upcoming 1897 census. Whether the authorities liked it or not, he had become a prominent member of the local intelligentsia. A scholar with unparalleled expertise on the local natives and an accomplished journalist with an impressive understanding of the various local economic and social issues, he was consulted by visiting natural scientists and government officials alike.

During his last year on Sakhalin, Shternberg no longer traveled throughout the island but, with the help of his native friends, occupied himself mainly

with his work on Nivkh language and folklore. He also worked on Ainu and Uil'ta dictionaries (Gagen-Torn 1975:106). He occasionally expressed his frustration about not spending enough time analyzing his ethnographic data but justified his procrastination by noting the absence of key scholarly works in ethnology and linguistics. Despite all the odds, he tried to keep his own spirits up and, most importantly, encouraged his comrades scattered throughout Siberia and the Far East to do likewise.

Finally, on May 8, 1897, he received official permission to leave Sakhalin thanks to the 1896 manifesto issued on the occasion of the tsar's coronation. Still, his sentence was cut only by one year and five months, not by one-third. Permission to return to European Russia did not mean complete freedom; the former advocate of terrorism had to reside in hometown "under police supervision" (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/156:77).

Shternberg's Jewishness during the Exile Years

Shternberg's experience on Sakhalin Island contributed to his development as an ethnologist but also to the evolution of his attitudes toward the Jews and Judaism. Despite his decision to leave behind the Jewish milieu and the traditional Judaism of his childhood, he remained keenly interested in Jewish history and contemporary life as well as the moral and ethical aspects of Judaism. This interest was further strengthened on Sakhalin, where he sought out Jews regardless of their background (Shternberg 1912d). From the shores of the "prison island" Shternberg longed nostalgically for the comfort of the family and community he had grown up in. For that reason he seems to have renewed his interest in observing basic Jewish rituals, such as spending the Sabbath with Jews whenever he could. Shternberg's own version of humanistic Judaism, which he began developing while in prison, seems to have further solidified during his exile (see chapter 5).

Despite his strong sense of Jewish identity, however, Shternberg remained open to other religious ideas, which he viewed as being marked by the same humanism that he sought in the Judaism of the Hebrew prophets. He was particularly sympathetic to Christianity and knew almost the entire New Testament by heart, even though he later criticized its otherworldly orientation. Christianity's message of compassion for the poor and the downtrodden clearly appealed to him. This sentiment is best illustrated by an episode from his life at Viakhtu, described in an essay he published thirty years later.

On the eve of the Orthodox Easter, the entire Russian population of this small settlement came to see him, dressed in their holiday finest. The group's leader told him that since the nearest church was far away, they would like to ask him, an educated man, to conduct the services for them. Shternberg's protestation that he was a Jew did not dissuade his visitors. When he finally explained to them that he could not possibly act as a priest, they asked to read "something religious" to them. Impressed with these people's strong desire to partake of the Church's most important feast day, the political exile began reciting the Sermon on the Mount from memory. The reaction of his audience was quite dramatic, "From the very first lines, upon hearing the sounds of my own voice, I was swept up by the mood of the people surrounding me. I had not even finished reciting the last verses, when I began hearing strange sounds. Individual sobs soon gave way to a loud sobbing by everyone present" (Shternberg 1922a:64–65).⁸⁴

Shternberg's Ethnographic Research in the Context of Fin-de-siècle Russian and Western Anthropology

In order to evaluate Shternberg's scholarly contributions we need to place his research within the context of late-nineteenth-century Russian and Western anthropology. First we have to establish what a typical Russian ethnographic study of this era was like. The idea of the ethnographer having to spend long periods of time in the field was still a novel one. Most ethnographers confined their studies to a few months. Ethnographic expeditions were still a favorite type of study, with the scholar engaged in collecting natural science samples as well as ethnographic data. The German-born Leopold von Shrenk (1826–94), a natural scientist by training, led an expedition to the region explored by Shternberg just a few decades before his time. In the course of a three-year expedition (1854–56) sponsored by the Russian Academy of Sciences, Shrenk covered a lot of ground but did not stay in one place for any length of time. While dedicated to collecting data on all the indigenous inhabitants of the lower Amur and Sakhalin, he was particularly interested in the Gilyaks (Shrenk 1883–1903).

Given the nature of his research, Shrenk's publication is much more detailed when it comes to the native material culture but much less so as far as their social and especially spiritual culture is concerned. Unlike Shternberg, he did not have command of the Gilyak language. He mentioned this as one of the main obstacles to his research, the second one being the initial lack

of trust between him and the natives. Shrenk presented his data in a typical natural-historical style, covering everything from ecology to the bear festival, with many topics addressed only briefly. Unlike Shternberg, the German-Russian scholar recorded very few Gilyak kinship terms and misunderstood the role of the agnatic clan in regulating marriage. At the same time, without an anthropological theory or hypothesis to guide him, Shrenk did not bracket the impact of trade and other influences of the more advanced neighbors of the Gilyaks on their culture (see Reshetov 1997). Compared to Shrenk's work, Shternberg's study clearly had many advantages: it was topically oriented and offered a much more detailed discussion of native social organization and religion. It was part of a new genre of ethnographic works carried out by political exiles that was unique to Russia.

The 1890s was a key period in the history of Russian anthropology that witnessed the establishment of two major ethnography journals in the country: *Etnograficheskoe Obozrenie* and *Zhivaia Starina* (Living antiquity). *Etnograficheskoe Obozrenie* was the publication of the Society of the Aficionados of Natural Sciences, Anthropology, and Ethnography (OLEAE), affiliated with Moscow University (Lipets and Makashina 1965). Established in the 1860s, the society had been involved in a major ethnographic exhibition in Moscow in 1867 that became the basis of the first Moscow ethnographic museum. The society also sponsored several scientific expeditions, though most of them were focused on physical anthropology rather than ethnology. Besides organizing expeditions, the society encouraged local collectors to engage in long-term "stationary" collecting of oral traditions and artifacts. In 1881 a prominent folklorist, Vsevolod Fedorovich Miller, became the head of the Society's Ethnography Division and began strongly encouraging folklore collecting. Unfortunately the society was always short on funds and had to organize periodic fundraising campaigns to support its journal.

Perusal of the *Etnograficheskoe Obozrenie* reveals a major discrepancy between the ideals of ethnological research advocated by Moscow ethnographers and the reality of the work carried out by amateur scholars in the field. The first major statement on the goals of Russian anthropology was made by one of its leading figures, Dmitrii Nikolaevich Anuchin (1843–1923), the first scholar to occupy the department (*kafedra*) of physical anthropology at Moscow University, where he also offered courses in ethnology and archaeology. That *kafedra* was

closed in 1884 and transformed into a Department of Geography and Ethnography within the Historical-Philological Faculty. However, in 1888–89 it was transferred once again to the Faculty of the Natural Sciences. This move negatively affected the teaching of cultural anthropology by removing its ties to the humanities and the social sciences. Anuchin headed the kafedra of Geography and Ethnology until 1917. However, his kafedra failed to produce professional ethnologists. Like many leading Russian social and natural scientists, Anuchin was an evolutionist and a Darwinian (see Shternberg 1926; Vucinich 1988; Alymov 2004).

The first issue of *Etnograficheskoe Obozrenie* (1889) contained a major paper by Anuchin entitled “On the Goals of Russian Ethnography.” Anuchin began his essay by pointing out that Russian ethnographers had already accumulated a good deal of data but that this data needed to be systematized and analyzed. He argued that well-qualified persons, well versed in ethnographic methods, should do new research and preferably be familiar with the language of the people whose culture they studied. The ultimate goal of this research would be to produce a series of ethnographic monographs on the various peoples and cultures of the empire. Beyond the descriptive monographs, however, lay other tasks: an explanation and interpretation of the facts using the comparative method, an analysis of the geographic distribution of the various tribes and ethnic groups, and a study of the historical development of their various institutions. Such works would have the same significance in ethnography that works in comparative anatomy, embryology, and biogeography have in zoology. Without them one cannot arrive at a deeper understanding of ethnographic facts. In this manner Anuchin appears to have been an advocate of combining evolutionist (as developed by Augustus Pitt-Rivers, Oscar Montelius, and E. B. Tylor) and diffusionist research agendas. In addition, as a naturalist scientist trained in geography, he viewed the natural environment as a major factor in shaping culture. According to Alymov (2004:23), his views on this subject were strongly influenced by such German geographers as Alexander von Humboldt, Carl Ritter, and Ferdinand Richthofen as well as geographer-ethnologist Friedrich Ratzel.⁸⁵ He also argued that studies of the Russian people as well as other inhabitants of the empire would provide important information about Russian history and primitive culture in general. Finally, it would help promote

a more enlightened approach to the treatment of the non-Russian inhabitants of the state and more civilized methods of assimilating them.

Another position paper that appeared almost simultaneously with Anuchin's further illustrates the development of Russian anthropology in the early 1890s. It was written by Vladimir Ivanovich Lamanskii (1833–1914), the editor of the country's only other ethnographic journal, *Zhivaia Starina*, the publication of the ethnography division of the St. Petersburg-based Imperial Russian Geographic Society. While Anuchin was a moderate Russian nationalist, Lamanskii was an ardent Slavophile who argued that Russian ethnographers had to concentrate primarily on the study of Russian culture and only secondarily on those of non-Russians. While familiar with and somewhat sympathetic to Western evolutionist approaches to culture, Lamanskii was more cautious than Anuchin. He preferred multidisciplinary, comprehensive studies of single peoples (a kind of *Volkskunde*) that would eventually lead to comparative ethnological research. He was also very interested in borrowing and diffusion. Like Anuchin, he hoped that collectors of ethnographic data would be well versed in the latest ethnographic methods.

While the leaders of Russian anthropology were clearly interested in the kind of professional scholarly anthropology that their Western counterparts were advocating, the reality of Russian life was such that very few ethnographic research projects actually followed their guidelines. There was a lack not only of professional training for anthropologists but also of funds that would support a field researcher for an extensive period of time. However, researchers who came from the ranks of political exiles usually had university education (often with a particular focus in the social sciences) as well as a good deal of time on his hands.

The practice of exiling dissidents to the periphery of the country was unique to Russia, and it played an important role in the development of the provincial intelligentsia in the Russian North and Siberia. The first observers of the local Russian and indigenous populations were the so-called Decembrists, a group of noblemen who conspired against the regime in the 1820s. However, a much larger cohort of ethnographers composed mainly of the middle-class Narodniks appeared in the 1850s–90s. Their Populist ideology encouraged a strong interest in local social life and “customary law.” Thus Petr Efimenko, a member of a secret student organization in 1855–60 and an exile to Perm' in the early 1860s,

ended up publishing over 120 articles on the “juridical customs” and other ethnographic facts pertaining to the Russian and non-Russian inhabitants of several northern provinces of Russia; he also composed a program for the gathering of ethnographic data (Tokarev 1966:250–251). Ivan Khudiakov was among the first Narodniks to conduct extensive ethnographic research on the indigenous Siberians. Exiled to Yakutiia in the mid-1860s, he became the author of one of the first major ethnographic works on the Yakuts (1969). Vaclav Seroshevskii, a Polish revolutionary who spent twelve years in exile (1880–92), also collected a good deal of ethnographic data on the Yakuts. His substantial ethnographic monograph on the Yakuts was published in 1896.

One of the most prominent Populist anthropologists of the generation preceding Shternberg’s was Dmitrii Klements (1848–1914), his future colleague at the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (MAE). Arrested in 1879, he was exiled to eastern Siberia for three years (1881–84). The conditions of his exile in Minusinsk were milder than those in the Yakutsk region, and Klements was able to take part immediately in ethnographic and archaeological expeditions and work at the Minusinsk Museum, which he eventually transformed into a true scientific institution. In 1890 Klements moved to Irkutsk, where he worked at the local museum and the progressive local newspaper *Vostochnoe Obozrenie* (Eastern review) (Dubov 1998).

The next generation of political exiles of the Narodnik persuasion boasted an even larger cohort of ethnographers. Most prominent among them were Shternberg’s comrades and future colleagues Vladimir Bogoraz (1865–1936) and Vladimir Iokhel’son (1859–1937). The former, who had participated with Shternberg in the work of the southern Populists, was exiled to the Kolyma region, where he began his research by studying the folklore and customs of the local Russian (“old-time”) settlers. Eventually he turned to the Chukchi, whose culture had not yet been well studied by ethnographers (see Bogoraz 1900, 1901). Iokhel’son, who had also been exiled to Kolyma, concentrated on the local Yukagir, a virtually unknown indigenous ethnic group (see Iokhel’son 1898, 1900a).

What distinguished the work of these prominent Siberian ethnographers from that of Shternberg was their lack of topical focus or a clear theoretical orientation. Their basic approach consisted of gathering data on all aspects of local culture. It was only in the mid-1890s, when a wealthy Siberian merchant named Aleksandr Sibiriakov provided the funds for a large-scale ethnographic

expedition, that Klements, Bogoraz, Iokhel'son, and several others began to focus their research on such issues as the local economy, tribal law, and kinship. Of all the participants in the expedition, the one whose research interests were closest to those of Shternberg was Nikolai Vitashevskii (1857–1918). Like Shternberg, he was strongly influenced by evolutionism, which inspired him to write works like “Yakut Materials for the Study of the Embryology of Law” (Pavlinov, Vitashesvskii, Levental' 1929).

Although Shternberg was not alone in his ethnographic studies of the 1890s, his research was rather unique in its strong topical focus on kinship and social organization and especially his fascination with the Nivkh clan and its counterparts in other Far Eastern native cultures. Equally unusual was his strong interest in local indigenous languages, not only as a source of quality ethnographic data, but also as a subject of research. As his friend and colleague Bogoraz pointed out, “Shternberg was the first one in Russian ethnography who combined fieldwork in linguistics and in ethnography into a single indivisible whole” (Bogoraz Collection, SPFA RAN, 250/1/211:15). According to a modern-day specialist on Nivkh linguistics, Shternberg's command of Nivkh language and especially his understanding of its grammar was quite impressive, especially given the fact that he was a pioneer in this field, having no predecessors whose work he could draw on (Ekaterina Gruzdeva, personal communication 2000). At the same time his grasp of Nivkh phonology was rather limited. On the whole, for a person without any linguistic training, he managed to accomplish a great deal in the field of Nivkh linguistics.

This combination of research interests and a long-term involvement in ethnographic research places Shternberg in a unique position not only in 1890s Russian anthropology but in anthropology in general. In comparing Shternberg's ethnographic research with that of his Western European contemporaries we must focus mainly on British anthropology, since neither the French ethnographers nor the Germans engaged in the kind of long-term participant observation he did (Williams 1983; Parkin 2005). German anthropology, which had made major advances in the 1890s, was dominated by museum-sponsored expeditions that tried to cover a lot of ground but could not afford to spend long periods of time with a single group (see Zimmerman 2001; Penny 2002; Bunzl and Penny 2003; Gingrich 2005).⁸⁶

As far as British anthropology was concerned, Shternberg's research resembled the studies of Lorimer Fison and William Howitt (1880) and Walter Baldwin Spencer and F. J. Gillin (1899), all of whom worked among Australian aborigines, widely perceived as some of the most primitive peoples of the world (see Stocking 1995; Hiatt 1996). Like Shternberg, Fison and Howitt adhered to Morgan's evolutionary model of social organization and searched for manifestations of "group marriage" in aboriginal social organization; moreover, the two amateur ethnographers were also forced to distinguish between the "theoretical" and "actual" marriage practices of the Australians (Stocking 1995:29). Of the two, Howitt had developed a particularly close relationship with the natives, having been initiated into their ceremonial system. However, his command of the aboriginal languages seems to have been inferior to Shternberg's command of Nivkh. Spencer and Gillin also subscribed to evolutionism, maintaining correspondence with E. B. Tylor. Unlike Fison and Howitt, however, these two ethnographers focused on the rich ceremonial system of the aborigines. In terms of their fieldwork methodology, Spencer and Gillen were close to Shternberg and even surpassed him. As Stocking described their approach, "Going beyond the elicitation of customary rules as general statements illustrated by a few particular instances, it [Spencer and Gillin's *Kamilaroi and Kurnai*] presented an extended account of observed ceremonial behavior, supplemented by information gained from informants in the immediate context of ceremonial performance (Stocking 1995:9). However, unlike Shternberg, the two of them never discussed their methodology and therefore left no methodological legacy.

Another important difference between Shternberg's view of natives and those of the British scholars was the fact that Shternberg, as a political exile and a member of a minority group that suffered some of the worst forms of discrimination in tsarist Russia, was very sympathetic to the plight of the indigenous population, even though he saw Western culture as being, in many respects, superior to theirs. This pro-native position, combined with a good deal of what might be called "benign primitivism," was much more typical of Populist Russian anthropology than of its Western counterpart.

Another major landmark of British anthropology in the 1890s was the Torres Straits Expedition organized and led by Alfred C. Haddon. A comparison of that expedition's research methods with those of Shternberg reveals interesting

similarities as well as differences. Haddon shared Shternberg's socialist views and expressed sympathy for the colonized peoples whose culture he and his colleagues studied as well as ambivalence about the civilizing efforts of the colonial regime. While the British scholar's pro-native stand was more moderate than that of Shternberg, there clearly were some strong similarities in their positions. Here is how Stocking characterized Haddon's approach,

What is surprising about Haddon's early ethnographic experience is his unusual sensitivity, for an anthropologist of his day, to certain aspects of what today would be called the "colonial situation" of his ethnography. Undated manuscript materials and short published pieces from the period after his return from Torres Straits reveal a humanely relativizing (though still ethnocentric and even racist) ethical sensibility. Squirring uncomfortably under the weight of the "white man's burden," Haddon tried to find a standpoint from which he could both study and defend natives whose traditional customs and beliefs were being radically transformed, if not effaced, by the encroachments of a civilization and an empire of which, albeit ambivalently, he was himself a part. (1995:101)

Similarly to Shternberg, however, Haddon still saw anthropology as part of a white man's burden that would reduce its weight by "enlightening imperial self-interest" (Stocking 1995:103). Unlike Shternberg, however, Haddon had entered anthropology from zoology, which explains his particular interest in physical anthropology and material culture. Also, Haddon was not a die-hard Morganian-Tylorian evolutionist like Shternberg, even though he did subscribe to many of the basic assumptions of later nineteenth-century evolutionism. Still, in the context of the Torres Straits, he was more concerned with establishing the distribution of cultural forms within a single geographical area than with documenting a universal sequence of development (Stocking 1995:105).

In comparison to Shternberg's studies of the Nivkh and other native groups of Sakhalin and the lower Amur region, the Torres Straits Expedition had the advantage of a team approach, in which several participants took on different research tasks. But as Stocking and others (Herle and Rouse 1998) have pointed out, the British expedition "did not mark the beginning of fieldwork in the modern sense—which was better exemplified in the work of Spencer and Gillin"

(Stocking 1995:111). After all, most of the expedition's work "consisted of brief stays among missionized natives; none of the investigators learned a native language; and much of the ethnographic data they collected had a somewhat random character" (Stocking 1995:112).

There was, however, one major methodological innovation associated with this expedition: William Rivers's "genealogical method." Both the method itself and the fact that it led Rivers back to Morgan's tradition of social evolutionism demonstrate a striking similarity between his and Shternberg's approaches to the study of kinship and social organization. The big difference, however, was that while River's method was quickly canonized in academic British social anthropology via *Notes and Queries*, it took many years before Shternberg's approach began influencing the younger generation of Russian ethnographers. Ultimately the main difference between Haddon and his team of Cambridge scholars, on the one hand, and the solitary Russian Populist ethnographers, on the other, was the fact that the former went on to establish a school that trained generations of professional anthropologists, while the latter had to overcome many obstacles before they could do so. Hence British scholars articulated the idea of "field work" (a term that Haddon is credited with introducing into the academic discourse) much earlier and more strongly than Russian scholars (cf. Stocking 1995:115). Ultimately Haddon's school gave birth to the Malinowskian approach to ethnographic fieldwork, which bore strong resemblances to Shternberg's method but surpassed it in terms of the length of the ethnographer's stay in the field and the degree of his involvement with the people whose culture he studied.

If Shternberg's approach to ethnographic research had striking similarities with British methodology in the 1890s, it also paralleled the approach of Franz Boas, the founder of professional American anthropology. A comparison between their two approaches is particularly interesting and important because Boas and Shternberg eventually became colleagues and friends and because Boasian anthropology had significant impact on Russian anthropology thanks primarily to Shternberg, Bogoraz, and Iokhel'son (Kan 2000, 2001a, 2006).

Boas and Shternberg arrived in the field with completely different backgrounds: the former had been trained primarily in the natural sciences, the latter in the social sciences. However, their long exposure to native life convinced both researchers that an ethnographer had to suspend his own biases

and try to understand the local people from their own point of view. Both scholars also displayed a sympathetic view of the native people, whose culture they saw as being in some ways equal or even superior to that of the “civilized” Westerners (see Müller-Wille 1998). Both of them also became strong advocates of learning native languages as the main method of gathering data, even though neither one became fluent in a native language. A strong interest in native language and folklore distinguished Boas’s and Shternberg’s ethnographic research from most of the work carried out during the same era by British, German, or French field workers. Still, there were important differences in their research as well: Boas collected a lot more data on native subsistence practices and environmental knowledge, while Shternberg collected more information on indigenous social organization. Finally, Shternberg’s research was much more theory driven than Boas’s, who was becoming a cautious empiricist and historical particularist and who saw grand theorizing as premature. Despite all these differences the two ethnographers agreed on many methodological issues. The big difference, of course, was the fact that Boas eventually obtained an institutional position that allowed him to shape American anthropology, whereas Shternberg had a much more difficult time exerting an influence on Russian anthropology and had to wait much longer to begin do so.

One other cohort of American anthropologists whose work bares comparison with Shternberg’s are the ethnographers affiliated in various ways with the Bureau of American Ethnology. Like Shternberg, such individuals as Frank Hamilton Cushing, James Mooney, George Dorsey, Francis La Flesche, Alice Fletcher, and several others were amateur ethnographers without any professional training in anthropology. They also spent long periods of time in the field and developed a good command of local native languages. Finally, like the Russian Populists, they tended to be more sympathetic to the plight of America’s indigenous peoples than many of the professional ethnologists who came after them. Unlike Shternberg, however, most of them (with the possible exception of Mooney) eschewed grand theory (see Darnell 1998).

Finally, it is important to point out that evolutionism dominated Russian anthropology decades after it began to be criticized and eventually abandoned by most of the Western ethnologists. In addition to Anuchin, evolutionism was espoused by another pioneering figure in Russian anthropology, Eduard Petri (1854–99). He was the first professor of the *kafedra* of geography and ethnography at

St. Petersburg University and the author of the first Russian textbook in physical anthropology, which included some discussion of ethnology. For him physical and cultural anthropology were part and parcel of the “natural history of humankind” and covered all aspects of humanity’s physical and cultural characteristics. Because of these precedents, the evolutionist theorizing of Shternberg’s first publications met with a rather enthusiastic reception.

Compared to the work of his contemporaries, Shternberg’s research on the Nivkh placed him at the vanguard of anthropology in the 1890s. His contribution to anthropology would only grow as he left Sakhalin Island and his career as an amateur researcher and returned to the mainland, where he would become a professional anthropologist associated with Russia’s main ethnographic museum.

3. Beginning a Professional Career in the Capital

Lev Shternberg's journey back home was marked by a pleasant reunion with his old friend Krol' as well as encounters with other prominent exiled ethnographers who found his stories about the Nivkh fascinating. Krol' described his friend looking fresh, energetic, and full of life. As he wrote, "His idealism, so full of enthusiasm, became even deeper, his rich imagination became even richer, and his faith in humankind and its bright future even more passionate than before. One could feel his powerful inner strength, which helped him survive the most difficult exile conditions on Sakhalin" (1944:254). Together the two of them traveled from Irkutsk to Zhitomir, stopping in Kurgan to visit Mikhail Gots, a prominent Narodnik who was still in exile.

While Shternberg was glad to be back home after such a long absence, he soon found out that there was not much for him to do in Zhitomir, which remained as provincial in the 1890s as it had been when he was growing up. His experience was similar to that of Krol', who had returned to Zhitomir a few years earlier to find the local intellectual and social life stagnant and his old friends uninterested in politics. Like Krol', Shternberg was eager to leave his hometown for the capital, where he could finally turn to the task of analyzing his Nivkh data, taking advantage of the city's first-rate libraries and advice from St. Petersburg scholars. Unfortunately, as former political exiles and Jews, both were prohibited from residing in most of the country's major cities. Another obstacle he had to overcome in order to settle in St. Petersburg was his lack of a university diploma; a Jew with a university diploma could obtain permission to reside outside the Pale of Settlement, including St. Petersburg. In the meantime

Shternberg tried to earn a living, as he had in exile, writing for a local liberal newspaper, *Volyn'*, as well as several other ones, including *Vladivostok*. In the late 1890s *Volyn'* was more than a small provincial newspaper. Thanks to the contributions of such prominent liberal and Populist authors as Nikolai Korobka, Grigorii Machtet, and Mikhail Kotsiubinskii, it had become the voice of the region's progressive intelligentsia (Machtet 1958:24–25).

Luckily, his friends and fellow exiles had already begun clearing a path for him from beyond the Pale of Settlement to St. Petersburg. A year prior to Shternberg's return, Krol' had written to Vasilii Radlov (1837–1918), the head of St. Petersburg's Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (MAE), asking him to help his best friend obtain permission to reside in the capital (1944:238–239). Having already hired Dmitrii Klements, a former Narodnik who had become a prominent ethnologist and museum specialist during his years of Siberian exile, Radlov, who had himself conducted linguistic, folkloristic, and archaeological research in Siberia, was sympathetic to the request of Krol' and was able to help him. Upon his arrival in the capital, Krol' met with Radlov to discuss his own Buryat research as well as Shternberg's Nivkh studies. Krol' did his best to promote his friend, emphasizing Shternberg's key role in the establishment of a natural history museum on Sakhalin. Radlov informed Krol' that he had already heard about Shternberg's interesting research and would do all he could to help him come to St. Petersburg to stay. Luckily one of the MAE's curators had just resigned and Radlov was looking for a replacement. Moreover, the museum's senior curator, Klements, knew Shternberg and could vouch for his curatorial skills and knowledge of ethnology. In a letter to Shternberg dated January 31, 1899, Krol' emphasized the importance of enlisting members of the Academy of Sciences in the fight for his relocation to the capital: "By all means you must establish contacts with the Academy of Sciences and the Imperial Geographic Society. I have told you this before and now I insist that you must not waste a single minute. You must submit to them at least one Gilyak text along with [your] grammatical, lexicological, etc. analysis. Then the Academy will fight for you" (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/157:110).¹

There was an additional reason why Krol' was so anxious for his friend to send his linguistic materials to the Academy. In 1898 preparations for the joint American-Russian Jesup North Pacific Expedition were under way. Sponsored by the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH), the expedition was the

brainchild of Franz Boas, who had long been interested in the question of the origin of native North Americans and was determined to obtain first-rate ethnographic, linguistic, folkloristic, archaeological, and osteological data from eastern Siberia. Having heard from Radlov about the scholarly accomplishments of Bogoraz and Iokhel'son, Boas decided to recruit these Russian scholars for his project (Boas 1897, 1903, 1905, 1910; Freed et. al. 1988; Cole 2001; Vakhtin 2001a; Krupnik 1998; Krupnik and Vakhtin 2003; Kan 2000, 2001a). Unfortunately for Shternberg, he was still in exile and remained unknown to Radlov when the MAE director was recommending Russian ethnographers to Boas. Consequently Boas hired a young German Sinologist, Berthold Laufer, to undertake ethnographic research on the lower Amur and Sakhalin. In July 1898 Laufer arrived on Sakhalin and stayed there until March 1899. Boas must have soon realized that the young German scholar was no match for Bogoraz and Iokhel'son; not only did Laufer not know any Nivkh, but he did not even know any Russian and had to work through a local German interpreter. Krol' explained to Shternberg that he would upstage Laufer if he sent his Nivkh texts to the Academy's linguists (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/157:110). Krol' realized that Shternberg had to act quickly, and several of his letters express frustration with his friend's slow pace of working on his ethnographic materials. In another letter he stated, "If you had already published your materials on the [Gilyak] bear festival, we would have been in a much better shape right now" (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/157:4-6). In January 1900 Krol' sent another letter to Zhitomir, telling Lev the following: "As I have already written to you, Radlov has promised to do his best to help you move to St. Petersburg but is asking you to wait a little longer; he is sure everything will be OK and asks me to assure you of that. . . . [H]e also thinks it would be a good idea for you to send to the Museum of Anthropology [and Ethnography] your small collection; then he would talk about you again with the council of the Academy" (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/157:7-8).

Determined to use all possible means to help his friend, Krol' also appealed to the Russian Geographical Society (RGO) to intercede on Shternberg's behalf.² In another letter written in 1900 he recommended that Shternberg, in order to demonstrate that he was a "real scholar," send his article on the Oroch to the society and ask it to publish the piece in its proceedings (*Izvestiia*).

The pleas of Krol' were echoed by those of Shternberg's other friend and fellow Narodnik-turned-ethnographer Bogoraz, who had already taken the steps he was urging his friend to follow. Bogoraz and Iokhel'son presented their research on behalf of the Sibriakov Expedition to the Academy of Sciences, which was able to convince the authorities to allow the two exiles to stay in St. Petersburg. In 1898 they came to the capital, where they analyzed their linguistic and ethnographic data under the guidance of the academician Carl Zaleman (1849–1916), a prominent linguist who specialized in Persian but was also very interested in Siberian languages.³ In addition, Bogoraz was hired by the MAE to analyze its collection of Chukchi artifacts (Bogoraz 1901). Arguing that aspiring ethnographers, anxious to find a niche in St. Petersburg, had to make as good an impression on the Academy as possible, Bogoraz advised Shternberg to make his linguistic materials more scholarly, using his own and Iokhel'son's papers on Chukchi and Yukagir as models. Bogoraz also pointed out that scholars had such a poor understanding of these indigenous languages that they were willing to overlook ethnographers' lack of linguistic expertise. Bogoraz's letters show how much Shternberg was still naïve and unsure of his own ability to produce an adequate linguistic analysis. Shternberg had apparently asked his friend to find him a Nivkh dictionary but, as Bogoraz wrote, "an international Gilyak dictionary does not exist." All he could send his friend was Wilhelm Grube's preliminary work on Nivkh texts as well as samples of his own analysis of Chukchi texts and Iokhel'son's work on Yukagir (see Bogoraz 1900; Iokhel'son 1900b).⁴ He also informed Shternberg that Zaleman, the academician most interested in Siberian languages, was unable to recommend any textbook in linguistics to him and pointed out that Shternberg did not really need one to analyze his texts. Bogoraz recommended that he "rewrite a couple of Gilyak texts and subject them to a detailed grammatical, phonetic, and syntactic analysis—the more detailed the better" (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/34:15a). Another 1899 letter from Bogoraz informed Shternberg that he was reading his Nivkh materials and was impressed by them but found "the discussion of Nivkh phonetics confusing." Bogoraz did, however, hasten to admit that he was not a specialist in linguistics (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/34:17). Shternberg's correspondence with his friends demonstrates how much they remained amateurs and how desperate they were to use any opportunity to convince the capital's academic establishment that they

had made major discoveries in the field of Siberian ethnology and linguistics. For this reason, Bogoraz advised Shternberg to check if there were any similarities between the Nivkh and the Yukagir languages and, if that turned out to be the case, point out this interesting fact in his essay (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/34:18a).

In addition to trying to impress Radlov and others with their expertise in a poorly known area of ethnology and linguistics, the Populist ethnographers attempted to whet the academicians' appetite by promising to turn over their extensive ethnographic collections and arguing that if they were hired by the MAE, they could then undertake a serious scholarly analysis of these collections. Like Krol', Bogoraz also advised Shternberg to "advertise himself to Radlov and other academicians" not only as an ethnographer and a linguist but as a museum specialist as well. As he wrote to him,

You should write an official letter to the Museum's Director immediately, saying that you have compiled this collection at such and such a place (brag about it strongly but with some restraint) and that you would like to give it to the museum as a gift, but would first like to study and organize it, and that in order to do that you must be in St. Petersburg. In addition mention that you have such and such materials on the Gilyak language, which you have already submitted to academician Zaleman, and in order to organize these materials properly you would need the assistance of a qualified person. In conclusion ask him to intercede on your behalf, so that you are able to settle in St. Petersburg for a certain period of time, e.g., six months. (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/34)

In the spring of 1899 Shternberg completed his work on the "Samples of Materials for the Study of the Gilyak Language and Folklore" and sent it to Zaleman. He was still full of doubt about the quality of his work and his prospects of being able to settle in St. Petersburg and make a living as a scholar; while waiting for Zaleman's response, he contemplated going abroad for a year to either study or work, possibly as a journalist (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/5/69:380).⁵

By the end of the summer he received a letter from Zelman who had reviewed the work and had been impressed with it. The academician invited Shternberg

to come to St. Petersburg immediately and stay there for three months in order to complete the preparation of his manuscript for publication. Inspired and excited, Shternberg proceeded to the capital, where the academician cordially received him. According to the memoir of his wife, Sarra Ratner-Shternberg (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/4/9:142–143), this was an exciting encounter for her husband: after years of exile he was finally able to converse with one of the country’s leading linguists. However, Zaleman hesitated before giving Shternberg’s work the green light. Being a specialist in Indo-European languages, he was unsure of the manuscript’s scholarly quality. He was particularly puzzled by the “strange” morphology and phonetics of the Nivkh language. To overcome his doubts, Zaleman invited several other linguists to take part in discussions with Shternberg, including Radlov and the great Polish-Russian scholar Jan Baudouin de Courtenay (1845–1929).⁶ Sarra Ratner-Shternberg noted that her husband “brilliantly defeated all of their objections using his own [scholarly] weapons” (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/4/9:142–143). Before making the final decision on whether to publish Shternberg’s manuscript in the Academy proceedings, Zaleman wanted to have an expert opinion on its quality, so he sent the work to Grube. Grube was very impressed with Shternberg’s work and approved its publication (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/9:144). Hungry for new ideas, Shternberg used his brief stay in the capital to familiarize himself with the main theoretical works in linguistics, which had not been available to him in his exile.

Early in 1900 Zaleman made the following announcement to a session of the Academy’s Historical-Philological Division:

After the General Meeting [of the division] on January 12 of this year decided to allocate the funds that I needed to continue working with the linguistic materials collected by the Sibiriakov Expedition, I contacted a person who had studied the Gilyaks and asked him to submit to me a sample of materials on the Gilyak language and folklore, as I had done earlier with Bogoraz and Iokhel’son. Recently Lev Iakovlevich Shternberg submitted to me a short paper, which he had prepared using the model of those of his predecessors published in volumes IX and X of the Academy [Izvestiia]. Having examined his work, I found it to be thorough and thoughtful.

Nonetheless, I cannot yet find it possible to appeal for the publication of Mr. Shternberg's paper, because his manner of representing the sounds of the Gilyak language as well as his interpretation of its grammatical forms suffer from some flaws. The reason for this is the fact that he is a self-taught individual and was working with a language that had not been studied by anyone before. This, however, does not in any way diminish the value of the materials he collected. I believe that to eliminate these shortcomings Mr. Shternberg should work on these materials under my supervision. However, since he does not have the right to reside in the capital, I have the honor of asking the Division to appeal to authorities to allow Mr. Shternberg . . . to return to St. Petersburg for the remaining part of this year. This permission is essential, given the importance of this scholarly undertaking, which promises to provide the first accurate data on the language and spiritual life of the mysterious Gilyak tribe. (Zaleman 1900:267)

The session authorized asking academician Radlov to appeal to the police department for such a residence permit.

In May 1900 Zaleman delivered another presentation to a session of the Historical-Philological Division, in which he discussed Shternberg's Nivkh materials in detail. In June 1900 the former exile returned to St. Petersburg with permission (obtained for him by Zaleman and Radlov) to stay there for the entire summer.⁷ He spent that season at a rented house next door to Zaleman's summer home in nearby Finland, where the two of them put the final touches on Shternberg's "Samples." The latter was finally published by the Academy in November 1900 (Shternberg 1900b).⁸

The publication consisted of a text of a Nivkh poem accompanied by a literal translation and a detailed analysis of one hundred words from it. Emphasizing the uniqueness of the Nivkh language, Shternberg pointed out that this was the first attempt to represent and translate an entire Nivkh text. He also suggested that his linguistic comments offered "a more or less satisfactory idea about the special structure [stroï], phonetics, and grammatical features of Nivkh (1900b:39). While Shternberg's work was far from perfect, it was indeed a pioneering one and has been positively evaluated by several specialists on Nivkh

language, such as Kreinovich (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/205) and Gruzdeva (personal communications, 2000–2003). As far as the quality of his translation of the Nivkh text into Russian, several linguists have commented on his impressive ability to render the tone and style of Gilyak speech by means of a particular word order (see, for example, Vladimirtsov 1930:38). At the same time, some of Shternberg's comments on the Nivkh language exhibit a certain naïveté and an influence of evolutionism on his thinking. Thus he describes an "extreme laxity and a lack of a definite articulation of vowels" typical for Nivkh speech and explains it as being "first and foremost a special characteristic of primitive languages, which allow a very wide individualization of sounds" (1900b:392–393).

Shternberg's anxiety about his professional prospects was further exacerbated by an important event that occurred in his life in 1898–99: his meeting and falling in love with Sarra (Sophia) Ratner. Born in Mogilev in 1872 to a middle-class Jewish family (her father was an "honorary citizen" of his city), she had attended a private boarding school and then the prestigious Bestuzhev Courses for Women in St. Petersburg, graduating in 1889 from its Physics and Mathematics Division.⁹ Trained to be a pedagogue, Ratner worked in the 1890s in Moscow, where she organized and taught in the first evening school for women laborers. In 1898 she opened her own four-year high school for Jewish girls in Zhitomir and served as its principal (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/4/17). With her advanced education and progressive views on women's issues, Sarra Ratner represented a new type of a secular Russian-Jewish woman who combined commitment to the Jewish people with familiarity and attachment to Russian and Western European high culture. She became Lev's life-long loyal companion and colleague. Letters exchanged between Lev and Sarra throughout their entire life suggest a happy marriage. As Roon and Sirina (2004:57) pointed out, Shternberg was a passionate and idealistic man, while Sarra Ratner was cautious, rather cold, and smart in practical matters, but also someone who constantly needed moral and emotional support and encouragement. Her husband tried his best to provide that kind of support.

At the same time, during the first years of this relationship, tensions between them did exist. Correspondence between Lev and Sarra reveals a conflict between their desire to be together and Sarra's commitment to having a career

of her own. Despite Shternberg's progressive views on the role of women in society, he still believed that his beloved had to follow him to St. Petersburg, even though it was clear to both of them that she would not be able to have a school of her own there. In a telling passage from one of her letters to him, Sarra wrote,

My dear, try to reject for a moment the standard views on women, try to imagine for a second that a woman is a human being with the same spiritual and social needs as those of a man; try also to imagine a couple in which the husband has to turn down a good and morally satisfying vocation because of some unfortunate circumstances and has to live with the woman and try to figure out how he could be of use to her. And then imagine that in response to his objections the wife would tell him, "I cannot believe that my love for you cannot replace your work for you!" Would you criticize such a husband, would you dare to say that he was wrong, would you conclude from his words that his love for his wife is not strong enough? Oh, Lev, Lev, why don't you want to understand me, why can't you be unbiased as a man in this case? Imagine how you would feel if I kept stubbornly insisting that I would stay with my school and you would have to live with me here? . . . I feel bitter and sad that even you, my lovely, wonderful man, are completely under the influence of the predominant views on the woman as a creature who is inferior to the man. (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/5/69:10)

Despite her bitterness, Sarra understood well that Lev could not thrive as a scholar in Zhitomir. After they were officially married on June 27, 1900, she finally agreed to sacrifice her career for the sake of her love and consented to moving to the capital. In early fall of 1900 she and Lev rented an apartment in St. Petersburg (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/5/69:302).

The only unpleasant aspect of their move was the need to obtain permission from the police to reside in the city. The problem was that Shternberg lacked a university diploma, a document that would have helped him obtain that permission. (Several times between 1899 and 1901 Shternberg appealed to the authorities for permission to take his university exams but was turned down).

In 1900, thanks to the efforts of Radlov and Zaleman, Shternberg finally received such a permit, but it had to be renewed every three months. Being a bit absentminded, Shternberg once forgot to do so and was threatened by the police with expulsion from the city within twenty-four hours. This was in the fall of 1901, when the Shternbergs already had a baby son, who they named Arkadii after his maternal grandfather. Zaleman's intercession enabled Lev to obtain a six-month extension of his permit, but his legal status remained shaky for several more years. His humiliation was further aggravated every summer when he had to appeal to the authorities to grant him a permit to reside in the Finnish suburbs of St. Petersburg, a favorite vacation spot of the capital's intelligentsia. Since he still did not have a job at the MAE, Shternberg once again contemplated going abroad (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/4/9:151). Finally, fortune smiled at the Zhitomir Populist: in late 1901 Radlov offered him a job as curator to replace Klements, who had resigned his position to become a curator at the Ethnography Department of the newly opened Russian Museum.¹⁰ Even though Shternberg was going to occupy the position of senior curator and ethnographer, he was initially hired as an adjunct employee with the salary of a junior curator because of budgetary constraints and because he lacked a university diploma. Finally, in May 1902, after an appeal by Radlov and other academicians, Shternberg was allowed to take his exams, and on June 9 of that year he was officially granted a diploma of higher education. Soon thereafter, the MAE hired him as a full-time curator. Lev was in seventh heaven; as his wife reminisced, he had told her earlier that he would have been willing to work at the great museum in any capacity, even as a guard (Ratner-Shternberg 1928:31–32). In 1904 he was officially appointed as a senior curator, and some years later he became the assistant to the director.¹¹

Shternberg liked living in the capital city but tried to maintain his old daily routine of taking long walks and occasionally bicycling in the parks. While waiting anxiously for a position at the MAE, he explored other sources of income in the capital, including journalism. In the summer of 1900, while vacationing at a summer cottage community outside the city, Shternberg met and befriended two prominent Russian-Jewish lawyers, journalists, and public figures: the cousins Iosif and Vladimir Gessen. In a few years the two men became leaders of the Constitutional-Democratic (КД) Party, the leading party of the liberal intelligentsia. Iosif Gessen (1865–1943) had actually known Shternberg

as a student and admired him for his skills as a radical agitator and leader. A man of means, he contributed to several leading liberal newspapers, including *Severnyi Kur'er* (Northern courier) and *Syn Otechestva* (Son of the fatherland).¹² In addition to asking Shternberg to write for these newspapers, the Gessens offered to help him earn some money by using part of their publishing funds to pay for his translations of scholarly works, one of which would have been Andrew Lang's *History of Religion* (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/361:12–13). While Shternberg never translated Lang's book, he and his wife did translate and edit scholarly works in anthropology and related disciplines through the 1900s, including Gabriel de Mortillet's classic work in evolutionary archaeology, *Le préhistorique: Antiquité de l'homme* (1882; Russian translation 1903) and one of the volumes of Hans Helmolt's *History of the World* (1899; Russian translation 1902–7) (see Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/4/9:150).¹³ Contributing to various liberal publications became not only a rather important source of additional income for Shternberg (who was always short on cash) but an opportunity to express his views on various burning issues of the day. While the Gessens introduced him to the more moderate St. Petersburg liberals and his future comrades in the struggle for Jewish emancipation (see chapters 4–6), his participation in the famous Thursday meetings of *Russkoe Bogatstvo* (The Wealth of Russia), a leading political and literary journal of the moderate Left, gave him an opportunity to meet the hero of his youth, Mikhailovskii, and other so-called Liberal Populists who shared many of Shternberg's views, which had become somewhat more moderate compared to those of his university years.¹⁴ The journal was edited by the writer and progressive activist Vladimir Korolenko, whose views were close to those of the liberal Populists. Shternberg had always admired Korolenko's writing as well as his public statements and was delighted to meet the man himself (Shternberg 1922a). In the early 1900s *Russkoe Bogatstvo* published several of Shternberg's reviews of recent books in the social sciences and related disciplines (see, for example, Shternberg 1903).¹⁵ Shternberg's journalistic work made him a true member of the city's community of progressive writers, a membership confirmed by his election to the Union of Mutual Help of Russian Writers (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/341:23). Between the 1900s and 1910s he frequented several salons of the liberal and radical intelligentsia of the capital, such as the one at the home of the literary critic Maria Watson, who was closely associated with the *Russkoe*

Bogatstvo circle, and another one presided over by Aleksandra Kalmykova, a novelist and educator who had strong ties with the Social Democrats (Shternberg 1922a:72; Shternberg 1928c).

Another encounter that turned out to be very fortunate for Shternberg was his meeting with Nikolai Kareev (1850–1931), a leading liberal historian and public figure who served as the editor of the country’s most respected encyclopedia, *Brokgauza i Efrona* (Brockhaus and Efron).¹⁶ Shternberg owed this meeting to Moisei Krol’, who not only lobbied Radlov on behalf of his friend but introduced him to his own circle of liberal friends, which included the Gessens. According to his own memoir (1944:239–240), the most interesting *jour fixe* Krol’ attended in St. Petersburg was that of Vasilii Vorontsov (1848–1918), a well-known economist and journalist who subscribed to liberal Populist views. As soon as Shternberg arrived in the capital, Krol’ brought his friend to Vorontsov’s house, where he had a long talk with Kareev. The latter was very impressed with Shternberg’s erudition, especially in anthropology, and offered him a position not only as a contributor of entries to *Entsiklopediia Brokgauza i Efrona* but as its anthropology editor. Kareev was in urgent need of such an editor, having just lost Anuchin. The next volume to go into production was number 61, so Kareev asked Shternberg to compose a rather lengthy article on “Comparative Study of Religion” (Shternberg 1900a). Shternberg eagerly accepted the offer and plunged into research, spending long hours at the city’s famous and well-stocked public library, where he finally gained access to the major Western works in anthropology that he had only heard about during his exile. In the process of preparing around fifty entries for the encyclopedia and editing the work of other contributors, Shternberg significantly expanded his knowledge of anthropology and strengthened his commitment to evolutionism.

Shternberg’s Contribution to *Entsiklopediia Brokgauza i Efrona*

Shternberg’s contributions can be grouped into several categories: a discussion of cultural anthropology (“ethnography”) in general; social organization, religion, ethnic groups of Siberia and Russian Central Asia; and various miscellaneous topics. Beginning with his very first entry, on the “Comparative Study of Religion,” and ending with “Ethnography,” published in 1904 and one of his last entries, these essays clearly articulate Shternberg’s scholarly views during

the first decade of the twentieth century, many of which he remained committed to for the rest of his career (Shternberg 1904b).

His strong dedication to the classic evolutionism of Tylor and Morgan was evident in most of his major contributions. However, he did not simply present the views of the classic evolutionists but supported or questioned and corrected them using his own Nivkh data as well as examples from Judaism and classical antiquity, both of which he knew so well. For example, his discussion of divine election (Shternberg 1900b:327), a topic that remained at the center of his attention for the rest of his life, utilized a number of examples from Nivkh religion. The entries dealing with such popular aspects of “primitive religion” as “Taboo” (1901a) and “Totemism” (1901b) also drew on examples from both Nivkh religion and Judaism to critique James Frazer’s and several other classic evolutionists’ interpretations of these phenomena. Similarly, in his discussion of the evolutionary theories for the development of social organization (1901c), Shternberg did not simply present Morgan’s scheme but modified it by drawing on his own ethnographic findings as well as examples from ancient Greek and Roman law. The essay also demonstrated Shternberg’s aversion to economic determinism and Marxist interpretations of the relationship between modes of production, social organization, and ideology, as well as his appreciation of the critical role of religious ideology in maintaining the unity of such primitive forms of social organization as the clan. Despite his evolutionism, Shternberg was clearly aware of the weaknesses of that school pointed out by Western critics in the late 1890s to early 1900s. Taking this criticism into consideration, he spoke not only of progress but also of regression and noted how diffusion and other factors contributed to the development of specific forms of culture.

The Russian anthropologist also showed his firm belief in the psychic unity of mankind and the progressive nature of human sociocultural development. Citing approvingly Tylor’s famous dictum that “the science of culture is mainly a science of reform,” he concluded his entry on Tylor with the following statement: “As a result of his studies, Tylor inevitably kept arriving at the conclusion that taken as a whole the history of mankind has been a history of progress and that differences in the degree of progress are determined not by racial differences but by differences in the moment and degree of [evolutionary] development” (1901d:486).

Two other deeply held convictions were present in several of his encyclopedia entries. The first was his Populist view that “primitive” social organization had important positive qualities that were lost as the more complex forms of sociopolitical organization developed. His enthusiastic description of the social solidarity maintained by the members of a clan (1901c) was very similar to his characterization of the Nivkh clan, first introduced in his 1893 essay. Also rooted in Populism was Shternberg’s ambivalence about the evolution of sociopolitical organization among the various inhabitants of the Russian Empire. On the one hand, he applauded the development of an educated class among the Tatars (1902a); on the other, he lamented the fact that a more complex social organization among this and other peoples of Russian Asia had led to class exploitation and the weakening of the clan (1902b). The second conviction consisted of his positive view of Judaism as the most advanced form of monotheism and religion in general as well as what might be called his “optimistic Jewish socialism.” For Shternberg, the moral and ethical monotheism of the Jews was also the source of fundamental Western humanistic ideas like the unity of humankind and the brotherhood of nations. Referring to Judaism as “the highest form of monism,” he argued,

The great concept of the common origin of the entire human family, created by God and then having chosen on its own will to fall from God’s grace and hence having been broken into various peoples, but all of which must inevitably be saved to form a single flock for a single shepherd—this great concept, which could have only developed at the highest stage of the monistic religious consciousness, has for the first time created the highest concept of humankind, which has become the foundation of ideas and ideals of the humanistic concepts of all of the subsequent periods of human thought. This idea has on many occasions been distorted and obscured and has undergone many modifications, but thanks to it the concept of one humankind, which must eventually become a brotherly union, has firmly established itself in the minds and the hearts of the civilized peoples. (Shternberg 1903:487)

These Populist and philosemitic ideas obviously contradicted the fundamental assumptions of classic evolutionism. Shternberg never reconciled these

contradictions, and they continued to plague his anthropological theorizing throughout his life.

The 1904 Nivkh Monograph and the 1908 Collection of Nivkh Texts

Shternberg's interaction with St. Petersburg ethnologists, linguists, and other scholars, together with his voracious reading of the latest works in his field during his employment with the Brockhaus and Efron Encyclopedia, contributed to a refining of his scholarly views and helped him expand his 1893 essay on the Nivkh into a short monograph, which he published in several installments in *Etnograficheskoe Obozrenie* in 1904 and later as a separate book. Before publishing his monograph, Shternberg presented his major findings in a series of lectures delivered at the meetings of the Ethnography Division of the RGO in late 1900 and early 1901. Shternberg's enthusiasm for his Nivkh research must have received a strong boost when the society awarded him a silver medal for these presentations (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/108:71).

Like his 1893 essay, Shternberg's 1904 Gilyak monograph, which was about three times as long as his first published ethnography, was not a truly comprehensive and rounded work in the classic Boasian style. While it did cover a variety of topics, including the origin of the Gilyaks, their natural environment, subsistence, material culture, language, and religion, issues related to social organization were, once again, at its core.¹⁷ In the very beginning of his work Shternberg justified his focus on this topic by stating, "No other aspect of the Gilyak social life differentiates them so sharply from the surrounding peoples as their classificatory system of relationships and the rules regulating sexual relations and marriage" (1933a:30). While this new discussion of Gilyak kinship differed from the first Gilyak study mainly in the amount of details presented and not in its substance, it did contain important new information on what Grant (1999:XL) called "a triangulated system of marital exchange, based on a tri-clan phratry or alliance group . . . that underwrote a complex web of mutual social and economic obligations."

In the 1904 work Shternberg spoke with much greater authority as a comparative ethnologist, not just as an ethnographer. He compared the Gilyak kinship and marriage system with those of the Australian aborigines and other "primitive" peoples and concluded that the former was very similar to the "Punaluan"

system documented by Morgan. In fact he used his own Gilyak data to “solve” a number of puzzling questions raised by the work of several Western ethnographers in other parts of the world. It is obvious that Shternberg’s evolutionism has become even stronger between the publication of his first and second Gilyak studies. The 1904 publication omitted a passage that had appeared in the 1893 article about the discord often caused by the theoretically permissible sexual liaisons among the Gilyaks. In fact, by the early 1900s, Shternberg appears to have become so wedded to evolutionism that he ignored his own data on a widespread Gilyak practice of marrying outside the prescribed clan and even outside their ethnic group (for example, 1933a:45). For him this phenomenon represented a more recent departure from the original “pure” practice, which he tried so hard to reconstruct. As Grant (1999:43) correctly pointed out, the clan system that Shternberg so elegantly reconstructed “was far less fixed than he first had perceived it. Given the swell of non-Gilyaks into the area, the increasing dislocations through travel and trade, and the demographic havoc wrought by disease,” much of what he had presented was only an ideal system.¹⁸

It should be noted to Shternberg’s credit that, while he described the “survivals of group marriage” among the Gilyaks, he repeatedly stated that they were not promiscuous but strictly followed their own laws of morality. In fact, unlike most of the Western evolutionists who saw “primitive” forms of kinship and marriage as something to be overcome by progress, this Russian Populist was ambivalent about them. On the one hand, as a firm believer in humankind’s inevitable progress, he expressed hope that someday the Gilyaks and other indigenous Siberians would accept the best aspects of European civilization. On the other hand, he admired many of the Gilyak customs and especially their social solidarity—the support an individual found in his or her primary kinship group, the agnatic clan. In my view, it is Shternberg’s detailed and sensitive discussion of the various socioeconomic and political functions and religious symbolism of the Gilyak clan, which he presented convincingly as the institution “regulating all of the other aspects of their life” (1933a:81), that makes all his writing on the Gilyaks different from most other contemporary evolutionist accounts of the social life and culture of “primitive peoples.” Paradoxically, while Shternberg never cited Durkheim and Mauss in his works, his discussion of the Gilyak clan, especially the interconnectedness between its social and ideological symbolic dimensions as well as the harmonious relationship between the individual and the group in Gilyak society, is strongly

reminiscent of *Primitive Classification* (Durkheim and Mauss 1963) and their other works. This similarity should not surprise us: like Shternberg, Durkheim and Mauss were socialists who sought an alternative to modern capitalist society's "organic solidarity" and anomie in "primitive" societies characterized by "simple economic relations and an integrated socio-religious world view" (Shternberg 1933a:113).¹⁹ Also, like Durkheim, Shternberg was fascinated with the fact that the Gilyaks adhered to their laws "despite an almost total absence of authority or compulsion" (Shternberg 1933a:108).

Like his account of the Oroch clan, Shternberg's exploration of the Gilyak clan followed the native perspective. He began his discussion by citing his informants' responses to his question about the things that clan relatives have in common: "common father-in-law, common son-in-law, common fire, common mountain man [spirit], common sea man [spirit], common heavenly man [spirit], common bear, common devil [evil spirit], common penalty [for serious transgressions]," and so on (1933b:81). He then proceeded to explore each of these assertions in detail by drawing on his rich ethnographic data.

In his concern for the freedom of the individual, Shternberg differed from Marx and Engels and their followers. While he occasionally described the Gilyak economic and social life as a kind of "primitive communism," he also emphasized that among them, "communism and individualism coexist almost without tension" (1933b:83). Like his fellow Populists' descriptions of the Russian peasant commune, Shternberg's account tended to overemphasize egalitarianism and downplay economic and sociopolitical inequality among clan relatives. However, he appears to have been correct in stating that in a society like the Gilyak one, wealthy leaders had to support their less fortunate clan relatives, so clan solidarity would ameliorate the hierarchical tendencies. Finally, unlike most of the classic evolutionists or the Marxists, but like Durkheim, Shternberg was interested in the impact that a "clan-based social order" (*rodovoi stroi*) had on an individual's personality. In his view an average Gilyak had a "holistically developed personality with its integrated world view" (1933b:120).

Finally, similar to the Durkheimians and their followers among the British structural-functionalists, Shternberg paid a lot of attention to the role of religious sanctions in encouraging the individual to adhere to the rules and laws of his or her society. His approving discussion of the Gilyak clan ends with a virtual hymn to an institution that he referred to as a "whole school of social

upbringing, a school of benevolence, hospitality, compassion, and . . . proper social conduct [*blagovospitannost'*]. In this school those social habits and emotions are created, which eventually become too strong to be limited to interclan ties and evolve into sympathy toward one's entire tribe [people] and eventually toward human beings in general" (1933b:127). Here the voices of Shternberg the ethnographer and Shternberg the Populist merged into one.²⁰

Despite his focus on social organization, Shternberg gave considerable attention to religion in the 1904 monograph, a major difference between it and the 1893 piece. With over thirty pages devoted to the discussion of religion, Shternberg demonstrated his considerable knowledge of Gilyak beliefs and, to a somewhat lesser extent, religious practices. Despite his use of evolutionist terminology (especially Tylor's), Shternberg no longer characterized the Gilyak religion as very primitive, demonstrating, once again, that his evolutionism was far from consistent or dogmatic (see 1933a:51).

In the early 1900s Shternberg also spent a good deal of time preparing his collection of Nivkh folklore for publication. This book was not published until 1908, but most of the work on it had been done prior to 1905. Like his 1900 publication on the same subject, his *Materials for the Study of the Gilyak Language and Folklore* was printed by the Academy of Sciences. It was over two hundred pages long and included the text of forty-two poems and legends in Nivkh, accompanied by Russian translations. Shternberg's detailed footnotes clarified many of the passages and offered additional information on Nivkh culture.²¹ Besides being the first publication of Nivkh folklore, this work offered a detailed discussion of several major genres of that folklore and of the Nivkh styles of storytelling. Particularly interesting is Shternberg's discussion of Nivkh beliefs about the spirits possessing and inspiring certain type of storytellers and the role of dreams as a major source of some types of oral performances. In addition, he briefly compared Nivkh folklore with that of other native Siberian and North American groups. Interpreting the reasons for similarities between stories collected from different peoples, he combined evolutionism and diffusionism. In this respect he was at least partially in agreement with Boas.

It should be pointed out that Shternberg's 1908 publication contained only a fraction of the Nivkh texts that he and Pilsudski had collected. Shternberg's contemporaries (including Pilsudski himself) wondered why this was the case, as have more recent scholars. The prevailing opinion (Kreinovich, Gruzdeva)

seems to be that, being a meticulous scholar, Shternberg felt that many of the texts in his possession had not been adequately transcribed or analyzed and were therefore not ready for publication. Various other projects that he became involved in over the years also prevented Lev Iakovlevich from completing his work. Furthermore, in the mid 1920s, when he began working on Nivkh linguistics with several Nivkh-speaking students studying in Leningrad, he was apparently contemplating another publication of Nivkh folklore (see chapter 8). However, his premature death in 1927 interfered with this project.

Modernizing the MAE in the Early 1900s

While Shternberg engaged in a great deal of scholarly and journalistic writing in the early 1900s, much of his time was occupied by his work as the MAE's curator. Peter the Great Kunstkamera, founded in 1714–17, was part-museum, part—"Cabinet of Curiosities," containing haphazardly assembled artifacts ranging from exotic weapons collected in the South Seas to a large teratological collection purchased by the emperor himself in Holland. By the late 1830s it had become St. Petersburg's first ethnographic museum, its collection augmented with artifacts from several scientific expeditions sponsored by the Russian Academy of Sciences, round-the-world voyages by the Russian Navy, and gifts from foreign and domestic donors. In the 1870s two large, systematically assembled collections (from Africa and Melanesia) were added to it (Staniukovich 1978).

By the 1870–80s a number of St. Petersburg scholars began discussing the need to systematize the museum's growing holdings. Finally, at a joint meeting of the Physical-Mathematical and the Historical-Philological Divisions of the Academy held in 1879, a decision was reached to replace the Kunstkamera with a special "Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography Predominantly of Russia" and appoint academician Leopold von Shrenk as its first director (Staniukovich 1964:65–66, 1978; Reshetov 1997). In the wake of that decision, the museum received a large ethnographic collection from the Russian Geographical Society as well as several other institutions. Once the entire contents of Emperor Peter I's "Anatomic Cabinet" and a small archaeological collections were transferred to it, the MAE was finally on its way to becoming a truly comprehensive anthropological museum.

Still missing, however, was a systematic, scholarly classification and display of artifacts. While an attempt was made to divide the entire exhibit into

five geographic departments (Russia, Asia, Africa, Australia, and America), this system was not adhered to in any systematic fashion. Thus objects from the same culture could be found in different parts of the building, sometimes divided between the departments of ethnology and archaeology or exhibited according to the material out of which they were made. Ceramic objects were grouped according to size, while one exhibit displayed bronze tools from Siberia and Denmark next to one another (Russov 1900). In several sections of the museum, curators used a simple typological and even quasi-evolutionist method of displaying artifacts, reminiscent of the Pitt-Rivers Museum or the U.S. National Museum under Otis Mason (Van Keuren 1984; Jacknis 1985). In addition, they installed several small topical exhibits as well, including “Objects of Buddhist Faith” and “Wind Instruments.”

However, a real reorganization and expansion of the museum did not occur until Radlov became its head in 1894 (Shternberg 1907a; Reshetov 1995a). Until that time the museum’s ethnographic artifacts were exhibited based on their material. Moreover, the museum was not officially open to the public and lacked a guide until 1891. In this year curators finally began grouping the artifacts by their geographical provenience; however, their arrangement remained rather haphazard.

Even though Radlov was not an ethnographer, his own research on Turkic linguistics and folklore had exposed him to a variety of non-Western cultures and made him appreciate the importance of ethnology. In order to familiarize himself with the latest developments in museology, he visited several major European museums. Eventually the MAE director chose the method of cataloguing museum artifacts that was used at the great ethnographic museum of Copenhagen (see Shternberg 1907a:34). Radlov’s vision for transforming MAE into Russia’s leading ethnological museum—described in several of his memoranda submitted to the Historical-Philological Division of the Academy of Sciences, which supervised the museum’s affairs—was one that Shternberg shared to a large extent. Like Shternberg, Radlov was writing as an evolutionist as well as a historical particularist when he stated that the goal of the MAE was “to provide a more or less comprehensive picture of a gradual development of humankind and the diverse cultural situation of the various tribes (Staniukovich 1964:78). Radlov also shared the prevailing view that an ethnographic museum should be a place for studying “primitive” non-Western

cultures that were rapidly modernizing and hence in danger of disappearing. As he put it, “One has to hurry with the task of building the Museum’s collection . . . since, with the development of railroads and factories, the old forms of economic and social life [byt] are quickly being replaced with the new ones (Shternberg 1907a:36–37).

By the time Shternberg began working at the MAE, Radlov had already managed to secure much larger funding for his museum. Unlike the many European and American museums that had wealthy private donors, the MAE had to rely primarily on the Academy, which was not rich and had to support various other museums. In the early 1900s the MAE had very little money for sponsoring expeditions and had to rely heavily on gifts and artifact exchanges with other museums. The MAE director began strengthening the museum’s ties with foreign and domestic museums. To ameliorate the problem, Radlov and Shternberg came up with a clever plan to establish an International Committee for the Study of History, Archeology, Linguistics, and Ethnography of Central and Eastern Asia. Radlov and his fellow academician and prominent Russian Orientalist, Sergei Ol’denburg, submitted their proposal to the 1899 International Congress of Orientalists and received the congress’s approval at its next meeting in Hamburg in 1902. Each participating country established its own subcommittee in 1903, with Radlov becoming the chairman of Russia’s. Members of the committee were drawn from both the academic community and government institutions that dealt with Russia’s Asiatic regions (particularly the Ministry of Foreign Affairs). The new venture allowed the MAE to request funding from the Russian government. Concerned about its image as a major colonial power in the East, the latter approved a five-thousand-ruble budget for the new committee. In addition the museum could now participate in the expeditions sponsored by the Asiatic Museum of the Academy of Sciences and lay claim to portions of their collections. Taking advantage of a strong Oriental studies (*vostokovedenie*) tradition in Russia and the great interest in Russian Central Asia and the Far East shared by Russian and foreign scholars alike, the MAE managed to build up its collections from these regions significantly (Kurylev et. al. 1980; Vishnevetskaia 1989).

In his capacity as the Russian Committee’s secretary (a position he held until the committee ended its work in 1918), Shternberg was able to play a major role in the planning and guiding of Russian expeditions at home and abroad.

Among his major accomplishments was the sponsorship of ethnographic research and collecting by his old friend and colleague Pilsudskii and another prominent Polish ethnographer of Siberia, Waclaw Sieroszewski, among the Ainu and other indigenous inhabitants of Sakhalin and Hokkaido (Pilsudski 1996, 1998). He also tried very hard to convince the Academy to allow him to increase the museum's staff.

Despite Radlov's efforts, at the turn of the century the MAE's staff was still quite small, consisting of one full-time curator (Klements) and a few registrars and part-time workers. Klements's decision to move to the Russian Museum was a big blow to the MAE—after all he had been its only employee with substantial experience in museum work. Shternberg, whose experience in that area was much more modest, had his work cut out for him. In fact, according to Sarra, he expressed some hesitation to Radlov about his ability to serve as a curator. The director responded that “one is not born a museum curator—one becomes a curator” (Ratner-Shternberg 1928:32). The early 1900s was an important moment in the history of the MAE. In addition to Shternberg, several other persons were hired, including Bruno Adler (1874–1942), who had received a PhD in Sinology from Leipzig University and had worked as an assistant curator at the Leipzig Ethnographic Museum. It was also a very good moment for Shternberg to familiarize himself with the museum's collection and with the practical tasks facing a curator; during his first two years at the MAE, its entire collection was being catalogued and reorganized.

Between 1898 and 1903 thousands of objects were sorted and catalogued.²² Following a previously prepared, detailed plan, the staff could only begin placing collections into cases after the painstaking work of cataloguing had been completed (Shternberg 1907a:53–54). The new 1903 exposition, which already reflected some of Shternberg's own ideas about ethnographic museums, was organized on the basis of a rather systematically applied geographic, ethnic, and linguistic principle. Artifacts were grouped by their continent and country of origin, and within the countries they were arranged using geographic, ethnic, and linguistic criteria. As Shternberg wrote a few years later, “Whatever the merits of the new exhibit, two things are definite: 1) its systematic and strict adherence to cultural-ethnic principle of placing the collections and 2) the arrangement of objects within each cultural-ethnic group exclusively on the basis

of the similarity of their purpose and role in culture which provides maximum systematicity and accessibility for viewing” (Shternberg 1907a:53–54).

Within each exhibit case or group of cases, an attempt was made to depict each individual culture in its entirety by focusing on subsistence activities and material culture as well as artistic and religious phenomena. (Social organization was obviously more difficult to portray). Much of the exhibit did not seem to differ greatly from exhibits in such MAE counterparts as the Berlin Museum für Völkerkunde or the American Museum of Natural History (both of which Shternberg visited). Despite applying this ethno-geographic principle of displaying artifacts at the new exposition, the curators also made some attempts to demonstrate the evolution of artifacts and the ideas underlying them. According to a 1904 MAE Guide (Staniukovich 1964:92), objects within some cultural-ethnic groups were often arranged to demonstrate development from the simple to the more complex.²³ In addition to cases with artifacts, the exhibit utilized large photographs of people and scenery as well as skillfully painted panoramas, copied from ethnographers’ photographs, depicting native life (like a Gilyak bear festival). The exhibit also used a substantial number of mannequins to display costumes and enliven the display.²⁴

The late 1890s and early 1900s was also the time when a major debate took place among Russian scholars representing the Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg University, the St. Petersburg Public Library, and other leading institutions of the country, about the proper focus and purpose of an ethnographic museum. It was precipitated by the establishment of the new Russian Museum, which was intended to showcase Russia’s fine arts as well as the crafts and folk culture of the principal peoples of the empire, especially the Slavs. Some participants in this debate were willing to broaden the geographic scope of the new museum but still insisted that it focus on those foreign peoples who resided close to the borders of the Russian state and were “under its economic, political, and cultural influence” (like the Chinese or the Slavic peoples of Eastern Europe). This was a museum in the European *Volkskunde* tradition with a strong nationalist and imperialist agenda, further underscored by the fact that it was to be a memorial to the life and reign of the recently deceased emperor Alexander III.

Interestingly enough one of the major advocates of the Slavic-centered museum, Professor Ivan Smirnov of Kazan’ University, was an evolutionist. Smirnov

articulated his nationalist agenda very clearly: “The Russian Ethnographic museum is being established at the moment when Russia’s isolation is ending and when the Russian people is beginning to recognize itself as an increasingly important factor in the history of humankind’s culture and civilization. All this imposes a definite and important task on it. The new museum must become a *cheval de bataille* of Russian ethnography and along with the other cultural undertakings of the Russian people, it must serve one great cause—the establishment of the universal significance of Russian culture” (Smirnov 1901:227). Here is how Smirnov envisioned the new museum’s exhibits:

First and foremost, this museum should obviously depict the white race with its representatives: the Slavic peoples (Russians, Poles, Serbs, Bulgarians), the Lithuanians and the Latvians, the descendants of ancient Frakians (Romanians), remnants of the Iranian world in the Caucasus and Central Asia (Armenians, Georgians, Greeks), etc. The second group should be constituted by the representatives of the yellow race—the Mongols, the Kalmyks, the Buryats, the Chinese, the Manchu. The third one should be composed of the smaller groups—groups of mixed character, as far as their physical type goes, and differentiated from each other mainly according to their language—the Finns (the Finns proper, the Estonians, the Karelians, etc.), the Turkik peoples (Tatars, Chuvash, Kirgiz, Bashkir, Turkmen, Tuirks of Crimea), the Samoeds, the Chukchi, the Ainu. (Smirnov 1901:229–230)

In Smirnov’s view, this kind of organization of the new museum’s exhibits would give the visitors “a clear idea of why it has been the Russian people who have managed to subordinate the various ethnic elements of Russia” (Smirnov 1901:229–230).²⁵

Threatened by the new and much better endowed museum, the MAE leaders insisted on a fundamental difference between a territorial or national museum and a cosmopolitan, universal, and academic one.²⁶ They articulated their reservations in a 1903 memo written by Radlov, with almost certain input from Shternberg:

The goal of an Academic Museum is to build an exhibition illustrating the evolution of human culture from the prehistoric period

to the highest cultures of the modern day, using ethnographic materials from the various tribes and peoples. Since exhaustive material could not be found in the culture of a single people or even a group of peoples, no matter how numerous it might be . . . a museum of scientific ethnography (which is what an academic museum must become) is obligated to embrace the entire world. Only by using the materials from the peoples of the entire world would the museum be able to demonstrate all the stages of the development of human society. If that is done, its exhibits would be able to give the viewer a fairly complete idea of the development of culture and a true conviction about the psychic unity of mankind and the uniformity of the laws of its development.

An academic museum must judge the objects it collects exclusively from the point of view of their relative importance for a scientific construction of the picture of the evolution of culture; as a result, some numerically small people that might have a special importance from an ethnographic point of view could be represented in this museum in a much more detailed manner than the more advanced peoples who have less importance for ethnography.

In a territorial museum the degree of attention devoted to a particular people should be proportionate to its population size, historical role in the life of the country, the degree of development of its culture, etc. Hence an academic museum has to direct its attention mainly at the primitive [*pervobytnye*] peoples, while the Russian Museum—at the ethnography of Russia’s more advanced (civilized) [*kul’turnye*] peoples, and first and foremost, the Slavic ones. (SPFA RAN, f. 1, op. 1a, 1903, no. 150, o.s., no. 161; quoted in Stanukovich 1964:87–88)

To further differentiate their own museum from the new one, Radlov dropped the words “predominantly of Russia” from the MAE’s title.²⁷

Although Shternberg did not articulate his vision of a general museum of ethnology until 1907, when he published major essays on the subject (which he developed further in a lengthy essay published in 1912), his ideas about it obviously matured in the early 1900s, when he worked alongside Radlov. Shternberg

(1912c) emphasized the MAE's three major goals, presenting them in the order of importance. The scientific (scholarly) goal was clearly at the top of his list, because the MAE was Russia's "only museum of general ethnography" (not restricted to any geographic area or topic) and because it was an "academic" museum. "The subject matter of such a museum," wrote Shternberg, "is the culture of all humankind, from both the static [cultural-historical] and the dynamic [evolutionary] perspectives. Such a museum must not only present a complete picture of separate cultures of a variety of most different peoples but, at the same time, must illustrate all the stages of the development and spreading of the universal human culture. Hence the territory covered by the MAE's scientific gaze is the entire space occupied by man, and the living object of its study is all the earth's peoples" (1912c:454).

However, despite his broad definition of the scope of ethnography and ethnographic museums, being realistic, he admitted that this ambitious agenda would be impossible to carry out. As he put it,

One type of culture that is usually not represented by ethnographic museums is the modern European one that surrounds us. It is impossible to gather examples of that culture for museums—it is so enormous and diverse; and it is not necessary to do so, since our own social environment is a living museum of that culture, and that rapid process of evolution, which has been taking place in the most recent era, is so colossal that to represent it one would need to use a variety of museums of technology and art. Hence ethnographic museums concentrate on the cultures of the lowest type and on the highest culture of the non-European peoples [like those of the Orient]. Among the cultural phenomena of the European peoples, the museum is interested only in those that represent anachronistic survivals of the past culture. Such survivals are still plentiful among the peasant cultures of even the most progressive European countries. (1912c:455)

Shternberg added a note of caution to his strong evolutionist rhetoric, demonstrating his awareness of the pitfalls of the earlier brand of unilinear evolutionism. As he argued, "In order to establish the process of evolution of cultural phenomena it is not enough to study only the culture of the modern-day

peoples, even the most primitive ones, since even they are a product of a long process of development from the even more primitive cultural forms of the peoples no longer existing. That is why an ethnographic museum must have a department of archeology within it” (Shternberg 1912c:455). Finally, he also emphasized the importance of having at least a small department of physical (somatic) anthropology within an ethnology museum, since “ethnology not only classifies cultures but their carriers as well” (Shternberg 1912c:455). A comprehensive three-field museum of this kind was, for Shternberg, “first and foremost, a scientific institute, a laboratory for any specialist studying the history of culture in the broadest sense of the word (or interested in specific ethnographic issues), an institute which is equally important for an ethnologist, an archeologist, and a historian” (Shternberg 1912c:455).

At the same time, as a consistent advocate of the teaching of ethnology at all levels of the educational system and especially the university one, he stressed that the second goal of an MAE-type museum was pedagogical. Drawing on his own experience, he argued that it was in front of the museum cases that an ethnology instructor “could use systematically collected materials to illustrate [many of] the issues discussed in the abstract in the classroom” (Shternberg 1912c:455–456).

Without denying the importance of using an ethnographic museum to educate (literally “cultivate”; Russian *vospiyat'*) the general public, Shternberg placed this task third on his list of the museum’s goals. However, the words he chose to explain this task were strong and clearly reflected his progressive and optimistic views, so reminiscent of those of his intellectual predecessors and heroes. In his view the MAE exhibits

provide a vivid picture of the dynamic nature of culture and also acquaint the visitor with ways in which technology, which he uses in his daily life, had been created and has developed over time, how the beliefs and ideas with which he has been brought up have been formed in the past, etc. . . . And while presenting to the person’s mental gaze the picture of that enormous and difficult journey made by humanity’s collective labor, which has made the great accomplishments of today possible, and while demonstrating them through visual materials, the museum should instill in each person a faith

in his own strength and the power of reason, and reveal to him the joyful future possibilities of endless perfection. While broadening his general spiritual horizon, our visitor simultaneously would receive here a visual ethical lesson on the psychic unity of mankind and the law of the cooperation of peoples for the common good. (Ratner-Shternberg in Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/4/9:169–170; cf. Shternberg 1912c:456)

Instead of glorifying the Russian state and its “principal” nationality, as Smirnov had proposed, Shternberg’s museum was supposed to teach the visitors a humanistic lesson about the psychic unity of humankind and the brotherhood of peoples. Not being ethnic Russians themselves, Radlov and Shternberg were understandably uncomfortable with the nationalist agenda advocated by Smirnov and others.

Shternberg also emphasized that the gathering of specimens was an ethnographic museum’s main task, especially given the rapid “spreading of the European culture to the most isolated and distant corners of the earth which is threatening many primitive cultures with extinction” (Ratner-Shternberg in Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/4/9:169–170). His discussion of the actual methods of collecting, which can be mentioned only briefly, is strongly reminiscent of Boas’s approach. Both scholars emphasized the importance of understanding the meaning of each acquired object and the cultural context from which it came and, consequently, the need to combine museum collecting with serious ethnographic field research (like “studying each object *in situ*,” as Shternberg put it) (1912c:457). For both anthropologists, an ideal collector was a professional ethnographer with a good understanding of the people whose artifacts he was acquiring or at the very least an amateur who had received some instruction in collecting from the museum’s ethnologists (see Shternberg 1914a).²⁸

We finally come to the question of exhibiting collections, which for Shternberg was an issue of utmost importance. Despite his evolutionist views, he advocated a very broad and comprehensive method of exhibiting. In its exhibits, an MAE-type museum had to pursue, in his view, the following goals: (1) to present a picture of the (specific) cultures of the various peoples of the world; (2) to depict the ties between different cultures, the processes of their interaction,

migration, and transformation; (3) to paint a picture of the evolution of the universal human culture in all of its manifestations. His vision of an ideal ethnographic museum combined evolutionism, diffusionism, and (Boasian) historical particularism.

To satisfy the first two goals, Shternberg arranged exhibits according to cultural-historical groups in a geographical-organized order. This way the visitor could familiarize himself with the culture of a people that interested him and, simultaneously, compare it with the cultures of the neighboring peoples and determine their relationship with one another. But to satisfy the third goal, he had to organize them not by peoples or separate cultures but by the groups of similar cultural phenomena in the order of their development from the lowest to the highest stage. In this kind of installation, objects were to be displayed and grouped without any regard for their origin (Shternberg 1912c:462).

For Shternberg, an ideal ethnological museum had to consist of two major departments, one being “morphological” and the other “evolutionary” or “typological” (Shternberg 1912c:462). If the material in the first department had to be divided conventionally into continents, countries, and cultural-ethnic groups, in the second one, artifacts were to be categorized according to the material or spiritual “domains of culture.” Both departments had to be divided further into subdepartments according to distinct groups of cultural phenomena (dwellings, tools and weapons, household items, clothing, etc.), and each of these subdepartments was, in turn, subdivided into distinct cultural categories. Thus the department of tools and weapons would have a separate collection of axes, beginning with the Paleolithic ax and ending with “the most highly developed type”—the American one. Of course, being a realist, Shternberg admitted that his pet project—a department of evolution within the MAE—could only be created in the future, since “to accomplish this a museum must have a very large space and numerous duplicates of objects, and no museum has it at this time. Most museums cannot even display their entire collection in a geographically ordered manner” (Shternberg 1912c:462).²⁹

Shternberg’s evolutionist ideas about the principles of organizing museums resembled those of such late-nineteenth-century museum curators as A. H. L. Pitt-Rivers in England and Otis Mason in the United States. Because of the difficulties involved in arranging museum exhibits solely on the basis of an evolutionary model, however, most museums preferred to display their collections

based on culture and geography (Van Keuren 1984; Chapman 1985). The advantages of this “historical-particularist” principle over the evolutionist model were most clearly articulated in the early 1900s by Franz Boas in his debate with Mason (Jacknis 1985).

First Trips Abroad and Encounter with Boas

Another major development in Shternberg’s life in the early 1900s was his business travel abroad. In 1903 the MAE sent him to Berlin and Leipzig to familiarize him with the world’s leading anthropological museums (see Penny 2002). The next year he attended a meeting of the International Congress of Americanists in Stuttgart and visited Berlin again as well Stockholm. Later that year, during a vacation in France, he visited the Trocadero Museum in Paris. In addition to learning as much as he could about Europe’s leading ethnographic museums, Shternberg used these trips to establish contacts with foreign ethnologists, with whom he would then exchange scholarly ideas and museum specimens (see chapter 4). Thanks to these visits, his name became well known to European and American ethnologists. In fact, by the end of the first decade of the twentieth century Shternberg had become one of the best-known Russian anthropologists.

However, it was not just foreign museums that fascinated him while he was abroad. With his strong interest in politics and human cultural differences, Shternberg used every opportunity to learn about other people, both as individuals and as representatives of ethnic groups. While vacationing in Brittany, he observed a major Catholic religious celebration, taking detailed notes and interviewing its participants (Shternberg Collection, SPEA RAN, 282/1/140:319).³⁰ He was also attracted to western European countries because they offered greater freedom than tsarist Russia. This particular Populist was a “Westerner” rather than a “Slavophile” and was very fond of London and Paris. During every trip he carefully observed the local political life and often used this information for his journalistic writing.

As far as his scholarly career was concerned, his trip to Stuttgart was particularly important. As a result of his interaction with Radlov as well as Bogoraz and Iokhel’son, Boas had learned a great deal about their colleague and friend Shternberg.³¹ Having realized that Laufer’s contribution to the ethnography of the natives of Russia’s Far East was quite limited, Boas became determined

to meet Shternberg and invite him to spend time at the American Museum of Natural History, which had a rather substantial collection of artifacts from Sakhalin and the lower Amur region. During the winter of 1903–4 Boas began his campaign to procure funds to cover Shternberg’s visit to the United States, but his museum’s bureaucracy prevented him from making this plan a reality until the summer of 1905. Still, he managed to obtain some money to enable Shternberg to attend the summer 1904 International Congress of Americanists in Stuttgart. There the father of American anthropology finally managed to bring together Bogoraz, Iokhel’son, Laufer, and Shternberg. In a letter to Shternberg from late April 1904, he wrote,

My Dear Sir:

I very much regret that our plans which were on for some time to have you come here to study our Amoor [sic] River collections, and to discuss with you the general problems of Southeastern Siberian ethnology, have come to naught. . . .

I am going to be in Europe this summer, and I have arranged a meeting with Mr. Jochelson [sic], Mr. Bogoraz, and Dr. Laufer at Stuttgart at the time of the Americanist Congress, which I believe begins on Aug. 19. I believe Mr. Jochelson wrote to you that we should be very glad to have you take part in our conference, in which we wished to discuss particularly the scientific questions brought up by the results of our studies in Northeastern Siberia and Northwestern America. Your thorough knowledge of the Ainu and Gilyak will be of great value to us, and I believe that the comparative points of view, which the other gentlemen, who partake in the conference, possess, will be of interest to you.

Will you kindly let me know whether you will be willing to spend about a week at Stuttgart. (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/21–22)

Shternberg responded that he would be delighted to participate in the Americanists congress and meet Boas, Laufer, Bogoraz, and Iokhel’son to discuss topics that had “greatly interested” him for a long time (Boas Papers, APS). At the end of August he arrived in Stuttgart, where he not only met with Boas and

Laufer but also became acquainted with such prominent anthropologists as Konrad Theodore Preuss, Karl von den Steinen, Eduard Seeler, William Thalbitzer, George A. Dorsey, A. L. Kroeber, and Roland Dixon.

By taking part in this gathering of Americanists and presenting papers that fit in perfectly into Boas's Jesup Expedition agenda, the three Russian anthropologists earned themselves a place within the community of Western anthropologists, which they occupied for the rest of their lives. The fact that Bogoraz and Iokhel'son chose to address issues that had been of central concern to the Jesup Expedition is not surprising; after all, they had just completed their contributions to the expedition's publication series.³² More noteworthy is the fact that Shternberg, who had not taken part in the expedition, had so quickly signed on to its agenda by giving a paper entitled "Observations on the Relationship between the Morphology of the Gilyak Languages and the Languages of the Americas" (Shternberg 1904c:137–140). In it Shternberg reiterated his argument, first presented in his 1900 publication of a Nivkh text (1900b), that Nivkh was a totally unique language and that, contrary to Schrenk's position, it could not be classified as a "Palaeoasiatic" one. He also argued that this language exhibited some interesting similarities with a number of American Indian languages, especially Aleut (cf. Shternberg 1908a:VI).

The fact that Shternberg chose to discuss the similarities between the Nivkh language and those of the Americas must have appealed to Boas and convinced him even further that he had to get better acquainted with the MAE curator. In the spring of 1905 he was finally able to send the Russian scholar an official invitation to spend a few months working with the Far Eastern collection of the AMNH. The prospect of visiting the United States and spending time with its leading anthropologists must have thrilled Shternberg. However, before he could depart for the New World, he had to deal with some very urgent business at home.

4. Scholarship and Activism during the 1905 Revolution

The years Lev Shternberg spent in exile were marked by significant changes in Russia's economy and society as well the ideology of its opposition movements. The last decade of the nineteenth century witnessed rapid industrialization and the rise of an industrial working class. In the countryside, the rural commune continued to decline and many peasants slid further into poverty; at the same time a class of well-to-do farmers arose.

Decimated by the arrests and trials of the 1800s, the Populist movement experienced an ideological as well as organizational crisis. While many of its participants remained loyal to the old ideology, some had turned to Marxism and social democratic ideas and began a vigorous campaign of attacking Populism. They accused the Populists of underestimating the degree of the rural commune's decline and the importance of the industrial workers as the new revolutionary class. Marxist critics of Populism included the more moderate "Legal Marxists" (Piotr Struve, Mikhail Tugan-Baranovskii) as well as the more radical ones (Yulii Martov, Lenin). In 1898 representatives of several Marxist groups and circles met in Minsk and established the Russian Social-Democratic Workers Party. Five years later, at its second congress, the party split into two factions: the "hard" Bolsheviks and the "soft" Mensheviks.

In the meantime, in the 1890s the old Populists and the younger generation of radicals who shared most of their views began organizing illegal groups.¹ While these Neopopulists acknowledged the growing influence of Marxism and

appropriated much of its terminology, they insisted that Marxists did not understand Russia's unique socioeconomic development and road to socialism. Unlike the Social Democrats, the Neopopulists did not yet have a clearly articulated program, and their attempts to unite, undertaken in 1897–98, failed. In the 1890s their movement was composed of small, highly secretive groups of intelligentsia whose activities were limited mainly to publishing radical literature. Government persecution further weakened this movement.

At the turn of the century a group of young Populist economists (including several contributors to *Russkoe Bogatstvo*) began articulating a modernized Populist ideology, arguing that the peasant economy in Russia was stable, that there was a tendency for class differentiation in the countryside, and that socialist ideas should be equally accessible to peasants and industrial workers. Viktor Chernov (1873–1952) became the leading ideologue of this group and the organizer of the Agrarian Socialist League in Paris in 1900. The Neopopulist movement included many of the older Populists who had come back from exile as well as radical students who had experienced government persecution. At the turn of the century the first periodical publication of the Neopopulist movement began to appear in Russia and abroad. In the early 1900s several Neopopulist organizations began calling themselves Socialist-Revolutionaries (SRs). In 1902 many of these groups joined together and formed the Party of Socialist-Revolutionaries (PSR). In addition to advocating the socialization of land, the SRs argued for the minimum wage, the eight-hour workday, and the industrial worker's right to unions. Their national platform promised great autonomy for the country's peoples and a federative organization of the future socialist state. On this issue they differed sharply from the Social Democrats (SDs), who stood for a much more centralized state. Like the old Populists, many of the SRs advocated terrorist acts against the government, though the more moderate Neopopulists opposed terror or approved of its use only in extreme situations.² The SDs criticized terror because in their view it diverted attention from the most immediate task of the socialists: organizing workers.

While the SDs and the SRs were popular among the radical intelligentsia, workers, and peasants, the liberal members of the middle and upper classes, including the moderate intelligentsia dominant among the university faculty and the Academy of Sciences, began to gravitate toward the various organizations that eventually formed the Constitutional Democratic (KD) Party.³ The

party's members, known as Kadets, were initially liberal activists of the local self-government (*zemtsy*), who began discussing the problems of rural Russia in the early 1890s. By the end of the decade growing frustration with the national government, which had placed severe limitations on the *zemtsy*'s activities, compelled like-minded people to organize and persuade the regime to enact social reforms, broaden civil liberties, and grant political concessions like a written constitution and a republican form of government (Stockdale 1999:155). In June 1902 they began publishing a journal abroad called *Osvobozhdenie* (Liberation). This marked the beginning of Russian liberalism's transformation into a real political movement. The main difference between Russian liberalism and socialism was that the former was "more practical in its immediate goals, and above all in its awareness that political liberty had to be secured before social issues could be justly resolved" (Stockdale 1999:155). As Pipes (1990:146–147) pointed out: "Russian liberalism was dominated by intellectuals with a pronounced left-wing orientation: its complexion was radical-liberal. The Constitutional Democrats or Kadets . . . espoused the traditional liberal values: democratic franchise, parliamentary rule, liberty and equality of all citizens, respect for law. But operating in a country in which the overwhelming majority of the population had little understanding of these imported ideas and the socialists were busy inciting revolution, they felt it necessary to adopt a more radical stance."

In the early 1900s the liberal and radical opponents of the tsarist regime began engaging in various forms of protest.⁴ The first major manifestation was a demonstration held on March 4, 1901, by students and intelligentsia in front of the Kazan Cathedral in the center of St. Petersburg. The police beat many of the participants, including prominent liberal journalists. Some of them were arrested and exiled. Five days later the Union of Russian Writers sent an official protest to the authorities about this matter, prompting the government to dissolve the union. Peasant unrest grew in 1902, and by 1903–4 factory workers in various parts of the country had become restless. On several occasions troops fired on the striking workers' demonstrations. In July 1904 Viacheslav Pleve, the minister of the interior, was assassinated and replaced by a more liberal minister, Piotr Sviatopolok-Mirskii. A period of relative calm followed. In 1904 the liberals formed "The Union of Liberation" and initiated a so-called banquet campaign between November 1904 and early January 1905. Since open

political gatherings and demonstrations were still forbidden, the liberal intelligentsia met in restaurants and delivered toasts and speeches advocating democratic demands. In November 1904 the Union of Liberation published the first issue of its legal newspaper, *Syn Otechestva*, which in the fall of 1905 came under an SR influence.⁵ The disastrous Russian-Japanese War, which demonstrated the weakness of the Russian army and corruption within its top echelons, also occurred in 1904–5.

Despite this increasingly radicalized atmosphere, the government refused to negotiate with the liberals and issued a very cautious declaration promising only a limited easing of autocracy. In early January 1905 a group of St. Petersburg workers, among whom a radical priest, Father Gapon, had been agitating, were preparing for a march on the Winter Palace in order to present the tsar with its grievances and demands. Fearing a violent confrontation, a group of liberals associated with the Union of Liberation and *Russkoe Bogatstvo* met at the editorial office of *Syn Otechestva* to discuss the situation.⁶ As a last-ditch effort, they decided to send a delegation to Sergei Witte, head of the committee of ministers, to implore him to use his good office to urge the government to act moderately. A delegation sent to see Witte, which included many of the city's leading writers and journalists, failed to convince the authorities. On January 9, the army massacred 459 people in front of the Winter Palace, horrifying the entire country, including the liberals who protested the cruel action.

Rallies by students followed, prompting the closing of most of the institutions of higher learning from February to August 1905. On February 18, 1905, the tsar issued a memorandum to his prime minister about the need to explore the possibility of developing an elected institution with limited power. Even though censorship rules remained in place, the liberal press began publishing more radical antigovernment statements. The country started plunging into vigilantism and lawlessness, including mob violence and political assassinations. In the spring of 1905 many professional unions combined to form the Union of Unions and put forward a radical liberal agenda. Throughout that year institutions of local self-government (*sovety*, or councils) were formed. The entire summer and early fall of 1905 was marked by an epidemic of rallies and meetings. In October 1905 a general strike swept much of the country. In St. Petersburg a left-wing Soviet of Workers' Deputies was organized. Finally, on October 17, the tsar issued a manifesto promising to establish a more democratic

regime that would include an elected parliament (the Duma). In mid-October the KD Party was founded in Moscow, and in December the SRS held their first congress. Between the middle of October and early December, during the so-called days of liberty, local soviets and militia took over a number of cities or districts of cities. On November 24 the government abolished the preliminary censorship of periodicals. In December 1905 an armed uprising took place in Moscow and several other cities, with the SRS playing a major role in them. While the government managed to put down the revolts, the extent of the antigovernment sentiment shook the authorities as well as the more moderate sectors of the population.

Beginning in 1903 a series of bloody pogroms shook the country. While Jewish activists and various critics of the government probably exaggerated its complicity in the pogroms, the national authorities did very little to discourage them, while the local officials often stood by and watched the violence or even aided the mob (see Lambroza 1992). Some of the participants in the pogroms blamed the Jews for the rise of revolutionary activities in the country. “Kill the Yids! Save Russia!” became the rallying cry of the right-wing political parties and openly anti-Semitic organizations such as the Union of the Russian People.

Shternberg in 1905

What do we know about Shternberg’s political involvement during these turbulent times? For obvious reasons the records dealing with this issue are very skimpy. Nonetheless, there is enough evidence to reconstruct the picture at least tentatively.

Shternberg always insisted that he remained loyal to the ideals and ideas of the old Populism. He was proud of the title “old Populist” and listed it as his party affiliation on a Soviet-era questionnaire. Many of his old comrades (including Krol’) from the People’s Will Party as well as revolutionaries whom he did not know personally but admired greatly joined the leadership of the PSR. Moreover, the Legal Populists and their sympathizers dominated *Russkoe Bogatstvo*, the main periodical he associated with. He also contributed to periodicals run by the Union of Liberation liberals (*Nashi Dni* [Our days] and *Nasha Zhizn’* [Our life]), the Legal Populists, the Legal Marxists (*Zhizn’*), and the SRS. At the same time, Shternberg was close to a number of liberal academics and journalists (many of them Jews) who leaned toward the Union of Liberation and

later the Kadets, such as the Gessens, Maksim Vinaver, and others. His own boss, Radlov, was among a large group of Academy members who in 1905 signed a memorandum addressed to the tsar that sharply attacked the government's policies toward education and demanded academic freedom (Tolz 1997:15–22; Wartenweiler 1999). As a member of the Union of Russian Writers and the *Russkoe Bogatstvo* staff, Shternberg must have taken part in the 1905 banquets and petitions addressed to the government. In the winter of 1904–5 he attended numerous rallies of the intelligentsia and the workers and spoke at several of them; on January 9, 1905, he was among the demonstrators marching toward the Winter Palace. In his archive his wife Sarra found a portion of an article he wrote, in which he stated,

With great excitement I speak of the nameless heroes of 1905, about that heroic year. . . . Unarmed people came out into the street. People were marching toward their death . . . the world had not seen such exalted, elevated mood. I cannot think of anything equal to this in the annals of the French Revolution. . . . Monuments should be erected to such heroes and not at the Preobrazhenskoe Cemetery but in all of the places where their sacred blood had been spilled . . . all over Russia. . . . A powerful movement has grown out of their bones. (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/4/9:253, 282/4/10:5–9)

Soon after the tsar's October manifesto, Lev Iakovlevich joined a group of Neopopulist socialists affiliated with *Russkoe Bogatstvo* who issued a declaration that served as the foundation of the moderate Peoples' Socialist Party (NS) (Sypchenko 1999). Although Shternberg himself remained closer to the PSR than the NS, he was sympathetic to many NS positions.

Shternberg's name does not appear in any of the PSR documents of the pre-1917 era, but there is some evidence that he was affiliated with the party, whose many leaders were his old Populist comrades. During the days of the 1905 Revolution, Viktor Chernov stayed at his apartment (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/116:236). That same year Shternberg arranged a meeting in St. Petersburg between a prominent Polish Marxist, Ludwik Krzywicki, and several prominent veterans of the People's Will Party who had recently been released from jail (Kan 2007). Among Shternberg's papers, there is a photograph of the entire SR faction of the State Duma. His wife reminisced that he spoke at

various rallies during the revolution, and according to the memoirs of a PSR member, Shternberg (along with his brother Aaron) helped write a radical manifesto addressed to the army and the working people by the PSR and other socialist parties in response to the government's closure of the First Duma (Kan 2007; Osipovich 1924:90; Leonov 1997:309–319).⁷ In 1907 Shternberg took part in a major SR conference in Finland, where the party's position on the issue of Russia's nationalities was debated (Briullova-Shaskol'skaia 1917b:28–29). Nadezhda Briullova-Shaskol'skaia (1886–1937), a prominent SR and an ethnologist who considered herself Shternberg's student (see chapter 8), recalled that in the 1910s she heard a lot about the old Populist named Shternberg from her party comrades. She finally met him during the Great War, when he attended a meeting of SR and SD labor representatives held in her apartment (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/110:34; Kan 2008).⁸ Finally, after the February Revolution of 1917, he became not only an active member of the party but a leader of one of its factions, characterizing himself in his speeches as an “old SR” (see chapter 6).

Even if Shternberg was not formally a PSR member prior to 1917, like most of the other old Populists and many of the journalists affiliated with *Russkoe Bogatstvo*, he sympathized with the party and participated in at least some of its activities (Protasova 2004:35). One factor that must have kept Shternberg from resuming underground political activities was his dedication to the MAE.⁹ Moreover, after his exile he moderated his views somewhat.¹⁰ In any event, he was equally comfortable with the Neopopulists and the Kadets.¹¹ His main contribution to the liberation movement was his journalism.¹²

The revolutionary protests of 1905 and their repression by the government as well as the anti-Semitic pogroms prompted him to compose several passionate articles that attacked the government and articulated the views of the liberal and radical Jewish intelligentsia. Two of these essays, both published in *Syn Otechestva*, made a particularly strong public impression and were read widely.

The first, published in the winter or spring of 1905 and entitled “The Widening of an Experiment,” was a response to a violent pogrom against the radical intelligentsia carried out by the police and the mob in Iaroslavl¹³ and several other cities.¹³ Shternberg saw these acts as a continuation of the mob violence that had initially been directed against the Jews. In this article the old Populist

articulated an idea that remained central to his political views for the rest of his life: the liberation of Russia's Jews was inseparable from the liberation of the country as a whole. The newspaper received a warning from the censor for publishing "The Widening of an Experiment" (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/4/9:255). The article was so popular that people were willing to pay extra for the issue of *Syn Otechestva* in which it appeared. Several Jewish communities sent telegrams to the paper's office thanking Shternberg and asking for permission to reprint the article (Ratner-Shternberg to Shternberg, April 23, 1906, Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/339:16; Yulii Gessen to Shternberg, Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/68:1).

The second article, entitled "The Tragedy of a Six-Million People," was published in either *Syn Otechestva* or some other liberal newspaper in 1905 and was reprinted in a 1906 collection (Shternberg 1906a) under the new title "On the Eve of the Awakening."¹⁴ It was a passionate indictment of the various policies of anti-Jewish government discrimination. It argued that anti-Semitic propaganda by government officials and right-wing journalists and politicians was a way of distracting Russia's masses from antigovernment sentiments and actions. The author described the Jews as the most oppressed of the country's ethnic minorities and argued once again that the struggle for their equal political and civil rights was part and parcel of the struggle for Russia's liberation. He also welcomed the Russian Jews' involvement in the revolutionary struggle that had begun in the 1880s with the Populists. Shternberg ended on an optimistic note, contrasting the silence of Russia's liberals after the 1903 pogroms with the revolutionary uprisings of 1903–5 and expressing a conviction that the revolutionaries would support the cause of Jewish emancipation.

Shternberg became involved in the struggle for Jewish emancipation and equality that was initiated by the liberal Jewish intelligentsia of the capital soon after his arrival in St. Petersburg. Once again, his friend Krol' blazed the trail for him. According to Krol's memoirs (1944:267–272), his own "return to the Jewish people" began when he came to the capital in 1899–1900. At this point a small but influential group of Jewish intelligentsia, particularly lawyers, began collecting information on legal discrimination against the Jews to work toward eliminating or at least ameliorating it. A lawyer himself, Krol' soon became involved in these activities.¹⁵ His friend Lev appealed frequently to Jewish lawyers on behalf of the unjustly persecuted Jews.

Unlike the Zionists who argued that the Jews had no future in Russia and the Jewish socialists (of the Bund and others) who advocated only a limited autonomy for the Jewish working masses and were critical of the Jewish bourgeoisie, the liberal Jewish intelligentsia, which was closer to the Kadets than to the SRS or the SDS, fought for the equal rights of the entire Jewish population of the country, regardless of socioeconomic status. They were also opposed to revolutionary violence, preferring constitutional reforms. In 1900 they formed a legal organization called the Bureau of the Defense of the Jews.

In addition to fighting the legal discrimination of Jews, the group promoted various cultural and educational projects that were supposed to “elevate” and “enlighten” the Jewish masses. In 1892 the leading Russian-Jewish historian, Simon Dubnov, and a prominent lawyer and one of the future founders of the KD Party, Maksim Vinaver, organized the Jewish Historical-Ethnographic Commission. In 1899 the same cohort established the Society for the Spread of Enlightenment among the Jews of Russia (OPRE). In March 1905 Jewish liberals, including former members of the Defense Bureau, organized an illegal gathering of sixty-seven leading Jews in Vilna in order to set up an independent Jewish organization among all the professional unions participating in the Union of Unions. At the meeting they established the Union for the Attainment of Full Equality for the Jewish People of Russia. The organization’s platform reflected the new approach by its initiators, the Jewish liberals: the political struggle for a democratic Russia within the general Russian liberation movement, through which equal rights and autonomy in community, cultural, and educational affairs were to be achieved.

As Gassenschmidt stated,

The emergence of the middle-class Jewish intellectuals in Russian-Jewish politics coincided with the deep dissatisfaction of the outer world of Russian society. The increasing protest movement of Russian society met so to speak with that of the privileged and acculturated Jews in a time when they were looking for ways to change their approach. The new spearheads of Jewish society could combine their forces with the propagators of liberal and democratic politics in Russia, the bourgeoisie and liberal forces of Russian society, which were reform-oriented and striving for a system of

participation. The general liberation movement in Russia coincided with a desire within Jewish society to organize broadly, to represent itself and create a democratic Russia, which would give the Russian Jews an equal place among all other members of Russian society. (Gassenschmidt 1995:17–18)

Several of the leaders of the Union for the Attainment of Equal Rights were elected to the Duma, which opened on April 27, 1906. There they did their best to raise the issue of Jewish liberation and worked together with the leftist and liberal parties that supported their position. Because of the eventual closing of the Duma, they did not accomplish any concrete results, but their pressure did compel the KD Party and several parties to the left of it to include the issue of Jewish liberation on their platforms (Gassenschmidt 1995:37–44).

It seems very unlikely that Shternberg was not involved in these organizations, since just a few years later he became a major figure in both the cultural institutions and the political organizations of St. Petersburg's Jewish intelligentsia (see chapter 5).¹⁶

The American Visit

In March 1905 Boas finally obtained authorization to invite Shternberg to the AMNH for a few months for the purpose of “examining and rearranging” its collection from the Amur River region and incorporating information from that collection into a written ethnography, which the Russian anthropologists had discussed with Boas in Germany in 1904 (Boas to Shternberg, March 2, 1905, Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/21:2–3). Boas had asked Shternberg to write a monograph on the Amur River tribes for the Jesup North Pacific Expedition (JNPE) Series. Shternberg gladly accepted the offer, and on April 10 (April 23, new style), he left St. Petersburg by train for Germany, where he boarded a ship to the United States (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/339:12a).

When Shternberg arrived in New York in late April, Boas was already contemplating leaving the museum. His relationships with Herman E. Bumpus, the AMNH director, and Morris Jesup, one of its main patrons, had become very strained (Cole 1999:247–248). On May 24 he finally submitted his resignation. Despite his problems Boas treated Shternberg very cordially, inviting him to his house for dinner and to his lecture at Columbia. The two scholars got to know each other well and became lifelong friends. They also made plans for a

systematic exchange of collections between their two museums and discussed Shternberg's Amur-Sakhalin monograph. The two men clearly liked each other. They were not only impressed with each other's erudition but shared left-wing views. Even though Boas was less radical than Shternberg, he was very sympathetic to the Russian revolutionary movement and kept an eye on the events in Russia. Despite the differences in their background, these two left-leaning European Jewish intellectuals had enough in common to enable them to really enjoy each other's company.¹⁷ The fact that Boas had already become a colleague and a close friend of both Iokhel'son and especially Bogoraz (who had spent a long period of time in New York) prepared him for quickly establishing a bond with Shternberg (Kan 2006). While the three Russian ethnographers helped Boas expand his knowledge of northeast Asian ethnology, his scholarly influence upon them was very strong (Krupnik 1998). This was especially true for Iokhel'son, who under this influence abandoned his evolutionism and became the most Boasian of the three members of the Russian "ethno-troika." Bogoraz also came to share many of Boas's research interests as well as methodological and theoretical positions. Shternberg, who was more interested in anthropological theory and the "big questions" than his two Russian colleagues, never abandoned his evolutionism but became very interested in diffusionism and intercultural borrowing. Boas's influence was clearly a major factor in this expansion of the MAE curator's scholarly agenda.

Shternberg enjoyed his host's hospitality, but, as he wrote to his wife, the amount of work available to him at the AMNH turned out to be moderate. This is surprising, given the fact that the museum's Amur-Sakhalin collection contained 740 objects (Roon 2000:140).¹⁸ Neither my own investigation nor Tat'iana Roon's produced any detailed catalogue of the museum's Amur River artifacts prepared by Shternberg. The only document we do have is a three-and-a-half-page text describing only some of the artifacts from this collection (Roon 2000:139–142). There might have been several reasons why Shternberg never completed the catalogue. On the one hand, he was still in the process of mastering the Amur River ethnology. On the other, various distractions prevented him from devoting his full attention to museum work.

These distractions included interaction with various people and observations of different political events. As always, Shternberg was interested equally in local left-wing activities and Jewish politics. He also spent a lot of time socializing with Russian-Jewish émigrés whose names he had received from his

friends and relatives in Russia.¹⁹ Shternberg was particularly fascinated and inspired by the fact that American Jews were free to express their political views and took advantage of that freedom. He was especially enthusiastic about the recent arrivals from Russia, many of whom seemed to have abandoned their fear of authorities and plunged into politics.²⁰ Here is a passage from his May 30, 1905, letter to his wife: “Two days ago I accidentally ran across a rally of Jewish émigrés. The speakers discussed the needs of their Russian co-religionists. It was not that important what these people said but how they felt, they who only yesterday might still have been trembling in front of some riffraff! Generally speaking, how touching it is to see crowds of Jews who feel that they are masters here, who feel strong and self-confident” (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/5/64:50).

Shternberg also commented favorably on the fact that the various occupations and positions of authority closed to Jews in Russia were open to them in the United States. He definitely liked the United States and admitted that he was beginning to share a position held by some local Jewish leaders that all of Europe’s Jews should immigrate to this country (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/5/64:50). He was impressed with the Jewish émigrés’ love of their new homeland.²¹

As far as American left-wing politics was concerned, Shternberg compared favorably the relative freedom of political expression in the United States with the repressive atmosphere in his own country. He was delighted to come across the “University Settlements,” where progressive young intellectuals lived among New York City’s poor and “plant[ed] the seeds of [high] culture” (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/5/64:51). Not surprisingly, these young enthusiasts reminded him of the young Populists “going to the people.” In late June, taking advantage of a trip to Chicago to examine the Amur-Sakhalin collection of the Field Museum, Shternberg attended the founding convention of the radical Industrial Workers of the World and met several American socialist and labor leaders (*Novyi Voskhod*, 1911, no. 40:27–30, 42).²²

Sightseeing was also on Shternberg’s agenda, despite the lack of time. Thus on his way back from Chicago to New York he visited Niagara Falls. However, his plans to go to Philadelphia and Washington did not materialize. He felt strongly that to really understand the United States he had to come back for a longer period of time. He even toyed with the idea of obtaining funding from a Russian newspaper to write a series of essays or even a book about the country.

Unfortunately Shternberg's American visit was marred and cut short by the terrible news from Russia: in late April a major anti-Semitic pogrom took place in his hometown. Shternberg learned about it from American newspapers as well as his wife's and his sister's letters. Nadezhda (Shprintsa) was the only one of his siblings who remained in Zhitomir and lived with their parents. Her April 29 letter detailed the massacre of the Jews in the poor neighborhoods and the panic that spread throughout the city. She also told her brother that while her own neighborhood, where the more affluent Jews and Gentiles lived, was untouched, a number of her family's poor relatives had come to stay with the Shternbergs (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/340:15-21).

The Zhitomir pogrom started as a result of rumors that Jews had used the tsar's portrait for target practice and were planning the massacre of the local Christian population. As a modern historian concluded, the Zhitomir pogrom was planned and carried out "by an amalgam of vigilante, pro-monarchist hooligans. It was in Zhitomir that the Black Hundreds, the terrorist arm of the Russian right, first began to gain prominence as the instigators of the pogrom." The pogrom was notorious because of the large number of people killed (29) and injured (between 50 and 150) (Lambroza 1992:223-224). It was also an important event because for the first time the Jews (and a few of their sympathizers among the leftist students) offered armed resistance to the mob. Nadezhda Shternberg believed that it was the bravery of these young people that prevented an even larger massacre.

The terrible news plunged Shternberg into a state of anxiety. He was particularly worried about his elderly parents. Finally, sometime in May, after Krol' had visited them following the pogrom, Shternberg's parents sent him a brief telegram stating they were all right. This was, however, not true. His mother had suffered a severe nervous breakdown and died soon thereafter. Cutting his American visit short, Shternberg sailed back to Europe on July 26. It was in August in Vienna, where he had stopped to examine the Amur-Sakhalin collection of the Ethnography Museum, that he learned of his mother's death and decided to hurry back home (Shternberg to Boas, August 28, 1905, Boas Papers, APS).

The Revolution on the Decline

The fall of 1905, when Shternberg was back in St. Petersburg, was a time of intense revolutionary activity. Boas followed the events in Russia with a great deal of interest and, knowing full well how politically engaged his new Russian

colleagues were, worried about them. As he wrote to Shternberg on January 18, 1906,

I feel very much worried because I have not heard anything either from you or Mr. Bogoraz for so long a time. I fully appreciate that your mind must be taken up with the terrible affairs that are happening under your very eyes day after day, but I beg of you that you will take time enough to let me know about Mr. Bogoraz. I feel very much worried on account of the failure to receive any news from him, and I shall greatly appreciate it if you will kindly let me know where he is, whether he is well, or whatever information you may have. (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/21:9)

A month and a half later Shternberg replied that Bogoraz was all right (Shternberg to Boas, March 1, 1906, Boas Papers, APS).

Shternberg himself undoubtedly took part in the rallies and meetings of those heady days. Politics was now clearly overshadowing his scholarly work. It is not surprising that he took a whole month to respond to Boas's September 21 letter, which raised the question of the title he intended to give his contribution to the JNPE publications (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/21:5). Ironically, his reply was dated October 17, the day of the tsar's famous manifesto. Despite this promising development, Shternberg's letter sounded somber: "Our public affairs are going very heavily. The unrest is growing every day, the intensity of the public feeling is very high, and we are on the eve of terrible things" (Anthropology Archive, AMNH).

Shternberg's mood must have given Boas reason to be concerned about the future of the JNPE publications, especially since the work of his two other Russian contributors was also being affected negatively by their country's troubles. Even Iokhel'son, who spent long periods of time living abroad and was the least politically engaged of the three, was being distracted from his work by the events back home. As he wrote to Boas in one of his 1905 letters, "You know, of course, that next to the researcher stands in me a citizen" (Cole 1999:236). Most troubled of the "ethno-troika" was Bogoraz, for whom politics and journalism were definitely a priority. After a period of silence, which worried Boas a great deal, Bogoraz wrote to him on April 6, 1905; he apologized for neglecting his scholarly writing but stated that "an epoch like this happens only once in many

centuries for every state and nation, and we feel ourselves torn away with the current even against our will" (Boas Papers, APS). Despite his sympathy for Russia's revolutionaries, Boas believed that science came first. As he lectured Bogoraz in a letter of April 22, 1905, "If events like the present happen only once in a century, an investigation by Mr. Bogoraz of the Chukchee [sic] happens only once in eternity, and I think you owe it to science to give us the results of your studies" (Boas Papers, APS). In a November 23, 1905, letter, Bogoraz stated more regret about his lack of progress but expressed the same sentiment: "My mind and soul have no free place to let in science" (Boas Papers, APS).

The final blow came on November 27, when Bogoraz was arrested because of his active involvement with the All-Russian Peasant Union, which leaned toward Populism and the SRs and had just come under government attack.²³ He informed Boas of his misfortune via cable, causing his friend to contemplate appealing to both Radlov and Jesup for help in securing his release (see Boas's December 4, 1905, letter to Iokhel'son and his December 10, 1905, telegram to Radlov, Anthropology Archive, AMNH). While he was concerned about Bogoraz's safety (see his January 10, 1906, letter to Bogoraz, Boas Papers, APS), Boas was also very worried about the fate of the scientific data he had collected in Siberia. This concern prompted the new head of the AMNH, Henry Osborn, to send an official letter to Shternberg on January 22, 1906:

My dear Mr. Shternberg:

You have undoubtedly heard of the arrest of Mr. Bogoraz, which we learn took place in Moscow on November 29, but the details concerning which we know nothing.

I have written to The Honorable George von L. Meyer, our Minister to Russia, asking if it would not be possible for him to make an effort to secure any notes, manuscripts, etc., bearing upon the Jesup North Pacific Expedition, that may have been in Mr. Bogoraz's possession at the time of his arrest, and I would say that if Mr. Meyer should call upon you, I hope that you will give him such assistance as is within your power, for I feel that it would be a distinct loss both to the museum and to science if the ethnological records in Mr. Bogoraz's possession should be destroyed. (Anthropology Archive, AMNH)

Fortunately, Bogoraz was out on bail two weeks later and by the beginning of 1906 was safe in Finland, where he resumed his scholarly work (Bogoraz to Boas, January 10, 1906, Anthropology Archive, AMNH). Happy to hear the good news, Boas cautiously suggested to Bogoraz that it might be better for him “under the present conditions” to devote his time “to scientific work” (Boas to Bogoraz, January 24, 1906, Boas Papers, APS; see also Kan 2006).

Despite the distractions of the events on the street, Shternberg devoted a good deal of his time to museum work and scholarship. In the wake of his visit to New York, a regular exchange of artifacts was established between the MAE and the AMNH. In September 1906 Shternberg sent a large collection of Siberian artifacts to the AMNH (Shternberg to Wissler, Anthropology Archive, AMNH). In his response, Clark Wissler, the AMNH’s new ethnographic curator, proposed sending South American archaeological specimens to Shternberg (Wissler to Shternberg, Anthropology Archive, AMNH). In 1905–6 Lev Iakovlevich wrote an important article on the *inau*, a major ceremonial object of the Ainu. Upon Laufer’s invitation, he published it in Boas’s *festschrift* (Laufer 1906; Shternberg 1906b).

Determined to continue his relationship with Shternberg, Boas invited him to take part in the 1906 International Congress of Americanists in Quebec. In a May 1, 1906, letter to his friend, he invited him to combine that trip with staying at Boas’s summer home on Lake George (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/21:10). Shternberg was indeed appointed as a delegate to that congress, but Radlov’s illness and the absence of several members of the MAE staff prevented him from making a trip he had so much looked forward to.²⁴ Shternberg’s reply to Boas conveyed an increasingly somber mood that reflected the gradual decline of the revolution’s momentum. He described himself as being “over worn by the hard political situation in the last few months.” He also blamed the “bloody conditions” of 1905–6 for his lack of progress on the Gilyak monograph, which Boas had been anxiously awaiting. His other excuse was the demanding journalistic work he had to engage in to supplement his modest museum salary (Boas Papers, APS).

Shternberg’s pessimism was borne out by the events in Russia: in July 1906 the tsar dissolved the First Duma. The rules governing the elections of the Second Duma restricted the participation of low-income voters. The new Duma began its work in the fall of 1906 but was dissolved in early summer 1907. This

act and the government's harsh suppression of the unrest marked the end of the first Russian revolution and the beginning of the reactionary years.

Along with other left-wing and liberal members of the intelligentsia, Shternberg turned to various legal, political, and cultural activities as well as scholarly and museum work. Despite various obstacles, the last decade preceding the February Revolution of 1917 and the Bolshevik coup that followed it was a very productive one for him.

5. The Last Decade before the Storm

In the decade prior to World War I, Lev Shternberg continued building up the MAE collection.¹ Given his own scholarly inclinations, it is not surprising that ethnographic objects from Siberia were of special interest to him. While the MAE continued to rely heavily on local amateur collectors, it was finally able to sponsor large-scale expeditions. Amateurs led some of them, but others involved Shternberg's museum colleagues and students. In 1910 he conducted his own collecting expedition to the Amur-Sakhalin region.

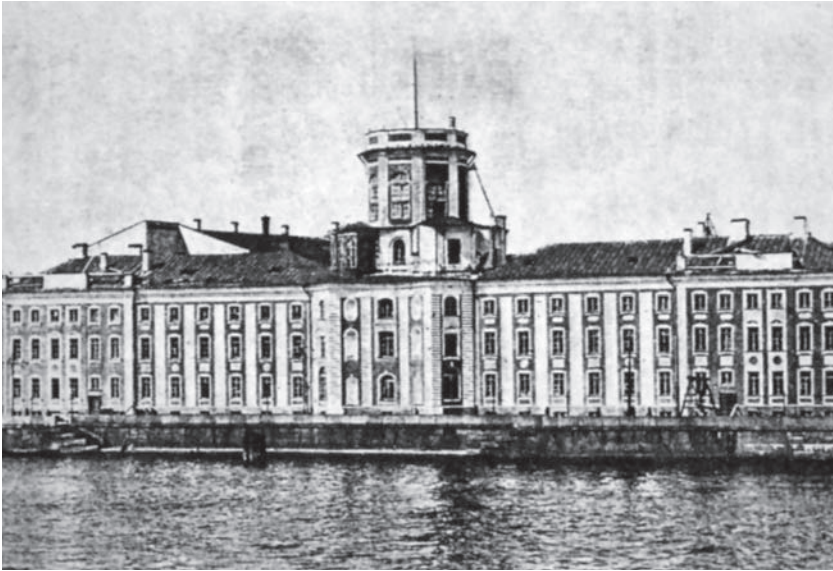
Most collectors received Shternberg's detailed instructions, which emphasized the importance of obtaining ethnographic information along with the artifacts themselves (*Instruktsiia dlia sobiraniia . . . 1912*; Shternberg 1914a, 1933a:715–735). Shternberg pushed collectors to solicit native terms for the objects they acquired as well as detailed information on their uses. He emphasized the importance of gathering data on social organization and religion and encouraged collectors to attend native religious ceremonies. He especially favored shamanic objects, and during his tenure the MAE acquired a very large number of them. Many of the MAE's collectors followed these instructions and sent back information that went far beyond the material culture. Shternberg also insisted that collectors record ethnographic information accurately and systematically. He even explained to his collectors what sort of notebooks to use and how to fill them out.

The MAE's most successful domestic collectors included Vasilii Anuchin and Viktor Vasil'ev, who brought back a large and valuable assemblage of Ket artifacts; Berggard Petri, who worked among the Buryat in 1912–16; and Sergei



8. Lev and his wife, Sarra, with their son, Arkadii (all front right) among family and friends at a summer resort in Kuokkala (Repino), early 1900s. Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 280/2/194:5.

Shirokogorov, who gathered ethnographic data and artifacts in the Transbaikal and Amur regions in 1912–13 as well as during World War I (see chapter 6). Another very successful collector was Andrei Zhuravskii, the head of a natural science station on the Pechora River in northern Russia. Over many years he managed to collect and give the museum over eight hundred objects belonging to the Old Russian settlers (*starozhily*) as well as the indigenous Nenets and Komi peoples (Teriukov 1993). Konstantin Rychkov, another tireless collector and amateur ethnographer, spent many years in the Turukhansk region, where he not only acquired a large number of Nenets and Evenk artifacts but, inspired by Shternberg, conducted a census of the natives and recorded linguistic information (MAE Collection, SPFA RAN, 142/1/137). Rychkov and several other MAE collectors also reported to Shternberg on the abuses suffered by the local indigenous population at the hands of the Russian administration and traders. Shternberg tried to publicize this information (see Rychkov to Shternberg, MAE Collection, SPFA RAN, 142/1/137:23–24). Shternberg cared deeply about his collectors and spent a good deal of time helping them overcome various administrative and financial problems. A number of them supplied Shternberg with



9. Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (MAE), St. Petersburg.
Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 280/2/194:5.

special ethnographic data that he requested while he was working on a particular research topic. Rychkov, for example, collected information on the use of reindeer fur in clothing decoration among the Turukhansk region natives (Rychkov to Shternberg, MAE Collection, SPFA RAN, 142/1/137:37).

One amateur collector who corresponded regularly with Shternberg and became a serious ethnographer with his help was the celebrated explorer of the Amur River region and novelist Vladimir Klavdievich Arsen'ev (1872–1930) (Arsen'ev 1957; Polevoi and Reshetov 1972, 1977). Born in St. Petersburg in 1872, Arsen'ev pursued a military career but became very interested in geography and ethnology very early in his life. At his military school he attended the lectures of the prominent anthropologist Eduard Petri. Assigned to serve in the Amur River region, Arsen'ev immediately turned to the study of the local fauna as well as the culture of its indigenous inhabitants. A passionate traveler, Arsen'ev explored the region, visiting many places that had not been previously known to the Russians. Having familiarized himself with the works of local ethnographers on the Oroch and the Udege and having visited their settlements, he concluded that the existing information was incomplete and inaccurate. He turned for advice to the MAE and received a response from Shternberg himself. In addition



10. Shternberg with MAE staff, 1914. Sarra Shternberg (*seated, third from left*); Shternberg (*seated, fifth from left*); Wasilii Radlov (*to Shternberg's left*); Vladimir Iokhel'son (*seated, far right*); Bergnard Petri (*standing, second from right*). Photograph in author's possession.

to giving him advice on fieldwork methods, the St. Petersburg ethnologist sent him important ethnographic works not available in the local libraries.

Soon Arsen'ev developed research methods that were very much in line with those advocated by Shternberg. They included a careful study of native languages not only to facilitate better communication with informants but also to obtain ethnographic data from them. An ethnographer was not supposed to burden informants with structured interviews but to use informal methods of data gathering. Finally, he was not supposed to show his own attitudes and biases to the natives, even if he knew that the latter were not being truthful. Using these methods Arsen'ev gained the natives' trust and was able to collect large amounts of very valuable data (Polevoi and Reshetov 1972:76).

Despite his success as a field ethnographer, Arsen'ev found it difficult to organize his data and compose his ethnographies. According to Arsen'ev's reminiscences, Shternberg harshly criticized his first written works but also offered valuable advice to the young ethnographer. He wrote to Arsen'ev in 1909,

Your article has many statements written in haste and giving imprecise information. This is the result of provincialism. That is very regrettable. By the way, this work makes me think that you ought to make more visits to the Udegei [sic]. I really wish that this work turns out to be an exemplary one. I feel very bad to sadden you with my response but I think that it is useful for you to listen to a voice of a person who is very favorably inclined toward you. (Polevoi and Reshetov 1972:76)

The two men finally met in 1910, when Shternberg was conducting his own ethnographic research along the Amur. By this time Arsen'ev had become the director of the regional museum in Khabarovsk. He accompanied Shternberg and his two assistants during part of their journey and observed their ways of conducting interviews and taking anthropometric measurements.

Soon thereafter, another St. Petersburg ethnologist, Bruno Adler, invited Arsen'ev to take part in an ethnographic exposition being prepared by the Ethnography Division of the Russian Museum. For his work and an ethnographic collection donated to the museum, Arsen'ev was awarded a silver medal by the Geographical Society. In the capital he met many leading ethnologists and linguists and also spent time at St. Petersburg University in order to learn how to do craniological measurements. In March 1911 Vladimir Klavdievich gave a talk at a meeting of the Ethnography Division of the Society on the Subject of the Oroch and the Udege. Since the amount of information he wanted to present was too large, he was unable to discuss some important phenomena in sufficient detail and was severely criticized by Shternberg. Arsen'ev's feelings were hurt, but he was eventually able to overcome them and restore good, collegial relations with the MAE curator. Arsen'ev's lecture attracted the attention of a number of leading St. Petersburg scholars (Arsen'ev 1957:275).

In 1911 Arsen'ev retired from the military and could now devote himself entirely to scholarly work. Thanks to his efforts, the regional ethnographic museum in Khabarovsk became a model of its kind. Upon Shternberg's recommendation, many ethnographers visited Arsen'ev's museum and were favorably impressed by it. Conversation with these scholars inspired Arsen'ev and exposed him to new ideas and field methods (Polevoi and Reshetov 1977:116). Besides taking care of his own museum, Arsen'ev generously supplied other Russian

museums, including the MAE, with valuable ethnographic specimens, never asking for any money in return for them. In addition, he purchased artifacts for the museum following Shternberg's requests (Polevoi and Reshetov 1977:216–18; Polevoi and Reshetov 1972:78). Encouraged by Shternberg, Arsen'ev collected detailed information on kinship and religion. Shternberg tried his best not only to teach Arsen'ev about field methods but also to influence his views on culture by turning him into an evolutionist. Arsen'ev's letters from 1914 mention receiving books by Lubbock and Tylor from his mentor (Arsen'ev 1957:220–222).

Sergei Shirokogorov (1887–1939) was clearly Shternberg's most promising student and field ethnographer of the prerevolutionary period. Unlike the other St. Petersburg University students who attended Shternberg's informal lectures, he had previously studied philology and political economy at the Sorbonne and also attended lectures at the famous *École d'Anthropologie* in Paris. After returning to Russia in 1911, he studied natural and social sciences at St. Petersburg University and attended classes at the Archeological Institute. While still a student, Shirokogorov began working at the MAE, registering collections and expanding the card catalog of artifacts. He also received from Shternberg in-depth instruction on general and Siberian ethnography as well as field methods. Finally, with Radlov's encouragement the young man developed an interest in linguistics and specifically the Tungus (Evenk) languages (Shirokogoroff 1935:40). He became one of only a handful of scholars with solid training in all the subfields in anthropology. In addition, he was from early on strongly interested in theoretical issues. The quality and the scope of Shirokogorov's fieldwork clearly surpassed that of Shternberg. As soon as he and his wife entered the field, they began living and traveling with nomadic and seminomadic natives and learning their languages. While Shirokogorov did collect a good number of valuable ethnographic specimens, his main interests were taking anthropometric measurements and recording ethnographic data, including important and detailed information on shamanism, his mentor's favorite topic (Reshetov 2004a; Revunenkov and Reshetov 2003). His letters to Shternberg reveal how much he had learned and continued to learn from his teacher (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/319). Like Shternberg, he got along very well with the natives, including shamans. Despite the fact that his first expedition lasted only four months and was supposed to have been only an exploratory one, he brought back a large collection of artifacts, phonograph

recordings, and photographs as well as ethnological and linguistic data. In 1913 the Shirokogorovs secured better funding from the Russian Committee for the Study of Central Asia and embarked on their second Transbaikal expedition to continue their Tungus research. They returned to St. Petersburg on the eve of World War I (see chapter 6).

Occasionally the MAE was able to bring its collectors to St. Petersburg to organize and register their own collections. For example, a Buryat scholar named Tsyben Zhamtsarno worked on his own collection of Buryat objects in 1906–7. In addition to ethnographic objects, a number of MAE collectors sent back artifacts for the museum's physical anthropology and archeology departments.

Faithful to his and Radlov's goal of representing the earth's entire population in the museum, Shternberg did his best to build up the MAE's collections from regions further removed from Russia's borders. Being in charge of the American department and having a special interest in New World aborigines, he was particularly interested in their artifacts. As far as North American Indians were concerned, he relied on his ties with several leading U.S. museums. Boas was his main connection, and thanks to him, many valuable objects were donated and sold to the MAE. To cite one example, in 1913 Boas's student Paul Radin collected a number of Winnebago (Ho Chunk) artifacts specifically for the MAE.

Exchanges also helped Shternberg build up the MAE's South American holdings. In addition to relying on trades with foreign museums, he was eventually able to organize MAE expeditions to that subcontinent. One of the MAE's most successful South American expeditions was the one undertaken by the Czech traveler and scholar Albert Voitech Fric (1882–1944). In 1901–8 he traveled to southern Brazil, Paraguay, and northern Argentina on his own initiative and then offered part of his collection to the MAE. However, in 1910–12 he returned to the Chaco province of northeastern Argentina to collect artifacts specifically for the MAE from local indigenous tribes (Zibert 1961:125–43; Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/302).

Thanks to the assistance of its Argentinean colleagues, the MAE was able to organize a very important expedition to South America. It took place in 1914–15 and was led by two of Shternberg's students: Genrikh (Heinrich) Manizer and Fyodor Fiel'strup, who had attended Shternberg's lectures at the geographic study group (*kruzhok*) affiliated with St. Petersburg University (Karmysheva

1999:153). An economist, Sergei Geiman, and two zoologists, Ivan Strel'nikov and Nikolai Tanasiichuk, also took part in it. Several private individuals and institutions outside the MAE participated in organizing this major expedition: the Zoology Museum, the Russian (Physical) Anthropological Society of the St. Petersburg University, and the Physical Anthropology Department of Moscow University. Even with their involvement, the expedition was not very well financed. Originally it was supposed to spend seven or eight months in the field, but because of the war, the expedition participants returned home only in the fall of 1915. This delay was actually beneficial—it allowed the expedition to broaden the scope of its ethnographic research among several indigenous peoples of Brazil as well as Argentina and Paraguay. As one of the first comprehensive Russian field studies in South America, the expedition generated not only a large collection of artifacts but valuable anthropometric, linguistic, folkloristic, and ethnographic data. In May 1916 the three student participants presented their findings to the Ethnography Division of the Russian Geographical Society and, thanks to Shternberg's recommendation, were awarded its small silver medals (Lukin 1977; Fainshtein 1977; Kinzhalov 1980: 170; Karmysheva 1999:153–55; Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/276).

MAE collectors made another major foreign expedition on the eve of the Great War, this time to South Asia. Aimed at significantly expanding the museum's modest Indian and Ceylonese collections, it was organized by Radlov, who recruited two Orientalists: Gustav-Hermann (Aleksandr) Mervart (1884–1932) and his wife Liudmila Mervart (1888–1965). Gustav-Hermann was born in Germany in 1884 and eventually settled in Russia, converting to Orthodoxy and changing his name to Aleksandr. Well-trained in general linguistics and Sanskrit, the Mervarts, who just before their expedition had been working at the MAE as adjunct curators, received detailed instructions in methods of ethnographic research and museum collecting. Fascinated by Dravidian kinship (so important to Morgan's evolutionary scheme), Shternberg convinced the Mervarts to spend much of their time in the southern part of India. In preparation for the expedition, the couple visited Germany in 1913 to study South Asian ethnographic collections in the museums of Munich and Berlin (Mervart and Mervart 1927). In early April 1914 the two ethnographers arrived in Ceylon, where they immediately began acquiring artifacts and studying local languages with the help of native instructors. Like Malinowski's work in the

Trobriands, the Mervarts' research benefited greatly from their long and involuntary stay in the field. Because of the war and the Russian Revolution, they were unable to return home and stayed in India for four years, conducting detailed ethnographic and linguistic research in several parts of the country as well as in Ceylon (Vigasin 2003).

The success of the MAE's South American and South Asian expeditions demonstrated the advantages of relying on university students and recent graduates who had had training in ethnography as opposed to amateur collectors. Another illustration of this new development in MAE collecting was the outstanding field research by Nikolai Nevskii (1892–1937) and Nikolai Konrad (1891–1970), who would become the country's leading Japan specialists. Both young men were students of the Oriental Faculty of St. Petersburg University, where they specialized in Chinese and Japanese languages and literatures. Like the Mervarts, Nevskii and Konrad not only spoke several Asian languages fluently but were also well trained in linguistics and folklore. Unsurprisingly, they attended Shternberg's lectures at the MAE, where they developed an interest in anthropology.² When, upon graduation, Konrad and then Nevskii were sent to Japan to further their studies, they tried to improve their language skills and collected ethnographic data. In the spring of 1914, while he was still in Japan, Konrad (who had already acquired some command of Korean) received a recommendation from Radlov and Shternberg to conduct field research in Korea. Thanks to it, he received adequate funding from the Russian Committee. Konrad's Orientalist mentors encouraged him to study the local language and customs in general, but Shternberg stressed the importance of paying special attention to shamanism. Unable to return to Russia until the summer of 1917 because of the war, Konrad stayed in Japan and made several extensive research trips to Korea (Konrad 1996:449–451; Dzagyrilasina and Sorokina 1999:200–201). His work resulted in a substantial monograph on Korean social organization and spiritual culture that remained unpublished until 1996 (Konrad 1996:17–106). Although the MAE did not have enough funding to organize expeditions to other parts of the world, it did manage to acquire several valuable collections from Russian travelers. Vladimir Sviatlovskii, a St. Petersburg University economist, acquired one of its collections of artifacts from Australia and Oceania. In 1907–8 his university and the Academy of Sciences sent him to Oceania. The MAE gave him a special assignment to obtain ethnographic objects. Besides

visiting Australia, New Zealand, Hawaii, Samoa, New Guinea, and Melanesia, he examined the ethnographic collections of several major European and North American museums and reported on his impressions in his letters to Shternberg, Radlov, and other MAE staff members (Rozina 1974).

Among the MAE's most famous collectors was the well-known Russian poet Nikolai Gumilev (1886–1921). An adventurer and romantic who celebrated the exotic in many of his poems, he made several trips to Africa. During his 1913 journey to Ethiopia, Gumilev collected native songs and artifacts, having received instructions from Shternberg and letters of recommendation from Radlov (Davidson 2001).

Thanks to his visits to many foreign museums and participation, in 1904, 1908, and 1912, in several meetings of the International Congress of Americanists (ICA), Shternberg established contacts with a number of leading Western anthropologists, many of them museum curators. While some corresponded with him only about exchanging artifacts and other museum business, others maintained closer relations with the senior MAE curator, sending him questions about the various cultures of Russia. A few even visited St. Petersburg and spent time examining MAE collections.

Shternberg's closest colleagues included such prominent anthropologists as Konrad Theodore Preuss (1869–1938), a specialist on South American Indians at Berlin's Museum der Völkerkunde and an evolutionist. He procured some valuable artifacts from South America for the MAE and was instrumental in getting a section of Shternberg's Gilyak ethnography published in the *Archiv für Religionwissenschaft* soon after it had appeared in Russia (Shternberg 1905; Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/238).

Juan Ambrosetti, a prominent Argentinean archaeologist, professor at the University of Buenos Aires, and head of the Buenos Aires Ethnographic Museum, was another foreign Americanist and a lifelong friend of Shternberg's (1865–1917) (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/11). He first met Shternberg in 1904 at the ICA meeting in Stuttgart. Four years later, at the ICA meeting in Vienna, they saw each other again, and Ambrosetti suggested to Shternberg that their museums establish a direct artifact exchange. In 1912 the two colleagues met once more at the London ICA, and Shternberg invited Ambrosetti to visit St. Petersburg. After the congress the Argentinean scholar came to Russia to visit the MAE but more importantly to spend time with Shternberg,

whom he visited at his summer home in Finland. Two years later Ambrosetti offered invaluable help to the MAE's collectors, as mentioned earlier (Lukin 1965; S. Shternberg 1928:48–49).

Shternberg's ties with French ethnologists were not as strong. Nonetheless, by the end of the 1910s his work had become known and appreciated by such prominent scholars as Marcel Mauss and Arnold Van Gennep. Although no letters between them exist, Shternberg, according to his correspondence with Pilsudski, communicated in some form with these leading figures of French anthropology. After learning of Shternberg's Gilyak monograph, Mauss apparently told Van Gennep about it. In 1913 the latter proposed exchanging his *Revue d'ethnographie et de sociologie* for the MAE's periodical publication, *Sbornik MAE* (Pilsudski 1999:251–278).

Of all the European countries where Shternberg had a significant number of colleagues, Sweden was clearly preeminent. One of the reasons for this was its geographical proximity to St. Petersburg. Another was the strong interest that quite a few Swedish ethnologists had in the peoples of Russia. Yet another reason was his friendship with Carl Hartman (1862–1941), a specialist on South American archaeology and the chief anthropology curator of Stockholm's Museum of Natural History. That museum and the MAE exchanged artifacts on a regular basis and in 1911 cosponsored a joint collecting expedition to Mexico (Ratner-Shternberg 1928:49). Another Swedish colleague with whom Shternberg corresponded regularly was Karl Wiklund (1868–1934), a prominent specialist in Saami linguistics and ethnology and a professor at the Uppsala University (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/54). Shternberg made several trips to Stockholm between the late 1900s and early 1910s and was very fond of the capital and of Sweden in general.³

Besides his visits to Stockholm, Shternberg's most memorable trips abroad between 1908 and 1914 were to Vienna and Budapest in 1908, Prague in 1909, and London in 1912. The main reason for his 1908 visit to Vienna was his participation in the Sixteenth International Congress of Americanists. Although Shternberg did not give a paper there, he was elected to the society's council.⁴

Especially important for Shternberg's international reputation as one of Russia's leading anthropologists was his participation in the Seventeenth ICA in London in May 1912. This time he was elected a vice president of the society, along with Ambrosetti, Boas, Alfred Haddon, Preuss, and others. Shternberg

delivered a paper that used data from the Nivkh and other indigenous peoples of Siberia to offer strong support for Morgan's concept of the "Turano-Ganowanian" type of social organization (1913b). Despite its evolutionist thrust, the paper generated a lot of interest. W. H. R. Rivers, its discussant, was very impressed. By that time he had become very interested in kinship and social organization and had not yet abandoned his earlier evolutionism entirely (Rivers 1910; Stocking 1995:184–208). Because the meeting took place in England it attracted the attention of several prominent British anthropologists besides Rivers, such as Haddon, Robert Marett, and Charles Seligman.

By the late 1900s several of the leading European and American members of the ICA (including Boas) as well as other anthropologists had concluded that the time had come for the creation of an international organization of anthropologists, which would meet regularly. Marett, one of the advocates of this plan, wrote to Shternberg in March 1912, inviting him to take part in a special meeting devoted to discussing it at the upcoming ICA meeting in London (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/190:1). Although the plan did not materialize until 1934, the fact that Shternberg was invited to take part in this important meeting attests to his stature among Western anthropologists. Shternberg sent letters to his wife from England, full of enthusiastic descriptions of London and Cambridge University, which the ICA participants visited. The highlight of Cambridge was a reception where the MAE curator had a chance to meet Sir James Frazer and discuss topics of mutual interest to them. Frazer, who had already heard about Shternberg's presentation at the ICA from his Cambridge colleagues, asked him about it and encouraged him to publish it as soon as possible (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/361:122–123). Following the London congress, Shternberg visited several European anthropological and archeological museums in Germany, Austro-Hungary, and Sweden.

The Zhuravskii Affair

His work at the MAE brought great satisfaction to Shternberg but was also an occasional source of frustration and grief. A passionate man who occasionally lost his temper, he was not uniformly liked at the museum. Since he would also calm down quickly, ordinary professional conflicts and disagreements were resolved amicably. Occasionally, however, they festered. One such conflict devolved into an ugly case of anti-Semitism and false accusations leveled at Shternberg and the MAE director.

The case involved the collector Andrei Zhuravskii. Born out of wedlock in 1882, he was adopted by an army general who tried unsuccessfully for years to get permission from the government to pass on his nobility status to the boy.⁵ In 1901 he enrolled at St. Petersburg University, and in 1902 he undertook his first expedition—to the Arkhangel'sk region in Russia's North, where he collected ethnographic artifacts. In 1905, using his own money, he established a zoological station in a village located in the Pechora region. That same year he began supplying several St. Petersburg museums with botanical, zoological, geological, and ethnographic collections. Eventually, the Academy of Sciences responded to Zhuravskii's appeals and officially took the station under its wing. In 1908, however, his relations with the Academy deteriorated. Zhuravskii, having assumed that the Academy would allocate substantial funds for scientific research and museum collecting, had invested a large sum of his own money in the station. But the Academy did not have the money he needed.⁶ After a prolonged conflict between Zhuravskii and the Academy, the Pechora station ended up closing. The collector was very frustrated. To make matters worse, his attempts to complete his university education, interrupted in 1906 when he was expelled for not paying tuition and poor attendance of lectures, failed.

Despite these setbacks, he did manage to be appointed the head of the North Pechora Expedition and the Pechora Agricultural Station (affiliated with the Agricultural Department). As mentioned earlier, Zhuravskii had sent large and very valuable collections of artifacts of the Russian Old Settlers as well as the Nenets and the Komi natives to the MAE. In addition to museum collecting, he spent a lot of time and energy advocating greater state support for the development of agriculture and natural resources in the Pechora region. However, the regional bureaucrats were not impressed with his arguments. In 1908 Zhuravskii wrote a series of articles attacking them that appeared in *Novoe Vremia* (New time), a popular newspaper of the nationalist right. His choice of this paper suggests that he had moved to the right since his student days, when he took part in radical activities. His meetings, in 1908–9, with Prime Minister Piotr Stolypin and the tsar himself must have strengthened his monarchist and nationalist ideology. Zhuravskii's attack on the administration caught the attention of *Novoe Vremia*'s well-known right-wing columnist and anti-Semite Mikhail Men'shikov (Balmuth 2005). In a series of articles published in 1910 he elaborated on Zhuravskii's own arguments, adding that the northern bureaucrats

were indifferent to the Russian patriot's pleas because there were too many foreigners (Poles, Germans, etc.) and "KD liberals" living among them. In 1910 Zhuravskii suffered a nervous breakdown when he found out that he had been adopted by his parents and thus had not been a nobleman by birth (Smolentsev 1979:268–283). Frustrated with the government's refusal to grant him the status of a nobleman, he was ready to lash out at his enemies.

The ammunition for his attack on the MAE director and its senior curator was provided by the museum's junior curator, Bruno Adler (1874–1942).⁷ After completing his education in the natural sciences at Moscow University, where he studied with the great Russian anthropologist Dmitrii Anuchin, this Russian-born man of German descent pursued his doctorate in Germany, studying with another giant of anthropology, Friedrich Ratzel. For several years Adler worked in German ethnographic museums and in 1902 was invited by Radlov to serve as the MAE's junior curator in charge of its Russian and Chinese-Japanese departments. Adler's relationship with Shternberg was seemingly always strained. It is conceivable that the professionally trained anthropologist resented the fact that, unlike himself, his superior did not have a doctorate in anthropology. The two curators also seem to have disagreed about museum practices, especially Shternberg's preference for expanding the departments he himself led. As Adler wrote in a statement he submitted to the Academy about the Zhuravskii affair, "The MAE's affairs were conducted single-handedly by Radlov, with Shternberg being the *de facto* head of the institution. All other museum employees knew almost nothing about its affairs" (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/180:154). Unable to continue working with Shternberg and lured by a higher salary, Adler left the MAE in December 1909 for the Ethnography Department of the Russian Museum.

Sometime between 1908 and 1910 Adler informed Zhuravskii that some of the artifacts he had so carefully collected and documented, including the ones donated to him on the condition that they would remain at the MAE, had been turned over to a wealthy Jewish businessman, E. Aleksander, who specialized in buying and selling ethnographic objects. The latter, in turn, sold them to German museums and in return procured artifacts from other cultures for the MAE. This exchange—a standard practice at the time—enabled the MAE to build up its collections representing peoples residing outside the Russian Empire. Besides selling various specimens to the MAE, Aleksander also donated

some to the museum, for which he received a medal. Zhuravskii must have been bothered by the fact that he had not been informed by the MAE about the handling of some of the artifacts he had collected. Moreover, he seems to have concluded that Radlov and Shternberg had profited from selling the artifacts to Aleksander. As both his petition to the president of the Academy of Sciences and a close relative of the tsar, Grand Duke Konstantin Romanov, and his letter to *Novoe Vremia* (each dated April 7, 1911) indicate, Zhuravskii saw the entire matter as a conflict between Russia's national heritage and Russian science, on the one hand, and non-Russian (primarily Jewish as well as German) administrators and curators and foreign-born (Jewish) businessman, on the other (MAE Collection, SPFA RAN, 142/1/43:50–54).⁸ He insisted on referring to Shternberg as “Khaim-Leib,” even though the latter had long been known as “Lev,” and claimed falsely that most of the MAE employees were Jews. (In fact only three of them were). He mentioned that Shternberg had reprimanded him in 1908 for publishing articles in a right-wing newspaper. He also accused Aleksander of mislabeling the artifacts from Pechora because “he barely knew Russian.” Zhuravskii's entire petition to Konstantin Romanov was so full of references to his own Russian ethnic background, the “ideals of Russian science,” and the “holy prestige” of the Imperial Academy of Sciences, that his monarchist, nationalist, and anti-Semitic views come through loud and clear.⁹ No wonder that *Novoe Vremia* and other right-wing newspapers hailed his case.

Deeply insulted by Zhuravskii's accusations, Radlov and Shternberg decided to defend themselves. Since Adler had been the source of slander and misinformation, and since he shared his accusations not only with his new colleagues at the Russian Museum but also with Sergei Ol'denburg, the general secretary of the Academy of Sciences, they focused their attention on his statements. In a series of detailed memos sent to the Academy of Sciences, they rebutted his claims. The MAE director and senior curator showed that Aleksander had received one half of all the objects collected on several important expeditions in return for sponsoring the trips financially. The first use of this arrangement had been so beneficial to the financially strapped MAE that soon thereafter the Ethnography Department of the Russian Museum reached a similar agreement with Aleksander. Radlov and Shternberg also rejected another serious accusation made by Adler—that objects from a valuable collection donated by the tsar to the Chinese-Japanese department had later been given by Radlov to Aleksander.

Adler's allegation intimated that the MAE leadership had not shown proper respect to the monarch's donation and were thus not loyal enough to the regime. The accused responded that these objects had never been identified as gifts of the tsar. Finally, they argued that Zhuravskii had known all along that one half of his collection would be turned over to a businessman who would then sell it abroad.¹⁰ In his own response to the MAE's leaders' rebuttal, Adler argued that his accusation had never been motivated by any hostility to the museum or Radlov and Shternberg but only by his strong disagreement with their way of conducting its affairs and his commitment to the science of anthropology (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/180:157-164).¹¹

For two years the Academy did not respond to Zhuravskii and Adler, but in late 1910 the accuser and Ol'denburg agreed that the Academy would convene a court of arbitration (*treteiskii sud*) to settle the matter. Radlov and Shternberg, anxious to clear their names and uphold the reputation of the MAE, gladly agreed to this. They chose academician Aleksei Shakhmatov, known for his liberal views, as their arbiter, while Adler chose academician Sergei Platonov, a prominent historian and monarchist sympathizer. The Academy appointed another academician as the third arbiter. The deliberations took place in the winter and spring of 1911. Both sides presented their accusations, and in April 1911 the academicians announced their verdict. Although they conceded that Zhuravskii might have had good reason to be disappointed with the sale of part of his collection abroad and that Adler had not made his accusation out of any special animosity toward Radlov and Shternberg, they decided that the accusations were unmerited. The court's decision was published in *Novoe Vremia* on April 16, 1911. Later that month, the same newspaper published an angry letter by Zhuravskii that presented his view of the affair and criticized the court's decision. Upon his return from a business trip abroad, Shternberg sent his own response to Zhuravskii, which *Novoe Vremia* published on April 28, 1911. It noted that in order to completely clear his reputation as well as that of the MAE and its director, he had asked Radlov to forward a request to the Academy of Sciences that it create a special commission to investigate the museum's affairs. While many documents generated by this commission have not survived, at some point in 1911 it exonerated Radlov and Shternberg of any wrongdoing.¹² This did not, however, end the controversy. Throughout that year right-wing newspapers continued attacking the two of them and supporting Zhuravskii.

As Mikhail Fainshtein pointed out to me (personal communications, 1997–2001), even though Russian nationalism, with its anti-German and anti-Semitic sentiments, might not have been the main motivation for Zhuravskii’s attack on Radlov and Shternberg, and it would have been difficult for Adler to attack the “foreigners” in the MAE, this conflict pitted a dedicated and naïve Russian collector against powerful non-Russian scholars and museum administrators. It is not surprising that the right-wing press was so interested in this case and further emphasized its “ethnic” aspect. After all, 1911 was marked by the notorious Beilis case, in which a Jewish man was accused of killing a Christian child for ritual purposes. During that same year an exhibit entitled “Lomonosov and the Era of [Tsarina] Elizaveta” generated newspaper articles that discussed the Germans’ domination of Russian science in the eighteenth century and their mistreatment of Mikhail Lomonosov, the great Russian scientist, who like Zhuravskii worked in the Arkhangel’sk region. Unsurprisingly, in a March 12, 1911, letter to Boas, Shternberg complained about the troubles he and Radlov had been having lately, referring to them as his “*affair Dreyfus*” (Boas Papers, APS). The Beilis case was a clear indication that in tsarist Russia any Jew’s loyalty to his country could be questioned, especially if he had been involved in handling objects representing Russia’s “national heritage.”

Teaching Anthropology Despite All Odds

Being Jewish also kept Shternberg from teaching at institutions of higher learning. As a scholar who cared deeply about his discipline and was anxious to share his knowledge with others, he resented the discrimination against him. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, anthropology was a suspect discipline in the eyes of the Russian authorities and was not taught at any of St. Petersburg’s institutions of higher learning. Despite these odds, Shternberg did manage to teach anthropology through his position as a museum curator.¹³ His first teaching opportunity occurred in 1904, when he encountered a group of young people who were instructors at the courses for factory workers in the city. They told Shternberg that while they had read Tylor and Morgan, their knowledge of ethnology was quite limited and they had difficulty making much sense of the MAE’s displays. The young people gladly accepted his offer to teach them, and in 1904–5 Shternberg conducted over forty-two three-hour-long informal lectures, beginning with the Siberian collection. Initially he had only four students, but

gradually their number increased. Five years later he instructed another group of young educators who worked with industrial workers.

In 1904 a group of such workers visited the MAE, and it occurred to Shternberg that they could benefit from his instruction. And so he began traveling to the outskirts of the city to offer a minicourse to the students of a Smolensk school organized by the Technical Society. The course consisted of three lectures that addressed the evolution of material and spiritual cultures. The course also involved two visits to the MAE.

In 1906–7 Shternberg taught physical anthropology and ethnology (including field methods) at the Free School, which had been organized by Piotr Lesgaft, a prominent Russian educator.¹⁴ The school did not offer any official diploma but was popular among the city’s progressive intelligentsia (particularly secondary school teachers) and occasional factory workers, attracting many future scholars.¹⁵ Many of its instructors were prominent St. Petersburg liberals (Wartenweiler 1999:147–55, 194–200).

Shternberg always viewed his teaching as a way of conveying to his students not only knowledge of anthropology but progressive ideas about human beings and society. He told his Free School students, “Your duty is not only to give your students specific knowledge and information but also to serve as the spiritual leaders of the growing generation. You have been entrusted with educating the youngsters of a tender age whose minds and souls are developing intensely and whose eyes are opening to the world. . . . [I]t is up to you to make sure that your students enter the world of science and life with already formed ideas of a healthy mind, noble citizenship, and deep enthusiasm for truth, goodness, and humanity” (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/46:1–2).

Word of Shternberg’s fascinating lectures spread, and soon the number of students wishing to hear him grew significantly. As a result he began offering regular lectures in cultural anthropology at St. Petersburg University as an adjunct lecturer. His first students came from the Oriental Languages and Historical-Philological faculties. Many of them were from Siberia, and when they went on their summer vacations, they often conducted ethnographic field research. These Siberians remained some of his most dedicated students throughout the entire pre-1917 era. Although the MAE could not offer them any funding, it negotiated with the railroads to give them a discount fare. Among these students were such future ethnographers as Bergard Petri and Sergei Shirokogorov as

well as V. Mikhailov (a Buryat) and Mark Azadovskii (1888–1954), who studied Russian folklore and the history of Russian literature and eventually became one of the leading Soviet scholars in these fields. Inspired by Shternberg, he spent his summer vacations taking part in ethnographic expeditions in the Irkutsk region (1910–12). Initially Azadovskii had planned to follow his teacher's footsteps by becoming an ethnographer of indigenous Siberians. However, having realized that he was not very good at learning indigenous languages, and remembering Shternberg's lesson that one could not be a good ethnographer without the command of these languages, he switched to Russian folklore. Upon graduating from St. Petersburg University, Azadovskii became an active participant in the Ethnography Division of the Russian Geographical Society and its journal. He also continued his ethnographic and folkloristic expeditions throughout the years of World War I and the Russian Civil War. He reminisced in the late 1920s that Shternberg had helped him a great deal during the early stages of his career (Azadovskii to Ratner-Shternberg, Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/136:52).

At the university Shternberg also presided over an anthropology circle, or informal seminar, organized by the students of the Geography Department. In 1907 he had an opportunity to give a series of lectures on primitive religion to the students of the Women's Pedagogical Institute. Finally, he also offered some instruction in ethnology to secondary school teachers in a program affiliated with the university (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/195:415).¹⁶

In 1910 a group of geographers organized a Geographical Bureau at the Pedagogical Museum of the Institutions of Military Education. At first it offered only occasional lectures on the various aspects of geography, but eventually these became more regular. Shternberg participated actively in this venture, giving several introductory lectures in ethnography. Given the success of the lectures offered by the new bureau, its members concluded that it was necessary to establish a special institution of higher learning dedicated to the teaching of geography and related disciplines, including ethnography. Scholars advocating the creation of a special Geography Institute viewed the establishment, in 1912, of a Dokuchaev Soil Committee, whose bureau included members of the Geographical Bureau, as a hopeful sign.¹⁷ In the spring of 1913 they held a series of meetings devoted to the discussion of this issue. Shternberg was the only anthropologist among the participants. Their efforts to obtain the government's

permission to create an institute finally bore fruit when, in March 1914, the authorities gave their authorization for the establishment of the Geography Courses of Higher Education, affiliated with the Dokuchaev Committee. Unfortunately the outbreak of World War I interfered with the development of this institution (see chapter 6) (Ratner-Shternberg 1935:138; Lukashevich 1919:42–43).

Before World War I Shternberg also offered informal and illegal instruction in anthropology through guided tours of the MAE displays. One group of students who received such instructions were the women enrolled in the Pedagogical School (*Pedagogicheskie Kursy*), which trained future schoolteachers.¹⁸ In 1912–13 (1914?) Shternberg organized a special course at his museum for students of that school. Each lecture was devoted to a particular region of the world and was given by an MAE employee in charge of a corresponding department. Shternberg also gave a series of lectures as part of his involvement in a proposed central ethnographic bureau.

Despite all this work Shternberg was not satisfied with the kind of instruction he could offer. After continued lobbying for a more systematic teaching of anthropology, his efforts finally bore fruit during the war years (see chapter 6).

Shternberg and Russian Anthropology in the Prewar Years

By 1910 Shternberg had clearly become one of Russia's leading ethnologists. In St. Petersburg he was a regular participant in the periodic meetings of the Ethnography Division of the Russian Geographic Society and served as a member of the editorial board of its serial publication (*Zapiski Ethnograficheskogo Otdeleniia RGO*). When Oldenburg replaced Lamanskii as the division's chairman in 1909, the scope of its activities became broader and the quality of the presentations given at its meetings improved. In 1910 Shternberg presented a lecture based on his study of the native Siberian ornaments made of reindeer hair (Shternberg 1931), and three years later he presented "The Eagle Cult in Comparative Folklore" (Shternberg 1925c) and was elected to the editorial board of the division's *Zapiski* (see chapter 6). He commented frequently on papers presented by others and continued to defend evolutionism against its critics.

His own presentations were met with great interest but were not immune from criticism. Several ethnographers critiqued his analysis of the eagle's role in comparative folklore for its sweeping generalizations. In this presentation Shternberg examined the roles of the eagle in aboriginal Siberian, Ugric-Finnish,

and Indo-European mythologies to show what he argued were striking similarities between them. In all of them the eagle is the king of the birds and is associated with the sun and the world tree. In addition, the creature is closely linked with the shamanic complex. This presentation (published twelve years later in an expanded version) represented an important new development in Shternberg's research interests and his methodological and theoretical approaches (Shternberg 1925c). It was his first major foray into primitive and comparative religion as well as comparative mythology—fields that, after the completion of his Nivkh social organization monograph, became his main area of research in the last decade and a half of his life. In his 1913 presentation Shternberg, while remaining a staunch evolutionist, explored in-depth the possibility of intercultural borrowing and diffusion not just of folklore motives but of an entire religious complex. He also boldly hypothesized that the peoples currently living far apart from one another had been neighbors in an earlier era. The paper demonstrated Shternberg's impressive erudition and skills as a comparatist, but the author had also made errors in the use of linguistic and ethnographic data as well as rash speculations and generalizations. Because Shternberg's main Siberian case was that of the Yakuts, the fact that two prominent specialists on Yakut language and culture, Vsevolod Ionov and Eduard Pekarskii, criticized him is of special importance. Ionov's criticism was especially pointed.¹⁹ According to a published summary of the debate, "Ionov insisted that comparisons must be made between peoples who are at the same level of development, because our focus should be mainly the system of their religious worldview and not the outward similarities of the images it produces (*Zhivaia Starina*, 1913, 3–4:51). Shternberg's response to his critics was spirited but not very convincing. His passionate temperament and sharp tongue must have antagonized some of the Ethnography Division's members. Nominated for its chairmanship, Shternberg lost to Ol'denburg, who was a much better diplomat and had the advantage of being a member of the Academy of Sciences.

Shternberg's more pressing concerns, however, were the lack of coordination of the work of the country's ethnographers, an almost total absence of university instruction in cultural anthropology, and other problems that, in his view, made Russian anthropology lag behind its Western counterpart. He articulated these concerns in his presentation "On the Needs of Russian Ethnography" delivered at the meeting of the Twelfth Congress of the Russian Natural Scientists

and Physicians. Held in Moscow between December 28, 1909, and January 6, 1910, it was the biggest and most important gathering of the country's anthropologists in the pre-Soviet era. The fact that Russia's anthropologists had to meet under the aegis of another society reveals their own organizational deficiencies.²⁰ Although the congress organizers insisted that participation was limited to published scholars or instructors at high schools and universities, many amateurs still attended. Interestingly enough, anthropological papers were presented in "The Section of Geography, Ethnography and [Physical] Anthropology," yet another sign that the discipline was still perceived by many as not entirely independent. Dmitrii Anuchin, the leader of the Moscow anthropologists and the chairman of the congress's geography, ethnography, and physical anthropology section, promoted anthropology's close association with geography. However, ethnographers (cultural anthropologists) did establish their own subsection, which was chaired by a prominent folklorist, Vsevolod Miller, the head of the Ethnography Division of the Moscow OLEAE (1848–1913).²¹

Russian cultural anthropologists clearly articulated their discipline's separate identity and scholarly legitimacy in an announcement published prior to the congress in *Etnograficheskoe Obozrenie*:

At the present time ethnography has already evolved into an independent scientific discipline and its right to exist as a natural history of tribes and peoples is no longer being disputed by anyone. Its accomplishments and a colossal growth of the accumulated ethnographic data make a collective sorting out of the many current ethnographic issues especially urgent. At the upcoming Congress, the task of the subsection of ethnography would be not to get too involved in the specific issues of the related sciences and not to get too bogged down in the excessive details of the specific issues of ethnography itself, but to concentrate on the general issues of ethnography and the history of primitive [*pervobytnyi*] culture, on the one hand, and the study of the particular ethnic groups inhabiting Russia and its neighboring countries and relations among them as well as their relations with other ethnic groups, on the other. . . .

For the persons engaged in ethnography, this gathering is particularly important, given the fact that they are not connected to each other and given the lack of any scientific institutions that would

unite the activities of individual researchers. All this plus an almost total absence in Russia of the teaching of ethnography [at the university level] forces almost every ethnographer to develop independently his own ways and methods of research. An inadequate familiarity with each other's research often prevents one researcher from using the results of the other. (*Etnograficheskoe Obozrenie*, 1909, 21(2-3):267-268)

Despite this call for papers dealing with the broader issues of cultural anthropology, most of them ended up being quite specific. The only major exceptions were the papers delivered by Vsevolod Miller, Aleksandr Maksimov, and Shternberg.

Miller (1848-1913) was a very prominent specialist on Slavic and comparative mythology, folklore, and linguistics who also conducted ethnographic and archaeological investigations (Shternberg 1913c; *Etnograficheskoe Obozrenie*, 1913, nos. 3-4; Tokarev 1966, passim). A leader of the Moscow ethnologists, he served for many years as the editor of *Etnograficheskoe Obozrenie* and the curator of the Dashkov Ethnographic Museum. His opening remarks at the first session of the ethnography subsection reviewed and praised the accomplishment of Russia's ethnographers but also lamented the fact that ethnography in Russia was "a labor of love," very poorly funded by the government or even the private philanthropists. In his words, "Our strength lies in our deep interest in the study of the conditions of life of the lowest strata of our society stimulated by compassion toward them, but our weakness lies in the paucity of our material resources and a very limited scientific preparation of most of our ethnographers" (Miller 1909:6-7). Miller compared the state of anthropological instruction in Europe and the United States with its sorry condition in Russia, where no independent university department (*kafedra*) of ethnography existed. He also complained that because of a lack of adequate funding, Russian anthropology museums were lagging behind European and especially American institutions. As a result of this, he continued, most of the works by Russia's ethnographers were descriptive, with very few addressing the broader theoretical issues of the "evolution of ethnographic phenomena" (Miller 1909:6-7).

Shternberg's presentation was one of two given in a special session devoted to general issues, the other being Maksimov's. Repeating his long-standing criticism of Russian anthropology and echoing Miller's assessment of the problems,

he outlined a series of ambitious proposals aimed at improving the situation. First, he called for establishing a centralized bureau to supervise ethnographic studies and coordinate the work of various ethnographic institutions that were currently working “separately from each other and were weakening each other’s energy and material resources” (Bartol’d 1910:179–181). He also proposed establishing several special kafedras of ethnography that would be attached not to the geography department, as was the case at Moscow University, but to the historical-philological departments of major universities. Students enrolled in these departments would be obligated to study ethnography. The same departments should also begin offering courses not only in Indo-European languages but Ural-Altai ones as well.²² Each city with a university also needed an ethnography museum. Finally, he called for creating “a special fund for the analysis of ethnographic materials” (Bartol’d 1910:179). The speaker referred to the underfunded and underdeveloped state of Russian anthropology as a “great paradox,” because, in his view, interest in this discipline was quickly growing among the country’s intelligentsia, including schoolteachers. Never missing a chance to defend evolutionary anthropology, he also argued that “evolution, the great truth taught by anthropology,” was gaining adherents among the educated people of Russia.

Although Shternberg claimed to have presented the views of a special commission recently established by the Ethnography Division of the RGO to work on improving the state of anthropology in Russia, several members of the commission who were present challenged his assertion, pointing out that some of his proposals had not been approved by it and therefore represented Shternberg’s own position. The commission had agreed that kafedras of ethnography should be established in Russian universities, but it had not specified which department they should be attached to.

Two of Shternberg’s points generated heated debate. While his proposal to establish a central anthropology bureau was supported and reiterated by the Polish physical anthropologist Kazimezh Stolyhwo, others were less enthusiastic about it. For example, Anuchin, the dean of the Moscow anthropologists, cautioned that the establishment of such a bureau would create “a bureaucratic institution which is going to teach us how to do our work” (Bartol’d 1910:180). By defending the work of Moscow physical anthropologists and ethnologists, Anuchin indicated that his opposition to the creation of a Russian version of

the Bureau of American Ethnology (BAE) was motivated, at least in part, by an old tension between Moscow and St. Petersburg scholars, especially those affiliated with the Academy of Sciences.²³ Another Muscovite, Miller, also voiced a note of caution about the establishment of such a bureau. In the end, it was decided this entire issue had not yet been fully explored and therefore had to be tabled. Shternberg's proposal to establish kafedras of anthropology at all major Russian universities was more favorably received. In fact, as both Anuchin and Miller pointed out, they had already made several appeals to Moscow University officials with exactly the same proposal, but to no avail. However, there was no agreement on the question of which department—a scientific or a humanistic one—such kafedras should be affiliated with, nor was there much consensus on their curriculum. Nonetheless the session's participants did vote unanimously in favor of establishing anthropology kafedras in the near future.

As far as the papers presented at this gathering of Russia's anthropologists, their quality varied from major scholarly contributions to rather amateurish presentations. Most of them dealt with specific, rather than general or theoretical, issues. While many of the papers did not illustrate their authors' adherence to any particular theoretical paradigm, evolutionism clearly remained prominent in early twentieth-century Russian anthropology at a time when it was increasingly being questioned and criticized by western European and American anthropologists (Stocking 1995:124–233).

At the same time, several prominent scholars present at the meeting voiced criticisms of evolutionist theory. Bogoraz's presentation, "The Psychology of Shamanism among the Peoples of Northeastern Asia" (Bartol'd 1910:182–183), which contained a good deal of evolutionist speculation, was criticized by academician Vasilii Bartol'd (1869–1930). One of Russia's leading Orientalists, he argued that information obtained by ethnographers in their studies of shamanism among modern-day "primitive" peoples had to be used very carefully in a study of the earlier forms of this religious phenomenon. Several other scholars sided with Bartol'd, while Shternberg asserted that there should not be any doubt whatsoever that "the specific features of the psychology of shamanism, observed by the presenter among the peoples of northeastern Asia, are typical for all the peoples located on the same level of evolution" (Bartol'd 1910:182–183).

The most devastating critique of evolutionism was delivered by Aleksandr Maksimov (1872–1941), the only one among the meeting's keynote speakers to

challenge the paradigm that many of the country's leading anthropologists (such as Anuchin, Miller, and Shternberg) either fully subscribed to or at least paid lip service to (Maksimov 1997:36–48). Although Maksimov was not a practicing field ethnographer and had little access to students, he was well versed in anthropological literature and for many years served as a major contributor of book reviews to *Etnograficheskoe Obozrenie* as well as the head of the Ethnography Division of the OLEAE (Tokarev 1947; Artiomova 1991, 1997). His work was well known to and respected by his Russian colleagues. A positivist who trusted facts much more than theoretical generalizations, Maksimov published a series of works between 1900 and 1917 in which he attacked evolutionist theories of the development of kinship and social organization. At the 1909 Moscow congress Maksimov declared classic evolutionism as well as its more recent manifestations dead and instead hailed careful studies of specific peoples and institutions by field ethnographers. He praised the work of the Boasians in particular but also favorably discussed Rivers's field research as well as the work of the new diffusionist school (led by such German scholars as Leo Frobenius and Fritz Graebner). On the whole Maksimov's views were reminiscent of Boas's historical particularism.

The 1909 gathering of anthropologists in Moscow demonstrated both the strengths and the major weaknesses of their discipline in Russia. In a number of ways it reflected a turning point at which many leading scholars were no longer satisfied with the status quo. At the same time, the meeting's participants failed to reach a consensus on several key issues. While some important new developments in the discipline did take place in the next decade, they did not produce a major change that would have allowed Russian anthropology to catch up with its Western counterpart. Of course, little could be accomplished in this area once World War I began.

The feeling of dissatisfaction with the state of anthropology in Moscow and in Russia as a whole was clearly stated in a letter sent to Shternberg from Moscow soon after the congress by a group of university students interested in cultural anthropology. The letter stated that the city badly needed to have a new anthropological society because the OLEAE "did not involve the public." The students also complained about the inadequacy of the existing instruction in anthropology offered by Moscow University and called for the establishment of a separate kafedra of anthropology. Finally, they advocated the creation of

a new, modern anthropological museum and the training of museum professionals (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/118).

In the wake of the Moscow congress, the Ethnography Division of the RGO held a special meeting in April 1910 to discuss the establishment of a commission for the promotion of ethnographic research in the country. While most of the participants agreed that the time had come for the creation of such a central institution, they viewed the commission's priorities differently. While some prominent Slavacists argued that the study of the Russian people and related ethnic groups should be the commission's main concern, others (including Radlov and Pekarskii) favored focusing on the inhabitants of the empire's eastern and southern regions and borderlands. Moreover, some scholars present (like Shternberg himself) argued that the division had to take the lead in coordinating ethnographic research in the country, while others (like its chairman, Ol'denburg) expressed caution and satisfaction with the status quo (*Izvestiia RGO* 1910:80–86).

One positive consequence of these debates in the Ethnography Division of the RGO was the establishment in 1910 of a commission for the preparation of an ethnographic map of Russia. Ol'denburg chaired the commission, which included seventeen prominent ethnologists, physical anthropologists, and folklorists. Shternberg headed the commission's subunit dedicated to the study of economic life. Committed to an ambitious project aimed at covering all the empire's peoples, the commission was to prepare maps that would reflect their distinct physical characteristics and spoken languages as well as their economies, material culture, folk art, religion, and customary law. Although a number of the commission's members were evolutionists, the project itself bore a significant resemblance to the culture-elements distribution studies conducted by some of the Boasians during this era and in subsequent decades as well as the work of the German anthropologists of the Kulturkreise school. In 1913 a special Siberian–Central Asian subcommission was established with Shternberg at its head. He and a number of his colleagues who were prominent Siberian ethnographers were planning their own methods of preparing ethnographic maps that differed from those used by the scholars of the peoples in the European part of Russia. They were particularly concerned about establishing the locations of every ethnic group, including small ones. They sent out questionnaires and programs for guiding ethnographic research to local amateur

ethnographers, took bodily measurements of individuals in a number of Russian and non-Russian ethnic enclaves, and conducted a good deal of fine linguistic research. The commission and its eastern subdivision met a few times, but the shortage of money and the war (followed by the February Revolution and the Bolshevik coup) prevented them from carrying out their ambitious plans (*Zhivaia Starina*, 1916, 1:xi–xiv; Hirsch 2005:45–51).

Another good example of Shternberg's stature as the one of the country's leading ethnologists and museum curators was his participation in the Preliminary Congress of Museum Professionals, which convened in Moscow in late December 1912. Attended by ninety persons representing sixty different institutions, it addressed various important museological issues and laid the groundwork for convening the First All-Russian Congress of Museum Professionals (Razgon 1991). Many of the presenters complained about the lack of coordination in the work of the country's numerous museums and called for the establishment of a central bureau for that purpose. Shternberg, the sole representative of the MAE, proposed conducting a survey of all of Russia's museums through a detailed questionnaire (Razgon 1991:14). Unfortunately, the outbreak of World War I prevented the All-Russian congress, scheduled for late 1914 or early 1915, from ever convening.

Scholarly Work in the Prewar Years

In the late 1900s and early 1910s much of Shternberg's ethnological research and scholarly writing was devoted to the Gilyak monograph Boas had commissioned.²⁴ The upheaval in his country, which Shternberg confronted upon his return from his trip to the United States, prevented him from getting much work done on this book. By 1907–8 Boas had become quite anxious about the delays in receiving the work he had planned to publish in the Jesup Expedition Series and expressed this sentiment in several letters to Shternberg (see February 15, 1907, and March 5, 1908, Boas Papers, APS).²⁵ To speed up the process Boas proposed that Shternberg write the monograph in Russian while he himself would find a translator in the United States.

The correspondence between the two scholars indicates that in 1907–8 Shternberg was making some progress on this project but that various professional and political distractions were slowing his work down greatly. Several of Shternberg's letters to his American colleague from this period contain pleas for an

extension of the deadline set for the manuscript's completion. Shternberg was also discovering that the preliminary work of extracting the relevant data from his field notebooks and rewriting them for the book was taking much more time than he had expected.

As far as the exact content of the monograph was concerned, Boas was also kept in the dark by his St. Petersburg contributor. All he knew was that it was going to deal with "the tribes of both the Amur River and Saghalin [sic]" (Boas to Shternberg, June 8, 1906, Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/21:16). Although Boas clearly preferred a comprehensive ethnography similar in scope to those of Bogoraz and Iokhel'son, the other Jesup Expedition publications' contributors, Shternberg preferred to concentrate on those topics that interested him most—"social organization and social life, including kinship and marriage" (Shternberg to Boas, September 10, 1907, Boas Papers, APS).

Having made some progress in the work on the book, Shternberg was able to send Boas the monograph's first section on the eve of his departure for the fall 1908 International Congress of Americanists in Vienna. Upon his return home, Shternberg fell seriously ill and did not recover until the spring of the following year (see Boas to Shternberg, March 6, 1909, and Shternberg to Boas, April 10, 1909, Boas Papers, APS; Pilsudski 1996:240–247). Apparently the Russian scholar was able to work on his manuscript during his convalescence, because Boas's October 16, 1909, letter informed him that he had just received pages 84 through 225 (Boas Papers, APS). Despite the various distractions of his busy life in 1910–12, Shternberg was able to continue writing *The Gilyaks* and sending new installments to Boas. During this period he was working on the comparative section of the manuscript and was finding it to be slow going. Nonetheless, as I mentioned earlier, at the 1912 ICA in London he was able to share some of his findings with his Western colleagues when he delivered a paper entitled "The Turano-Ganowanian System and the Nations of Northeastern Asia" (Shternberg 1912b).

While in London, Shternberg and Boas had a long discussion about his manuscript and worked out a plan for the entire publication, which was to be a rounded ethnography, rather than Shternberg's topical monograph. In addition to the discussion of the social organization of the Gilyaks, which had been pretty much completed, Shternberg promised to provide information on their natural environment, physical anthropology and demography, archaeology,

history, material culture, language, folklore, art, and religion (see Shternberg to Boas, February 28, 1917, Boas Papers, APS).

Between the end of 1912 and the beginning of World War I, there was a steady exchange of letters between him and Boas, indicating that the work on the monograph and its preparation for publication were progressing steadily. Boas's letter to Shternberg of October 26, 1912 (Boas Papers, APS), stated that he was about to send the Gilyak manuscript to the printer but was having some difficulty with the terms used for the various levels of the Gilyak social order. To clarify matters, Boas proposed a series of English terms that to him seemed to be adequate equivalents of the Gilyak ones. On December 1, 1912, Shternberg sent Boas a response in which he accepted many of his suggestions and answered most of his queries (AMNH). Finally convinced that the Gilyak monograph was indeed very close to being finished, Boas listed it in the "Plan of Publication" of the JNPE. Appearing on the title page of volume 8 of that series, published in 1913, it is listed as "Tribes of the Amur River, presumably replacing Laufer's Gol'dy (Negidal) monograph advertised in an earlier volume but never written.

Still, Shternberg had not yet fully completed the work, which bothered Boas a lot because the AMNH was clearly getting tired of his JNPE publication project. Always a perfectionist, Shternberg continued to tinker with his manuscript and complained about some inaccuracies in its English translation (see his June 23, 1913, letter to Boas, Boas Papers, APS). To make matters worse, in the spring of 1913 he experienced another set of professional and political troubles, and he and his wife also suffered a major personal loss, the nature of which I have not been able to establish (Boas to Shternberg, April 29, 1913, Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/29:51; see also Pilsudski's October 3, 1913, letter to Shternberg, cited in Pilsudski 1996:278). On October 2, 1913, Boas sent an exasperated letter to his Russian contributor, remarking, "Last time you wrote to me you said you were going to send me your manuscript very soon. I am exceedingly anxious to get your material. If I do not finish my work by the last of December 1915, the whole matter will be at an end, and I am simply held up by you. Can you not please finish your part of the work, so that we can at least go ahead with that part that has been translated?" (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/29:54; Kan 2000, 2001a).

Finally, on November 18, 1913, Boas acknowledged having just received the ill-fated manuscript and was planning to send it to the printer very soon. He



11. Lev Shternberg and Sarra Ratner-Shternberg in his office at the MAE.
Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 280/1/194:12.

begged Shternberg to read the proofs as soon they would reach him. One difficulty remained, however: Boas could not print the table of contents since he did not know exactly what Shternberg's further plans were. He also continued to press his colleague to "keep up the work, because, as I told you several times, the time is drawing very near when the work must be closed. The whole labor after I receive your manuscript—translation, revision, etc.—means a great deal and consumes much time" (Boas to Shternberg, November 18, 1913, Boas Papers, APS).

Despite his promises, Shternberg never managed to write a comprehensive Nivkh ethnography, even though he continued working on the manuscript on and off during World War I and in the post-1917 era (see chapters 6 and 7). His manuscript, most of which was first published in Russian in a posthumous collection of Shternberg's works (1933a) and in a more complete form in English a few years ago, dealt almost exclusively with social organization (Kan 2000, 2001a; Grant 1999; Shternberg 1999).²⁶

How much new data and theorizing did this monograph—Shternberg's most substantial work—contain compared to his 1904 *Gilyaks* piece? As far as the description of the Nivkh social organization was concerned, the manuscript did not introduce much new data except on kinship and, to a lesser extent, marriage. Presented at the beginning of the work, the discussion of kinship is very systematic and detailed, with every kinship term analyzed. No prerevolutionary Russian ethnographer had ever undertaken such an investigation, and few of Shternberg's Western predecessors or contemporaries had either. Aimed at proving that Morgan's theory of the evolution of kinship and marriage was by and large correct, Shternberg's discussion of the Gilyak classificatory system bears a strong resemblance to that of the American ethnologist he admired so much. However, unlike Morgan, who relied heavily on data supplied by others, Shternberg used primarily his own. Another anthropologist who was very interested in Morgan's theory and the study of kinship and social organization was W. H. R. Rivers (1906, 1907, 1914; Stocking 1995:184–208). As Raymond Firth (1968:17) pointed out, Rivers was largely responsible for restoring Morgan's *Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity* "to the position of serious theoretical consideration to which it was entitled, after having suffered thirty years or so of relative neglect."²⁷

Shternberg clearly found it difficult to describe adequately a marriage system that we would today call a prescriptive matrilineal cross-cousin one (cf. Black 1973:75). According to him, the Nivkh married outside of their agnatic clan (lineage) in a complex system of reciprocity that bound together the wife-givers and wife-takers. What made the Nivkh unique, in his view, was a "system of marital exchange, based on a tri-clan phratry or alliance group . . . that underwrote a complex web of mutual social and economic obligations" (Grant 1999:XL). Although his 1904 essay on the Nivkh stressed the tri-clan model, in this manuscript he argued that at least four clans, and ideally five,

were required for the successful functioning of any given marriage network. While Boas found Shternberg's presentation of the Nivkh kinship data confusing, Lévi-Strauss (who had access to the manuscript on his sojourn in New York during the war years) was fascinated by it and cited it extensively in his *Elementary Structures of Kinship*.²⁸

Since Shternberg's monograph was aimed not only at reconstructing the evolution of the Gilyak system of kinship and marriage but at placing it in a comparative perspective, it did introduce a significant number of examples from other indigenous Siberian cultures. However, with the exception of the Oroch, whose marriage system is discussed in detail in chapter 10 of the monograph, very little of this data came from Shternberg's own field research of the 1890s or 1910, when he undertook his last expedition to the Amur River area.

What distinguished this study of Nivkh social organization from its 1904 precursor were the various theoretical generalizations and conclusions Shternberg arrived at. First and foremost, he remained a staunch evolutionist despite the attacks waged on Morganian evolutionism and specifically on the theory of the existence of group marriage by a number of scholars in the first decade of the twentieth century.²⁹ Like Morgan, but unlike Marx and Engels, Shternberg saw ideas (or as he called it, "psychology") as the main mechanism of social evolution. He also continued to subscribe to a theory that postulated the existence of group and cross-cousin marriage as the original form of exogamy, which was at the root of the classificatory system of relationships. In fact, one of the goals of the entire work was to demonstrate that Morgan's hypothesis of the development of the classificatory kinship system was correct, as was his "discovery" that terms of relationship were a reflection of corresponding sexual and marriage norms. More specifically, Shternberg argued that his data on the Nivkh and other Siberians vindicated Morgan's hypothesis about the development of the Turano-Ganowanian system. Moreover, he claimed that this Siberian data provided the link between the kinship and marriage systems of Indian tribes and North American Indians, thus providing firm proof of another one of Morgan's hypotheses: the Asiatic origin of Native Americans (Shternberg 1912b, 1999:95–122).

At the same time, he took issue with a number of specific hypotheses about the evolution of social organization proposed in the 1900s by such evolutionists as Frazer, Rivers, and others. For example, he argued that these scholars

were mistaken in deriving cross-cousin marriage from the dual system of social organization. In his view, it was the other way around (1999:91).

Shternberg's firm commitment to evolutionism made him downplay the fact that his picture of the Nivkh marriage system was highly idealized and had little resemblance to the reality on the ground. Despite admitting that in the late nineteenth century many Nivkh were marrying non-Nivkh and that migrations, wars, and especially epidemic diseases had affected the system, he remained unwavering in his speculations and commitment to the group marriage hypothesis (cf. Grant 1999:XLIII). This weakness in his interpretation of the Nivkh marriage system has been pointed out by several students of that culture, particularly Anna Smoliak, who, unlike him, undertook detailed and painstaking archival research on the history of this phenomenon and whose fieldwork among the Nivkh has been more extensive than his (Smoliak 1970, 1975; see also Taksami 1975; Grant 1999).

Nonetheless, *The Gilyaks and Their Neighbors* was clearly a major scholarly contribution that stood out among the ethnological works by Russian and most Western scholars of the time. Unfortunately, for reasons I explore in subsequent chapters, it remained unpublished for seven decades (cf. Kan 2000, 2001a).

In 1908–14 Shternberg also continued working for several encyclopedias. In 1910–11 he served as the ethnography editor of the *Novyi Entsiklopedicheskiĭ Slovar' Brockhauza i Efrona* (New encyclopedia of Brockhaus and Efron) and contributed several entries to it, including a long one on “animism.” Several years later he wrote a number of entries for the *Novaia Russkaia Entsiklopediia* (New Russian encyclopedia) on kinship and social organization. Finally, during this period he was the de facto editor of the MAE's periodic publication *Sbornik MAE*. Thanks to his efforts the essays published in it became more scholarly and substantial than they had been in the previous decade.

The Last Ethnographic Expedition

In the last decade preceding World War I, Shternberg's life as a scholar was marked by another important accomplishment besides his completing much of the manuscript on Nivkh social organization: his only ethnographic expedition since his return from the Sakhalin exile. In late spring 1910 he received an assignment from the Academy of Sciences and funding from the Russian Division of the International Committee for the Study of History, Archeology,

Linguistics, and Ethnography of Central and Eastern Asia to travel to the lower Amur River and Sakhalin Island. His mission was to collect artifacts for his museum and ethnographic data for his manuscript on the Nivkh as well as supplement the Gol'd (Nanai) data that Laufer had collected a decade earlier as part of the Jesup Expedition. Initially Shternberg concentrated on collecting artifacts and data on the Nivkh. As in the past, he was planning to focus on social organization. This time, however, he also wanted to explore shamanism, the study of which had not been central to his previous expeditions (Shternberg's "Report on the 1910 expedition," Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/13:453).

The MAE's senior curator finally had an opportunity to practice what he had been teaching his collectors for a decade. Unfortunately, limited funding and the need to resume his duties at the museum prevented him from spending more than a few months in the field. His fieldwork of 1910 was no match to the work he had done in the 1890s. Nevertheless, for Shternberg this was an exciting project. Unlike his earlier expeditions, this one carried the Academy's stamp of approval. Shternberg himself was no longer a young exile but a well-known specialist on the cultures of the region. He was also accompanied by two university students, Iosif Ansheles and Ivan Zarubin, whose main tasks were to take photographs, carry out anthropometric measurements, and assist Shternberg in his own work in collecting ethnographic and linguistic data. In addition, the entire group engaged in some archaeological excavations and investigation of petroglyphs.

On May 15 Shternberg and his party left St. Petersburg on a train and traveled for two weeks along the Trans-Siberian Railroad, arriving in Vladivostok on May 31. Here Shternberg's old friends and colleagues gave him a warm welcome, while the local officials provided him with various forms of assistance, including free passage on government ships and an official instruction to the local "elders and chiefs" to help him in every way possible.

The expedition's first undertaking was the study of the Nanai of the lower Amur River. Knowing that he would have only a limited amount of time to explore this culture, Shternberg decided to visit three or four "typical Nanai settlements." True to his times, he was searching for the more traditional (that is, less Russified) native communities. Paradoxically, he also wanted to stay close to the steamboat stops because of time constraints. As his own travel notes indicate, several of the Nanai villages located along the boat route had



12. Shternberg (seventh from left), student assistant (sixth from right), and a group of Amur River natives, 1910. Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 280/1/133:1.

the reputation of being quite Russified and, as he put it, “not particularly interesting from an ethnographic point of view” (Shternberg’s “Report on the 1910 expedition,” Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/13:453). The expedition members would soon discover, however, that innovations in material culture (like use of store-bought home furnishings) were not necessarily a sign of acculturation. In the village of Sakhachi-Alian, Shternberg came across a shaman who barely spoke Russian and was about to help a woman who had trouble giving birth. But in other native communities the team did observe the effects of Russification, which Shternberg, in his Populist fashion, saw as a decline from an earlier way of life. For this reason he referred to the few Russified Nanais he encountered as “skeptical renegades” who had already left their own people but had not yet become Russian. He also wrote that among these people, “the indigenous honesty of the savage has been lost and replaced by a spirit of commercialism and a thirst for an easy profit” (Shternberg’s “Report on the 1910 expedition,” Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/13:456).

Still, there was plenty of interesting data for his expedition to collect among the Nanai. As in the past, Shternberg managed to quickly establish rapport with the natives, who were eager to sell him various mundane and religious objects.

During the Nanai portion of the expedition, the members gathered a variety of linguistic and ethnographic data, purchased a significant number of artifacts, and took numerous photographs. The most important acquisition from Shternberg's point of view was the fascinating new information on shamanism.

The two Nanai shamans, whom Shternberg (in his own words) had "pes-tered" with questions, told him that they had not volunteered to become shamans but had been chosen by spirits who had fallen in love with them and desired intimate relations. In return for the shamans' love and nourishment, these spirits had become their guardians (Shternberg's "Report on the 1910 expedition," Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/13:460-463). This unexpected "discovery" became the inspiration and a major source of information for Shternberg's subsequent work on what he called "divine election in primitive religion" (see chapters 6 and 7).³⁰

As in the past, Shternberg devoted a good deal of time to questions having to do with kinship and marriage practices. Despite his realization that the latter had been heavily influenced by the Chinese, he insisted that Nanai social organization "has preserved the main features, which I have found among other Tungusic peoples of the Amur region" (Shternberg's "Report on the 1910 expedition," Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/13:460-463). Despite his evolutionism, however, Shternberg did pay attention to intertribal borrowing and diffusion of social practices. Surprisingly, he did not incorporate the new information on Nanai kinship and marriage into the monograph he was working on at the time. In fact, most of his Nanai data would remain unpublished.³¹

The fact that Shternberg's field notes contain as much, if not more, material on Nanai beliefs and rituals as on other aspects of their culture indicates a shift in his interests from "primitive" social organization to religion. This shift is clearly illustrated by the oral presentations and published papers of the 1910s and 1920s (see chapters 6 and 7).

Shternberg was so fascinated with his Nanai findings that he ended up spending more time among them than he had planned. Only in mid-July did his party move into a Nivkh region of the lower Amur. Here the native people, many of whom remembered him from the mid-1890s, gave him an even warmer welcome. The local nonnatives, including members of the Jewish community of Nikolaevsk, were also very hospitable. In addition to visiting several settlements of the Amur Nivkh, Shternberg conducted some ethnographic research

among the local Negidal (another Tungusic-speaking people of the area), once again focusing on their language, social organization, and religion (Shternberg 1933a).

The extra time spent among the various Tungusic groups as well as transportation problems prevented the expedition from reaching Sakhalin before early September.³² Because Shternberg had to be back on the mainland by October 1, he only had three weeks to spend among his old friends, the Sakhalin Nivkh. According to Zarubin, on Sakhalin Shternberg worked with a single Nivkh informant, Pletunka, whom he had known in the 1890s (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/205:3).

Shternberg's return to the "prison island" was a highly emotional one. His letter to Sarra Ratner-Shternberg conveys this well: "And so I am back on Sakhalin. A great sadness has come over me. Memories have filled me. Everything here reminds me of the past" (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/361:72). In addition to spending time with several old comrades who remained stranded on Sakhalin after finishing their exile, the old Narodnik visited the graves of his friends, which were all in disarray. Shternberg's visit was a major event in the life of the island: every local administrator, including the governor, came to greet him. Unlike the Nanai research, this brief visit to the Amur and the Sakhalin Nivkh did not result in any major discoveries. Nevertheless, Shternberg gathered valuable new data on religion, social organization, and other aspects of that culture.

Shternberg characterized his last ethnographic expedition as a success. He was pleased to discover that he still had the stamina and patience for ethnographic research and that there was still plenty of information to be collected on the "Gilyak and their neighbors." He was also happy to have been able to significantly enlarge the MAE's holdings in the artifacts from the Amur River natives and bring back an important collection of phonograph recordings of local native folklore as well as over eight hundred photographs.³³

At the same time, he realized that a lot more could have been accomplished with more time and better funding. In fact, these two factors, plus the need to spend a good deal of time purchasing artifacts, prevented him from adequately carrying out the kind of ethnographic work that he had always encouraged his students and local collectors to pursue. These limitations were present in the

work of many Western, and especially German and French, ethnographers (see Dias 1991; Zimmerman 2001:147–171; Penny 2002).

When comparing Shternberg's 1910 expedition with his field research of the 1890s, one needs to keep in mind that his health had deteriorated significantly in a decade and a half. An inadequate diet, to which he subjected himself to save money during the 1910 trip, caused stomach pains and might have contributed to the development of the ulcer that eventually killed him. This was one of the reasons that he was never able to return to his beloved part of the country for more research, despite his eagerness to do so.

Shternberg appears to have been able to establish good rapport with the native people in spite of the brevity of his ethnographic research. This might explain (at least in part) their willingness to sell him precious ceremonial objects. When two of Shternberg's female students were conducting their own research among the Negidal sixteen years later, they came across a number of people who still fondly remembered "Lep Yakowlis." According to these students, the Negidal had been particularly impressed with Shternberg's respect for them and their customs. They reminisced that he had told them that all people were equal and that a day would come when people would stop exploiting one another. In his true Populist fashion, he also told them to "keep their ancient law." Believing the two young researchers to be Shternberg's daughters, the natives treated them very well and asked them to take a model of a birch bark boat as a special gift for Shternberg. They also asked to have his photograph, because during the Civil War they had lost the one he had given them in 1910 (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/110:79–79a).

A Staunch Populist in a Reactionary Era

Although the 1907–14 period is usually referred to as the "reactionary era" of Russian history, attempts to liberalize and modernize the country's economic and political system were made by the chairman of the Council of Ministers, Piotr Stolypin. But only some of his plans materialized. One of the reasons for their failure was the unwillingness of the KD liberals to cooperate with the regime and refrain from making demands that were too radical for Stolypin and the tsar. To the regime's dismay, the Second Duma, which opened in February 1907, was even more radical than the First because the SRs and the SDs had abandoned their boycott of the elections. The socialist deputies outnumbered

the right-wing ones by two to one. The Kadets lost deputies but still remained the second largest opposition block, equal in size to the rightists. Unable to work with the new Duma, the government dissolved it in June 1907 and passed a new electoral law that favored the propertied classes. The result was a more conservative and ethnically more Russian body that was permitted to function for the normal five-year span. The majority of the deputies belonged to the right-wing parties as well as the Party of the 17th of October (*Oktiabristy*, or *Octobrists*), which represented the right flank of the liberal camp between the rightists and the Kadets and espoused monarchist and nationalist views. However, the obstinacy of many of the Duma members as well as the conservative court's and bureaucrats' opposition to Stolypin stifled the prime minister's efforts to work with the "loyal opposition."

The years 1910–11 were marked by increased Russian nationalism both in the Duma, which passed bills to strengthen the national bonds in the country and bolster the "true Russians," and among a significant segment of the population. While the rightist and the Octobrist Duma deputies sponsored these bills and the leftist ones opposed them, the Kadets wavered, disappointing many of their non-Russian supporters, including the Jews. In September 1911 a young SR assassinated Stolypin. The three years between his death and the beginning of World War I were marked by "contradictory trends, some of which pointed to stabilization, others to breakdown" (Pipes 1990:191). Stolypin had managed to restore order by repressing the revolutionary unrest. The Russian economy was doing quite well. The country appeared to have survived a revolution, and the liberals and the radicals were in a state of gloom. While revolutionary terrorism did not entirely disappear, it never recovered from the revelation in 1908 that the head of the SR Combat Organization was a police agent. In addition, some party members came to see terrorism as repugnant, while others saw its cost to the party in terms of government reprisals as being too high (Melancon 1999:81; see also Morozov 1998 and Hildermeier 2000). By this time the SRs and the other socialist parties had been forced back into the underground. The party's leadership again withdrew to western Europe, while thousands of its rank-and-file members languished in prison and exile. The SRs (like the SDS) began a new program that stressed the involvement of its activists in legal institutions such as labor unions, cooperatives, and educational-cultural societies that alone survived the regime's repression unscathed.

As industrial production increased, so too did labor unrest. Ethnic minorities also became restless, while many members of the Russian intelligentsia were in a state of demoralization. As Pipes (1990:193) argued, “The preoccupation with civic issues and the politicization of Russian life which had set in the middle of the nineteenth century showed signs of waning.” Many former educated radicals and liberals turned to religion, including theosophy and spiritualism. Idealism, metaphysics, and religion replaced positivism and materialism. Modernist (or “decadent”) literature was in great vogue. This mood was most clearly reflected by the articles that appeared in a volume of *Vekhi* (Signposts). Published in 1909, it featured prominent former Marxists and liberals who harshly attacked the Russian intelligentsia, charging it with narrow-mindedness, lack of true culture, bigotry, and excessive preoccupation with political radicalism, and calling for its greater self-cultivation. The intelligentsia grouped around the leftist and liberal parties was shocked by this book and rejected its appeal. Most contemporary observers and historians agree that, in the words of Pipes (1990:193), “notwithstanding social peace, economic progress, and the exuberance of her culture, on the eve of World War I Russia was a troubled and anxious country.”

While Shternberg most likely did not participate in the illegal underground activities of the PSR, he did keep in touch with his old People’s Will comrades, many of whom had become SRs and sympathized with their activities. It is unclear whether his views on the use of revolutionary terror changed or not, but at the very least he saw the execution of the tsar in 1918 as just retribution for the execution and imprisonment of revolutionaries (Shternberg 1925a:96–97).³⁴ At the same time, his cooperation with liberal and moderate socialist journalists and Jewish activists contributed to a certain moderation of his radical views. During this era Shternberg did continue publishing occasional essays and articles in liberal and leftist periodicals. In 1909 he published a harshly critical response to *Vekhi* in a liberal newspaper, *Zaprosy Zhizni* (no. 4). Entitled “Seekers of God among the Intelligentsia,” it accused the notorious volume’s contributors of religious mysticism and a shift toward conservative political views.³⁵ For him, the *Vekhi* intellectuals, especially those who had only recently belonged to the liberal-radical camp, were dangerous traitors to the revolutionary cause.³⁶

Another manifestation of Shternberg's willingness to overcome party sectarianism and reach out to various liberal groups and parties that opposed the tsarist regime was his involvement in the revived Masonry movement. Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth century there were Masonic lodges in Russia. In addition, members of the Russian nobility and liberal intelligentsia also joined foreign chapters of this influential secret movement while living abroad. Most of them were drawn to Masonry's progressive ideology and fascinating secret rites. During most of this period, however, Russian Masons played a relatively minor role in the country's political life. Only during the more liberal era that followed the publication of the October 17, 1905, manifesto did a serious revival of Russian Masonry as a political force occur. The leading lodge in this movement was the so-called Union of the Great Orient of the Peoples of Russia, an affiliate of a well-known French "Great Orient" lodge (Haimson 1965; Nikolaevskii 1990; Serkov 1997, 2001).

Leaders of this new group hoped to use Masonry to create a unified front of all progressive forces that opposed the regime. In the late 1900s and early 1910s prominent members of the liberal and leftist parties, from the Kadets to the Social Democrats, joined the Russian Masons. A number of them, including Krol', were Shternberg's friends and fellow SRS. Although Shternberg never publicized his involvement in the Masonry movement, there is sufficient evidence to prove that at least prior to World War I he did take part in its various meetings, which brought together representatives of the liberal and left-wing intelligentsia to coordinate their parties' antigovernment activities. In addition, he most likely attended a number of gatherings at the apartments of leading liberal industrialists such as Aleksandr Konovalov and Pavel Riabushinskii, who later acted as the leaders of the Progressive Block, the leading faction of the Duma.³⁷

Some sources suggest that Shternberg was no longer active as a Mason after the outbreak of World War I (Serkov 2001:1146). Nonetheless, during the war he continued to attend secret meetings of the leaders of the liberal-left parties and anti-tsarist intelligentsia. For example, in 1915 he was a member of a circle that included prominent political and public figures like Dmitrii Ruzskii, Mikhail Bernatskii, Solomon Pozner, Maksim Gorky, Boris Brutskus, and others, and that eventually evolved into a liberal Russian Radical-Democratic Party (Shelokhaev 1996:515; Serkov 2001:909).

On the whole, however, Shternberg's involvement in the pre-1917 liberation movement was primarily as a progressive journalist and not as a radical conspirator or politician. His most important contribution to the political literature of this era were the two essays contributed to a volume entitled *Forms of the National Liberation Movement in Modern States: Austro-Hungarian Empire, Russia, and Germany* (Kastelianskii 1910). The collection featured liberal and leftist scholars as well as a few political activists from those camps who were united in their sympathy toward national liberation movements and opposition to the tsarist regime's oppression of the non-Russian peoples. In his essays—*Inorodtsy* ("Indigenous minorities") and *Buriaty* ("The Buryats")—Shternberg, the only ethnologist among the contributors, wrote both as a social scientist and a Populist (Shternberg 1910a, 1910b). These two essays are his only scholarly works that discussed contemporary political movements. Given the author's own clearly defined political views, his contributions to the Kastelianskii volume did not constitute "pure scholarship" but were quite partisan, despite the editor's claim that all the contributors to his collection followed his request to pursue "purely scholarly goals" and be "objective" in presenting the material (1910b:XII).

Shternberg began *Inorodtsy* by critically examining the Russian authorities' use of this term. As he clearly demonstrates, it was never employed consistently. While originally applied to the "not-yet-assimilated peoples of Russia's Asian borderlands, by the early twentieth century the term carried the connotation of the non-assimilable peoples of all the borderlands" (cf. Slocum 1998:174). Christian inhabitants of the empire, especially the more "advanced" Europeans like the Georgians, the Armenians, or the Poles, were usually not described as *inorodtsy*, while the various Muslim peoples and the Jews often were. The rise of the national liberation movements at the turn of the century and especially during and after the 1905 Revolution prompted the Russian state to begin defining "alien-ness" on the basis of language, making the Russians, the Ukrainians ("Malorussians"), and the Belorussians the only "non-*inorodtsy*." At the same time, this term continued to be used in the earlier, broader sense (Slocum 1998:183–184). Shternberg objected to the (mis)use of this term not only as a socialist but as an ethnologist and an evolutionist as well. He pointed out that language cannot be used as a criterion for classifying peoples because it alone cannot be used to characterize a people's "level of culture" or "the degree of

development of [their] ethnic consciousness” (1910a:532). In these two essays, as in his works on the Nivkh and other native Siberians, Shternberg’s evolutionism clashed with his sympathy toward the oppressed peoples of the empire and his Populism. While he condemned the Russian state’s discrimination against the non-Russians, he insisted that “European culture” (at least in its most “enlightened” manifestation) was beneficial for them because it led them toward greater social and spiritual progress, just as British rule had for Indians (1910a:532).

The same reasoning led Shternberg to argue that only ethnic groups that are professedly religious, literate, and have their own intelligentsia can develop an ethnic consciousness. Of course, to a large extent, he is correct: the Muslim Tatars or the Buddhist Buryats did develop such a consciousness and took part in the 1905–7 liberation movement, while the nomadic “pagan” Chukchis did not. Shternberg’s emphasis on the key role of the ethnic intelligentsia in developing this consciousness and leading national liberation movements is clearly a reflection of his Populist views. In fact, the major political party that Shternberg identified most closely with in the 1900s and 1910s—the *PSR*—was the one most interested in and sympathetic toward these movements (see Briullova-Shaskol’skaia 1917a, 1917b).

Shternberg’s Populism comes through clearly in his insistence that a true ethnic revival would not take place simply in response to persecution. What is needed most is “the existence of social institutions (e.g., a clan, a tribe, etc.) capable of . . . directing the various separate actions into a single stream or, if all of the traces of such a traditional social organization have already disappeared, the existence of a religious or secular intelligentsia, capable of infecting the masses with its enthusiasm about national liberation” (Shternberg 1910a:547). This revolutionary Narodnik saw the Buryat clan as the equivalent of the Russian peasant commune. While acknowledging the importance of economic and political factors in stimulating a national liberation movement, he saw ideological and social causes as being more important. Like the Jewish Populist that he was, Shternberg also criticized those members of the ethnic intelligentsia who had turned their backs on their people and praised those who had returned to them (Shternberg 1910a:557). Shternberg idealized the non-Russian who retained the “best” elements of his or her own culture but who was also influenced by the more advanced Western ones. The author’s political

sympathies are also evident in his insistence that the most progressive national liberation movements were all allied with the Populist ideology of the PSR. In his “Buryats” article, he contrasted the Buryat Marxist party, which did not favor the preservation of the traditional economy and social organization (and even supported the local assimilationists), with the Buryat Populists, who favored the retention of “socialist” elements of the old socioeconomic order like communal land ownership (Shternberg 1910b:622–623).

Finally, Shternberg’s view of the best solution for solving Russia’s “ethnic questions” is also reflected in his conclusion that the 1900s national liberation movements were not separatist or anti-Russian. He advocated the same position on the subject of Jewish liberation. While he admitted that the national liberation movements in Russia (like other revolutionary ones) had declined since 1907, he still perceived a widespread and strong “enthusiasm” among the oppressed peoples in the empire. It was, in his optimistic if not utopian view, “the kind of enthusiasm that dreams not of separatism but of joining the other peoples, but joining them not at the expense of the national [culture] but through it” (Shternberg 1910a:574).

A Leader of the Progressive Jewish Intelligentsia

In the last decade before the Great War, most of Shternberg’s journalistic work involved writing for Russian-language Jewish publications. Similarly, his active participation in the various legal, political, cultural, and educational activities and institutions of progressive Jews in St. Petersburg occupied much of his time, often competing with museum and scholarly work. What accounts for his greater involvement in Jewish causes during the “reactionary era”? On the one hand, the limited freedoms granted by the tsar in 1905 allowed Jewish political parties and organizations, including those Shternberg identified with, to multiply and operate openly. On the other hand, this relative liberalization of Russia’s political life had not resulted in any significant improvement in the legal status of the country’s Jews, while the government’s persecution of the Jews and its anti-Semitic propaganda only rose during this period, encouraging Shternberg to become much more involved in the Jewish liberation movement.³⁸ His own encounters with anti-Semitism continued. In addition to the Zhuravskii affair, he had to face the annual humiliation of petitioning the police for permission to reside in the nearby Finnish countryside

during the summer.³⁹ Finally, as he grew older and more distant from the traditional Jewish lifestyle of his youth, Shternberg, like a significant number of other members of the big city Jewish intelligentsia, became increasingly sentimental about the world of his ancestors. He powerfully expressed this nostalgic sadness and a realization that “one cannot go home again” in the story *Zabytoe Kladbishche* (“A forgotten cemetery”), published in a Russian-language magazine for Jewish youngsters (Shternberg 1913a). In the 1910s the MAE senior curator wrote several short stories featuring small-town Jews, but this one is the most eloquent and clearly autobiographical.⁴⁰

In his private life Shternberg continued to observe the major Jewish holy days.⁴¹ At the same time, he was apparently only an occasional participant in the service at the city’s ornate Choral Synagogue, which had opened its doors in 1893. As his writing on the subject shows, during the last prerevolutionary decade he developed a humanistic Judaism that he shared with many other members of the St. Petersburg Jewish intelligentsia and that bore some major similarities to German Reform Judaism (see Nathans 2002:143–149). Genrikh Sliozberg, another prominent participant in the Jewish liberation movement, reminisced about his colleague that he doubted whether Shternberg was a religious person but that for him Judaism was “a form of spiritual idealism and a foundation of morality” (1934:127). At the same time, Shternberg’s letters indicate that, like many of the capital’s educated Jews, he did not wish to deprive his child of the Christmas and New Year’s parties and presents and for that reason installed a holiday tree.

Shternberg became acquainted with the capital’s progressive Jewish intelligentsia soon after his arrival in the city. By the end of the 1905 Revolution he had already become known in the Jewish community for his newspaper articles, which harshly attacked the country’s anti-Semitism and the government’s role in encouraging it. In the decade preceding the second revolution Shternberg became even more actively involved in the various endeavors of the Jewish enlightenment and liberation movement. He soon became one of the leaders of the St. Petersburg Jewish liberals.⁴² Here is how Sliozberg remembered him:

I met him in the arena of the Jewish social and political work. . . . Shternberg was not a wordy participant in deliberations and conferences, [and] he was not an eloquent speaker. . . . But he had a great

talent for logically elaborating on an idea, and he always based his actions and positions on the principle of truth and morality. That is why he was irresistible. Since he was free of any habits of a demagogue, he did not lead, but convinced and charmed you with the purity of his logic and his ideas. (Sliozberg 1934:127)

In December 1906 the liberals formed the Jewish People's Group (*Evreiskaia Narodnaia Gruppya*, or ENG) and published an appeal to "The Jewish Citizens" in one of the country's Yiddish-language newspapers (Gassenschmidt 1995:166 n. 15). It accused the Zionists of undermining the Union for the Attainment and stated that their decision to run Jewish politics under their own flag had forced the liberals to establish their own political organization. The main goal of this organization, as they explained, was the achievement of political, national, and cultural rights for Russian Jewry. The appeal was signed by fifteen prominent Jewish liberals, including Maksim Vinaver, Genrikh Sliozberg, Mikhail Kulisher, Mikhail Sheftel', Iosif Gessen, and several others. Shternberg was also a signatory. The fact that the new organization was called a "group" rather than a "party" suggested that its founders saw it as a unifying and coordinating organization that stood above petty party politics. The word "People's" in its title harked back to Populism and Neopopulism (Gassenschmidt 1995:166 n. 15). At the same time, many of ENG's founders were members of or sympathizers with the Constitutional Democratic Party.⁴³

In early 1907 the ENG began publishing a newspaper called *Svoboda i Ravenstvo* (Freedom and Equality) and convened its first organizational congress in St. Petersburg, in which over 120 people participated. Vinaver, a prominent St. Petersburg lawyer and one of the founders and leaders of the Kadets, was elected the party's chairman. In his opening speech he discussed the ENG's national program, which stressed developing a national culture of Russian Jewry and improving the economic conditions of the Jewish masses through self-help organizations. The ENG leaders envisioned modernizing the Jewish community by putting the administration of each Jewish community on a democratic basis and reforming its taxation system (Gassenschmidt 1995:57).

The second congress of the ENG also took place in St. Petersburg. According to Gassenschmidt (1995:56–57), it not only started a new period in Jewish liberal politics but at the same time offered a program that went beyond solely

political demands. The program approved by this congress reflected a combination of older political goals as well as a newly developed mandate known as “autonomism.” The ideology of autonomism was first developed by Simon (Shimon) Dubnov (1860–1941), the leading historian of Russian Jewry and a major figure in Russian Jewish politics during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In articles published by the major Russian Jewish newspaper *Voskhod* (Sunrise) between 1897 and 1902, he brought together German Romanticist, Russian Populist, and moderate Jewish nationalist ideas into a coherent ideology.⁴⁴ Autonomists believed that the Jews could exist as a people or a nation in the diaspora if they established their own autonomous legal, national, and cultural units within various states. The latter included the struggle for civil, political, and national rights, the development of the economic and spiritual forces of Russian Jewry, and the organized struggle against anti-Semitism (see *Pevyi Uchreditel’nyi S’ezd . . . 1907:4*).

Shternberg, one of the ENG’s chief ideologists, delivered a major speech at this congress entitled “The Goals of Russian Jewry” that stands in many ways as a good summary of his views on the Russian Jews and Judaism (Shternberg 1907b). He announced that the liberals’ new slogan was “self-protection”—securing the legal grounds for cultural-national rights, including the right to use one’s language in school. The Jewish community was to be freed from the local Russian administration and reorganized on a democratic basis. Self-protection also meant helping poor Jews. According to Shternberg, because the Jewish Socialists (Bund) represented only the workers’ interests and the Zionists aimed primarily at emigration, the economic revival of Russian Jewry had to be pursued through an interaction between the local population and the Jewish leadership. Shternberg also advocated a spiritual and national rebirth of Russia’s Jews through both a reorganization of national education on the basis of Jewish national-ethical ideals and a complete integration of the Jewish masses into the general culture of Russia.

Shternberg firmly believed that Russia should remain the home for most of its Jewish inhabitants and that their liberation had to be part and parcel of the entire country’s struggle for social justice, freedom, and democracy. As he wrote five years later, “Jewish nationalism can be based on one principle—a harmony between the national [ethnic] and the general human [*obshchecheloveskii*], on a great ideal of a holy nation living among a brotherly union of peoples” (Pozner

1937:181). Given this view, it is not surprising that Shternberg was always critical of Zionism even as he maintained friendly relations with individual Zionists.⁴⁵ He also opposed the idea, advocated by some of the other groups of Jewish liberals, of convening a parliament (*seim*) of Russian Jews.

As a Populist, Shternberg called upon the Jewish intelligentsia to “go to the Jewish masses,” who were in great need of education and enlightenment. This intelligentsia, whose members mostly spoke Russian, had to use Yiddish as its medium of communication and employ the heroic figures and key events of Jewish history as the main sources of a new sense of Jewish national conscience and identity. While Shternberg spoke respectfully about Jewish religion and acknowledged its continuing hold on the Jewish masses, he clearly saw secular Jewish humanism as the future ideology of Russia’s Jews. This ideology, in his view, had to draw heavily on the best ethical and moral “national values” of the Jewish people such as “temperance, sobriety, purity of family life, and the spirit of the book and of idealism.” While welcoming changes that were already bringing about the decline of “old-fashioned and parochial elements” of Judaism and of Jewish life, he warned that the good “national values” were also being endangered. To insure the survival of the Jewish nation, these values had to be preserved (Shternberg 1907b:31). Moreover, as a Populist he criticized the current Jewish community (*obshchina*) as an institution where a wealthy minority exploited the poor masses, and he called for its democratization. In November 1909 the ENG and the Jewish deputies of the Duma convened a special conference of various Jewish parties and groups in Kovno (Gassenschmidt 1995:85–93). The conference elected an advisory committee representing all the major Jewish parties and organizations. Shternberg was one of the three ENG representatives on this committee (Frumkin 1966:54).

By the beginning of the second decade of the century anti-Semitism in Russia was definitely on the rise. Although there were no major pogroms, right-wing politicians (including Duma deputies) and journalists waged a nasty campaign against the Jews. The government was not far behind them, imposing, among other anti-Jewish measures, restrictions on the number of Jews who could participate in the Duma elections. Aleksandr Guchkov, a leader of the dominant Duma party—the centrist Octobrists—never failed to remind the deputies that it was a Jew who had killed Prime Minister Stolypin in 1911. That same year the government closed the Jewish Literary Society. However, the worst manifestation

of this anti-Semitic atmosphere was the Beilis trial, which also took place in 1911, and, like the Dreyfus affair, attracted an entire country's attention and polarized public opinion. All the progressive parties in the Duma, including the Kadets, protested the trial, as did many liberal writers and other members of the Russian intelligentsia. In 1913 Beilis was finally acquitted, but his lawyers were subjected to persecution (Gassenschmidt 1995:111–114).⁴⁶

Shternberg must have been deeply disappointed when the majority of ethnographers attending a meeting of the Ethnography Division of the Russian Geographic Society in December 1911 voted not to issue a scholarly critique of the “blood libel.” As Ol'denburg and several others argued, individual ethnographers were free to express their opinion, but the division itself was better off staying out of politics and sticking to pure scholarship (*Zhivaiia Starina*, 1911, vol. 20, bk. 1:xlvi–xlix).⁴⁷

The last decade preceding the Great War was marked by the same kind of government policies and anti-Semitic attacks from the Right. Only three Jewish deputies were elected to the Fourth (and last) Duma. A major civil liberties bill introduced in 1913 by the KD deputies did not contain any special discussion of the Jewish question. That same year a newly appointed conservative interior minister denied a request by the St. Petersburg Jewish activists to convene a Jewish congress for the purpose of finally establishing an elected national Jewish body (Gassenschmidt 1995:105–109, 114–119).

Nonetheless, issues pertaining to anti-Jewish discrimination were occasionally raised in the Russian parliament. Much of the information on this subject was provided to the deputies by a special advisory committee to the Duma that was officially called the Political Bureau but was better known as the Fridman Bureau, named after Naftalii Fridman, a prominent Jewish Duma deputy. It was composed of prominent Jewish lawyers, journalists, and scholars representing the major nonsocialist Jewish parties, including the Jewish People's Group. Most of the bureau members shared the KD ideology, but some, like Shternberg, who was very active in the group's work, were to the left of the Kadets. The bureau met at least once a week and sometimes even more often (Frumkin 1966:54–56).

Not all was grim in the life of the country's Jewish community. Several Jewish newspapers, including *Novyi Voskhod* (New sunrise), the voice of the Jewish liberals, increased their circulation. Some advances were also made in the

field of primary and secondary Jewish education and the rights of Jewish artisans. Progress was also made in the sphere of Jewish higher education. In the 1910s increased government restrictions on the number of Jews admitted to the institutions of higher learning forced a steadily rising number of young Jewish men and women to study abroad, provoking an angry backlash against them in German and French universities. Moreover, many Jewish families could not afford to send their sons and daughters to study outside the country, and a substantial number of them chose to convert to Christianity in order to be able to study in Russia. To deal with this crisis a Society for the Dissemination of Higher Learning among the Jews was organized in 1911 to support Jewish students financially. In this climate, plans for creating a Jewish university began to circulate. In 1912, to finance such a venture, the Kovno Committee advocated the establishment of a special educational fund in St. Petersburg. The best location for such a university—Russia, Switzerland, or Palestine—became a matter of hot debate among Jewish liberation activists. A special group of Jewish scholars and lawyers was formed to lay plans for the university. It included Dubnov, Vinaver, and Shternberg (Dubnov 1998:332). These activities were interrupted by the war but were revived after the fall of the monarchy. In the late 1900s a more modest venture in the sphere of Jewish higher education called Courses of Oriental Studies was initiated in St. Petersburg. Sponsored by the Ginzburgs, a millionaire Russian Jewish family, the courses were a kind of mini-university and employed several prominent Jewish scholars as instructors (Dubnov 1998:292–293).

Although the ENG (outlawed in mid-1907) never played a major role in Jewish political life, it did engage in various important political, community-building, and educational activities (Gassenschmidt 1995:56–71). In the spring of 1907, for example, it organized a series of lectures on various Jewish issues aimed at familiarizing wide circles of Russia's educated community with the current legal and economic plight of the country's Jews. By the end of 1907 the group established its own publishing house, which produced various books and brochures on a number of Jewish issues. The ENG also helped organize various Jewish self-help organizations such as the Society for the Promotion of Credit and Cooperation. In 1907 it also played an instrumental role in organizing the Society of Scholarly Jewish Publications, which joined forces with the Brockhaus and Efron publishing house to produce a Jewish encyclopedia in Russian

(1908–13). In Moscow members of the ENG played a key role in establishing the Society for the Dissemination of True Knowledge about Jews and Judaism, whose main goal was fighting anti-Semitism. The ENG also played an important role in expanding and democratizing such important Jewish self-help organizations as the Society for the Promotion of Artisan and Agricultural Labor (ORT) and the Society for the Spread of Enlightenment among the Jews of Russia (OPRE). These types of activities, known as “organic work,” were popular among Russia’s intelligentsia during the “reactionary years.” Politically, the ENG was most involved in the elections to the Second and Third Dumas, encouraging their liberal deputies to raise the Jewish question. Shternberg took part in several of these educational and cultural endeavors: in 1911 he was elected to the review committee of OPRE and two years later was invited to the first organizational meeting of the Committee of the Educational Fund, which helped Jews obtain higher education (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/108:30, 78).

Promoting Jewish Ethnology

The most important cultural-educational organizations established by St. Petersburg’s Jewish liberals (including ENG members) in the pre–World War I years were the Jewish Higher Education Courses, the Jewish Literary Society, and especially the Jewish Historical-Ethnographic Society (JHES), the last of which fit Shternberg’s interests most closely. On November 16, 1908, at a festive meeting held in one of the halls of the city’s synagogue, the Jewish Historical-Ethnographic Society was officially established.⁴⁸ Maksim Vinaver, a prominent lawyer and leader of the Kadets, became its chair, with Dubnov and Mikhail Kulisher (1847–1919) serving as vice-chairs. The other members of the executive committee included prominent journalists, publishers, historians, lawyers, a professor of archaeology (Sal’vini Goldshtein), and Shternberg. Several of these men were also members of the ENG.

The word “ethnographic” in the titles of the new society and its predecessor indicates that its members were interested not only in Jewish history but also in past and contemporary Jewish culture and social life. In fact, in his opening remarks, Vinaver reminded the audience that the commission was interested in the sociology of modern-day Jewish life. The two societies’ titles as well as the fact that Kulisher, whose interests included cultural anthropology, became the JHES’s vice-chairman reflected these interests. Kulisher had been educated



13. The Jewish Historical and Ethnographic Society, St. Petersburg.
Photograph in author's possession.

as a lawyer but had also studied physical and cultural anthropology in western Europe, where he became an adherent to classical evolutionism (Tokarev 1966:358–359). His anthropological works dealt mainly with Jewish cultural history (Kulisher 1887). However, only a fraction of presentations delivered at the meetings of the commission and the society had to do with anthropology, even though the JHES's statutes proclaimed that its goals included not only a

study of Jewish history and ethnography but also a “development of theoretical issues of general history and ethnography” (*Ustav Evreiskogo istoriko-Etnograficheskogo Obshchestva* 1909:3). The new society continued its predecessor’s practice of publishing documents on Russian Jewish history and culture, conducted public lectures during its periodic meetings, worked on establishing a central Jewish archive and a museum, and published a journal called *Evreiskaia Starina* (“Jewish Heritage” or “Jewish Antiquity”). Another important goal of the society was encouraging local amateur historians to collect historical and ethnographic (mostly folkloric) information. At the peak of its activity, the society had over six hundred members, more than half of them residing outside the capital. Besides this scholarly agenda the JHES had a political one as well. As Dubnov (1998:298) argued in his remarks delivered at the society’s opening, the proposed activities of the JHES were particularly important in an era of reactionaryism and rampant anti-Semitism. The JHES’s founders clearly saw them as part of a spiritual and intellectual revival of the Jews of Russia.

The word *starina* (heritage) in the title of JHES’s journal is reminiscent of *Zhivaia Starina*, one of Russia’s two national anthropological journals. In fact, Dubnov used this term several times in his remarks: “In the great process of development, there is no boundary between the past and the present—there is only a single chain of a people’s experience, which continues to manifest itself in the various aspects of the life of the current generation, in our . . . culture. The kind of historical consciousness that we are encouraging does not lead our people away from life but . . . leads them from the old Jewishness to the new one. . . . In our old heritage [*starina*] one would always hear the new life [*novizna*] . . . (*Evreiskaia Starina*, 1909, 1:VI; cf. Dubnov 1998:304). Given the fact that Dubnov became the editor of *Evreiskaia Starina*, his ideas about the importance of making Jewish history part of the new Jewish national consciousness influenced the direction of the new society and the nature of articles published in its journal. While Shternberg shared many of these ideas, he must have been disappointed by the scarcity of lectures and publications dealing with ethnographic topics.⁴⁹ Unfortunately, Russian-Jewish ethnology was only beginning to develop. Nonetheless Shternberg did take an active part in JHES work: serving on the executive committee, attending its meetings (where he often commented on presentations), and serving as a member of the editorial board of *Evreiskaia Starina* and occasionally publishing in it. During the pre-1917 era Shternberg’s

only major publication in this journal was a detailed review of three recent publications on the physical anthropology of the Jews: Ignaz Zollschan's *Das Rassenproblem* (1910), Maurice Fishberg's *The Jews: A Study of Race and Environment* (1911), and Boas's *Changes in Bodily Form of Descendants of Immigrants* (1911) (Shternberg 1912a). The review demonstrated Shternberg's strong interest in and grasp of the latest literature in physical anthropology, particularly that dealing with the Jews. It also showed his concern with combating the rising academic anti-Semitism in western and eastern Europe, and particularly the new German theories of Aryan superiority and Jewish inferiority.⁵⁰

Some of Zollschan's arguments appealed to Shternberg. On the one hand he praised Zollschan's use of the latest data from physical anthropology to challenge the notion that racial characteristics were immutable. On the other hand, as a Jewish patriot, Shternberg agreed with Zollschan's idea that certain features of the Jewish "racial type" reappeared all over the world and that they included many very positive characteristics, like a great interest in learning and outstanding performance in various religious and secular studies. The Jews' unique contributions to humanity became a favorite theme of his and he returned to it again and again, finally devoting a major lecture and essay to it at the end of his life (Shternberg 1924a). However, Zollschan's Zionist argument that the Jews of Europe were doomed to extinction because of racial mixing with non-Jews did not appeal to Shternberg at all. He rejected this idea, believing that a nation (ethnic group) could not be completely identified with a single race. As he put it, "The Jews are not just a race but a nation as well. It is a nation that possesses a rich supply of great historical memories and spiritual as well as moral values. Thus it is not going to commit suicide. Even if it wanted to do so, it would not be able to" (Shternberg 1912a:314). As a strong believer in a bright future for the Jews in a free and democratic Russia, he rejected Zollschan's idea that only by immigrating to Palestine could the Jews save themselves as a people.

If he took Zollschan to task for identifying race with ethnicity, Shternberg disagreed with Fishberg because the latter denied that the Jews possessed any distinct biological characteristics. Shternberg attributed this position to Fishberg's assimilationist ideology, which had prompted him to argue that by mixing with non-Jews the Jews would eventually disappear as a race and as a distinct people and that this would be a very good thing, since it would put an end to

anti-Semitism. For Shternberg, both Zollschan and Fishberg, despite their differences and their scholarly contributions, were preachers of “pessimistic fatalism, detrimental to the psychology of national rebirth that has only just begun to plant its roots among the Jewish intelligentsia” (Shternberg 1912a:317).

The third book Shternberg reviewed—Boas’s *Changes in Bodily Form of Descendants of Immigrants*—received a much more positive evaluation. Referring to his friend Boas as one of the most highly respected contemporary physical anthropologists not only in America but in the entire world, Shternberg accepted his findings about the influence of living conditions in America on the physical structure of the immigrants’ descendants, including the cephalic index. He also expressed his approval of Boas’s methods, including his cautious approach. He concluded the review with his usual criticism of the state of anthropology in Russia, lamenting the fact that a very large Jewish population of Russia had not been adequately studied and calling upon Jewish scholars as well as local intelligentsia to undertake such studies (Shternberg 1912a:329).

Given Shternberg’s determination to encourage anthropological research among Russia’s Jews, it is not surprising that he became a strong supporter of and the major advisor to the first comprehensive Jewish ethnographic expedition, led by Solomon (Semion) Rappaport (pseudonym An-sky) (1863–1920). Whether it was regarding Russian politics or the destiny of Russian Jews, An-sky shared many of Shternberg’s views and convictions.⁵¹ He too had been an active Populist in the 1880s, serving as the personal secretary of the great Narodnik ideologue Piotr Lavrov, and had become an SR in the early 1900s, advocating a national-cultural autonomy for Russia’s Jews under the leadership of a progressive Jewish intelligentsia. Like Shternberg, he believed that the cultural heritage of Russia’s Jews, particularly the folk culture of the masses (the inhabitants of the shtetl), had not been adequately studied and that the knowledge and appreciation of this heritage was a major prerequisite for a political and spiritual renaissance of the Russian Jews. Unlike the MAE curator, however, An-sky was interested less in a comprehensive anthropological study of the Jews than in Volkskunde-style ethnographic and folkloric data gathering as a form of raising Jewish consciousness. An-sky’s interest in folklore developed in the 1880s, when he lived among working-class Russians as part of the Populist “going to the people.” He published his collection of Russian miner songs in the early 1890s.

In 1908 An-sky arrived in St. Petersburg, where he joined the Jewish Literary Society, the Society for the Study of Jewish Folk Music, and the JHES. As early as 1910 he had outlined a study of Jewish ethnography that he envisioned as a folklore-based, comprehensive description of various aspects of Jewish social and cultural life, including songs, stories, and folk art. As a Populist, he also planned to gather information on Jewish traditions pertaining to the struggle for freedom and justice (see An-sky 1910). To gather the data needed for such a study, he began preparing for a major ethnographic expedition, obtaining funding for it in 1911 from Baron Goratsii (Horace) Ginzburg, Russia's leading Jewish millionaire and philanthropist. Lacking training in anthropology or related disciplines and wishing to raise the status of his venture, An-sky called for a special meeting of Jewish scholars in St. Petersburg in late March 1912 (Lukin 1995).⁵² Not surprisingly An-sky emphasized folklore as the main focus of his expedition. Several scholars disagreed with him, expressing a view typical of assimilated urban Jewish intellectuals who valued high culture and looked down on folklore. Iokhel'son, who had not abandoned his evolutionist position, rejected An-sky's preferred idea that folklore had great educational significance. In his words, "Our youth should be guided toward the path of progress, while folklore is a survival of the past, an element of [cultural] stagnation" (Lukin 1995:132). Shternberg, who presented two formal talks during this debate, argued for a comprehensive and multifaceted scholarly expedition that would collect ethnographic data (including information on kinship), objects of material culture, and even physical anthropology data. Having just composed his review of the latest works on the physical anthropology of the Jews, Shternberg argued that such data would be very valuable for clarifying the question of the "Jewish race." An-sky had to accept these suggestions, even though his own preference for folklore and folk beliefs remained unchanged. At the same time, he lacked the funds and the manpower to undertake the kind of expedition that Shternberg and others advocated. At the conclusion of the St. Petersburg meeting, a special commission was appointed to work on the expedition's program. Besides An-sky, it consisted of three ethnologists (Shternberg, Iokhel'son, and Kulisher) and one historian (Dubnov).

An-sky and several younger participants in the officially named Baron Goratsii Ginzburg Expedition departed for the Ukraine in the summer of 1912. In 1913 the expedition established a formal affiliation with the JHES.⁵³ Its work, which

continued until 1914, when it was interrupted by the war, resulted in a very large collection of ethnographic texts, recorded songs, and objects representing Jewish daily and religious life (Beukers and Waale 1992). An-sky carried with him a detailed questionnaire that he had developed with the assistance of several Jewish students in the Oriental Courses and under the guidance of Shternberg. Published in 1914, it listed Shternberg as its editor (Shternberg 1914b). The MAE curator was clearly the expedition's main mentor and advisor. He and An-sky exchanged letters, and when two of An-sky's fellow field ethnographers were arrested in 1914 as suspected spies, Shternberg's intervention secured their release (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/246).⁵⁴ While most of the ethnographic data collected by the An-sky expedition remained unpublished, the artifacts it collected were placed in a new Jewish museum in St. Petersburg organized by the JHES. Located in a building on Vasil'evskii Island, it finally opened in the spring of 1917 (see chapter 7).

For a New Humanistic Judaism and Jewish National Consciousness

In the last decade before the tragic events of 1917, and especially between 1910 and 1914, Shternberg used the pages of Russian-language Jewish periodicals to articulate his views on a number of issues: the future of Russia's Jews; the newly reformed and humanistic Judaism that he believed would eventually replace the old-fashioned Orthodox kind; the tasks facing the Jewish intelligentsia; the relationship between the Jewish liberation movement and the larger, Russian liberal and revolutionary movements; life of European and American Jews (as witnessed by the author himself); and a host of other related issues. He was particularly involved in *Novyi Voskhod*, the leading Russian-Jewish weekly newspaper and the successor to *Voskhod*, which had been published between 1899 and 1906. Like its predecessor, it was an organ of the liberal Jewish intelligentsia. Its politics were closest to those of the Kadets, although Shternberg and a few other contributors were socialists. Despite their ideological differences, the entire staff of the newspaper was committed to unifying all of Russia's Jews, regardless of their party affiliation or socioeconomic standing. While not a radical periodical, *Novyi Voskhod* did run into periodic troubles with the censors and was even shut down for a few months in the spring of 1910.⁵⁵ Shternberg's passionate condemnation of the tsarist government's

anti-Semitism (including the notorious Beilis trial) and other attacks on the authorities occasionally brought about heavy fines and confiscation of entire issues. It also earned him the admiration of his readers, from St. Petersburg to the most distant towns of the empire. On several occasions he received letters from his readers asking him to publicize acts of anti-Jewish discrimination.⁵⁶

Shternberg contributed one or even two articles to almost every issue, including a series of popular “Letters to the Readers” and “Conversations with the Readers.” For several years he was not only a major writer for the paper but an editor for it as well. When the first issue of *Novyi Voskhod* appeared in January 1910, the “liberation movement” was in decline, and the paper’s staff saw its main task as the defense of Russia’s Jews from persecution and discrimination as well as the development of a new ideology that would combine the best of the centuries-old Jewish heritage with progressive new ideas (see *Novyi Voskhod*, 1910, no. 1:1–2).

Like the paper’s chief editor, Maksim (Nachman) Syrkin, and many of its major contributors, Shternberg believed that the traditional closed, corporate Jewish communities were in a state of crisis and had to reorganize and revitalize themselves on the basis of new ideas and institutions. He also shared the Russian-speaking Jewish intelligentsia’s view that the Jewish masses were poorly educated, ignorant about the world outside their own community, and politically unorganized. At the same time he repeatedly berated those educated Jews who had turned their backs on their own people and the moral-ethical values of Judaism. He argued that the era of struggle between the “backward traditions of the Jewish masses” and the values of the “Europeanized Jewish intelligentsia” was now over. In his view, “the [Jewish] masses had accepted the notion of the importance of education and were stretching their tired arms toward the [Jewish] intelligentsia” (*Novyi Voskhod*, 1910, no. 2:4). Like the Russian Populists of the 1880s, the Jewish intelligentsia had to “go to the people” and close the gap separating it from their less fortunate brethren (*Novyi Voskhod*, 1910, no. 2:4).

Arguing that the “religious foundation of Jewish culture was in the state of collapse,” Shternberg called upon the Jewish intelligentsia to make sure that the best traditions of that culture would survive and serve as the basis for a new, modern Jewish national consciousness and identity (*Novyi Voskhod*, 1911, no. 3:8). Continuing to develop the ideas he first expressed in his prison diaries and later articulated in his speeches delivered to the Jewish People’s Group

and published in *Svoboda i Ravenstvo*, Shternberg extolled the high moral values of Judaism and more specifically the ethical Judaism of the Prophets. As in the past, he argued that “the ethical ideals of the Jews have been the universal ideals of humankind” and compared their teaching to that of European socialists like Ferdinand Lassalle and Karl Marx, both of whom happened to be Jewish (*Novyi Voskhod*, 1912, no. 3:9). He also praised Judaism for its firm commitment to monotheism, which this evolutionist anthropologist saw as the highest form of religion. In his words, one should not forget that

those ethical ideals, which today constitute the essential soul of the civilized [i.e., Western] society have been brought into the universal human treasure house by the Jews. We ought to remember that in 600 BCE, Jewish prophets, those ethical thinkers who have not been surpassed by anyone, had for the first time revealed to the world clearly and definitely the ideas of humanity, love, equality, brotherhood, peace, and God’s kingdom on earth. These were the eternal ideals that have eventually become the common heritage of the modern world, partly through Christianity but even more so through the revolutionary doctrines of the old liberalism and the modern socialism. In fact, in the two-and-a-half-thousand years that have passed since these ideas were proclaimed by the prophets of Judea, humankind has not added an iota and is not likely to ever need to add anything in this area, except for putting these ideals into practice. (*Novyi Voskhod*, 1910, no. 6:5; underlining in the original)

Shternberg also argued that the best ideals of Christianity were derived from Judaism, even as Christianity’s otherworldly orientation was foreign to it. In the opinion of this Jewish Populist, Jewish ideals, in contrast to Christianity, “never remove themselves from this earth, from the people, from humanity, and their ultimate goal is the establishment of social justice linked with a spiritual rebirth of the individual” (*Novyi Voskhod*, 1910, no. 9:6).

Despite his view that in the early twentieth century “the role of the religious factor in the national life of the large European peoples, who have their own state, was weakening,” Shternberg was not ready to dismiss Judaism. He argued that it was too early to speak of a total elimination of religious influence,

and that as long as Judaism continued to exist, various Jewish religious and communal institutions would continue to function as well, serving as “national cement.” As he put it, “those habits of social interaction and cooperation, which have developed in the context of the Jewish religious cult, will remain a major component of the national capital of the Jewish people” (*Novyi Voskhod*, 1911, nos. 14–15:11–12).

At the same time, Shternberg argued that in the future Judaism would no longer be a “cult-oriented” religion but would serve as “an eternal symbol of the [Jewish people’s] entire heroic journey, a symbol of its unbroken link with all of the previous generations, with its entire past, unique in both its beauty and its tragedy.” He also described Judaism as a “sacred banner miraculously salvaged by the Jews in thousands of bloody battles”; it was a banner one did not abandon or put in the archives (*Novyi Voskhod*, 1911, nos. 14–15:11–12).

In the series “Conversations with the Readers,” Shternberg examined the various phenomena that other Jewish intellectuals had viewed as the key symbols of Jewish identity, including language and territory. In his view, language could not play such a role because in the diaspora Jews spoke a variety of languages. Even Yiddish, still the primary language of the majority of eastern European Jews, was in his view destined to be replaced eventually by the languages of the countries inhabited by the Jews. As an anti-Zionist, he refused to see Hebrew as a new national symbol for the Jews and expressed strong doubts about the possibility of massive immigration to Palestine. The key symbols of a new identity, he argued repeatedly, were Judaism and the common history of the Jewish people, from ancient times to the present. He also spoke of a distinctly Jewish “national character” or “national psychology,” a topic he elaborated on in the 1920s in a more scholarly article (1924a; see chapter 7).

For Shternberg, Judaism represented not only an entirely new religion but a new and unique form of nationalism. It was not the narrow “zoological” nationalism of most of the other peoples of the past and the present, but an ethical, moral, and universal nationalism (*Novyi Voskhod*, 1910, no. 11:4). Always a partisan thinker, Shternberg characterized Zionism, Territorialism, and other Jewish ideologies that he and the ENG opposed as forms of this “zoological” and narrow nationalism. In his words, “a nationalism based exclusively on the schemes of external organization (parties, political ideologies, material

factors, etc.) is doomed to disappointment and degeneration” (*Novyi Voskhod*, 1910, no. 11:6).

Shternberg’s vision of a new ethical and humanistic Jewish ideology also assigned an important role to the major holy days and their ritual observances. He was particularly fond of those that commemorated key events in Jewish history, such as Passover (the exodus from Egypt) and Hanukkah (the Maccabees’ victory over the Syrians). In his view, it was essential to continue to observe them not because of the centrality of ritual in Jewish life but because they were powerful symbols of Jewish history, common identity, and national pride. He also enjoyed reminiscing nostalgically about the way his family celebrated Passover at his home years ago. Asserting that the world of his childhood could not be re-created by the urban intelligentsia of today, he called upon the Jewish intelligentsia “to create around our seders the same aura of noble poetry that our parents created by means of ritual symbolism” (*Novyi Voskhod*, 1912, nos. 12–13:4). Deeply concerned about instilling patriotism in the Jewish youngsters, he urged educated parents to use this and other holy days to inspire the hearts and minds of the new generation. What this Populist particularly liked about the Passover story, retold every year at the festive meal, was its central theme of liberation from slavery. In his words, “In our [Passover] Haggadah of the intelligentsia, one would be able to find hundreds of Egypts of all times and places, hundreds of martyrs and heroes of the spirit who will inspire us” (*Novyi Voskhod*, 1912, nos. 12–13: 4).

Occasionally Shternberg alluded to and drew upon his professional interest in religion, but he always insisted on the uniqueness of Judaism and its special meaning for him. Returning to the theme of Passover in an article published four years later, he wrote:

I am over half a century old. It would seem that my long journey through life would have taught me to maintain a composed attitude to the affairs of the past or the present, and especially, toward the legends of the ancient times. After all, for many years now I have been slicing endless legends of all times and all peoples with a sharp analytical knife. Yet of all the legends of the world, there is only one, which year after year, from my early childhood on, continues to move me with an ever-increasing power, stimulating new

emotions every year. It is the legend of the Exodus from Egypt, the Passover legend. (*Evreiskaia Nedelia*, 1916, nos. 14–15:1)

He also admitted that when it came to his own cultural heritage, he tended to be more skeptical about applying comparative and evolutionist models to the study of belief and ritual. He referred to Judaism as a “totally unique phenomenon” in human history; instead of simply searching for the roots of various Jewish festivals in ancient Near Eastern religions, he focused on their important role or function in the lives of the persecuted people.⁵⁷ This contradiction between Shternberg’s evolutionist views, on the one hand, and his Jewish patriotism and Populism, on the other, which I have already discussed, continued to appear in his lectures and scholarly works (see chapter 7).

Little did Shternberg know that in the summer of 1914 his *Novyi Voskhod* articles would have to be devoted to a very different subject: the war with Germany and Austria and its disastrous effect on the Jewish population of Russia.

6. The Years of Turmoil, 1914–17

In early August 1914 Russia entered the war against the Central Powers. Although some of the more radicalized segments of Russia's population and the political parties of the extreme left, particularly the Bolsheviks, opposed the war, a majority of Russians supported it. Patriotic feelings swept across the intelligentsia and the Kadets, the main liberal party representing it. Even many of the SRS, including those on the right and to a lesser extent the center of the party, refused to take an antiwar stand. While they rejected the aggressive designs of the warring governments, they argued that the defense of the motherland was imperative and were willing to halt their antigovernment activities for the duration of the war.¹ Many of these socialists viewed Germany and Austro-Hungary as the more conservative European regimes that had to be destroyed by Russia and its more liberal allies. The Kadets and the SRS also hoped that once Russia won the war, it would begin to liberalize its own political system (see Melancon 1990).

Like most other non-Russian inhabitants of the empire, the Jews (especially the city dwellers) initially expressed their strong support for their country's war effort. Large patriotic demonstrations by Jews took place in the first weeks of the war, and the Jewish press expressed its patriotism passionately. Here is an example of these sentiments from an editorial in *Novyi Voskhod* (1914, no. 29:3–4), published in the same issue as the tsar's manifesto on Germany's declaration of war against Russia:

In this great historical moment, which is unprecedented in history, all the Russian Jews will rise to defend their motherland. Every

one of us will carry his duty—to the very end—with firmness and courage. . . .

We were born and raised in Russia, [and] here lie the remains of our ancestors. We, the Russian Jews, are linked to Russia by unbreakable ties, while our brothers who have been carried overseas by a wicked destiny carefully preserve the memory of Russia.

His Majesty's manifesto about the declaration of war says, "In this dangerous hour of trial, may the internal strife be forgotten." This strife is the last thing the Jews of Russia are thinking about in this fatal moment. In this common rush to defend the motherland, they stand shoulder to shoulder with the rest of Russia's population, and their courageous conduct will demonstrate that right now is not the time for internal disagreements and serious insults inflicted upon us. . . .

The entire world has been drawn into this military conflict. A tight circle of friends is being formed to oppose the Germans and, first and foremost, Prussia, the main culprit responsible for this terrible disaster. This unprecedented coalition, a coalition headed by France and England, the constant bearers of culture and civilization, is becoming a war of the entire progressive humankind against the burden of militarism, which has been hanging over the whole world. The sacrifices, which will have to be made, are the guarantee of the future life of freedom, an opportunity to live in peace, and great accomplishments in science, art, and social development.

The Jewish people have always stood in the forefront of those who fight for the improvement of humanity's life. We have always been the most dedicated fighters for the great ideals of truth and justice. In this historical moment, when our motherland is threatened with a foreign invasion, when a brute force has begun an attack on the greatest ideals of humankind, the Russian Jewry must bravely appear on the battlefield and fulfill its sacred duty. (1914, no. 29:3-4)

These patriotic sentiments and hopes for a better future for all of Russia's inhabitants, including the Jews, overwhelmed Lev Shternberg as well. Like many

other members of the St. Petersburg intelligentsia, he learned about the war while vacationing at a Finnish resort. Along with other summer vacationers, he rushed back to the capital. At the railroad station in Abo (Turku) he met his old friend and colleague Dubnov. The latter reminisced how the two of them watched the passing trains overloaded with Russian soldiers traveling to the front lines. The soldiers yelled “farewell” to them, and Shternberg responded by shouting “good luck!” Everyone understood that the events of late July and early August were the beginning of a new era in Russian and world history. Shternberg told Dubnov as they traveled back to St. Petersburg, “The time of colossal events has come—one must keep a diary” (1998:334).

Shternberg’s contribution to *Novyi Voskhod* published in the first few weeks of the war was full of patriotic fervor and hope that “the mission of liberating the peoples, proclaimed as a slogan of the current war, is also a slogan calling for the establishment of equality among the peoples of Russia” (1914, no. 36:4). At the same time, like other leaders of the Russian Jewish community, he quickly became very concerned about the fate of the Jewish refugees who streamed into the country’s interior regions, driven by fear of the invaders and by the encouragement and eventually the punitive measures of the tsarist military authorities. The forced expulsion of thousands of Jewish inhabitants from the Pale of Settlement was prompted by the Russian generals’ view that the Jews were German sympathizers and even spies. Old anti-Semitic stereotypes, combined with the fact that Yiddish resembled German, fed these false accusations. The Jews also became convenient scapegoats for Russian military failures. From early on in the military campaign, the Russian army began deporting Jews without giving them adequate time to pack. By the spring of 1915 this deportation reached massive proportions, with estimates of the number of refugees ranging from half a million to a million. After the Russian troops had occupied Austrian Galicia, soldiers carried out pogroms, confiscating property, raping the women, and beating the men (Lohr 2001, 2003; Fuller 2006).

The Jewish leadership responded quickly to this crisis: a few weeks after the war started, a meeting was held in St. Petersburg (renamed Petrograd) at which the idea was raised of establishing a Jewish relief organization based in the capital. In September 1914 the Jewish Committee for the Relief of Victims of War (*Evreiskii Komitet Pomoshchi Zhertvam Voiny*, or ЕКОРО) was formed. Its leaders were wealthy Jewish businessmen known for their previous philanthropic

activities and members of the urban intelligentsia who had been active in liberal Jewish politics in the prewar years. In late November 1914 Shternberg received a letter from the chairman of EKOPO informing him of his election to the organization's Organizational Committee (Shternberg Collection, SPFARAN, 282/1/176:732).² With its impressive budget, to which Russian and foreign Jews contributed, EKOPO was able to help thousands of Jewish refugees at a time when the government did very little in that area (Zipperstein 1988; Frumkin 1966:57–82).

Besides his work for the EKOPO, Shternberg continued taking part in the activities of the Political Bureau that had been advising the Duma's Jewish deputies on issues affecting their Jewish constituents. He participated in an important meeting of Russian-Jewish leaders in St. Petersburg in November 1914, where they decided to continue to align themselves with the KD Party. Thanks to their activities and the work of the Duma's Jewish deputies, Russian liberals issued a number of strongly worded resolutions demanding that the government begin abolishing the various restrictions on Jewish citizens.

One of the major demands of the progressive Jewish leaders was the elimination of the Pale of Settlement, which was already occurring de facto as large numbers of Jewish refugees were settling outside the pale. In many of his editorials from 1914–15 Shternberg passionately articulated this demand. In August 1915 the government, which was becoming increasingly critical of the army's anti-Jewish policies, abolished the Pale of Settlement. It also pressured the army to curtail its massive deportations of the Jews and hostage taking. As a result these activities began to diminish, though they never fully disappeared (Lohr 2003:137–145).

The Jewish press also experienced a serious attack from the authorities. While it was the victim of the same harsh wartime censorship as the other liberal and leftist publications, it was also subjected to a particularly vicious harassment. Many Russian-language Jewish periodicals appeared with blanks spots—the fruit of the censors' labors. The liberal *Novyi Voskhod* was one of the most frequently persecuted Jewish newspapers until it was finally closed down on April 25, 1915. Taking advantage of the less rigid censorship that existed in Moscow, however, the newspaper was revived in late May 1915 under the name *Evreiskaia Nedelia* (The Jewish weekly). Another major attack on the country's Jewish press was the prohibition of any periodical that used the Hebrew alphabet—both

the Hebrew and the Yiddish languages. These “temporary rules” established by the military authorities, which were never legally authorized, deprived the majority of the country’s Jewish readers of access to the news. To make matters worse, in early 1916 the use of the Hebrew alphabet in private correspondence was also prohibited (El’iashevich 1999:481-521).

Shternberg’s articles in *Novyi Voskhod* in 1914-15 addressed a few major issues: the need to abolish the discrimination against Russia’s Jews, the rising anti-Semitic propaganda of the Polish nationalists, and the urgent task of helping the refugees and other Jewish victims of war. Lev Iakovlevich not only wrote about the Jewish refugees but visited them as well. In June 1915, when the government ordered the deportation of the entire Jewish population of the Kovno (Kaunas) Province of Lithuania, he was part of a delegation of Jewish activists on a fact-finding mission (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/4/9:256).³ Shternberg’s report on his visit, filled with heartbreaking details, was published in a series of articles in *Evreiskaia Nedelia* (1915, nos. 12-26).

Between 1915 and early 1917 Shternberg contributed editorials and major articles to *Evreiskaia Nedelia*. During this period he focused on a new issue: the Progressive Block, which dominated the Duma, and its feeble efforts to eliminate discrimination against the Jews. This faction was formed in the spring of 1915, when the majority of the Duma deputies as well as Russian society as a whole became extremely angry with the government for its repressive measures, incompetent ministers, and poorly conducted military operations. The “Progressives” included the Kadets, the Octobrists, and the left wing of the Nationalists. In order to build a broad base in the Duma and not antagonize the government too much, they designed a program that was intentionally moderate. Instead of continuing to make the old liberal demand that the Cabinet of Ministers would be responsible to the Duma, for example, the Block only asked that the government enjoy “the confidence of the nation.” Progressives were equally cautious in their demands for the abolition of ethnic and religious discrimination in the country. Not wanting to antagonize their Nationalist members nor the many anti-Semitic Octobrists, the Progressive Block pursued equality for the Jews rather halfheartedly. As a result a large segment of the Jewish population became disillusioned not only with the Block itself but also with the KD Party, which the Jewish voters tended to favor in Duma elections. The Progressives’ cautious stand vis-à-vis the government, especially on

national liberation issues, earned them Shternberg's wrath.⁴ Despite its moderate opposition to the regime, the Progressive Block failed to reach a compromise with Nicholas II and his ministers. In the winter of 1916–17, the country was sliding rapidly toward revolution.

Shternberg and the MAE during the Great War

World War I had serious consequences for the museum. Plans from 1914 to expand it into the adjacent building of the former *Kunstkamera* had to be put on hold until 1925.⁵ The beginning of the war also coincided with a gradual decline in Radlov's energy and health. To ease the director's burden of running the museum and democratize the administrative activities, in 1915 Shternberg organized systematic meetings of the institution's entire staff (Ratner-Shternberg 1928:55).

Despite the various difficulties experienced by the museum during the war years, it continued sending ethnographic expeditions to various parts of the country, most of them cosponsored by the Russian Committee for the Study of Central and Eastern Asia, on which Shternberg continued to serve.⁶ Among the most important and successful was the one by Shirokogorov, who, having secured adequate funding from the Academy of Sciences and the Russian Committee for the Study Central and Eastern Asia, embarked on an ambitious two-year expedition. The couple returned to the Transbaikal and Amur regions and also expanded their research to the Tungusic peoples of northern Manchuria, China, and Mongolia. Shirokogorov collected museum specimens as well as ethnographic, linguistic, archaeological, and skeletal materials. Some of his most valuable data was on Tungusic shamanism, a subject that became a major area of his research for the rest of his life (Shirokogorov 1935; Revunenkov and Reshetov 2003). A sensitive field ethnographer and a good speaker of several dialects of the Tungus (Evenk) language, Shirokogorov (with the help of his wife, Elizaveta Shirokogorova) gained the trust of the Tungus and the Manchus and was thus able to probe deeply into what he called their "psychomental complex." Correspondence between the young anthropologist and his mentor reveals how seriously Shternberg took the task of advising the MAE's collectors and ethnographers (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2:319; MAE Collection, SPFA RAN, 141/1/69:477–80, 142/1/72:18–23).⁷ He wrote to Shirokogorov in early 1917,

First and foremost you should try to increase the information, which is necessary for a monograph on the Tungus or at least their Orochen [Negidal] subdivision, to enable you to develop an accurate and complete idea of the distribution of the Tungusic peoples of Northern Manchuria and the Amur region. Furthermore you should collect the data on all the aspects of life, culture, etc., of the most typical representatives of these peoples. As far as their languages are concerned, in addition to the vocabulary, texts, and grammatical notes, you need to collect data on the various dialects. More specifically, please pay attention to something that is rarely paid attention to, i.e., the people's living speech: write down absolutely everything that you hear and in addition make the natives tell you about this or that event and economic activities (description of the building of the house, fishing, making of tools, . . . etc.). Among the Manchurians please pay particular attention to the influence of the Chinese phonetics and intonation . . .

I also insist on your studying the role of the individual within the social milieu. Describe in detail all outstanding persons, their role in creating new forms, ideas, improvements, [and] poetry as well as the manifestations of his independence in relation to his tribe's traditions and customs. Please provide descriptions of individual shamans, singers, storytellers (especially those who improvise), traders, outstanding hunters, judges, elders, and any outstanding persons.⁸ (MAE Collection, SPFA RAN, 142/1/69:178; underlining in the original)

The Shirokogorovs were among several MAE collectors who had to conduct their research under the very difficult circumstances of the postrevolutionary chaos and discovered that the country's new authorities were often as bad as the old ones. While traveling through Siberia on an eastbound train, the young couple was arrested as spies. For ten days they were kept under guard and subjected to rough treatment while their documents were checked and rechecked. Ironically, an SR who had himself been a victim of the old regime interrogated them. The entire incident prompted Shirokogorov to write to his mentor, "What a shame! They should not have subjected people to such humiliation, especially

at a time when the guarantees of the inviolability of the individual are being proclaimed. . . . What was the point of the struggle waged by several generations—the political freedom . . . etc. were trampled upon in an even cruder manner than before” (Reshetov 2001:18–19; cf. Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/19:21–22a).

Upon his return to the capital, Shirokogorov was hired by the MAE as a junior ethnographer. However, his heart was now more in ethnographic research than curatorial work. Given the impressive results of his two previous expeditions, the museum decided to send him back into the field. On October 24, the eve of the Bolshevik coup, the Shirokogorovs departed from Petrograd, never to return. The new expedition, one of the MAE’s most ambitious domestic ones to date, was supposed to cover a huge area, including Manchuria and large sections of the Russian Far East. The Shirokogorovs did accomplish a great deal, but local unrest, which followed the Bolshevik coup and lasted throughout the entire Civil War, interfered with the expedition. During the coup the Russian ethnographers were in Beijing, and only in the summer of 1918 they were finally able to return to Russia. They never returned to Petrograd but settled in Vladivostok, where Shirokogorov soon became an organizer of and a major scholar and instructor at the Far Eastern University (Kuznetsov 2001:35–39; see chapter 8).

Once the war began, it became increasingly difficult to expand the museum’s collection representing the peoples residing outside the Russian Empire. Most of the correspondence between the MAE’s staff and its foreign colleagues stopped. Several collections purchased by the museum before July 1914 remained in foreign museums (like those of Copenhagen and Stockholm) until the end of the war. Nonetheless, the MAE’s two major foreign expeditions to South America and South Asia continued during the war years.

Another major accomplishment of the MAE staff was its continuing to publish *Sbornik MAE* despite the rising cost of paper and other war-related problems. Under Shternberg’s able leadership, the MAE’s periodical published a number of important essays and, starting with volume 3 (published in 1916), significantly expanded its size and coverage. This new version of *Sbornik MAE* contained two of Shternberg’s pieces—an essay about a recently deceased MAE collector and prominent Siberian archaeologist, Ivan Savenkov (Shternberg 1916b), and

a long essay entitled “The Twin Cult of Classical Antiquity in the Light of Ethnography” (Shternberg 1916a).

Shternberg and the Ethnography Division of the Russian Geographical Society

As in the past, many of Shternberg’s published papers were based on presentations he gave at scholarly meetings, particularly those of the Ethnography Division of the RGO. Over the years his participation in this major gathering of St. Petersburg ethnologists increased. Similar to his presentation on the eagle cult, the one on the twin cult was an exercise in comparative mythology and involved the use of ethnographic data from “primitive” religions to shed light on the origins of the beliefs and mythological plots of the ancient Asian and Indo-European cultures. As always, Shternberg raised the question of the “genesis” of the cult, which he viewed as being “almost universal.” First, he rejected Max Müller and the philological school’s interpretation of this phenomenon as a symbol or an anthropomorphic image of a pair of deities whose cult was based not on the nature of their birth but only on their roles among the celestial bodies and other natural phenomena. He introduced various data from primitive religions to show that all twins were considered deities and that their birth was a direct cause of the origin of their cult (Shternberg 1936:82). He also drew attention to the frequency with which twins had a zoomorphic origin and qualities. He then alluded to a number of ethnographic cases to illustrate his other major argument surrounding a notion common in primitive religion: twins must have two fathers, a human as well as an animal or a supernatural one. This belief as well as a widespread primitive custom of polyandry produced the twin cult. Eventually Shternberg turned to his own Nivkh data.⁹ For him, Nivkh religion and mythology, which was typically primitive and prehistoric, provided a clear picture of the “psychology of this cult, as a natural and integral part of a general . . . animistic worldview” (1936:91). In his interpretation, the Nivkh believed that a powerful animal or a spirit would often fall in love with a human female and have sexual intercourse with her, which would result in the birth of twins endowed with superhuman power. In this manner Shternberg arrived at the major conclusion that “the main motive of divine election is a sexual one, the love of a spirit toward a human being” (1936:94).

In the last decade of Shternberg’s life, this phenomenon of “divine election”

became of major interest to him. It had been stimulated not only by his research in comparative religion and mythology and his 1890s Nivkh data but by a “discovery” he made among the Nanai during his 1910 expedition. On the basis of interviews with two shamans, Shternberg concluded that a shaman’s guardian spirit in Nanai culture was usually the lover who had chosen him. From the Nanai he moved to other indigenous Siberian cultures, searching for and finding(!) confirmation of his hypothesis about the origin of divine election, first proposed in his presentation on the twin cult. In November 1911 he gave a talk at the meeting of the Ethnography Division of the RGO entitled “The Idea of Divine Election in Gold Shamanism.” Not surprisingly, prominent Siberian ethnographers like Vsevolod Ionov and Iokhel’son, leery of sweeping evolutionist schema, questioned both his particular examples from the cultures they themselves had been studying as well as his grand generalizations. In his response, Shternberg demonstrated that such criticism could not make him change his mind or even modify his argument but only make him admit that “besides the sexual one, other motives for divine election could exist” (*Zhivaia Starina*, 1916, 4:4–6). Unperturbed by this criticism, Shternberg continued researching divine election among peoples living far beyond Siberia and in 1924 delivered a major paper on the subject at the meeting of the International Congress of Americanists in The Hague (see chapter 7).

During the war years Shternberg continued his work on a major project initiated by the RGO in the early 1910s: the Committee for the Preparation of the Ethnographic Maps of Russia. The MAE senior curator continued to serve as the head of its Siberian–Central Asian subcommittee. Despite the fact that several members of the subcommittee had to suspend their activities because of their work in various war-related medical institutions, it continued preparing ethnographic data for the map. The ethnographer and demographer Serafim Patkanov did a good deal of important for the subcommission, while several other ethnographers (including Arsen’ev and Shirokogorov) supplied it with data (*Zhivaia Starina*, 1916, 1:vi–ix).

Another large-scale project involving many of the country’s ethnographers was initiated on the very eve of the February Revolution when the Academy of Sciences established a special Commission for the Study of the Ethnic Composition of Russia (KIPS) aimed at studying all the ethnic groups and “tribes” of Russia. Like the Commission for the Study of the Natural Forces of Production

of Russia, established earlier, KIPS had to both contribute to the war effort and help the state deal with the consequence of the war once it was over (*Izvestiia KIPS*, 1917:3).¹⁰ Presided over by seven academicians, the new commission was charged with undertaking a comprehensive study of the physical characteristics, languages, and socioeconomic life of the country's ethnic groups. KIPS had not yet started its research when the tsarist regime was overthrown. Because of the turmoil throughout 1917, KIPS could not really undertake any actual investigations. However, it made a number of important decisions that became the basis of the work carried out in later years. Among them was the creation of a special subcommission, composed mainly of ethnographers including Shternberg, to develop guidelines for the preparation of ethnographic maps and sketches of individual ethnic groups (*Izvestiia KIPS*, 1917:11).

These ambitious projects, which involved most of the country's leading ethnographers, were an indication of Russian anthropology's true coming of age. Paradoxically, it was during the difficult years of World War I that its leaders finally came forward with major proposals for centralizing, accelerating, and improving the quality of ethnographic research in Russia. For the first time in Russian history they also gained strong support of the government, concerned with mobilizing the entire country's resources for the war effort (cf. Hirsch 2005:45–51). Despite their differences, which prevented them from reaching a consensus at their 1909 gathering in Moscow, on the eve of the February Revolution they had concluded that the time had come for a true national congress of Russia's ethnographers and for radically improving the state of instruction in all the subfields of anthropology in the country's institutions of higher learning.

To facilitate the latter project, at its March 4, 1916, meeting, the Ethnography Division of the RGO established a special commission whose task was to prepare position papers concerning "the establishment of the departments [*kafedras*] of ethnography [ethnology], physical anthropology, and history of culture. The commission consisted of five leading St. Petersburg anthropologists: Shternberg, Iokhel'son, Nikolai Mogilianskii (1871–1933), Fedor Volkov (Khvedir Vovk) (1847–1918), and Veniamin Semenov-Tian'-Shan'skii (1870–1942). Mogilianskii and Volkov were the leading ethnographers of the Ethnography Department of the Russian Museum, while Semenov-Tian'-Shan'skii was a prominent geographer and demographer."¹¹

By October 1916 three position papers—Shternberg's, Mogilianskii's, and Volkov's—had been prepared and presented to the Ethnography Division of the RGO (*Zhivaia Starina*, 1916, 4:2; ARGO, 109/1/15:1–13). The thrust of Shternberg's statement was the idea that physical anthropologists could no longer teach ethnography (or cultural anthropology), as they had in a few Russian universities. While he linked physical anthropology and archaeology as natural science disciplines, he contrasted them with cultural anthropology as a humanities discipline that had strong ties to such fields as history, linguistics, and psychology. For that reason he advocated placing the newly proposed "departments of ethnography" within history rather than geography or other natural science departments. He also argued that cultural anthropology should no longer limit its scope to the study of the culture of the "savage and semi-savage" peoples but must also focus on the survivals of the various "primitive beliefs and practices" in the culture of the "civilized" peoples of the West and the Orient (*Zhivaia Starina*, 1916, 4:2). In contrast to Shternberg, Volkov insisted on the need to teach all the subdisciplines of anthropology in a single department assigned to the natural science, rather than the humanities, faculty (*Zhivaia Starina*, 1916, 4:9). Mogilianskii, who had studied physical anthropology and archaeology in Paris, like Volkov, before becoming an ethnographer and a curator of ethnographic collections, seconded his view. This disagreement between Shternberg and the two Russian Museum anthropologists demonstrated how divided St. Petersburg's anthropological community continued to be even over problems that everyone agreed were urgent.¹²

Despite his disappointment with the current state of anthropological education in Russia, Shternberg was able to do more teaching during the war years than ever before. During this period a great deal of discussion about the need for reform and some actual liberalization of Russian higher education took place. Among the important innovations was the opening of formerly male-only institutions to women and the broadening of the curriculum of the technical institutes by introducing more practical and applied disciplines (*Kupai-gorodskaia* 1984).

While Shternberg continued his informal instruction of university and Higher Women's Courses students in front of the museum cases, he finally had an opportunity to offer a full-fledged anthropology course at an institution of higher learning when the Geographic Courses of Higher Education commenced in the

spring of 1915 and Shternberg was asked to serve as its council's vice-chairman (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/156:36; Ratner-Shternberg 1935:138–139; Lukashevich 1919:43). However, it took over a year for the new institution to begin offering instruction. The Higher Geography Courses were organized as a four-year program of higher learning. The curriculum included ethnology, the subject taught by Shternberg in 1916. In addition, he conducted a seminar for students interested in cultural anthropology that was his first official ethnography course taught outside the MAE. Still, the course was rather short, and the status of cultural anthropology at the Geographic Courses was, as he later wrote, that of a “subsidiary discipline subordinate to geography,” with the students not being obligated to study (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/2:10). Given Shternberg's view that cultural anthropology belonged in the humanities, this situation was obviously not to his liking. Nonetheless, he had big plans for the program. According to his abortive proposal for the academic year 1916–17—he was scheduled to teach in 1917 but could not after the fall of the tsarist regime in February—in their first year students interested in anthropology were supposed to take an introduction to “paleoethnology” (pre-historic archaeology), while in the second year they would take cultural and physical anthropology as well as linguistics. The third and fourth years were to be devoted to more specialized courses in cultural anthropology and archaeology as well a special course on ethnographic methods.¹³

In early 1916 the Geographic Courses received their own small building, which marked the beginning of their independent existence. On January 17, 1916, at the ceremony marking the official opening of the school, Shternberg spoke on “The Significance of Geography and the Role of the Geographic Courses in a Comprehensive Study of Russia and Its Borderlands.” Unfortunately the new institution suffered from a lack of funds and had only two lecture halls, forcing some the instructors to give their courses elsewhere.¹⁴ It enrolled about one hundred students, two-thirds of them male. They must have been great enthusiasts, since they received no diplomas upon graduation. It was also a labor of love for the instructors, who were given no salary (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/135:25–49). Students came from different backgrounds and age groups. Some were physicians, engineers, and other professionals who had already received an education in separate disciplines prior to enrolling in this institution. It was more of an adult education program than a true institution

of higher learning (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/110:87). In 1917 the political and economic crisis in the country almost brought the Geographic Courses to a standstill.

While they lasted, Shternberg's courses proved to be very popular, as did those offered by several other instructors he was able to attract.¹⁵ His task was particularly difficult because he was the only professor of ethnography and had to carry the burden of organizing the new "ethnographic school" alone (Ratner-Shternberg 1935:138). In addition, despite his efforts, ethnography remained a secondary subject that was not included in the core curriculum. Some of Shternberg's fellow instructors did not see its importance in their students' education. While some of these colleagues thought the courses were doomed, Shternberg was more hopeful. It was a very important project for him, even though anthropological instruction within the context of geography was not what he had hoped for. Despite the modest nature of this project, it became the foundation for the department of anthropology established at the new Geography Institute, which opened its doors in late 1918 (see chapters 7 and 8).¹⁶

As I have shown, most of Shternberg's research during the war years concentrated on "primitive religion." However, he was able to devote some of his time to other scholarly work. In 1916, upon the request of the Academy of Sciences, he prepared a detailed and thoughtful review of Iokhel'son's manuscript on his archaeological excavation in the Aleutian Islands. On the basis of this review, Iokhel'son received a prize from the Academy of Sciences, while the reviewer himself was awarded a gold medal (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/105:4; ARGO, 110/1/271).¹⁷ Finally, he continued his active participation in the meetings of the Jewish Historical and Ethnographic Society and the creation of its ethnographic museum, established in 1915 with Solomon An-sky as its director.¹⁸ The first exhibition at the new institution was opened in the spring of 1917, but the chaos in the city forced An-sky to close it soon and pack up the collections. The earth-shattering events of that spring became a major watershed in Shternberg's life and career.

The February Revolution and the Provisional Government

The disastrous war had a direct and decisive impact on the February Revolution. Among other things it seriously weakened the soldiers' morale, rapidly eroded tsarist authority, created a radical break between the autocracy and the

Duma liberals, contributed to food shortages (especially in the capital), and revitalized the workers' strike movement.¹⁹ The final straw was the government's decision to introduce a food rationing system in Petrograd. The shortage of bread that followed caused major demonstrations and strikes by women workers, which began on February 23 (March 8, new style). They were followed by a general strike in the capital two days later. When most of the soldiers stationed in the city refused to fire on the demonstrators, the uprising in Petrograd triumphed.

While chaos reigned in the streets, two centers of power were created: the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies and the Provisional Committee of the State Duma (Duma Committee). The former was established on the initiative of the leaders of the Workers' Group, who saw the Soviet as simply a coordinating center for the strike movement. Several Social Democratic intellectuals formed the leadership of the Soviet by establishing a self-appointed Executive Committee. Perceiving the Duma Committee as a bourgeois government, they feared anarchy and civil war. To prevent them, the Soviet leaders appealed to the radical masses to support the Duma liberals, who so far had stood on the sidelines.

The workers and other revolutionary activists, who were largely to the left of the Soviet leaders, chose to support the Soviet rather than the Duma Committee. However, after the elections of delegates to the Soviet had taken place at various factories throughout the city, moderate socialists (particularly the SRs and the Mensheviks) gained the upper hand over the radical ones. At the same time, the soldiers stationed in Petrograd, infuriated by the Duma leaders' attempt to confine them to their barracks, proclaimed their allegiance to the Soviet, thus pushing it into the center of power. Despite their critical view of the Kadets and the Octobrists dominating the Duma Committee, the socialist leaders of the Soviet, following the Marxist idea that the bourgeois revolution had to precede the socialist one, believed that there had to be a bourgeois government before a truly socialist-proletarian government could be established. To speed up the creation of such a government, they began negotiating with the Duma Committee. The Soviet's willingness to do so was also encouraged by the presence of one its own members on the Duma Committee—an SR and a popular leader of the major socialist faction in the Duma, Aleksandr Kerensky (1881–1970).

The events of late February took most of the Duma liberals and moderates by surprise. Their initial reaction to the revolution was hesitant. However, pushed by the insurgent workers and especially soldiers, they formed the Duma Committee as the sole legitimate authority in the absence of any government. The committee arrested former tsarist ministers and took over the government apparatus. To gain legitimacy in the eyes of the insurgents, it sought and received the acceptance of the Soviet. Still, the insurgents remained skeptical of the bourgeois committee and refused to obey its orders, such as to surrender their weapons. With the radical masses remaining unsupportive of the Duma Committee, the Soviet leadership, fearing the loss of their own approval among the radicals, offered only qualified support to the Provisional Government formed by the committee. This made the existence of the government quite precarious. Nonetheless, when the Duma Committee finally forced Nicholas II to abdicate on March 2 (March 15, new style) and formed the Provisional Government, the February Revolution appeared to be triumphant and almost complete. The last remaining step was the election of the All-Russian Constituent Assembly, which would serve as the country's new parliament and decide on the form and composition of the new (and no longer "provisional") government.

Despite the energetic anti-tsarist propaganda by the SRS during the war, the February Revolution, and especially its swiftness, caught them (and other socialist parties) by surprise. With the collapse of the monarchy, the SRS embarked on their new legal life. Throughout the country they joined other socialist parties in setting up a network of soviets and various committees and militias to replace the administrative organs of the old regime. The party's organization experienced rapid growth. As Melancon (1990:283) pointed out, "More than any other political organization, the SRS were the chief initial beneficiaries of the February revolution." Thousands of soldiers, industrial workers, peasants, and members of the intelligentsia joined the party. Many of the so-called March SRS had only a vague idea about the party's ideology. To encourage growth, the party leadership became more tolerant of major differences of opinion in its midst. As a result, Russia's largest political party quickly began to suffer from factionalism, splitting into the right, the center, and the left. With many representatives of the "Defensist" intelligentsia rushing to join the party, its positions on the major political issues of the day became more moderate: "revolutionary defensism" on the question of the war, support (with

some reservations) for the Provisional Government, and a willingness to delay action both on reforms for workers and peasants and on the Constituent Assembly elections (Melancon 1990:284).

As a veteran Populist and Jewish activist of the liberal persuasion, Shternberg was ecstatic about the overthrow of the tsarist regime. He immediately plunged into politics, continuing his active participation in the Jewish People's Group (ENG) and joining (or renewing his membership in) the PSR.²⁰ As he did before the revolution, Lev Iakovlevich used the one weapon that he was a master of—his pen. He wrote for *Evreiskaia Nedelia*, which continued to be the main Russian-language Jewish weekly, not affiliated with either the Zionists or the Jewish Social-Democrats (the Bund). Shternberg's prominence in this newspaper was demonstrated by the fact that he was the author of the front-page editorial in its first postrevolution issue. Written with partisan passion, the piece, entitled "On the Eve of a New Era," summed up his view of the revolution (*Evreiskaia Nedelia*, 1917, nos. 10–11:5–9). Shternberg argued that the February coup would not have been possible without the active involvement of the army, which supported the workers' movement. He also insisted that neither the soldiers nor the workers could have overthrown the old regime and established a new one if not for the existence of a "center, around which the popular forces could rally and which would have the recognition and respect of the both the country and the military leadership" (*Evreiskaia Nedelia*, 1917, nos. 10–11:6). This center, in his view, was the Duma, which, despite its flaws, was immediately recognized by the soldiers and the workers who had taken part in the coup. That is why these groups quickly acknowledged the Provisional Committee of the Duma and the coalition government it soon created as their supreme executive body. At the same time, Shternberg (expressing a view shared at the time by the majority of the SRS) gave credit to the Soviet of the Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies for the "firmness" of its political stand, thanks to which the Provisional Government became more aggressive in its dismantling of the old administrative-political system, issuing revolutionary decrees, initiating democratic reforms, and supporting the convening of a Constituent Assembly elected without any voting restrictions.

Having stated his political sympathies, the author went on to outline his view on the proper way for the country's Jews to respond to the "unforgettable" events of the last few weeks. As he put it, "Together with all of Russia, we,

the Jews, can finally breathe freely and happily” (*Evreiskaia Nedelia*, 1917, nos. 10–11:7). He hailed the new government’s quick abolition of all forms of ethnic and religious discrimination and establishment of complete civil equality.²¹ The persistent demand of the leadership of the Jewish community had finally been met. He appealed to fellow Jews to celebrate the beginning of a new era in the history of Russia and humankind and predicted that the country’s break with autocracy would be echoed throughout Europe and even lead to the overthrow of the conservative German regime. As a result, “a united democratic Europe would choose the path of brotherly cooperation and inviolable peace” (*Evreiskaia Nedelia*, 1917, nos. 10–11:7). Given his view of Germany, it is not surprising that Shternberg expressed strong support for the continuation of Russia’s war against the Central Powers. In his words, “We cannot allow the Germans to approach Petrograd and dictate their conditions for peace to us” (*Evreiskaia Nedelia*, 1917, nos. 10–11:7). He argued that all the country’s Jews, especially the industrialists and the big merchants, had to do as much as they could to support the war effort. On the issue of the continuation of the war, he remained loyal to his defensist views of the previous years, which were shared after the February Revolution by the more right-wing SRs, some of the Mensheviks, and by the parties to the right of them (Melancon 1990).

In this important article, Shternberg also appealed to the Jewish intelligentsia (which he criticized for remaining largely aloof from the Jewish masses) to do its best to explain to these masses the significance of the revolution and the need to support the new government’s democratic reforms. As in the days of his youth, Shternberg called upon his peers to “go to the people.” While emphasizing the need for the country’s Jews to obtain a cultural-ethnic autonomy, he warned them about the dangers of extreme nationalism and separatism, reminding his readers that they were also citizens of Russia who should not “for a minute forget about the all-Russian tasks and fight against any possible manifestations of tactlessness and narrow egotistic demands by some individuals” (Melancon 1990:8). The closing statement of the editorial spoke for itself: “Long live the free Russia and the liberated Jewish people!”

The next issue of the *Evreiskaia Nedelia*, published ten days later, again carried Shternberg’s editorials on its front page. Devoted to the upcoming Passover holiday, the first editorial pointed out that freedom, a major message of this holy day, had a special meaning this spring. In his words, “Using the words

of the Haggadah, we can now truly say: only yesterday we were still slaves, today we are the children of Freedom” (*Everiskaia Nedelia*, 1917, nos. 12–13:5–6). The second, entitled “The Tasks of the Present Moment,” focused on an old demand of the Jewish liberals: the need to reorganize local Jewish communities through democratic institutions. In Shternberg’s view, only after that task was accomplished could another demand of the Jewish liberation movement—the convening of an all-Russian Jewish congress—be made a reality.²² The editorial also contained Shternberg’s characterization of three major factions within this movement: the nationalists who encouraged the Jews to establish their own separate political parties (the Zionists and Dubnov’s Volkspartei); the Jewish socialists (SDs and SRS) who wished to form a Jewish faction within their parties; and finally Shternberg’s own ENG as well as the Jewish Democratic Group (JDG), which was close to the ENG but subscribed to a more leftist ideology.²³ While suggesting that the third faction’s approach was the best one, he called for all the factions and parties to set aside their differences and work together for a common cause. In the post-February 1917 era, Shternberg continued to adhere to his earlier position; despite his PSR affiliation, he insisted on the need for unifying all the progressive Jewish forces—the position advocated by the staff of his newspaper.

In his spring 1917 editorial, Shternberg also expressed the Populist idea that there was a fundamental difference between the Western and the Russian-Jewish liberation movements. While the former achieved Jewish emancipation at the cost of almost totally rejecting Jewish “national individuality” and turning the Jews into a religious minority, the latter always subscribed to the idea of national self-determination. The Russian ideology, which for Shternberg was clearly superior, was to be the guiding one for the Jews of liberated Russia. He encouraged them not to follow the example of their Western brethren, preoccupied with material wealth and social status and ashamed of their Jewishness (*Everiskaia Nedelia*, 1917, nos. 14–15:19–20).

In the spring of 1917 Shternberg not only wrote about Passover but also took part in a delegation of Jewish public figures that traveled to the front line in order to bring holiday greetings and gifts to Jewish and non-Jewish soldiers from the Jewish women of the capital. On April 8 he left for the Western front along with Naftali Fridman, one of the Jewish members of the Duma, and three other persons directly involved in the logistics of this charitable undertaking.

His participation in this venture clearly indicated Shternberg's high stature in the progressive Russian-Jewish community. During this trip he and Fridman were asked on many occasions to speak at the rallies of soldiers and officers. Shternberg described the People's Will and its heir, the PSR, and their heroic struggle against tsarism as well as the need to support the Provisional Government and, most importantly, defend the country and the revolutionary gains from the Germans and the Austrians.²⁴ In a series of reports about his visit, he praised the Jewish and the non-Jewish soldiers for their warm reception and emphatically stated that there was no anti-Semitism at the front. His tendency to see only the good side of the picture was reflected also in his description of the tremendous respect the Duma still enjoyed among the soldiers and of the desire of many of them (and especially the officers) to continue fighting the enemy. Still, he had to admit that pacifist sentiments did exist among many of the soldiers (*Everiskaia Nedelia*, 1917, no. 16:9-12; no. 17:9-12; no. 18:9-12; nos. 19-20:25-29).

The first major political crisis in the new Russia, in late April 1917, plunged Shternberg into the cauldron of internal debates and sharp disagreements within the PSR and Russian society as a whole. The immediate cause of the crisis was a conflict over the direction of Russia's foreign policy that pitted the Petrograd Soviet against the Provisional Government and especially its foreign minister—Pavel Miliukov, a leading Kadet. On April 20 the newspapers carried his diplomatic note to Russia's allies, reaffirming his government's commitment to continuing the war to a "decisive victory." Under pressure from the Petrograd Soviet, whose leaders took a revolutionary defensist position consisting of a bipartite insistence on peace "without annexations and indemnities" and support for maintaining the army's defensive capabilities, the Provisional Government moderated its position on the war. However, the radicalized workers and soldiers, encouraged by the Bolsheviks and other activists of the far left, were not satisfied with this compromise. With their rising resentment of the "bourgeois" government, they went into the streets calling for the removal of Miliukov. Some of the most radical demonstrators demanded that the entire Provisional Government resign and the power to govern be transferred to the Soviets. Frightened by these demonstrations, the Kadets encouraged their own supporters to confront the "anarchists" in the streets and defend Miliukov. This confrontation between the two groups turned violent. While the violence

soon subsided, the April events demonstrated how weak the Provisional Government was. When it called upon the troops stationed in the capital to defend the new regime, the Petrograd Soviet issued a proclamation forbidding this order. The crisis also accelerated the rift within the Provisional Government between those ministers who advocated using force to make the government the sole executive body and the more liberal ones (like Kerensky) who now advocated achieving compromise with the Soviet by forming a coalition cabinet, which would co-opt the Soviet's moderate socialist leaders.

The resignation of the two “bourgeois” ministers from the cabinet and the addition of six socialist ones (including Chernov, the chief ideologue of the PSR) in early May failed to bring about a united front of liberals and moderate leftists. In fact, by entering the cabinet, the latter automatically came to share the blame for everything that went wrong. According to Pipes (1990: 406), this “allowed the Bolsheviks, who refused to join the government, to pose as the sole alternative to the status quo and the custodians of the Russian Revolution.”

Shternberg summarized his response to the April crisis in a front-page editorial in *Evereiskaia Nedelia* entitled “Exaggerated Fears” and published on April 23 (1917, no. 16:1–3). He attacked the Bolsheviks for their anti-Provisional Government agitation, initiated in the first days of the new regime, and dismissed the fears of the “Leninists” as being highly exaggerated. He called this movement a “temporary and accidental relapse” that had been firmly opposed by the majority of the population and even the socialist leadership of the Soviet. Chastising the Bolsheviks for their antiwar propaganda and other ultraradical slogans, he called for strong support of the Provisional Government as well as a moderate socialist political agenda.

Shternberg's program was the one that the right wing of his party had advocated since the revolution. The ideological split between them and the centrists as well as the leftist SR factions crystallized at the Second Petrograd Party Conference in early April, which Shternberg must have attended. Strongly disagreeing with the resolutions passed by the majority of its participants, a group of right-wing SRs left the conference and on April 22 (May 5 new style) published “The Letter of the 36” addressed to the editorial board of the party's main and centrist newspaper *Delo Naroda* (People's cause) (Shelokhaev 2000, vol. 3, pt. 1:82–83). They objected primarily to the conference participants' highly qualified support for the Provisional Government's continuation of the war and

refusal to allow its members to join that government (a position that was reversed later in that month). The letter also strongly opposed a separate peace with Germany and advocated continuing the war until a general peace (without “annexations and indemnities”) could be reached. It expressed strong support for the Provisional Government, arguing that it represented the interests of the entire nation and not those of a particular class, and criticized the party’s center for giving it only lukewarm backing. Finally, it rejected any coalitions with the leftist socialists while encouraging an alliance with the moderate ones. In addition to well-known moderate SR leaders such as Andrei Argunov and Pitirim Sorokin, the letter was signed by a surprisingly large number of old Populists, several of them ethnographers. They included Shternberg, his old colleagues from the MAE, Iokhel’son and Pekarskii, as well as other Siberian ethnographers—Nikolai Vitashevskii (1857–1918), Vsevolod Ionov (1851–1922), and Ivan Mainov (1861–?). In the same issue of *Delo Naroda*, the paper’s editors sharply criticized the positions Shternberg advocated (Shelokhaev 2000a, vol. 3, pt. 1:84–85).²⁵

Shternberg’s participation in the right-wing faction of the PSR makes sense in light of his defensist stand during the war and his strong ties with the Jewish leaders of the Kadets. By 1917 his political views had moderated. While he remained a committed socialist, he was now advocating a gradual transition from capitalism to socialism that would prevent anarchy and civil war. He firmly supported the Provisional Government and opposed the disintegration of the multiethnic state. These views were quite close to those of the (Labor) People’s Socialist Party (*Trudovaia Narodno-Sotsialisticheskaia (NS) Partiiia*). Established in 1906 by the Legal Narodniks of the *Russkoe Bogatstvo* journal, the NS party always remained a small but rather influential party of the moderate socialist intelligentsia, which stood between the Kadets and the Right SRs. Shternberg’s old comrade and fellow ethnographer Bogoraz was one of this party’s founders (Shelokhaev 1996:619–626; Sypchenko 1999, 2003).

The issue of the war continued to preoccupy Shternberg. Only a week after his upbeat assessment of the April crisis, he published a more somber editorial in *Evereiskaia Nedelia* (1917, no. 17:1–3), arguing that defending the country against German imperialism was essential and that any attempt to discourage the soldiers at the front from doing so was a betrayal of the country and the revolution. In addition he called for all those who treasured the accomplishments

of the revolution to rally around the Provisional Government. His appeal was directed particularly at those socialists who advocated an immediate replacement of the present government with a socialist one and a rapid transition to a socialist socioeconomic system. In his view, such demands were very dangerous and would undermine the cause of defending the nation against its external enemies. In the next issue he made an even stronger argument in favor of establishing a single powerful, legitimate authority in the country, asking the moderate socialist leaders of the Soviet to join the Provisional Government and the leftist socialists to stop their verbal attacks on it. Not surprisingly, Shternberg was enthusiastic about the establishment of the first coalition government (*Evreiskaia Nedelia* 1917, nos. 19–20:1–3).

In early May the disgruntled right wing of the PSR, which was a relative small but vocal group of mainly Petrograd intellectuals, established their own newspaper under the name *Volia Naroda* (People's will). The editorial board and the contributors to the new SR publication included most of the signatories of "The Letter of the 36" as well as several other old friends and comrades of Shternberg, such as his protégé Nadezhda Briullova-Shaskol'skaia, one of the party's major specialists on the issue of nationalities, and Solomon An-sky.

Although Shternberg's contributions to *Volia Naroda* were much less frequent than his articles in the *Evreiskaia Nedelia*, his active participation in the right-wing faction of the SR Party made him an important participant in that periodical.²⁶ His first article for it, published on May 27, criticized the radical sailors of Kronstadt, a major naval base on the Baltic Sea located close to Petrograd, for refusing to recognize the Provisional Government's authority. Warning about the rising anarchy, he also chastised the government for being afraid of the rebellious sailors (*Volia Naroda*, 1917, no. 24:1).

The summer of 1917 witnessed the strengthening of the Bolshevik influence on the soldiers and workers as well as the gradual weakening of the PSR. Factionalism continued to plague the latter. As Melancon (1997:285) noted, while the right wing's position had limited support among the party's rank and file, its "numerically dominant center found itself trapped in the crossfire of the left-right war." At the third PSR congress (late May–early June), several *Volia Naroda* activists criticized the leftists and the centrists. The centrists, in turn, accused them of becoming "an independent political movement" (Shelokhaev 2000, vol. 3, pt. 2:116–117). In the meantime the Bolsheviks benefited from the fact

that neither the SRs nor the Mensheviks would push their socialist slogans to their logical conclusion, thus confusing their constituency. Lenin's party cleverly used such bold revolutionary slogans as "Down with the War!" and "All Power to the Soviets!" that were beginning to gain ground among the masses. In the meantime, most of the moderate socialists lacked the courage to stand up to them (Pipes 1990:407).

Gradually the Bolsheviks strengthened their influence on trade unions and soldiers' committees. Their antiwar propaganda at the front contributed to the failure of a mid-June military offensive through which the Provisional Government was hoping to fulfill its obligations to the Allies and strengthen the morale in the army and in the rear. That same month the Bolsheviks were busy encouraging the capital's soldiers and workers to demonstrate against the Provisional Government and even the Petrograd Soviet, whose leadership they accused of selling out to the bourgeoisie. The so-called June crisis did not bring about an overthrow of the government, but it was another step toward the Bolshevik coup.

While the SR leadership, represented in both the government and the Soviet, remained timid in its condemnation of Lenin and his party, *Volia Naroda* took a strong anti-Bolshevik stand. Shternberg was among the voices attacking the "Leninists" and warning against the "counterrevolution from the left."²⁷ Besides condemning the radical elements for their "anarchist," antigovernment position, he was worried about the rising anti-Semitism, which was being stirred by the political crises of the summer in the camps of both the Far Left and the Far Right (see Beizer 1999:41-49). His articles in both *Evreiskaia Nedelia* and *Volia Naroda* attacked the right for portraying the Bolsheviks as a party dominated by the Jews and harshly criticized the radical Left for tolerating if not encouraging the view of "uneducated and politically naïve masses" that both the Provisional Government and the Petrograd Soviet were dominated by the Jews. He also chastised those Bolshevik and other socialist leaders who denied their Jewish identity.

Strong support for the Provisional Government was something Shternberg shared with a majority of the Jewish population of the country.²⁸ Russian Jews were inspired by the government's decree, issued less than a month after its establishment, outlawing all forms of religious and ethnic discrimination in the country. Moreover, this abolition of discrimination, combined with the new

democratic freedoms, stimulated a significant increase in Jewish political activities. All Jewish parties, including the leftist and Zionist organizations whose activities had been either illegal or heavily restricted under the old regime, increased their membership and their efforts to influence Jewish as well as national politics. Between February and October 1917 Jewish cultural and educational life also flourished.

The fact that Shternberg became an active member of the PSR but continued his involvement with the ENG (closely allied with the KDs) indicates that when it came to Jewish issues he was more tolerant of the differences of opinion and placed ethnic interests above party politics.²⁹ Unlike the SDs (both Bolshevik and Menshevik), who advocated a strongly centralized state, moreover, both the Kadets and the SRS had always been supporters of ethnic political and cultural autonomy.³⁰ The SRS paid special attention to the “national question” and supported a federated republic as well as national self-determination and cultural autonomy for its peoples (see Briullova-Shaskol’skaia 1917a, 1917b, 1917c; Shelokhaev 2000, vol. 3, pt. 1:603–604; pt. 2:222–225).³¹

The next major test of strength between the government and the Bolsheviks came during the violent demonstrations in Petrograd during the so-called July Days. Sparked by the ultraradical sailors of Kronshtadt, the Petrograd mob began to act on the Bolshevik appeal for the overthrow of the Provisional Government. After some vacillation, the Bolsheviks drew back and the government was able to restore order and outlaw Lenin’s party. Kerensky became the prime minister and began to act increasingly as a dictator.

The next two months witnessed a resurgence of the Right. The conservatives, rallying around the appeal for discipline and the war effort, looked to Kerensky’s chief of staff, General Lavr Kornilov, as a man who could finally restore order and prevent the Far Left from taking over. In late August, on the pretext of supporting the government against the Soviet, Kornilov marched his troops to Petrograd. Kerensky, interpreting this act as a monarchist conspiracy to overthrow him, turned to the forces of the Left, even going so far as relaxing his ban on the Bolsheviks. The attempted counterrevolutionary coup collapsed, but it moved the country (and especially the capital) to the left amid rising fears of counterrevolution.

Following the Kornilov affair, popular support for the Provisional Government declined rapidly as the country further polarized into Right and Left.

While the German army advanced east, occupying by the fall of 1917 all of Poland, Lithuania, and Latvia as well as parts of Byelorussia and Ukraine, the Russian army continued to disintegrate. Taking advantage of the workers' antigovernment mood, the Bolsheviks significantly increased their influence on the soldiers and workers. By mid-September they managed to win control over the key Moscow and Petrograd soviets, with Leon Trotsky elected chairman of the latter. In the meantime, the indecisive Provisional Government continued to lose popular support. The polarization within the PSR increased as well. The left-wing faction, whose popularity was growing, increasingly acted as a separate party allied with the Bolsheviks. The center, led by Viktor Chernov, shifted from its cautious support of the government to harsh criticism.

In the meantime, a small but vocal right wing of the PSR that defended Kerensky from these attacks and called for strong support of the Provisional Government formed the Petrograd Group of Socialist-Revolutionaries.³² On September 15 (September 28, new style) *Volia Naroda* published a letter entitled "To All Socialist-Revolutionaries," signed by this group's "Organizational Soviet." Like those who signed "The Letter of the 36," most of the signatories of this appeal, including Shternberg, were veterans of the People's Will and SR parties who stated that it pained them to criticize their own party so strongly. They called upon the PSR to support unequivocally the government and its war effort and oppose "anarchy" (antigovernment agitation by the Bolsheviks and other leftist extremists). Asserting that their goal was not to break up the PSR, the appeal hinted that if the party's centrist-leftist leadership would not change its course and accept the Right SRS platform, they were prepared to call for a conference of their supporters (Shelokhaev 2000, vol. 3, pt. 1:777-781). On the next day the PSR's Central Committee (which was now dominated by the center-left) issued a resolution accusing the Petrograd Group of Socialist-Revolutionaries of trying to split the party (Shelokhaev 2000a, vol. 3, pt. 1:887-888). Although the *Volia Naroda* leaders angrily rejected being labeled "schismatics," they appeared separately from the PSR on the list, prepared in mid-October, of Petrograd candidates in the elections to the Constituent Assembly. Named the "Petrograd Group of SRS-Defensists" or simply the "Group of SRS-Defensists," the *Volia Naroda* candidates included Shternberg (*Delo Naroda*, 1917, no. 180:3).³³

By this time rumors of an impending Bolshevik coup were circulating throughout the capital. Once again, the Right SRS of the Petrograd Group of Socialist-

Revolutionaries were among the most vocal socialist opponents of the “Leninists.” Every issue of *Volia Naroda* began carrying a banner that read, “The Salvation of the Motherland is in the Unity of All the Living Forces of the Country!” Starting with the October 15 issue, an even more dramatic slogan began appearing on the paper’s front page: “The Enemy Is Approaching—Defend The Motherland!” The “enemy” in this case was not the German army but the Bolsheviks. On October 22, one day before the Bolshevik Party’s Central Committee voted to “place an armed insurrection on the agenda,” Shternberg published a long and strongly worded article in *Evreiskaia Nedelia* (no. 42:1-3) entitled “Do Not Panic!” He addressed the rising anti-Semitic propaganda not only on the Right but also on the Far Left, particularly among the “uneducated urban masses,” who constituted a major group supporting the Bolsheviks and who were using the banner of an antibourgeois struggle to prepare for pogroms. While those elements of the “bourgeois public” that were frightened by the rising anarchy emphasized the presence of a large number of Jews among the Bolshevik leaders, the pro-Bolshevik urban mob blamed the “rich Jews” for food shortages and other economic problems. Lev Iakovlevich also took to task the Jewish Bolsheviks and other Jewish leftists (including the Bund) who placed party politics above the interests of the Jewish people. Despite this dangerous situation, however, he pleaded with his Jewish readers not to panic but to prepare to oppose these forces of evil and, by implication, continue to rally around Kerensky and his government.

The Bolshevik Coup and Its Aftermath

On October 24 (November 6, new style) the Provisional Government finally took decisive action: it sent soldiers to close down Bolshevik newspapers and initiated a criminal investigation of them. The next day, Lenin’s party called upon the sympathizers among the troops and in the pro-Bolshevik workers’ militia (the Red Guards) to rise up against Kerensky. While Lenin’s party claimed that its uprising was aimed at defending the soviets (particularly the one in Petrograd) against an impending right-wing coup, this was only a pretext for establishing its own regime. The Bolsheviks’ coup was quickly ratified by the Second Congress of Soviets, where they and their allies, the Left SRs, had a substantial majority. The soviets were proclaimed to be the ruling organs of the country, headed by the Soviet Central Executive Committee as a quasi-parliament and

the Council of People's Commissars as the cabinet. Lenin was designated the council's chairman (or prime minister). Kerensky's attempt to return to power with loyal troops was quickly put down. The Bolsheviks' seizure of power in the capital was soon followed by similar moves by local soviets in most other parts of Russia. The Soviet government immediately proclaimed a series of decrees (which were more like proclamations) on peace, the transfer of land to the peasants, and other topics.³⁴ Many of these were designed to appeal to the masses and gain at least some legitimacy for the new regime. (The measures outlined in several of the decrees were either never put into practice or were drastically modified in later years). Although the new cabinet initially included some Left SRs (who finally broke away from the PSR and organized their own party), they did not last long, and by the summer of 1918 one-party rule was firmly in place. The new government's "distinguishing quality," according to Pipes, was "the concentration of executive and legislative authority, as well as the power to make all legislative, executive, and judiciary appointment in the hand of a private association, the 'ruling party'" (1990:507).

By the end of October the Provisional Government had become so weak and unpopular with the majority of the population that the Bolsheviks managed to overthrow it with very little bloodshed. Unlike the situation in February, the October Revolution in Petrograd was a very quiet event. On October 25-26 most of the city's streets appeared normal and the majority of the population was not aware of the dramatic changes that were underway. Similarly, the vast majority of the country's inhabitants had no idea of what had happened. As Pipes (1990:504) described it, "Nominally, the soviets, which since February had acted as a co-regent, assumed full power. This hardly seemed a revolutionary event: it was rather a logical extension of the principle of 'dual power' introduced during the first days of the February Revolution."

Once the news of the Kerensky government's fall appeared in the newspapers, however, most of the socialist parties (not to mention those to the right of them) vehemently opposed the coup. All their representatives, except for the Left SRs, walked out of the Congress of Soviets in protest. The Central Committee of the PSR called it "an insane and criminal act" as well as "a crime against the motherland and the revolution, which marks the beginning of the civil war and the derailment of the Constituent Assembly, and threatens to destroy the revolution altogether" (*Delo Naroda*, October 27, 1917, no. 190:1). A day after

the coup, *Volia Naroda* echoed this sentiment, carrying such headlines as “The Black Day” and “A Great Crime Has Been Committed” (1917, no. 154:1). A few days later the paper called for the overthrow of the Bolshevik regime. The SRS believed that the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks was only temporary and that soon their weak regime would collapse. To speed up this process, they tried three tactics: isolation of the Bolsheviks from the masses, armed uprisings against them, and the establishment of a socialist government that would unite all the democratic forces opposed to the usurpers and lead the country to the Constituent Assembly.

An absolute majority of the intelligentsia was as strongly opposed to the Bolsheviks. It began cooperating with them only after concluding that the new regime was there to stay and that boycotting it would only make matters worse. One of the most dramatic early manifestations of the educated class’s refusal to accept the coup was the general strike of the white-collar workers. Soon after establishing strike committees in the ministries, banks, and other public and private institutions, the anti-Bolsheviks (including the centrist and rightist SRS) organized a coordinating body called the Committee for the Salvation of the Motherland and the Revolution. Because of the lack of unity and coordination between groups that joined this movement, the vacillation of some of the socialists, and its limited support from the masses, the committee failed to remove the Bolsheviks, just as army units were unable to seize power in the capital after several attempts. However, the strike by the white-collar workers could not be crushed until the new regime began using brute force, and even then it took months to put an end to it.

Other major targets of the Bolshevik attack were the political parties of the Right, the liberal center, and the rightist socialists like the SRS-Defensists. In addition to arresting them, the regime began closing many of the opposition papers and harassing the others. As early as October 28, *Volia Naroda* warned its readers that the Bolsheviks were planning an attack on the paper (1917, no. 156:1). A week later it reported that the government had begun seizing its issues at post offices and railroad stations, thereby preventing their harshest critics from delivering the paper to its subscribers.

It goes without saying that Shternberg reacted just as negatively to the coup as his comrades in the right wing of the PSR and the liberal Jewish intelligentsia did.³⁵ In the aftermath of October 25, the tone of Shternberg’s newspaper

was vehemently anti-Bolshevik. One editorial went so far as to refer to Lenin and his comrades at the helm of the state as “a group of people suffering from a most dangerous psychosis” (*Evreiskaia Nedelia*, 1917, nos. 43-44:1). In addition to their fury at the usurpers, the Jewish liberals at *Evreiskaia Nedelia* were extremely worried about the rising anti-Semitism. As Shternberg himself pointed out in an article entitled “A New Wave,” anti-Semitic sentiments were common among the soldiers and workers who carried out the coup and among the anti-Bolsheviks focused on the presence of a large number of Jews among the Bolshevik leaders. Despite all this, the Jewish liberals, like many of the other opponents of the new regime, remained hopeful that the Bolshevik rule would not last long. They prayed that the Constituent Assembly, which was about to be convened, would somehow replace the new dictatorship with a truly democratic coalition government. In late fall 1917 the SRS were preparing their fourth congress, while the Jewish leadership was getting ready for a national Jewish congress, the first in the history of Russia’s Jews. Shternberg was actively involved in both of these activities.

By mid-November it was no longer safe for him to remain involved. The new government continued closing or raiding opposition papers, including socialist ones, and arresting anti-Bolshevik activists and SRS. On November 19, a detachment of sailors barged into the offices of *Volia Naroda*, arrested several editors, and wrote down the names of all who were present. They told the paper’s staff that the government’s Military-Revolutionary Committee had ordered the raid to retaliate against the paper for publishing an anti-Bolshevik appeal by the ministers of the Provisional Government. Two days later another raid on *Volia Naroda* took place. Not surprisingly, by this time *Volia Naroda* stopped listing the names of its contributors and carried a banner “Long Live Freedom of the Press!” In late November the paper was closed down, but it quickly reappeared under a slightly different name.

Amazingly, while the PSR and its organs were under assault, its centrist leadership continued attacking the “schismatics” within the party. Although much of its wrath was now directed at the pro-Bolshevik Left SRS, it challenged the Petrograd Group of the SRS-Defensists and other rightist SRS as well.³⁶ This was partly because the PSR leadership wanted to finally end factionalism, which had significantly weakened the party prior to the Bolshevik coup. Finally, on

November 14, angered by the SRS-Defensists' appeal to their followers and sympathizers to vote for them in the Constituent Assembly elections, the Central Committee of the PSR issued a statement expelling the members of the Petrograd Group of the SRS-Defensists from the party (Shelokhaev 2000, vol. 3, pt. 2:49–50).³⁷

Between November 26 and December 5, 1917, the PSR held its last national congress, which Shternberg attended (Shelokhaev 2000b, vol. 3, pt. 2:52–230; Radkey 1963:163–202). One of the major topics of discussion was the upcoming opening of the Constituent Assembly. Having long supported this new national parliament, the party adopted the slogan “All Power to the Constituent Assembly.” Moreover, after winning the majority of the seats in this body, the PSR was hoping to use the assembly as the arena for fighting the Bolsheviks and replacing their dictatorship with a coalition socialist government dominated by the SRS.³⁸

Another and more controversial issue was party unity. The speakers from SR's center lashed out at both its left and right wings. Several leaders and active members of the Petrograd Group of the SRS-Defensists/*Volia Naroda*, including Shternberg, spoke passionately in their own defense. Shternberg, who had been expelled from the party earlier for allowing his name to appear on the electoral lists of the Defensists, began by stating that he was not trying to defend himself but the entire Defensist group. His speech was not only a defense of his faction but also an attack on the party's center and left. In his words:

We are sailing on a ship, which could perish any minute and with it will perish not only our party, and not even only Russia, but socialism as well. Our party is the oldest and the most accomplished. Its program is a program based not on abstract theories but deeply rooted in the consciousness of the people. How is it possible then that our party could allow the criminals to triumph and destroy Russia? We [the Defensists] did not drag our feet behind the masses, we did not commit the sin of demagoguery, while in this respect you acted like the Bolsheviks. But Lenin turned out to be more cunning than you. We [the entire PSR] were defeated by the Zimmerwald-Anarchist-Jacobin movement.³⁹ (*Partiia Sotsialistov-Revoliutsionerov* . . . 2000, 3(2):145–146)

Shternberg went on to argue that the *Volia Naroda* group never wished to secede from the PSR but always waged its political struggle from within the party. Of course, this was not entirely true, since the group he belonged to did create its own list of candidates. After a long and heated debate, the earlier expulsion of the Left SRS as well as the Petrograd Group of the SRS-Defensists and other right SR groups and factions was confirmed. The only way members of these factions could remain in the PSR was by supporting the party's central committee and refraining from any independent political actions or propaganda (Radkey 1963:163–179).

In late 1917 most of the PSR's attention was focused on the upcoming meeting of the Constituent Assembly—the last nonviolent opportunity to remove the Bolsheviks from power.⁴⁰ The Bolsheviks were leery of this parliament, having failed to win a majority in it. Some of the Bolshevik leaders, fearing their loss of power and legitimacy, advocated preventing the assembly from convening. However, Lenin and his supporters, who feared that prohibiting the Constituent Assembly delegates from meeting would reveal their own dictatorial nature and antagonize the more moderate part of the population, prevailed. The regime chose to delay the opening of the assembly as long as possible, trying to prohibit the “bourgeois” (that is, mostly KD) delegates from participating in it, and encouraging the masses to replace the KD, SR, and other anti-Bolshevik delegates with Bolsheviks and their Left SR allies.

Despite the government's willingness to allow the assembly to meet, threats by Bolshevik leaders against it persisted. This encouraged the anti-Bolshevik parties to call upon the capital's population to rally around the assembly and prevent the government from derailing this democratic project. As the party with the most delegates, the PSR led this movement under the slogan “Everyone to the Defense of the Constituent Assembly!”. Rejecting the calls by the more radical PSR members, including the *Volia Naroda* leaders, to organize an armed protection of parliament, the party's centrist leadership advocated organizing a large pro-Assembly demonstration on January 5, the day of its opening.

On the eve of January 5, the offices of the *Volia Naroda* were raided again and several Right SR leaders associated with it were arrested.⁴¹ The regime used a January 1 assassination attempt on Lenin as a pretext for the raid.⁴² The demonstration in defense of the Russian parliament was quite impressive, but Bolshevik

forces promptly opened fire on it. Having neutralized the anti-Bolshevik “street,” Lenin’s regime allowed the assembly delegates to convene. As the leader of the party with the largest number of delegates, Chernov was elected chairman of the assembly. Shternberg was not elected to it but many of his friends, comrades, and colleagues were, including Solomon An-sky and Moisei Krol’.⁴³ The Bolshevik caucus tried to obstruct the parliament’s work from the moment it began. Accusing the SR majority of taking the side of the bourgeoisie in its fight against the “revolution of the workers and the peasants,” they walked out. Soon the Left SR caucus followed them. After the remaining delegates deliberated for a few hours on the various issues proposed by the PSR, the head of the military guards, following orders by his superior, the “people’s commissar” of defense, demanded that the delegates adjourn. This order marked the end of the last non-Bolshevik parliament in Soviet history.

In the aftermath of the derailment of the Constituent Assembly, the government’s harassment of the SRs and their newspapers increased further. By late February the last incarnation of the *Volia Naroda* was shut down. Four months later the same happened to *Delo Naroda*. In the summer of 1918 the publication of all legal non-Bolshevik periodicals virtually ceased (Pavlov 1999:24). Infuriated by all of the regime’s actions as well as by its separate peace treaty with Germany and the other Central powers (signed in early March 1918), many of the PSR leaders finally began advocating armed struggle against the Bolsheviks. By the summer of 1918 many of the Left SRs, who were equally angered by the Brest-Litovsk treaty, joined the anti-Bolshevik struggle. The PSR struggled playing the role of a “third force” opposed to both the Bolsheviks and the White counterrevolutionary movement. Even those socialists who advocated conducting the anti-Bolshevik struggle only by peaceful means were subjected to vicious attacks in the government press and police harassment (Melancon 1997).

Although he undoubtedly remained sympathetic to the PSR, Shternberg chose not to participate in its anti-Bolshevik resistance, being too old and in poor health.⁴⁴ Moreover, in 1917–18 he became the de facto director of the MAE. His major priority was keeping the museum work going and protecting the MAE during the year of chaos. Although in the first half of 1918 Shternberg appears to have gradually stopped participating in *Volia Naroda*, he continued writing editorials and other major pieces for *Evreiskaia Nedelia*, which survived until August of that year. Most of his contributions to the paper dealt with the rise of anti-

Semitism, an issue that had troubled him since the Bolshevik coup. Shternberg attacked the anti-Semitic propaganda and activities of both the pro-Bolshevik “mob” and the anti-Bolshevik right who used the presence of a large number of Jews in Lenin’s party to portray it as a Jewish conspiracy against the Russian people. The nationalist demagoguery of the right and especially reports of pogroms committed by the anti-Bolshevik armed forces against civilian Jewish population made it impossible for the old SR to sympathize with the White movement. Nonetheless, he placed much of the blame for both the economic and social chaos of the post-October era as well as the Civil War that broke out in mid-1918 on Russia’s new rulers. He also believed that the Bolshevik coup was largely responsible for the nationalist and secessionist movements on the non-Russian periphery, which were destroying the country’s unity. Shternberg had always been an advocate of a unified Russia, where each nationality would have a great deal of political and cultural autonomy. He feared that the Jews, who tended to speak Russian and identify with the Russian rather than the local culture, would be subjected to discrimination and violence in the new independent states that were being established in the non-Russian regions. Unfortunately, his fears proved to be correct: anti-Semitic actions were common in these new countries, especially in the Ukraine.

Between the October coup and mid-1918, when a major crackdown on the non-Bolshevik parties and organizations took place, Shternberg continued his active involvement in Jewish politics, particularly through the ENG, which he had helped found a decade earlier. Among other things, he gave two lectures on Jewish nationalism to the newly formed student branch of the ENG (Beizer 1999:136). During this time, however, the ENG’s influence was quite limited. In 1918 a number of its leaders who were also active in the KD Party were either arrested or fled the capital. Moreover, the popularity of the Zionists, which rose dramatically after the February 1917 revolution, further weakened the influence of the Jewish liberals on Jewish political life (Beizer 1999:133–60; Gitelman 2001:59–74). If Shternberg’s dream of the Constituent Assembly never materialized, neither did his hope for the All-Russian Jewish Congress. Because of the unrest that followed the October coup, its elections were postponed several times. When they were finally held in January 1918, enthusiasm for them among the Jewish voters was no longer great. After all, they had just witnessed the disbanding of the Constituent Assembly. By the fall of 1918 the Bund and

the Zionists were the only Jewish parties still active, despite government harassment. Neither one appealed to Shternberg.

Anthropology in the Turbulent Year

The majority of members in the Academy of Sciences, like most other scholars in the capital, initially welcomed the February Revolution. Not only did it overthrow a regime that most academicians had long been critical of; also led to a government that granted the Academy the autonomy it had been fighting for. Moreover, several academicians who were members or sympathizers of the КД Party were invited to join the government.⁴⁵ Although many academicians eventually grew critical of the Provisional Government for its inability to control the destructive forces of the revolution it had unleashed, these negative feelings paled in comparison to their overwhelming dislike of the Bolshevik coup and the new regime it had brought about (Tolz 1997: 27–32). The Academy's annual report, delivered by Ol'denburg on December 29, 1917, contained the following passage: "Dark and ignorant masses have fallen for the false temptation of thoughtless and criminal promises, and Russia has reached the edge of the abyss" (cited in Tolz 2000:43). The academicians also wrote a petition in support of the Constituent Assembly that characterized the Bolshevik regime as a "great tragedy" for Russia. Despite these sentiments, during their general assembly in late January 1918, the scholars voted not to join their colleagues from institutions of higher learning in anti-Bolshevik strikes and demonstrations.

Determined to save the Academy of Sciences and thus Russian science as a whole, the majority of the academicians advocated negotiating with the new regime.⁴⁶ Negotiations began in January 1918, with the Academy determined to retain its autonomy and obtain much better funding for research than it had received from the tsarist and the provisional governments. The regime, in turn, had no choice but to enter into this negotiation because there were no other real scientific institutions in Russia. While some radical Petrograd Bolshevik leaders contemplated abolishing the Academy as a "useless relic of the pseudo-classical period of the development of a class society," Lenin, who insisted on working with the "bourgeois specialists" in the absence of trained communist cadres, prevented this from happening (Tolz 1997:30). A number of prominent members of the Academy left Russia soon after October 1917, but the regime

prevented more from emigrating by gradually creating favorable working conditions for quite a few of their colleagues. However, as Tolz (2000:46) points out, “the Bolshevik government never intended to permit the academy’s autonomous existence in the long term. Eventually, the academy was to be restructured to better suit the needs of the new government. How this would be done was not immediately apparent.”

The faculty and many of the students of Petrograd University as well as the other institutions of higher learning in the capital were even more anti-Bolshevik than the academicians.⁴⁷ When Anatolii Lunacharskii, the first commissar of education, issued decrees effectively putting institutions of higher education under state control, the academic council of Petrograd University issued a decree in late November 1917 that rejected a dialogue with Narkompros (the new ministry of education) and condemned the arrest of several members of the faculty. The council expressed its support for continuing the war with Germany and the convening of the Constituent Assembly. The State Committee on Education established by the Provisional Government refused to cooperate with the new regime’s special education commission, which it had organized hastily in early November. Soon after the October coup, a United Council (soviet) of the Institutions of Higher Education was organized to oppose any attempts by the authorities to control the work of these institutions. The council refused to recognize the new government. By early 1918, however, the worsening financial situations of universities and academic institutes finally forced it to begin negotiating with the regime. Still, it took several major meetings between the Narkompros officials and representatives of the institutions of higher learning to begin the process of establishing a new system of governmental control over education. For that reason the first academic year after the coup proceeded as if no radical change in the country’s political life had actually taken place. The one major change was a significant decline in the number of instructors and students due to emigration, the Civil War, and dire economic conditions. To state one example, the dean of the Faculty of Oriental Languages reported that only about twenty students continued taking classes (Kupaigorodskaiia 1984:40).

If Shternberg had difficulty concentrating on his research and museum work during the 1905 revolution, it was even harder for him to do so in 1917. As Vasiliĭ Alekseev, a prominent Sinologist who knew him well, wrote to Nikolai Nevskii

in early November 1917, “Shternberg is too busy with the revolution and journalistic work” (Aleksiev 1982:88). Despite all the political upheavals and distractions of 1917–18, Shternberg never stopped his work at the MAE or his research, teaching, and participation in scholarly societies. MAE’s other employees also welcomed the events of February 1917. Shternberg’s student and MAE collector, Shirokogorov, who was by no means a leftist, wrote to his mentor in early March of that year: “There are no words to express our feelings. I do not need to write about that. You know how important the coup that has taken place could be for us. . . . You cannot even imagine how happy I am. Maybe we could get some rest now and not feel ashamed because of the awful things that used to take place in Russia. I am happy for science, I am happy for the people (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/319:19–20).⁴⁸

Even the dry annual report of the MAE for 1917 revealed the sentiment prevailing among the museum’s staff: “The past year has been an extraordinary one for the museum in all respects. As in all other institutions, the Revolution has naturally caused an increased interest in public life among the employees. This, in turn, affected their work, at least initially. Gradually, however, the work is returning to normal” (*Otchiot Akademii Nauk* 1917: 117). In the spirit of those revolutionary times, the council (soviet) of the museum staff was transformed from a consultative body into a legislative one, with the director acting as its chairman. From then on, all the administrative decisions were made by majority vote (Ratner-Shternberg 1928:55).

One of the curators’ biggest fears was the government’s plan to evacuate the collections to Moscow because of the approaching German army. At the general meeting of the museum’s entire staff, they decided against the removal because evacuating them would have been much more dangerous than keeping them under the employees’ careful protection (Ratner-Shternberg 1928:118; Staniukovich 1964:104). Another major concern was impeding the vandalism that had spread throughout the capital after the Bolshevik coup. As a precautionary measure, the MAE was temporarily closed to the public. The October coup also brought serious financial hardships to the institution: a generous allocation of funds promised by the Provisional Government never materialized.

Despite the turbulent events of 1917 and an almost total secession of communications with foreign museums, the MAE’s dedicated staff continued its curatorial work, instructing students in the halls and conducting several major

expeditions. Sergei Shirokogorov and his wife continued their expedition in Manchuria and the Amur region until mid-spring, when they returned to the capital. Another former student of Shternberg's, Nikolai Konrad, returned from a trip to Japan and Korea after the February Revolution with a large collection of artifacts as well as ethnographic and linguistic data. Finally, Herman (Aleksandr) Mervart and his wife Liudmila continued their expedition to southern Asia. Between February and October 1917 the Russian Committee for the Study of Central and Eastern Asia continued to operate, funding several expeditions. As before, Radlov presided over it and Shternberg served as its secretary. Despite the emotional pain caused by the war between his country of birth and his country of residence and the lack of adequate food in the aftermath of the Bolshevik coup, the MAE's aging director was still full of energy and ideas, pleading with the authorities for more funding for the museum itself as well as its collectors (Reshetov 1995a:80).

On the eve of the Bolshevik coup, a special commission overseeing the MAE for the Academy of Sciences held an important meeting that was attended by prominent academicians, including Radlov, and by Shternberg, who was acting as secretary. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the merging of the MAE and the Ethnography Division of the Russian Museum. Apparently, both Radlov and the two leading curators of the latter museum (Mogilianskii and Volkov) were in favor of the idea. The commission authorized the MAE director to prepare a memorandum on the subject (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/105:5). While bearing only Radlov's signature, this proposal was most likely prepared in cooperation with Shternberg, who remained second in command at the MAE and who had, in the last years of Vasilii Vasil'evich's tenure, taken on many of the director's duties.⁴⁹ The MAE director proposed creating a single State Museum of Anthropology, Ethnography, and Archeology, which would bring together all of the main collections divided among the capital's various museums. Returning to ideas first presented in the early 1900s during the debate surrounding the establishment of the Russian Museum, Radlov argued that the collections of that institution had accumulated in a haphazard manner. To properly organize the Russian Museum's collection, Radlov proposed combining it with that of the MAE, "a two-hundred-year-old academic museum, organized upon a scientific principle of evolution of world culture

and guided by the Academy of Sciences,” which should become the foundation of the future State Museum.

Reiterating his evolutionist views (which were similar to those of Shternberg), the MAE director argued that the new museum should illustrate every culture of the world in both a synchronic and a diachronic perspective except for “the highest forms of culture of the civilized peoples” (Reshetov 1995a:82). He also argued that a separate museum representing the peoples of Russia would be “totally unscientific,” since these cultures could only be properly illustrated if presented alongside the cultures of the foreign countries linked to them. Finally, the MAE director reiterated another important idea that he had first articulated with Shternberg in the 1900s: the new anthropological museum should be linked with and even supervise a research institute dedicated to the study of human culture in its various manifestations (Reshetov 1995a:82). Unfortunately, the events of October 1917 put an end to Radlov’s grandiose plans: the new regime had more urgent things to do than create a unified anthropology museum.

After the Bolshevik takeover the conditions at the MAE deteriorated. Radlov prepared a memo for the Academy that addressed these problems. In it he referred to the condition of the museum as “critical.” While the museum continued expanding its collections as it prepared to move to a new and larger building, it was becoming more and more expensive to purchase specimens and fund expeditions. Several staff members received a reduced salary or none at all (Miscellaneous Museums Collections, SPFA RAN, 177/3/24:54–55). On May 12, 1918, the museum suffered a terrible blow: having come down with a serious cold and lacking proper nutrition, the eighty-one-year-old Radlov passed away while working at his desk. As his friend and colleague, Ol’denburg, said at his memorial service: “There is no doubt that he died because of the war and the horrible events of the past year” (quoted in Reshetov 1995a:80). With Radlov’s death, the MAE council appealed to the Academy to postpone the appointment of a new director for a year, so as to make it a year of mourning (*Otchiot Akademii Nauk* 1918:111–113). As the chairman of the council, Shternberg became the de facto head of the MAE. Unfortunately for him, he could not become the museum’s official director because he was not a member of the Academy of Sciences.

Ignoring the wishes of the MAE employees, the Academy of Sciences decided that it was necessary to select at least a temporary director for the museum and appointed a commission of academicians with this task. On October 23, 1918, the commission asked Vasilii Bartol'd to take on the job performed by Radlov for a quarter of a century. Like Radlov, he was a prominent linguist and folklorist as well as an Orientalist specializing in the history and religion of the Middle East and Central Asia. Although he worked mainly with written sources, Bartol'd did undertake several archeological expeditions to Central Asia and was an active participant in the Russian Committee for the Study of Central and Eastern Asia. Nonetheless, as Bartol'd himself admitted, Radlov's attempt to involve him in reorganizing the MAE in the late 1890s had failed. As Bartol'd later wrote, "I turned out to be totally incapable of museum work" (Reshetov 1995a:39). Given his lack of museum experience and the circumstances of his appointment, it was only a matter of time before a serious conflict between him and Shternberg developed (see chapter 7).

Radlov's death was a very serious blow to Shternberg, who had worked with the great Turkologist for almost twenty years and had been very fond of him. His first task was memorializing the former director. At a memorial gathering of the staff, Shternberg spoke about Radlov's contribution to the MAE and proposed a series of measures to honor him.⁵⁰ It was also decided to organize a study group called the "Radlov Circle" where scholarly papers on various ethnological and philological topics, particularly those pertaining to the languages, culture, and history of the Turkic peoples, would be presented (Reshetov 1995:39). The statutes of this society were prepared by Shternberg and approved by the Academy of Sciences. In an unpublished position paper entitled "The Goals of the Seminar on Ethnography, Linguistics, and History of the Orient to Be Named after Radlov" as well as his speech delivered at the first meeting of the group, he emphasized the importance of interdisciplinary area studies combining linguistics, ethnology, and history, urging ethnographers to learn local native languages and field linguists to engage in ethnographic research (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/191:259–266).⁵¹ At the first meeting of the Radlov society, Shternberg delivered the opening presentation. However, not being an Orientalist, he had to yield the chairmanship of the new organization to Bartol'd.⁵² The "circle" existed from 1918 to 1930 (see chapters 7–8). Finally, the participants agreed that the special issue in honor of Radlov's

eightieth birthday, which should have come out in 1917, had to be published as soon as possible (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/191:259–266). The fact that this memorial issue of the MAE's periodical was not published until 1925 indicates the very difficult financial situation of both the museum and the entire Academy.

The year 1918 was an extremely difficult one for the museum. With its budget diminishing and communication and travel between Petrograd and much of the country becoming either difficult or impossible, the acquisition of new collections came almost to a standstill. Nevertheless, the museum was able to send two collectors into the field. One of them (most likely Ivan Zarubin) vividly described the difficulties of post-1917 travel. To get to Central Asia, his final destination, the ethnographer had to change trains several times. The only relatively uneventful and comfortable leg of his trip was between Petrograd and Moscow. After that he had to travel mostly by freight trains. At some point, his cigarettes, two pairs of shirts, and some socks were confiscated by a Red Guard on the pretext that he had too many for his own personal use and thus was likely to sell the rest. This type of commercial activity, defined as "speculation" in the early Bolshevik Russia, was prohibited. When Zarubin protested, the soldier fired a shot in the air. The unfortunate collector summed up his impressions of the trip: "Everything is Soviet-style and quite disgusting" (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/358:88–89).

With very few new artifacts coming to the museum and the economic condition of the city deteriorating, the MAE staff's activity in 1917–18 was limited to protecting the museum treasures from cold temperatures and moisture (Ratner-Shternberg 1928:56). The curators' scholarly work was also rather limited, consisting mostly of trying to complete the projects initiated before the coup (Ratner-Shternberg 1928:56). Some projects undertaken during the first year of the new regime were never completed. The MAE's annual report to the Academy of Sciences in 1918 mentions that Shternberg was engaged in preparing for publication a Nivkh grammar and dictionary as well as an article entitled "The Classification of the Tungus [Evenk] Peoples of the Priamur Region" (*Otchiot Akademii Nauk* 1918:126). Neither of these works ever appeared in print.

While Shternberg's research contracted significantly during this era of upheaval, his teaching expanded a great deal. With the overthrow of the old regime, neither his revolutionary past nor his Jewishness were obstacles to his

being hired by the university. In fact, soon after the February Revolution, he was invited to establish a new department of ethnography at the Faculty of Oriental Languages and teach there as an assistant professor (*privat-dotsent*) (Ratner-Shternberg 1935:139).⁵³ His appointment was part of a campaign initiated by the Oriental Faculty's dean, Nikolai Marr (1864–1934), to strengthen the links between its traditional curriculum and the disciplines of history and philology and thereby significantly broaden it (Golubeva 2002:31–36).

Upon this appointment, Shternberg delivered a lecture entitled “Ethnography and the Humanities” at a special meeting of the Oriental faculty (Bogoraz Collection, SPFA RAN, 250/5/94).⁵⁴ The new docent described feeling “happy satisfaction” with his appointment but, more importantly, with what it said about the state of ethnography in Russia. In his view, the establishment of a special department of ethnography especially within a faculty dedicated to the study of the humanities was a major milestone in the development of Russian ethnography. He argued that, because of the all-encompassing scope of ethnography, it was “possibly the most important of the humanities.” He went on to criticize the fact that ethnography in Russia had been taught in the natural sciences division of the university and had been treated as a subsidiary discipline to biology, biological anthropology, and geography. This situation, he argued, had promoted an emphasis on the effect of inherited biological, rather than social, factors and characteristics of human culture and its evolution. In his view, however, ethnography was “most intimately connected” with such disciplines as history and philology.

Given his view, it was most ironic that when he finally succeeded in establishing his own ethnographic school, it was within an institution dedicated to the teaching of geography (see chapter 7). In the meantime, he tried to combine his teaching in both the Oriental faculty and the Higher Geography Courses, with which he had been affiliated since 1915. His lectures in both institutions were very popular. However, given the uncertainty and harsh economic conditions in Petrograd during the first year of Bolshevik rule, instruction at both the university and the Geography Courses was rather limited. Lectures and seminars were offered sporadically and were held in various buildings to accommodate the students. Despite this difficult situation, Shternberg not only continued teaching but also began working on a proposal for the creation of a special Institute of Geography.

Like other residents of Petrograd in 1918, he had to work under very difficult conditions: life in the city was marked by hunger, lack of fuel, and general chaos. To make matters worse, in March 1918 the new government, fearing the approaching German and White Army troops, decided to relocate the capital to Moscow. In the meantime, the city government, led by a prominent member of the Bolshevik Party's Central Committee, Grigorii Zinov'ev, announced that the old capital was being transformed into the "Petrograd Workers' Commune." This announcement coincided with the establishment of a dictatorial one-party regime that practiced what eventually became known as War Communism and created the Red Terror.

7. Building a New Anthropology in the “City of the Living Dead”

After the SRS abandoned their dream of reconvening the Constituent Assembly, they drew up a set of theses that outlined their policy of peaceful opposition to the Bolsheviks within the framework of the Soviet regime.¹ The SRS feared the right-wing White counterrevolution as much or even more than the Bolsheviks. However, faced with the industrial workers' and the peasants' rising discontent with the new regime in early to mid-1918 as well as the Brest-Litovsk Peace Treaty with Germany (which they strongly opposed), the SRS revised their strategy. Unlike the Mensheviks, they abandoned their plans to maintain legal opposition to the Bolsheviks and began orchestrating an armed uprising against them aimed at establishing a government under a Constitutional Assembly. Particularly active in planning and organizing the anti-Bolshevik armed struggle were right-wing SR leaders like Nikolai Avksent'ev and Andrei Argunov who were affiliated with the *Volia Naroda* newspaper, to which Lev Shternberg contributed. They played a central role in forming the major underground anti-Bolshevik organization of 1918: the Union for the Regeneration of Russia. With the Allies' help, the Union planned to organize an eastern front against the Bolsheviks. By May 1918 many of the SRS, and not just its right wing, recognized the necessity of fighting the Bolsheviks with arms. However, many party members to the left of Avksent'ev and Argunov were not fully comfortable with the idea of forming an anti-Bolshevik alliance with the Kadets and other “bourgeois” parties and forces.

This wavering position continued to undermine the SRS' struggle against the new regime. When the German revolution removed the threat of counter-revolution implicit in the Brest Treaty, the SRS (once again) promptly abandoned armed struggle against the Bolsheviks. In May 1918, however, the PSR's council decided to resume this struggle. For a time, the party played a major role in the democratic regimes established in the Urals, the Volga region, and parts of Siberia, which tried to position themselves between the Reds and the Whites.² However, by late 1918 and early 1919 it became increasingly difficult for the PSR to play this role. When, in November 1918, Admiral Kolchak, a major White leader, overthrew the Ufa Directory (dominated by the SRS), he arrested many prominent party members and expelled them to China.³ The SRS' "war on two fronts" continued throughout 1919, with some party leaders seeing the Bolsheviks as the main threat and others insisting that for the time being the fight against the monarchist Whites was the number one priority. In 1920, with the Bolshevik regime gaining the upper hand in the Civil War, the PSR struggle against it became increasingly difficult. Many top leaders of the party were forced to flee the country and tried (unsuccessfully) to wage their war against the Communists from Warsaw, Berlin, and Paris. Their hopes of overthrowing the Leninist dictatorship were given a boost in 1921, when large-scale peasant rebellions and an uprising by the anti-Bolshevik sailors at the Kronstadt naval base near Petrograd rocked the country. However, once these last major anti-Soviet uprisings had been crushed, PSR influence on Russian political life declined dramatically. A major show trial of the "right-wing" PSR organized by the Soviet regime in the summer of 1922 dealt the final blow to the party.

Sometime in 1918 Shternberg ended his active participation in the PSR to concentrate instead on protecting his beloved museum and trying to continue his ambitious project of creating comprehensive anthropological education in Russia. All these activities had to be undertaken in a city that was barely surviving during the chaos of the Civil War years.

The City of the Living Dead: Petrograd, 1918–22

According to a recent historical-sociological study of Petrograd life during the era of so-called War Communism, "the most important factor of the city's life . . . was a drastic reduction in its population" (Musaev 2000:61).⁴ Because of the rising mortality and declining birth rates as well as the flight abroad and

into the country's provinces, the city's population declined from 2.4 million to 722,000. Petrograd's population as well as its status declined further in the spring of 1918, when the new regime, fearing capture by the advancing White Army of General Iudenich, relocated to Moscow and made it the country's capital. As Emma Goldman wrote about her 1920 visit to Petrograd, "It was a city almost in ruins, as if it had been hit by a hurricane. The buildings resembled old broken up graves at an abandoned cemetery. The streets had become dirty and devoid of all life. The passers-by resembled the living dead" (Musaev 2000:62). The spread of epidemic diseases and shortage of medicine also threatened the city's existence.

Another major problem was the chronic shortage of food and fuel. The lack of fuel made electricity extremely limited. Public transportation came almost to a standstill. By the summer of 1918 the city's residents were on the verge of starvation. Finally, a dramatic proliferation of crime made their survival even more difficult. Here is a passage from Simon Dubnov's diary dated December 13, 1919:

Got up early and put on my coat, galoshes, and winter hat (it is 7+ Celsius in the apartment) and sat down to work at my desk. My fingers were frozen. . . . At 10 am went to the firewood department of the local soviet to obtain a firewood ration. Found myself among hundreds of people who formed a line stretching along the staircase from the first floor to the fourth. Spent two hours in the midst of these miserable, agitated people and, like many of them, went home without obtaining anything: there were not enough rations for all of us. . . . Everything spiritual in man has been stamped out. Except for the Reds, the people do not walk but crawl, worn out by hunger, cold, and humiliating violence. (1998:417-418)

To combat the negative effects of food shortage on the population, the city government instituted a system of food rationing, dividing the population into four categories and assigning different amounts of bread coupons to each. Industrial workers formed the first category, which was allocated the largest ration. The lowest category was reserved for the "non-laboring elements"—the representatives of the nobility, the bourgeoisie, and the tsarist government bureaucrats. Scientists, professors, artists, and other members of the intelligentsia

were also treated rather harshly by the food rationing system. Most of them were assigned to the third or, less commonly, to the second category of rationing. Food shortages hit the older members of the intelligentsia particularly hard. In addition to Radlov, a number of other prominent members of the Academy of Sciences died of malnutrition during this period. Among the measures that annoyed the intelligentsia greatly were the introduction of compulsory labor for all able-bodied men, the allocation of rooms in "bourgeois" apartments to poor families, and the closing down of the non-Bolshevik press and many bookstores.

Besides physical hunger, Russian scholars suffered greatly from intellectual want. Their isolation from Western science, which began to be felt during World War I, became total during the Civil War years (Tolz 1997:32). For Shternberg, who had always been very interested in foreign anthropology, frequented European museums, and maintained extensive correspondence with colleagues around the world, this intellectual starvation was a source of enormous suffering. In a speech delivered to the faculty and students of the Geography Institute in 1921, he spoke of the interruption in the Russian scholars' communication with their Western colleagues as a "terrible thing" (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/28:1). He expressed the same sentiment in a June, 22, 1922, letter to Boas written soon after their correspondence had resumed: "One can outlive sometimes without sufficient food, warmth, and clothing, but without faith in man, without sympathy of our kind, without intercourse, especially scientific intercourse, it is too hard. . . ." (Boas Papers, APS).⁵ Severe shortages of paper made it extremely difficult to publish scholarly works.

To make matters worse, a number of leading members of the academic community fell victim to the Red Terror without being guilty of any antigovernment activities.⁶ For example, Ol'denburg, the Academy's permanent secretary, was arrested in September 1919 and spent twenty days in the house of preliminary confinement (Tolz 1997:113). The only possible reason for his imprisonment was his brief service as the Provisional Government's education minister. The intelligentsia's very difficult living conditions were made worse by the new regime's demands to cooperate. The students' situation was equally bad.

The mood of the academic community was summed up in a petition sent by the executive board of the Academy of Sciences to the People's Commissariat (ministry) of Education in September 1918, which stated: "Lately the situation

they [scientists] find themselves in has become totally unbearable: these people have been subjected to the worst possible conditions as far as their nutrition is concerned, they are being distracted from their work either by periodic arrests or by public works assignments, their apartments are not immune to various random invasions, and their libraries to confiscations and destruction. In such [an] atmosphere, it is impossible to carry out creative intellectual labor, so badly needed by Russia" (Musaev 2000:73). Along with this list of grievances, the academicians' petition included a series of requests and recommendations for improving their situation.

In response to these demands, the government undertook a series of measures aimed at alleviating the plight of the scholars and other "productive" members of the intelligentsia. One of them was the establishment, late in 1919, of a Central Committee for the Improvement of the Life of Scholars (ТСКУБУ). Starting in February 1920 it began supervising the distribution of a special "academic ration" to scholars and higher education instructors (Kupaigorodskaia 1984:65). Musaev (Kupaigorodskaia 1984:74) argued, however, that serious improvement in the lives of the Petrograd intelligentsia occurred only in the mid-1920s. Shternberg was one of the scholars who benefited from ТСКУБУ's activities. In 1919, thanks to his status as the senior curator of a museum administered by the Academy of Sciences, he was assigned to the highest category of food ration recipients and given permission to move to a new apartment in the house owned by the Russian Academy of Sciences on the Neva embankment (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/108:36, 38, 109).

Like other academics, Shternberg was forced to pursue a variety of scholarly and educational activities that could bring in extra money or food. In 1918–20 he was involved in the work of the Oriental Division of the "World Literature" publishing house. Established by Maksim Gorky in 1918, it had the goal of familiarizing the reading public of the new Soviet state with the great works of literature, Occidental and Oriental alike. Many prominent Petrograd writers, literary critics, and other academics took part in its projects. Despite his terrible difficulties, Shternberg remained an optimist. In his speech to the students of the Geography Institute, he expressed his unwavering faith in the "great role played by science in the cause of humankind's rebirth (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/28:3).

In addition to the postrevolutionary chaos and the lack of resources to support research, Shternberg and other scholars were deeply troubled by the nihilistic ideology of the ultraleftist ideologues who called for the creation and promotion of a radically new "proletarian culture and science." Promoted by an influential group of left-wing Bolshevik intelligentsia, the Proletkul't movement (from "proletarian culture") enjoyed a considerable following and tried to exert pressure on Bolshevik policies during the Civil War years (Mally 1990; Korzhikhina 1997:27–107). Among the "bourgeois" institutions that Proletkul't attacked with vigor was the Academy of Sciences. The movement called for the abolition of this institution and the rejection of all academic disciplines and institutions that did not directly serve the interests of the proletariat. Most of the humanities and many of the social sciences were in that category, as were the old museums. This "bourgeois" institution had to be replaced with a "proletarian" one affiliated with Proletkul't. Luckily for the old intelligentsia, most of the Bolshevik leaders were hostile to the leftist excesses of the Proletkul't ideologues. A cultural conservative whose tastes favored the Russian classics, Lenin offered a particularly strong criticism of the "intellectual inventions" of the Proletkul't adherents. He was equally critical of this movement's attacks on the basic sciences and the humanities. While acknowledging that some of the old academic disciplines had to be seriously revamped, Lenin and his supporters advocated utilizing the best of the old scholarship and art. Finally, they could not tolerate the Proletkul't's attempts to become an autonomous movement through its large proletarian following and refusal to be subordinate to the Bolshevik Party and the state bureaucracy. By the end of the 1920s Proletkul't came under heavy attack from the Bolshevik establishment and its influence declined significantly (Fitzpatrick 1992:16–36). The New Economic Policy of the 1920s, with its more tolerant attitude toward the "old bourgeois specialists" and its somewhat more moderated rhetoric of class warfare, undermined Proletkul't even further (see chapter 8). Nonetheless the ultraleftist attacks on the academy and the "old non-proletariat" culture mobilized scholars like Shternberg to come to their defense.

Shternberg's clearest expression of this position came in his 1921 speech to the students and faculty of the Geography Institute entitled "Ethnography and Social Ethics" (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/28). In it he linked the current calls for a "new science" to the nihilistic views of his own heroes and

comrades in the Populist intelligentsia of the 1870s–80s who, in his words, “viewed entire fields of academic science as useless and even harmful to the people.” He then compared this earlier view with the contemporary one, which he characterized as “social utilitarianism” and described as having a more positive attitude toward science even as it remained one-sided. For Shternberg, the slogan that science had to be subordinated to the interests of the masses was being interpreted simplistically to mean that only technology and applied science were valuable and that the exposure of the masses to science simply meant popularizing the latter. Consequently the sciences were divided into those that could be used to serve the masses and those that could not. He went on to state that for the true “people of science,” like him, such an approach was unacceptable. Instead, science had “value in its own right.” Because it always searched for the truth and strove to develop a worldview based on that truth (*istinnoe miropoznanie*), their science served the people by benefiting them materially and spiritually. Using rather lofty language that was typical of much of his writing about science and the ideals of humanity, the MAE curator rejected the notion that science could be divided into “old” and “new” or into “useless” and “useful.” Without naming the people whose views he was harshly criticizing, Shternberg rejected the notion of some distinct “proletarian” culture. In fact, for him, such a division was particularly dangerous in critical times like the present, when the continuous process of culture’s evolution was being threatened. The rest of his lecture was devoted to the argument that ethnography, a science that one might view as being far from the day-to-day life and needs of the masses, could actually be of tremendous value to them.

The Academia and the New Regime

In an important article on the emergence of the 1920s Soviet academic order, Michael David-Fox argued convincingly that the Civil War era “might be conceptualized not only as the time when a Bolshevik academic agenda took shape, but also as an era of chaotic yet influential flowering of manifold trends with ‘outsider’ pre-Revolutionary roots. These represented programs in all echelons of higher learning that had been stymied by the old regime. Despite war, hunger, and acute material hardship, the revolution provided impetus for movements with well established impulses not formulated primarily by Bolsheviks” (1997:110).⁷ These developments included the founding of a variety of specialized

and applied scientific research institutes, mostly in the natural and applied sciences. Having been held in check by the tsarist authorities in the early 1900s, they were established despite the wartime hardships (David-Fox 1997:110). David-Fox goes on to point out that "the irony of the War Communism period in academia was that it combined threatening and often apocalyptic revolutionary imagery with *de facto* decentralization and fragmentation" (David-Fox 1997:112).

While suspicious of the old academy, the Bolsheviks had no choice but to try and negotiate with academics in order to build a new educational and scholarly system. The speed with which the new government established Narkompros, the People's Commissariat of Education—only weeks after the October coup—indicated how high a priority this rebuilding was for the Bolsheviks. In February 1918 the new ministry invited the leadership of Petrograd University to take part in reforming higher education. However, the university's governing body rejected Narkompros's invitation to participate in a special conference dedicated to this subject.

Despite their opposition to the new authorities, the professoriate soon realized that the Bolsheviks were there to stay and that without some sort of cooperation with them scientific research and academic instruction could not be carried out. The less politicized professors of the Polytechnic Institute were the first to break ranks with the antigovernment coalition, beginning negotiations with Narkompros in early 1918. Eventually other institutions, including Petrograd and Moscow universities, joined this dialogue as well. As Tolz (2000:45–46) noted in her discussion of the Academy of Sciences' gradual softening of its anti-Bolshevik position, the academicians were determined to save the Academy as a unique scientific institution with a significant degree of autonomy and thus prevent the total collapse of Russian science.

In addition to establishing control over the higher education curriculum, the authorities were determined to "democratize" the faculties and the student bodies. Reforming the faculties was more daunting and required the establishment of new Bolshevik-dominated institutions of higher learning. This was eventually done but it took some time to train a cadre of "red professors" (see David-Fox 1997). The student bodies seemed easier to manage, so Mikhail Pokrovskii, the assistant people's commissar of education, proposed an open admission to universities and institutes of higher learning and the establishment of systematic instruction in "scientific socialism" in all of them. At the

same time, Narkompros's willingness to compromise with the academic establishment was indicated by its proposal to retain much of the existing autonomy of the higher education institutions. Narkompros also called upon the universities and institutes to actively engage in spreading knowledge among the masses.

In its efforts to weaken the old professoriate's opposition to these new proposals, Narkompros encouraged the establishment of organizations of left-leaning students and academics. By 1920 these pro-Bolshevik intellectuals established a small but vocal group of "Red Professors of Petrograd" and issued a statement calling for greater cooperation with the educational authorities. Some of their rhetoric was too leftist even for the Bolsheviks, who advocated a more cautious method of dealing with the old academic establishment.⁸

This approach was evidenced by the results of a major all-Russian conference on university reform held in Moscow in 1918, which was attended by some four hundred professors, students, and Narkompros officials. While the conference did approve the establishment of departments of scientific socialism within each institution of higher education, it also reaffirmed the instructors' right to teach and express their views without restriction. At the same time the conference saw the passage of a measure unpopular with most professors: the admittance of poor peasants and industrial workers regardless of their previous academic training. As a Petrograd University instructor, Shternberg took part in this conference. Although no records reflecting his view of the proceedings and the decisions made there have survived, I imagine that he sided with the old professoriate on many of the issues discussed, particularly the preservation of academic freedom.

The degree to which the regime was willing to accommodate the old academic establishment was limited. After limiting the universities' autonomy, the government eliminated it altogether by mid-1921. The first sign was the establishment of special commissars who acted as government watchdogs (with veto power) at every institution of higher education. In 1919 Narkompros issued a decree that clearly reflected the view of Pokrovskii and other radicals within the ministry and the academy. It abolished all entrance exams, grades, and diplomas. That same year Narkompros also abolished the old Faculties of Law (seen as the hotbeds of conservative anti-Bolshevik ideas) and established new Social Science Faculties (FONS) that taught law as well as history, literature, and

other social sciences and humanities. The FONs included new departments dedicated to the teaching of the history of science, technology, and religion from a materialist (though not exclusively Marxist) perspective.⁹

To further undermine the power and influence of the old professoriate, the authorities established new government bodies at every institution of higher learning. These soviets (councils) consisted of faculty and students, with the latter being guaranteed at least 25 percent of the seats. Despite this innovation, pro-Bolshevik students remained a minority, with most students leaning toward the Kadets, the SRs, and the moderate Mensheviks. Even the more leftist students shared the majority's views on the importance of academic freedom for students and student self-rule. Opposed to these ideas, education officials soon began curtailing the power of the elected student councils. In its efforts to radicalize the student body, Narkompros established "workers' faculties" (*rabfaki*) at every institution to prepare lower-class youth for higher education. They also began bringing large numbers of Red Army veterans into the universities. Despite these efforts, the number of students from the "bourgeois" families remained high enough that the government began restricting the admission of youngsters from "non-laboring" classes to institutions of higher learning (see Konecny 1999).

The government's stick-and-carrot approach to the academic establishment was further demonstrated by a gradual increase in the academics' food rations and other perks, on the one hand, and the arrest of a number of scholars and university instructors for their anti-Soviet views and real or imaginary collaboration with the Whites, on the other.¹⁰ Two major manifestations of this early persecution of anti- and non-Bolshevik intellectuals were massive arrests of the latter in Petrograd during the 1921 Kronstadt rebellion and the expulsion in 1922 of between 100 and 150 of the "anti-Soviet lawyers, literati, and professors," who seem to have been randomly selected from the leaders of the liberal intelligentsia. A number of them were prominent historians, sociologists, and philosophers who taught at various social science schools and faculties in Moscow and Petrograd.¹¹

Another method used by the government in its effort to weaken the influence of the "conservative pro-KD professorate" was the establishment of new educational institutions outside the universities. Regarded as less beholden to the old academic establishment, they were expected to train students in more applied subjects than the old humanities and social sciences, which reformers

viewed as "conservative disciplines." The Geography Institute was among the institutions established in Petrograd soon after the Bolshevik seizure of power. At the institute Shternberg was finally able to put into practice his ambitious plan for teaching anthropology.

Building the Ethnographic School at the Geography Institute

Despite the dramatic upheavals of 1917–18 Shternberg continued teaching his ethnological courses at the Faculty of Oriental Languages of Petrograd University. In 1919 this faculty combined with the Historical-Philological and Law faculties within the university to form the Faculty of the Social Sciences (FON), which consisted of six divisions: political-legal, socioeconomic, philosophical, historical, philological, and ethno-linguistic.¹² The FON's curriculum included Shternberg's popular courses Introduction to Ethnography, Evolution of Religion, Evolution of Social Organization, and Primitive Art (*Vostokovedenie v Petrograde* 1918–1922:34), which he continued teaching through the 1920s (Gagen-Torn 1971). A few surviving documents indicate that Shternberg apparently petitioned the Commissariat of Education in 1919 to expand significantly FON's curriculum so it included ethnology, physical anthropology, anthropogeography, and several other related disciplines (Leningrad State University Collection, TSGIASP, 7240/14/132). However, his ambitious plan was not accepted.

Sensing the new regime's sympathetic attitude toward the sciences as well as social sciences such as geography and ethnology that it saw as more practical, Shternberg, together with the chairman of the Higher Geography Courses, Joseph Lukashovich, appealed to Narkompros to allow the establishment of a new Geography Institute on the basis of the Courses.¹³ Using the Geography Courses as the embryo of the proposed institution made sense. They had been in existence for several years and had attracted considerable student interest despite the difficulties of the war and the revolution years.¹⁴

The Narkompros leadership favorably received a petition delivered to the Moscow authorities by Shternberg and several of his colleagues, giving the new project its blessing and a modest sum of one hundred thousand rubles to cover the most immediate expenses in December 1918.¹⁵ With that subsidy the new institute was able to rent a better building, one located closer to the center of town. Its executive committee consisted of Lukashovich as chair with Sergei

Sovetov and Shternberg as vice-chairs. According to Shternberg's widow (Ratner-Shternberg 1935:139), he was the one who composed the guidelines for the new institution, which were approved by the executive committee. Instructors for the new school were invited from across the country (cf. Lukasevich 1919:63).¹⁶ The main goal of the new institute was defined as follows: "To offer complete higher education in the field of geography, so as to train scholars of geography, researchers-explorers, as well as field researchers of various regions of Russia concentrating on geographic, natural historical, ethnographic, and economic issues" (*Izvestiia Geograficheskogo Instituta*, 1919, 1:69). Though dominated by geographers, the institute was supposed to have a separate *kafedra* of physical anthropology and another one dedicated to ethnography, archaeology, and general linguistics (*Izvestiia Geograficheskogo Instituta*, 1919, 1:77).

In 1918–19 two hundred students attended lectures at the new institute. It is not clear how many of them specialized in ethnology, but probably at least a quarter or even a third did. In the summer of 1919 the new statutes of the Geography Institute divided it into two large faculties of equal standing: a geographic and an "anthropogeographic" one (soon renamed "ethnographic"). The latter was responsible for courses in physical anthropology, archaeology, ethnography (cultural anthropology), linguistics, the economic geography of Russia, and economics.¹⁷ It had several laboratories where students worked on anthropological and archaeological projects. Students of both departments had to take general courses in the sciences and geography as well as in a number of practical disciplines, such as photography (*Izvestiia Geograficheskogo Instituta*, 1921, 2:144–145). In the spirit of the times, the institute's program emphasized the value of such an education for the new Soviet state.

Shternberg served as the dean of the first full-fledged program of anthropological education in Russia until the end of his life.¹⁸ From its inception, the program combined the teaching of a large number of academic disciplines with training in practical and applied areas. In 1920 over 800 students studied at the Institute, 284 of them in the ethnography faculty (*Izvestiia Geograficheskogo Instituta*, 1920, 2:157).

Initially Shternberg was the only ethnologist among the institute's faculty, and his field's very broad and comprehensive curriculum was definitely his creation. Reflecting Shternberg's vision of ethnology as a broad "science of mankind and culture," the curriculum included various courses in the humanities

and social sciences as well as a number in the natural sciences. Especially at the beginning of their coursework, students took courses in physics, chemistry, zoology, botany, geology, geology, human anatomy and physiology, and, of course, geography.¹⁹ Although these courses were much more compact than the ones more directly related to the students' fields of specialization, they did receive solid basic education in the sciences. The program in the social sciences and humanities was even more ambitious, including courses in physical anthropology, archaeology, history of Russian culture, history of philosophy, history of religion, statistics, and history of the ancient Near East. This program also included various area and topical courses in ethnography (cultural anthropology) such as introduction to ethnography (cultural anthropology), evolution of social organization, evolution of religion, primitive art, history of cultural anthropology, and museum studies. Shternberg himself taught most of these core courses.²⁰ Area studies curricula included Slavic peoples of the USSR, Finno-Ugric peoples, Mongolian peoples, Turkic peoples, Palaeoasiatic peoples, and peoples of the Caucasus. Within each cycle, instruction was offered in the peoples' history, languages, geography, and sociopolitical organization.

While I discuss the content of Shternberg's lecture courses in the next chapter, a few words must be said here about his teaching style and relationship with students. We are fortunate to have at our disposal a number of his students' unpublished reminiscences (collected by Sarra Ratner-Shternberg soon after her husband's death) (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/110) as well as Gagen-Torn's biography of her favorite teacher. Here is how she recalled her first impressions of his lecturing style:

A thin old man, who seemed to have been charred by some internal burning, spread a pile of cards with notes on the podium and raised his eyes to the audience. For a whole minute his dark, burning eyes intently looked at us through the glasses. Then he began to speak. . . . He would periodically bend down to his cards in order to read a citation supporting his thought. He would cough, flip through them, and then read one, bringing the card close to his glasses. He was not an orator. He stuttered a little. It was difficult to listen to his lectures and especially to take notes. Nonetheless, we all listened to him with rapt attention. (1975:161)

Another student recalled that Shternberg smoked nonstop while lecturing and that he suffered from a facial tic (Kreinovich cited in Kolosovskii 2002:185–186).

Many students recalled their fascination with Shternberg's lectures and how these lectures and the professor's enthusiasm for his discipline inspired them to devote their lives to anthropology. Lev Iakovlevich prepared very carefully for each lecture, writing them down in advance. Being a very lively person, he could never read his lecture from the prepared text, and he never taught a lecture course according to some preexisting, fixed plan. For this reason his students often attended the same course twice. Shternberg's erudition and breadth of knowledge were legendary. Here is how a fellow professor from the Geography Institute characterized Shternberg's lectures: "Lev Iakovlevich was not a brilliant orator, but his lectures and conversations with students sparkled with deep thoughts and witticism; they made a profound and indelible impression on the audience" (Edel'shtein 1930:33). Many of Shternberg's former students who had not originally planned to specialize in ethnology changed their minds after attending just a few of his lectures.

Shternberg's accomplishments as an educator are particularly impressive considering the circumstances under which he and his colleagues had to teach during the first years of the Geography Institute's existence. The auditoriums often lacked heat and electricity, while most of the students and the instructors were undernourished.²¹ For Shternberg, who suffered from a stomach ulcer, the lack of adequate nutrition was life-threatening. Yet despite his own difficult material circumstances, he was always eager to give his students food and money.²² While he had the reputation of being a very harsh examiner and showed occasional fits of anger, students adored him, calling him "father," and many came to him with their personal problems.

Reminiscences by two of Shternberg's former students, Garma Sanzheev (a Buryat) and Georgii Startsev (a Komi), highlight another of his strengths as a pedagogue—a unique ability to treat ethnic minority students as equals without patronizing them or condescending to them. They also credited him with inspiring them to love and study the cultural heritage of their own people (SPFARAN, 281/1/136:67–71; cf. Sanzheev 1927:939).

During the summer terms students engaged in various field studies including archaeology, ethnography, topography, botany, drawing, and photography.

Since in the first few years of its existence the institute had no funds to underwrite ethnographic field research far from Petrograd, students of the ethnography faculty spent their summers at the institute’s field schools located not far from the city—in Pavlovsk in 1919, where Shternberg himself spent much of the summer, and in Sablino in 1920. With their diverse Slavic and non-Slavic populations, these were interesting locations for fledgling ethnographers. According to the institute’s bulletin, an exhibit of student projects undertaken in the summer of 1920 featured maps of the ethnic groups of the Petrograd region, the dialects of Russian in the same region, and the archaeological sites of the area. In addition the exhibit showcased data collected by the students on the language and folklore of the Finnic language-speaking Karelian population of the Tver’ region and the Russians of the Petrograd region (Ratner-Shternberg 1935:142). From early on, student summer research was being supported (at least in part) by the government. The participants in the 1920 expeditions received an assignment from the Council on the People’s Economy (via the Commission for the Study of the Productive Forces of Russia) to produce a detailed description of the natural resources and economy of the Petrograd region. Along with the assignment came some funding. Shternberg and another instructor were responsible for a brief historical sketch of the political and socioeconomic relations in the region (*Izvestiia Geograficheskogo Instituta*, 1920, 2:168–169).

A number of students were able to conduct ethnographic research under the auspices of the scientific expeditions organized by other institutions, such as the Northern Scientific Expedition of 1921. Four students worked in the Pechora River area, three of them studying the economy as well as the material and social culture of the local Russian population (the Pomory) and the fourth focusing on the indigenous Nenets. Georgii Prokof’ev (one of Shternberg’s best students) joined another section of this large expedition to investigate the language and material culture of the Ob’ River Nenets. All the students brought back photographs, sketches, and artifacts, which were exhibited at the institute and then turned over to the MAE (Gagen-Torn 1975:167–168; Staniukovich 1971:129–130; Poppe 1983:65–67). Beginning in 1922, when the government began providing the institute with funding for field research and when the energetic and practical Vladimir Bogoraz joined the institute, students began conducting ethnographic research throughout much of the country (see chapter 8).

Of course, such an ambitious program of study required a large staff of instructors. Assembling a staff was not an easy task in a country that did not have many specialists in cultural anthropology and related disciplines, and at a time when many members of the Petrograd intelligentsia were no longer in the city. Despite these problems, Shternberg managed to attract a number of well-qualified scholars to join his faculty. Among them were reputable professors of the older generation such as Nikolai Kareev (who taught history of culture and methodology of the social sciences); Lev Karsavin (history of culture); David Zolotariov (physical anthropology); and Aleksandr Spitsyn, a prominent specialist in early Slavic archaeology. Shternberg also recruited brilliant younger scholars like Alekseev (Chinese language and culture); Izrail' Frank-Kamenetskii (ancient Near East culture); Boris Vladimirtsev (Turkic languages and general linguistics); and several others (*Izvestiia Geograficheskogo Instituta*, 1920, 2:174–175). Like Shternberg himself, none of these instructors espoused Marxist views (see chapter 8).

A comparison of the Geography Institute's ethnology curriculum with those of other Russian and foreign institutions shows how unique the institute really was. For example, Moscow State University's offerings in this field were much more modest. Cultural anthropology was taught in the department (*kafedra*) of physical anthropology, which in 1919 separated from the geography department. Until 1923 the physical anthropology *kafedra* was presided over by Anuchin, who had been teaching ethnology at Moscow University for decades. Some instruction in cultural anthropology was also offered at the Ethno-linguistic Department of the Faculty of the Social Sciences, established in 1919, the same time that Petrograd University also created its faculty. While prominent ethnologists like Aleksandr Maksimov, Vera Kharuzina, and several others taught at Moscow State University, it had much more limited offerings in cultural anthropology than the Geography Institute (Markov et. al. 1999). Neither American nor western European graduate programs in anthropology offered their students this kind of broad curriculum.

The MAE during the Civil War Years

Despite his intense involvement with the Geography Institute, Shternberg continued devoting many hours to his favorite child—the MAE. The Civil War years were extremely difficult for this institution. Unable to organize expeditions

because of the war and its drastically decreased funding, the MAE focused on cataloging its large collection and simply trying to preserve the artifacts under very adverse conditions. The museum staff did not grow between 1918 and 1921. In fact, several of its employees (including Shirokogorov and the Merverts) were unable to return to Russia from their expeditions because of the war, and their valuable ethnographic collections, destined for the MAE, remained abroad. A number of other collections prepared for the MAE by foreign museums in artifact exchanges languished in Stockholm, Copenhagen, and Hamburg. Authorities denied Shternberg's request in 1920 for permission to travel to these cities and oversee the shipping of the collections to Petrograd. Only two years later were some Russian scholars allowed to travel abroad on business; however, Shternberg had to wait until 1924 before he could leave the country (see chapter 8).²³

At the same time, this was the only period in the museum's history when all three members of the "ethno-troika" were working there, with Shternberg, Iokhel'son, and the newly hired Bogoraz presiding over the Native Peoples of Russia, African, and South American departments, respectively. Shternberg and Bogoraz gave public lectures on the MAE collections for museum professionals and for future MAE guides being recruited from the students of the Pedagogical Institute (*Otchet of deiatel'nosti Rossiiskoi Akademii Nauk*, 1918:111–128, 1919:135–150; Ratner-Shternberg in Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/4/9:166). Shternberg, his MAE colleagues, and a number of established as well as younger Orientalists also continued to meet as members of the Radlov Circle. In 1919 he gave a talk in which he compared the artistic designs of the various Siberian peoples of the Ural-Altai language family (Tumanovich 1976:313; see MAE Collection, SPFA RAN, 142/1–2:1–348).

As the senior curator of the museum, Shternberg was forced early on to cooperate with the authorities. When, in the fall of 1918, the People's Commissariat of Education requested that the MAE send a representative to a major meeting of museum professionals it was organizing to discuss the role of their institutions in promoting the enlightenment of the masses, Shternberg's colleagues elected him to attend the gathering (SPFA RAN, 242/1/72:29).

Despite terrible working conditions, the MAE's small but dedicated staff managed to show several small exhibits and even increased the number of visitors.²⁴ Many of the visitors were working-class people, particularly soldiers recovering

from their wounds. True to his democratic ideals and firm belief in the need to enlighten the masses by bringing them into ethnographic museums, Shternberg devoted a good deal of attention to this new category of visitors. Some of his colleagues at the MAE and the Academy of Sciences did not appreciate his enthusiasm and criticized Shternberg for "bringing the street into the temple." Eventually, however, they reconciled themselves to this new development, seeing it as a good way to curry favor with the new regime. Shternberg, like all museum administrators during the war years, had to be very creative in order to survive, and he used his new connections with the military to obtain more disinfectant for the MAE and to lobby for an increase in his guides' rations.

In this and several other instances Lev Iakovlevich did not consult with academician Bartol'd, the MAE's appointed head, but acted as the de facto director of the museum. Angered by these acts of insubordination, Bartol'd finally submitted his resignation in October 1921. Upon his recommendation, Shternberg was severely reprimanded by the MAE council, which consisted of several academicians. According to Sarra Ratner-Shternberg (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/4/9:167, 282/1/105:8; cf. Reshetov 1996:43), her husband was so incensed by the censuring that he decided to resign as well. However, his love for the museum outweighed his anger and he stayed on.

Thinking About and Serving the New Society

Even with his various jobs and responsibilities as a curator and educator, Shternberg continued fulfilling a number of public service duties he had taken on during the pre-1917 era. The most important one was his participation in the Commission for the Study of the Tribal/Ethnic Composition of Russia (KIPS). Despite its inadequate funding and an inability to reach large parts of the country, the commission continued its work, concentrating primarily on analyzing the results of the last pre-1917 census and preparing the maps of the country's ethnic groups.²⁵ Shternberg continued serving on the Siberian subcommission and in 1919 became its chair (*Otchet o deiatel'nosti Rossiiskoi Akademii Nauk*, 1919:292–305; Hirsch 2005).

With very little time left for his own scholarly research, Shternberg still managed to continue his work on both the Nivkh social organization manuscript for Boas and a grammar and dictionary of the Nivkh language as well as prepare several oral presentations, which he was planning to publish.²⁶ Unfortunately,

none of them saw the light of day. Instead, Shternberg was now deeply preoccupied with a completely new research topic that had emerged out of his 1910 ethnographic expedition to the Far East: the so-called divine election in Nanai shamanism and "primitive religion" in general (see chapter 8).

Two unpublished papers illustrate the evolution of Shternberg's thinking during the war years. One is based on a public lecture delivered at the Geography Institute in 1919 and entitled "Ethnography and Social Ethics" (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/28). The other, also written in Russian but given the English title "Anthropological Perspectives and Suggestions During [sic] the Revolutionary Years in Russia," was intended for publication abroad (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/81). Both papers show that this die-hard evolutionist could not ignore the dramatic changes in Russian life caused by the upheavals of war and revolution. Like most other Russian intellectuals of this era, he was frightened by the drastic decline in the standard of living, the decay of industry and the entire infrastructure (especially in the cities), and the almost total interruption of intellectual ties between Russian and foreign scholars.²⁷ He also saw the unprecedented violence and devastation caused by the wars of the 1910s as a severe blow to culture, both on the ethnological level and in the more colloquial sense of high culture. At the same time he passionately defended the importance of anthropology and theoretical science in general for understanding the current crisis. This argument was aimed at the radical leftist intellectuals who, in the first years of the new regime, vociferously attacked academic research and argued that only the applied sciences were useful for the masses and needed in the new Soviet society.

In "Ethnography and Social Ethics," Shternberg argued that his own discipline had a lot to offer the citizens of the new Soviet society. As in his other writings, he conveyed a humanistic understanding of anthropology, contending that the idea of the psychic and racial unity of mankind was one of his discipline's greatest contributions to civilization. As he pointed out, this humanistic ideal remained as relevant in the early twentieth century as it had been in the nineteenth. After all, ethnic prejudices and especially "European chauvinism," which defined the peoples of Asia and Africa as inferior, were as strong during World War I as they had been in the past (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/28:12-14). True to his past theoretical views, Shternberg insisted that evolutionist theory and the ethnological research based on it continued

to offer scientific support to this idea of psychic unity. This theory also demonstrated that the existing differences between cultures were due to environmental conditions and historical circumstances and that once these were made equal, "humanity would become a single brotherly union of cultural interaction and mutual equality and cooperation." (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/28:20).

He then brought his evolutionist argument to its conclusion, pointing out that culture was a product of the gradual accumulation of knowledge and that any interruption in this process was very dangerous for humanity. In his view, such interruptions occurred not only among the "primitive" peoples but among "civilized" western European societies as well, as the four years of worldwide war had demonstrated. Shternberg expressed particular concern about the war's massive cost in the lives of the creative young generation. The essay concluded with a warning that modern-day Europe could soon be facing a major break in the evolution of its culture (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/28:27–28). Delivered to an audience of faculty and students of the Geography Institute, this lecture showed that despite the efforts of the Bolshevik regime, Shternberg (like many Russian intellectuals of that period) remained rather uncertain about the future of culture in his own country, which he continued to view as part and parcel of Western civilization.

In the second essay, written in the early 1920s, Shternberg described Russia's experience in the past five years as a true laboratory for a social scientist, allowing him to observe human creativity during a major disruption of normal life and a serious regression toward material conditions resembling those of primitive society. Specifically, Russian industry had come to a standstill after the city stopped producing goods for the countryside. The countryside also did not produce for the city, except when forced to do so through food requisitions. In addition to a severe lack of food, the cities experienced a major shortage of fuel and even matches. Without resources, science and technology became powerless. As a result, "a civilized (cultured) country was left without the resources of culture" (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/28:2).

Under these circumstances, the peasant population turned out to be better equipped for survival. In the countryside old practices like using wood splinters as a source of fire were still alive or at least remembered, and it was easier to revive them. Since almost no factory-made clothing was now available, old

women took their looms out of the closets and resumed making clothing the old-fashioned way ("known to us from the ethnographic record," Shternberg noted). Similarly, peasants revived the weaving of footwear out of bark. The only technology that could not be rediscovered was the domestic manufacturing of iron tools and utensils, so wooden nails and plows reappeared. With interregional trade completely disrupted, the peasant economy as a whole returned to its archaic (*patriarchal'nyi*) mode of production, with each village trying to satisfy its own needs. Regions that could no longer obtain cloth started growing cotton or flax. Other areas began growing grain. Production of homebrew resumed on a large scale. Industrial workers either had to return to their ancestral homes in the country or try and survive by applying their skills to manufacturing cigarette lighters or other useful devices. Turning to the urban intelligentsia, the ethnologist contrasted its helplessness with the peasants' impressive inventiveness and survival skills. Nonetheless, even the city dwellers had to learn new skills, such as making pancakes out of potato peels and coffee grinds and heating their homes using metal stoves.

Ironically, it was much easier for the "primitive" peoples of the Russian borderlands, like the Siberian natives, to survive under such circumstances. After all, the Nenets could switch fairly easily from firearms back to bows and arrows for hunting or rely on the traditional oil lamps instead of the kerosene ones. In some areas their ingenuity surpassed that of the Russians.

All this, in Shternberg's view, was a return of the "civilized human being" to a "primitive" (*pervobytnyi*) state, not only in the area of technology but morality as well. When forced to live under primitive conditions, the "civilized" Russians returned to an earlier level of material and socioeconomic culture. To this classic evolutionist, such a cultural decline was proof of the fundamental equality of all peoples and races. Moreover, these developments supported a fundamental evolutionist postulate that as far as their mental characteristics were concerned, all peoples were equal. In the end of this essay, Shternberg finally gave credit to the new Soviet regime by pointing out that the Bolsheviks had liberated the non-Russian peoples and that the new political-administrative system represented a federation of dozens of equal republics and autonomous regions, with even small ethnic groups having been granted autonomy. He also praised the new regime's efforts in creating alphabets for the nonwritten languages of the country and educating these minority groups using the

new literacy.²⁸ Both of these essays demonstrate Shternberg's willingness to modify his evolutionist thinking by focusing more on the interruptions and reversals in the universal progress of culture.

Promoting Jewish Scholarship and Education under the New Regime

With the establishment of the Bolshevik regime, many liberal Jewish newspapers and organizations gradually came under scrutiny and eventually attack. In their efforts to curtail the "bourgeois" Jewish political and cultural activities, the new authorities were aided by the zealous leftist Jewish activists, who soon after the coup formed a special Jewish Section (*Evsseksiia*) within the Communist Party as well as a special Jewish Commissariat within the Commissariat of Nationalities (Gitelman 2001:54–86).

With the closing of the *Evreiskaia Nedelia* newspaper and the abolishing of all the "bourgeois" Jewish parties in the summer of 1918, Shternberg's career as a Jewish journalist and political activist effectively came to an end.²⁹ However, he remained actively engaged in a variety of Jewish educational and scholarly projects, the most important of which was the Jewish Historical-Ethnographic Society (JHES). The JHES continued operating despite a very difficult financial situation and other war-related calamities brought on by *Evsseksiia*, which closed its museum and attempted to seize the society's valuable museum collection (Beizer 1989:118–119; 1999:65). Shternberg remained a member of the society's executive committee and helped prepare its journal *Evreiskaia Starina*. After the publication, in 1916, of the last prerevolutionary issue of the journal, it ceased publication for two years. Finally, in 1918, with the financial help of the Petrograd and Moscow Jewish communities, it again saw the light of day. The new issue of the journal was the last one edited by Dubnov; in the spring of 1922 he left Petrograd permanently. With Dubnov's departure and the emigration and deaths of several other older members of the JHES executive committee and its journal's editorial board, Shternberg remained the only highly respected member of the old guard who was willing to cooperate with the authorities. And so between 1922 and his death in 1927 he served as the chief editor of *Evreiskaia Starina* and the chairman of the JHES executive committee.

Another important Jewish institution of the early post-1917 era was Petrograd Jewish University, which was established in the end of 1918. According to

Greenbaum (1994:16), the university owed its existence to the prerevolutionary efforts by the famous Jewish philanthropist Baron David Gintsburg (Ginzburg) to establish a Jewish institution of higher learning. The Jewish University was a fairly modest operation that Greenbaum compared to a continuing education school. In his view, teaching at this institution provided prominent members of the city's Jewish intelligentsia with modest pay and, more importantly, awarded them status as gainfully employed persons instead of the "parasitic bourgeois" (1994:16). Some of the school's students were also attracted by the bread rations distributed by the People's Commissariat of Education (Dubnov 1998:421, 438). While Shternberg was apparently not one of this university's lecturers in the late 1910s and early 1920s, he was close to many of them and in the mid-1920s, when the university's name was changed to the Institute of Higher Jewish Learning, did offer a course on general ethnography (cultural anthropology). One of his students, Isaak Vinnikov, taught the ethnography of nineteenth-century Jews (SPFA RAN, 155/3/27:6). Prior to their voluntary or forced departure from Soviet Russia in 1921–22, a number of prominent Jewish scholars hostile to the new regime lectured there, including Dubnov, Boris Brutskus, and Aaron Shteinberg.

The issue that troubled Petrograd's Jewish inhabitants the most during the Civil War years was the anti-Semitic agitation by the disgruntled anti-Bolshevik masses who felt threatened by the presence of a significant number of Jewish Bolsheviks in the city government (Beizer 1999:66–71; Dubnov 1998:391–437). In 1918 a group of Jewish intellectuals affiliated with the Bund made one of a number of attempts by the Jewish intelligentsia to counteract this erroneous impression. They invited such prominent moderate Jewish activists as Dubnov, Leontii Bramson, Aleksandr Braudo, Saul Ginzburg, and Shternberg to contribute to "Jews in the Russian Revolution," a publication that was supposed to document the suffering inflicted on the country's Jews by the Bolsheviks. Either for financial or political reasons this project never came to fruition, while anti-Semitic agitation in the city persisted for several more years (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/10:25–25a; Dubnov 1998:401).

More long-lasting were the three archival commissions for the study of Russian Jewish history that had been proposed by a Jewish historian and lawyer, Grigorii Krasnyi-Admoni, and authorized and financed by a Jewish assistant to the people's commissar of education, Zakhar Grinberg. A former Bund member who became active in the Jewish Section of the Communist Party, Grinberg

was sympathetic to the three projects, which were designed to expose the myth of ritual blood use by the Jews, research the history of the anti-Jewish pogroms in prerevolutionary Russia, and document the history of Jewish education in Russia (Dubnov 1998:436–137). Shternberg was one of four Jewish members of the “ritual commission,” the others being Dubnov, Sliozberg, and Krasnyi-Admoni. For parity, four non-Jewish historians also participated in its work. Unfortunately, several Russian participants in this project were not ready to reject the blood libel myth and tried to find proof of such practices at least by some Jewish “sect” in the documents being examined by the commission.³⁰ Serious disagreement arose between the Jewish and Russian participants in the process of preparing the introduction to the documents. While the “ritual commission” did prepare an entire volume of documents for publication, it was never published. The “pogrom commission” was luckier: it managed to publish two volumes of documents. The third commission also published one volume of material. In the meantime, two government institutions—the Commissariat of Education and the Jewish Section of the Communist Party—began asserting their control over all scholarly and educational projects dealing with Jewish issues. As a result, by the early 1920s all three commissions ceased to exist (Elias Tcherikower Papers, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, f. 982; Beizer 1999:311; Kel’ner 2003:216–217).³¹

While the War Communism era saw the proliferation of a number of Jewish cultural and educational enterprises, there were limits to what the new regime was willing to tolerate. Thus in 1919 the *Evseksiia* spearheaded an attack on the Zionist movement, which had been steadily gaining ground among Russia’s Jews. During that same year the Jewish Commissariat issued a decree proclaiming Hebrew a “reactionary and counterrevolutionary language” and prescribed that Jewish education would be conducted only in Yiddish, the “language of the Jewish masses,” while all Hebrew schools would be closed and all Hebrew publications eliminated. Thanks to *Evseksiia*’s policies, in 1918–19 most Jewish political organizations that were neither pro-nor anti-Soviet were closed, including the highly respected Society for the Dissemination of Enlightenment among the Jews of Russia as well as the Jewish Colonization Society. In the early 1920s the *Evseksiia* and the Soviet authorities in general began a vicious campaign against Judaism (Gitelman 2001:74–82). While not a Zionist, Shternberg was undoubtedly opposed to the new regime’s anti-Zionist campaign. The

attack on Hebrew and Judaism must have troubled him even more. Not being religious himself, he had still always insisted that Judaism was a source of Jewish national identity and consciousness (see chapter 8).

Spring 1921: The Regime in Crisis and Shternberg’s Arrest

The year 1921 was a crucial one in the history of the Bolshevik rule. On the one hand, by the end of 1920 the major military forces of the White movement and their foreign allies had been crushed. On the other hand, in the spring and summer of 1921 the regime found itself facing large-scale peasant uprisings in the heartland of agricultural Russia along the middle and lower Volga River, and in western Siberia; unrest among factory workers in Petrograd and Moscow; and a sailors’ revolt in Kronstadt, a major naval base on the Baltic Sea not far from Petrograd (Brovkin 1994:327–401).

The immediate cause of the workers’ strikes was a dramatic deterioration of food supplies, which led to a sizable reduction in bread rations for the workers. The sailors’ anti-Bolshevik unrest reflected the peasants’ and workers’ grievances as well as their own disappointment with the regime’s refusal to ease its rigid control over the country’s political and socioeconomic life. Kronstadt sailors had always been known for their radical political ideology. They did not call for the restoration of the Provisional Government or the Constituent Assembly. Their opposition to the Bolsheviks came, in a way, from the Left. Nonetheless, it echoed a larger discontent with the regime that was rumbling throughout much of the country. Added to these sentiments was the anti-Bolshevik propaganda by the SRS and other socialist parties operating both within the country and outside of it.³²

On February 25, in response to massive strikes in Petrograd and the rising unrest among the Kronstadt sailors, the military authorities declared martial law in the city while the secret police (Chrezvychnaia Komissiiia or ChK—literally the “Extraordinary Commission”) proceeded to arrest SRS, Mensheviks, and other suspected members of the socialist intelligentsia, regardless of whether they had been implicated in antigovernment propaganda and agitation. Among the some three hundred socialists arrested were Shternberg and Iokhel’son. The two aging anthropologists had not been involved in the current unrest, but their active participation in the activities of the right wing of the PSR in 1917–18 was undoubtedly known to the authorities.

According to a document issued to Shternberg on March 3, between February 25 and March 2 he was incarcerated at the House of Preliminary Confinement and was released upon the request of the regional ChK (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/156).³³ Shternberg's arrest came as a shock to his colleagues. Three days after it occurred, the head and several other officials of Petrograd University sent an appeal to the head of the Petrograd ChK to release "Professor Shternberg whose work at the university as a senior expert could not be performed by anyone else." In the case that he could not be freed outright, the appeal suggested that he could be released on bail with the university acting as the guarantor. The same officials also asked the TSEKUBU to intervene on Shternberg's behalf.³⁴ It is not clear whether this appeal helped free the old SR, but there is evidence that Gorky, who for several years had been intervening with the authorities on behalf of many arrested members of the intelligentsia, had helped secure his and Iokhel'son's release (Minz 1968:211, 219). Although by the standards of the time a weeklong arrest was not an awful tragedy, it could have only further strengthened Shternberg's critical view of the new regime. He must have also been shocked by the Bolshevik regime's massive attack on the PSR in the wake of the Kronstadt rebellion.³⁵

8. The NEP Era and the Last Years of Shternberg's Life

The peasant uprisings, industrial workers' strikes, and the Kronstadt revolt demonstrated to the regime its declining popularity among a large segment of the Soviet Union's population. To improve the situation, Lenin and his followers within the Communist Party announced in 1921 that major changes would take place in the Soviet economic system. The infamous system of grain confiscation, greatly disliked by the peasantry, was replaced by a standardized tax in grain and other agricultural products. The new system also restored market relations in the agricultural and industrial spheres. Moreover, privately owned stores and even small and medium-sized factories were allowed to open. Heavy industry, however, remained in the hands of the state. The elaborate system of free services and food that had dominated the economy of the War Communism era was largely abandoned. This unique hybrid of socialism and capitalism came to be known as the New Economic Policy (NEP), and it did help improve the country's economy (see Pipes 1990:368–435; Fitzpatrick, Rabinowitch, and Stites 1991; Brovkin 1998; Pavliuchenkov 2002). On the "cultural front" during the NEP-era, the government softened its treatment of the intelligentsia. Some "nonproletarian" literary and artistic societies as well as private publishing houses were permitted to operate, and important pre-1917 institutions, such as the Academy of Sciences, were allowed to retain a significant degree of autonomy (Fitzpatrick 1992:91–114). As a result of these reforms, the living conditions of Petrograd's population improved significantly.

Fearing that NEP, which he called a “retreat,” would strengthen the influence of the anti-Bolshevik socialists and encourage dissent within his own party, Lenin insisted that the Communist Party’s control over the country’s political and even cultural life had to become stronger, not weaker. As Brovkin (1994:401) observed, “The NEP order was certainly not a liberalization of the Bolshevik regime, nor was it a search for a tolerant path to socialism.” His view was echoed by Clark; despite the temporary loosening of the regime’s control over the country’s intellectual life, she concluded, “during NEP a series of changes occurred at a fundamental structural and institutional level, and those changes established many of the prevailing, enduring patterns of Soviet intellectual life. Russian intellectual life was sovietized” (1991:211).¹ In 1922 the regime established a special institution in charge of controlling scholars’ access to scientific information. According to one historian of Soviet science, this notorious GLAVLIT, along with the State Political Ministry (Gosudarstvennoe Politicheskoe Upzavlenie, or GPU), “provided a firm and reliable barrier against the flow of foreign literature into the Soviet state” (Kolchinskii 1999:22).

In the early 1920s the number of concentration camps for political prisoners increased from 84 to 315. The so-called “former people,” or members of the old elite, were deprived of the right to vote, and their children faced major obstacles when they tried to enter institutions of higher learning. Orchestrated by the GPU, the first show trial in the history of Bolshevik Russia took place in the summer of 1922, soon after NEP’s introduction. Thirty-four members of the PSR, twelve of whom had been members of the party’s central committee, were accused of various major crimes (most of them imaginary), including terrorist and military actions against the Soviet government. After months of investigation, the trial opened in June 1922, with the accused being tried by the Supreme Revolutionary Tribunal. While many prominent Western socialists and liberal intellectuals protested the unjust proceedings, the regime orchestrated mass rallies where “working-class people” demanded that the accused receive the death sentence. This was in fact the sentence handed down in the case of the eleven SR leaders. Feeling pressure from abroad, the regime finally decided to substitute long prison sentences. It did, however, leave open the possibility of executing the condemned, announcing that it would spare them only if the PSR ceased all its underground activities (Jensen 1982; Krasil’nikov 2002).² In addition to the SR members appearing at the Moscow show trial, a

large number of party members, most of whom had already abandoned anti-Bolshevik activities, were sentenced to exile. A year later, the Mensheviks, anarchists, and other non-Bolshevik socialists were subjected to a similar attack (Pavlov 1999:78–82).

While rival socialist parties were being eliminated, prominent liberal intellectuals who did not openly disagree with the regime but continued to “disseminate their bourgeois views” through writing and lectures were expelled from the country. From July 1922 to April 1923 close to one hundred and fifty leading prerevolutionary Russian philosophers, economists, historians, novelists, and other scientists and scholars were forced to emigrate. Several of them were old-time colleagues and friends of Lev Shternberg.³ The departures of Semion Dubnov and a prominent Jewish activist and economist, David Brutskus, must have been especially difficult for him. As Michael David-Fox (1997:54–55) concluded, this deportation was closely connected with the regime’s “moves to establish control over higher education.”

At the same time, those scholars who decided to remain in Russia and cooperate with the Soviet regime experienced a significant improvement of their situation compared to the Civil War years. The need to utilize the skills and knowledge of the “bourgeois specialists” in the absence of suitable communist cadres, advocated by Lenin and his allies in the government, meant that the research work of the cohort of scholars trained before 1917 began to be financed more generously and supported more vigorously. Moreover, until a major assault on the Academy of Sciences in the late 1920s, its members were allowed to publish their scholarly works without the preliminary approval of the censors. The Academy also maintained the right to receive foreign scholarly publications and send its members’ works abroad without interference from the authorities (Tolz 2000:52). Not surprisingly, the natural sciences were favored over the social sciences and the humanities. Nonetheless, those social scientists and humanities scholars who managed to convince the authorities that they could make important contributions to the building of a new socialist economy, society, and culture, were able to continue their research without too much interference from the regime. Given the Bolsheviks’ special attention to the issue of nation building and “cultural enlightenment” among the various large and small ethnic groups, ethnographers and linguists began to enjoy much greater prestige and government support than during the tsarist times.

Although the authorities supervised the system of higher education more closely than the Academy of Sciences, even universities experienced a certain limited degree of intellectual autonomy in the early and mid-1920s. As Kremtsov (1997:17–18) pointed out, this era was marked by the advent of a “functioning symbiosis” between the state and the academic community. On the one hand, by the early 1920s administrative control in higher education schools had been turned over to the party-appointed rectors. Instructors could no longer openly voice anti-Soviet or anti-Marxist views. Communist cells, which were established among leftist professors and students in every higher education institution, attempted to exert some ideological and administrative pressure on the “bourgeois specialists.” From the early 1920s on, periodic attempts were made to increase the number of students with proletarian and peasant backgrounds in institutions of higher learning and purge the children of the bourgeoisie and the old intelligentsia (Konecny 1999).

On the other hand, many scholars and instructors belonging to the “old guard” were able to teach and conduct research without too much interference from above or from the left. The percentage of Communists among the teaching personnel in the 1920s remained quite small, as did the percentage of Young Communists (Komsomol) among the students. Outside the social sciences, the professoriate retained *de facto* control over most faculty appointments and the selection of graduate students during the NEP. While they could not challenge the new ideology in their lectures, textbooks, or scholarly publications, many non-Bolshevik instructors managed to present their audiences with a variety of non-Marxist ideas and scholarly methods. This was particularly true in the various new institutions of higher learning established outside the university system, where governmental ideological control was greater. In the early to mid-1920s the Geography Institute faculty included the historian Nikolai Kareev, a positivist and a critic of Marxism; Vladimir Den, a non-Marxist economist; and Shternberg himself, who represented a modified nineteenth-century evolutionism, combined with newer ideas of his own and those of his western colleagues as well as Populist views on culture, society, and history.⁴ Of course, classic evolutionism represented much less of a threat to the new Soviet Marxism than positivism and other “bourgeois” theories that were still being presented to Soviet students by many of their instructors. In fact, Shternberg’s career as an educator and founder of the Leningrad school of ethnography

can be seen as a constant struggle of a dedicated socialist—but not Marxist—anthropologist of the old school against the efforts by the educational authorities and his own pro-Bolshevik colleagues and students to politicize the curriculum at the expense of the basic academic disciplines. Although by the mid-1920s Shternberg was beginning to lose this fight, he did not live to see the unraveling of much of his ethnographic school (see chapter 9). In the last years of his life he also engaged in a fair amount of scholarly research, pursuing some of his favorite old topics as well as some new ones. His election to the Academy of Sciences in 1924 reflected the recognition of his prominent role in Russian-Soviet scholarship. Work at the MAE also continued to occupy a good deal of Shternberg's time, even though he no longer felt that he was the first in command there. Finally, in the 1920s he was able to reactivate and even expand his large network of international scholarly ties and join two major gatherings of anthropologists and other scientists—in Western Europe and the other in Japan. By the time of his death in 1927, Lev Iakovlevich was well known and highly respected among the world's anthropologists and linguists. Before exploring his various scholarly contributions, we need to establish his position vis-à-vis the Soviet regime in the 1920s.

The Old Populist in the Era of the “Quiet Revolution”

Many Russian intellectuals, both émigrés and those remaining in the USSR, were seduced by the limited liberalization of intellectual and economic life during NEP into believing that the Bolshevik regime was undergoing a real liberalization. A number of scientists, scholars, and members of the artistic community who had previously refused to cooperate with the authorities changed their minds. Some of them were driven by patriotism and simply chose not to focus on the remaining unpleasant aspects of Soviet political life but to concentrate on their own work, which they saw as their contribution to the well-being of Russia, regardless of whether it was a Soviet Russia or not. Others justified their cooperation with the Bolsheviks by developing a new ideology that came to be known as *Smena Vekh* (“Changing of the signposts”). Positioning themselves as both the heirs and the critics of the antirevolutionary ideas contained in the 1909 *Vekhi* essay collection, *smenovekhovtsy* argued that NEP was not just a Bolshevik tactic but a sign of a true evolution of the Soviet regime toward a more democratic and free-market type of society. In addition,

most of the *smenovekhovtsy* were strong Russian patriots and even nationalists who saw the Communists as the builders of a powerful Russian state. Among the leading Russia-based intellectual leaders of this movement was none other than Shternberg's old comrade and colleague, Vladimir Bogoraz. While he was a staunch opponent of the new regime in the first few years after the Bolshevik takeover and even published some anti-Bolshevik articles in the press, in 1921–22 he announced that he was now “betting on the Bolshevik horse” and joined the editorial staff of *Novaiia Rossiia* (New Russia), a Petrograd journal of the *Smena Vekh* persuasion (Hardeman 1994:47–48). It was at this time that he also began teaching at the Geography Institute.

Unlike his old People's Will comrade Bogoraz, who was known for his tendency to change ideological positions, Shternberg did not make public proclamations about his enthusiastic support for the new regime. On the surface he maintained a loyal stance and ceased his participation in any anti-Communist organizations or publications. He might have even shared the hope of many members of the Russian intelligentsia of the NEP era that the Soviet regime was becoming more liberal. Since Shternberg left no writings describing his attitude toward the Soviet regime, we can only speculate about his feelings based on the testimony of those who knew him as well as his own brave civic actions of that era. Shternberg's political and moral position remained firmly rooted in the Populism of the People's Will and the New Populism of the SRS. Shternberg filled out several mandatory Soviet-era personnel forms and questionnaires that contain the following response to the question of his party affiliation: “a former People's Will member, currently without any party affiliation.”⁵ While there is little direct evidence of Shternberg's attitude toward the Bolshevik regime, based on a few hints as well as the attitudes of fellow veterans of the People's Will, one can reconstruct it, at least tentatively. As the Soviet state began to accelerate the persecution of its ideological rivals, Shternberg undoubtedly began to lose any faith he might have had in the Bolshevik government.⁶

Passionately loyal to the ideals of the “People's Will,” Shternberg took an active part in the work of the Society of the Former Political Exiles (*Obshchestvo Byvshikh Politkatorzhan*). Established in 1921, it numbered about two thousand members, many of them old Populists of Shternberg's generation. With branches in several major cities (including Petrograd), the society organized

lectures on the history of the pre-1917 revolutionary movements and published a journal of memoirs and historical studies entitled *Katorga i Ssyllka* (Forced labor and exile). It also sponsored festivities and other events in honor of prominent revolutionaries and supported indigent members financially (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/4/10). Shternberg's memoirs about his comrades appeared in this journal (1925a, 1925b), as did the reminiscences about him by Moisei Krol' (1929). The *Katorga i Ssyllka* editors' willingness to publish works by anti-Soviet émigrés, along with the fact that many of the society's members had once belonged to the PSR and other non-Bolshevik socialist parties, made the society and its publication suspect in the eyes of the authorities and led to their eventually closing in the mid-1930s (see chapter 9).

After his arrest in 1921 and the 1922 show trial of the leading SRS, Shternberg no longer dared mention his own PSR membership. Nonetheless, he never turned his back on the party he considered to be the only true heir to the People's Will.⁷ It is not surprising that in the summer of 1922 he joined a few dozen old Populists in their appeal to the Soviet government for leniency toward the accused SRS on trial in Moscow.⁸ Instead of a composing single joint petition, for some reason these aging revolutionaries signed different ones.⁹ Copies of the appeal bearing Shternberg's signature and those of his fellow ethnographers Pekarskii and Bogoraz were discovered in both the GPU archives as well as Shternberg's own archive (Krasil'nikov 2002:558–59; Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/102:15–16). Given the fact that this appeal was handwritten by Shternberg, he was probably the document's author. The appeal's signatories referred to themselves as “old veterans of the People's Will and the revolutionary movement” who were no longer involved in political activities and party politics. They proclaimed that it was their “revolutionary and moral duty” to raise their voices in opposition to the death penalty sentencing of the accused SRS. They asked for leniency toward the old revolutionaries, who had fought against the same enemies as the Bolsheviks, and argued that the death penalty was a morally unacceptable measure that contradicted the spirit of socialism and was also politically unwise. Finally, they invoked their own and their Populist comrades' terrible experience of having been placed in solitary confinement or on death row. Given Shternberg's own arrest by the GPU a year earlier, submitting the appeal was definitely a courageous act. Although it went unpunished, the authorities undoubtedly noted Shternberg's petition, and it

might have been one of the reasons why he did not obtain permission to go abroad on business until 1924.

The 1922 petition was not the only act of civic courage by the aging and sickly professor. Given his ideological position and honesty, he undoubtedly resented many of the Soviet government's actions and policies. As the linguist Nikolai Poppe, a former student who knew him in the 1920s, reminisced years later, "Shternberg was a revolutionary of the old school, which held freedom to be the most important tenet of all, and he was suffering in spirit under the Soviets. He died in 1927. Had he lived longer he would probably have been arrested and left to die in a concentration camp" (1983:68). No longer able to protest political repression, Shternberg still intervened on behalf of and supported his colleagues and students being prosecuted by the authorities.

His conduct in the case of Nadezhda Briullova-Shaskol'skaia (1886–1937) is a good illustration of his courage and moral stature.¹⁰ A graduate of the Historical-Philological Faculty of the Women's Courses of Higher Education, Briullova studied classical mythology and religion in Germany and Italy for several years, where she prepared a dissertation in German on Roman animism. Upon returning to Russia, she began writing articles for the *New Encyclopedia of Brockhaus and Efron*. She married Piotr Shaskol'skii, a historian and a leading member of the moderate socialist NS Party, who also knew Shternberg very well through left-wing political activities and publications. Her own choice was the PSR, which she joined in 1910. Prior to the revolution of 1917 she taught at a woman's high school in St. Petersburg and attended Shternberg's informal lectures at the MAE, developing a strong interest in anthropology. She began applying anthropological methods and theories to the study of primitive and classical religions. At the time of the February Revolution, Briullova-Shaskol'skaia had become a prominent member of her party and its leading expert on ethnic issues. She advocated reorganizing the PSR along an ethnic-federative principle and stood for granting significant autonomy to the country's peoples. Not being Jewish, she developed a strong interest in and commitment to the Jewish liberation movement, where she got to know Shternberg even better. In 1917 she wrote several major brochures presenting her party's position on the nationalities' issue. In 1918–21 she lived in the Ukraine, working closely in the PSR with Shternberg's idol, Korolenko, and teaching history of religion at Khar'kov University.

Shternberg finally managed to bring her back to Petrograd in 1921 by finding her a job at the MAE as the curator of the African department. Thanks to him she was also able to do some teaching at the Geography Institute and the Jewish University. During this time Briullova-Shaskol'skaia attended Shternberg's lectures on primitive religion and worked on her own research papers and lectures under his close supervision. Both of them were also active in the short-lived Sociological Society.¹¹

In the wake of the SR trial of 1922, Briullova-Shaskol'skaia was arrested and put in jail. Knowing so well how important it was for a prisoner to keep his or her sanity, Shternberg sent her books and corresponded about her research. When she was finally sentenced to a three-year exile and brought to the railroad station to travel to Central Asia, Shternberg and his wife met her there and stayed with her until the train departed. Once again, he sent her books and encouraged her to be strong and take advantage of the opportunities to study local cultures. She did precisely that by conducting ethnographic research among the various Central Asian peoples. She also worked in local anthropology museums, published some scholarly works, and taught anthropology at local universities. Shternberg repeatedly lobbied for her return to Petrograd but to no avail. Briullova-Shaskol'skaia was finally allowed to return home in 1929, so that the two of them never saw each other again. As a tribute to the man she called "her main and most beloved teacher in science and in life," Briullova-Shaskol'skaia wrote a moving account of their relationship for a publication of memoirs about Shternberg that his widow was planning in the late 1920s as well as a lengthy obituary for a German sociological journal (1930).¹²

Of course, in the 1920s it was less dangerous to communicate with and help political prisoners than in the horrible 1930s and '40s. Nonetheless, many people in Shternberg's milieu were not brave enough to behave the way he did toward Briullova-Shaskol'skaia or his younger students, several of whom were exiled to western Siberia in 1923–26.¹³ Their mentor encouraged all of them to pursue ethnographic research and sent them books, dictionaries of the local native languages, and instructions on how to conduct fieldwork. As one of these students, G. Shtrom, wrote to Shternberg in 1926, "Even if I am no longer your student, you are still my dean!" (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/342:6–6a).¹⁴

Lev Iakovlevich was equally courageous in his advocacy on behalf of a number of students expelled from Petrograd University and other institutions of higher learning during the infamous 1924 “verification” (*proverka*) aimed at expelling children of the “bourgeoisie” and Trotsky supporters (Konecny 1999:103–106).¹⁵ Among the victims of this purge were the two daughters of Shternberg’s old friend, Moisei Krol’; they had returned to Russia in 1923 to study at the Petrograd University. Despite being the children of an old revolutionary, the young women were expelled. An enraged Shternberg gave the university administrators an ultimatum; either they would reinstate the Krol’ sisters or he would resign his positions as the dean of the Ethnography Division of the Geography Institute and as a university professor. His threat worked, and the two students were reinstated (Krol’ n.d.:382).¹⁶ In addition, Shternberg offered financial assistance to a number of destitute members of the old Petrograd intelligentsia.¹⁷

Despite these unpleasant incidents and a heavy teaching and administrative load, Shternberg continued his scholarly work. In fact, in the last years of his life he produced several important research papers that reflected both his unwavering adherence to evolutionism and his new openness to new research topics, methods, and theories.

Scholarship in the 1920s

As I already mentioned in the previous chapter, for Shternberg the scholar one of the most painful experiences of the Civil War years was a complete interruption of ties between the Russian and the foreign academic communities. For several years he received no mail from abroad and did not see a single current western anthropological journal or book. In this atmosphere of intellectual isolation, it was difficult for him to continue the work on the Nivkh monograph that had been commissioned by Boas (Kan 2000, 2001a). Another reason for Shternberg’s lack of progress on this project in the late 1910s and early 1920s was that, as he himself liked to say, he liked to work on issues that happened to interest him at the moment and often changed those interests (Bogoraz 1928:16).

Several of his publications from the 1920s built directly upon the work in comparative religion that he had undertaken in the previous decade. The most important was his long essay “The Cult of the Eagle among the Siberian Peoples.” First presented as a paper in 1913, it was finally published in 1925 in the first post-1917 issue of *Sbornik MAE*, which Shternberg himself edited (Shternberg

1925). The essay was a sweeping comparative study combining the basic theoretical presuppositions of evolutionist anthropology with diffusionism as well as historical ties of various ethnic groups. A similar essay published in the 1920s was Shternberg's response to a critique of his 1926 paper "The Ancient Cult of Twins in Light of Ethnography" that was leveled by a prominent Russian sinologist, Vasilii Alekseev (1925). Alekseev pointed out various inaccuracies in Shternberg's use of data from ancient China to bolster his evolutionist argument. Entitled "The Cult of Twins in China and the Indian Influence," Shternberg's response dismissed most of the criticisms and reiterated the earlier essay's evolutionist and comparativist arguments (Shternberg 1927).

During this period Shternberg also became deeply involved in researching the topic of "divine election," which he first discussed publicly at a 1916 meeting of the Ethnography Division of the RGO and which combined his two long-standing interests: the evolution of religion and the role of instincts in religious experience (see chapter 6). As I have already mentioned, these pursuits grew out of his own data collected from Nanai shamans during the 1910 expedition to the Amur region. Despite the criticism of his 1916 presentation by several prominent Siberian ethnologists, he continued exploring these phenomena in various "primitive" and world religions, finding more and more "proof" for his theory that sexuality was the main motivating force behind the "divine election" of shamans.

The resumption of communication between Petrograd ethnologists and their western colleagues occurred in the fall of 1921, when a letter by Boas finally reached Iokhel'son. The letter was a response to Iokhel'son's sending him two of his recent publications a few months earlier. As Boas put it, "I have been wishing for years to get into touch with you again and learn how you and our other Russian friends are faring. I was in Europe this summer, but could not learn anything about your whereabouts. Will you not please send me a line and let me know how you are" (Boas to Iokhel'son, September 9, 1921, Boas Papers, APS). Iokhel'son shared the letter with the other two members of the "ethno-troika," all of whom were delighted to hear from their old American friend again. As in the old days, they once again relied on him for practical assistance. Iokhel'son, who after his recent arrest decided to leave the country, asked Boas for help in obtaining the necessary permission to be allowed into the United States (Iokhel'son to Boas, November 23, 1921, Boas Papers, APS).

As far as his other two Russian colleagues were concerned, Boas, aware of the physical privations suffered by the Soviet intelligentsia, was anxious to help ease their lot. For that purpose he sent them food parcels and in late 1921 managed to obtain a commitment from the American Museum of Natural History president to pay Shternberg and Bogoraz three hundred dollars each for any contributions related to their ethnographic research in Siberia.¹⁸ In Shternberg's case, this clearly meant the Nivkh monograph (Boas to Shternberg, December 9, 1921, Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/22:64; Boas to Shternberg, May 17, 1922, Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/22:66). Shternberg was pleased to accept the offer in a June 20, 1922, letter to Osborn (Boas Papers, APS).¹⁹ Boas's friendly concern and moral support were just as important to Shternberg and his colleagues as the money they received from him. As Shternberg wrote in his June 20, 1922, letter to Boas, "I am not versed enough in the English language to duly express how strongly I have been touched by your sympathetic memory of me and my friends, Mrs. [Mr.] Bogoraz and Jochelson [sic]. It is not so much the material part—because after all our experience of these years it seems one can survive sometimes without sufficient food, warmth, and clothing, but without faith in man, without sympathy of our kind, without intercourse, especially scientific intercourse, it is too hard. . . . Your answer to our silent call was the more [sic] comforting and fortifying" (Boas Papers, APS). Mindful of his Russian colleagues' spiritual and moral needs, Boas sent them scholarly books and even an official invitation to attend the opening of the Heye Foundation Museum in New York. Finally, the resumption of their communication with Boas meant that the Russian ethnologists, frustrated by their own country's paper shortage, could satisfy their desire to be published again.

Unfortunately for Boas, neither Bogoraz nor Shternberg were willing to send him the kind of descriptive ethnographic works that he had always requested for the Jesup Expedition series. Bogoraz, with his wild imagination and voracious appetite, had recently read the works of Einstein and decided to compose an essay on "the idea of space and time in primitive cultures" (Bogoraz to Boas, February 17, 1923, Boas Papers, APS; Bogoraz 1925a, 1925b). About the same time, Shternberg informed his American friend that he had recently completed a paper dealing with "the genesis of the idea of divine election in primitive religion, especially in Siberian shamanism." Expecting Boas to be disappointed that he did not send him another installment of the Nivkh monograph, Shternberg tried to

justify his choice by saying he was not sure about the status of the monograph chapters that he had sent Boas ten years earlier, before the Great War. It is not clear why Shternberg did not send him this portion of the Gilyak manuscript, but for some reason he felt that it was not ready for publication.

With Iokhel'son's arrival in New York in 1922, communication between Boas and his Russian colleagues as well as his understanding of their situation improved considerably. Iokhel'son's letters to Bogoraz and Shternberg give us a better idea of what Boas really thought about their current work. Sometime in the beginning of 1923 Shternberg mailed his "Divine Election" paper to Iokhel'son and asked that it be translated into English for publication in *American Anthropologist*. In his two March 1923 letters to Shternberg, Iokhel'son told him that Boas was expecting him to "continue working on the materials for the Jesup Expedition . . . and not to send any theoretical articles to him" and that was not going to help translate his essay into English (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/124:24, 38–40). Despite Boas's repeated reminders and inquiries, the monograph, first commissioned two decades earlier, was never completed (see Kan 2000, 2001a). Instead, Shternberg prepared a paper entitled "Divine Election in Primitive Religion," which he delivered at the 1924 International Congress of Americanists in Göteborg and then published in English in its proceedings as well as in Russian two years later (Shternberg 1925d, 1927a).²⁰

Shternberg began the essay by summarizing the ethnographic data from the two Nanai shamans, followed by examples of similar phenomena from other Siberian cultures. The Russian ethnologist was firmly convinced that in 1910 he had made a major discovery. He selected his data to show that the power possessed by Siberian shamans was believed to have been awarded by a spirit that wanted to establish a sexual (and often marital) relationship with their "elected" or "chosen ones." He then goes on to demonstrate the presence of similar phenomena in various religious systems, both "primitive" and "advanced."

In his discussion of Nanai and other forms of Siberian shamanism, Shternberg acknowledged that the shaman's assistant spirits and even his principal one often came from his ancestors who had once been shamans themselves and, thanks to a "natural parental or kin sentiment," decide to favor their descendant. However, in his view, "this idea of inheriting guardian spirits seems to be a secondary one and could have developed completely independently from the idea of divine election. It could have arisen, as a natural conclusion from

the fact of physiological inheritance—a complex of emotions that is the *sine qua non* of shamanism” (1933a:463). Another reason why the centrality of the ancestral spirits in shamanism was a later development was the fact that “someone must surely have elected the ancestor himself and given him his assistant spirits” (1936: 141). These spirits, he says, were the ones who developed a strong physical attraction toward the neophyte and offered him special power in exchange for sex and marriage. The fact that a person usually became a shaman during puberty or soon thereafter was, for Shternberg, further proof of the accuracy of his argument.

Relying primarily on his own Nanai ethnography to develop the entire divine election theory as well as the most “spectacular” proof of its validity, Shternberg had very little other data from the Amur River to back up his claims. The 1924 version of the paper contained only one other example from the region: an incident involving a Manchu shaman, reported by Shirokogorov in one of his earliest essays (1919). Untroubled by the scarcity of supporting data from the indigenous peoples of the Far East, Shternberg continued his search for divine election in the rest of Siberia, focusing mainly on societies whose cosmology and shamanism were more complex than those of the Nanai and their neighbors. Admitting that the evidence was not as good as he would have liked it to be, he relied heavily on unpublished information obtained from his colleagues and graduate students, supplementing it with bits of data gleaned from published sources.²¹ Thus his Yakut (Sakha) evidence came only from an educated Sakha woman who had informed him that certain female spirits were believed to engage in sex with male shamans; however, one would be hard-pressed to interpret her testimony as proof that all (or even most) Sakha shamans received their power from their spiritual lovers.

Shternberg's data on the Buryat and some of the Altai peoples appear more convincing. According to his Buryat source, despite the fact that their shaman usually received his power and vocation from an ancestor, his initiation included sexual relations with a female spirit-maiden whom he would locate in the heavenly realm, while his final “installation” ceremony contained many elements of an ordinary wedding.²² While not all of Shternberg's examples from Altai shamanism could be interpreted as solid proof of his thesis, the information provided for him by his graduate student, Nadezhda Dyrenkova, on the shamanic initiation among the Shors is impressive and has not been

discredited by subsequent studies.²³ According to her, the assistant spirits of every Shor shaman included both ancestral ones as well as his “heavenly wife.” The final test of a neophyte shaman included his ritualized marriage to this woman symbolized by his tambourine, which she was supposed to penetrate (cf. Dyrenkova 1930).

Having focused on the few cases that seemed to support his argument, Shternberg added pieces of information from the rest of Siberia (mainly Finno-Ugric and so-called Paleoasiatic peoples) as well as North and South America. Few of these examples seem to support his hypothesis, and one gets the impression that he was now willing to use any evidence even vaguely related to sexually motivated divine election. Convinced by now of the validity of his theory, he did not question any of these cases. In fact, the strongest further supporting evidence for his thesis came from a much more “advanced” religious phenomenon—Shaktism. He argued that despite the “lofty mysticism” of this cult—it was based on the idea that supernatural power could be obtained by means of sexual intercourse with a particular female spirit called Shakti, who acted as the primary factor in the creation of the universe—“it has preserved . . . certain . . . features which we distinctly recognize in Siberian shamanism” (1925a:493). Shaktism was of great interest to Shternberg because, in his view, it illustrated two manifestations of the universal process of religious evolution: from “passive” election (when a spirit seeks his or her human lover) to “active” election (when a human being seeks to establish an intimate relationship with a spirit in order to gain power, wisdom, etc.); and from the more “primitive” forms of human-spirit relationships, which centered on sexuality, to the more “advanced” ones marked by ethical ideals and metaphysical love towards deities. For Shternberg, Shaktism was also a good example of how belief in the possibility of direct intimate relations with a spirit or deity was replaced by sexual intercourse between a man and an earthly woman believed to be Shakti’s reincarnation, and how a multitude of spirits (“shaktis,” or powers) coalesced into a single universal female goddess (like the “Great Mother”).

Shternberg’s discussion of divine election in Hinduism was followed by a breathtaking review of a variety of “related phenomena,” such as “sacred marriage” between a human being and a deity, temple prostitution, vestal virgins, virgin birth, a medieval European belief in the witches’ sexual relations with the devil, and a number of other well-known myths, religious beliefs, and practices.

The paper ended with a brief discussion of a major evolutionary leap that occurred with the establishment of monotheistic religions, which emphasize an “elected” person’s spiritual love of and devotion to his or her God.²⁴

What are we to make of Shternberg’s hypothesis of divine election? As far as Nanai ethnography is concerned, the existing evidence seems to indicate that while some shamans were believed to have received their power from a spiritual lover or spouse, there were various other ways that power could be acquired. Although the data collected by some of the other Nanai ethnographers (like his student Iosif Koz’minskii) supports Shternberg’s interpretation, the leading scholar among them—Anna Smoliak, who studied Nanai shamanism between the 1950s and the mid-1980s—rejected it (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/145:1; Smoliak 1991).²⁵ Shternberg’s student Shirokogorov, a prominent expert on Evenk shamanism, argued that in their culture the idea of a sexual attraction between a shaman and his patron-spirit was almost nonexistent (Shirokogoroff 1935:365–367). In other Siberian cultures the belief in a shaman’s divine election seems to have been one of several ways in which power was believed to be transmitted from a spirit to a shaman (Potapov 1991:132). As Eliade pointed out in his classic work on shamanism, “It does not seem that sexual relations with spirits constitute the essential and determining element in shamanic vocation” (1972:74; cf. Basilov 1984:43).

Nevertheless, while Shternberg’s evolutionary hypothesis clearly does not work as a universal explanation of the origin and development of shamanism, his questioning of the presence of sexual imagery and erotic emotions in Siberian shamanism and in related religious systems elsewhere in the world was innovative and has been confirmed by subsequent research in several parts of the world (see Romanova 1995:110–111; Funk 1997, *passim*). While Shternberg’s essay does not cite Freud, his focus on the central role of sexuality in religious experience echoed the intellectual agenda of many social and behavioral scientists of the first decades of the twentieth century and explains the strong interest that his presentation in Göteborg generated among the ICA participants.

There were two reasons for his focus on the issue of sexuality in divine election. On the one hand, he had always been interested in the role of instincts and emotions in culture and became particularly concerned with them in the 1920s. On the other hand, Shternberg’s view that the human sexual instinct was the

most basic one and therefore the original motivation for divine election was clearly inspired by his evolutionist views as well as his own attitude toward religion. Thus, like his “Divine Election” paper, his lectures on the evolution of religion delivered at Leningrad State University in 1925–27 demonstrate that, like many late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century evolutionist anthropologists and sociologists, he saw religion and other forms of sociocultural life advancing from the most primitive forms motivated by “basic instincts” (sexuality, hunger, desire to survive) to the more advanced ones influenced by emotions like love of one’s kinship group, tribe, nation, and ultimately humanity as a whole. After all, his manuscript on Nivkh social organization was an attempt to trace the evolution from “group marriage” to monogamy (Shternberg 1999; Kan 2000, 2001a). Finally, central to Shternberg’s own worldview—a peculiar mix of the nineteenth-century European progressivism, Russian Populism, and Jewish liberalism—was the notion that spiritually and morally motivated actions were superior to those inspired by “basic” instincts and emotions (like sexuality) and that monotheism (and especially Judaism), with its emphasis on belief and morality, was superior to “primitive religions,” which emphasized ritual and other ways of manipulating supernatural powers and spirits.

Like “Divine Election in Primitive Religion,” Shternberg’s other major scholarly work of the 1920s, “The Ainu Problem,” was marked by a combination of old and new research interests and theoretical approaches. Written for the Third Pan-Pacific Congress held in Japan in 1926 and published posthumously in 1929, this ambitious essay attempts to answer the question of the origin of the “mysterious Ainu,” who had long puzzled Russian and foreign scholars alike. In a way, Shternberg’s scholarly work had come full circle: his last major research paper brought him back to the people and the issues that first attracted his attention during his Sakhalin exile.

At the heart of the “Ainu enigma,” at least as it was understood in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, was the fact that their physical characteristics (long beards, hirsute bodies, large stature, deep-set eyes, and facial features) made the Ainu appear very different from other Asian populations.²⁶ To some Western observers the Ainu seemed to have “Aryan” (Caucasian) features. Many of their customs, including the practice of capturing, raising, and ceremonially killing bears, were also seen as a mark of their unique and peculiar “savagery.” Using data from physical anthropology, linguistics, or, to

a lesser extent, ethnography and archaeology, scholars proposed various hypotheses about the origin of the Ainu. Dissatisfied with all of them, Shternberg critiqued these theories and argued that one had to utilize the entire body of available data and especially “the entire complex of their material and spiritual culture” (Shternberg 1929:336).

On the basis of such comprehensive and multifaceted analysis, Shternberg concluded that the ancestors of the Ainu had come from Astronesia. As a museum scholar, Shternberg drew heavily on material culture, pointing to similarities between Ainu and Astronesian clothing, pottery, decorative designs, and tattooing. He also found “striking similarities” between the Ainu bear cult and their other religious practices and those of Oceania and Southeast Asia. Finally, he found further support for his hypothesis in various data from physical anthropology and linguistics.

Modern-day anthropologists no longer accept Shternberg’s hypothesis. As Fitzhugh (1999:17) recently noted, anthropologists today generally consider ethnological parallels, trait-list comparisons, folklore, and other types of ethnological data as incapable of providing reliable evidence for reconstructing cultural history, believing these areas to be too malleable and susceptible to borrowing or reinvention, besides being impossible to verify. Ultimately, the problem for ethnological reconstruction is the lack of chronological depth, because ethnological evidence exists only within the range of written or oral history. For these reasons, it is archaeological research (and a much more advanced study of biological evidence), which in the Ainu region was still in a rather rudimentary state in the 1920s, that has come to the fore as the main method for researching cultural origins. On the basis of this research most contemporary scholars agree that Ainu origins lie within the Jomon culture, which occupied much of the Japanese archipelago throughout the Holocene period and persisted in an evolved form in Hokkaido until around 500 CE (Fitzhugh 1999:18).

It is important to note that Shternberg’s method of reconstructing the history of an ethnic group by studying the history of each of its major constituent kinship groups, which he first used in his Sakhalin research and further developed in the Ainu essay, had a significant impact on what came to be known as “ethnogenesis” in subsequent Soviet works. In fact this line of research became central to the Soviet archaeology, physical anthropology, and ethnology of the 1940s–80s (Roon and Sirina 2004:65).

From the perspective of Shternberg's intellectual biography, the importance of the "Ainu Problem" lies in his research methodology, which was quite innovative for its time. By the late 1920s he had become very interested in the issue of diffusion and culture-element distribution. This does not mean that his commitment to evolutionism was weakening, but it indicates that he was not dogmatic and was clearly open to new ideas and methods popular in Western anthropology of the 1910s–20s, such as the work of Paul Rivet on the origin of South American Indians (1943). This openness was also evident in the lecture courses he offered to his students in the early 1920s at the Geography Institute and in 1925–27 at the Leningrad State University.

At both institutions Shternberg was responsible for the core of the cultural anthropology (ethnography) curriculum, teaching such courses as Introduction to Ethnography, Evolution of Social Organization, and "Evolution of Religion."²⁷ On the surface they appear to be a clear reflection of his evolutionist views. In fact, he described himself in these lectures as an adherent of the "old classical evolutionist school." Much of what he told his classes had already been expressed by him in a variety of publications, from the 1900s encyclopedia articles to ethnological works on the Nivkh. As his students recalled, he continued speaking about Morgan and Tylor with such enthusiasm it was as if they had been his revolutionary comrades. Nonetheless, a more careful reading of these lectures reveals a more nuanced picture that does not allow us to simply label Shternberg as a "classic" nineteenth-century evolutionist.

To begin with, there was Shternberg's view on the nature of culture and ethnic identity, which echoed that of Boas. As he put it in an introductory ethnography course, "The unity of a people rests on a set of common experiences, which create a complex of such strong memories and emotions that they unite millions of people into a single psychological as well as historical whole" (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/21:26). As a socialist Shternberg could not deny the existence of cultural differences between the various socioeconomic classes within a single society, but he argued that many strong emotions and powerful experiences were shared by all of the members of a people (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/21:26). His definition of culture was unabashedly idealist and thus contrary to Marxist-Leninist views. In his words, "The real cultural values are the inventions and discoveries expressed in knowledge and habits and not those material objects, in which they from time to time

manifest themselves. The latter are only temporary. . . . A system of classification of cultures should be based on the products of culture and not on ethnic groups, peoples, [and] somatic or linguistic characteristics" (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/21:123). While remaining an optimist who firmly believed that "by its nature, culture was a progressive phenomenon, beneficial for humankind," he acknowledged that any serious interruption in cultural evolution could lead to a cultural slowdown or even a regression, while a one-sided development of culture could lead to "pathological results" (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/21:123). Since the examples of such regression and pathology given in Shternberg's lecture tended to come from the Great War and other dramatic recent events in Europe, it is clear that, like many of his European colleagues, he had lost at least some of his earlier optimism that had been so typical of classical evolutionists (cf. Stocking 1995). Still, his naïve late-nineteenth-century optimism remained strong. He continued to argue that, despite various exceptions, cultural evolution tended to correspond to progress, which he understood as a gradual acquisition of the best humanistic values of Western culture by all the peoples of the world. As a utopian socialist, he also spoke of a future when mankind as a whole would share one culture and when all people, and not just a select few, would demonstrate cultural creativity.

In his discussion of the "dynamics of evolutionary development," Shternberg also advocated a position that differed from that of classic evolutionism. In his view, despite the importance of inner sources of evolutionary development, the most powerful factor in the dynamics of evolution was contact between two cultures. First and foremost, since evolution was a product of the accumulation of new inventions, each new invention was the product of the creativity of an individual. Each separate society had only a limited number of such creative individuals. Consequently, an encounter between several societies increased the number of individuals who create culture. This happened because an exchange of inventions led to an increase in the total number of inventions. Not only did an encounter between two different social environments stimulate increased activity within each of them; meetings between two different cultures tested the institutions of each (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/21:198–199).

While he acknowledged the importance of borrowing in the process of socio-cultural evolution, he was not willing to surrender the fundamental postulates

of evolutionism to diffusionism. In fact, he gave credit to diffusionists for some very important discoveries, yet he criticized their theories as “fashionable” but seriously flawed; he was particularly critical of their denial of the possibility of independent invention of similar cultural institutions.

Even though the arguments and speculative reconstructions presented in Shternberg's lectures on the evolution of social organization were quite similar to those in his monograph on Nivkh social organization, his course on the evolution of religion, which on the whole adhered pretty closely to Tylor, did contain some new ideas on the subject that were not present or fully developed in his earlier works. Throughout his lectures, Shternberg did not hesitate to criticize or modify the theories of such giants of classical evolutionism as Wilhelm Wundt, James Frazer, and Tylor himself, attributing their errors to the fact that they were armchair ethnologists.²⁸ At the same time he did not shy away from critiquing the more recent theories of primitive religion, such as that of Lucien Lévi-Bruhl.

Shternberg's definition of religion—“one of the forms of the struggle for survival in the area where all of man's own physical and intellectual efforts, all of his inventiveness and outstanding talents are powerless”—resembled that of Tylor and Malinowski (1936:248). His course covered an impressive number of issues, drawing on a large body of data from “primitive” cultures as well as the ancient Near East, South and East Asia, classical Greece and Rome, and the Judeo-Christian tradition. While some of his interpretations of specific religious beliefs and rituals (for example, totemism or the twin cult) demonstrated his impressive erudition and intellect, on the whole there was little that was truly original in this lecture course, which seems to belong to late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century anthropology rather than that of the 1920s.

From the point of view of Shternberg's intellectual biography and the effect of his teaching on the first generation of Soviet anthropologists, however, the last lecture, which focused on the transition from polytheism to monotheism, is a very interesting one. Without citing Durkheim and Mauss (or Marx), Shternberg asserted that a revolutionary change in social organization (that is, the rise of centralized empires) contributed to the change in religious ideology, with the new social order being projected upon the cosmos. He then proceeded to discuss the development of two types of monotheism: an “animistic” kind (typical of Egypt, where the sun eventually became a monotheistic

deity but remained an animistic and an anthropomorphic being) and an “ethical” type, developed by the Semitic peoples. In the latter, the single deity loses its anthropomorphic features and eventually becomes a purely ethical being. Not surprisingly, he saw the latter form of monotheism as being superior to the former. In fact, he suddenly abandoned the notion that forms of religion reflect forms of social organization and argued, instead, that the new ethical monotheism refused to accept a dramatic inequality between classes that developed in the centralized states. Here he began to speak more as a Jewish socialist, humanist, and patriot rather than simply a classical evolutionist. He extolled the idea, present in several monotheistic religions, that truth and justice must prevail in this world and that eventually “god’s kingdom on earth” would triumph. At the same time he described Christianity as a “pessimistic” form of monotheism that focuses on the salvation of the individual rather than the entire society and promises mankind happiness in the other world.

Although his lecture course did not mention Judaism as “optimistic” monotheism that advocated the need to create a just society on earth rather than in heaven, this idea was clearly present in his thinking. He had already expressed it in the essays published in Jewish periodicals before 1917 and elaborated on it in a major paper on “Jewish national psychology” delivered to the JHES and published in *Evreiskaia Starina* in 1924. In this ambitious essay, part scholarly research and part ethnic boosting, Shternberg described the key characteristics of the Jewish national character, a subject discussed by numerous other scholars before and during his time, and tackled the complex issue of its unique origins. In terms of our discussion of the new developments in Shternberg’s scholarly worldview, the most important aspect of this essay is his attempt to establish the psychobiological, and not just cultural and historical, causes of certain traits of the Jewish national psychology.

He began by stating that the character of every people is composed of universal human traits as well as particular traits. The latter are the product of two conditions. First, there are the geographical, ecological, economic, political, and historical conditions, and when they change, the national character changes as well. Second, there are those unique characteristics of a national character that remain unchanged “during the course of a people’s entire history, regardless of the changes in the environment and temporary circumstances of a people’s life. These characteristics are biological and they are transmitted unchanged

from one generation to the next” (Shternberg 1924a:6–7). Under different circumstances, these characteristics may become weaker or distorted but never disappear altogether; under favorable conditions, they can reemerge again. The flexible environmental traits represent a people’s social heritage, while the unchanging traits make up its biological heritage. Given this understanding of the causes of national psychology of a people, Shternberg defined it as “not some concrete manifestations, which are malleable, but a complex of hereditary inclinations, abilities, and unique characteristics of the psychological and intellectual makeup, which serve as the basis for the development of various concrete characteristics of a people” (Shternberg 1924a:7–8). He went on to admit that, like a people’s physical characteristics, this “biological complex” can change over time, but he insisted that it changes very slowly, much more slowly than a people’s sociocultural characteristics.

A necessary precondition for the development of this stable “racial complex” is the ethnic group’s isolation. One of the main causes of this isolation is endogamy. Invoking (for the first time in his writing) Mendel’s revolutionary discovery of recessive genes, Shternberg concluded that “as far as its national psychology is concerned, no ethnic group disappears altogether, regardless of the amount of interbreeding it experiences.” His understanding of Mendel’s theory of heredity, combined with what appears to be an old Populist belief in the power of the intellectual leaders to shape a group’s history, led him to argue that “in the domain of [human] psychology, quality is more important than quantity . . . because an especially gifted minority makes a strong imprint on the physiognomy of its entire people. In every generation, this minority, with the power of its intellectual hypnosis, influences the psychology of those individuals who do not possess this hereditary psychology” (Shternberg 1924a:12). In classic Populist fashion, he compared this intellectual minority to a “ferment, which brings to life the entire inert masses.”

Having outlined his view of the inheritance of psychological traits within a certain people, Shternberg proclaimed that the most difficult problem in the study of national psychology was finding the most important specific psychological type, the one that manifests itself repeatedly in the course of a people’s entire history. Even more difficult, he adds, was tracing the existence of a historical period when a racial type was created in isolation. Because of these difficulties, Jewish national psychology represented for him “an absolutely unique

material for research, a kind of unique experiment in the laboratory of world history” (Shternberg 1924a:13). What made Jewish history unique, in his view, was the fact that, because of the centuries of diaspora, the connection between this history and the physical and social environments occupied by the Jews has been weaker than among any other people. Combined with a tradition of endogamy, Jewish history represented a unique phenomenon.

The next question that Shternberg raised was how best to study this “dominant racial type, which has created a unique physiognomy of the Jewish people.” In his view, “the unique psychological characteristics of a people can be uncovered by analyzing the concrete historical practices of this people” (Shternberg 1924a:15). Of course, the question of which of these practices the researcher should focus on is a very subjective one. For Shternberg, they should be the practices “marked by a unique intensity of psychic and intellectual energy needed in order to manifest them, whether these would be some remarkable cultural institutions, outstanding intellectual accomplishment, or acts of emotional or moral creativity” (Shternberg 1924a:15). Outstanding individuals, whose actions and thoughts best reveal the unique characteristics of their people, could also be the focus of this kind of research.

Given his view that a people’s psychology has to be studied by analyzing “the most outstanding moments of its creativity and manifestation of its will [*voleproiavlentie*],” Shternberg began his discussion of the specific characteristics of the Jewish national character by focusing on his favorite topic: the discovery of monotheism, “that decisive and unprecedented moment, which accounts for the Jewish people’s universal historical significance” (Shternberg 1924a:16). For him, who had always favored belief over ritual in Judaism, it is the early and pure Jewish monotheism that is absolutely unique in human history, not the later developments that “covered it with a spider web of beliefs so foreign to it.” In a dramatic leap of faith, he hypothesized that it was the “original racial element” of the minority within the Jewish people who created this pure original monotheism and fought against the “pagan religious beliefs and foreign ethnic psychology” subsequently introduced. The former was associated with the northern part of Palestine, and the latter with the southern. Describing these later additions to the original Judaism as manifestations of “regression,” Shternberg argued that what was unique about Judaism was the eventual victory of the pure monotheism of the minority over the polytheism of the

majority. In contrast, he believed that many other originally monotheistic religions, like Christianity, had become forever contaminated with elements of polytheism and “double-faith” (*duoeverie*).

At this point Shternberg began to modify his theory, arguing that Judaism was such a unique phenomenon in world history that “it does not fit the ordinary mold of evolution” (Shternberg 1924a:21). In his view, unlike most other socio-cultural phenomena, Judaism developed as a result of a leap. As he put it,

The original concept of Jewish monotheism has to be seen as an individual discovery, which had been made in an isolated environment by some sort of a social group, like the Rechabites, and then planted its root thanks to a special complex of psychological traits, present within the ethnic group of this brilliant discoverer. Such individual discoveries of monotheism could have happened outside the Jewish environment as well. However, in order for them to become the property of an entire ethnic group, it was necessary for some specific inherited psychological traits to exist with it, which would favor an acceptance of such a purely intellectual concept. (Shternberg 1924a:21–22)

For Shternberg, proof of the fact that this discovery and triumph of monotheism resulted from “hereditary [group] psychology, rather than a power of tradition,” lay in the total victory of the monotheist minority, without any pressure from above and despite very unfavorable internal and external conditions.

Following this argument, he introduced a virtual hymn to Judaism as a unique religion that totally rejected the polytheism of its neighbors as well as their tradition of depicting their gods. He also juxtaposed its own ideal of social justice to the polytheistic cult of brute force and sensuality, and its notion of a holy nation with that of a militarily victorious people. Here, the Jewish socialist, who sang similar praises to Judaism in *Novyi Voskhod*, goes even further and argues that the original Judaism proclaimed the unity and holiness of humankind, not just of the Jewish people, and called for the building of God’s kingdom on earth (Shternberg 1924a:23–25).

In trying to explain a sharp contrast between polytheism and monotheism (especially in its “pure” Judaic form), Shternberg once again appealed to psychology by arguing that while the former was the product of a “sensualist” type

of mentality, the latter was the result of an “intellectualist-rationalist” mentality (Shternberg 1924a:26). In his characterization, monotheism emerged as a kind of scientific reasoning without the benefit of modern science. The final proof of his hypothesis was, for him, the impressive accomplishments of the Jewish scientific and literary intelligentsia of Europe since emancipation.²⁹

In his brief overview of Jewish history, Shternberg again emphasized the rational and intellectual, rather than emotional, thrust of the teachings of Jewish prophets as well as the work of philosophers and political figures. He described his favorite figures of that history, the Biblical prophets, as being “pure rationalists, despite their emotionalism.” Not surprisingly, he saw Moses Maimonides as a typical Jewish philosopher and rejected mysticism as a marginal phenomenon within the history of Jewish theology and philosophy. He also characterized the leading Jewish philosophers of the more recent era, such as Baruch Spinoza, Moses Mendelssohn, Marx, Herman Cohn, or Henri Bergson, as “pure rationalists.”

Along with emphasizing repeatedly the extreme rationalism of the Jews, Shternberg also drew attention to this people’s “intense emotionalism” and a “high level of [social] activity” (Shternberg 1924a:31–32). For him social activity grew logically out of emotionalism. In this manner, the “monistic enthusiasm” of Jewish thought demanded that God’s world be just and that human beings struggle to turn the ideal of universal brotherhood and justice into reality. This Jewish socialist saw this impulse toward social action as the basis for another key attribute of Jewish history and national psychology: “propheticism.” The long line of prophets who not only preached social justice and freedom but actively fought for it included the prophet Moses (“who began his career with a terrorist act of killing an Egyptian slave-master”), the prophet Ezra, the Maccabees, Rabbi Akiva, and Jewish socialists of all stripes, from Marx to Lassal to the leaders of the SR and SD parties.³⁰ In a fashion typical of a Jewish socialist, he referred to Marx’s works as “not only the new Bible of our times but also a book of a new type of social predictions” and compared the subsequent commentaries and exegeses on these works to a “new Talmud” (Shternberg 1924a:31–32). Thus, for Shternberg, an inclination toward sociopolitical action was neither an accident of history nor the influence of the environment or the historical moment, but a product of the psychology of that early racial type that is exemplified by the biblical prophets.

The last major attribute of the Jewish national psychology that Shternberg discussed was its optimism and worldly orientation, which he contrasted with the pessimism and the otherworldly orientation of Buddhism and Christianity. In conclusion, he reiterated his main argument: it was thanks to the unique characteristics of their national psychology that the Jews had been able to contribute “absolutely unique” ethical and intellectual values.

The essay ends with a call to his audience (the Jewish intelligentsia) to continue cultivating these qualities for the sake of the Jewish people, whose national conscience was in need of cultivating and strengthening, and humanity as a whole. The author also rejected the argument that some of the examples of Jewish social and political engagement presented in the essay could be used by the anti-Semites and expressed a strong conviction that the future lay with the Jews and not with those who hate them, whom he refers to as “the dying monster of the old barbarianism” (Shternberg 1924a:31–32: 44).

What are we to make of an essay that one modern researcher described as “rather interesting but not convincing” (Greenbaum 1994:21)? First, it illustrates Shternberg’s persistent interest in physical anthropology, particularly the issues related to the evolution of racial characteristics, and his attempts to bring together a study of human culture and biology.³¹ Second, it shows an increased interest in human psychology, which he developed in the 1910s and especially the 1920s.³² Third, it demonstrates how much he tried to unite his evolutionism, socialist ideals, and philosemitism. These attempts were not very successful, since his belief in the uniqueness of the Jewish people and of Judaism clashed with his sociocultural evolutionism. At the same time, one can see here how his ideas about Jewish culture and history challenged his nineteenth-century evolutionism. Finally, this essay, one of the last published by Shternberg, clearly shows that he remained loyal to the fundamental political and moral ideals of his youth until the very end of his life.³³

From the vantage point of modern biology and anthropology, it is easy to criticize Lev Iakovlevich’s interpretation of the causes of Jewish cultural persistence. For one thing, he did not understand genetics very well. When he spoke of the “Jewish race,” he was actually focusing only on selected phenomena of Jewish religious and cultural history and on the Western-educated Ashkenazi Jews. At the same time, his foray into Jewish “racial history” resembled those of other Jewish physical and cultural anthropologists of the pre–World War II

era.³⁴ Like Shternberg, they “seemed to have been unsure as to where the influence of race began and where it ended, and at what point history became the decisive factor” (Efron 1994:178). Like him, they too tried to use the concept of a unique Jewish race to combat anti-Semitism and to offer their Jewish readers “comfort, dignity, and hope” (Efron 1994:180). What is more remarkable is that when it came to defining and characterizing the Jews, Shternberg, who otherwise favored environmental, historical, and cultural interpretations of human evolution, turned to biology and psychology. It should be pointed out that the views on race articulated in this essay were shared by many other social scientists of Shternberg’s era, including—ironically—the advocates of the superiority of the “Nordic” (“Aryan”) race and outright anti-Semites (Kenneth Korey, personal communication, 2004; Patai and Patai Wing 1975; Barkan 1992; Efron 1994). At the same time Franz Boas was very critical of such ideas (1924, 1925).

The final example of Shternberg’s somewhat eclectic openness to new ideas and theories, even if some of these were only pure conjectures, is a paper written for an 1925 academic meeting in which he examined the fashionable new “Japhetic theory” of a Russian linguist, Nikolai Marr (1864–1935), in light of various ethnographic data. Although only the notes for the paper (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/191:269–309) and its résumé (Shternberg 1935) survive, one can get a fairly good idea of what Shternberg was trying to say in it.

First, we need to establish what Marr’s “theory” was about and why it attracted the attention of various prominent scholars in the 1920s. A talented specialist in Georgian and Armenian linguistics and archaeology, Marr had already made an impressive career prior to 1917. He became the dean of the Faculty of Oriental Languages in 1911 and a member of the Academy of Sciences a year later. By that time he had also begun developing his eccentric linguistic theories, including the Japhetic one. By applying a study of sound laws, which operated beyond time, place, and dialect, to Georgian and Semitic languages, he concluded that their phonetic and morphological systems were strikingly similar. Using some additional and shaky linguistic “proof,” Marr came to assert that Georgian was a typical representative of the “Japhetic branch” of a large “Noetic” family, which included Semitic languages. Eventually, Marr included all the languages of the Caucasus in the Japhetic family and then proceeded to add to it various dead languages of the Mediterranean, such as Etruscan and

Sumerian. By the early 1920s Marr had concluded that the Japhetides were the original inhabitants of the Mediterranean and that they had later mixed with the Indo-Europeans, the Semites, and other peoples. Eventually, the Japhetic element acquired global proportion in his theorizing (Alpatov 1991:27). For him, languages across the world had preserved tangible evidence of the earlier stage of human speech. By turning the Japhetic languages into a kind of Ur-language of humanity, he in a way made them superior to the Indo-European ones.³⁵

A charismatic teacher and persuasive debater who had become a minor celebrity by the early 1920s, Marr was “a powerful academic entrepreneur” (Slezkine 1996:33). In 1921 he managed to organize a major scholarly institution—the State Academy for the Study of the History of Material Culture (GAIMK)—as well as a Japhetic Institute, the only research institute within the Academy of Sciences dedicated exclusively to linguistics. Initially, the institute only had a few full-time staff members. Using his ties within the Academy and the power of persuasion, however, Marr was able to attract a significant number of prominent Orientalists, historians, ethnologists, and other humanities scholars, including Bogoraz and Shternberg, as paid consultants (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/103).³⁶ As Alpatov (1991:29) pointed out, most of these scholars were not linguists per se and never strongly supported Marr’s Japhetic and other grand theories or took a very active part in the work of his institute. Nonetheless, Marr’s extraordinary personality and his passionate dedication to exploring new scholarly directions did appeal to them. In addition, Marr’s theory attracted nonlinguists working in other fields of the humanities who believed that it could help them penetrate the depths of prehistory, for which no direct evidence existed. The scientific jargon that filled Marr’s writings and his numerous linguistic examples impressed nonlinguists and created an illusion that the mystery of at least one component of human prehistory—language—had already been to some extent solved and that this could provide a key to solving other ones. In Alpatov’s words, “Marr’s paleontology promised to reach such depths that the traditional comparative linguistics could not even claim to do” (1991:54–55).

Unfortunately, by the mid-1920s Marr’s Japhetic theory evolved into a “new science of language,” which Alpatov (1991:54–55) has identified as a “myth.” The real tragedy for Soviet linguistics was the fact that, thanks to Marr’s entrepreneurial talent and an increasing use of Marxist and pseudo-Marxist rhetoric,

these eccentric “theories” gradually became dogma, and those scholars who dared to disagree with them were not only expelled from the Academy but in many cases arrested. However, in 1925, when Shternberg was preparing his paper, he could not have foreseen that within a decade Marrist linguistics would become the only kind permitted in the USSR.

From the outset, Shternberg admitted that while he was not competent to judge the validity of Marr’s “very original” linguistic theory, it seemed a priori feasible to him because of some current views in archaeology and comparative linguistics on the relationship between the various “pre-Aryan” cultures and peoples of the Mediterranean and the Near East (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/191:272–273). Like many other nonspecialists, Shternberg relied totally and uncritically on Marr’s analysis of the languages of the Caucasus. He then proceeded to draw on a large body of ethnological and archaeological data from this region to suggest that the peoples labeled Japhetides by Marr had indeed possessed a variety of shared cultural traits. He concluded that scholars working on Japhetic theory could use his own comparative ethnographic method effectively for the study of the ethnogenesis of peoples located very far from each other (Shternberg 1935:58). Like the “Ainu Problem,” this paper demonstrates that, without abandoning his lifelong preoccupation with the evolution of human culture as a whole, Shternberg was now becoming more interested in the origins of specific cultures.

The fact that in the mid-1920s Shternberg was clearly one of Soviet Russia’s leading ethnologists is further illustrated by the key role he played in establishing the first post-1917 journal in his field. Entitled *Etnografiia*, it began publication in 1926. Its editorial board consisted of the ethnologists of the old school. In addition to Shternberg, there was Ol’denburg, David Zolotariov (1885–1935), and Boris Sokolov (1889–1930).³⁷ Both Zolotarev and Sokolov received their training in ethnology before the Bolshevik coup and taught ethnology or worked for the country’s major ethnographic museums in the 1920s.³⁸ While a few of the articles published in *Etnografiia* in 1926–29 reflected the politics of the time and the new research agenda of the Soviet era, there was no single party line that its contributors followed, and the influence of Marxism was barely felt. Articles dealing with theory and reviews of new works in foreign ethnology exhibited a variety of approaches. One of the most important essays published during this

period was undoubtedly Shternberg's detailed review of contemporary western ethnology, discussed later in this chapter (Shternberg 1926a).³⁹

In another sign of the high esteem Shternberg enjoyed among the country's anthropologists and government officials overseeing his discipline, late in 1926 the Commissariat of Education asked him to serve on the organizing committee of the proposed All-Union Congress of Ethnologists and Physical Anthropologists. The committee was to consist of ten members—five from Moscow and five from Leningrad, with Shternberg and Zolotariov being the only ethnologists among them. Finally, only a month before his death Shternberg was commissioned by the Academy of Sciences to contribute an essay on the accomplishments of Soviet ethnology and biological anthropology for a volume marking the tenth anniversary of the Bolshevik regime.⁴⁰

Shternberg prepared all of his last major essays and publications within an intellectual environment that no longer consisted only of his Russian colleagues. With the end of Soviet Russia's isolation in the early 1920s, he resumed intensive correspondence with colleagues around the world, once again becoming one of his country's most cosmopolitan anthropologists.

Rebuilding International Academic Cooperation

With the end of the Civil War and the easing of the international blockade of Soviet Russia, the country's leading scholars began asking the government to enable them to restore ties between the Russian and the foreign scholarly communities. Gradually Soviet authorities began easing restrictions on written communication between domestic and foreign scholars and on foreign travel by the former. They also allowed foreign scholars to send books as well as food parcels and money to their Russian colleagues. Initially, however, it was not easy to obtain permission to travel abroad. While some prominent members of the Academy of Sciences, like Ol'denburg, were able to visit Western Europe in 1921–23, authorities denied Shternberg's repeated requests to do so even though he had been endorsed by the Academy.

Despite these disappointments, his ability to correspond once again with such old colleagues and friends as Boas and Hartman was a great relief to him. While Boas, began sending books, food parcels, and eventually small honoraria to Shternberg, Hartman made an effort to bring him and his family to Sweden (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/52:21–21A).⁴¹ In 1923–24 Shternberg's

communication with Western colleagues and familiarity with the latest foreign anthropological literature increased significantly. In addition to Boas, he now relied on Iokhel'son to send him the works of Lowie, Wissler, and Alexander Goldenweiser as well as the latest issues of the main American anthropological periodicals. Once the Soviet government finally began allocating some foreign currency for the purchase of scholarly books and journals published abroad, Shternberg's personal library as well as the collections of the MAE began receiving German, French, British, and other European publications. New ethnographic data and research issues presented in these publications found their way into his lectures and publications.

Like most other Soviet scholars, Shternberg was able to reestablish ties first with his German colleagues, whose country signed a separate peace treaty with Soviet Russia before the end of World War I, and then with Scandinavian colleagues, whose countries had remained neutral during the Great War. Only by the mid-1920s was he also able to communicate extensively with French, British, Polish, and other European colleagues. However, his and Bogoraz's extensive correspondence with Boas was due not so much to a favorable climate in United States–Soviet relations but to Boas's special ties with the Russian “ethno-troika” and his pro-Soviet sympathies. Thus, as Iokhel'son wrote to Shternberg in late March 1923, “Contrary to expectations, Boas belongs to those Americans who are sympathetic to the USSR.” Although Boas did not make many public pronouncements about the Bolshevik Revolution and their new regime, in his *Anthropology and Modern Life*, written in the 1920s, he commented favorably on the USSR's promotion of indigenous minorities' languages and described Soviet Russia as “a great, radical economic experiment” (1928:89–90). He even considered visiting the Soviet Union in the summer of 1923, but that plan never materialized.

Nonetheless, he was finally reunited with his Russian colleagues at the 1924 International Congress of Americanists. Because of the persistent hostility between the German and Austrian scholars, on the one hand, and those of the Entente, on the other, for several years after the Great War no gathering of Americanists had taken place in Europe.⁴² The choice of two neutral countries—the Netherlands and Sweden—as the hosts of the 1924 congress was a way of softening this tension. According to Hartman's July 24, 1924, letter to Shternberg, it was his suggestion to the congress organizers that encouraged



14. Shternberg with participants in the International Congress of Americanists, The Hague. Vladimir Bogoraz (wearing a hat, back row far left); Franz Boas (holding his hat, back row sixth from left); Shternberg (behind Boas). APS, F8-2.1.

them to invite Bogoraz and Shternberg to attend (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/52:42). However, I imagine that Boas himself had a lot to do with this invitation as well. Since it was not just the official invitations but the financial assistance provided by the congress that made the Russian scholars' participation possible, it also helped that the main Swedish organizer of the scientific gathering was none other than Erland Nordenskiöld (1877–1932). A son of a famous Arctic explorer and a correspondent with such famous Russian revolutionaries as Piotr Kropotkin, he had conducted extensive ethnographic, archaeological, and archival research in South America. One of Sweden's most respected scholars, he combined evolutionist, Kulturjreise, and Boasian ideas (Lindberg 1996). From 1912 to 1932 he served as the head of the Museum of Ethnography in Göteborg. As a scholar from a country that had remained neutral during the Great War, he helped maintain communication between anthropologists from the warring countries. He also appears to have been sympathetic to the new Russian regime.

Their trip to Europe, the first in ten years, was of great importance to both

Shternberg and Bogoraz. In addition to attending the ICA meetings lasting from August 12 to August 26, they were able to remain abroad for several months, meeting colleagues, establishing and reestablishing exchange relations with museums, catching up on their professional reading, and purchasing books for the MAE and other Leningrad academic libraries. A few days prior to the opening of the congress, Shternberg and Bogoraz met with Boas in Berlin. In a letter to his wife, Shternberg described the meeting as "very cordial," adding that of all of his Berlin impressions, the meeting with Boas was the most pleasant one and that it was difficult for him to convey "Boas's warmth, the simplicity of his manners, and the nobility of his character" (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/361:175). Once the three anthropologists had arrived in The Hague, they decided to stay in the same hotel. The only sour note in the meeting between Shternberg and Boas was the subject of the Gilyak monograph, which Boas was still anxious to publish. As Shternberg wrote to Boas prior to his departure for Western Europe, he was anticipating being scolded by him for taking so long to complete the Nivkh manuscript (July 5, 1924, Boas Papers, APS). His expectations proved true, as his letters to his wife and especially Boas's October 29, 1924, letter to him indicate (Boas Papers, APS). Since this was Boas's last detailed communication with Shternberg on this subject, it is worth quoting a large section of it here:

My dear Dr. Sternberg:

Allow me to very briefly repeat the various points that we discussed and partly agreed upon at our meeting this summer. First of all, you agreed to send me the chapter on the social organization, history, and statistics of the Gilyak, which is to be covered by the payment of three hundred dollars that was made to you about two years ago by the museum. I am retaining one part of your manuscript, which forms part of this chapter. Furthermore you made the following proposal: to finish by August 1925 the chapter on mythology and folklore of the Gilyak; by March 1926 the chapter on religion and history; by August 1926 the chapter on material culture. You asked that if you were to undertake this, the sum of two thousand dollars a year be paid to you for the years 1925 and 1926. Furthermore you estimated that the sum of five hundred dollars would be required

for illustrations, translations, and so on. Furthermore you were going to include material on the Gol'd and Ainu in your manuscript, which you were going to deliver in English.

By this time Boas had apparently realized that in order to get his Russian friend to complete this work, he simply had to make him commit to a definite schedule. It is worth noting, however, that Boas left open the possibility that after twenty years of waiting for the Shternberg manuscript, the AMNH administration might refuse to continue paying him. As he put it, "I have, of course, not been in a position to make any arrangements, and it remains to be seen what I can do" (Shternberg to Boas, October 29, 1924, APS).⁴³ Given the pressures Boas was experiencing at the time, this was not an idle threat.

The congress itself brought together a large number of Old and New World anthropological luminaries.⁴⁴ They included older German and Austrian scholars whom Shternberg had met at the ICA meetings before the war, such as Konrad Preuss, Wilhelm Schmidt, Wilhelm Koppers, Fritz Krause, Karl von den Steinen, and others. He also became acquainted with a number of younger scholars, several of them students of Boas or adherents to Boasian anthropology, such as Melville Herskovits, Robert Lowie, E. C. Parsons, Frank Speck, Carl Wissler, Leonard Bloomfield, and Roland Dixon. The congress also featured a large group of Scandinavian participants, several of whom became Shternberg's correspondents. Among them were Wilhelm Thalbitzer, Gerhard Lindblom, Ture J. Arne, and Kai Birket-Smith.

Among the French participants, the Russian scholars found Paul Rivet particularly impressive. Fifteen years younger than Shternberg, Rivet had conducted extensive ethnographic, linguistic, and archaeological research in South America in the early 1900s. In the next twenty years he published important research on various topics, including pioneering work on the origin of the Indians of South America, where he examined comparisons of living peoples and fossil remains, pathologies and blood groups, and the distribution of cultural elements. Among his more controversial ideas was the hypothesis that Asia was not the sole place of origin of the early Americans—that there had been migrations from Australia about six thousand years ago and from Melanesia sometime later. Like Boas, he was a strong advocate of the disciplinary interdependence of ethnology, linguistics, archaeology, and physical anthropology. In 1925 Rivet, Marcel Mauss, and Lucien Lévi-Bruhl created the Institut d'Ethnologie

at the University of Paris and in 1929 he became the head of the famous Musée d'ethnographie du Trocadéro, which he proceeded to transform into a reorganized Musée de l'Homme.

Not everything went smoothly at the congress. Bitter feelings generated by the recent war were still present, with some of the German and the Austrian participants harboring hostility toward the representatives of the Entente countries. When Shternberg asked Schmidt if he could help him acquire some artifacts for the MAE, the Austrian scholar replied that he would and added that he would not help the British or the Americans, who were still his enemies (Shternberg to Sarra Ratner-Shternberg, Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/361:202–203).⁴⁵ In the description of the congress he sent to his wife from Europe, Shternberg commented on the rather grim mood of many of the European participants, particularly the older ones (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/361:202–203).

On the whole, the two Russian scholars were treated very well and even felt like celebrities, although a few of the participants remained suspicious of or even hostile to the new state they represented. This might explain why Boas not only spent a lot of time with the Russians but, in Shternberg's words, "did so as a demonstration to others" (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/361:202–203). Boas's sympathy toward socialism and Soviet Russia clearly played a role in his conduct. In fact, Shternberg described him as "nash edinomyshlennik" (a person who thinks like us). Ironically, he found Boas to be more radical than himself (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/361:202–203). While Shternberg did not elaborate on this subject, I suspect he meant that Boas was more sympathetic toward the new Russian regime than his Russian colleagues who had been living under it for seven years because he viewed it from a distance. Another socialist scholar whom Shternberg also referred to as an *edinomyshlennik* and with whom he and Bogoraz established very warm cooperative relations was Rivet. A Dreyfusard and a lifelong Socialist Party activist, Rivet was a militant antiracist and antifascist. In the 1930s he became one of the organizers of the Committee of Vigilance of Anti-Fascist Intellectuals and of the Popular Front. In the words of a French historian of anthropology, "Rivet was involved in a political career the intensity of which makes it difficult to distinguish the aspects of his thought that are due to his role as a politician from those due to his role as a scientist" (Jamin 1991:585).

The Scandinavians, and especially Nordenskiöld, also treated Shternberg and Bogoraz warmly.⁴⁶ The latter, in turn, presented the ICA's chief organizer with the original correspondence between his famous father and several prominent Russian revolutionaries, which they had found in the police archives in Leningrad.⁴⁷

While the congress gave Shternberg an opportunity to catch up on some of the latest research in his discipline, it exposed prominent western scholars to his new scholarly work and confirmed his earlier reputation as one of Russia's leading anthropologists. Not surprisingly, he was elected as one of the congress vice presidents, joining a group of distinguished scholars that included Boas. Even though evolutionism was clearly no longer in fashion, Shternberg's presentation on divine election generated a great deal of interest. On the one hand, it introduced a large body of new data on Siberian shamanism. On the other, it was much more ambitious than many of the other papers presented in The Hague or Göteborg. Even scholars who did not fully agree with the Russian scholar's conclusions found his paper fascinating.⁴⁸ A number of prominent anthropologists who did not attend the 1924 ICA but either heard about Shternberg's presentation or read it in the congress proceedings also found it very interesting. Among them were Mauss, Lévi-Bruhl, and Charles Seligman. In his letter to Shternberg, Seligman referred to the "Divine Election" paper as "one of the most interesting things I have read for a very long time" (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/262:1).

After the end of the meetings, Shternberg remained in Sweden for a few weeks, sightseeing, purchasing books, visiting friends and colleagues, and examining museum collections. One of his most important accomplishments during the trip was to receive a collection of South American artifacts that had been acquired by the Stockholm Ethnographic Museum for the MAE before the war. From Stockholm he traveled to Copenhagen, where he studied the great Inuit collection of the Royal Ethnographic Museum and received a large collection of Greenlandic artifacts that had been assembled for the MAE before the war. From Denmark Lev Iakovlevich proceeded to London, where he spent three weeks and selected two hundred books from among the anthropological works published in the last years; in addition he visited the Pitt-Rivers Museum, where he obtained some archaeological specimens for the MAE, and met with his old colleague Seligman.

He then traveled to Paris, where he and Bogoraz remained until the end of October. During their stay in France they established professional relations with various Paris museums and scholarly societies. They were hosted by Rivet, who introduced them to his colleagues and fellow socialists Mauss and Sylvain Lévi. The two Russian academics were obviously celebrities. In a letter to his wife, Shternberg mentioned being invited to the homes of several politicians for dinner. It is not surprising that Lévi and Mauss became Shternberg's friends.⁴⁹ Lévi and Mauss were both Jewish and leftist, and both had been active Dreyfusards. Lévi (1863–1935) was a very prominent Indologist and a professor at the Collège de France. As a scholar, he was close to the Durkheimians and was a teacher of Mauss. In fact, the latter called Lévi his “second uncle” (after Émile Durkheim). According to Strenski (1997:117), Lévi was the most “active, observant, and enthusiastic Jew” among the Durkheimians. In fact, he was for years the president of the Alliance Israelite Universelle (AIU) and of the Société des Études Juives. He wrote on Jewish subjects, both scholarly and cultural. Strenski's characterization of Lévi as someone who “neither desired nor in fact achieved segregation of his Jewish identity from much of his career as an Indologist” could have been written about Shternberg (1997:119). Moreover, prior to Shternberg's stay in Paris, Lévi had met prominent Soviet Orientalists like Feodor Scherbatskoi, Ol'denburg, and Alekseev, and had become a strong supporter of French-Soviet scholarly cooperation (Bongard-Levin et. al. 2002).⁵⁰ Thanks to Shternberg's encounter with Lévi, the revived Jewish Historical-Ethnographic Society in Leningrad received some funding from the AIU.⁵¹

Like Durkheim, his uncle, Mauss (1872–1950) came from a prominent family of Alsace rabbis, but he was not an observant Jew. He was even a member of the Union Rationaliste. However, by the 1930s he began to identify with his Jewish heritage (Strenski 1997:124). He became a member of the central committee of the Alliance Israelite Universelle, which he joined through his loyalty to Sylvain Lévi, and continued working for this organization after Lévi's death in 1935 (Pickering 1998:45–47). Like Rivet, he was a radical socialist with a strong interest in the cooperative movement.⁵² Mauss was also an internationalist and, like Lévi and Shternberg, was critical of Zionism. As a Socialist he must have been opposed to foreign intervention in Russia during the Civil War, and like Lévi he was a big supporter of Franco-Soviet cooperation in the scholarly domain. At the same time Mauss was very critical of Bolshevism, as were many

French socialists.⁵³ During the 1920s he published a series of articles in the socialist press that compared Bolshevism to fascism and condemned the secrecy and the violence of its leaders (Fournier 2006:427). Although there is no direct evidence, I am almost certain that Shternberg was rather open with his French socialist friends about the situation in post-1917 Russia (as he was with Boas). After all, their political views resembled his own.

Shternberg was equally open with a few very close émigré friends and colleagues whom he fully trusted. Dubnov's diary mentions Shternberg's visit and his sad account of the "emptying out of the old Petersburg" as well as a recent purge of faculty and students, including many Jewish ones (1937:49; 1998:506). At the same time, Lev Iakovlevich chose not to be too critical about life in the USSR even with his close friends. Genrikh Sliozberg, a lawyer active in various Jewish liberation causes of the pre-1917 era, wrote in his memoirs that during his visit to Paris Shternberg would not discuss the negative aspects of Soviet life. Sliozberg attributed this reluctance not so much to Shternberg's fear of the authorities but his old idealism and optimism. In Sliozberg's words:

Shternberg had not been broken and had not abandoned his old values and principles. He was full of the same idealism, the same belief in the power of the human spirit and . . . progress. . . . When I spoke to Shternberg in Paris, it was clear to me that as an anthropologist and ethnographer, he viewed the events of the present as only a passing moment in the endless movement and progress [of humankind]. His science served as a solid foundation for and continued to strengthen his idealism—humanity's long history allowed him to look toward the future with a firm belief that neither Bolshevism nor a temporary rule by the ChK (with its crimes and cruelty) would be able to stop the progressive process of evolution. (1934:126)

Despite Shternberg's courage, he knew he had to be cautious: the Soviet secret police had its eyes and ears in every European capital but especially in Paris, where so many anti-Soviet Russian émigrés ended up. In fact, Shternberg wrote home that he was trying to avoid the émigrés as much as possible (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/361:210).

On the whole, Shternberg was very pleased with his European trip.⁵⁴ Unfortunately, his wife's letters carried bad news from home that troubled him a lot. In the summer of 1924, his enemies at the Geography Institute waged an attack on his broad curriculum and attempted to radically politicize it. And in the early fall a major flood in Leningrad threatened his beloved museum. Worst of all, while he was in Paris, his old intestinal affliction flared up so badly that he had to be examined by doctors (including Bogoraz's brother, Sergei, who had immigrated to France). Some suggested surgery but Shternberg refused. He returned home in October 1924 tired and sick.

Later that year an important development in his life occurred: he was finally elected to the Academy of Sciences as a corresponding member (a rank below that of an academician). The fact that Shternberg was finally inducted into this elite scholarly community under the rubric of "Palaeoasiatic languages" rather than "ethnography" (cultural anthropology), his main area of expertise, suggests that his discipline still lacked sufficient respect in the eyes of the Academy's old-fashioned members.⁵⁵ In their summary of Shternberg's scholarly work submitted to the Academy, Sergei Ol'denburg and Fiodor Shcherbatskoi mentioned that he was preparing a large body of Nivkh texts and other linguistic works for publication. They also stated that the publication of the Nivkh monograph in the United States had been delayed by the war and an interruption of communication between that country and the USSR. Finally, they said that a grammar and a dictionary of the Nivkh languages were supposed to be published in the United States as well (*Izvestiia Rossiiskoi Akademii Nauk*, ser. 6, vol. 18, pt. 2:206–210).

Shternberg's contacts with foreign scholars were strengthened during the 1925 celebrations in Leningrad of the two hundredth anniversary of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Despite a boycott campaign by scholars in several Western countries, close to one hundred foreign scholars from twenty-four countries attended the ceremonies. Among them was Sylvain Lévi (Esakov 2000:42–44; Bongard-Levin et. al. 2002).⁵⁶

Two years later he contemplated attending an ICA congress in Rome but changed his mind when Boas informed him that he would not be going (see Shternberg to Boas, September 15, 1926, Boas Papers, APS).⁵⁷ Shternberg could not have gone to Rome anyway, because the Academy of Sciences asked him to represent Soviet ethnology at the Third Pan-Pacific Science Congress in Tokyo in 1926. The first such congress took place in 1920 in Hawaii, where participants



15. Shternberg (*second row, second from right*) with participants in the 1926 Scientific Pacific Congress, Tokyo. Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 280/1/118:32.

began planning and coordinating scientific research in the Pacific Ocean and its coastal areas, establishing contacts between scientists of various Pacific countries, and exchanging views on the various controversial issues involved in the study of the region (Vilenskii-Sibiriakov 1926:5). The Japanese congress featured close to six hundred scholars from a dozen countries (four hundred of them from Japan). After Japan and Soviet Russia finally established diplomatic relations in 1925, Soviet scientists were not only able to go to Japan but were treated very courteously by scholars and government officials alike. The Soviet delegation, which traveled by train to Manchuria and then sailed to Japan, consisted of nine participants, most of them prominent natural scientists and geographers. Shternberg was the only anthropologist among them. The Russian Academy of Sciences prepared an exhibit, accompanied by a series of publications in English, showcasing the history of Russian scientists' research in the Pacific. Shternberg's contribution to this project was a lengthy article on the history of ethnographic research in the region, in which he devoted considerable space to his and his "ethno-troika" colleagues' research.

Although most of the papers presented at the congress did not deal with anthropological issues, Shternberg managed to meet a number of leading physical anthropologists, archaeologists, and ethnologists as well as colleagues

from Japan, Hawaii, New Guinea, New Zealand, Australia, and other countries.⁵⁸ An eternal optimist and idealist, Shternberg praised the spirit of peace and cooperation that prevailed at the congress and expressed his conviction that gatherings of this kind would further promote international friendship and brotherhood. Little did he know that a decade and a half later many of the countries represented at the congress, including the USSR and Japan, would be engaged in a bloody Pacific war.⁵⁹

Of all the presentations he heard at the congress, Shternberg was most impressed with a paper by Rivet, delivered in absentia. It was an ambitious comparative study of Austro-Asian and Malaysia-Polynesian languages in which the author hypothesized that the entire population of Oceania had originally arrived from South Asia and that some Austro-Asian and Malayo-Polynesian groups had even reached America. Shternberg referred to this hypothesis as a “grand one, though possibly too bold, which would stimulate future studies in the field” (1927b:335).

Upon Shternberg's recommendation, the congress established a special section dedicated to anthropology and related disciplines. Shternberg's before-mentioned presentation on the “Ainu problem” was very well received, and in the aftermath of the congress he received a number of letters from anthropologists he had met in Tokyo. As always, Lev Iakovlevich used every opportunity to see as much of the country as possible. He was particularly interested in visiting Shinto temples and observing the work of Japanese shamans and folk healers. In order to learn more about Japanese folk medicine, he even pretended to be a patient.

The highlight of the entire trip was a visit to Hokkaido, where Lev Iakovlevich spent a few days interviewing Ainu and observing their life. According to his report, he was also able to collect interesting new ethnographic data (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/127). In addition, he managed to purchase a substantial number of specimens for the MAE's Japanese and Ainu collections.⁶⁰ The long and rather difficult trip to Japan as well as an unfamiliar diet exacerbated Shternberg's health problems. His letters home indicate that he was not feeling well and was getting homesick. Nonetheless, he could not turn down an opportunity to do more of the research he loved so much. As he put it in one of the letters to his wife, “After all, I have an ethnographer's soul” (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/361:222a).

Throughout the 1920s, as in the pre-1917 era, Shternberg maintained his strongest ties with colleagues in Germany and the United States.⁶¹ He received a number of requests from German anthropologists to submit papers to their journals on Siberian ethnology and linguistics as well as comparative ethnology. Several of his articles were in fact published in *Asia Minor*, *Zeitschrift für Völkerpsychologie*, and several other journals soon after his death. In addition to corresponding with German ethnologists of the older generation (whom he had known prior to 1917), Shternberg exchanged letters with such prominent younger scholars of culture as Richard Thurnwald (Shternberg Collection, SPEFARAN, 282/1/103). He also corresponded with American ethnologists and linguists like Leonard Bloomfield and Edward Sapir. In the aftermath of his visit to London and Paris in 1924, he also established regular correspondence with Seligman and Mauss. Just a few months before his death, Shternberg was elected to the committee for the organization of the 1928 International Congress of Linguists in The Hague.

Assessing Contemporary Western Ethnology

Shternberg's two extensive trips abroad and voracious reading of the latest scholarly literature gave him a good sense of the state of Western ethnology in the first post-World War I decade. His assessment of this scholarship, published in the first issue of the new Soviet ethnological journal he helped to establish, was unmatched by any other Soviet review of his or subsequent times and reflected very well his own theoretical and methodological standpoint at the sunset of his life (Shternberg 1926a).

Always remaining a "Westernizer" among the Russian ethnologists, Shternberg began his essay by stating that since the mid-1910s Western ethnology had made "extremely impressive progress." He pointed out that even a terrible war turned out to have stimulated new ethnological and archaeological research, including that of a "brilliant young Austrian ethnologist, B. Malinowski." Shternberg spoke favorably of the new research in psychological anthropology ("Völkerpsychologie"), especially in Britain and Germany. He also praised the ambitious new ethnographic expeditions, including Knud Rasmussen's in the Canadian-American Arctic, Koppers's among the inhabitants of Terra del Fuego, Rafael Karsten's in South America, and especially Malinowski's in the Trobriands. Given Shternberg's lifelong advocacy of long-term field

work, it is not surprising that he concluded his discussion of Malinowski's research with the following words: "This new method of field research will be used fruitfully by future researchers" (Shternberg 1926a:20).

While he commended the publication of various survey works on social organization, religion, and other major ethnological topics, Shternberg pointed out that, unlike the era of classical evolutionism, the last decade had been marked by skepticism about general theories. The only new theory-oriented development in contemporary ethnology, which he discussed in great detail, was the culture-historical or diffusionist school popularized by Graebner in Germany, Schmidt and Koppers in Austria, Rivers in England, and to some extent Boas and his followers in the United States. Having acknowledged both the shortcomings of classical evolutionism that made it vulnerable to criticism by this new school and the important discoveries of the diffusionists (such as Rivet's work in linguistics), Shternberg criticized the "excesses" of this new theoretical approach. Not surprisingly, he directs his heaviest attack at the wild, diffusionist speculations of Perry and Elliot as well as a highly speculative recent paper by Lowie (1924) on the historical connections between certain Old and New World beliefs. Shternberg criticized the paper while emphasizing that it was not typical of the Boasian school and Lowie's own work. After all, the Boasian school advocated an intensive study of diffusion within a delimited territory that would uncover the dynamics of the process of diffusion, which was not as simple as the (European) diffusionists thought (Shternberg 1926a:29). As an example of the successful study of a single cultural phenomenon in a delimited geographic area, the Russian ethnologists cited Ruth Benedict's 1924 paper on the Plains vision quest.

Shternberg's overall assessment of the diffusionists went as follows. First, in his view the new school had not been able to demolish a major postulate of classical evolutionism about the possibility of independent invention of parallel institutions. Second, "the problems of diffusion and of parallelism are totally independent of each other and do not intersect" (Shternberg 1926a:30). Third, the diffusionists had not been able to debunk the existence of the main processes of evolution, even though it had become clear that these processes were not uniform. Fourth, the new school would only be able to continue making important discoveries if it studied each culture in detail and crosschecked its findings with the help of archaeological and linguistic data. Fifth, as Boas argued, a study of diffusion should be conducted within a delimited territory.

Shternberg also discussed in detail the second major new development in modern ethnology: the work on primitive mentality and primitive religion. In his view, the new theories of “pre-animism,” developed by Robert Marett and his followers, were deeply flawed. He was equally critical of the new ideas about the alleged similarities of the religious psychology of the primitives with child psychology as well as adult impulsive behavior. Having dismissed Durkheim’s theory about the primacy of society over the individual and of ritual over belief, he turned his critical gaze onto the ideas of Lévi-Bruhl.⁶² Shternberg dismissed the French ethnologist’s “armchair” speculations about the “prelogical” mentality of primitive people and his denial of individual creativity in tribal society. At the same time, he agreed with Lévi-Bruhl’s idea that primitive mentality was a very complex phenomenon that still required a great deal of study and that the unconscious played an important role in it. Once again, Shternberg’s sympathetic view of the Boasians was revealed when he pointed out that Boas’s young students, who had training in psychology and studied primitive mentality on the basis of detailed field research, were doing the really interesting and important new work in psychological anthropology. In Shternberg’s view, this new research continued the tradition of the Torres Straits Expedition carried out by a team of anthropologists and psychologists. Besides the Boasians, he praised the psychological anthropology of Richard Thurnwald and his new journal *Zeitschrift für Völkerpsychologie und Sociologie*.

Finally, Shternberg turned to the fashionable new theories of Freud. Setting aside the issue of Freud’s contributions to psychology, Shternberg issued a warning to the younger generation of ethnologists not to get too excited about Freudian theory. He began by asserting that one of the foundations of Freudianism, the Oedipus complex, remained unproven and had recently been delivered a serious blow by the Trobriand research of Malinowski, who himself had been influenced by psychoanalytic theory (1924). The danger of applying Freudian psychology to ethnology lay, in Shternberg’s view, in the simplicity of its solutions to complex problems and its derivation of human (and especially primitive) psychology from that of the neurotics. The Russian scholar ended his review of psychoanalytic psychology’s pros and cons ended by acknowledging the importance of the subconscious and erotic in human culture but concluding that Freud and his followers in ethnology had, in his opinion, exaggerated the significance of the latter. A tolerant and open-minded scholar, Shternberg

called on ethnologists not to dismiss Freudianism but to simply show great care in applying it to their research.

While his review began with strong praise for the accomplishments of contemporary Western ethnology, it ended with criticism of the “dismissal in certain circles, especially the American ones, of the general problems of the genesis and evolution of cultural institutions” (Shternberg 1926a:42). Always an optimist, however, he saw this phenomenon as only a temporary phase, one brought about by a rethinking of old theories, that “would be inevitably followed by a new wave of enthusiasm about the general problems, without the study of which a simple classification of facts would lead only to disappointment and a decline in scholarly creativity” (Shternberg 1926a:42). Although the essay was devoted to foreign ethnology, it ended with a positive evaluation of the enthusiastic work carried out in the past decade by Russian researchers working under very difficult circumstances. Among the USSR’s accomplishments in the field of ethnology, he argued, was the establishing of the Geography Institute in Leningrad, the Institute for the Study of Material Culture (which combined research in archaeology, linguistics, and ethnology), and a special institute dedicated to the study of Marr’s “Iafetic theory.” He also underscored the positive impact on ethnology made by the Soviet government’s acknowledgement of the importance of studying culture for the building of a new state. This recognition, as he pointed out, had already resulted in a proliferation of ethnographic expeditions to all regions of the country.

At the same time, he argued that serious problems in Soviet ethnology remained. Inadequately trained persons were still conducting much of the ethnographic research, and there was little recognition of the need for ethnographers to master local native languages and remain in the field for extensive periods of time. Shternberg proposed the creation of a single research center or bureau that would coordinate ethnographic research, the convening of a national congress of Soviet ethnologists, and the formation of ethnological research institutes engaged in the study of theoretical issues.

Last Years at the MAE

In the 1920s, despite heavy teaching and administrative responsibilities at the Geography Institute, Shternberg continued his active participation in the work of the MAE. When Bartol'd, the museum’s director and occasional adversary

of Shternberg, finally resigned in the fall of 1921, Shternberg apparently tried to organize the election of the new director without involving the Academy of Sciences. His plan was against the rules and was stopped by Ol'denburg, the Academy's permanent secretary (Reshetov 1996). It must have pained Shternberg greatly that he could not serve as his beloved museum's director because that post had always been reserved for a full member of the Academy. And so a month after Bartol'd's resignation, the academician Evfimii Karskii (1860–1931) was appointed as his replacement. A prominent specialist on the Byelorussian language and folklore, Karskii had conducted some ethnographic research but was not an anthropologist. Not surprisingly, his relations with Shternberg and his allies and admirers among the MAE staff remained strained throughout his entire tenure (Reshetov 1996).

At the MAE Shternberg continued to head the Siberian department, while his wife took over the North American one from him. Bogoraz still presided over the department of Central and South America. The museum staff grew significantly during this period. Some of the new employees, such as Dmitrii Zelenin (1878–1954), were well-established anthropologists who also taught at the Ethnography Division of the Geography Faculty of the Leningrad State University (LGU), which replaced the Geography Institute in 1925 (Reshetov 2004b). Others were students and graduate students (*aspiranty*) of those institutions and had been trained by Bogoraz and Shternberg. Thanks to an increase in both funding and the number of well-trained anthropologists, the number of MAE employees who conducted field research in ethnography, archaeology, and physical anthropology rose significantly.

As in the past, Shternberg maintained extensive correspondence with domestic and foreign museum curators and collectors. Among them were Aleksandr and Liudmila Mervart. In 1918 they finally managed to sail from South Asia to Vladivostok, where they began working at the new Far Eastern University, which they had helped establish.⁶³ Unfortunately, much of their large collection of valuable specimens remained in India and Ceylon and could not be shipped to Russia because of cost and the foreign embargo (see chapter 5). For financial reasons, in late 1922 they (like many other Russians) fled from Vladivostok to Harbin, where Aleksander worked for a bank. After two years of dealing with the Soviet bureaucracy, Shternberg finally found a way to facilitate the collections' shipment to the MAE. When the academician Shcherbatskoi

traveled to London in 1923, he carried with him a letter to British authorities from Leonid Krasin, the Soviet minister of foreign trade whom Shternberg had known for years. Thanks to this letter the Mervarts' Calcutta collection finally arrived in Petrograd in late 1923. Additional efforts by Shternberg resulted in the return of the Colombo and Madras collections as well. Unfortunately, these arrived without an inventory and many of the objects lacked labels. The MAE staff found it very difficult to catalog them without the collectors' participation. Throughout 1923 and early 1924 Shternberg exchanged numerous letters with the Mervarts, who were eager to return home in order to resume museum and scholarly work but worried about their job security and the material conditions in Petrograd. Thanks to Shternberg's and Bogoraz's lobbying, curatorial positions were finally authorized for the couple. Shternberg tried to persuade them to come back:

As far as the material conditions of your life in Petrograd are concerned, they will in no way come close to those you enjoy in Harbin. Here you will have to reconcile yourself with the same living conditions in which all Russian scientists are living and which Sarra Arkad'evna and I have already written to you in great detail. We have enough to eat, have clothing and footwear, and even purchase books, but we have to work nonstop. Keep in mind that life here is becoming more and more normal every day. . . . Finally, I would like to add the following. If you have not been spoiled by your Harbin life and if science remains the most important thing for you, you will not regret [returning]. But of you prefer to remain in Harbin, then I believe that you owe it to science and the museum, which had enabled you to prepare for and funded your expedition, as well as to the memory of our beloved Vasilii Vasil'evich [Radlov], to come back at least for a temporary visit in order to register the collection. (Shternberg to A. Mervart, January 21, 1924, Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/2:4)

Persuaded by their old mentor and colleague, the Mervarts returned to Petrograd in the summer of 1924 and soon began working as curators and heads of the India and Southeast Asia departments of the MAE. In addition Aleksandr taught at the university, introducing the first course in the Tamil language ever to be taught in Russia.

The fate of Sergei Shirokogorov, another brilliant MAE collector and ethnographer and a former student of Shternberg's who ended up in China after the Civil War, turned out quite differently.⁶⁴ In 1918, upon his arrival in Vladivostok, which at that time was under the control of the Allied and Japanese military forces, Shirokogorov became one of the founders of a private Historical-Philological Faculty where he taught the archaeology and ethnography of Siberia and continued his research on Evenk shamanism and other ethnological topics. In addition, he became involved in politics and served as the secretary of the parliament of a semi-autonomous buffer state called the "Far Eastern Republic." After a research trip to China and Japan in 1920–21, he returned to Vladivostok, where he became a docent in the department of Far Eastern ethnography at the Far Eastern University. Shirokogorov never liked teaching very much and was anxious to resume full-time research. He must have also suffered from the political instability and economic hardships of life in the Far Eastern Republic, a reason why, in his 1920 letter to Boas, he inquired about the possibility of finding work in the United States. Boas's July 13, 1920, response is an interesting document in its own right, shedding light on his views of the contemporary political situation and the future of science in both the United States and Soviet Russia:

My Dear Sir

I have your letter dated the 10th of May and I wish very much I could be able to assist you. The conditions here, however, are so discouraging that I do not see even how American anthropologists can be supplied with necessary positions. It seems to my mind that the only hope for you and your people is to acknowledge the elementary force that is carrying along the social development in Russia and to make the best of it, trying to develop on a given basis a happier future. . . . I wish I could hold out some hope for you. I shall be glad to bring your desire to the attention of those who are more powerful than I am, but I am not very hopeful as to favorable results. For three years I have tried to get a position for Szaplicka [sic], but without results.⁶⁵ (Boas Papers, APS)

In the fall of 1922, during another one of Shirokogorov's trips to China, Bolshevik forces captured Vladivostok, enabling Soviet Russia to annex the Far Eastern

Republic. While still in China, Shirokogorov was fired from his university and became a émigré, first in Shanghai and then in Beijing. During this period he also corresponded with Shternberg. While his own letters to Shternberg have survived, Shternberg's letters to him have not, and it appears that he was having a very difficult time receiving mail from the USSR (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/319). Shirokogorov's tone in the letters was very friendly and respectful. He described thinking a lot about Shternberg and feeling a strong need to discuss scholarly issues with him. He also mentioned dwelling constantly on Petrograd—his library left there, the MAE, and his colleagues. In 1922 he was clearly thinking seriously about returning home.

In the fall of 1923, however, the Russian ethnologist wrote another letter to Boas in which he described his recent research and publications and once again expressed his hope of finding a position in the United States. He complained about the difficulties of working in China but also stated that he did not think it was "useful for the success of my investigation to return immediately to Petrograd" (Boas Papers, APS). By the fall of 1923 his attitude toward the situation in Russia and his feelings about returning there must have changed for a few reasons: his removal from the list of MAE employees; news of the 1922–23 arrests and exile of the anti-Bolshevik liberal intelligentsia; and, finally, the improvement of his financial situation in Shanghai combined with deteriorating living conditions in Petrograd.

In the meantime, Shirokogorov's scholarly work was going well. In 1922 he published part of his Vladivostok lectures under the title *The Place of Ethnography among the Sciences and the Classification of Ethnoses* (Shirokogorov 1922), and a year later his important theoretical work *Ethnos: A Study of the Main Principles of the Changes in Ethnic and Ethnographic Phenomena* appeared (Shirokogorov 1923). In addition, in the early 1920s he published important works on physical anthropology, social organization, and religion of the Evenk and the Manchu. His publications on Evenk shamanism laid the foundation of his monumental *Psychomental Complex of the Tungus*, published in England in 1935.

While I do not intend to discuss Shirokogorov's theoretical ideas here, I should mention that he was one of the most interesting and brilliant Russian anthropologists of his era. He developed his own original theory of society in which he combined his expertise and interest in physical and cultural anthropology and even used mathematical formulas to describe the rise, expansion,

and fall of “ethnoses” (ethnic groups). His ideas represent a peculiar mix of sociobiology, British and German functionalism, structuralism, and systems theory. He also wrote insightfully about the need for the ethnographer to explore another ethnos’s “psychomental complex” from what we would today call “the native point of view” (see Solovei 1998:108). At the same time, some of the ideas expressed in his theoretical writing, especially his characterization of the Jews as a “parasitic ethnus,” echoed those of the German ethnologists of the Nazi era.⁶⁶

Shirokogorov sent his 1922–23 publications to Shternberg, but there is little evidence of the latter’s reaction to them. This reaction, however, must have played a major role in souring their relationship. According to Reshetov (2004a), Shirokogorov was badly hurt by Shternberg’s remark about the “provincialism” of his work. At the same time, Shternberg, who continued to admire and cite Shirokogorov’s ethnographic work on shamanism, must have been disappointed by his student’s new theorizing and angered by the anti-Semitic passages in his work.⁶⁷ After reading “Ethnos,” Shternberg was probably no longer interested in helping bring Shirokogorov home. The last straw was probably Shternberg using Shirokogorov’s data on Evenk shamanism to support his “divine election” hypothesis even as he referred to him as “my former student” (1925d, 1927a). In his *Psychomental Complex* monograph, Shirokogorov harshly criticized his former mentor’s interpretation of the origin of shamanism (Shirokogoroff 1935:366–367).⁶⁸

As the MAE’s senior curator, Shternberg also received numerous letters from amateur ethnographers and individuals interested in conducting ethnographic research. Shternberg had had such correspondents before 1917, but with the new regime encouraging the education of working people, this type of interaction definitely increased. A good example is a letter from A. Kichaikin, a peasant belonging to the Mordva ethnic group. During his military service in the Caucasus, he was sent to a military school where he studied, among other subjects, the ethnography of the local peoples. After returning to his home village to become a political agitator, he began collecting information on Mordva legends and customs. He asked the MAE curator to give him advice on how to conduct this work and also mentioned his desire to continue his education in ethnography (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/139). As always, Shternberg gave such inquiries a great deal of attention and encouraged the amateur ethnographers to continue their work.

One of his most prominent correspondents during this period was his old colleague Vladimir Arsen'ev. In the 1920s this famous explorer and writer became one of Vladivostok's leading ethnologists, well known throughout Russia for his extensive knowledge of the culture of the Amur River peoples. Arsen'ev served as the head of the Ethnography Division of the Museum of the Society for the Study of the Amur Region and taught ethnology at the Far Eastern University. In his letters Arsen'ev continued to ask Shternberg for advice on various issues related to his ethnographic research and writing. In fact, Shternberg was supposed to serve as the editor of Arsen'ev's major ethnological work on the Udege people. In return, Arsen'ev offered scholarly advice and practical assistance to many of Shternberg's students embarking on ethnographic research in the Amur region.

As in the pre-1917 years, Shternberg maintained extensive correspondence with foreign museums and ethnologists. Throughout the 1920s, a dozen or so European and American scholars visited the MAE to study its collections. A few of them even managed to conduct ethnographic research in the Soviet Union. For instance, between 1924 and 1927 Shternberg corresponded with a young German ethnographer, Hans Findeisen, who was interested in native Siberian cultures and anxious to get into the field (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/297). With Shternberg's and Bogoraz's help he eventually succeeded and was allowed to spend several months among the Ket of the Enideir River in 1927–28. After the expedition he also worked on the MAE's Siberian collections (Findeisen 1929). Unfortunately, by the late 1920s political and ideological repression was making ethnographic research by foreigners in the USSR impossible, just as it deprived Soviet anthropologists of an opportunity to join foreign expeditions (Krupnik 1998).

As the MAE's senior curator, Lev Iakovlevich was called upon frequently to organize exhibits. Some of these requests came directly from various government organizations. For example, in 1923 an official of the administration of Russia's Northwestern Region requested that the MAE provide artifacts for an upcoming all-Russian agricultural exhibit. On other occasions such requests came from the Academy of Sciences, which continued to supervise Shternberg's museum. This was the case in 1925, when the entire Academy began preparing for the celebration of its two hundredth anniversary and was able to obtain substantial funding from the government for remodeling and exhibit preparation.

Thanks to this backing, the MAE was able to double its space by reclaiming its original building, *Kunstkamera*, built by Peter I. It also increased its staff and prepared an impressive exhibit. In conjunction, Shternberg took part in preparing a rather detailed French-language guide to the museum. He also published two popular articles on the history and the current state of the MAE (Shternberg 1925e, 1925f). Among Shternberg's most successful projects of the mid-1920s was the Gallery of Shamans, which exhibited more than twenty mannequins of shamans in full regalia from all the major Siberian ethnic groups (Staniukovich 1964:109, 113).

While the MAE continued to exhibit its collection on the basis of culture areas, Shternberg longed for a more "scientific" method to complement the more traditional one. With the MAE achieving some financial stability, he could finally return to his old pet project—the establishment of a separate department of typology and the evolution of culture. Not wanting to remove unique artifacts from the other departments for this new one, he purchased originals and copies of prehistoric stone tools and other artifacts at several Paris museums during his visit there. He also had to rely on drawings, diagrams, and other substitutes for real specimens. Nonetheless, starting in 1925 Shternberg began the work of organizing his new department, systematizing its holdings and preparing for several thematic exhibits. Of course, it was a lot easier to illustrate the evolution of weapons and tools than that of social and religious institutions and practices. For this reason, Shternberg began assembling a substantial collection of bows and arrows from various parts of the world. However, he was not satisfied with focusing on material culture and had much more ambitious plans.⁶⁹ In 1925 he was already working on topics like the evolution of images of both the world tree in the decorative art of the Evenki and the Finno-Ugric peoples and the dragon in the decorative art of the Amur River peoples.⁷⁰ According to the 1926 annual report of the Academy of Sciences, the new department had over eight hundred objects in the following categories: artifacts that duplicated pieces in another MAE department; drawings of artifacts and practices that "filled in the missing links of an evolutionary or a typological sequence" or illustrated the use of these objects (like methods of making fire); and new artifacts purchased by Shternberg or collected for his department by MAE staff members. The newer objects tended to be specimens acquired by Shternberg's students during their ethnographic expeditions. In his work at

the evolution department Shternberg was assisted by Evgenii Kagarov (1882–1942), an erudite ethnologist from Ukraine who in 1925 joined the Ethnography Division of the LGU as well as the MAE staff.

In 1926–27 the new department increased its holdings and staff. Several of Shternberg's students worked on such topics as the evolution of weaving techniques, the bow and arrow, fire-making techniques, and others. Some of them also tried developing typologies of tools and dwellings in particular cultural regions. This typological aspect of the new department's research was more akin to the work of the Kultukreise scholars in Germany or the culture-area distribution research of Kroeber and his students.

In his ambitious plans for the department of evolution and typology, Shternberg reiterated his old idea that this addition to the country's leading anthropology museum would play a very important role in the advancement of scholarship as well as education of the masses. As he put it, the exhibits developed by the new department

would give the visitor a chance to get at least a basic idea of the development of the technology he uses in his daily life, and the evolution of beliefs and ideas, with which he has grown up with, etc. And by exposing him to the pictures of that gigantic and difficult collective work of humanity, which have made the great accomplishments of modern life possible . . . , it would instill in him the faith in his own power, the power of reason, and also reveal to him a happy picture of continuing endless perfection. Thus while broadening his spiritual horizon, the visitor receives here a visual ethical lesson on the psychic unity and the law of the common cooperation of all the peoples of the world for the sake of their common good. (Ratner-Shternberg 1928:63–64)

His optimism, however, did not reflect the reality of museum politics. Although this evolutionist approach must have appealed to the Bolshevik ideologues and bureaucrats from the Commissariat of Education, Shternberg never lived to see the Department of Evolution and Typology officially opened. While the annual MAE reports blamed the delay in the opening of the new department on the lack of furniture and funding, it seems that there were bigger, more conceptual, problems involved. After Shternberg's death in the summer of 1927, the work of the evolution and typology department continued under

Kagarov and resulted in a series of exhibits on such topics as “Primitive Tools and Weapons” and “Fire in the History of Culture.” Several other exhibits, like “Means of Transportation,” had been prepared but never opened. Not surprisingly, the more ambitious exhibits, such as “The Organization of the Pre- and Early Class Society,” “Science,” “Art,” and “Religion” remained on the drawing board. The last major exhibit organized by Shternberg’s favorite department opened in 1929 under the name “The Economic and Social Roots of Art” (Staniukovich 1964:114–117). By this time the changing ideological climate demanded very different kinds of exhibits (Ratner-Shternberg 1928; see chapter 9).

Despite these setbacks, Lev Iakovlevich remained an eternal optimist with very high hopes for his beloved museum. The best example of this optimism is his memo outlining the goals of the MAE for the first five-year plan (1924–29) (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/105:30–34). His ambitious proposal included five ethnographic expeditions to Siberia and the Far East, several to both Soviet Central Asia and China, three to Africa, and one each to Japan, the Moluccas, Afghanistan, Iran, and South America. In addition there were to be numerous archaeological and physical anthropological expeditions in various parts of the USSR. Admitting that at the moment it was not financially feasible for the MAE to undertake its own foreign expeditions, Shternberg proposed re-establishing and expanding its exchanges with foreign museums.

Strongly committed to combining curatorial and scholarly work, Shternberg played an active role in the meetings of the Radlov Circle, serving as a member of its executive committee. This scholarly society, whose membership consisted of all the MAE staff members, a number of academicians specializing in Oriental studies and linguistics, and ethnography students, met several times a year to hear presentations by its members, including Shternberg himself. His last presentation, made a few months before his death, dealt with his 1926 trip to Japan (MAE Collection, SPFA RAN, 142/1(1922)/2).⁷¹

Shternberg and the Development of Soviet “Applied Anthropology”

Like many of the other Russian ethnographers of his time, Shternberg understood all too well that his discipline could no longer limit its scope to the study of the past or its survivals and ignore the dramatic changes that the country’s ethnic groups had been experiencing since 1917. His essay on the effects of the

economic devastation of the early years of Soviet rule on the day- to-day life of the various classes demonstrated that he was not averse to focusing his “ethnographic lens” on contemporary sociocultural issues. As an old socialist, he was also strongly committed to the cause of improving the living conditions of the country’s minorities. Finally, like Bogoraz and his other colleagues, Shternberg realized that the new regime badly needed accurate information on Soviet Russia’s ethnic groups and thus could be persuaded to allocate substantial funds for ethnographic expeditions.

Shternberg clearly articulated his position on ethnography’s role in the Soviet state in his unpublished paper “Ethnography and the National Economy” (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/80). Written in 1921, it argued that ethnography was a very important discipline not only from a “theoretical” (academic) viewpoint but from administrative and economic perspectives as well. In this piece, Shternberg expressed ideas that would in a few years become anathema to the Soviet authorities. To demonstrate the usefulness of ethnography in providing important information for the state, he used Western countries as his model. According to him, the first to begin appreciating ethnography’s usefulness were the “practical Yankees.” He pointed out that in the United States anthropology was taught in numerous institutions of higher learning and that those who studied it used their knowledge in various government jobs in the sphere of colonization and administration of new territories inhabited by indigenous peoples (like Alaska or the Philippines). The British, he argued, had also come to appreciate the importance of ethnography in their colonial empire, especially in India, as had the Dutch in Indonesia and the Germans in Africa.

Shternberg praised colonial institutes and especially language schools and compared their curricula with that of his own Geography Institute. He then went on to criticize the tsarist government for not organizing ethnographic expeditions to study the inhabitants of the lands being colonized and not using existing ethnographic data in its colonization activities. This resulted in serious and irreparable mistakes in policies affecting the Transbaikal region, Central Asia, the Far East, and especially the Caucasus. By ignoring the local economies of indigenous peoples, the state could easily destroy them. The economy and culture of the Slavic and non-Slavic inhabitants of the European part of the country also needed to be studied. With some exceptions, Russia remained

unexplored from an ethnographic point of view. Even the ethnic composition of the Petrograd region remained understudied, but thanks to the work of the Ethnographic Department of the Geography Institute the situation in this area was beginning to improve.

To do his part in the field of what we would call “applied anthropology,” Shternberg continued playing an active role in the work of the Commission for the Study of the Tribal/Ethnic Composition of Russia (Komissiiia po Izucheniiu Plemennogo Sostava Naseleniia Rossii, or KIPS) as the head of its Siberian section and a member of the editorial board of its periodical *Chelovek* (Human being). By the mid-1920s, with increased funding from the government, KIPS expanded its activities (Hirsch 2005). For example, in 1925–26 Shternberg’s section prepared a detailed ethnographic map of Siberia and in 1927 sponsored several ethnographic expeditions to Siberia led by Shternberg’s colleagues from the MAE and his graduate students from Leningrad State University. Throughout the mid-1920s, he received many requests from local authorities in Siberia and the Far East to take part in conferences and research projects on the socioeconomic conditions of the local population. Prevented from taking part in them by his poor health and a lack of time, Shternberg sent a number of his students instead.⁷²

The reason for a significant increase in ethnography’s prestige as a “useful” discipline was quite simple. As Hirsch (1997:252) noted, “the same party leaders who promised ‘national self-determination’ and wrote endless tracts on the ‘nationality question’ knew remarkably little about the peoples of the Soviet Union during the 1920s.” Accurate facts and figures were badly needed by the government to effectively mobilize the country’s economic and social resources. Having consulted repeatedly with ethnographers, geographers, and linguists, Soviet officials concluded that “borders drawn along national or ethnic lines would be more durable than those established according to natural geographic boundaries or economic principles” (Hirsch 1997:252). Therefore, it is not surprising that ethnographers became active participants in the All-Union censuses beginning in 1926. By defining and counting the USSR’s “nationalities,” the ethnographers helped solidify and even create them.⁷³ The country’s inhabitants felt the consequences of their activities for years to come; the findings were central to the division of the country after the Soviet Union’s collapse in 1991. Ethnographers sometimes played an even more ominous role in the

regime's efforts to define and control its subjects. For example, in 1926 KIPS participated in correcting an ethnographic atlas prepared by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, an institution responsible for policing the country (*Otchiot o Deiatel'nosti Akademii Nauk SSSR*, 1926:277–278; Hirsch 2005:101–144).

While Shternberg seems to have sincerely believed that the new regime could correct the wrongs committed against the country's minorities prior to 1917, he must have been uneasy with some of the consequences of the work his colleagues and students were performing for the authorities.⁷⁴ In fact, unlike Bogoraz, who enjoyed being at the center of government-sponsored projects in “applied anthropology” and presided over a series of projects by student ethnographers on the effects of the revolution on the Russian countryside, the Jewish *shtetl*, and so forth, Shternberg remained more interested in a deeper understanding of past and present social institutions and religious beliefs. Hence the only volume of student field reports that he edited dealt with continuity and change in marriage-related customs. Shternberg's introduction to this volume offers evolutionist interpretations of his students' findings and makes no reference to the post-1917 transformation of marriage customs (Shternberg 1926d). As an unreformed old Populist, he was also cautious about government ventures aimed at rapidly transforming the way of life of the country's indigenous minorities.

Not surprisingly, the two other “applied anthropology” projects that Shternberg devoted a fair amount of his time to in the 1920s fit in well with his Populist ideas on the need to preserve each people's unique ethnic culture and the key role of the intelligentsia in that work. One of them was the Committee for Assistance of the Peoples of the Northern Borderlands (Committee of the North), formed in 1924. In the words of Slezkine (1992:56–57), “Conceived of as a Soviet equivalent to the United States Office [Bureau—SK] of Indian Affairs, the Committee proceeded from the assumption that the circumpolar peoples . . . were at a stage of primitive communism. That is, there was no class stratification among them and whatever exploiters there were, were Russians. Accordingly, the task of the northern officials/ethnographers was to protect their ‘small peoples’ from various ‘predators’ and assist them—ever so cautiously—in their climb up the evolutionary ladder.”

The new government body, which reported to the country's top executive office (*vtsik*), was composed of a number of prominent old Bolsheviks as well as

several ethnographers, geographers, and other academics. One of the committee's most active members and its leading ideologist was Bogoraz. Shternberg, who shared his friend's ideas about the best way to assist northern minorities, was less active than him but did take part in a number of the committee's meetings and conferences and contributed to its journal *Severnaia Aziia* (Northern Asia). Among the committee's major proposals, which clearly reflected Bogoraz's and Shternberg's Populist ideas, was the promotion of local autonomy by means of creating local soviets (councils) based on the indigenous sociopolitical institutions and protecting indigenous homelands from further encroachments by nonnative newcomers. At the same time, the committee advocated "raising the cultural level" of the "backward" northern minorities by promoting improvement in medical care, schooling, and other "civilizing" measures. Thus, the committee's initial program represented a peculiar mix of Russian Populism with ideas developed by "enlightened" western colonial bureaucrats (like the British "indirect rule") and especially liberal American reformers like John Collier a decade later.⁷⁵ While one could find many flaws in the committee's policy proposals, they were much more enlightened and liberal than the government policies of the 1930s, which favored rapid socioeconomic and ideological development and treated the local shamans and the more successful hunters and reindeer-herders as "exploiters" that had to be eliminated (Slezkine 1992, 1994).

The second venture of the 1920s that Shternberg participated in along with many other Soviet ethnographers, geographers, historians, biologists, and other scholars, was *kraevedenie*, or "the study of the local region." It involved the study of the natural environment, population, economy, history, and culture of a particular territory ranging in size from a large administrative district to a single estate or even house, conducted primarily by local amateurs and enthusiasts with guidance from the academic community. Building on a prerevolutionary tradition of regional studies and local museum work by grassroots organizations of the provincial intelligentsia, Soviet-era *kraevedenie* brought together leading academicians, government officials concerned about "involving the masses into scientific research," and local enthusiasts from the ranks of the intelligentsia and better-educated representatives of the working class. As Sigurd Shmidt (1992:33) pointed out, "This [movement] was a form of democratization of science." He also referred to the period between 1917 and

1929 as the “golden decade” of *kraevedenie*, during which time the government not only gave it support but also allowed the local participants a significant degree of independence in their work. One of the major new projects undertaken by the *kraeveds* was the preservation of historic buildings and other cultural treasures threatened by the nihilistic zeal of the leftist activists and bureaucrats. The first All-Union *kraevedenie* conference took place in 1921, and a year later the Central Bureau of Kraevedenie (TSBK) was created, with Ol'denburg, the permanent secretary of the Academy of Sciences, elected as its president. TSBK, which initially operated from Leningrad, coordinated the work of its local branches and published a journal.⁷⁶ Eventually many of the country's leading historians, linguists, and scholars of cultural history became involved in the movement, along with thousands of local enthusiasts. Of course, the *kraevedenie* movement had to take the interests of the state into consideration and research the potentials for further development of the local “forces of production” (Shmidt 2001:297). Until the late 1920s, however, it was allowed to explore all aspects of local natural and cultural history, including the material and spiritual culture of the local peoples. According to Shmidt (1992:65), “*kraevedenie* societies were a manifestation of the democratic local activities, which went back to the prerevolutionary scientific and enlightenment traditions. Proliferation of knowledge among the local population often took place outside the official channels and without adhering to standardized instructions, which in the 1920s were becoming the norm.”

A number of prominent ethnographers including Shternberg also took part in this movement, advising local *kraeveds* on methods of conducting ethnographic research and putting together ethnographic exhibitions at the proliferating local museums. Shternberg undoubtedly shared the idea, advocated by Ol'denburg and other representatives of the prerevolutionary intelligentsia, that *kraevedenie*'s key task was encouraging the masses to care about the preservation of local natural, historical, and cultural resources and monuments. In Maksim Gorky's words, it was also supposed to contribute to “the growth of the sense of human dignity” among the masses and instill in them “the faith in the creative power of our reason” (quoted in Shmidt 1992:59–60).

Shternberg's involvement in the *kraevedenie* movement was more limited than that of such prominent ethnographers and physical anthropologists as David Zolotariov, the head of the Ethnography Division of the Russian Museum.

Nonetheless, he corresponded with a number of local *kraeveds* and took part in several *kraevedenie* conferences, including a regional Caucasus one held in Batumi, Georgia, in September 1925. Always an anthropologist, Shternberg enjoyed observing the region's diverse "anthropological types" as well as the material culture of its various ethnic groups. In addition, as he wrote in his report on the trip, Caucasus was a fascinating place for an ethnologist because an "absolutely unique sociological experiment of a radical social transformation" was taking place there in the 1920s. This experiment involved peoples "occupying the various levels of culture and within an environment where all the old traditions, and especially interethnic hostility, were extremely resilient." True to his new interests in cultural change, Shternberg argued that these sociocultural processes had to be studied by ethnographers even though "an understanding of the mechanism and the process of this experiment as well as the psychological experience of the people affected by it was not easily developed" (Shternberg 1926e:75).⁷⁷

The Dean of the Leningrad Ethnographic School

The 1920s could be called the golden age of anthropological education in the Soviet Union (Solovei 1998:112–136). From 1922–23, government funding for Shternberg's Geography Institute increased, allowing him to hire a fairly large and rather impressive group of instructors. Government financing of ethnographic expeditions, including student research, also grew. At the same time, there was almost no ideological censorship of the content of lectures offered by the institute's faculty. During that era, Shternberg, Bogoraz, and their colleagues trained a large group of young ethnographers who went on to conduct research among many of the country's ethnic groups.

However, the 1920s also witnessed a gradual tightening of ideological control over higher education, particularly in the social sciences and the humanities. This pressure, which came from the government bureaucracy in charge of higher education as well as from left-wing instructors and student activists, was particularly strong at the country's leading universities, including the Leningrad one. Eventually it began to be felt at the Geography Institute as well.

As early as 1919 courses on the history of socialist ideas and movements and other "ideologically correct" courses began to be taught at the Moscow and Petrograd universities, even though there were hardly any textbooks available

for such instruction. But Soviet leaders and ideologues wished to go much further. In order to facilitate greater control over the “bourgeois professoriate,” they established special Faculties of the Social Sciences (FONS) in 1921. Some of them, including the one at Petrograd University, offered instruction in ethnology. That same year, the government body overseeing Moscow University divided the disciplines taught at the FON into the “more politically significant” and the “less politically significant.” The former, which included philosophy, sociology, economics, and several other disciplines (but not ethnology!), had to be taught by Marxist professors.

In 1922 the top government body, the Council of People's Commissars, ordered all institutions of higher learning to offer obligatory courses in historical materialism, capitalism and the proletarian revolution, and the political system of the USSR. In 1923–24 several “ideologically correct” disciplines were added to the curriculum, including the history of the Communist Party, national policy of the USSR, and methods of political propaganda in the city and the countryside. To insure a more pro-Soviet student body, applicants from the “working classes” began to be given preference over the children of the intelligentsia and the bourgeoisie during the same period. Thanks to this form of affirmative action, the number of Communists and Young Communists among FONS' students increased significantly. In 1923 Shternberg's own institute began applying “the class principle” in recruiting students.

Despite these efforts, in the 1920s the regime's control over education in the social sciences (including ethnology) remained limited. As Solovei (1998:123) explains, government policy towards higher education contained major contradictions. On the one hand, it required ideological indoctrination. On the other, it financed concrete scientific investigations led by the scholars of the old school, the results of which often contradicted “the vulgar sociological schemes forced upon science in the guise of Marxist methodology.”

Throughout the 1920s Shternberg continued offering some courses at the Leningrad State University's FON. However, his main efforts as an educator were directed toward his own “child”—the Geography Institute (GI), where he served as the dean of the Ethnography Division. An in-depth examination of the publications and especially the records of this institution shows that in 1922–25 it was able to maintain greater freedom from ideological pressure than the university, which the regime viewed as the most important institution of higher

learning in the city.⁷⁸ In fact, as early as 1923, the university faculty and staff were subjected to a major purge. Nothing of this kind took place at the GI. The fact that ethnology was being taught in an institution devoted to geography undoubtedly helped it resist this pressure longer than the university's FON. This relative independence of the GI appears to have been one of (if not the main) reasons for its incorporation into the university in 1925, when it became the Geography Faculty with both Geographic and Ethnographic divisions.

The curriculum of the Ethnography Division (ED) of the Geography Faculty reflected Shternberg's vision of ethnology as the most comprehensive of all the social sciences. In the course of their four-year education, students acquired very substantial training not only in ethnology, archaeology, physical anthropology, and linguistics, but also in a variety of other disciplines deemed to be of use to them. Thus in 1923, in addition to introductory and more specialized anthropology courses, first-year students studied the major sciences as well as geography. In the second year they focused on topography, cartography, and geomorphology. In the third and fourth years they took courses mainly in their specialty while also studying psychology.

None of the instructors teaching these courses were Marxist in their orientation. Shternberg was not only the division's dean but also its main professor. He taught Introduction to Ethnography to the first-year class and the courses General Ethnography and the Evolution of Religion to the second-year students. Third- or fourth-year students took his Evolution of Social Organization and Museology. In their last year, students specializing in Siberian ethnography attended his seminars on the subject.

As I have already stated, Shternberg's lectures presented students with a strongly articulated evolutionist perspective. What made his lectures unique was the effort he made to show the students *how* he had arrived at his conclusions and interpretations regarding specific aspects of culture and its evolution, instead of simply presenting them with those conclusions (Shternberg 1999:245–246). The lectures also exposed them to all the major works in cultural anthropology, from those of Tylor and Morgan to studies by more recent scholars. The work of anthropologists whose views Shternberg did not share was presented in detail and without simplification or caricature, as became common in the next decade. Moreover, as we have seen already, by the 1920s Shternberg's evolutionism became tempered by such new theoretical developments

as diffusionism, the cultural historical approach, and several others. For example, in 1925–27 he supervised an independent study course with the graduate student Dmitrii Ol'derogge (1903–87) on the German Kulturkreise school and African ethnology. Ol'derogge, a graduate of Petrograd University's FON, was hired by the MAE's African Department as a junior staff member and attended Shternberg's lectures at the ED in 1925–27. Thanks to Shternberg, he was able to spend six months in Germany interacting with the leading German ethnologists and studying museum collections on African ethnology as well as African languages. This trip helped him become the leading Soviet Africanist (Kochakova 2002:185–191).

In addition to exposing the first generation of Soviet ethnologists to the main schools of Western cultural anthropology, Shternberg's courses conveyed to them his political worldview, which combined Populism, liberal humanism, and other progressive ideologies of the pre-1917 Russian intelligentsia. While rarely referring directly to Soviet politics, he repeatedly emphasized the importance of intercultural and interstate cooperation and the dangers of isolationism. He also gave a largely positive assessment of the liberal Western democracies and their culture. Finally, although he emphasized the inevitability of progress in human culture from “primitive superstitions” and polytheism to secular humanism and scientific reasoning, Lev Iakovlevich often recounted his favorite idea of the key role played by monotheism, and especially Judaism, in the development of Western culture. After 1917 he continued to use evolutionism as a weapon against conservative and dogmatic views. As one of his students recalled, he liked to say that the “most important lesson taught by ethnography is that not a single viewpoint or idea in human society should be seen as something constant and unchanging. Ethnography makes us view all the phenomena of social life in a critical light . . . That is why ethnography is an enemy of any kind of conservatism” (Gagen-Torn 1975:162).

Shternberg's message of humanism, respect for all peoples and cultures, and selfless commitment to the science of ethnography was best exemplified by his famous “Ethnographer's Ten Commandments,” which he shared with each cohort of his students (Gagen-Torn 1971:161–62; Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/108:64).⁷⁹ Although the tone of these commandments was somewhat humorous, their message was dead serious. Based rather closely on the original biblical commandments, they undoubtedly reflected their author's

strong commitment to Judaism as well as humanism and universalism. The highlights of the old ethnographer's message, parts of which would sound subversive only a few years later, included:

Thou shalt not make an idol of thine own people, thy religion, thy culture. Know though that all peoples are equal: there are no Hellenes, no Hebrews, no white, no black [persons]. He who knows only one people knows none; he who knows only one religion, one culture, knows none at all . . .

Thou shalt not profane science nor define ethnography by careerism. Only a person filled with enthusiasm for science and love for humanity and for each individual human being can be an ethnographer . . .

Respect thy great predecessors and teachers in academic and public life, so that thou may be judged by thine own accomplishments . . .

Thou shalt not betray ethnography once chosen. The one who has taken the road of ethnography once, must never depart from it . . .

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor, against other peoples, against their character, customs, rituals, morals, etc.

Thou shalt not forcibly impose thy culture upon the people thou art studying; approach it carefully and with solicitude, love, and consideration; no matter what level of culture it occupies, it will strive to elevate itself to the level of the highest cultures. (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/108:64)

The first generation of Soviet ethnologists learned a great deal from their mentor outside the classroom. Published and unpublished memoirs of his students mention long conversations with him outside the auditorium after his lectures and in the street when they walked their favorite teacher home (Gagen-Torn 1975:159–211, 1994:48–57).⁸⁰ A man of strong opinions, Shternberg was known for his tolerance of other people's views, regardless of their rank or level of education. In addition to a huge amount of ethnological theory and ethnographic data, he shared with his students useful advice on fieldwork methodology and

ethics as well as day- to-day survival under difficult field conditions. He even provided his students with medication they needed badly in the field.

For many of his students, the old Populist became not only their teacher but also a parental figure—a trusted friend, advisor, and confidant with whom they could discuss the most personal and private problems. His kindness and generosity with his time and money were legendary, as was his determination to find professional positions for his former students.⁸¹ Initially, his stern demeanor and reputation as a very demanding and harsh examiner intimidated many of the ethnology students. Soon, however, they developed close relationships with the man they called “father” or “papa Shternberg” (cf. Boas’s relationship with his own students).

Bogoraz was Shternberg’s right-hand man and, in his own words, a “*spiritus movens*” of the ethnology division. In 1923–25 he taught Introduction to Ethnogeography, Evolution of Material Culture, seminars on the Palaeoasiatic cultures, and a course on fieldwork methods that included hands-on instruction in ethnography and demography. Like Shternberg, Bogoraz was an eclectic thinker, with his courses exposing students to a combination of evolutionism, Boasianism, and anthropogeography.⁸² His particular strength lay not in theory but in his broad knowledge of Siberian ethnology and emphasis on field methods, from recording linguistic data to very practical matters of survival in the Arctic.

Other major instructors in the ethnography divisions of the university’s Geography Institute and, after 1925, the Geography Faculty (GF) included prominent scholars trained before 1917 like Dmitrii Zelenin, Sergei Rudenko, and several others. Born in 1878, Zelenin graduated from the Historical-Philological Faculty of Tartu (Iur’ev) University in 1904. From his student days on he conducted ethnographic and linguistic research among rural Russians and other Slavic peoples. Having taught at Khar’kov University for many years, he joined the faculty of the Geography Faculty of the LGU in 1925, teaching various general and specialized courses on Slavic ethnography. We know that he was critical of the Bolsheviks and that until the early 1930s his studies bore no influence of Marxism. Instead, they were part of the pre-1917 Russian tradition of Slavic studies (Reshetov 2004b). At the Ethnography Division of the GF Zelenin was known for his intellectual tolerance.

Physical anthropology was taught at the ethnography divisions of the institute and the faculty by Sergei Rudenko. Born in 1885, he graduated from the Physical-Mathematical Faculty of St. Petersburg University before the Bolshevik coup and conducted ethnographic research among the non-Russian peoples of the Volga River as well as major archaeological excavations in the Altai region (Vasil'kov and Sorokina 2003:331–332). Instruction in archaeology was offered by one of the leading Russian archaeologists of the old school, Aleksandr Spitsyn (1858–1931), and a longtime MAE staff member, V. Lemeshevskii.

In addition to full-time professors and lecturers (known as docents), the GF employed a number of part-time instructors who taught specialized and elective courses. Among them were the prerevolutionary Russian historians Kareev and Mikhail Priselkov (1881–1941); a prominent scholar of East Asian history and ethnology, Nikolai Kiuner (1877–1955); the country's leading Turkologist, Aleksandr Samoilovich (1880–1938); and a leading prerevolutionary and Soviet Egyptologist, Hebraist, and Orientalist, Israil' Frank-Kamenetsii (1880–1937). By 1925, when the GI was transformed into the GF of the LGU, a number of Shternberg's best former students were also offering lecture courses and seminars. Prominent among them was a leading specialist on Chinese and Japanese culture, Nikolai Konrad (1891–1970); a promising young scholar of Turkic and Ugro-Finnish linguistics and ethnology, Nikolai Poppe (1897–1991); and several others.

Compared to the LGU, the GI had very few members of the Communist Party or the Young Communist League among its faculty and students. According to the annual reports on the activities of the Communist Party and Young Communist League (VLKSM) cells at the institute, it had very little influence on the students and was treated “rather coldly” by the administration. This is not surprising, given the fact that there were only four Communists in an institution whose staff and students together numbered 951! The GI's Young Communists complained to their superiors that more than half the students were of “bourgeois” or “intelligentsia” origin and hence hostile or at least indifferent to the political causes promoted by the Communist Party and VLKSM cells. Moreover, in 1923 a small group of anarchist students attempted to organize a meeting honoring the great Russian anarchist Kropotkin. Having assured the GI's administration that only scholarly presentations would be given during the event,

the organizers obtained its permission. However, high authorities forbade the meeting (TSGAIPDSP, Geography Institute, Informational Report no. 165).

The only Communist and committed Marxist among Shternberg's and Bogoraz's students who were teaching in the ED of the GF was Ian Al'kor (Koshkin). Born in 1900, he joined the Bolsheviks in 1917 and plunged into revolutionary activities. At a young age he was already the head of the Central Executive Committee of Latvia (before the efforts there to establish a Soviet-style regime failed). In the early 1920s he studied at the High Cavalry Academy of the Red Army and the FON of the LGU, graduating in 1924 as a specialist in Tungusic languages and ethnology. A year later he was teaching this subject at the ED of the GF.

In addition to receiving a very broad education in ethnological theory and descriptive ethnography, students in the Ethnography Division before and after 1925 were taught a great deal about fieldwork methodology, including photography, topography, and drawing. They were also supposed to study at least one language of the non-Russian inhabitants of the USSR, preferably the one that they would later be using in their field research. Finally, they spent one or two summers at the GI's and the GF's summer schools ("stations"), conducting ethnographic research in nearby communities and further perfecting their practical skills as linguists and ethnographers. Shternberg treated the data gathered by his students during the summer with the utmost seriousness. He tried to publish it or at least archive it for future use (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/18).

Upon completion of their four-year program of study, the young ethnographers either looked for a job in education, museums, or state bureaucracy that dealt with minority populations, or continued their education by undertaking long-term ethnographic research and then writing up their data as a dissertation or an academic publication. Most of Shternberg's better students chose the second option. Each one of them received detailed personal instruction in various intellectual and practical matters related to his or her field project. Every student was encouraged by their mentor to cast a wide research net—to collect data on all aspects of native life, especially social and spiritual culture (Ratner-Shternberg 1935:148). By 1923–24, taking advantage of an improved economic situation in the USSR and the state's need to have accurate information on its various ethnic groups, Shternberg and Bogoraz established the Commission for Organizing Ethnographic Student Expeditions and managed

to obtain substantial government funding for these expeditions.⁸³ In addition, students were able to travel by train for free and received assistance from local authorities.⁸⁴ In return they usually carried out some educational or “enlightenment” work among the population they were studying. A number of them took part in the 1926 national census (see Hirsch 2005).

Many of ethnology students were sympathetic and even enthusiastic about the regime’s campaigns to “Sovietize” the peasants and the non-Russian minorities and saw no contradiction between the tasks of documenting the local culture and transforming it. At the same time, some of their experiences sharply contradicted their optimistic expectations. For example, when one of Shternberg’s students arrived in a small Russian village for his summer research, the local Soviet authorities told him that its population was making great progress in building socialism. Once he had gotten to know the peasants better, however, he learned how much they hated the local Communists. In fact, the anti-Soviet sentiment was so strong that the young ethnographer, who was clearly identified as one of the outsiders, fled the village (Kreinovich to Shternberg, August 12, 1925, Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/5/27:2–3). Another student of the ED, Saul Abramzon, had to request a handgun for his ethnographic expedition to the Kyrgyzstan-China border area, where in the mid-1920s anti-Soviet bandits were still roaming (Russian Communist Party Reports on the Institutions of Higher Education, TSGAIPDSP, 192/1/23). Having been taught by their mentor to do their utmost best to help the natives, the young ethnologists did not hesitate to criticize those actions of the local authorities that hurt both the local people and the cause of Sovietization.

The work of the 1920s ethnography students was conducted under very difficult conditions, especially in the Arctic. A dozen students died in the field of starvation, exposure to very low temperatures, and accidents (Gagen-Torn 1971; Kreinovich 1973). The field research carried out by two of Shternberg’s students offers a good example of the kind of work they accomplished. Born in 1895, Glafira Vasilevich studied at the ED of the GI from 1921 until 1925.⁸⁵ As part of her education, she participated in the Pechora Expedition of the Supreme Soviet of the National Economy (VSNKh) in 1923 and another expedition to the Viatka region, where she studied the local Russian peasant house and collected artifacts for the State Academy [Institute] of the History of Material Culture (GAIMK). Having completed her four-year education, she embarked on

her own independent expedition to the Tungus (Evenk) people of eastern Siberia. Like many of the other graduates of her institute who chose to work in Siberia or the Russian North, she carried an official document stating that the Committee of the North was sponsoring her project. It appears that the young ethnographer was able to select her own field site, on the upper reaches of the Lena River. Vasilevich spent much of this four-month long expedition following the Evenk on their migrations. Upon her return to Leningrad, she became a junior assistant instructor at the newly established ED of the GF, teaching Evenk language and ethnography. From September 1926 until April 1927 she was back in Evenk country collecting artifacts and ethnographic data in the Krasnoiarsk region. Like her first field project, this one resulted in a brief ethnographic publication. Back from the field, she continued teaching at the university and also obtained a part-time teaching job in the Northern Faculty of the Leningrad Institute of the Living Eastern Languages (LIZHVIA). Transformed into a separate Institute of the Peoples of the North, this institution was organized by Bogoraz and other activists on the Committee of the North with the aim of training indigenous northerners to become the first generation of the local intelligentsia. The institute staff conducted both academic and applied research on indigenous northern languages and cultures. One of its main tasks was to develop alphabets for the preliterate languages of the region and then publish texts in these languages. Vasilevich's job was to prepare an Evenk primer. Published in 1928, it became the first instructional material for the teaching of Evenk. A year later she produced the first reader in that language. In 1929 she was back with the Evenks, studying the inhabitants of the Olekma and Vitima rivers for the Committee of the North. During this expedition, she became so proficient in the Evenk language that she was able to serve as an interpreter for the local officials dealing with the natives and deliver a presentation at a local conference in Evenk. The data collected in 1929 served as the basis for the young woman's first major scholarly publication, an article on Evenk customs and beliefs related to hunting that she published in the journal *Sovetskaia Etnografiia*. In the late 1920s she also took part in putting on exhibits at the MAE. Throughout the 1930s she undertook several additional ethnographic expeditions to the Evenks and published articles and books on Evenk ethnology and linguistics. By the time of her death in 1971, Vasilevich was a well-known specialist on these subjects.



16. Ethnology students of Leningrad State University on the eve of Erukhim Kreinovich's departure for Sakhalin, 1926: (top row, left to right) I. Dyshchenko, Saul Abramzon, Zakharii Cherniakov, Stepan Makar'ev; (middle row) Ian Al'kor (Koshkin), Vladimir Bogoraz, Kreinovich, Shternberg, Pavel Moll; (front) Sergei Stebnitskii, Naomi Shprintsin, Elena Talonova. Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/5/27:61.

Another student of Shternberg's, Erukhim (Yurii) Kreinovich (1906–85), was probably one of his favorites.⁸⁶ Part of the reason for this was the fact that he chose to study the Nivkh, a people dear to Shternberg's heart. Upon graduating from an evening school for teenagers of working-class backgrounds in 1923, this Jewish boy from a small Byelorussian town enrolled in the FON of the LGU. After attending one of Shternberg's lectures, he fell in love with anthropology and decided to devote his life to it. Kreinovich took classes at the ED of the GF for several years and then began preparing for his own ethnographic research on Sakhalin Island. As part of this preparation, he (along with another student, Nestor Karger) studied the Nivkh language with Shternberg. Several Nivkh students from the Oriental Institute served as their informants.⁸⁷ In May 1926 Kreinovich graduated from LGU and left for Sakhalin. As Kreinovich recalled many years later, Shternberg saw him to the train station and warmly embraced and kissed him before he jumped on the train. Then, "as the train began to move faster, it was followed by only one running person who was waving at me. This was Lev Iakovlevich, a man so close and dear to me" (Kreinovich

1973:12). Erukhim spent two years in the field, more than most other Geography Institute and Faculty graduates.⁸⁸

He diligently worked on mastering the Nivkh language and collecting ethnographic data. He exchanged letters with his mentor, seeking his advice and reporting on his findings. Like other young Soviet ethnographers, Kreinovich carried out the new regime's plans for the "development" of the "numerically small peoples of the North." He was assigned to work as an assistant to the head of a local revolutionary committee (*revkom*), a temporary governmental institution with great executive powers established throughout the country in the first years of the new regime. Uncomfortable with the enormity and vagueness of the *revkom*'s tasks, the young ethnographer chose to work as a teacher in a boarding school for indigenous youngsters. One of his jobs was attracting the natives to the school. It was not a simple task because living conditions there were poor and many children became sick with tuberculosis and other contagious diseases. Several students died in the arms of the young teacher, who eventually came down with pneumonia and later TB. Soon thereafter he decided to return to the *revkom* to prepare a Nivkh dictionary in the hope that it would facilitate better communication between the natives and the Soviet officials in charge of them and thereby protect the natives from being exploited by private fur traders. In addition, he was supposed to promote "economic progress" by encouraging the Nivkhs to become farmers and workers in the oil fields. While he did not question the wisdom of the government's larger agenda, this honest and sensitive ethnographer informed his superiors of the misguidedness of such projects. He argued that the natives were still deeply devoted to hunting and fishing and would not want to change their economic pursuits. Echoing the ideas of his mentors, Bogoraz and Shternberg, he concluded that instead of discouraging these traditional activities, the local officials should give the Nivkhs an opportunity to continue pursuing them. This approach would not only be better for the natives but "necessary for the general task of socialist economic construction" (cited in Roon and Sirina 2003:55; see also Grant 1995:72–80). Unfortunately Soviet officials rarely listened to such advice (see Slezkine 1994).

Some of the sentiments expressed by Kreinovich in his letters to Shternberg echo the thoughts his mentor recorded in his 1890s diaries and field notes. In one of his letters Kreinovich wrote that interaction with the Nivkhs gave him more joy than with the Europeans. In another letter he lamented the loss of fine

traditional customs and the acquisition of some bad habits from the Russians (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/5/27:19–24).⁸⁹ And here is a passage that could have definitely been written by Shternberg himself: “In the depths of the taiga, far away from the noise of a huge capital city, on the banks of a wonderful cold river, it is so good to live the life of these children of nature, to learn about their laws . . . and to realize that fortunately they have not borrowed all the bad things from us” (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/5/27:23–24).

Thanks to his exceptional linguistic talents, Kreinovich became fluent in the Nivkh language, something his mentor was never able to accomplish. He developed close ties with a number of Nivkh elders, including Shternberg’s old informants and friends Churka, Pletunka, and several others who remembered their “father” (ytʸk) with affection. Thanks to his student, Shternberg was able to send a letter in Nivkh to his old friends and receive a response from them (Roon and Prokof’ev 2001:209–211).⁹⁰ Following Shternberg’s example and advice, Kreinovich lived in Nivkh dwellings, fished with them, ate their food, and took part in their ceremonies. This enabled him to collect a great deal of valuable ethnographic and linguistic data. He also recorded numerous folktales, earning a Nivkh nickname “the boss of folktales.” Responding to Erukhim’s detailed letters, Shternberg sent him useful advice on the research topics he should pursue. Upon returning to Leningrad, he followed a career path similar to that of Vasilevich, working at the MAE and teaching the Nivkh language at the Institute of the Peoples of the North. With his expertise on Nivkh language, he was given the task of developing literacy in that language. Having conducted a linguistic field study among the Nivkh in 1931, Kreinovich published a number of important articles and a primer on their language and culture.⁹¹ In 1936 he completed a dissertation on Nivkh phonology, thus continuing his mentor’s project in Nivkh linguistics.⁹²

Shternberg inspired other students besides Kreinovich to become linguists and anthropological linguists. Nikolai Poppe, a student of Oriental Studies at the LGU, reminisced that it was Shternberg who influenced his decision to become a linguist. Between 1919 and 1923 Poppe took several of Shternberg’s courses and also attended his famous lectures given in front of the museum cases at the MAE building. As I already mentioned, it was Shternberg who, in the summers of 1919 and 1920, enabled Poppe to undertake linguistic and ethnographic research among the Finno-Ugric peoples of European Russia. He also gave the young linguist a part-time research job at the GI and introduced

him to several of its ethnography students, who became Poppe's close friends. Under the influence of his mentor, Poppe chose to specialize in Mongolian languages of southern Siberia. In his own words, "Thanks to Lev Iakovlevich I began to see the culture of the peoples I was studying as a single complex of spiritual and material culture. . . . Thanks to him I also significantly broadened the scope of my research" (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/110:65–66).⁹³ Shternberg encouraged at least one of his students, Grigorii Petrov, to become a physical anthropologist (Petrov 1930).

Of course, those students who chose to specialize in ethnology, especially Siberian, were also influenced by their mentor in their choice of research topics. A number of GI and GF students ended up researching social organization or shamanism and other forms of "primitive" religion. Shternberg asked several of them to provide him with new data for his own current research, including that for his essay on divine election. According to Arsen'ev (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/110:25), Shternberg encouraged his brightest and most favored students (like Kreinovich) to work among the native peoples whom he had studied himself. At least one of Shternberg's students, Isaak Vinnikov, who was indeed very close to him, had originally begun working on Jewish ethnology but was forced to give it up in later years due to the change in the political climate.

Finally, another bright young ethnologist who had been strongly influenced by Lev Iakovlevich was Sergei Ivanov. In his case, he chose to specialize in an area that Shternberg had always been very interested in but had done relatively little work in: "primitive" art. Born in 1895, Ivanov learned to draw early in life and entered the FON of LGU in 1922 with a strong interest in art. He chose the "museum studies" cycle of the FON. That same year he found himself sitting in Shternberg's lecture on the evolution of religion and was greatly impressed by it. He took two courses with Shternberg and was invited by him to work at the MAE as an artist-illustrator. As Ivanov reminisced in the late 1920s,

Under the influence of L. Ia. Shternberg's lectures . . . a radical change took place in my worldview and my attitude toward art. Ethnographic disciplines broadened and deepened my ideas about human society and its culture. . . . Gradually, step-by-step, my eyes were opened to the psychic world of the primitive man, his beliefs and art. Unbeknownst to me, I was becoming an ethnographer and

developing a true scholarly interest in the various ethnographic issues, and especially religious beliefs and art. Moreover, I began to feel love and respect for the most primitive human being, whom I had never even thought about before. All this could not have happened without Shternberg. (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/110:47a)

Thanks to Shternberg's influence, Ivanov became largely disinterested in Western art and decided to study the art of the "primitive peoples." In 1925 he was appointed as a researcher at the MAE and an instructor at the ED of the GF. Upon Shternberg's recommendation, he began leading "practical instruction" (laboratory work) in primitive art. Shternberg often spoke to him about this subject and helped him improve his teaching and develop several lines of research using the MAE's rich Siberian collection. Shternberg's influence led Ivanov to work on topics such as the "world tree" in Siberian native art, the evolution of decorative designs in Siberian and North American Indian art, and the decoration of Siberian shamanic costumes.

A number of Shternberg's students conducted their research under the auspices of KIPS. For example, in 1926–27 Lev Iakovlevich served as the official head of a major expedition to the Garin-Amgun area of the Amur region. Led by two of his students, Iosif Koz'minskii and Nestor Karger, the expedition worked among some of the same native peoples that Shternberg had visited in the 1890s and 1911 (*Otchiot o deiatel'nosti Akademii Nauk SSSR*, 1926:169–172). A year later, Karger and Ivanov continued this expedition. Once again, their mentor served as the official head of the project (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/132, 282/2/145; Bogoraz Collection, SPFA RAN, 250/5/40). These three ED graduates as well as Vera Tsintsius and Klara Myl'nikova, who conducted research among the Amur River Nigidal, followed some of Shternberg's own routes and came across several groups of natives who still remembered him fondly (Tsintsius to Shternberg, Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/307). All in all Shternberg, Bogoraz, and their colleagues trained several dozen first-rate cultural anthropologists within the relatively short period of 1918 to 1932, when such instruction came to a temporary standstill (see chapter 9).

In addition to training students that Americans would call "undergraduates," Shternberg was determined to establish an academic institution that would train graduate students to conduct serious research in ethnography.



17. Shternberg and Bogoraz with ethnology students, including Naomi Shprintsin, mid-1920s. Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/194:14.

While he had been preoccupied with this idea since the early 1900s, only in the mid-1920s did it seem to become realizable. In a series of position papers and letters to government officials in charge of higher education and research, Lev Iakovlevich articulated his vision. The first step toward encouraging students to become serious scholars and continue their ethnographic education beyond the four-year program was to involve many of the GI and GF students in the work of the Radlov Circle, where they heard mature scholars and fellow students present and discuss scholarly papers. In 1923 another ethnographic “circle” was organized specifically for ethnography students. Members presented their papers, discussed upcoming ethnographic expeditions, published their own small journal—*Etnograf-Issledovatel'* (Ethnographer-researcher)—and eventually published their findings in a series of collections edited by Shternberg and Bogoraz, who served as the circle’s mentors.⁹⁴

The next step was to hire recent graduates to work as “assistants” (i.e., junior instructors and researchers) at the GF. In 1925–26 a dozen of Shternberg’s former students served as docents (roughly equivalent to assistant professors) and senior assistants, while a dozen worked as junior assistants (lecturers or instructors). At the same time they worked as junior staff members at the MAE, where they continued their education by attending special seminars led by Shternberg

and several other ethnologists on a variety of topics, such as Durkheim's theory of religion, Lévi-Bruhl's ideas about primitive mentality, and Freudianism (Kochakova 2002:189).⁹⁵

Shternberg summed up his vision of an ethnological research institute in an unpublished paper entitled "Research Institutes" (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 281/1/191). In his view such an institute should have several major goals, including: the investigation of significant ethnological problems requiring cooperation among several scholars; the systematic study of the ethnography of Russia, so that precious data on disappearing cultures is preserved for the sake of science; the training of researchers specializing in general and comparative ethnological topics as well as field studies of specific peoples. Shternberg's list of the necessary disciplines within the institute was quite impressive, as was the number of specialists he proposed for it—over fifty! (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 281/1/191:323–325).

Lev Iakovlevich did not live to see the establishment of an Ethnographic Scientific Research Institute, but his ideas were clearly the inspiration for a position paper on the subject that Bogoraz prepared in 1928 for the Commissariat of Education and other government bodies in charge of scientific research and higher education. This memo described a unified conglomeration of *kafedras* created by the faculty, assistants, and graduate students at the ED of the GF for the purpose of strengthening the scholarly work and increasing the academic qualifications of the young staff members of the ED. The proposed institute's tasks included organizing ethnological research on various topics and issues, like those important to the state; training professional ethnographers to serve as researchers as well as teachers of ethnology and related disciplines; popularizing ethnological knowledge; and (in the spirit of the changing times) thoroughly exploring Marxist ideology as it related to ethnological disciplines. The institute was to be divided into two sections and included courses on the history and methodology of ethnography, ethnogeography, the evolution of material culture and forces of production, the evolution of social and socioeconomic institutions, and the evolution of spiritual culture.

Fighting the Politicization of the Curriculum

The regime's attempts to impose ideological and political control over the higher education curriculum began soon after the October 1917 coup. However, given the almost total absence of Marxist social scientists and the scarcity of Marxist

textbooks and other educational materials, it was very difficult for the higher education authorities to remove all the “bourgeois” professors from their teaching posts and introduce “politically correct” subjects into the curriculum like dialectical and historical materialism or the history of the Bolshevik Party. One of the solutions to this shortage—proposed in 1921 by the party’s central committee—was to have party functionaries teach such courses. Another example of this politicization of the curriculum was a 1921 decision by the leadership of Moscow State University to divide the courses taught at its Faculty of the Social Sciences into the “more important” and “less important” (*udarnye* and *neudarnye*); the teaching of classes in the first category was assigned to the “politically literate” (that is, Marxist) instructors.

Three years later, in the midst of a bitter struggle between Stalin’s and Trotsky’s supporters, a resolution issued at a party conference pointed out “the weakness of political literacy among many of the students” and called for making the study of the party’s history obligatory at every institution of higher learning (Chanbarisov 1988:144). After Lenin’s death, the party decreed that the number of ideologically correct disciplines had to be increased, with an emphasis placed on Lenin’s teaching. In the 1924–25 academic year the teaching of the so-called “social science minimum” became obligatory and systematic. The following year special *kafedras* in Marxist philosophy (dialectical and historical materialism) and Leninism were established at a number of the leading higher education institutions (Chanbarisov 1988:144). Finally, a system of institutions was established in the early 1920s to train Marxist scientific and scholarly cadres. It included the Communist Academy, the Institute of Red Professors, and the All-Union Association of Workers of Science and Technology for the Assistance of Socialist Construction (VARNITSO) (David-Fox 1997).

While the campaign to politicize the curriculum had been mandated by the regime, it was carried out not only by the officials of the Commissariat of Education but by the leftist docents, instructors, and students who were beginning to organize themselves and raise their voices against the “old-time” or “bourgeois” faculty members.

Another manifestation of the regime’s efforts to make the institutions of higher learning obedient and loyal was a 1923–24 campaign of “checking” and “purging” (*proverka* and *chitska*) their instructors and students. Advertised initially as a campaign against bribery and other abuses of authority by the

educators, this campaign clearly had a political agenda. During the campaign, universities and institutes could not fire any Communist Party member without the party's permission. The purge of the student body was also initially justified as a way of weeding out the poor learners and antisocial elements. Many of its victims, however, were students whose parents belonged to the nobility and other "exploiter classes" or who espoused anti-Communist or Trotskyite views. Some students were expelled simply because they were allegedly interested only in their own education and took no part in the social and political life of their institution.

In addition, the regime, fearful that too many students were from bourgeois and petit bourgeois families, continued to promote the establishment of special "workers' faculties" (*rabfaki*) at all institutions of higher learning in order to prepare the young people from the ranks of the proletariat and the poor peasantry for higher education. To make matters even worse, the government introduced class-based quotas for admitting applicants to universities and institutes. Its restrictions on matriculating men and women of "nonproletarian" backgrounds, introduced in the early 1920s, were not abolished until 1935 (Konecny 1999:102–111). Thanks to these various efforts, between the early and the late 1920s the number of students who were members of the Communist Party or the Young Communist League (VLKSM) increased significantly (Kupaigorodskaia 2002).

Although the universities were the first to be saddled with obligatory "social science minimum" courses, the institutes, including the GI, could not escape them either.⁹⁶ Given Shternberg's insistence on a very broad curriculum for his ED and his skepticism about the applicability of Marxism to ethnology, it is not surprising that he tried to resist or at least limit the number of Marxist subjects at his institution. Among the GI instructors, Shternberg's nemesis in this area was a man by the name of V. A. Egorov. Recently hired by the ED's dean to teach the history of Russian culture, Egorov had allegedly once been a member of the ultra-nationalist and virulently anti-Semitic "Union of the Russian People," but after the Bolshevik coup he quickly changed his affiliation and became an active member of the "leftist professoriate" organization (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/135:52–53). In June 1923 he submitted a proposal, approved by the "leftist professoriate" and the so-called "revolutionary students" organizations, to establish a program of three ideologically correct

courses for first-year students. These three courses were designed to address the political system of the USSR, political economy, and historical materialism. These new courses, combined with their classes in the hard and natural sciences as well as those giving ethnography students practical skills, left students with room for only three courses related directly to their specialization: Introduction to Ethnography, Introduction to Linguistics, and Ethnogeography. According to the proposal, the entire program of studies was to be reduced from four to three years, with the second and third years devoted primarily to specialized courses in ethnology and related disciplines (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/135:52–53). To accommodate this reduction in the entire program, several courses in the natural sciences were to be eliminated. In addition, Egorov proposed strengthening the students' readiness for work that had practical benefits for the state, like fortifying the link between the city and the countryside as well as between the various nationalities in the USSR. The only item of the proposal that Shternberg fully agreed with was the establishment of a special institute that would train graduate students in geography and ethnography as well as conduct its own research (Curriculum Collection, AGI, 2556/1/389; Ratner-Shternberg 1935:144–145). Egorov's proposal fit well within the party and government's larger program of limiting student preparation in the basic general disciplines and increasing both the number of courses in the Marxist-Leninist social sciences as well as practice-oriented instruction aimed at training students to carry out government policies in the countryside, especially among ethnic minorities.⁹⁷ Minutes from the meeting of the GI's executive committee indicate that Shternberg, along with the majority of the professors, rejected the proposal on the grounds that it had been prepared without their consultation. Upon hearing this, several members of the leftist faculty group, including Egorov, seem to have backed down (Curriculum Collection, AGI, 2556/1/389).

It was, however, a short-lived victory for the majority. In a clever maneuver, the left-wing reformers managed to place another curriculum reform proposal on the table a year later, this time backed by the Commissariat of Education and taking advantage of Shternberg's and Bogoraz's departure for the Americanists congress in western Europe. Presented as a document originating from the students themselves, this proposal was sent to the Commissariat of Education. The latter approved it fully and sent it back to the council of the

GI for implementation in the forthcoming 1924–25 academic year. This time, Ian Al'kor (Koshkin) received the leading role in the ED's reform campaign. In the eyes of the officials in charge of higher education, Koshkin's party membership since 1917, his prominent role in party organizations in Latvia, and his recent service as the commissar of the High Cavalry Academy all compensated for his lack of scholarly and teaching experience (Vasil'kov and Sorokina 2003:25). Even though he was the most ardently pro-Soviet and Marxist of Shternberg's "proletarian" students, Koshkin was highly respectful of his teacher and was eager to convince him to approve the changes in the curriculum. In a letter to Shternberg written in the summer and fall of 1924 and sent to London, he informed his mentor that in his absence a special committee affiliated with the Leningrad branch of Glavprofobr, a government institution in charge of vocational training, had been formed to revise the ED's curriculum. The committee was composed of several educators with strong Marxist and progovernment views, including Mikhail Pokrovskii, second in command at the Commissariat of Education; Nikolai Derzhavin, the first pro-Soviet dean of the Leningrad State University; Nikolai Marr; and two professors of the GI who taught disciplines in the "social science minimum" program. Koshkin was the sole representative of the GI students. Shternberg and Bogoraz, the only potential opponents of the proposed reform, were absent. Koshkin's letter assured Shternberg that the new curriculum, which he had proposed, did not contradict his mentor's own views on the subject. He also urged him to return to Leningrad as soon as possible in order to express his approval of the proposal (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/134).

Like Egorov's program, Koshkin's proposal limited ethnographers' education to three years. It also contained the same standard "social science minimum" lecture courses but added such "applied" or policy-oriented courses as *Methods of Working in the Countryside*, *Goals of the Cooperative Movement in the USSR*, and several others. In addition, it proposed several seminars for second- and third-year students in political economy, historical materialism, and other ideologically correct topics (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/134). Koshkin's plan was not entirely selfless: in the 1924–25 academic year he taught not only Tungusic languages and cultures but historical materialism as well. A year later he was in charge of a course on dialectical materialism, and in 1926–27 he was appointed senior lecturer (*assistant*) of the ED as well as the head of

the *kafedra* of Tungusic languages. Shternberg and Bogoraz, who returned to Leningrad in October 1924, faced a done deal. Frustrated with the proposed reduction of the natural science curriculum, Shternberg fought against it. He was able to salvage botany and zoology but only in scaled-down courses that lasted for just one academic year (Ratner-Shternberg 1935:145).

Shternberg soon realized that the Commissariat of Education was determined to close down the Geography Institute. It is not clear from the existing documents why the Commissariat reached this decision. The institute's relative ideological independence, especially compared to the Leningrad State University, might have been at least partly to blame.⁹⁸ Throughout the 1924–25 academic year, the authorities entertained various scenarios, including making the Geography Division of the GI part of the LGU's Physics and Mathematics Faculty and combining the Ethnography Division of the GI with the Faculty of Linguistics and Material Culture (IAMFAK), the domain of the powerful Marr.⁹⁹ The latter was established in 1925 when the Faculty of the Social Sciences (FON), a failed creation of the first post-1917 years, was disbanded. When the FON at the LGU existed, its Ethno-Linguistic Division did offer some instruction in ethnology, with Shternberg and Bogoraz offering courses there on a part-time basis. In fact the FON had a laboratory (*kabinet*) of general and Russian ethnology, over which Shternberg presided. With the abolishment of the FON, this laboratory closed down as well (Curriculum Collection, AGI, 2556/1/534). Shternberg's refusal to have the ED merge with the newly created IAMFAK was the most likely reason for the laboratory's closing.¹⁰⁰ It is interesting that Shternberg, who was fond of arguing that ethnology (ethnography) was a discipline that bridged the natural sciences, the social sciences, and the humanities, did not want to have his beloved ED combined with the new IAMFAK, which was to specialize in two disciplines closely linked with ethnology—linguistics and archaeology. It is possible that he preferred to work with his old colleagues from the GI rather than with the university faculty, many of whom had already been for several years under the watchful eyes of the authorities and their informers within the university.¹⁰¹

Initially both the faculty and the students of the GI were opposed to the closing of their institution.¹⁰² Eventually, however, they had to reconcile themselves with this *fait accompli*. The new Geography Faculty (GF) of the LGU, officially established by a government decree on May 5, 1925, consisted of three

divisions: general geography, ethnography, and physical anthropology. The Ethnography Division's (ED) curriculum was quite similar to the one that existed in the old GI in 1924–25 (Collection of the Division of the People's Commissariat of Education, TSGIASP, 2556/1/534). The only major innovation had to do with the establishment of special "cycles" for more narrow areas of specialization by the students. Following the plan first proposed by Koshkin, who had been appointed the secretary of the division, nine such cycles were formed using a linguistic principle. They were: Eastern Slavic, Turkic, Mongol, Finno-Ugric, Iranian, Hindustan, Iaphetic (Caucasian), Paleoasiatic, and Tungusic (Ratner-Shternberg 1935:146). The last two were soon merged into a single "Arctic" cycle. Each third-year student had to choose one of the cycles and study the ethnography, history, folklore, religion, and other aspects of the peoples belonging to the cycle of their choice. In addition they had to study at least one language spoken by the peoples of their cycle. In the last year of their studies, students also took additional specialized courses and seminars related to one of the three "directions" (*uklon*) that they chose: Russian, Comparative Ethnographic, or Economic. During the summer of their third year, they worked mainly on their thesis (*diplom*). Finally, a number of courses, such as History of European Ethnography and History of Russian Ethnography, History of Oriental Culture, and History of Philosophy, became electives.

Judged against Shternberg's own vision of a broad, interdisciplinary ethnological education, the net result of all these changes was mixed. On the one hand, much of the core of his original curriculum (including all his own lecture courses) had been saved. The increased amount of time devoted to area specialization must have also appealed to him, although he had always spoken against ethnological training that was too specialized and narrow. As he wrote some twenty-five years earlier: "Given the complexity of ethnographic phenomena, narrow specialization is more dangerous in it than in than in any other discipline and could lead to fatal mistakes" (1904b:189). On the other hand, the elimination of much of the natural science courses and the transformation of several humanities classes into electives did not agree with Shternberg's ideals. The new cohort of ethnography students would be less broadly educated and have a much greater exposure to the Marxist-Leninist disciplines (Collection of the Division of the People's Commissariat of Education, TSGIASP, 2556/1/534). The aim of the new Ethnology Division was to produce specialists capable of

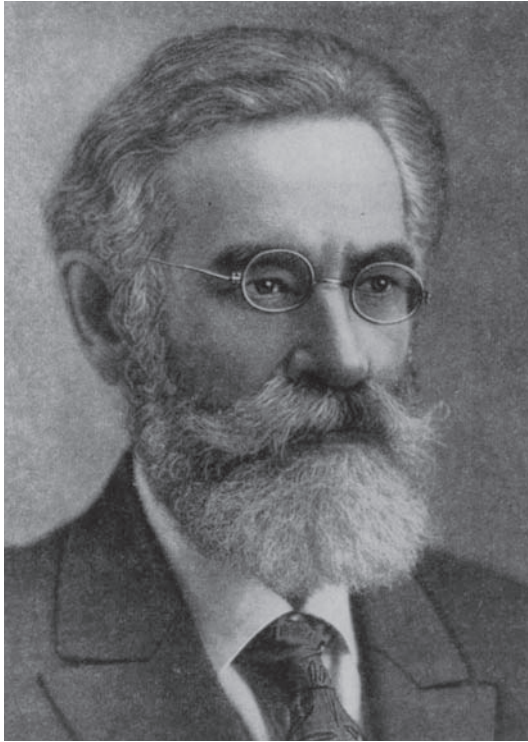
working in museums, scholarly journals, archives, and secondary schools as well as those Soviet institutions that dealt with ethnic minorities. Those graduates who wished to become professional researchers would continue their education as graduate students (*aspiranty*) under the mentorship of their professors. Despite its limitations, the new ethnology curriculum was impressive, especially if compared to those existing in most Western countries.

The expansion of the ED's curriculum created a need for a greater number of instructors, particularly those capable of teaching the disciplines included in the "social science minimum" and other ideologically correct subjects. Because well-trained Marxist-oriented instructors were still rare in the mid-1920s, the ED was forced to hire people whose educational level was far below that of the other faculty. These new instructors were younger, more politicized, and more aggressive than Shternberg and his cohort of faculty. They tended to be Communists who had taken part in the Bolshevik revolutionary activities, fought in the Civil War, or done work as Communist Party emissaries in the city and the countryside. Most had no training or much interest in ethnology. The main exceptions were Nikolai Matorin and the previously mentioned Koshkin. Matorin's rapid rise within the ED and Soviet ethnography as a whole illustrates well the effect that the changes in the country's political and ideological climate had on anthropology and other social sciences and humanities.

Born in 1898, Matorin graduated from high school in 1916, entered the Historical-Philological Faculty of Petrograd University, but was soon drafted.¹⁰³ After the Bolshevik takeover he worked as a propagandist and joined the Communist Party in 1919. After only two years of party work in a provincial town, he obtained a prestigious post as the secretary of the top party official in Leningrad, the notorious Grigorii Zinov'ev. In 1922–25 he served in various capacities as a Communist functionary. He also taught the courses Political Agitation and Propaganda in the Countryside at the Communist University as well as the Foundations of Leninism at the Technological Institute, even though he never went back to the university to complete his education. Finally, in 1923–26 he also worked at the Leningrad Scientific Research Institute of Marxism, where he prepared manuals and essays on the methods of rural work. Feeling the pressure to offer a course on the "hot" topic of political and educational work among the peasants, Shternberg was forced to hire Matorin in 1924 to teach a course on that subject at the ED of the GI.

In 1925–26 Zinov'ev and his supporters within the Communist Party struggled for power with Stalin's faction. Once the latter prevailed, Zinov'ev lost his leading position in the Leningrad party organization and was expelled from the party's Central Committee. Having cast his lot with the Leningrad party boss, Matorin was demoted in 1926 and sent to do low-level party work in the provinces. Inspired by his experience of teaching ethnography students, he began collecting ethnographic and sociological data on the population of the rural areas he worked in. In 1927–28 he coordinated antireligious propaganda among the local population of Kazan for the Tatar regional party committee. The young party functionary clearly liked ethnographic research and even prepared a manuscript entitled "Religion among the Peoples of the Volga-Kama Region, Past and Present: Paganism—Islam—orthodoxy—Sectarianism," which was published in 1929. In 1928 he was allowed to return to Leningrad, having been invited to the university to teach as a docent at the Ethnography Division of the Geography Faculty. Once again, he offered several courses from the "social science minimum" but also added new ones on the history of religion and atheist work. In 1929 he became the head of the history of religion *kafedra* of the LGU and two years later was made a professor there. In 1930 he was also appointed by the Academy of Sciences to serve as the head of the MAE, becoming the first director of this venerable institution who neither had a university degree nor was a member of the Academy (see chapter 9).

The closing of the GI and repeated assaults on Shternberg's ED curriculum were not the only troubles that its dean faced in 1923–25. As noted already, he was deeply concerned by the application of the "class-based principle" in the matriculation of students and the periodic purges of their ranks.¹⁰⁴ Being a longtime socialist who taught ethnology to factory workers in the early 1900s, Shternberg undoubtedly welcomed the government's efforts to increase the number of university students from the ranks of the proletariat and the peasants. What he objected to was the matriculation of poorly prepared persons on the basis of their socioeconomic background and Communist Party affiliation. Even more troubling to him were the politically motivated expulsions of ethnology students, the largest-scale of which occurred in 1924. During that infamous purge at least a dozen of his students were expelled for being "socially alien" or even "hostile to the Soviet regime." Those unfortunate enough to end up in the latter category were usually arrested (Collection of the Division



18. Lev Shternberg's official photograph as member of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR. Photograph in author's possession.

of the People's Commissariat of Education, TSGIASP, 2556/11/4). While some were subsequently released and occasionally even allowed to resume their studies at the GI, others ended up in jail or exile. Despite this generally grim situation, ED students of the GI appear to have suffered less than their fellows at other institutions of higher learning in the city; fewer students were expelled and those who were tended to be labeled "socially alien" rather than branded "anti-Soviet."¹⁰⁵

Shternberg experienced the transfer of the Ethnography Division from the Geography Institute to Leningrad State University as a mixed blessing. On the one hand, on the eve of the 1925 academic year, the first one after the closing of the Geography Institute, he was optimistic. As he wrote to Boas on September 12, 1925, "I hope it would be understood by you, why I and Bogoraz kept silent till now. It was a very hard matter for us, a matter of conscience, to write being



19. Shternberg's Nivkh informant and guide, Churka, and his son, Zagan (Aleksei Churka) on the eve of Zagan's departure for Leningrad's Institute of the North. Photograph by Erukhim Kreinovich, 1926. Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/194.

fully conscious of distressing you, our best friend, by our incorrectness [rudeness] in our letters. My brother [who had met Boas in Europe in the summer of 1925—SK] had perhaps explained to you, what were our conditions during this troublesome year. I do not want to go in[to] details. In every case the troubles are over and we are able to work for ourselves" (Boas Papers, APS).

There were indeed a number of reasons for optimism. Funding for student field research increased significantly during this period and, with the exception of the "social science minimum," most of the instruction at the ED was carried out by first-rate scholars who were still rather free to express views and assigned readings largely untouched by Marxism-Leninism. At the same time, Lev Iakovlevich had to deal with too many frustrations. Besides the politicization of the curriculum and the periodic student purges, the authorities and some of his leftist colleagues continued attempting to abolish the ED or at least transfer it from the Geography Faculty to another faculty within the university (Collection of the Division of the People's Commissariat of Education, TSGIASP,

2556/1/556). Most disappointing for Lev Iakovlevich was undoubtedly the rising discontent among a small but gradually growing group of leftist students with the ED's entire curriculum and even with its leading instructors.

During the first academic year following the transfer of the ED to the LGU, a group of its students began complaining about their education, which emphasized theory over praxis and thus prepared them poorly for the job market. In addition, they lamented the fact that their main instructors were not Marxists. A spokeswoman for this group, Iu. Likhtenberg, wrote in her memo to the Communist Party bureau of the LGU in February 1926, "Prof. Shternberg does not hide the fact that he is not a Marxist. He is very strong in his views and does not like when they are challenged" (Minutes of Communist Party Cells' Meeting at the Institutions of Higher Education, TSGAIPDSP, 984/1/199). As far as Bogoraz was concerned, the same memo characterized him as someone who would have liked to teach from a Marxist perspective but was unable to do so. Among his "grave errors" was an argument that in the countryside Communism represented a "new religion" that had to be studied alongside with the older ones, paganism and Orthodoxy (Minutes of Communist Party Cells' Meeting, TSGAIPDSP, 984/1/199). According to Likhtenberg, presenting such "idealistic nonsense" to ED students was particularly dangerous because only a handful of them were Communists and well-versed in Marxism-Leninism). As the only solution to these problems, she proposed transferring the ED to the Faculty of the Social Sciences (FON), which "focused its instruction on the social sciences and had a lot more Marxists among its instructors" (Minutes of Communist Party Cells' Meeting, TSGAIPDSP, 984/1/199).

To address the sentiments expressed in this memo, several faculty-student meetings were held at the ED during February 1926. A number of students voiced their disagreement with the academic focus of their education and called upon their faculty to prepare them better for the jobs in the real world. They also complained about high absenteeism among the upperclassmen and rumors about the closing of the ED in the following year. Shternberg and Bogoraz rejected these rumors and instead argued that the government was actually planning to increase its support for ethnological education. Moreover, they criticized the students for not being willing to work in the remote parts of the country and preferring to stay in the central cities, where there were not enough jobs for all of them. Shternberg seems to have interpreted the students' discontent not as

a leftist rebellion against the ED establishment but as a sign of their careerism and lack of proper “cultured” (*inteligentnyi*) preparation. He expressed this view in his closing remarks at the last meeting devoted to the problem. According to the reminiscences of one of his students, Nina Nikitina, when some students loudly complained at a rally that their training would not help them put food on the table and that they were afraid of ending up in some godforsaken corner of the country, Shternberg accused them of having been infected with a virus of the “striving for material well-being” that was afflicting much of the larger society. He also reminded them of the very important role that they were destined to play among the country’s “backward” peoples, whose culture they were obligated to raise.¹⁰⁶ In Nikitina’s words, “He spoke passionately, as if to inspire us, the weak and the fearful, with the fire that burned inside him. We heard the voice coming from a totally different world; he spoke to us about a great idea, which was penetrating our small heads and hearts with great difficulty. He invited us to follow him to the heights that were very hard for us to ascend. Only very few objected to his words. We felt ashamed of ourselves” (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/110:60–61).

In an unpublished biography of her husband, Sarra Ratner-Shternberg stated that after 1925 his involvement in the affairs of the ED decreased, unsurprisingly, even though he remained its dean until the day he died (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/9:182). A significant part of the running of the ED was now in the hands of its secretary, the dedicated Bolshevik Ian Al’kor (Koshkin).

Still, in his last written evaluation of the “Leningrad school of ethnography,” the ED’s ailing dean, who rarely gave up or lost faith, did sound optimistic and proud of his institution’s accomplishments. In his words, “The Ethnography Division of the Geography Faculty is a unique institution of higher learning not only in the USSR but in western Europe as well” (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/18:10–21). He also noted the high demand for ED graduates as schoolteachers, museum professionals, demographers, and “culture and education workers” among Russian peasants and non-Russian minorities and expressed regret that the government body in charge of higher education was limiting the number of students matriculating in ethnography to only thirty per year. Finally, he reiterated his long-standing argument about the urgent need to train more professional ethnographers who would be capable of conducting serious research and assist in instructing the “undergraduates.” To accomplish

this he once again called for the establishment of an academic research institute in his field (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/18:10–21).

Shternberg also retained his usual optimism about “the progressive role of ethnography in educating the masses to respect the other people’s culture and to understand the origin and meaning of cultural institutions, so as to evaluate them properly and to reject old superstitions and survivals, while treasuring, preserving, and further developing those valuable ones that have survived thanks to the labor and sacrifices of the past generations” (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/15:3).¹⁰⁷

Fighting to Keep Jewish Ethnography Alive

As most historians of Jewish social life in the USSR argue, Jews were one of the very few segments of the population that had, on balance, benefited from the establishment of the Soviet regime. Leningrad Jews made particularly strong gains because they became one of the best-educated ethnic groups in the second largest Soviet city and were more involved in the process of urbanization and sovietization than many of the other Soviet peoples. Between 1917 and the late 1920s the presence of Jews among the city’s intelligentsia and the petit bourgeois (the so-called *nepmany*) increased greatly, outpacing their percentage in Leningrad’s total population. However, as Beizer (1999:131) noted, Jews paid a heavy price for the positions they gained in Soviet society as they intermarried with non-Jews; forfeited their mother tongue, religion, and ethnic culture; and gave up the opportunity to participate in independent Jewish political, cultural, and educational organizations and institutions (cf. Gitelman 2001).¹⁰⁸ When the regime began curtailing NEP and persecuting the *nepmany*, the new Jewish middle class suffered greatly. However, in the early 1920s few could have predicted that NEP’s limited economic and ideological liberalization would last less than a decade.

Although during and immediately after the Civil War, many members of the city’s old Jewish elite, including businessmen, lawyers, politicians, and professors, emigrated, a significant number remained. Like Shternberg, they were willing to cooperate with the new regime or at least take advantage of the new political climate to maintain Jewish social and cultural life as well as education. One of their major undertakings in education was the establishment, in early 1919, of the Petrograd Jewish Peoples’ University (PENU) as the heir to the pre-



20. Shternberg's son, Arkadii, a military-medical academy graduate, 1925. Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/178:6.

1917 Oriental Courses. Even though this was a modest project, the opening of a Jewish university, whose staff included many of the city's leading Jewish scholars, was very significant.¹⁰⁹ Many of the new faculty members were Shternberg's old friends and comrades from the prerevolutionary era. Among them were the university's dean, historian Samuil Lozinskii; Semion Dubnov; Boris Brutskus; Nadezhda Briullova-Shaskol'skaia; and others (Dubnov 1998:420–21; Greenbaum 1994:15–16). Not surprisingly, Shternberg himself taught ethnography at the PENU. From its very beginning, the university was under scrutiny by Jewish communist leaders and educational bureaucrats. By 1922 several of its faculty members, including Dubnov, were forced to leave the country. Renaming the

university the Institute of Higher Jewish Learning, the government took control of its curriculum and intensified the social background checks of its students. Nonetheless, in the early 1920s, thanks to financial assistance from international Jewish organizations, the university managed to enroll about fifty students. Its faculty gave public lectures on Jewish topics that were well attended. In the 1923–24 academic year the institute was renamed the Institute of Jewish History and Literature, and in 1925 it was closed altogether.

Even less successful was an attempt in 1919 to publish a Jewish encyclopedia in Yiddish. While a number of entries had been commissioned from leading scholars including Shternberg, the project never got off the ground (Beizer 1999:311).

Taking advantage of NEP's liberalization, Petrograd's Jewish intelligentsia resumed its publishing activity, which centered on the monthly magazine *Evreiskii Vestnik* (Jewish courier). It began to come out in April 1922 and focused on cultural and scholarly issues. According to its editorial, the new journal's goal was to serve as a "link between the Jewish past and its present" (*Evreiskii Vestnik*, 1922, no. 1:1). The list of its contributors, which included Shternberg, read as a "who's who" of the city's old Jewish intelligentsia. Unfortunately, this monthly had a very short life span: the authorities closed it down in September 1922.

While it shut down most of Petrograd's independent cultural societies and humanitarian organizations in the early 1920s, the government allowed purely scholarly ones to exist as a way of improving the academic intelligentsia's attitude toward the regime. Thanks to financial aid from foreign Jewish philanthropic organizations and the tireless efforts of its new chairman, Shternberg, the Jewish Historical and Ethnographic Society (JHES) resumed its work in 1922. In an article published in *Evreiskii Vestnik* (1922, nos. 5–6:10), he articulated his vision of the revived society. It included the resumption of scholarly work on Jewish history, literature, and ethnology; publishing once again the journal *Evreiskaia Starina*; and most importantly a careful study and "synthesis" of the Jewish past in Russia as well as abroad. Shternberg was also determined to revive the society's original goal of strengthening the ethnic consciousness of Russia's Jews. In his words, "A people cannot live without a national idea and a national ideal." With his usual optimism, Lev Iakovlevich announced that the revived society "must become the center of the scholarly and educational work of [the Jewish] community" (*Evreiskii Vestnik* 1922, nos. 5–6:10). The first meeting

of the revived society took place in June 1923, with seventy-five people present. Not surprisingly, Shternberg was elected its chairman. With Dubnov's departure he became one of the city's few most prominent Jewish scholars who had strong interests in Jewish history and ethnology.¹¹⁰ Moreover, unlike some of the other JHES activists, Shternberg was respected by the authorities as an old Populist who had paid dearly for his anti-tsarist activities. Although the society's new charter reiterated most of its old goals, the general focus of its activities and lectures as well as the articles published in *Evreiskaia Starina* changed somewhat. The shift reflected the interests of the society's new chairman as well as the post-1917 developments in the life of Russia's Jews. The JHES established several new commissions, including one for the study of physical anthropology of the Jews and another for research on the Jewish socialist and labor movements (*Evreiskaia Starina*, 1924, 11:396–398).¹¹¹ Determined to transform the JHES into a more professional, research-oriented organization, Shternberg also proposed establishing a special research group dedicated to the study of Jewish historical documents from ethnographic, legal, ethical, philological, and medical points of view. Participants in this project were supposed to meet weekly to present papers and discuss their research (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/176:362). Another major project of the revived society was the reopening of its museum, which was established in the wake of An-sky's successful ethnographic expedition. Never afraid to dream, Shternberg outlined a very ambitious plan for it. His memo to the Petrograd Bureau of Scientific Institutions stated that the goal of the JHES and its museum was to "amass a collection that would reflect the history and ethnography of the Jewish people of the entire world and not just Russia," developing "the only museum in the world" that would have that kind of a focus. As a first step toward this goal, he proposed transferring all the Jewish artifacts from Petrograd's Russian Museum to the Jewish museum and allocating government funds to support the latter. At the same time, he offered to transfer duplicates from the Jewish museum to other ethnographic museums, such as his own MAE (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/176:358–359). Although Shternberg's ambitious program could not possibly be realized in Soviet Russia, the JHES museum did open in June 1923 and was the only Jewish museum in the Russian Federation until its closing six years later (see chapter 9).

The eleventh volume of *Evreiskaia Starina*, published in 1924, opened with an article by its chief editor that was based on his 1923 presentation to the JHES. Entitled "Issues in Jewish Ethnography," it contained Shternberg's old ideas about the scholarly and sociopolitical significance of ethnographic research among Russia's Jews (1924a).¹¹² It also reflected the post-1917 developments in Jewish life as well as Shternberg's increased interest in contemporary sociocultural issues. Not surprisingly, the head of the Leningrad ethnographic school began his essay by stating that ethnographic research in the country was experiencing unprecedented growth, with every nationality and ethnic group being studied. He described this development as a natural outcome of the fact that even the smallest peoples of the USSR, who have been asked to "develop their own life, wish first and foremost to understand their own past, make sense of their present, identify their intellectual and psychic potentials, and formulate their national consciousness" (Shternberg 1924a:11). However, because of the lack of strong ties between the Jewish intelligentsia and the Jewish masses, a radical break in the economic life of the Jews, and other factors, Jewish ethnography remained seriously underdeveloped in his opinion. He then proceeded to demolish the notion that Jewish culture, because it was far from being "primitive," did not need to be the focus of ethnographic research. He reiterated his favorite idea that every people, regardless of the level of its culture, should be studied through ethnography: "Ethnography is a sociological discipline that studies both the static and the dynamic aspects of a people's life. It studies both the manifestations of the traditional culture as well as the processes of creation of [a] new one" in present-day social and economic relations. This was not the first time that Shternberg had emphasized the study of contemporary culture in the post-1917 era. More remarkable was his insistence on the importance of both studying the "psychological aspect of cultural processes" and focusing not just on the masses but on the individual as well. Foreshadowing the argument in his essay on "Jewish national psychology," Shternberg argued that "each ethnic group has its own social individuality" (Shternberg 1924a:12–13). His vision of the future of Jewish ethnology resembled the view of Edward Sapir and other "culture and personality" scholars. He saw both negative and positive sides to the radical changes that had been happening in Jewish life in Russia since 1917—the impoverishment of the Jewish masses, for example, but also the development of the new occupations and institutions, including farming in

the newly established Jewish agricultural colonies. Once again, he called upon ethnographers to focus on the psychological transformations caused by this “unprecedented sociological experiment” (Shternberg 1924a:15). Among the radical changes in the ideational and social culture, he mentioned the younger people’s abandonment of religion as well as the decline of traditional marriage and family life. Although Shternberg did not express his opinion about these particular changes, one would imagine that, as a Jewish Populist, he was not entirely happy about them. Finally, he noted the rapid urbanization of the Soviet Jews and their increasing participation in the institutions of the new state. Despite his emphasis on the need to study the present, Lev Iakovlevich closed his paper with a familiar statement citing the urgency of more traditional ethnographic research among the Jews, whose old material and socioeconomic culture was rapidly changing and disappearing.¹¹³

The development of Jewish ethnography and ethnology was clearly very important to Shternberg.¹¹⁴ He and his colleague at the Ethnography Division of the Geography Faculty, Evgenii Kagarov, established a Jewish section within the society of student ethnographers. It appears that participants in that section planned an ethnographic expedition to the Ukraine in the mid-1920s. Unlike Bogoraz, who directed his students to focus primarily on the post-1917 changes in Jewish life, Shternberg, as we have already seen, advocated a much more comprehensive approach. In a lecture on the scope and methods of Jewish ethnography delivered at the Institute of Jewish History and Literature in 1923–24, he outlined a very ambitious program of research that included topics on everything from “Jewish participation in Soviet institutions” and anti-Semitism to Jewish sexual life (RGASPI, 272/1/532:1–9).¹¹⁵ He was also largely responsible for the establishment in the 1927–28 academic year of a special Jewish section within the Ethnographic Student Circle (society) at the GF of the LGU (Danilin 1928:89).

Given Shternberg’s determination to create an academically based ethnographic study of Jews and Judaism, it is not surprising that one of his brightest students, Isaak Vinnikov (1897–1973), chose to specialize in this field. Born in a small Jewish *shtetl* in Belorussia, Vinnikov received a traditional Jewish as well as a secular education. In 1922, after working as an educator, he was sent by Narkompros, the ministry of education, to Petrograd to study at the Ethno-Linguistic Faculty of the LGU’s FON. At the university he specialized in general

ethnography and linguistics as well as Semitic languages and literature, studying with prominent linguists and Orientalists as well as Shternberg. While still a student, Vinnikov prepared an interesting paper on the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Jewish beliefs concerning the *dibbuk* and other phenomena involving the transmigration of souls from one body to another (Vinnikov Collection, SPFA RAN, 1045/1/27:1–21). He also taught a course on the ethnography of nineteenth-century Jews at the Institute of History and Literature. Upon graduating from the LGU, he was appointed a lecturer (*assistant*) at the ED of the GF, where he taught seminars on the evolution of social organization and Islam and researched topics in biblical and Jewish ethnography. Prompted by Shternberg, he began preparing an index of ethnographic data gleaned from the Babylonian Talmud. Unfortunately this gigantic project was never completed.¹¹⁶ Shternberg's influence was also present in Vinnikov's unpublished essay on the cult of the cedar tree in Talmudic literature as well as a published paper on secondary burial among the ancient Hebrews that appeared in an Austrian anthropological journal (undoubtedly through Shternberg's help) (Vinnikov 1930; see Vinnikov's letter to Shternberg, July 20, 1926, Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/56:2a). Vinnikov conducted some ethnographic research in his hometown during the summer of 1926 and presented his findings at the JHES meetings.¹¹⁷ Moreover, he played an active role in the work of the Society for the Spreading of Enlightenment among the Jews of Russia (OPE). In 1927 he gave a presentation at one of its meetings describing the findings of his recent ethnographic expedition to the Bukharian Jews. As late as 1929 he was still undertaking field research in Jewish ethnography. During his last expedition he collected religious objects that were in danger of destruction because of anti-religious propaganda that was being waged at the time. After the closing of the JHES and the OPE, Vinnikov was forced to abandon his research on Jewish topics (Gessen 1995). However, he became a prominent scholar of Oriental history and culture and Semitic and Hebraic studies (within the limits established by the authorities).

Another student of Shternberg's who specialized in Jewish ethnography was Isai Pul'ner (1900–1942). In 1926, while still a student, he conducted research among the Jews of Georgia and a year later collected ethnographic data and museum artifacts in a small Jewish *shtetl* in Belorussia (Pul'ner to Shternberg, July

27, 1927, Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/243). Unlike Vinnikov, Pul'ner was interested equally in the old Jewish culture and its post-1917 expression and contributed several essays to the volume *Jewish Shtetl During the Revolution*. In the 1930s he headed the Jewish Department of the State Museum of Ethnography in Leningrad, continuing his research among and writing about the Jews of Central Asia and the Caucasus (Krupnik 1989; Berg 1999:106; Pul'ner 1931).

In his capacity as the head of the JHES Shternberg corresponded with a variety of scholars and lay enthusiasts of Jewish ethnography in Soviet Russia and abroad. In the 1920s he was truly the focal point of this fledgling but ultimately doomed field. Despite Dubnov's reputation as a harsh critic of the Soviet regime, Shternberg maintained communication with the former chair of the JHES and invited him to contribute to its journal (Shternberg to Dubnov, January 7, 1923, Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People; Dubnov to Shternberg, February 25, 1923, Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/94). In the early 1920s he also corresponded with his old friend Boris Brutskus, another prominent Russian Jewish scholar exiled from the USSR in 1922. Several of Shternberg's correspondents had been active members of the JHES who had sent valuable historical documents to it prior to 1917. Prominent among them was Boruch (Boris) Toporovskii, a Zionist from Ekaterinoslav (Dnepropetrovsk) and an active member of the society since 1909. In 1925 he reestablished contact with Shternberg and resumed sending him valuable documents on the history of the pre-1917 Jewish liberation movement. Although this was no longer an ideologically correct topic, Lev Iakovlevich encouraged him to continue his work in the area (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/93).

Several of Shternberg's correspondents represented the younger generation of Jewish ethnographers. They included Zalman Amitin-Shapiro (1893–1968), a Tashkent-based specialist on the Bukharian Jews of Central Asia, and Isaak Lur'e (1875–1930s?), another specialist on the Bukharian Jews and a colleague of An-sky (Lur'e to Shternberg, 1925–1926, SPFA RAN, 282/2/178). In 1921 the GI sent Lur'e on his first ethnographic expedition to Central Asia to study the Bukharian Jews, whom ethnologists knew little about. Impressed with his findings, the JHES sent him on another, six-month expedition to the same ethnic group. According to Nosonovskii (2002:3), Lur'e used the research methods he learned from An-sky to amass a large body of ethnographic data. In the mid-

1920s he finally opened a Jewish museum in Samarqand, one of the centers of Bukharian Jewish culture.¹¹⁸

Shternberg's communication with foreign Jewish scholars and charitable organizations also helped maintain Jewish ethnology in the USSR. Thanks to his ties with Sylvain Lévi, the JHES president was able to secure funding from the Alliance Israelite Universelle and several other foreign organizations for his Jewish students, Vinnikov and B. Shul'man, both active participants in the JHES (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/176:741-742, 755).

The last presentations Shternberg gave at the JHES concerned his comrade from the prerevolutionary Jewish liberation movement, Aleksandr Braudo (1864-1924).¹¹⁹ A prominent staff member of the St. Petersburg Public Library, Braudo "became one of the most active fighters against anti-Semitism and for full and equal rights for Russian Jews" (Frumkin 1966:55). Like Shternberg, he was a very active participant in the work of the political bureau set up in 1907 to maintain regular contact between the liberal Jewish intelligentsia and the Jewish deputies of the Duma (see chapters 4 and 5). Braudo was well connected with and trusted by Russian radical and liberal politicians, Jews and non-Jews alike. This allowed him to gather important information on the persecution of Jews in the Russian Empire. By passing this information to foreign journalists, he was able to encourage foreign governments to condemn the tsarist regime's anti-Semitism. Also like Shternberg, Braudo chose to remain in Russia after the Bolshevik takeover. He continued working at the public library and in 1924 was allowed to travel to western Europe to establish contacts with foreign libraries and purchase new books. He also collected materials for a major work on the history of the Russian-Jewish intelligentsia and the pre-1917 Jewish liberation movement that Shternberg had commissioned and obtained funding for from the JHES (Serkov 2001:137-138). It was during this trip that he saw Shternberg for the last time. In early November Braudo died in London of heart failure. Shternberg gave a talk about Braudo on the first anniversary of his friend's death, at a gathering of the Society for the Spread of Enlightenment among the Jews of Russia (OPE).¹²⁰ A shorter version of this talk appeared posthumously in the 1928 issue of *Evreiskaia Starina*. Ironically, this same issue contained Shternberg's obituary and was dedicated to his memory. His statement about Braudo could have very well applied to Shternberg himself: "In every society there are people, without whom it seems impossible to survive even while

they are still alive. And when they leave us, an emptiness remains for a long time that is impossible to fill. . . . Along with his struggle for Jewish causes, A. I. [Braudo] fought an equally passionate fight for the liberation of Russia from tsarist despotism, a cause in which he fought together with the Russian intelligentsia (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/176:335–337).¹²¹

9. All Humanity Is One

Lev Shternberg never recovered from his 1926 trip to Japan. In 1927 his duodenal ulcer became much worse, and he began experiencing more frequent and prolonged attacks of sharp pain. He often could not sleep and, being unable to work, suffered not only physically but emotionally as well. In fact, the physicians who performed the autopsy on him were amazed that he had lived as long as he did (Ratner-Shternberg in Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/116:237–238). A vacation from late May to late June in Kislovodsk, a resort in the south of Russia famous for its climate and mineral water, did not bring him any relief. Despite his suffering, he never lost his keen interest in people and cultures.¹

Upon their return to Leningrad, the Shternbergs moved to the summer resort community of Dudergof (Mozhaiskoe), not far from the city. While there Lev Iakovlevich enjoyed his favorite activities: long walks in the woods and swimming. Despite the attacks of stomach pain, he continued working hard, ignoring his family's pleas to slow down. Having completed numerous minor projects, he returned to his magnum opus on Nivkh social organization, which Boas had been so anxiously awaiting. He also continued receiving visitors, from Bogoraz to students about to depart for their summer ethnographic expeditions to a group of high officials from the Commissariat of Education, whom he was hoping to persuade to give greater support to the ED of the LGU and the Evolution Department of the MAE. He did not lose his usual interest in politics either: in August 1927, along with the entire country, he followed the last stage of the notorious legal drama involving the two Italian anarchists Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, who were finally sentenced to death in the

United States. On July 24 Shternberg's condition worsened. In the last hours of his life he was delirious but at the very last moment regained consciousness. No longer able to speak, he used his finger to write the words "I'm dying" in the air (Bogoraz 1927:282).²

Given the deceased man's stature, a special commission was organized to take charge of his funeral. As Shternberg's old friend and colleague, Bogoraz took it upon himself to organize the funeral, with his student and assistant Zakharii Cherniakov serving as his right-hand man (Bogoraz Collection, SPEA RAN, 250/1/219; Grant 1999:254–255).³ From the Academy of Sciences to the JHES, all the institutions and organizations that Shternberg had been affiliated with placed announcements about his passing in the city newspapers. However, it was the All-Union Society of Former Political Prisoners and Exiles (ОБПК) that became the chief organizer of the elaborate funeral. This was only fitting, given Shternberg's passionate, lifelong loyalty to the People's Will Party and its legacy.

On August 15 Shternberg's body was brought from Dudergof to his apartment in the city, where a civic memorial service (*grazhdanskaia panikhida*) was held.⁴ Several prominent members of the Academy of Sciences as well as colleagues, students, and friends of the deceased were present. His colleagues from the MAE and the university served as the honor guard. Bogoraz gave a brief speech. The next day another civic memorial was held at the building of the ОБПК, located on Nevskii Prospect (avenue), Leningrad's main thoroughfare. Its large hall was filled to capacity. The coffin was covered with numerous wreaths from various organizations and individuals, including one from the ОБПК that read "To the Populist Fighter, Lev Iakovlevich Shternberg." Once again, Bogoraz, as Shternberg's closest colleague and People's Will comrade, spoke first, followed by Aleksandr Fersman (speaking for the Academy of Sciences) and several other scholars representing the various institutions Shternberg had been involved in, like the MAE, the LGU, and the JHES. Shternberg's old comrade Aleksandr Pribyliov (1857–1936), an old Populist and a prominent PSR member, spoke on behalf of the People's Will Circle of the ОБПК.⁵

In an article published in the August 17 issue of the newspaper *Leningrad-skaia Pravda*, Bogoraz expressed sentiments that he must have shared with his audience during the funeral:



21. Lev Shternberg's funeral. Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/194:25.

Today Lev Iakovlevich Shternberg—my passionate and wild Lev—is descending into darkness, leaving the living and joining the dead. He has bought a ticket for his last ethnographic journey into the other world. . . .

We argued a lot and published our arguments next to each other. We argued a lot and built a lot together. We were like the right and the left arm of the same living organism. We helped each other, we complemented each other. . . .

And now it is over. No one to argue with and no one to build with. Instead of a dialogue there is now only a monologue. A two-armed being has become one-armed. How much could one build with one arm and an old and tired one at that?

Farewell my passionate Lev! We will continue your cause, we will continue to build as long as we are alive. Soon the young and greedy ones will come, the ones with many arms, hundreds of arms. There will be many of them and they will finish building our skyscraper of ethnography.

Another memorial service took place at the university on August 17. After that ceremony was over, a long procession marched from the ОБРК building

to the Jewish Preobrazhenskii Cemetery on the outskirts of town. As a sign of the respect and recognition Shternberg enjoyed among the local Communist Party leadership, the procession stopped in front of the local party headquarters building, where Bogoraz and several party officials gave speeches. The entire presidium of the Academy of Sciences followed the casket of one of its members. We do not know if a special Jewish memorial service was held at the cemetery but, given Shternberg's values, one most likely was. Lev Iakovlevich was buried among the city's intellectual elite, next to the famous Russian-Jewish sculptor Mark Antokol'skii (1843–1902) (see Beizer 1989:193–197).⁶ The president of the Academy, Aleksandr Karpinskii, spoke first. Shternberg's colleague from the GF and its dean, Iakov Edelstein, two representatives of the JHES and MAE staffs, and several faculty and students of the Ethnography Division followed him.

A year later a monument was erected on the grave. Lev Iakovlevich's favorite student, Isaak Vinnikov, had proposed the stone's design, and it reflected the deceased's professional identity and values very effectively (Gessen 1995:195). The black marble obelisk bore Shternberg's name and the title of "professor" written in Russian on one side and the name "Leo Sternberg" on the other, emphasizing his prominence in both the Russian and the international academic communities. Most remarkable was a round sphere placed on the top of the obelisk; it represented the globe and bore Lev Iakovlevich's favorite motto, "All Humanity Is One!"

Reactions to Shternberg's death came from all corners of the Soviet Union and the world. The Peoples Commissar of Education, Anatolii Lunacharskii, expressed his deep respect and admiration for the deceased and offered his help in organizing a commemoration as well as procuring a special pension for Shternberg's widow, while anti-Soviet émigrés and Shternberg's old friends and comrades from the PSR and the Jewish liberation movement sent their condolences from Berlin, Paris, and Kharbin. On the far away Sakhalin Island, Shternberg's old friend, guide, and informant Churka grieved deeply over his "father's" death, while his wife performed a traditional Nivkh lament (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/195:246). Erukhim Kreinovich, who gave Churka the sad news, was himself deeply saddened. On August 21, 1927, he wrote in his diary: "Sleep peacefully, dear ityk [Nivkh for father]. After all, one has to fall asleep some day and find rest from the life of the terrible Sakhalin. As for



22. Lev Shternberg's grave. Photo by the author, 1998.

me, I will somehow return to Sakhalin and, full of bitter sadness, will do my best to complete your task. Yet I do not have the strength. It is gone all at once. Farewell. Farewell, my ityk. I must hurry. The ship's whistle calls me to return to Sakhalin. Farewell. Your Iurii is going back to work" (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/5/27).

In an obituary written for the émigré newspaper *Poslednie Novosti*, Genrikh Sliozberg, Shternberg's old comrade from the days of the Jewish liberation movement, wrote, "With Shternberg's passing, Russia lost a truly cultured Russian man, while the Russian Jewry also lost a truly enlightened Jew. It is because of this mix of an excellent Russian and a wonderful Jew that we have lost an ideally pure person. With his passing, a pure light has been extinguished; a great spiritual power has disappeared" (1934:128).

Condolence letters also arrived from such German anthropology luminaries as Fritz Krause and Konrad Preuss. George Rivière wrote from Paris, while Thalbitzer sent a message to Bogoraz from Copenhagen. Swedish, Australian, Japanese, Czech, and other foreign scholars joined in. Upon learning the sad news from Iokhel'son, Boas sent a telegram to Bogoraz. Two weeks later he wrote to his Russian friend that Shternberg's death was a major blow to him; he had lost not only a colleague but also a "dear old friend." Moreover, the Nivkh monograph for the Jesup Expedition series could no longer be completed. A year later, at the 1928 International Congress of Americanists in New York, Boas memorialized Shternberg as "the leader of the Russian ethnologists, . . . whose great work was the study of the natives of the Amur River and the Island of Saghalin [sic], but whose influence upon the study of ethnology extended over the whole world." He closed with the following statement: "Through his death Russian ethnology has suffered a severe loss. He was a dear friend to me and I feel his death as a personal loss" (*Proceedings of the Twenty-third International Congress of Americanists*:xviii–xxix).

Two years later, responding to a request made by Shternberg's former students, Boas delivered more extensive comments about his Russian colleague's scholarly contributions at the 1930 ICA meeting in Berlin (*Proceedings of the Twenty-fourth International Congress of Americanists*:xl–xli). He emphasized Shternberg's significant contribution to the study of the links between the inhabitants of Siberia and North America and praised him as someone who "since 1900 had been our colleague and participant in the publications of the Jesup North Pacific

Expedition, whose work represented a major element of that project.” He also expressed regret that Shternberg’s “fundamental studies of the peoples of the Amur region were still not sufficiently known to the scholarly world, despite his presentations on the subject at several ICA meetings and the publication of several recently translated shorter articles.” At the same time, Boas could not avoid expressing reservations about his Russian friend’s theoretical position, stating that Shternberg had observed “unique forms of group marriage and kinship system which he interpreted in terms of Morgan’s theory” and that made him “one of the most zealous recent defenders of the entire Morganian scheme and the general evolutionary theory.” He then went on to remark, “no matter what our attitude toward these theories might be, his important observations must be taken into serious consideration.” Finally, he praised the decedent’s important work at the MAE and the Leningrad State University, concluding that those who called him “the Russian Bastian” were not incorrect. Closing his remarks on a personal note, the American anthropologist said that “with all of his broad knowledge and all of his creative energy, Shternberg had always been [my] most modest and amiable comrade whose friendship I consider to be one of the most valuable memories of my life. *Ehere seinem Andenken!*” (“Honor to His Memory!”) (cf. Kan 2001a).

Shternberg’s obituaries also reflected the breadth of his involvements and the ideological diversity of his friends and colleagues. Aside from the Soviet ethnographic and other academic journals, obituaries appeared in the organs of the JHES, the OPK, and the Committee of the North.⁷ Members of the student Scientific Research Society of the ED dedicated the first issue of their own journal to their recently departed teacher.⁸ As they wrote, “We lost not only a teacher but a wise mentor as well as a sincere and compassionate friend. . . . Every one of us would travel to the most distant corner of the country, if Lev Iakovlevich would advise us to do so . . . ; he taught us to respect and understand the primitive [*pervobytnye*] people” (*Etnograf-issledovatel*, 1927, no. 1:1). A year later the same journal reported that a special section of the society had been established for the sole task of studying Shternberg’s scholarly legacy. The same group was also involved in trying to organize a small museum at the ED that would showcase the scholar’s academic and nonacademic activities (*Etnograf-issledovatel*, 1928, nos. 2–3:4).⁹

The *American Anthropologist* published two obituaries, a short one by Iokhel'son and a longer one by Shternberg's colleague Kagarov. Vinnikov published a detailed account of his mentor's life and work in the German-language journal *Anthropos*. His former student Nevskii, who was living in Japan, published a moving tribute to the Soviet ethnologist entitled "Moon and Immortality" in a Japanese journal. Finally, several émigré publications also carried obituaries written by Shternberg's colleagues, comrades, and friends.

One of the most moving tributes to the deceased revolutionary and scholar was written by his old friend and fellow Populist-SR Moisei Krol'. Having missed his friend's visit to Paris by only one year, Krol' was devastated by the sad news from Leningrad. As he wrote to Sarra Ratner-Shternberg in the fall of 1927, "I still cannot reconcile myself with the thought that our wonderful beloved Lev is no longer with us. . . . Our lives were so tightly bound to each other that I feel as if with him an entire portion of my soul, a portion of my ego has left as well. . . . He was my living conscience" (Krol' to S. Shternberg, November 4, 1927, Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/116:30–30a). As an unrepentant enemy of the Bolsheviks who continued criticizing them in a variety of émigré publications, Krol' knew that he might not be welcomed onto the pages of a Soviet publication. Still, full of hope, he asked Shternberg's widow if he should use his real name, a pseudonym, or simply identify himself as an "old friend" (Krol' to S. Shternberg, November 4, 1927, Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/116:30–30a). Surprisingly, Krol's reminiscences about Shternberg's younger years in Zhitomir and his role as a leader of the last generation of the People's Will radicals did appear under his own name in the 1929 volume of *Katorga i Ssyłka*, dedicated to the fiftieth anniversary of the People's Will. The OBPК leaders showed the courage to feature the writing of an anti-Soviet socialist emigrant and could still get away with it in 1929 (see Leont'ev and Iunge 2004).

Finally, Shternberg's protégé and fellow SR Nadezhda Briullova-Shaskol'skaia, upon learning about his death, sent a highly emotional condolence letter to his widow from her Central Asian exile, describing the deceased as her "ideal of a human being, a scholar, a public figure" (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/5/68:109). A few years later, the exiled ethnologist had the courage to send her essay "Lev Shternberg as Sociologist and Ethnologist" to a German sociological journal, where it was published in 1930. In it, she offered a detailed review of her mentor's scholarly contributions and compared him to

Anuchin, describing both of them as the fathers of Russian ethnology (Briullova-Shaskol'skaia 1930:454; Kan 2008).

In the aftermath of Shternberg's death, several steps were made to memorialize him. His hometown of Zhitomir affixed a memorial plaque to the house where he grew up. A mountain and a river on Sakhalin were named after him. The Academy of Sciences and the LGU also made a proposal to rename the university embankment where his house stood after the deceased, but this plan was never carried out.

Throughout 1927–28 various societies and institutions with which he had been involved, including the JHES and the Committee of the North, organized memorial gatherings dedicated to him. Several organizations outside Lenin-grad that wished to honor him, like the Eastern Siberian Division of the RGO, held similar meetings. In February 1928 the Academy of Sciences, LGU, and the RGO co-organized a special meeting six months after Shternberg's passing. A number of prominent members of the Academy of Sciences and other scholars who had been close to him spoke at this well-attended meeting, which was held in the Academy's main conference hall.¹⁰

Epilogue: The Legacy of Lev Shternberg and the Unraveling of Soviet Anthropology

The Year of the "Great Break" and the Bloodbath that Followed

Only a year after Shternberg's death the New Economic Policy (NEP), with its limited economic and ideological pluralism, came abruptly to an end. Joseph Stalin, having become the unchallenged head of the Communist Party, proceeded to impose tight party control on every aspect of Soviet life and to use that control to subject the country to violent economic and political transformation. The two main manifestations of the former were industrialization and collectivization. In 1928 the Central Committee adopted the first five-year plan aimed at dramatically increasing industrial output. To implement this plan the government imposed very tight controls on the economy. Closely related to industrialization was the second major campaign of Stalin's "great break"—a forcible and radical reorganization of Soviet peasantry into collective farms.

As far as the effect on the intelligentsia was concerned, the third major aspect of Stalin's revolution—the imposition of totalitarian control over all spheres of life—had the greatest impact. In 1928–29 the power of the party was unleashed

on Soviet intellectual life, which until then had been one of the freest aspects of the system: “Every academic and artistic field was subjected to the dictates of extreme Marxism and the imposition of strict party controls,” and nonconformist “thinkers and artists were silenced or . . . imprisoned. . . . Overall, the doctrine of *partiinost’*—party spirit—was stressed, entailing party judgments in every field as to the ultimate truth and the appropriateness of any piece of work” (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1983, 15:74–76).

The late 1920s also witnessed a bitter struggle within the party between Stalin and his supporters and the so-called right-wing opposition of Nikolai Bukharin and others who disagreed with some of the aspects of post-NEP policy. By the end of 1929, the Right had been crushed, and by 1934 the essential framework of Stalinist society had been established in the political and economic structure of the USSR. However, the country was in a state of turmoil and unrest, both among the masses, who were experiencing the horrors of rapid industrialization and forced collectivization, and among the intelligentsia, who were being subjected to severe regimentation. Additionally there still remained people within the party who had misgivings about the “great break.” Under these circumstances, Stalin and his henchmen unleashed the Great Purge, involving the arrest, exile, imprisonment, and execution of millions of people, many of them Communists and government officials but also non-Communist intellectuals and ordinary workers and peasants. In the late 1920s to the early 1930s the state concocted a number of anti-Soviet political organizations and parties and paraded their members in show trials.

The attack on the Academy of Sciences, one of the last bastions of freethinking and relative institutional independence from the state, also took place during this time. In the course of a “screening” of the Academy’s members and staff, a special commission “uncovered” the existence of a mythical “National Union for the Rebirth of Free Russia.” It was falsely accused of anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda aimed at restoring the monarchy and the capitalist socioeconomic system.¹¹ In addition to the eighty-six defendants affiliated with the Academy, members of several alleged counterrevolutionary organizations, including former tsarist army officers, museum professionals, clergymen, and others, were put on trial for related antigovernment activities.¹² These notorious “cases” in the late 1920s and early 1930s were built almost entirely upon the defendants’ own testimony. To extract it, the investigators used physical

and psychological torture and pressure, methods that would become standard throughout the Stalinist era.

In the early 1930s the government held a series of closed trials of former members of the SRs, the Mensheviks, the anarchists, and other non-Communist leftist parties, leading to the imprisonment and exile of several thousand people. During this time the state also closed down all of the remaining scholarly, cultural, and other public organizations affiliated with these socialist parties. In the mid-1930s the machine of extermination engulfed an even larger number of innocent people. This time the accused consisted of loyal Communist Party leaders and ordinary members as well as the top echelon of the army, industry, and the scientific community. Thus began the Great Terror, which lasted (with ebbs and flows) until the death of the “Father of All the Soviet People” in 1953 and resulted in the death and imprisonment of millions of people (Pavlov 1999; Conquest 1990).

Along with criminal prosecutions of millions of people, the regime unleashed a methodical campaign of ideological subjugation of the country’s scholars and other intellectuals. Especially hard hit were those working in the humanities and the social sciences. By the mid-1930s a simplistic Marxism, as formulated by the party and its ideologues, had consolidated its stifling grip over most Soviet scholarship. Being accused of “ideological sabotage” or “counterrevolution” often meant not only the loss of job but arrest as well. This ideological purge, together with the arrests and executions, delivered such a severe blow to Soviet ethnology that only in the last two decades has it been experiencing a slow rebirth. One of the targets of Stalinization was the Leningrad ethnographic school and the entire scholarly legacy of Lev Shternberg.

The case against the Academy of Sciences involved only a few ethnologists. Prominent among them was Aleksandr Mervart, who upon Shternberg’s urging returned to Soviet Russia in 1924. A brilliant Indologist and fine museum professional, he undertook a long trip abroad in 1927 to familiarize himself with the ethnology museums of Germany, Holland, France, and several other European countries. As his biographer concluded, Mervart, as a “German by birth, who spoke five European languages as well as Chinese and Hindi, and who had lived outside the USSR for a long time, seemed to be a convenient figure to be featured in a major trial” (Vigasin 2003:393; see also V. P. Leonov 1993). Hence Mervart was labeled an agent of the German intelligence as well as an

active member of the “National Union for the Rebirth of Free Russia.” After his wife had been arrested and his children threatened, Mervart “confessed” his alleged crimes and in 1931 was sentenced to five years in a labor camp. He died in the camp in late 1931.¹³

Another colleague of Shternberg’s that fell victim to the Case of the Academy was a talented archaeologist and ethnologist, Sergei Rudenko (1885–1969), who in 1929 discovered the famous Pazyryk mounds of Altai. Along with ten other employees of the Academy of Sciences who had been involved in research expeditions, Rudenko was accused of a “systematic sabotaging of scientific expeditions by means of senseless wasting of government funds and hiding the results of the expedition work, which had a major practical significance for the development of the Soviet economy” (V. P. Leonov 1993:VIII). In 1930, at the time of his arrest, Rudenko was the head of the Ethnography Department of the Russian Museum. Following his sentencing, his entire approach to ethnographic and archaeological research, labeled “Rudenkovism,” was “unmasked” and condemned by the Russian Museum staff (Vasil’kov and Sorokina 2003:331).

In 1933–34 the state concocted another major criminal case, accusing a large group of people including ethnologists, folklorists, museum professionals, and participants in the *kraevedenie* movement of belonging to a “Russian National Party” (Ashnin and Alpatov 1994). Also known as the “Case of the Slavicists,” it involved the prominent ethnologist and physical anthropologist David Zolotariov, who had served with Shternberg on the editorial board of the journal *Ethnografiia*. Zolotariov died in a labor camp in 1935. Another victim of this case was Feodor Fiel’sstrup (1889–1933), a participant in the MAE-sponsored ethnographic expedition to South America of 1914–15. A specialist in Turkic ethnology, he worked with Shternberg at the MAE and after 1921 at the Russian Museum. Fiel’sstrup died soon after his arrest, having drunk scalding water in an alleged suicide attempt (Karmysheva 1999).

The year 1933 was also when Shternberg’s protégé and colleague Briullova-Shaskol’skaia was rearrested in connection with a case involving former SRS. After spending seven years in Central Asia conducting ethnographic research and working at local museums, she had been allowed to return to Leningrad in 1929. At the time of her arrest, she was working in the Ethnography Division of the Russian Museum. Sentenced to a new exile to Central Asia, Briullova-

Shaskol'skaia was arrested once again in 1937, sentenced to death, and executed (Vasil'kov and Sorokina 2003:77; Kan 2008).

In late 1934 and early 1935, following the assassination of Leningrad's party boss, Sergei Kirov (probably orchestrated by Stalin's secret police), numerous arrests took place in Leningrad. Many of those arrested had been associated with Trotsky, Zinov'ev, Lev Kamenev, and other leaders of the anti-Stalinist opposition, who were accused of the Kirov murder. Others were members of nobility or other "nonproletarian classes." Not surprisingly, Nikolai Matorin, who had once been close to Zinov'ev, was arrested in this campaign. At the time of his arrest, he was the director of the Institute of Anthropology and Ethnography (IAE), which in 1933 replaced the MAE and the Institute for the Study of the Peoples of the USSR (IPIN). In late December 1934 Matorin was expelled from the Communist Party, and a year later he lost his job at the IAE as well as his teaching position. Soon thereafter he received a sentence of five years in a labor camp, but in 1936 he was tried again and accused of taking part in the plot to assassinate Kirov. Like Zinov'ev himself and many of his associates, Matorin was sentenced to death and shot (Reshetov 2003a). It should be pointed out that Matorin himself had contributed to the persecution of his colleagues; at a session of the First All-Russian Museum Congress in 1930, he attacked a fellow ethnologist, Bruno Adler (an old colleague and antagonist of Shternberg), for publishing an article on the current state of the Soviet "science of man" in a German academic journal (Reshetov 2003a:158). Characterizing this as an "act of treason," Matorin called for expelling Adler from the congress. Having submitted his article to the *Archiv für Anthropologie* in 1926, Adler could not have anticipated that it would not be published until four years later, when relations between Germany and the USSR were much less friendly than they were in the 1920s. In 1933 this prominent Soviet ethnologist, who was then teaching at Moscow University and the (Physical) Anthropology Institute, was arrested and sentenced to a five-year exile to Siberia. Three years later he received a longer exile sentence, and in 1941 he was sentenced to death and shot (Vasil'kov and Sorokina 2003:15; Reshetov 1994).

In the wake of the Kirov assassination, Shternberg's former student, Nestor Karger (1904–43?), was exiled from Leningrad for being of a "bourgeois" class. He was barred from living in his hometown as well as Moscow for three years. While living in exile on the Yamal Peninsula, he conducted ethnographic research

there. Released from exile in 1940, he was drafted in the beginning of World War II and died in action (Vasil'kov and Sorokina 2003:194).

The years 1936–38 were a dark period, when scores of Shternberg's colleagues and former students were arrested. Among them were Nikolai Nevskii (1892–1937); Georgii Startsev (1902–43); Vera Tsintsius (1903–81); and Aleksandr Forshstein (1904–68).¹⁴ Nina Gagen-Torn (1900–1986), the author of a 1975 biography of Shternberg, experienced several arrests and spent many years in the camps.¹⁵ After completing her ethnographic studies at the LGU in 1924, she went on to do graduate work under Zelenin. A specialist on the culture of Slavic and non-Slavic peoples in the Volga region, by the mid-1930s she was working at the IAE and also served as the secretary of the country's main ethnographic journal. It appears that her close association with Matorin led to her arrest in the fall of 1936. She was accused of harboring counterrevolutionary views and advocating an active struggle against the Communist Party, including terrorist acts against the party leadership. In addition she had allegedly “engaged in anti-Soviet conversations with the staff of her institute, in which she made slanderous statements about the decline of the material well-being of scientists in the USSR” (Reshetov 1994:361).¹⁶ In 1937 she received a five-year labor camp sentence. Only in 1946 was she allowed to move to Moscow and finally defend her doctoral dissertation. After a year of working at the Moscow branch of the Institute of Ethnography, she was once again arrested and accused of the same crimes as in 1936. When she tried to argue that she had already served time for these crimes, her interrogator responded, “You have obviously become an enemy of the Soviet government and must hence be isolated from society” (Reshetov 1994:361). Following another five-year labor camp sentence, Gagen-Torn was released and sent for permanent exile to a small and remote Siberian village. Stalin's death in 1953 was a blessing to her and millions of other prisoners and exiles. She returned to Moscow in 1954 and resumed working at the Institute of Ethnography.

The fate of Shternberg's favorite student, Erukhim Kreinovich, was especially tragic.¹⁷ After two years on Sakhalin Island, where he learned to speak Nivkh and collected a great deal of valuable ethnographic data, Kreinovich returned to Leningrad and was admitted into a graduate program in ethnography. In addition he was teaching Nivkh at the Institute of the Peoples of the North. In 1932 the MAE hired him as a junior researcher. Soon Kreinovich began publishing

papers on Nivkh culture, thereby continuing Shternberg's work. In the 1930s he also worked on the Nivkh alphabet as part of a larger project, headed by Ian Al'kor, of creating alphabets and promoting literacy among indigenous Siberian peoples. In the course of that work, the young ethnologist became interested in Nivkh linguistics, which eventually became his main scholarly pursuit. In May 1937 Kreinovich was arrested along with Al'kor and other Siberian and Far Eastern ethnographers and linguists, several of them students of Shternberg and Bogoraz. All of them were accused of spying for Japan under the direction of Karl Luks, an old Bolshevik and the former chairman of the Far Eastern branch of the Committee of the North, who had died a few years earlier. After days of torture and beatings, Kreinovich signed a confession, which he later tried to retract. He was sentenced to ten years in a labor camp.¹⁸ He turned out to be the "lucky" one, since several of the people prosecuted alongside him were sentenced to death. In the tradition of his mentor, he recorded linguistic and ethnographic data obtained from fellow inmates who were indigenous Siberians, including Yukagirs. Although he was released in 1947, Kreinovich was barred from residing in Leningrad and had to settle in a small town in the Leningrad region. In 1949 he defended his outstanding doctoral dissertation on the Yukagir language but was still unable to obtain political rehabilitation. Soon after receiving his PhD he was arrested once again and sentenced to another exile to Siberia, where he received a nursing degree and also continued his ethnographic work. This time he focused on the local native people, the Kets. Stalin's death did not bring him immediate release. Only in 1955 he was fully rehabilitated and allowed to return to Leningrad. From that point on Kreinovich worked at the Linguistics Institute of the Academy of Sciences. Although he lived another thirty years and completed a great deal of valuable linguistic and ethnological works, his mental health had been permanently damaged.

Ethnographers working in the Russian Far East were not the only ones charged with spying for Japan. Many Nivkhs and other aboriginal inhabitants of the region suffered a similar fate. Aleksei Churka, Shternberg's student from the Institute of the Peoples of the North (and the son of one of his key informants) had joined the Communist Party in 1934 and became the chairman of the East Sakhalin regional executive committee. He was fired from his job in 1936 and sentenced to five years of hard labor in 1937. His alleged crime was "inciting nationalist antagonism between Russians and Nivkhs, speaking out against

government [economic] plans, giving away state seal resources, opposing the merger of two state collective farms, and praising Japanese culture.” Churka never came back, perishing in the GULAG (Grant 1995:100–108).

Persecution of ethnographers continued until the very end of Stalin’s rule. One of its victims was Shternberg’s student Glafira Vasilevich (1895–1971). A graduate of the Ethnography Division of the Geography Institute, she conducted several expeditions among the Evenks, collecting a great deal of ethnographic and linguistic data as well as artifacts for the MAE. Throughout the 1930s and 1940s she taught ethnology at the LGU and Evenk language at the Institute of the Peoples of the North and published numerous works on Tungusic languages and cultures. She prepared a Russian-Evenk dictionary, a variety of primers, and other educational materials in Evenk. In April 1952 she was arrested and accused of inserting politically harmful ideas into her Evenk-language educational materials. She was sentenced to ten years of hard labor. Like Kreinovich she was released and rehabilitated in 1955 and resumed working at the Leningrad branch of the IAE (Ermolova 2003).¹⁹

Ethnology in the Grip of Stalinism

Executions and imprisonment of ethnographers were not the only plagues unleashed on the Leningrad school and all of Soviet ethnology and archaeology between the late 1920s and the early 1950s. Equally detrimental to these fields was the heavy ideological pressure that began during the era of the “great break.” As historian John Barber noted, in the late 1920s–early 1930s

tolerance of non-Marxist intellectuals who cooperated with the regime was replaced by the demand for unequivocal commitment to the official worldview. Among Marxists a flourishing diversity of opinion on theoretical matters was succeeded by an intense drive for orthodoxy. Political leaders, hitherto reluctant to become involved in disputes between intellectual factions, now intervened in one field or another to lay down the party line. Academic and cultural institutions, previously liable to general supervision by the authorities, were brought under strict political control. The many intellectual groups and societies of the 1920s lost all independence and were converted into official organizations. Within a few years, Soviet intellectual life as it had existed until the beginning of the

First Five-Year Plan was altered almost beyond recognition. Orthodoxy was established and maintained by the power of the party and the state. The most extreme forms of regimentation would come later in the 1930s and after the Second World War. Already by the end of 1934, however, the essential features of the Stalinist intellectual life had emerged. (1979:141)

One of the earliest manifestations of this ideological “revolution from above” was the regime’s campaign to subjugate the Academy of Sciences. In the summer of 1927 the government established a commission to review the Academy’s activities in the previous two years and its plans for the coming year. Composed of Marxist scholars and high-level bureaucrats, the commission gave the Academy a mixed review. Especially harsh was a document criticizing the humanities and the social sciences divisions of this venerable institution. Written by the leading Marxist historian of the day and the second-in-command at the Commissariat of Education, Mikhail Pokrovskii (1868–1932), it accused the Academy of lacking a centralized system of authority and continuing the kind of research that had existed prior to 1917. Several academic institutions were singled out as particularly old-fashioned and irrelevant. The MAE was attacked for having maintained a special “Gallery of Peter the Great” in which various personal possessions of the emperor had been kept. Pokrovskii characterized the gallery as a “senseless survival of the past” and suggested that some of its artifacts could be sold to foreign collectors in order to purchase valuable agricultural machinery (Pokrovskii 1992:585). The head of the Communist Academy concluded his evaluation of the “old academy” by stating that its research in the humanities (including ethnography) had to be radically reorganized or eliminated altogether. As part of this reorganization the Academy of Sciences had to completely rethink its research agenda and screen its staff (Pokrovskii 1992:591–592).

Most of Pokrovskii’s recommendations were eventually put into practice. The Academy’s staff was heavily “purged” as a result of the work of a special commission. The macabre “Case of the Academy,” mentioned earlier, removed a number of politically conservative academicians of the old guard and instilled fear in many of the remaining ones. Ol’denburg, who had served as the Academy’s secretary since 1904, was removed from his post. In 1928–29 the regime

forced the Academy to increase significantly the size of its membership and elect a number of new members approved by and loyal to the party (Graham 1967; Perchonok 1991; Tolz 1997; Esakov 2000).

During that same period, the ideological domination of Stalin's version of Marxism was firmly established. In the words of Andrei Zdravomyslov (1992:40), Stalin's formula of historical materialism, spelled out in several of his works, "became the canon and any deviation from it was seen not only as a theoretical but a political mistake, with all of its logical consequences. The establishment of this canon was accompanied by a staffing coup: all of the social scientists suspected of harboring independent thinking and unwillingness to accept this canon were fired and persecuted."

This ideological "revolution from above" inevitably created conditions that favored ambitious young social scientists trained after 1917. Historian of Soviet ethnology Tat'iana Solovei (1998:108) referred to their rise to power as a "revolution from below" that supplemented the one from above. These young and often poorly educated activists translated government decrees and ideological postulates into action. In ethnology such activists came primarily from the ranks of the Society of Marxist Historians.²⁰ Their leader, Valerian Aptekar' (1899–1937), spearheaded the attack on the non-Marxist anthropologists. While his education in the social sciences and humanities was very limited, he had the perfect résumé of a loyal party member and activist. By the mid-1920s he had already gained a reputation as a specialist in the area of "fighting hostile ideology" (Vasil'kov and Sorokina 2003:26). Because the official party line on the social sciences did not exist prior to 1932, Aptekar' and others took it upon themselves to act as the representatives of the party in academia. Starting in 1928 they initiated a debate on the scope and methodology of ethnology. At first these debates took place at public gatherings of scholars and in periodicals. One of the main organizers of such discussions was the sociology section of the Society of Marxist Historians. A number of Moscow and Leningrad ethnologists, including Bogoraz, were drawn into the work of this section (see Kan 2006). According to Solovei (1998:144–146), Aptekar' accused Bogoraz and other members of the older generation of ethnologists, who had begun trying to apply Marxism to their studies, of distorting the great theory by being eclectic and "mechanistically materialist." His conclusion was extremely radical: he wanted to abolish ethnology as a discipline! This position was not supported

by the other participants in the debate, with the exception of a few young members of the Society of Marxist Historians. At the same time, many of the participants agreed that ethnology had to be placed on a “Marxist track.” A number of the more radical Marxists also advocated narrowing the scope of ethnology by turning it into a subsidiary and descriptive discipline called “ethnography” (Solovei 1998:147).

Although Aptekar’ failed to win wide support at this debate, he continued attacking the “non-Marxist ethnologists.” The main target of his attack at the First All-Union Conference of Marxist Historians, which took place in Moscow in late December 1928 and early January 1929, was Bogoraz’s recently published book *Introduction to Ethnogeography* (1928a). The young Marxist ideologue accused Bogoraz of recycling Ratzel’s ideas and dismissed his attempt to apply Marxist dialectics as an example of the incompatibility of ethnology and Marxism. A few months later, at a debate on the Marxist approach to sociology, he spoke even more passionately against Soviet ethnology as a “surrogate bourgeois social science” and attacked “the fathers of modern ethnology,” that is, the older scholars like Bogoraz (Solovei 2001:112). The climax of these disputes was the infamous conference of Moscow and Leningrad ethnologists that took place in April 1929 in Leningrad.²¹ Although several older ethnologists were elected to the presidium and gave presentations, several younger Marxist scholars dominated the conference.²² Speaking as representatives of this group, Matorin and Al’kor respectfully but firmly criticized Bogoraz’s feeble attempts to combine Ratzel’s views with Marxist ideology (Mikhailova 2004:123; cf. Kan 2006).²³ In his keynote presentation, Aptekar’ addressed general issues of ethnological theory and reiterated his earlier arguments that ethnology did not have its own distinct subject matter and therefore was not a theoretical discipline. Instead it was a “surrogate bourgeois social science” that attempted to replace Marxist sociology and history.²⁴ Although such a position was too radical even for the two powerful, younger Marxist ethnologists, Al’kor and Matorin, the conference participants did reject the notion that ethnology was a separate theoretical discipline and stated that the main subject of ethnographic research would be from that point forward the “socioeconomic formations in their concrete manifestations.” The term “ethnology” was more or less banned from scholarly discourse. Except for one participant, everyone voted for this resolution. Moreover, the resolutions of the conference were considered to be

mandatory for all Soviet ethnographers (*Soveshchanie Etnografov . . . 1929*:110–114). As Solovei suggested,

It is unlikely that all of those who voted for these resolutions agreed with them, especially with the elimination of theoretical ethnology. By signing on to the new program, members of the older generation were probably hoping to insure that they could continue their professional activities, even if only within a narrower framework. In an oppressive atmosphere of the late 1920s, it would be difficult to expect a different reaction from scholars. (2001:113)

The April 1929 conference made it impossible to continue a serious debate about the subject matter and methods of ethnological research. Although the discussion continued formally throughout 1930, it had actually become simply an ideological purge aimed at driving the last nail into the coffin of “bourgeois” ethnology, whose representatives were required to “disarm” and “admit their mistakes” (Solovei 2001:113). In January 1930, at a meeting of the former sociology section of the Society of Marxist Historians, which had been renamed “section of the precapitalist formations,” Bogoraz delivered a talk entitled “On the Application of Marxist Methodology to the Study of Ethnographic Phenomena,” which was published that same year in *Etnografiia*. In it he distanced himself from the theoretical positions he had outlined earlier in the *Introduction to Ethnogeography*. He also drew a sharp distinction between his own analysis and the work of Fritz Gräebner and Wilhelm Schmidt.²⁵ Bogoraz emphasized the struggle that had to be waged within ethnography between “the materialist and the idealist method” and argued that ethnography had to concentrate on the “study of the social formations associated with the early forms of production as well the survivals of the earlier modes of production.” In addition, ethnography, in Bogoraz’s words, “had to explore the social superstructures, which are produced by earlier socioeconomic formations but often persist as survivals” (Solovei 1998:158). Despite Bogoraz’s attempt to propose a four-stage scheme of the evolution of social and economic organization, there was very little Marxism in his argument. The paper looked more like a desperate attempt by an old ethnographer to demonstrate his “ideological correctness” (Reshetov 2001:33–34; Kan 2006).

A major watershed in the history of the Soviet social sciences was Stalin's 1931 letter to the journal *Proletarskaia Revoliutsiia*. In the words of Solovei, "it demonstrated that the party leadership had to become the arbiter of truth in historical research and potentially in every sphere of scholarship or cultural life" (1998:170). The radical transformation of Soviet ethnology in the late 1920s and early 1930s inevitably affected *Etnografiia*, its main academic journal. While in 1926–28 it published works expressing a variety of theoretical approaches, in 1929–30 this pluralism began to give way to dogmatic Marxism. The tone of the critique leveled at those accused of deviating from the "party line" became increasingly shrill. Here, for example, is how Sergei Tolstov, the future head of the Moscow Institute of Ethnography but a very young scholar in 1930, when the following review appeared, characterized a recently published article by Zelenin on the ethnogenesis of the Russian people:

This criticism should not be limited to simply unmasking the reactionary essence of the statements made by Professor Zelenin and those ethnographers who share his methodology. Our task is much bigger: to approach in a new way the existing enormous body of ethnographic data that has hardly been utilized in order to reconstruct the history of the peoples of the USSR and develop truly scientific models, which would be our response to any attempts to contribute to the growth of Great Russian chauvinism (even if they are presented in the guise of pure scholarship) and thus play in the hands of the enemies of the construction of socialism. (Reshetov 2001:34–35)

Assessing the consequences of the heated debates in Soviet ethnology in the late 1920s and early 1930s, Solovei argues that the scope of this discipline became significantly narrower than it was in the previous decade. Ethnography became an auxiliary discipline "whose task" was "to assist the historical research" by providing data on pre-class societies "as well as collect field data on the present-day peoples and provide an initial analysis of that data" (*Vsesoiuznoe arkheolog-etnograficheskoe soveshchanie 7–11 maia 1932 g.*, cited in Solovei 1998:172–173). For decades Soviet ethnology lost its status as a theoretical discipline. The kind of Marxism it came to espouse was a "vulgar dogma combined with elements of evolutionism" (Solovei 1998:172–173). Deviation from

this dogma “not only endangered a scholar’s ability to publish his work but became a real threat to his life” (Artiomova 2003:201–202; cf. Slezkine 1991, 1994:246–263; Kan 2006). In the words of Boas, writing in 1939, Soviet anthropology “must be Marxian and Lewis Morgan, otherwise it is not allowed” (cited in Stocking 1992:109).

All these developments allow Solovei (1998:189–190) to characterize this era in the history of Soviet ethnology as one of “scientific crisis.” Despite some fine descriptive work by the older scholars as well as some of the younger ones, the majority of the new Marxist ethnographers were inadequately trained and

turned out to be incapable of solving developing scientific questions, including the task of applying Marxism to ethnological research, by using only intellectual methods and staying within the bounds of a scholarly debate. As a result these discussions gradually turn into scholasticism, with the debate focused on how properly to interpret a selection of quotes from Marx and Lenin. This inevitably pushed the participants . . . toward the politicization of the debate, and so they began increasingly using political and ideological arguments and thus willingly or unwillingly appealing to the party leadership to serve as the arbiter in their search for scientific truth. (Solovei 1998:189–190)

Those few remaining scholars who continued to espouse non-Marxist or nondogmatic Marxist views were forced to limit their production to the most descriptive works or bibliographic compilations or turn to less controversial research topics (cf. Artiomova 2003:203). Some of the more prominent among them, like the Moscow ethnologist Piotr Preobrazhenskii (1894–1941), were attacked in public presentations and scholarly articles and often became victims of Stalinist terror (Ivanova 1999).

From the early 1930s on, Soviet ethnographers had to develop their own five-year plans for scholarly research, like other scholars in the USSR, and sharply criticize “bourgeois ethnology” and its “handmaidens” among their own colleagues. In 1931 the journal *Etnografiia* was renamed *Sovetskaia Etnografiia* (Soviet ethnography), and it began featuring articles written by leading Marxist ethnographers, such as “The Goals of Soviet Ethnography,” “Fifteen Years of Soviet Ethnography,” and “Ethnography in the Service of the Class Enemy.” A

good example of the ideological dogmatism of this era was a special volume published by the IAE in 1934 to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of Engels's *The Origin of the Family*. Its contributors included many of the leading Soviet ethnographers, while its essays ranged from a discussion of Engels's interpretation of the evolution of precapitalist socioeconomic institutions to the application of a Morgan-Engels-Marx scheme in specific cases.²⁶ In the words of one historian of Soviet ethnology, "In the field of research on the evolution of social institutions, the theoretical thought in our country not only ground to a halt but, in a sense, was thrown back into the 1870s–80s of the nineteenth century. And all this was happening while in the rest of the world ethnology was making giant steps forward" (Artiomova 2003:202). In addition to criticizing "bourgeois" ethnology, Soviet ethnographers were now being asked to devote a great deal of their field research to the study of the "survivals of the pre-socialist socioeconomic formations" and "obstacles to socialist development" among the peoples of the USSR (Hirsch 2005:253–259).

This dramatic change in the political and ideological atmosphere in the social sciences and humanities inevitably affected the situation at the MAE. For a couple of years following Shternberg's death, the work of the museum continued without any major changes. In fact, his pet project—the department of the evolution and typology of culture—continued its work in the form of temporary exhibits.²⁷ However, during the same period party ideologues began pushing a notion that Soviet museums should become major centers of Marxist propaganda and socialist education. Simultaneously, politically radical younger ethnographers and "ethnographic commissars" (like Aptekar') began to argue that ethnographic museums were totally disconnected from Soviet life and required a radical reorganization. A lively debate about the goals and scope of ethnographic museums took place at the 1929 conference of Soviet ethnographers. The main disagreement was between those who still advocated the old view of an ethnographic museum as a place where equal attention was paid to ethnological research and educating the masses and those who emphasized the priority of the latter. Aptekar', always ideologically well attuned, went much further by calling for the removal of the "old specialists" from museums and their replacement by the "young Soviet museologists." In the end the radicals prevailed, so that the conference's resolution called for staffing museums with "ideologically tested employees" (Shangina 1991:74).

That same year the regime set up a special commission, staffed by party and government representatives and a few prominent ethnographers, such as Bogoraz, for the reorganization of the MAE. Along with the Commission for the Study of the Tribal/Ethnic Composition of Russia (KIPS), another academic institution dominated by non-Marxist scholars, the museum was subjected to “socialist criticism” that included accusations of using exhibits to promote “great power [Russian] chauvinism” as well as “national separatism.” Several KIPS scholars were arrested, having been charged with organizing “anti-Soviet activities on the peripheries of the USSR.” Upon the commission’s recommendation, KIPS was reorganized, and Marr (the regime’s favorite academician) replaced Ol’denburg as its head (Hirsch 2005:138–143). In 1930 Evfimii Karskii was suddenly removed from his post as the director of the MAE and replaced by Matorin (Reshetov 1996:41).²⁸ The latter was the first head of this academic museum who was not a member of the Academy of Sciences. He clearly expressed his view of the goals of an ethnographic museum in a speech given at the First All-Russian Museum Congress, held in Moscow in 1930. As Matorin put it, “A museum must become a giant condenser, a giant tool for restructuring the worldview on the basis of dialectical materialism” (cited in Shangina 1991:75). The resolution adopted by the congress called on Soviet museums to depict “the dialectical process of class struggle to serve as a weapon of propaganda in the struggle for the socialist reconstruction” (Shangina 1991:75).

In the early 1930s ethnographic museums were to a large extent transformed into institutions that illustrated the harsh life of various peoples under capitalism and the progress they were making in the Soviet Union thanks to the nationalities policy of the state. A special government directive adopted in 1934 emphasized the primacy of the educational task of museums and downplayed their research and curatorial functions. Adopted without any input from serious museum professionals, this directive was quite unrealistic, but no one dared to question it (Shangina 1991:76). After all, in the early 1930s dozens of museum professionals were fired and some arrested. Many of the new employees hired to replace them lacked serious ethnographic and museological training.

As a result of these demands by the state, all ethnographic museums, including the MAE, made major changes in the way they exhibited their collections. As the annual report of the MAE for 1930 stated, specimens were to be exhibited not according to an ethnographic or geographic principle, as they been in

the past, but based on a “socioeconomic” principle that corresponded more closely to “Marxist methodology and the increased demands of the working masses” (*Otchiot o deiatel’nosti MAE*, 1930:261). This new ideology was first exercised in several exhibits organized by the MAE, including one called “The Colonialist Policies of the Imperialist Nations and the Nationalities Policy of the Soviet Union in the North” that opened on the day marking the anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution. Two other MAE exhibits, held outside the museum in a public park, were entitled “India in Its Struggle for Independence” and “From Primitive Technology to the Industrial Five-Year Plan” (*Otchiot o deiatel’nosti MAE*, 1930:265).²⁹ Another exhibit—a portable one—had an antireligious message and coincided with the Russian Orthodox feast day of the holy trinity. Responding to the recently redefined scope of ethnographic research, the museum also established a new division devoted to the study of “primitive communism” (*Matorin 1932:11*).³⁰

In 1933 a major change in the MAE’s status occurred when it was merged with the Institute for the Study of the Peoples of the USSR (IPIN).³¹ The new institution was called the Institute of Anthropology and Ethnography of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR (IAE). Under a different set of circumstances Shternberg, who had always advocated the creation of a special anthropological-ethnological research institute, would have welcomed this development. Bogoraz also proposed forming a similar institute the late 1920s.³² However, in the 1930s the regime monitored and limited the kind of ethnological research that the new institute could engage in. Headed by the all-powerful Matorin, the IAE adopted the new research issues in the social sciences that were sanctioned during the Second Five-Year Plan era (1933–37). These included a study of precapitalist socioeconomic formations and problems of primitive communism as well as the ways of overcoming the precapitalist and capitalist habits in the culture of the peoples of the USSR. Such institutional reorganizations were quite common in the 1930s; they facilitated both a jettisoning of research topics deemed irrelevant or inappropriate and the removal of scholars who had not been able to reinvent themselves as Marxists (*Solovei 1998:201–202*). In the case of the MAE, the reorganization did not contribute to any improvement of its scholarly output. Compared to other institutions employing ethnologists, however, the old museum fared somewhat better. Thanks to its

affiliation with the Academy of Sciences, its curators were able to continue at least some of their traditional research.³³

In addition to heavy ideological pressure, Soviet ethnology of the 1930s suffered from periodic reorganizations of educational institutions that trained professional ethnographers and an increased politicization of its curriculum. Ever since its transfer from the Geography Institute to the Geography Faculty of Leningrad University, the Ethnography Division was under close official scrutiny. As early as 1927 rumors began circulating that the higher education officials were planning to merge the ED with the Faculty of Linguistics and Material Culture. As noted previously, a similar plan was proposed in 1925 when the ED was being transferred to the university. At that time Shternberg and his colleagues objected to the proposal and managed to preserve the institutional independence of the ED. Two years later such a plan aroused a good deal of anxiety and opposition among the ED's students and faculty. As an anonymous contributor to the newly established student journal of the ED wrote, such a reorganization would inevitably affect the ED's curriculum negatively by reducing important specialized courses and would undermine the Leningrad ethnographic school's unique "ethno-geographic" focus (Edel'shtein 1930:35). Luckily, in 1927 the authorities decided not to make any changes in the ED. However, its troubles were not over. In the spring of 1929 a series of articles appeared in the Leningrad press accusing the GF and specifically the ED of being dominated by noncommunist faculty (most notably its dean, Bogoraz) and students (known as "the golden youth"). Authored by a group of leftist students apparently from separate faculties of the LGU and other institutions of higher learning, these attacks were sharply repudiated in a memo by Bogoraz entitled "Purulent [sic] Attacks" (Bogoraz Collection, SPFA RAN, 250/2/1541-3; Kan 2006).

In 1929 ethnologists of the old school still had the courage to object to attacks on their ED, especially if they came from some unknown students rather than the political establishment. However, when the ED was finally closed down two years later, after first being demoted from a division of the GF of the LGU to a division of the Institute of History and Linguistics with a focus on applied ethnography and museology, no one raised their voice.³⁴ Until the ED's reopening in 1936, the only institution in Leningrad that continued training ethnographers was the Institute of the Peoples of the North (IPN). Established in 1930 on the basis of the Northern Faculty of the Leningrad Oriental

Institute, the IPN was created with the help of the ED and included a number of Shternberg's colleagues (like Bogoraz) and former students among its faculty and staff. In addition to training indigenous northerners to become the future Soviet governmental and educational specialists and officials, the institute conducted ethnographic, linguistic, and other types of research. Headed by Al'kor, the IPN combined traditional and "applied" ethnographic and linguistic research. Its particular specialty was the development of alphabets for the nonliterate languages of the North, with much of that work carried out by ED graduates under the direction of Al'kor and Bogoraz. Despite the IPN's efforts, in the 1930s ethnological education in Leningrad and elsewhere in the country almost came to a standstill.

In the late 1920s to mid-1930s several ethnologists working at the IPN, and especially Bogoraz and Koshkin, also continued their involvement with the Committee of the North (CN). The CN, which had been to a significant extent a brainchild of Bogoraz and in which Shternberg had participated as well, also became the victim of Stalin's "revolution from above."³⁵ Beginning in 1929 the CN leadership and particularly Bogoraz came under fire from the more radical communists involved in indigenous Siberian affairs for denying the existence of class differentiation and exploitation in indigenous northern societies and tolerating a number of "harmful" traditional customs, such as bridewealth and even shamanism. In the early 1930s indigenous hunters, fishers, and reindeer herders were collectivized and "dekulakized" (that is, the wealthier "exploiters" among them were deprived of their gear).³⁶ A harsh campaign against shamans would soon follow, with native religious practitioners harassed and often imprisoned.

Despite the obvious failure of "collectivization" in the North and cautious protests from the CN leadership, the regime continued to insist that indigenous societies of the "numerically small peoples of the North" were backward and had to be forced to make a transformation into socialism as quickly as possible. In addition, in the early to mid-1930s, as the exploration of Siberia's natural resources and its industrialization increased dramatically, the plight of aboriginal northerners came to be seen as less important than the overall goals of the country's rapid economic development. In the ideological climate of the Second Five-Year Plan, the CN argument about the need to protect the natives from large-scale Russian settlement and encroachment on their traditional

food-producing areas became evidence of “reactionary neopopulism” that had to be formerly rejected. The CN was clearly becoming irrelevant, and it was finally disbanded quietly in 1935 (Slezkine 1992; 1994:188–281).³⁷

The increased politicization of ethnology in the USSR in the late 1920s and 1930s inevitably affected the way Shternberg’s ideas and his entire scholarly legacy came to be viewed. Through the late 1920s he continued to be hailed as the founder of the Soviet ethnographic school and a major figure in both the pre-1917 and early Soviet ethnology—as the “best representative of the old bourgeois school of ethnography who gave us examples of applying spontaneous [as opposed to ‘dialectical’] materialism to culture” (*Etnografiia*, 1929, 2:117; cf. Cherniakov 1927:293–295). At the infamous 1929 conference of Moscow and Leningrad ethnographers, participants formally recognized his special role in the development of Soviet ethnography and to honor him elected Sarra Ratner-Shternberg to the conference’s presidium (*Soveshchanie* 1929). Several of his works, including those presented as papers in the late 1920s, were printed posthumously during this time, while a special editorial board was proposing to publish his entire scholarly legacy, including his lecture courses, as a six-volume edition of collected works (Shternberg 1927a, 1927b, 1929a, 1931c). A number of his students, including Kreinovich, Karger, and Ivanov, were given the assignment of helping Sarra prepare these works for publication. This publication was supposed to include an introduction by Ol’denburg, an essay by Bogoraz entitled “Shternberg as Human Being and Scholar,” and a biographical sketch by his widow.³⁸

At the same time, mindful of the changing ideological climate in the country, the editorial board approved Sarra Ratner-Shternberg’s proposal to ask David Riazanov (1870–1938) to contribute an essay containing a “methodological assessment” of the late ethnologist’s works (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/117:8–17). This was an interesting choice because Riazanov was both an old Bolshevik and a prominent Marxist intellectual who was not afraid to disagree with the party leadership. From 1921–31 he was the head of the Institute of Marx and Engels, which was dedicated to collecting, preserving, and researching the works of the “classics.” In the 1930s, however, he was first exiled and then executed as a Menshevik sympathizer (Rokitianskii 1996).

Shternberg’s widow had good reasons to request a positive assessment of her late husband’s work from a highly respected party intellectual: from 1930 on

the shortcomings of Shternberg's legacy began to be identified and criticized. Among his biggest "mistakes" was the "subjective idealism" of his worldview, which he had inherited from Populism, as well as his non-Marxist interpretation of social evolution. The first hints of this criticism appeared in presentations by the more radical leftist participants in the 1929 ethnographers' conference. Two years later Shternberg's own former student Al'kor delivered a paper at a meeting of the Ethnographic Section of the Society of Marxist Historians entitled "L. Ia. Shternberg as Ethnographer. Critique of the Populist School" (Sukorkin 1931:155). In 1932 the recently created IPN established a special study group charged with developing a Marxist-Leninist critique of the main currents in Russian and foreign ethnography. One of the section's "brigades," headed by Matorin, was responsible specifically for evaluating "Populist Idealism." According to a report on the activities of this brigade, in the spring of 1932 another former student of Shternberg's, Leonid Potapov (1905–2000), delivered a paper dealing with his mentor's "philosophical views and methodology." The eager young ethnographer detected a strong influence of Auguste Comte in Shternberg's philosophical worldview. According to him Shternberg the idealist incorrectly identified the intellect as the driving force in the development and evolution of culture. He also accused Shternberg of "denying the existence of class differentiation and substituting the struggle for survival for class struggle, substituting evolution for revolution, religious mysticism, exaggerating the role of the biological factor, . . . ignoring the role of the economic one in human life," and a host of other sins. Potapov went on to brand the founder of the Leningrad ethnographic school a "typical idealist–eclectic and a representative of the petit bourgeois Populist ideology." Moreover, he criticized his teacher's view of ethnography as the most important and the most general of the social sciences. Having thus "uncovered the class essence of Shternberg's philosophical views," Potapov called upon Soviet ethnographers, and especially his former students, to reject Shternberg's idealistic theories while utilizing his ethnographic data (Karpova 1932:139; cf. Matorin 1932).³⁹ Some of the official pronouncements about "Populist ethnography" from the early 1930s were even more ominous. For example, the resolution of the All-Russian Archaeological-Ethnographic Conference of May 1932 contained the following verdict: "The petit bourgeois Populist ethnography never had its own political identity but followed the lead of either the liberal bourgeoisie or the groups representing

the feudal nobility or the imperialist bourgeoisie. In the USSR the petit bourgeois ethnography reflects the interests of the groups wishing to restore capitalism and of the wealthy peasants (*kulaks*) among the various nationalities of the country” (*Rezoliutsiia Vsreossiiskogo Arkheologicheskogo-Etnograficheskogo Soveschaniia*, 1932:10).

By the mid-1930s the notion that Shternberg’s ethnographic works had significant value but his theoretical contributions were deficient became firmly entrenched in Soviet ethnology. During this time Al’kor, who had already been playing a major role in planning the publication of Shternberg’s collected works, offered the most detailed evaluation yet of the strengths and weaknesses of his legacy. Frustrated with the persistent delays in the publication of her husband’s collected works, Sarra Ratner-Shternberg consented to publishing the portions of his written legacy that she had already worked on. It is worth noting that none of the three collections of his work appearing in the 1930s were produced by an academic press or even a prestigious Leningrad or Moscow publishing house. Instead two were published by the Committee of the North and one by the Far Eastern State Publishing House (Shternberg 1933a, 1933b, 1936).

Al’kor’s introductions to these publications formulated an ideologically correct view of Shternberg as a theoretician, a perception that lasted throughout the entire Soviet period of Russian ethnology (Shternberg 1933a:xi–xxxvi; 1933b:iii–xvi; 1936:iii–xv). Shternberg’s social thought was categorized as unequivocally Populist (in the tradition of Lavrov and Mikhailovskii), which meant it was idealist rather than materialist and mistakenly attributed social evolution to the working of human ideas and ideals. Like other Populists he was also criticized for exaggerating the role of the individual in social life. In his criticism of Shternberg’s theoretical views, Al’kor drew not only on Marx and Engels but also on the Russian Marxists, especially Lenin. By the early 1930s Lenin’s evaluation of the “classic Populists” of the 1870s–80s as well as their neo-Populist heirs, both the liberal Populists and the radical SRS, had become official dogma. While Lenin did give credit to the former for their brave struggle against tsarism, he blasted the SRS for their mistaken interpretation of the Russian economy and society and for their incorrect if not outright counter-revolutionary recipe for forcing it to transition from capitalism to socialism. Mindful of the bitter debates between Lenin and the neo-Populists in the 1900s–1910s, Al’kor and other ethnographers of the 1930s–40s accused Shternberg of

rejecting Marxism (which the old Populist called “economic materialism”) and refusing to see the socioeconomic relations determining ideology. His other major mistake, according to his former student, was ignoring the class differentiation and struggle in native societies of the Far East and instead “viewing all social phenomena from a point of view of abstract humanism and justice.” Al’kor also deemed Shternberg guilty of idealizing the wealthy members of these societies and admonished him for his theoretical eclecticism, “biologizing” a number of social phenomena, and not being critical of religion. Defending a view that had become dogma by the early 1930s—that ethnography was a discipline with a limited scope and was a subsidiary to history—Al’kor proclaimed that his mentor’s very broad definition of his discipline was unacceptable to Soviet ethnographers because it equated ethnography with sociology and thus ran counter to historical materialism. Equally unacceptable to him was Shternberg’s definition of culture.

Despite this rather harsh verdict on the late scholar’s theoretical positions, Al’kor did give him credit for being “an outstanding representative of the so-called classical school in ethnology, founded by Spencer, Bastian, Tylor, and others.” While radicals deemed this school inferior to Marxist dialectical and historical materialism, they regarded it as “progressive” for its time and far superior to the cultural historical, the diffusionist, and other schools. Shternberg also received praise for his criticism of such “reactionary” ethnological theories as Marett’s pre-animism, Lévi-Bruhl’s theory of primitive mentality, and Freudianism. Shternberg’s view of religion was said to be “fairly close to a materialist one” (Shternberg 1936:viii–xv).⁴⁰ However, his greatest theoretical contribution was as “one of the major followers of the famous American ethnologist, L. Morgan, whose theory he had strengthened and further developed thanks to his remarkable discovery of the classificatory system of relationship and group marriage among the peoples of the Far East as well as several of his other contributions to the study of prehistory” (Shternberg 1936:viii–xv). Not surprisingly the Marxist ethnographer cited Engels’s praise for Shternberg’s discovery of “group marriage” among the indigenous Far Easterners as the seal of approval of his work in the area of social organization.⁴¹ Engels’s mythical letter to Shternberg was also cited as a highlight of Shternberg’s intellectual biography. In fact, Al’kor attributed Shternberg’s “discovery” of group marriage on Sakhalin to the influence of Engels’s *Origin of the Family*. Moreover, the

Marxist ethnologist argued that Shternberg's two earliest publications on the social organization of the Sakhalin natives were his most materialist works, least influenced by "subjectivist-idealist Populist" ideology and methodology (Shternberg 1893, 1896, 1933b:xiii). The high mark given to Shternberg by one of the founders of dialectical-historical materialism became a major trump card for all those who defended his scholarly contribution's enduring value.⁴² At the same time, all of his disagreements with Morgan's and Engels's interpretation of the evolution of social organization were duly noted and critiqued (1933b:xiv–xvi). In his last commentary on Shternberg's work, which he wrote not long before his own arrest, Al'kor reiterated his earlier evaluation of his mentor's ideas but added that the latter had "come very close to the materialist interpretation of the origin of religion and had offered a valuable critique of such reactionary schools in the modern ethnology as those of W. Schmidt, Durkheim, Preuss, Freud, and others" (Shternberg 1936:xv).

From a modern vintage point it is easy to criticize Al'kor's dogmatic evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of Shternberg's view on sociocultural evolution. Particularly jarring are the editor's references to the "social-fascist ethnology of Cunow and Kautsky." However, these simplistic and ideological introductions and evaluations made it possible to publish a variety of the late ethnologist's key works, including such important unpublished manuscripts as his work on Gilyak social organization (parts of which were included in the two 1933 collections) and his lecture course on the evolution of religion, at a time when so much of the old social science was being rejected.

During this dark era, no one would dare to disagree with Al'kor's Marxist critique of Shternberg's worldview. Nonetheless, at least one of the old Populist's students and protégés expressed his disagreement with the "ethnographer-commissar." The dissenting voice was that of Vinnikov. By the mid-1930s, having inherited Shternberg's great interest in the evolution of social organization, he became the leading expert on evolutionism as developed by Morgan and Engels. In an unpublished commentary on Al'kor's introduction to Shternberg's *Family and Clan* collection as well as his own short entry on Shternberg in the *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences* (published in the United States in 1930–35), Vinnikov defended his teacher by cleverly noting Al'kor's mistaken interpretations of the viewpoints of several evolutionist and anti-evolutionist ethnologists, including Shternberg himself (Vinnikov Collection, SPFA RAN,

1045/1/213:23–32; Vinnikov 1934:388). In the harsh ideological climate of the 1930s, this casuistry was the only way to debate another social scientist. Vinnikov had to admit that because Shternberg's theories were "limited by the schematic, mechanistic method of the classic evolutionary school, he failed to conceive of evolution as a dialectical development" (Vinnikov 1934:388). However, he played up Shternberg's evolutionism, praising him as a counterpart to Morgan in the United States and Tylor in England (Vinnikov 1934:388). He also vehemently defended Shternberg against Al'kor's accusation of being eclectic. In the end, both of Shternberg's former students used political labels and accusations to bolster their arguments. Even the more erudite and theoretically sophisticated Vinnikov ended up sounding just like the new breed of Marxist ideologues when he accused Al'kor not only of factual but of political mistakes as well (Vinnikov Collection, SPFA RAN, 1045/1/213:29).

The Disbanding of the OBPk and the JHES

An increasingly critical view of Populism in general and Populist ethnography in particular expressed by the ideologically correct Soviet ethnographers in the 1930s resulted not only from the Stalinization of the social sciences but also from rising anti-Populist attitudes among Soviet government officials and historians alike. These attitudes affected both the historical scholarship and the treatment of the All-Union Society of Former Political Prisoners and Exiles (OBPK), to which Shternberg had belonged.⁴³

The first major ideological confrontation between two different views on the nature and legacy of Russian Populism took place in 1930 during the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the creation of the People's Will Party. *Katorgai Syslka*, the official organ of the OBPk, published an essay on the historical significance of that party by Ivan Teodorovich, an old Bolshevik, historian, and one of the leaders of the OBPk. In it, the author tried to rehabilitate the People's Will as a revolutionary party closely connected in theory and practice with the Bolsheviks. As John Barber pointed out, Teodorovich's article expressed the sentiment of many of the old Populists and other non-Bolshevik socialists who "must have been profoundly out of sympathy with the growing tendency to depict Russian revolutionary past in terms of Bolshevik infallibility and non-Bolshevik error" (1981:90). Immediately thereafter a heated debate about the People's Will and specifically Teodorovich's article took place at a meeting of the

Society of Marxist Historians. The radical leftist historians attacked Teodorovich's interpretation of the history of the first Populist political party and even tried to accuse him of being a "neo-Populist." Despite some qualified support from other historians and Bolshevik activists of the ОБПК, he eventually had to admit defeat and confess his political sins in a letter sent to the Communist Party newspaper, *Pravda*. At the same time the party's Central Committee issued a lengthy statement repudiating his evaluation of the People's Will.

By the mid-1930s official writings on the Populists became even more critical. In their telling the Bolshevik "revolution" had completely crushed Populism. From this point on, not only were the liberal Populists of the 1890s and the radical Neopopulists of the 1900s–1910s branded as counterrevolutionary, but even the early Populists were given a mixed review. The regime waged a particularly harsh attack against terrorism as the early Populists' "favorite" method of revolutionary struggle. All the enemies of the Bolshevik Party, including former Bolsheviks themselves who were "liquidated" in the 1930s, were now linked to the Populists. As the leading Soviet encyclopedia wrote in 1939, "A despised gang of traitors and enemies of the motherland had borrowed terrorist and conspiratorial methods, which they used to accomplish their counterrevolutionary and restorationist goals" (Menitskii 1939:186). Somehow the murder of Kirov and other Bolshevik leaders turned out to have been inspired by the Populist and Neopopulist terrorism of the 1880s–1910s.⁴⁴

By the mid-1930s the regime had also completed its war against former PSR members, the great majority of whom had become loyal Soviet citizens and had long stayed away from any political activities. One example is the case of the so-called Populist Center, a movement fabricated by the secret police in Leningrad in 1933. Allegedly run by the prominent SR intellectual and literary critic Razumnik Ivanov-Razumnik (1876–1946), its members, most of them former PSR and People's Will loyalists, were accused of plotting to overthrow the Soviet government and providing material assistance to imprisoned and exiled SRs (Kan 2008).⁴⁵

Simultaneously with these attacks on Russian Populism and its legacy, the regime began a campaign to liquidate the ОБПК. After all, it had never forgotten the letters sent by a number of ОБПК activists (mainly former People's Will and PSR members) in defense of the SRs on trial in 1922. In later years the society provided financial and other forms of material assistance to its members,

regardless of their party affiliation. It also featured Trotsky and other odious speakers at its meetings and continued to petition the government to spare the lives of Zinov'ev, Kamenev, and other "enemies of the people." The Stalinists could not forgive the ОБПК for these actions. Inducting Stalin and several of his henchmen into the ОБПК membership did not save the society from being officially disbanded in 1935. Within the next several years many of its former members were arrested (Leon't'ev and Iunge 2004). For the next two decades no serious historical research on Populism was conducted in the USSR.

A few years before the ОБПК was shut down, another society dear to Shternberg's heart was disbanded. In the 1920s the Jewish Historical and Ethnographic Society (JHES) as well as the Society for the Spread of Enlightenment among the Jews of Russia remained the only independent organizations of Jewish intelligentsia in Leningrad. The JHES was particularly popular among those interested in Jewish history and culture. Its lectures and meetings continued to be well attended, and its journal, *Evreiskaia Starina*, generated considerable interest, even though Soviet censors were making its publication increasingly difficult.⁴⁶ Attempts by the regime, acting through the Jewish Section of the Communist Party, to Sovietize the JHES failed. Finally, in mid-1929 a Communist Jewish newspaper carried an article that viciously attacked the JHES as the last vestige of "old Petersburg" and as a place of useless work that had nothing to do with the building of socialism in the USSR. Citing its continued ties with "the bourgeois nationalist" Dubnov, a special government commission reviewed the society's work and concluded that it had to be closed down. On December 9, 1929, Leningrad regional authorities carried out this recommendation. When the JHES library and museum were closed, their precious collections were scattered among various storage facilities in several Soviet cities, and many of their books and artifacts were lost forever. The last president of the JHES, Saul Ginzburg, frightened by the destruction of his organization and the arrests of scholars in Leningrad in the wake of the "Case of the Academy," immigrated to the United States (see Beizer 1989:122–125, 1999:315–325; Greenbaum 1994:21–28).

As the last independent Jewish organization disappeared, Jewish scholarship, including ethnography and ethnology, soon came to a standstill. Shternberg's protégé, Vinnikov, curtailed much of his work in that area (although he continued working on "safer" topics like the Babylonian Talmud, for which

he was preparing his index). Hebrew instruction at the university and the publishing of any periodicals and books in Hebrew was prohibited. The last members of the JHES who had known and worked with Shternberg were arrested in the late 1930s, accused of participating in a counterrevolutionary nationalist Jewish organization.⁴⁷

Sarra Ratner-Shternberg
and the Saga of Shternberg's Collected Works

Immediately after Shternberg's departure, his widow and Bogoraz began developing an ambitious plan for the publication of his works. A special editorial board chaired by Ol'denburg (in his capacity as the secretary of the Academy of Sciences) and consisting of Bogoraz, Sarra Ratner-Shternberg, and Al'kor was organized in late 1927 and early 1928. Its original plan was to collect all of Shternberg's widely scattered published works as well as much of his unpublished scholarly pieces, including substantial materials on Nivkh linguistics and folklore. The board asked several of his former students (including Kreinovich and Vinnikov) to assist in preparing this publication. This was indeed an ambitious plan—the initial correspondence between the editorial board and the government office in charge of funding such projects refers to a nine-volume set of Shternberg's collected works. In addition, Sarra Ratner-Shternberg was planning to publish all his essays on Jewish subjects, including unpublished ones (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/176:8–17, 35–37). However, the deteriorating conditions in the academy doomed this project from the start.

Given the rapidly increasing ideological pressure on the social sciences accompanied by the firing and arrests of many of Shternberg's former students and colleagues, Sarra Ratner-Shternberg's tireless efforts to get his collected works published appear particularly heroic. The correspondence, the minutes of meetings, and other documents dealing with her struggle offer a window on a fascinating yet gloomy tale of Shternberg's legacy during the Stalinist era. One of the first changes that the editorial board had to make was replacing Riazanov as the author of a Marxist evaluation of Shternberg's theoretical worldview. In 1931, after Riazanov's fall from grace, a more ideologically sound and opportunistic Marxist intellectual, Boris Fingert, replaced him as the scholar in charge of providing an assessment of the "methodological foundation of Shternberg's ideas" (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/117:32). The next

major task for Sarra was to prepare an essay about her husband's life and work that would fit the spirit of the times without distorting the facts of his life and his ideals too much. Because several versions of this essay have been preserved, we can see how Shternberg's widow was forced to make his life story more "acceptable" to the Marxist establishment and modify her narrative in response to the tightening of the ideological screws. For example, contrary to facts, she asserted that her late husband had come from a "poor Jewish family" (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/4/9:101). She also skirted around the issue of his commitment to neo-Populist ideology and the PSR, focusing instead on some disagreements he had with the leadership of that party as early as 1905 (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/140:312). At the same time, she had the courage to mention Shternberg's involvement in various Jewish liberation projects and his passionate commitment to fighting anti-Semitism. Bogoraz also contributed to the efforts to publish his late comrade's collected works by preparing a detailed narrative and evaluation of Shternberg's ethnographic research in the Far East.

The new ideological winds of the late 1920s and early 1930s also affected which of Shternberg's pieces could be included in the projected collected works. A 1937 publication proposal eliminated any articles dealing with Jewish subjects (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/4/20:1-13). As a result of this and other reductions in the number of works deemed acceptable for publication, the proposed collection was reduced in size from nine to five volumes. Nonetheless, it was still supposed to include his lectures from his introductory course as well as those on the evolution of religion and social organization. Despite these changes, there was apparently a delay in the project in the early to mid-1930s. Probably the turmoil in Soviet ethnology during that period and more specifically the closing of the *kafedra* of ethnology at Moscow University in 1931 and the ED of the LGU in 1932 impeded progress.

In the mid-1930s an important change took place in the social sciences, and especially in history and related disciplines. The regime decided to rely less on international worker solidarity and world socialism as its guiding principles and instead tap into Russian nationalism and Soviet patriotism. A letter from Stalin and a resolution of the council of peoples' commissars issued in 1934 stated that national pride among the country's people had to be strengthened through the teaching of Russian history, which would be reinvigorated

by returning to the study of important figures and events of the past. Among other things this meant renewed focus on prerevolutionary political figures and thinkers. Once again, the legacies of at least some of the important pre-1917 historians and social scientists had to be studied. To carry out this major pedagogical change and research shift in history, archeology, ethnography and other related disciplines, the regime was forced to rely once again on the scholars of the old school and brought a number of them back from exile. Simultaneously it harshly condemned “leftist excesses” in the historical disciplines, including the powerful Pokrovskii school of historical research. As a result of this reform, history faculties, including the ethnology departments within them, were restored. The teaching of ethnography resumed in Leningrad in 1937 and in Moscow two years later. Of course, the curricula of the restored departments were highly politicized. Nonetheless, this climate brought renewed attention to the “classics” of Russian and Soviet ethnographers like Shternberg.⁴⁸

In the meantime, in 1935 the presidium of the Academy of Sciences finally decreed that a five-volume collection of Shternberg’s works must be published and charged the IAE with that task. That same year the institute signed a contract with the Academy’s publishing house and appointed a new editorial board, which began working on the first volume. The academician Ivan Meshchaninov, Marr’s influential and ideologically savvy right-hand man, headed the board, which included Sarra Ratner-Shternberg, Bogoraz, A. A. Busygin (the new director of the IAE), Kagarov, and three of Shternberg’s students—Al’kor, Vinnikov, and Karger (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/117:2). The first volume of the projected set was to be devoted to Shternberg’s works in general ethnology, including his lectures from the course *Introduction to Ethnography*. Sarra would write her husband’s biographical sketch, while Kagarov was asked to edit the materials for the volume and prepare an introductory essay. In the spirit of the times, his essay not only had to note the significance of the author’s works but also “underscore those passages in his lectures that express views contrary to Marxist methodology” (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/20:151–151a).

The board prepared the first volume according to the new plan and sent it to the publisher, where it lingered for quite some time before it was returned to the editors for minor revisions. Unfortunately, during this time (1935–36)

the IAE lost two of its directors—first Matorin and then Busygin. Both were accused of participating in a counterrevolutionary organization and then executed (Nitoburg 2003:407–409).

Only in 1937, with the appointment of the academician Vasilii Struve as the IAE's new director, did the project resume. By this time Bogoraz had died, Al'kor had been arrested, and Karger was exiled from Moscow. The reconstituted board continued to include Meshchaninov, Sarra Shternberg, and Kagarov, while two of Shternberg's former students, Mark Azadovskii and Saul Abramzon, filled the vacant positions (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/4/20:1). Minutes of the editorial board meetings illustrate the editors' nervousness about publishing works that so clearly deviated from Marxism. They debated whether to reword some of the passages that contradicted "our views" (that is, dogmatic Soviet Marxism) or simply to indicate these contradictions in the footnotes. A brief introduction to the entire collected works, written by the whole editorial board, reiterated Al'kor's evaluation of Shternberg's ideas. It praised the late ethnologist for his wide-ranging work in Far Eastern ethnography, folklore, and linguistics; his contribution to the MAE; the founding of the first Soviet ethnographic school; and several other major accomplishments. At the same time it pointed out his disagreements with a number of postulates of dialectical materialism. In an effort to make Shternberg's work more palatable to the orthodox ideologues in charge of Soviet ethnology, the editors also argued that he had departed from a number of methodological principles of the "psychological-evolutionist" school and "came close to the methodology of dialectical materialism" in his work on the evolution of social organization (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/4/20:8). They also praised him for always defending Morgan's theory of social evolution from criticism and characterized his writing and lectures on the evolution of religion in a more positive light than Al'kor had. The editors claimed that Shternberg "emphasized the link between religion and the sociopolitical order, and also offered a materialist explanation of the evolution of religion" (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/4/20:8). They identified his other strengths as his passionate struggle against racism and critique of the culture-historical school of Schmidt and Koppers.

Sarra Ratner-Shternberg's sketch of her husband's intellectual biography proved more troublesome for the editors. In 1937 Kagarov wrote an evaluation of this text that gives a good idea of the highly politicized atmosphere

surrounding Soviet ethnography and the difficulties Shternberg's widow and colleagues had to overcome to get his works published.⁴⁹ After praising Sarra for the various strengths of her essay, Kagarov recommended significant cuts in the section dealing with Shternberg's fondness for the Bible and the Talmud, pointing out that "Shternberg's position on the Jewish questions did suffer from some elements of narrow nationalism." He also called for deleting a "greatly exaggerated and one-sided interpretation of the petit bourgeois revolutionary movements in Russia," like the People's Will and the P.S.R. Moreover, he recommended adding a statement indicating that Shternberg's goal for unity of humankind and friendship among peoples could only be achieved in the Soviet Union. In conclusion, Kagarov stressed once again that the "philosophical foundation" of Shternberg's works was unacceptable to Soviet ethnographers and thus their publication "could only be viewed as a way of mastering the legacy of the classics of literature and science," which had been advocated by party ideologues since the mid-1930s. He also emphasized that these works could not be published unless the author's ideological errors were subjected to thorough and detailed criticism. At the same time, he argued that Shternberg's criticism of racism and of various theories of the "reactionary bourgeois ethnology" would undoubtedly be of great use to Soviet students.⁵⁰

Despite the editors' efforts to finally get the Shternberg project off the ground, little progress was made in 1937. This prompted Sarra Ratner-Shternberg to write two letters to the president of the Academy of Sciences, Vladimir Komarov, in the spring of 1938. The official letter complained about the delays in publishing the work and blamed Meshchaninov for not making any progress on the project and failing to resign as the editorial board's chairman. It also accused the new director of the IAE of being overwhelmed with his demanding job and consequently not being able to find the time to review the prepared first volume of the series. Sarra Ratner-Shternberg wrote a second, unofficial letter to Komarov as an old colleague of Shternberg's. It accused Vinnikov of wanting to resign from the editorial board and claimed that he possessed a version of Shternberg's lectures on social organization that was more accurate than the one selected for publication. When asked to share his copy with the board, Vinnikov had allegedly refused. The irate widow made an even harsher accusation against Vinnikov, claiming that he was planning to guard his mentor's lectures and use them in his own course on the same subject, which he would

offer at the recently restored ethnography division of the LGU (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/20:151–154).

It is difficult to interpret the causes of Sarra Ratner-Shternberg's attitude toward Vinnikov, although it is also very hard to believe her accusations.⁵¹ The most likely reasons for this conflict were a very tense atmosphere at the IAE, where staff members were being arrested weekly, and the aging Sarra Ratner-Shternberg's difficult personality. Several MAE employees told me that in the last decade of her life, she became extremely suspicious of many of her colleagues and was difficult to work with. A similar conflict had occurred earlier between her and Kreinovich, whom she had unfairly accused of trying to appropriate her late husband's linguistic and folkloristic materials and use them in his own research.

Determined to have Shternberg's works published, his widow tried to solicit help from another prominent Marxist ethnologist specializing in (among other things) the study of Engels' "matriarchate" stage of social evolution, Mark Kosven. Sometime between 1935 and 1937, Kosven had briefly been a member of the ever-changing editorial board (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/4/20:22). He promised to help but tried to blame the endless delays in publishing Shternberg's "selected works" on shortages of paper and other publishing problems (Kosven to Sarra Ratner-Shternberg, March 8, 1939, Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/5/25:3).

A year later the Academy finally responded to Sarra Ratner-Shternberg's appeals by agreeing to assign to its division of history and philosophy the task of finally producing the five-volume collected works of her late husband. The project's editorial committee was reconstituted once again. The only members remaining from the previous committee were Ms. Shternberg herself and Vinnikov. The other three members—Struve, Abram Deborin, and Zelenin—were Academy members. Deborin (1881–1963) was an interesting choice. A Social Democrat since 1903, he had been a prominent Marxist philosopher and historian and was elected to the Academy of Sciences under heavy pressure from the authorities. In 1939 he was the secretary of its history and philosophy division (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/20:158).

The last document pertaining to the saga of Shternberg's collected works was an official letter from Deborin to Struve dated March 8, 1940. Deborin stated that a plan to publish the works had been approved by the Academy a month

earlier and expressed regret about the delay in getting this project completed. He also mentioned that Vinnikov and Zelenin had recently removed themselves from the editorial board, and he asked Struve to replace them with other staff members of the IAE. We do not know what precipitated the two ethnographers' decision to withdraw from the project, but it is possible that Mrs. Shternberg's intrigues as well as their fear of being involved in publishing the works of a non-Marxist were behind it. But it is also difficult to say for certain whether Shternberg's collected works would have ever been published, since only one year later the Nazi armies were advancing rapidly toward Leningrad, and in another year Sarra Ratner-Shternberg died during the extended siege of that city.

Shternberg's devoted and tireless widow also initiated contact with her husband's foreign colleagues with the purpose of getting some of his major works published abroad. Taking advantage of the good working relations that existed in the late 1920s and early 1930s between Soviet and German academics and drawing on her husband's old ties with the latter, she also worked hard to have Shternberg's major published and unpublished papers appear in German anthropological journals. For this purpose she initiated correspondence with Konrad Preuss as well as Fritz Krause, both of whom had known her late husband since the early 1900s and had a very high opinion of his work. Thanks to them six of Shternberg's essays, including "Contemporary Ethnology," were published in several major German-language journals between 1929 and 1931 (Shternberg 1929b, 1930a, 1930b, 1931a, 1931b).⁵² Sarra Ratner-Shternberg had good reasons to be cautious when corresponding with German-speaking scholars and publishing work abroad; starting in the early 1930s, a number of Soviet scholars, including ethnologists, had been severely criticized by their leftist colleagues and the authorities for doing so.⁵³ Despite these dangers, as late as 1933 she was still corresponding with Preuss, whom she sent a copy of her own yet unpublished article on her late husband's role in creating the Leningrad ethnographic school that she wished to have translated and published in Germany (cf. Ratner-Shternberg 1935). If not for Hitler's rise to power later that year, the essay would probably have been published in the *Archiv für Anthropologie* (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/116:5; 18 October 1932, Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/5/36:27).⁵⁴

During that same period of time, Mrs. Shternberg also maintained a seven-year-long correspondence with Boas regarding her husband's Gilyak manuscript,

which still had not appeared in English. In a November 4, 1927, letter she informed him that she had found a manuscript on Nivkh social organization among her late husband's papers. Boas was delighted to be able to resume work on this important Jesup Expedition series monograph.⁵⁵ In 1933 he came very close to publishing the *Social Organization of the Gilyak*. Unfortunately, it never was published, and in 1934 he received two angry letters from Mrs. Shternberg complaining about his foot-dragging and letting him know that portions of the manuscript had recently been printed in Soviet Russia (Shternberg 1933a, 1933b). He never heard from her again. It is unclear what, exactly, caused the delays in publishing the manuscript, but they most likely stemmed from a combination of the publisher's (Brill's) financial difficulties during a worldwide economic depression and Boas's advancing old age, which prevented him from taking care of his editorial duties properly.⁵⁶

The last example of Sarra Ratner-Shternberg's persistent efforts to memorialize her husband as a leading scholar was her correspondence with Abraham Schwadron, the head of the department of autographs and collections at the Jewish National and University Library in Jerusalem (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/116). This department collected and preserved handwritten documents by prominent Jewish figures from all over the world. Once again, one cannot help but admire Sarra Ratner-Shternberg's courage—corresponding with someone in Palestine in the early 1930s was a risky undertaking.

Sarra Arkad'evna Ratner-Shternberg outlived her husband by sixteen years.⁵⁷ It was a difficult life: she seems to have never recovered from her loss and had to face health and financial problems. Fortunately Bogoraz and Ol'denburg (acting on behalf of the Academy of Sciences) managed to secure a decent "personal pension" for her as the widow of a "prominent scholar, educator, and revolutionary" (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/108:58). Thanks to the help and support of her friends and family (including her son Arkadii, who became a military physician) as well as a busy professional life, Ms. Shternberg was able to go on. On the surface she seemed to have a successful career during the late 1920s and 1930s. After 1917 she continued working in the North American department of the MAE and became a student at the ED of the GI. By the mid-1920s she had obtained her diploma in ethnology and was promoted to a higher curatorial position. In 1934 she became the head of the American department, with which she had been affiliated for a long time. A year later she

defended her PhD dissertation. By the end of her life Ms. Ratner-Shternberg carried the title of a “senior scientific worker.”

In addition to curatorial work and the time-consuming struggle to get her husband’s work published, she managed to produce a fairly long list of articles and small monographs. Like most of her colleagues, however, she had to adjust her research and publications to the new ideology of Stalinization. While much of her work had been dedicated to traditional museological research on North American Indian cultures (and especially those of the Northwest Coast), in the 1930s it shifted to the study of the evolution of Native American social organization according to a Morganian-Marxist-Leninist scheme and criticism of the Indians’ mistreatment by the American government. She was also forced to publish a highly politicized book on the plight of African Americans in the United States. (Ratner-Shternberg 1936). She continued working at the MAE throughout the Nazi siege of Leningrad and died of starvation in 1942. Her son, Arkadii, served as a military physician from the 1920s through the early 1940s. His trail disappears during World War II (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/4/23).

Shternberg’s Legacy in the Post-Stalinist Era

After Stalin’s death the ideological pressure on the humanities and the social sciences eased slightly. The history of the Populist movement was one of the previously taboo topics that were once again open for study. While they continued to be criticized for their “petit bourgeois” ideology, the Populists were once again hailed as heroes and their scholarly work was “rehabilitated.” Consequently, Shternberg’s ethnographic works and many of his theoretical ideas were once again deemed valuable. His evolutionism received a particularly favorable evaluation. At the same time, his view on the relationship between the material and the social-spiritual aspects of culture continued to be criticized as an example of “Populist idealism” (*Sovetskaia istoricheskaia entsiklopediia*, 1976, 16:350–351; Tokarev 1966:426–427).

This renewed interest in Shternberg was reflected in several articles on the MAE and the Leningrad School of Ethnography published in the 1970s–80s. However, the most important work about him was Nina Gagen-Torn’s biography, published in 1975. One of the few survivors of the Leningrad school, Gagen-Torn returned to the MAE in 1955 and dedicated herself to documenting

the lives and scholarly contributions of her mentors and fellow students. Drawing on personal reminiscences, published works, and materials from the Shternberg archive, she produced a lively book marked by deep respect and even reverence for her teacher. Of course, the book could not escape the ideological restrictions of the Brezhnev era. It says almost nothing about Shternberg's involvement in Jewish ethnography and completely avoids the subject of his pre-1917 political views and commitments. Moreover, the book was less an academic biography and more a literary life history; Gagen-Torn fictionalized quotes by Shternberg and depicted some of the people close to him in an unfavorable light. At the same time, considering Gagen-Torn's own tragic fate, one cannot help but admire the praise she awarded to a brave man who refused to abandon his ideals and was not broken by years of jail and exile (G. Gagen-Torn 1999:331–332).⁵⁸

Despite carefully editing her portrait of Shternberg, however, Gagen-Torn encountered serious obstacles. This time it was not his Populist legacy but his Jewishness that almost derailed the biography's publication. Several prominent ethnologists, including Rudolf Its, the head of the Leningrad branch of the Institute of Ethnography, wrote negative or lukewarm evaluations of the manuscript, criticizing in particular the author's alleged exaggeration of the role of Jews in the Populist movement and Russian anthropology. While this new anti-Semitism had not been officially sanctioned, Gagen-Torn's critics found support among some of the party ideologues and bureaucrats in charge of monitoring the social sciences. Nonetheless, thanks to Gagen-Torn's refusal to edit the manuscript and the support she received from senior colleagues (such as Shternberg's student Ol'derogge), the book was finally published (G. Gagen-Torn 1999:331–332).

In the end, Gagen-Torn's biography did not seriously challenge the canonized image of Shternberg from Soviet anthropology of the 1950s–70s. Until the perestroika era he continued to be revered as “one of the most progressive of the pre-Marxist Russian ethnologists,” a staunch evolutionist, a major contributor to the study of the evolution of social organization and religion, and a key figure in the study of the peoples and cultures of the Amur-Sakhalin region. At the same time, few of his specific ideas about culture, religion, or pre-modern social organization were seriously examined and discussed. The descriptive aspect of Shternberg's scholarly legacy continued to be extolled by his

student Kreinovich (1973) as well as a by the Nivkh ethnographer Chuner Taksami, a fairly dogmatic Soviet Marxist who made an impressive career in Leningrad (1961, 1967). Nonetheless, even before the arrival of the more liberal ideological climate of the late 1980s, Taksami and several other ethnographers who had done extensive field and archival research among the Nivkh began cautiously criticizing Shternberg for exaggerating the archaic nature of late-nineteenth-century Nivkh social organization, including the marriage system (Taksami 1975; Smoliak 1974).

A new chapter in the study of Shternberg's life and scholarship began in the 1990s in the wake of the scholarly activities marking the centennial of the Jesup North Pacific Expedition. The impetus for this renewed interest came not from Russia but from the West—more specifically, from the Jesup II project initiated by the Arctic Studies Center of the Smithsonian Institution (Krupnik 1998; Kan 2000, 2001a). At the same time, Bruce Grant (1995), the first American ethnologist to work on Sakhalin Island, published a critique of Shternberg's depiction of Nivkh social organization and its emphasis on survivals of primitive communism. The ultimate irony is the fact that Shternberg's only book-length study of Nivkh social organization, edited by Grant, was finally published not in his home country but in the United States (Grant 1999; Shternberg 1999).⁵⁹

In conclusion I would like to briefly outline the legacy of Shternberg's ethnographic school. On the one hand, despite the devastation visited upon his students by World War II and Stalinism, a number of his talented students did survive, continuing the school's tradition of inquiry into the 1970s, even though their work was severely restricted by the ideological domination of Soviet Marxism. Nevertheless, in such areas as the study of "tribal art," social organization, religion, and linguistics, a number of his students and their students did make important contributions to Soviet cultural anthropology and especially the study of indigenous Siberian cultures. Some of them also pursued lines of inquiry that Shternberg had only briefly followed. By drawing not only on their own field research or the work of their predecessors but on rich provincial archives, these scholars made a major contribution to the study of what became known as "ethnogenesis," the history of the specific peoples and ethnic groups of Siberia and the Far East.⁶⁰

At the same time, in the ideologically more restricted post-1920s era, a number of research subjects central to Shternberg's work were either not pursued

at all or were subjected to severe ideological censorship (which was often internalized by scholars rather than imposed by the regime). While the study of shamanism continued, it was now based mainly on museum collections and reminiscences of former shamans or their relatives. After all, Soviet ethnographers took great pains to emphasize that by the 1930s shamanism had largely disappeared from the life of Siberian natives. In addition, finding shamans to speak with was not easy because many of them had perished in the GULAG or were afraid to talk about their craft. Not surprisingly, the first major case study of indigenous Far Eastern shamanism, one based on years of ethnographic research, appeared during perestroika (Smoliak 1991).

Moreover, long-term participant observation, the hallmark of the Leningrad school, was rarely put into practice after Shternberg's death. There were several reasons for this retreat. On the one hand, the lack of funding severely restricted the amount of time ethnographers were able to spend in the field. On the other, the focus on the "survivals of primitive culture," which had become dogma in Soviet ethnology, justified short-term ethnographic expeditions, often conducted during the summer months. While Soviet ethnologists working between the 1930s and 1980s did manage to compile an impressive body of data, the overall state of their discipline lagged behind that of its Western counterpart. Not surprisingly, with the opening of Russia to foreign field researchers, much of the more innovative and theoretically sophisticated ethnological work has been produced by Western scholars or the younger generation of Russian academics trained in the West (like Piers Vitebsky, David Anderson, Alexia Bloch, Patricia Gray, and Nikolai Ssorin-Chaikov).⁶¹ Similarly, the few major works on the history of Russian anthropology, including the study of Siberian peoples, that have appeared in the last twenty years were written mainly by Western scholars or Russian-trained ethnologists and historians working in the West (such as Igor Krupnik, Yuri Slezkine, Andrei Znamensky, or Peter Schweizer).

Despite the opening of archives and the breaking of ideological shackles, the history of Russian and Soviet anthropology remains to be written. It is my hope that this intellectual biography of Lev Iakovlevich Shternberg will help revive interest in his scholarly legacy and the relationship between his political activities and academic work as well as place the history of Russian and Soviet anthropology within the larger historical context of our discipline.

Conclusion

Lev Shternberg's contribution to the development of professional ethnology in Russia was very significant. Although he was not the only exiled left-wing intellectual to conduct ethnographic research, he was the first to insist (in his lectures and writings) that it was the sine qua non of serious academic anthropology. In fact, his "discovery" of fieldwork predated Malinowski's by two decades. Unlike the famous Polish-British scholar, unfortunately, Lev Iakovlevich did not get a chance to make fieldwork a central element of his ethnological teaching until after the February Revolution and the Bolshevik coup. In contrast to Malinowski, moreover, Shternberg engaged mainly in survey-style ethnography. His field research can be situated somewhere between that of the Torres Straits Expedition and the Trobriands fieldwork, which became the model for Western anthropology for years to come (Stocking 1992). Shternberg was equally pioneering in insisting that a field ethnographer needed to gain a working knowledge of the local language and collect data using it. In this respect his views resembled those of Boas. Unlike Boas, however, Shternberg did not get a chance to instill this idea in his students until the last decade of his life.

In pre-1917 Russia Shternberg was one of the leading voices in the campaign to professionalize ethnological education in his country and create a centralized system of ethnographic research. In this area he was definitely a "Westernizer" who believed Russian ethnology lagged behind its counterparts in western Europe and the United States. Shternberg was also a major figure in his country's relatively small community of museum curators. Inspired both by his own Siberian experience and evolutionary theory as well as his visits to foreign

museums, Lev Iakovlevich played a decisive role in transforming the MAE from an old-fashioned *Kunstkamera* into a modern museum of anthropology.

Shternberg's contribution to the ethnology of the indigenous inhabitants of Sakhalin Island and the lower Amur River was also quite significant. Building on the work of his predecessors, he made the languages and cultures of several native peoples of the region an important part of Russia's "ethnographic map." His data on Nivkh language and folklore is particularly valuable. However, most of his hypotheses about the ethnogenesis and evolution of social organization of the Nivkh, the Ainu, and several other indigenous peoples of the Amur-Sakhalin region have been criticized for their errors or rejected outright. The fact that his evolutionist reconstruction of the Nivkh system of kinship and marriage became a model for many subsequent Soviet studies had more to do with the ideological climate between the 1930s and the 1980s than with its validity (cf. Roon and Sirina 2004:67–68). Only in the 1970s did ethnographers (especially Smoliak) who spent more time in the field than Shternberg and who utilized archival as well as ethnographic materials begin subjecting his work in this area to cautious criticism. Shternberg's evolutionist theorizing on the subject of "primitive religion" also received scholarly attention. While they rejected some of his specific hypotheses (such as divine election) as well as his "idealism," later Soviet authors on the subject tended to follow his scheme (like Mikhail Shakhnovich or Sergei Tokarev). At the same time, Shternberg's focus on the "archaic" elements in monotheistic religions encouraged important subsequent research by Soviet Marxist ethnologists as well as the more progressive school of semioticians between the 1960s and 1980s (for example, Viacheslav Ivanov, Vladimir Toporov, etc.). His work on shamanism has been equally influential, in spite of the fact that most contemporary scholars reject his theory of divine election (cf. Balzer 1997).

From a "presentist" perspective, the weakest part of Shternberg's scholarly legacy is his stubborn insistence on the basic infallibility of the classic nineteenth-century evolutionism of Morgan and Tylor. Despite his willingness to admit evolutionism's shortcomings, he did not waver in his commitment to this theory, even after the majority of Western and some of the Russian ethnologists had rejected it. Shternberg's stubbornness as a theoretician owed to his personality and especially an unwillingness to renounce the ideology of his revolutionary youth, a typical characteristic of many Russian intellectuals

of Shternberg's time. At the same time, it is important to keep in mind that in the climate of official ideological and political conservatism that dominated Russian life from the 1880s to 1910s, social evolutionism tended to play a much more progressive role than it did in Europe or United States, and it had numerous adherents among Russia's ethnologists (cf. Plotkin and Howe 1985). After the Bolshevik takeover, evolutionism retained this aura of progressivism because of its association with Morgan and Engels. This explains, in part, why Shternberg, a strong critic of Marxist social theory, was permitted to teach classic social evolutionism to the first generation of Soviet students (cf. Kolchinskii 1999:69).

As Artiomova (2003:200–201) noted, in the first decade after the Bolshevik coup, Soviet “ethnographic Marxism” developed a kind of “symbiotic relationship” with classical evolutionism, which was tolerated by the regime at least until the late 1920s. This allowed Shternberg to present his vision of the discipline to his students without making any compromises with the rising new Marxist ideology, which he referred to as a “hackneyed reworking of a Hegelian triad” (Al'kor cited in Grant 1995:58). During the same period some of the older and especially many of the younger ethnologists tried to combine evolutionism and a variety of other theoretical approaches with elements of Marxism. However, in Artiomova's words, “in the 1920s Marxism within Soviet ethnology was only a complex of concepts and research questions, rather than a series of ready-made solutions to various problems, as became the case during the later years” (2003:200–201).

In the 1920s evolutionism also began to be criticized more systematically as new approaches—from Boasian and German cultural-historical analysis to diffusionism—began to find adherents among Soviet scholars. These new approaches influenced Shternberg himself and had a major impact on his colleague, Bogoraz, who taught “ethnogeography” at the LGU and published a book under the same title in 1928 (Bogoraz 1928). However, such anti-evolutionist views were particularly strong among Moscow ethnologists. Vladimir Bogdanov, for example, called upon his colleagues to “reject those methods of ethnological research which in our scholarship are based on the principle of evolution” (cited in Solovei 1998:107). Instead he encouraged them to apply the methods and ideas of the cultural-historical school to the study of the social and economic life of the rural population of Russia, an approach he and

his Moscow colleagues practiced in the mid-1920s (Solovei 1998:107). In the 1920s Shternberg's younger colleague Zelenin also expressed criticisms of evolutionism and recommended focusing on new research issues like the diffusion of cultural elements.

The most outspoken critic of late-nineteenth-century evolutionism was the young Moscow scholar Piotr Preobrazhenskii (1894–1941). Trained in ancient history prior to 1917, he became a major figure among Moscow ethnologists in the 1920s and '30s. Like Shternberg, Preobrazhenskii was able to influence the first generation of Soviet ethnologists through his lectures, which he gave on a regular basis between 1925 and 1931 at the Ethnology Faculty of Moscow University. Published in 1929, these lectures offered a sharp critique of Morgan's and Tylor's evolutionist theorizing but presented German theories of diffusion and *Kulturkreise* in a favorable light. While Preobrazhenskii expressed his support for Marxist "historical materialism," he was not afraid to criticize the "classics" for their erroneous view of primitive society. In the final analysis, his own theoretical approach represented a mix of evolutionism, diffusionism, cultural-historical analysis, and even acculturation. His views appear more advanced compared to Shternberg's and more consistent with those of his Western contemporaries, whom he cited approvingly (Ivanova 1999). Not surprisingly, Preobrazhenskii's Marxist colleagues subjected his ideas to harsh criticism.

Smaller and less well-known than its Leningrad counterpart, the Moscow University Ethnology Faculty, short-lived as it was, represented an ambitious program of education that grounded ethnology in the humanities rather than the natural sciences. The ethnology faculty consisted of four divisions: folklore, visual arts, archaeology, and the principle one, ethnography. While they both believed that professional ethnologists had to receive a very broad education, Preobrazhenskii emphasized the humanities more than Shternberg, who had been forced to develop his school within the context of the Geography Institute. One major difference between the two schools was the fact that the Leningrad one focused more on training in fieldwork methods and producing ethnologists competent in local native languages, while Preobrazhenskii's school emphasized mastering theory (including a comparative approach to the study of ethnic groups and their cultures) and a grounding in the humanities, especially history. Another major difference was the Leningrad school's close association with a major ethnographic museum, which Moscow did not have

(Solovei 1998). With its eclectic approach to the teaching of ethnology and its critical view of evolutionism, the Ethnology Faculty of Moscow University experienced greater and earlier scrutiny by the Marxist leadership in charge of higher education. Disbanded in 1931, this school managed to train only a handful of prominent future ethnologists and archaeologists, several of whom fell victim to Stalinist terror.

Finally, prominent Russian ethnologists like Mogilianskii and Shirokogorov, who took strong anti-evolutionist positions and used a variety of alternative theoretical approaches to pursue important new topics of research, left Russia after the Bolshevik coup and were soon cut off from any intellectual dialogue with their Soviet colleagues.

Another weakness of Shternberg's scholarly legacy, especially in comparison to that of Boas or Malinowski, is the relatively modest size of the corpus of his scholarly works. The only ethnological monograph he managed to complete was not published until the late 1990s. Once again, Shternberg's personality offers part of the explanation for this—he enjoyed the process of doing research much more than the work involved in presenting his findings. In my view, however, the more important reason was that he simply lacked time for scholarly work. He not only had to carry the heavy burden of museum work but also spent a great deal of time advocating various political and social service causes, especially through journalism. Although the need to supplement his modest MAE salary was an important reason for his journalistic activity, the main reason for his numerous distractions was his deep and passionate commitment to the causes of Russian and Jewish liberation.

Once again, from a “presentist” viewpoint Shternberg's early revolutionary career (and especially his advocacy of political terrorism) as well as his later involvement in the PSR might appear excessive. However, one needs to keep in mind that in pre-1917 Russia Shternberg fought for progressive ideals shared by the majority of the country's intelligentsia. After the February Revolution, he joined those more moderate Russian Socialists who saw Bolshevism as the greatest danger for the new regime in speaking out loudly against it. After his enemies took over the country, the old Populist remained true to his ideal of combining social equality with intellectual and political freedom as well as the freedom of the individual. He advocated this position in his lectures and his

few public statements in defense of the new regime's persecuted opponents, whether they were Socialists or members of the old elite.

While the battles between the Bolsheviks and the SRS no longer seem particularly relevant to most of us, Shternberg's role in developing Jewish ethnography in late imperial and early Soviet Russia deserves our attention and respect. After all, his was the academic mind behind the only major Jewish ethnographic expedition of the tsarist era. Moreover, he kept the JHES and its journal going in the 1920s, when they were increasingly threatened by the regime. Much of what Shternberg managed to build in this area was destroyed a few years after his death, while some of his ideas about Jewish history and culture seem naïve today. Nonetheless, his legacy as a popularizer of Jewish ethnography in Russia served as an inspiration to those scholars and activists who revived Jewish studies in Russia in the 1980s and 1990s.

One of the main foci of this biography is the relationship between Shternberg's scholarship and his larger *Weltanschauung*, including his Populism and love of Judaism and the Jewish people. His respect for and compassionate concern about the Nivkh people as well as his special interest in their traditional social institutions had a lot to do with his Populism. Populist ideology also influenced the way he viewed the struggle for self-determination waged by the non-Russian peoples of the empire, including Jews. His view of religion was clearly influenced by his knowledge of and admiration for Judaism, while his anthropology affected his ideas about the role of Jewish rituals in the life of his people, present and future. As his wife pointed out, "Shternberg's commitment to social justice gave his entire scholarly work a certain unique coloring. . . . He brought social and ethical issues into his science, while also supporting his own social, political, and journalistic work by scientific facts" (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/140:10).

While they both enriched and were influenced by his anthropological views, Shternberg's Populism and philosemitism often contradicted each other and ran counter to and even undermined his scholarly position on a number of key issues. For example, his views on Judaism and the causes of the Jews' survival made it difficult for him to sustain a Tylorian argument concerning the inevitable replacement of religion by a more superior and rational ideology of science. His Populism and Judaism also made him ambivalent about the process of modernization in the indigenous societies of Russia and the world. It is very

difficult to imagine Shternberg turning his back on his own Jewish people and advocating their total assimilation into the new Soviet society. At the same time, his strong identification with Russian high culture and commitment to the struggle for the liberation of all of Russia's inhabitants made him a strong opponent of Zionism and an advocate of the establishment of local political and cultural autonomy for the country's Jews. However, Shternberg's commitment to his own people also served as an obstacle to his full acceptance of Populist ideology. As a committed Jew he was not inclined to romanticize the Russian peasants and their commune as well as their traditional culture. As an urban intellectual who was well-versed in Russian and western European high culture, he was a "Westernizer" rather than a "Slavophile" and grieved deeply when his academic community was cut off from its Western counterpart in the aftermath of the revolution and the Civil War.

As a humanist and a Populist Shternberg favored the preservation of the "positive" aspects of indigenous cultures, but another paradox of his legacy is that his own students played a significant role in forcing native Siberians to abandon traditional social and religious institutions for the sake of "progress" and rapid sovietization. By taking censuses, mapping ethnic groups, and learning native languages, these young ethnographers contributed to the science of ethnology but also helped impose the Soviet state's control over the non-Russian minorities, manifest in forms of social engineering like the promotion of some ethnic groups at the expense of others (cf. Martin 2001; Hirsch 2005).

Despite all these contradictions and inconsistencies, Shternberg's life and career do show a great deal of consistency and integrity. It is difficult to imagine him desperately reworking his ethnographic data to fit a new ideological climate, as his friend and colleague Bogoraz did (Kan 2006). It is also very hard to imagine him living in and surviving the dark years of Stalinism. Given his political views and especially his personality and great moral integrity, Shternberg would have almost certainly perished in the GULAG of the 1930s and 1940s.

Notes

Introduction

1. Until the last decade, Russian anthropologists preferred to use the term *ethnography* to refer to what their Western counterparts call (cultural) *anthropology* or *ethnology*. For this reason, throughout this work I often use the term favored by Shternberg's contemporaries and Soviet successors.

2. A few exceptions to this rule are essays by several members of the younger generation of Russian ethnologists, e.g., Artiomova (2003) and Mikhailova (2004).

3. The only exception is a monograph by the Russian ethnologist T. D. Solovei (1998) and a recent one by the American historian Francine Hirsch (2005). However, their main focus is the history of Soviet ethnology during the Stalinist era. Moreover, Hirsch's book deals mainly with the Soviet state's use of ethnographic knowledge in the process of delineating the ethnic and administrative boundaries of the country.

4. The leading Russian ethnology research institute is named after Miklukho-Maklai.

5. The book also includes an interview Grant conducted with one of Shternberg's last surviving students, Zakharii Cherniakov (Shternberg 1999:245–255).

6. Since the early 2000s my research on Shternberg's life and work has benefited greatly from cooperation with Russian ethnologists and historians, and particularly those working on Sakhalin Island. Several of them have recently published their own brief essays (in Russian) on several aspects of Shternberg's life and scholarship (e.g., Sirina and Roon 2004).

1. The Early Years

1. The main sources of information regarding Lev Shternberg's early years are the published memoirs of his best friend Moisei Krol' (1929, 1944) and several versions of his unpublished biography composed by his wife Sarra Ratner-Shternberg (1872–1942) after his death (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/4/9, 282/1/140, 282/1/195:301–315).

2. They included a giant of modern Yiddish and Hebrew literature, Mendele Moicher Sforim (1835–1917), and Mikhail Sheftel' (1860–1922), who fought for the equality of

Russian Jews as a lawyer, political activist, and the leading Jewish member of the first Russian parliament (the Duma) (Shternberg 1922b:28).

3. In addition to four younger brothers—Shevel (Savelii) (b. 1865), David (b. 1868), Aron (1871–1927), and Abram (b. 1873)—Lev had an older sister, Shprintsa (Nadezhda) (b. 1857). All of Lev’s brothers became physicians.

4. Being very sensitive to any manifestations of anti-Semitism, the young Shternberg was deeply disturbed by an infamous portrayal of a Jew in Turgenev’s short story “Kike” (Krol’ 1929:216).

5. In the meantime, his friend Krol’ had become disillusioned with systematic terrorism and saw it only as a last resort used under very special circumstances (Krol’ 1929:227).

6. On the Ekaterinoslav congress see Shekhter-Minor (1928); Denisenko (1929); Orzhikh (1931); Naimark (1983:97–103); Haberer (1995:246–250).

7. Naimark (1983:101) mistakenly attributes the article to Bogoraz. These issues of the People’s Will newsletter were later republished in a volume edited by Bazilevskii (1905).

8. Years later Krol’ reminisced that at the Ekaterinoslav meeting Shternberg advocated transforming the People’s Will into a mass party that would bring together the intelligentsia and the working people (1929:228).

9. Shternberg was a heavy smoker all of his life.

10. Unlike his prison notebooks, most of his literary works composed in prison did not survive.

11. A Sakhalin exile reminisced that Shternberg “began his conversation with strong stuttering and twitching of the face, but using willpower eventually overcame this handicap; he spoke smoothly, using a bookish language . . . and a great deal of foreign words” (Ellinskii 1927, pt. 1:23).

12. Shternberg wrote a highly emotional tribute to Gausman and Kogan-Bernshtein for a volume of essays commemorating the thirty-fifth anniversary of the “Iakutsk tragedy” (1925a, 1925b).

13. The best English-language study of Populist social thought, which serves as the basis of much of my own discussion, is by Vucinich (1970, 1976). I also rely on the work of the Russian scholar V. Malinin (1972).

14. Soon after his arrival on Sakhalin, he wrote to Mikhailovskii on behalf of the island’s entire colony of political exiles. Expressing his admiration for the addressee, Shternberg asked him to send a free copy of his entire collected works for the benefit of the exiles (Archive of the Institute of Russian Literature, St. Petersburg, Pushkinskii Dom, f. 181 [Mikhailovskii Collection], op. 1, ed. khr. 784).

15. Several Soviet biographers of Shternberg argue that he read Engels’ *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* in prison on the mainland (see Al’kor in Shternberg 1933a:xiii); however, my own research indicates that this occurred when he was already on Sakhalin (see chapter 2).

16. The Russian term *pervobytnyi*, used by Shternberg and others to describe tribal societies, is less loaded than the English term *primitive*.

17. At the same time, he argued that given favorable circumstances these “primitive” societies could have been elevated to the level of the “civilized” conquerors.

18. Shternberg also spend a good deal of time translating Milton’s *Paradise Lost* from English into Russian.

19. This passage comes from Bogoraz’s unpublished autobiography located in his archive at the St. Petersburg branch of the Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences. A shorter version of it was published in 1927 (Bogoraz 1989). To be fair to Bogoraz, in the same autobiography he stated that he never stopped considering himself a Jew as well as a Russian (Bogoraz 1989).

20. Even in his early years as a high school student, Shternberg contributed to a Russian-language Jewish weekly, *Russkii Evrei* (Russian Jew), published in St. Petersburg.

2. Sakhalin

1. This description of Sakhalin’s geography and history is based mainly on Stephan (1971), with additional information derived from Forsyth (1992), Grant (1995), and several reference works.

2. Prior to the establishment of the Soviet regime, the Nivkh were known as the Gilyak.

3. Following the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–5, the southern half of Sakhalin was turned over to Japan, leading to the departure of a large portion of its Russian population. In the wake of the Russian Revolution of 1904–6, the Sakhalin penal system was abolished.

4. This summary is based on Taksami (1975) and Grant (1995). The main ethnographic and ethnohistorical works on the Nivkh are by Kreinovich (1973), Taksami (1967, 1975), and Smoliak (1975, 1984); for an English-language overview of their traditional culture see Black (1973).

5. He might have been slightly exaggerating his own cheery mood and his positive impressions of Sakhalin so as to calm his family’s fears.

6. While Ploskii, the author of the memoir where this information can be found, might have exaggerated Shternberg’s lack of compassion for the accused, Shternberg’s conduct in this case fits well with his personality and worldview.

7. Rakhil’ Fel’dberg was the only other correspondent besides Krol’ with whom he shared his deepest feelings and frustrations. She grew up in Zhitomir and was a close friend of both Krol’ and Shternberg. In the mid-1880s the three of them spent a lot of time together in Odessa. It is possible that during this period Rakhil’ and Lev had a romantic relationship or were at least intimate friends. However, at some point during his Sakhalin exile, she married Ludwik Krzywicki (1859–1941), a leading Polish social scientist and Marxist who later corresponded with Shternberg and whose work interested Shternberg (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/155). In their letters Fel’dberg and Shternberg express strongly affectionate but not romantic feelings. Unfortunately only a dozen of them survived, and they cover only the last few years of his exile. The index of the Shternberg collection of the Academy of Sciences Archive incorrectly identifies Rakhil’ Feld’berg as “Rakhil’ Shternberg” (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/338) (Kan 2007).

8. Publishers sent a number of liberal periodicals to the Sakhalin exiles free of charge (Gagen-Torn 1975:38).

9. Shternberg's letters to Krol' indicate that throughout his Sakhalin years he prayed occasionally for the well being of his family and friends and continued to believe in God and life after death (e.g., Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/201:4).

10. Shternberg's Soviet biographer believes the great Russian writer Anton Chekhov was on his way to Aleksandrovsk at that time and was likely to be briefed by Shternberg on the evils of the penal system, providing another reason for his removal to Viakhtu (Gagen-Torn 1975:28–30; cf. Grant 1999:XXXII).

11. In fact, his diary indicates that he had been able to bring a lot of books and magazines with him. According to his wife, he read a great deal of Kant during that winter (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/140:303). Incidentally, during his 1883–84 Baffin Island research Franz Boas also read Kant. Shternberg probably would have shared the sentiments that Boas expressed in his letter-diary: "I have a copy of Kant with me, which I am studying, so that I shall not be so completely uneducated when I return. Life here really makes one dull and stupid (only at times however . . .)" (Cole 1983:29).

12. Shternberg (1999:4–5) mentioned that he did not gain access to the main ethnological and linguistic studies on the Nivkh until after his return to mainland Russia (see Shrenk 1883–1903; Grube in Shrenk 1892).

13. On Pilsudski see Mirolubov 1901:84–89; Pilsudski 1998; and Kan 2005. See Pilsudskii 1996 for most of the letters sent by Pilsudski to Shternberg from 1893 to 1917.

14. Kononovich, the island's top administrator, and Shternberg eventually developed a friendly relationship. It was probably he who allowed the exiled troublemaker to spend a month in Aleksandrovsk in the summer of 1890 and return there for the Christmas holidays (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/2:10). Upon his retirement from Sakhalin in 1893, Kononovich settled in Shternberg's hometown of Zhitomir and corresponded with him until 1917 (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/149).

15. Once again, Chekhov's celebrated recent visit might have had something to do with the governor's decision; the Russian writer was publishing a great deal of statistical data on the island, much of it previously unknown to its administration (Gagen-Torn 1975:51; cf. Chekhov 1967).

16. Obon had already served as an interpreter for another Russian explorer, Petr Surunenko, a local physician who collected ethnographic and zoological materials in the 1880s.

17. In addition to the Nivkh, he encountered and interviewed a few Uil'ta, although did not seem to have included them in his census.

18. We are fortunate to have at our disposal Shternberg's rather detailed diary of his journey (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/3:80–101) as well as a typescript copy of most of that text (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/190). Additional information on the winter 1891 journey can be found in his letters to Krol'.

19. The staff of small Russian posts he visited also treated him as a government official. As Shternberg noted, they did not even have to see his papers because he spoke like a noble man (*barin*) (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/3:90).

20. Thus in one native community, the man appointed by Shternberg to be the *starosta* complained to him that he was poor (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/190:48).

21. See Shternberg's description of traditional and contemporary Nivkh law in his 1893 essay. Bruce Grant (personal communication, 2003) speculates that this system of judges might have been based on an earlier, indigenous one.

22. Sakhalin natives, like most other indigenous inhabitants of Siberia (*inorodsty*) were not subject to the draft.

23. The following passage from Shternberg's ethnographic publication based on the winter 1891 expedition sums up his positive experience interviewing the Nivkh: "If you begin a conversation with one of them about their life, customs, etc., the entire group inhabiting the dwelling will surround you. The adults would listen to you with a serious expression and would respond to your questions. The children's eyes would be fixed upon you. All of the eyes would be sparkling with their wisdom and interest. All you have to do is earn their trust and they would answer seriously and conscientiously. And then you will have a positive feeling toward these barbarians" (Shternberg 1893:18).

24. On this and subsequent expeditions Shternberg noted that the natives were particularly impressed with his writing, a mysterious activity that occupied a lot of his time (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/3:39a–40).

25. *Tsel'nyi* (feminine *tsel'na*, meaning "wholesome") was Shternberg's favorite term for describing the natives. It suggests that the civilized people's personalities were not wholesome, like those of the "barbarians," but fractured.

26. Shternberg's use of the term *barbarian* to refer to the Sakhalin natives is not as pejorative as it might sound; I am almost certain that it reflected his evolutionist thinking. Having just read Engels, who, following Morgan, divided all societies into three stages, Shternberg assigned the Nivkh and the other Sakhalin natives to the intermediary state of "barbarism," located above "savagery" but below "civilization" (see Engels 1972).

27. Shternberg's diary mentions repeatedly that most Nivkh women tended to act in a shy manner in his presence.

28. Thus Shternberg's ethnography based on this expedition describes a Nivkh sacrifice to the spirit of the land that he observed when one of his temporary traveling companions made a offering to Cape Maria, believed by the Nivkh to be the "Head of the Earth" (1893:22).

29. This seven-page report was entitled "Brief Information on the Native Villages Located between Aleksandrovsk and Cape Maria. Prepared on the Basis of a Detailed Census of the Population" (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/145).

30. Shternberg's biographers have not acknowledged the key role that Sakhalin's chief administrator played in helping Shternberg become an anthropologist. However, a letter from the OLEAE's secretary, Nikolai Ianchuk, to Shternberg, dated June 18, 1894, acknowledges this fact and mentions that Kononovich had been corresponding with the society for quite some time (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/353:1).

31. This essay was accompanied by a note stating that it had been prepared upon Kononovich's request by one of the exiles on the basis of his personal observations. The exile's name was not mentioned.

32. For an earlier discussion of this essay see Kan 2000, 2001a.
33. For a much more detailed and thorough discussion of the Nivkh bear festival see Shrenk 1883–1903:64–103; Kreinovich 1973, 1977, 1982; and Black 1973:93–102.
34. See chapter 3 for a discussion of the degree of historical accuracy in Shternberg’s portrayal of the Nivkh clan, which appeared in his 1904 monograph *The Gilyak*.
35. The last comment indicates that Shternberg had no or very few opportunities to witness a shaman’s performance or discuss shamanism with the Nivkh during his first expedition.
36. It is interesting that the last sentence of this passage does not appear in the version of the essay published in the *Tiuremnyi Vestnik* (Prison news).
37. The notion that the native inhabitants of the more isolated parts of Sakhalin were cannibals seems to have been quite pervasive. After Shternberg had left for his summer 1891 expedition and had not been heard from for several days, rumors started to circulate that he had been eaten by the natives (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/7:41).
38. In addition to the original diary of the summer 1891 expedition (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/3:1–107) there also exists a typewritten one (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/190:91–184). The latter was recently published (with a commentary) by Roon and Prokof’ev (2001:211–216); Shternberg 2001a.
39. Being older than and socially superior to his three young companions, Shternberg addressed them as “his children”; they in turn called him their “father.” Botanist Andrei Krasnov, who traveled with Shternberg in the southern part of Sakhalin in 1892, wrote that the latter “came to love the Gilyaks like children” (1894:396).
40. Parts of Shternberg’s diary are written like literary sketches and offer vivid portraits of the various people he encountered along the way.
41. His young companions would often describe Shternberg to their hosts as a “rich man” and a “good man.”
42. Shternberg refused to issue such a document, telling the man he had no right to do so. In his diary he wrote that such practices had to be prohibited because they could lead to abuse by the Russian officials and the Gilyak themselves (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/3:22).
43. Shternberg continued to suffer from loneliness—it seems that he had a fair number of acquaintances but no real close friends (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/201:8–15).
44. His September 21, 1893, letter to Krol’ (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/201:8–15) mentions that lately he had been reading a book on the history of the “Anglo-Saxon race,” some work by the French socialist Louis Blanc, and Ernest Renan’s *The Life of Jesus*. He was also reading an article by Karl Kautsky that attacked Morgan’s theory of the evolution of marriage and the family. Shternberg, of course, defended Morgan, although he agreed with Kautsky that Morgan might have been wrong in his explanation of the “rise of the Punalua family” (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/157:43a).
45. Not knowing any Ainu, Shternberg relied on a Nivkh man who spoke their language.

46. Shternberg prepared a twelve-page-long annotation for the artifacts he had collected (see Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/8/II:1–12a).

47. Shternberg believed that he found “traces of matrilineality” among the Ainu (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/4/9:129) (see Shternberg 1905, 1929).

48. In one Ainu village the local *starosta* asked him to write a request to the island authorities to administer a smallpox vaccination to his people (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/195:223).

49. For a handwritten copy of this report see Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/7:1–35. In addition Shternberg wrote a long report for the authorities entitled “The Economic Conditions of Western Sakhalin,” which was never published (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/8/13:1–15).

50. *Sakhalinskii Kalendar'* was Sakhalin's first periodical publication, produced in the mid-1890s. Each issue consisted of two parts: the first contained detailed statistical information on the island and other official business, while the second featured various “materials on the conditions of the island,” including its history, native inhabitants, and economic conditions. (Pilsudski 1996:306).

51. See a document printed in *Vestnik Sakhalinskogo Muzeia*, 1996, no. 3:7–10.

52. I would like to thank Vladislav Latyshev for bringing this document to my attention.

53. According to Shternberg's wife, he intended to have his collection of Uil'ta and Ainu artifacts go to the OLEAE. It was first sent, however, to the Columbian World Exposition in Chicago, along with his detailed annotation. Unfortunately, because of some misunderstanding it was sold to agents of foreign museums at the end of the exposition (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/4/9:132).

54. See Pilsudski's letters to Shternberg in Pilsudski 1996.

55. Shternberg was truly flattered that a positive review and detailed summary of his essay appeared in the leading French anthropological journal *l'Anthropologie* a year after its publication in Russia (Volkov 1894). Shternberg continued to exchange letters with the OLEAE's secretary, Nikolai Ianchuk, who sent him several ethnographic publications, including questionnaires (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/353:3–5).

56. It is also possible that at least some of the people who produced and wrote for the newspaper *Vladivostok* knew who “Verus” was.

57. Among Shternberg's influential local friends was Mikhail Sibirtsev, one of the editors of the Khabarovsk newspaper *Vostochnyi Vestnik* (Eastern news). According to his and his wife's letters to Shternberg, dated June 11 and 12, 1896, Sibirtsev and Shternberg had been communicating with two high officials about the possibility of extending the latter's stay on the mainland for the purpose of continuing his ethnographic research. These two officials were Nikolai Grodekov, the assistant to the governor-general of the Amur military district and the first president of the Amur Region's Division of the Russian Geographical Society, and Vladimir Merkazin, the military governor of Sakhalin. Both of them expressed a high opinion of Shternberg and approved an extension of his stay in the Amur Region (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/267:1–2).

58. According to Sarra Ratner-Shternberg (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/4/9:136), her husband became *Vladivostok's* de facto editor.

59. See Turaev (2001) for the most recent summary of Oroch ethnography.
60. He ended up collecting nine hundred objects, with only a small portion of the collection being eventually donated to the Vladivostok Museum of the Society for the Study of the Amur Region (Shternberg 1900a:338).
61. See *Vladivostok* no. 47:11–14; no. 48:11–12; no. 50:9–11; and no. 51:8–51. One ought to keep in mind that the summary of Shternberg's oral presentation was written by someone else.
62. Shternberg visited Protodiakonov at his home in Blagoveshchensk in 1896 (see *Vladivostok*, 1896, no. 10:12). See also Shternberg 1933a:451–477.
63. While supported by at least one prominent Oroch ethnographer (Lopatin 1925), Shternberg's hypothesis is no longer accepted by scholars (Turaev 2001:12–13). Smoliak, for example, thinks that Shternberg strongly exaggerated the importance of reindeer herding as the occupation of the ancestors of the late-nineteenth-century Oroch (1975:138–139).
64. This tendency leads him to some erroneous conclusions about the early history of the Oroch (see Smoliak 1975:138–139).
65. While discussing Oroch kinship nomenclature, Shternberg strongly encouraged all ethnographers to pay serious attention to kinship terms, pointing out that even the terms used by the Russians were very interesting (1933a:18).
66. According to Shternberg, the Nivkh viewed a man's sexual relations with his sister's daughter of any degree of relatedness as incest, while the Oroch allowed it (1933a:16–17).
67. The Oroch essay mentions for the first time the existence of a three-clan system of marriage among the Nivkh in which ego's clan's wife-givers and wife-takers came from different clans (1933a:17; see chapter 4).
68. Shternberg might have been correct, since *Enduri* was the term used by Russian missionaries to translate the word *god* into Oroch. Moreover, a recent work on Oroch culture mentions that they usually described this being as an old man with a long gray beard (i.e., resembling the biblical God). However, the same study does not speculate on whether this is an indigenous concept or a foreign import (Turaev 2001:79).
69. According to Bogoraz's manuscript, Shternberg also met with a number of local government officials in order to convey his views on various social and economic issues in the region (Bogoraz Collection, SPFA RAN, 250/1/211:35). Sarra Ratner-Shternberg concurs with Bogoraz, adding that during his stay in the Amur region Shternberg became its "*spiritus movens*" (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/4/9:136).
70. In the summer of 1896 the government actually adopted the economic policy he advocated (*Vladivostok*, 1896, no. 26:5–7).
71. The Molokans were a religious sect established in the second half of the eighteenth century by the peasants of the Tambov Province. Its followers criticized the official Russian Church and considered the Bible, which they interpreted in a peculiar fashion, the only source of truth.
72. Shternberg contrasted favorably the hardworking, virtuous, and theologically minded Molokans with the ignorant and hard-drinking frontier Cossacks (*Vladivostok*, 1896, no. 44: 13–14).

73. In one article he used the British system of training its colonial bureaucrats as a model for the training of local government officials who would have a command of the local Eastern languages (*Vladivostok*, 1896, 23: 4–5).

74. See Shternberg's article in *Vladivostok*, cited in Bogoraz's manuscript (Bogoraz Collection, SPFA RAN, 250/1/211:47–49); cf. Shternberg's article in *Priamurskie Vedomosti*, cited in Ratner-Shternberg's manuscript (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/4/9:138). According to Shternberg's widow, who tended to exaggerate his contributions (scholarly and otherwise), his advocacy played a key role in the establishment of the Oriental Institute (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/4/9:138).

75. Shternberg's wife also stated that as an anthropologist and a jurist by training Shternberg was opposed to Cesare Lombroso's theory, fashionable in its time, that certain individuals were born criminals as a kind of atavistic biological throwback to a primitive stage of human evolution and that criminals could be identified by certain physical characteristics (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/4/9:230).

76. For an earlier version of my discussion of Shternberg's Sakhalin fiction see Kan 2004b.

77. Because of censorship Shternberg did not indicate why his main character was sent to Sakhalin. His readers, however, undoubtedly understood that this young intellectual could only have ended up on the island prison and especially at this isolated place out of punishment for a crime, and most likely a political rather than a common one.

78. Several episodes of this story are strongly reminiscent of the ones Shternberg described in his summer 1891 travel diary, while the native storyteller's narrative itself appears in his field notebooks, published posthumously, and is attributed to Obon (1933a:341–342).

79. *Tylgund* is a particular narrative genre that featured “supernatural” events and characters that the Nivkh considered to be true (see Shternberg 1908a:xiv–xv).

80. The irony of this episode seems to be lost on Shternberg—here is a Russian merchant engaged in an activity that is more reminiscent of a “survival of group marriage” than the native practices recorded by the ethnographer.

81. The Russian word *otverzhennye*, used by Shternberg for the story's title, is the same one that the Russian translator chose for the title of Victor Hugo's novel *Les Misérables*, which was very popular in Russia at that time.

82. See Sibirtsev's letter to him dated June 2, 1896 (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/267:1–1a).

83. Shternberg was not the only political convict and exile on Sakhalin who did not benefit from the amnesty. His friend and colleague Bronislaw Pilsudski, who had been sentenced to a fifteen-year term of forced labor (later replaced by exile) for allegedly participating in a plot to assassinate Tsar Alexander III, was removed from the list of convicts eligible for the amnesty.

84. Cf. Shternberg's sympathetic portrayal of the devout members of several Christian sects as well as his wishful comment that some day humankind might follow a single religion (*Vladivostok*, 1896, no. 16:13).

85. Anuchin sent several of his students to study with Ratzel.

86. One major exception was the fieldwork of Karl von den Steinen, who spent several years among the Brazilian Indians in the late 1880s (1894).

3. Beginning a Professional Career in the Capital

1. Radlov himself was a member of the Academy of Sciences, which had a rule that the head of one of its museums had to be an academician himself.

2. The head of the Geographic Society's Ethnography Division, Lamanskii, did not do anything in that area except write a letter to Shternberg (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/157:119–120).

3. Zaleman served as the head of the Asiatic Museum for thirty years and as a *privat-docent* of the Faculty of Oriental Languages for forty years.

4. Wilhelm Grube was a German Sinologist who had worked in St. Petersburg and had published a brief analysis of the Nivkh language in 1892 using Shrenk's data (see Grube 1892). Zaleman had also facilitated the publication of Grube's work.

5. Shternberg's frustration with his life "in the god-forsaken isolation" of Zhitomir is clearly palpable in his (undated) letter to Klements, whom he also begged to help him find work in St. Petersburg (Archive of the Orientalists, Institute of Oriental Studies, St. Petersburg, 28/2/385:1–3).

6. According to Sarra Ratner-Shternberg (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/4/9:143–144), Jan Baudouin de Courtenay later told her husband that the fact that he had undertaken a study of the Nivkh language without any previous training in linguistics might have actually helped him to arrive at his own, totally independent and penetrating analysis of its complex phonetics, morphology, and syntax.

7. Using his access to the imperial family through Grand Duke Konstantin Konstantinovich, who served as the MAE patron, Radlov finally obtained permission for Shternberg to visit St. Petersburg for a rather extensive period of time and then settle there for six months with a possibility of the permit's renewal.

8. According to the academician Vasilii Bartol'd, Zaleman had a real talent for gaining a good understanding of the grammar of a new language after only a few conversations with the person who had studied it in the field. Those who had worked with him acknowledged that his assistance helped improve their texts a great deal (Bartol'd 1977:616).

9. Women in tsarist Russia were not allowed to study at universities. The Bestuzhev Courses, where many of the St. Petersburg University faculty members taught, was the most prestigious institution of higher learning for women.

10. Klements encouraged Shternberg to join him and work at the new museum of Alexander III, but Shternberg refused. He felt that Klements's departure from the MAE showed a lack of gratitude to Radlov, who had made a great effort to hire Klements, a former exiled revolutionary. In addition, Shternberg did not wish to be employed by a museum named after a tsar who had executed and jailed so many of his comrades (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/4/9:152).

11. Shternberg's hard work at the museum was rewarded by a series of titles given to him in his capacity as a government employee: in 1903 he became a *nadvornyi sovetnik* (German *Hofrat*), in 1905 a *kollezhskii sovetnik*, and in 1908 a *statskii sovetnik*. Thus the

former exile (!) advanced from the seventh to the fifth rank of the imperial bureaucracy, which held a total of fourteen ranks. In 1907 he was awarded the Order of St. Anne of the third degree, and in 1910 he was appointed as the assistant to the director and awarded an Order of St. Stanislav of the second degree (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/156:31, 282/1/103:6–7).

12. *Severnyi Kur'er* contributors included liberal and leftists of all stripes, from Maxim Kovalevskii, a prominent sociologist and one of the leaders of the Constitutional Democrats (Russia's leading liberal party), to Mikhail Tugan-Baranovskii (a Marxist economist) and Shternberg's old friend Moisei Krol'. *Syn Otechestva* was dominated by Liberal Populists like Aleksei Peshekhonov and Nikolai Annenskii who also wrote for the *Russkoe Bogatstvo* as well as by prominent liberals like Iosif Gessen.

13. Although Sarra Ratner-Shternberg did not have a regular job until 1910, when she was hired by the MAE as her husband's assistant in the North American and Siberian departments, she kept herself very busy in St. Petersburg. Besides raising her son and helping her husband in his research and translations, she served as a member of the Cultural-Educational Commission of the Society for the Spreading of Education among the Jews and taught at the evening school for female laborers affiliated with the society. According to her curriculum vitae, in the early 1900s she published a long article on the Jewish artisans and agricultural workers of the northwestern region of Russia (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/4/17).

14. Liberal Populists shared many of the ideas of the radical revolutionary Populists but did not advocate an overthrow of the tsarist government and other forms of revolutionary violence (Malinin 1991:215–231). Shternberg also seems to have abandoned his belief in terrorism as a major weapon to fight against tsarism (see Ellinskii 1927, pt. 1:76).

15. In 1922 Shternberg contributed an interesting memoir about Korolenko to a volume of essays memorializing the recently deceased writer (Petrishchev 1922).

16. This encyclopedia was the product of an agreement between Brockhaus, the publisher of the leading German encyclopedia, and Efron, a St. Petersburg publishing house. The publication of the Russian version of the encyclopedia began in 1890, and the project attracted many of the country's prominent liberal academics.

17. In his discussion of the origin of the Nivkh, Shternberg drew on linguistic, archaeological, and ethnographic data to argue that the Nivkh were relative newcomers to the island. While his data has long been superseded, his methodology was certainly innovative for its time. Another important conclusion of the 1904 monograph was that "race" or "ethnicity" did not always equal language or culture. Shternberg cited his own data to show that many of the modern-day Nivkh clans had numerous non-Nivkh members that had been adopted into them. As he put it, "the body of the Gilyak tribe has died forever but its spirit is alive; it is alive in its language . . . and it is alive and well in their unique customs and institutions which have survived, like their language, all of the vicissitudes of the physical [biological] changes (Shternberg 1933b:21).

18. In fact, later ethnographers and particularly Anna Smoliak (1975), who combined extensive ethnographic research among the Gilayk and other native peoples of

the lower Amur with systematic archival research, argued that the Gilyaks' intermarriage with other indigenous and exogenous ethnic groups influenced the character of many of their settlements, making close adherence to the marriage rules described by Shternberg very difficult (cf. Taksami 1975).

19. Cf., for example, Shternberg's description of the Gilyak clan as being "a striking combination of collective solidarity and individual freedom" (1933a:59).

20. Speaking of the British structural-functionalists, it is worth pointing out that their leader, A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, had been strongly influenced not only by Durkheim but by the Russian anarchist Piotr Kropotkin.

21. Shternberg's 1908 work can be compared to such monumental publications by Boas as *Tsimshian Mythology* (1916) and *Kwakiutl Culture as Reflected in Mythology* (1935).

22. The objects were catalogued first according to large geographical areas, then according to specific "cultural-ethnic groups," and finally within each of these subgroups according to "their function within the culture" (e.g., houses, clothing, household objects, decorations, art, religious cult, etc.) (Shternberg 1907a; Staniukovich 1964).

23. For example, a model of a simple eighteenth-century Itelmen dwelling was exhibited next to a model of a modern-day dwelling from the same culture, Yakut weapons were arranged in a set from the more simple to the more complex, etc. (Staniukovich 1964, 1978).

24. The exhibit guide (1904) for visitors was quite detailed and scholarly, reflecting Radlov's and Shternberg's scientific approach to ethnographic exhibitions. Each of its sections dealt with a major subdivision of the exhibit and opened with a sketch that provided brief information on the local geography as well as the history and ethnography of the tribes, groups of tribes, and specific peoples displayed in this particular area. The description of the collection itself included many brief comments and explanations, supplemented with references to the works of the ethnographers who had studied the peoples being described and had collected the objects on display.

25. It should be pointed out that as an evolutionist Smirnov also advocated the establishment of a separate department within the new museum where artifacts from around the world would be used to illustrate the evolution of human culture in general. In this respect his views closely paralleled those of Shternberg. For more on Smirnov see Geraci (2000, 2001:171–176).

26. Unlike the MAE, whose budget came from the Ministry of Finance via the Academy of Sciences and which therefore had to compete with several academic natural science museums, the Russian Museum was generously supported by the Ministry of the Imperial Court. Since St. Petersburg already had one ethnographic museum, the issue of the nature of the new one was of vital interest to Radlov and his MAE colleagues. In fact, it appears that some of the participants in the debate as well as high officials overseeing the MAE considered closing the MAE altogether (see Ratner-Shternberg 1928:54–55; see also Radlov's letters to Shternberg, Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/244).

27. A smart and experienced politician, Radlov also named his museum after Peter the Great knowing that such a museum would be difficult for the government to eliminate.

28. Of course, this was only an ideal. In reality the MAE was occasionally forced to rely on poorly prepared collectors or accept gifts from wealthy amateur donors whose collections came without good documentation. Since the MAE's funds rarely permitted large-scale expeditions abroad, Shternberg often had his contacts among foreign scholars and museum curators collect for the MAE or exchange their duplicates for some unique items owned by his own museum. In this manner the MAE acquired substantial collections from the Americas, Oceania, and Southeast Asia.

29. The paradox of Shternberg's vision was that he never considered how an evolutionary-driven exhibit would depict the development of the two principal aspects of human culture—social organization and religion—that he had always been most interested in and had written the most about. It was only in the mid-1920s, when his evolutionist ideas found strong support among the new Soviet ideologues, that he was able to establish a “department of typology” within the MAE and produce his first exhibit based on evolutionary theory. Not surprisingly, it dealt with a rather simple topic: “The Evolution of the Stick” (see chapter 8 and conclusion).

30. As his wife reminisced years later, “In the course of just a few hours of observation and questionings, he managed to gather numerous data on primitive animism. . . . He also discovered traces of totemism in Brittany by observing how local women marked their geographic identification by the style of head covering they wore and how they used names of animals and fish to refer to the different styles” (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/140:319).

31. Boas and Radlov met at several international gatherings of linguistics; they also had a number of mutual colleagues, especially in Germany.

32. Bogoraz's paper dealt with shamanism among the Chukchis, while Iokhel'son's addressed the issue of the Asiatic and American elements in Koryak mythology (see *Proceedings of the 1904 International Congress of Americanists*).

4. Scholarship and Activism during the 1905 Revolution

1. My discussion of the Neopopulists and the Party of Socialist Revolutionaries (PSR) draws primarily on the following sources: Melancon 1999; Gorodnitskii 1998; and Shelokhaev et. al. 1996:433–452.

2. Some prominent historians argue that terror occupied the central plank of the SR program (Pipes 1990:147); see also Geifman 1993 and Gorodnitskii 1998.

3. On the liberal movement see Shatsillo 1985 and Stockdale 1999.

4. The main English-language works on the revolutionary events of 1904–7 are the two monographs by Ascher (1988, 1992).

5. According to Vladimir Zenzinov, a prominent SR, the staff of *Syn Otechestva* consisted of SRs and persons close to the SRs. The paper's highly critical stance toward the entire government, including the tsar, made it very popular (1953:205).

6. While there is no direct evidence that Shternberg participated in this meeting, it is quite conceivable that he was there. After all most of the participants were his colleagues from the *Russkoe Bogatstvo* and *Syn Otechestva* circle.

7. According to Osipovich (1924:90), the meeting where this manifesto was written took place in Vyborg, the same Finnish town where many of the liberal and left-

leaning delegates of the Duma gathered in mid-July 1906 to draft their own appeal to the Russian people. This “Vyborg Manifesto” was more moderate in its tone than the one Shternberg worked on. He and several other socialists gathered at the summer home of an old Populist and member of the PSR’s Central Committee, Mark Natanson, to draft their manifesto. Among the participants were Bogoraz and several SR-leaning members of the Trudoviki (Laborites) faction of the Duma (see Kolesnichenko 1985; Tiutiukin 1991).

8. According to Briullova-Shaskol’skaia, her husband, Piotr Shaskol’skii (1882–1918), a historian and a moderate socialist close to the SRs, was also very fond of Shternberg, with whom he participated in some political undertakings (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/110:34a).

9. Iosif Gessen, a leader of the Kadets who had known Shternberg in the early 1880s as a radical student leader, reminisced that after Sakhalin, the former exile “had completely moved away from revolutionary activities, turning instead to Jewish causes” (1937:50).

10. According to Sarra Ratner-Shternberg, during the 1905 Revolution her husband was already distancing himself from the more radical views of the PSR leaders, Chernov and Boris Savinkov (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/116:236).

11. It is not entirely clear whether Shternberg continued to advocate the use of terrorism in the revolutionary struggle. On the one hand, his wife, in 1928, reminisced that in 1905 he disagreed on this issue with the leaders of the SR Party, who strongly supported terrorism (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/116:236). On the other hand, in a conversation with a friend in 1904, he did express his hope that Viacheslav Pleve, the head of the tsar’s police, would be assassinated for his support of anti-Semitic pogroms and violence against the workers and the peasants (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/116:220). He also felt that the execution of Russia’s last tsar was a just punishment for the deaths of his fellow populists and other revolutionaries (1925a, 1925b).

12. Lev Aizenberg, a lawyer who knew Shternberg well from their participation in the defense of persecuted Jews, reminisced that in 1904 Shternberg told him, “You and I fight with our word, our pen; others have chosen more radical methods. But all of us are marching toward the same goal” (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/116:220a).

13. Unfortunately I was unable to locate a copy of this article.

14. The other two authors in this collection were M. Ratner, an SR, and Iosif Gessen, a Kadet (Ratner 1906). According to El’iashevich (1999:422), Shternberg’s article was again reprinted in 1909 as a separate brochure and was quickly arrested by the censor.

15. The best and most detailed discussion of the Jewish liberals is a monograph by Gassenschmidt (1995). On the rise of the St. Petersburg Jewish intelligentsia see Nathans 2002.

16. Shternberg’s closest friend, Krol’, was among the leaders of the Union of the Attainment of Equal Rights (Gassenschmidt 1995:153n21).

17. Boas voted for the Socialist Party in 1918.

18. I would like to thank Tat’iana Roon for bringing this document to my attention.

19. Among these émigrés was Joseph Ratner, a cousin of Sarra Ratner-Shternberg (see his letters to her: Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/250 and 282/4/40).

20. Upon his return to Russia Shternberg continued corresponding with several politically active Russian-Jewish émigrés.

21. Shternberg wrote to his wife that the Russians knew very little about America and that even Bogoraz, who had spend a long period of time there and wrote novels about it, did not really understand the country (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/5/64:55).

22. Unfortunately, because most of the museum staff was on vacation he was unable to see the collection, which numbered 142 objects (VanStone 1985; Roon 2000:146).

23. In 1905–6 Bogoraz moved to the right of the mainstream SRs and, along with several prominent journalists from *Russkoe Bogatstvo*, in September 1906 became one of the founders of the People's Socialist (NS) Party, a small party of moderate Populists composed mostly of intelligentsia (Shelokhaev et. al. 1996:619–626; Sypchenko 1999).

24. The only Russian anthropologist to attend and give a paper at the Quebec meeting was Iokhel'son, who was staying in Europe during the 1905–7 revolution. In a September 4, 1906, letter to Iokhel'son, Boas begged him not to return to Russia where, in his words, “everything seems so uncertain” (Boas Papers, APS).

5. The Last Decade before the Storm

1. In the decade before the war the MAE's staff grew significantly. In 1912 an increase in its budget allowed it to hire new staff, including Shternberg's old colleague Vladimir Iokhel'son. Iokhel'son would work for the museum as a curator until 1922, when he left Russia (see chapter 7).

2. As Konrad reminisced years later, Frazer's *The Golden Bough* (frequently cited by Shternberg) became Nevskii's Bible (cited in Konrad 1996:116).

3. He wrote a series of reports about his 1911 visit to Sweden that were published in the Russian-language Jewish newspaper *Novyi Voskhod*. His visit was reported in a major Swedish newspaper, which interviewed him.

4. Shternberg published a report on the Vienna congress that gave a very enthusiastic evaluation of Boas's presentation on the results of the Jesup North Pacific Expedition (1908b).

5. For biographical data on Zhuravskii see Smolentsev 1979 and Teriukov 1993.

6. Radlov subsequently denied promising Zhuravskii that the Academy of Sciences would financially support his Pechora station (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/180:6).

7. Much of the information on the “Zhuravskii Affair” is found in two large files in the Shternberg archive (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/179 and 282/1/180); additional documents are located in the Manuscript Department of the Russian National Library (Sergei F. Platonov Collection, fond 585/1/856) and the Archive of the Russian Geographical Society (ARGO), St. Petersburg.

8. Although Zhuravskii does not allude to Radlov's German ancestry, it was undoubtedly important to him. Of course, it is highly ironic that Adler, Zhuravskii's ally at the MAE, was also German.

9. Zhuravskii expected Shternberg to attribute his hostility to anti-Semitism and tried to defend himself, but he only revealed his anti-Semitism: “I strongly believe that while it is not proper to accuse people of something only because they are Jews, it would be criminal to spare them only because they are Jews” (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/180:54).

10. Zhuravskii’s letter to Konstantin Romanov suggests that he did not know Aleksander was a Jew or that Shternberg, aware of his political views, had purposefully concealed this information from him (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/180:54).

11. Adler accused Shternberg of, among other things, mislabeling a Ket shaman’s outfit as a Dolgan one, thereby committing a serious professional mistake.

12. The commission, which consisted of six academicians, was presided over by Zaleman, its most senior member (MAE Collections, SPFA RAN, 142/1/43:4–4a).

13. For a discussion of Shternberg’s educational activities see Edel’shtein 1928; Ratner-Shternberg 1935; Staniukovich 1971; Gagen-Torn 1971, 1975; and documents in Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/4/9.

14. The school was officially registered as “Higher Courses in Biological, Pedagogical, and Social Sciences” (Wartenweiler 1999:154). It continued the tradition of the Russian School of Higher Education in the Social Sciences, organized by liberal émigré professors in Paris in 1901 and closed down by the French authorities in 1906. In addition to sociology, another suspect discipline not taught in Russian universities, the Paris school offered courses in philosophy, history, economics, history of religion, and cultural and physical anthropology. The future curator of the Russian museum, F. K. Volkov, taught its anthropology courses (Ermakovich 1997).

15. The Free School was closed in 1907 but continued to operate illegally for another five years. Several of Shternberg’s students at the school later became prominent scholars.

16. According to a printed announcement, on June 24–25, 1907, he gave lectures on “primitive religion” (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/195:415).

17. Vasilii Dokuchaev (1846–1903) was a prominent agronomist and geographer who in 1897–1900 organized a cycle of public lectures on geography and related subjects.

18. Adler taught field methods at this school.

19. Ironically, it was V. M. Ionov’s 1913 essay on the eagle in Yakut religion that served as a major source (and possibly an inspiration) for Shternberg’s presentation.

20. A detailed report on this gathering of Russia’s anthropologists was written by academician Vasilii Bartol’d and published in *Zhivaia Starina*, 1910, vol. 9, nos. 1–2:176–187).

21. In 1911 Miller was elected to the Academy of Sciences and thus was obligated to move to St. Petersburg, where he was elected to chair the Ethnography Division of the RGO. When he died a year later, Ol’denburg resumed his chairmanship.

22. In his critical comments on the lack of university training in ethnography, Shternberg pointed to Boas’s anthropology department at Columbia University as the leading graduate program in this field in the United States and the world. He also noted that even though most Western universities did not have separate departments of anthropology or graduate programs in the discipline, these universities offered courses in ethnography, physical anthropology, archaeology, and linguistics.

23. A good illustration of this tension is Anuchin's refusal to move to St. Petersburg after his election to the Academy of Sciences in the late 1890s (see Alymov 2004).

24. For a preliminary discussion of this topic see Kan 2000 and 2001a.

25. Boas expressed his strongest statement on the subject in a March 12, 1908, letter to Iokhel'son: "I should like to say once more that I had to take considerable financial obligations in order to insure the completion of the Publications of the Jesup Expedition and that I can meet these obligations only when the contributors furnish me promptly with material, for the reason that I am paid always after the completion of printed signatures. This is one of the reasons why I am constantly urging you and Mr. Bogoraz and Mr. Shternberg to send me material. Otherwise I should be only too glad to be relieved of the necessity of pushing the editorial work so much that I hardly get time for anything else" (Boas Papers, APS).

26. An English translation of Shternberg's monograph was deposited in the archive of the AMNH, where it was consulted by a number of prominent anthropologists (Kan 2001a).

27. Interestingly, in his manuscript Shternberg cites Rivers approvingly and ignores Kroeber's famous 1909 attack on Rivers's evolutionist interpretation of the classificatory system of relationships. It is not surprising that Rivers was fascinated by Shternberg's 1912 presentation at the London meeting of the ICA fascinating.

28. Lévi-Strauss characterized the manuscript as "a work of exceptional value and insight" (1969:292). In the 1950s Rodney Needham discovered the Shternberg manuscript and also cited it repeatedly in his *Structure and Sentiment* (1962) and *Rethinking Kinship and Marriage* (1972). He even considered preparing it for publication (Needham's letters to Harry Shapiro, Anthropology Archives, AMNH).

29. Several Western scholars attacked the group marriage hypothesis, and Maksimov subjected it to devastating criticism in a 1908 article. In it, Russia's leading anti-evolutionist ethnologist criticized Shternberg's interpretation of the evolution of Nivkh marriage (1997:49–87).

30. In addition to conducting interviews with the two Nanai shamans, Shternberg was able to observe their healing séances.

31. After Shternberg's death, some of his Nanai data appeared in a volume prepared by his widow and edited by his student Ian Al'kor (Koshkin) (Shternberg 1933a).

32. As Shternberg wrote to his wife, "I left the Gol'd feeling sad, since they are extremely interesting, while I had to leave them in the midst of my work. Nonetheless, I left them feeling satisfied, since I did acquire some interesting and valuable information from them" (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/361:76–77).

33. Shternberg's collection of Negidal artifacts was recently analyzed and evaluated by Khasanova (2000).

34. In contrast to Shternberg, his old Populist comrade and fellow ethnographer Bogoraz remained deeply involved in left-wing politics and journalism during the "reactionary era." He did, however, move a bit to the right by playing an active role in the work of the party of the People's Socialists (*Trudovaia narodno-sotsialisticheskaia* (NS) *partii*), established in the fall of 1906 by a group of liberal Narodniks who were more moderate

than the SRS but more socialist than the Kadets (Sypchenko 1999). In October 1910 Bogoraz, who had been free on bail since his 1905 arrest, was finally given a jail sentence. Responding to his and his wife's appeals (Boas Papers, APS), Boas had the American Anthropological Association pass a resolution on October 12, 1910, requesting that the Russian Minister of Justice allow Bogoraz to have access to all the materials he needed to continue his scholarly work and correspond freely with his colleagues abroad as well as his publisher (Boas Papers, APS). Thanks to Boas's efforts as well as those by several members of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Bogoraz's sentence was reduced and he was finally released in April 1911 (see 1910–11 letters to Boas by Vladimir and Sof'ia Bogoraz and Boas's letters to them, Boas Papers, APS) (Kan 2006).

35. "Seekers of God" (*Bogoiskateli*) was a term used to describe the followers of a religious-philosophical movement that arose in Russia in the 1890s and became quite popular among the intelligentsia (including many former leftists and liberals) after the defeat of the first revolution. It attacked Marxism and other leftist theories and called for a return to a "new Christianity," a mystical ideology that drew on the ideas of Fyodor Dostoevsky, Vladimir Solov'ev, and Henri Bergson. Many of the contributors to *Vekhi* were prominent *Bogoiskateli*.

36. Shternberg was not alone: this book provoked the wrath of numerous liberals and leftists, including the SRS who published an entire collection of essays of their own attacking *Vekhi* (Chernov 1910).

37. On the eve of the February Revolution, the activity of the "Great Orient" lodge came almost to a standstill, while a group of its prominent members constituted the core of the Provisional Government ministers and high officials (Serkov 1997:107–126).

38. A good example of how ingrained anti-Semitism was in the minds of even liberal Russian intelligentsia members is a letter of recommendation written in 1898 by the Vladivostok journalist Dmitrii Komorskii on behalf of Shternberg to Esper Ukh-tomskii, a prominent St. Petersburg publisher, poet, and public intellectual who was very interested in the Far East. In this letter, which Shternberg was supposed to deliver personally to the count, Komorskii praised the former exile's scholarly and journalistic contributions and asked Ukh-tomskii to offer him some job in his newspaper. Despite his liberalism and obvious admiration for Shternberg, Komorskii said the following about him: "Shternberg is a Jew by religion, but is a very honest man" (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/108:8).

39. As far as his residency in St. Petersburg, Shternberg must have finally obtained a permanent permit sometime after his appointment as a full-time MAE curator.

40. Shternberg's other short stories on Jewish subjects were *Kara bozh'ia* (God's punishment), *Posledniaia pros'ba* (The last request), and *Slepoi* (The blind man) (see Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/141 and 282/4/14).

41. In one of his undated letters to his mother-in-law, Shternberg informed her that he was planning to attend the services between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur when the penitential prayers are recited. He also told her that he missed his old Zhitomir synagogue, where the services seemed more moving than in the large St. Petersburg synagogue (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/5/69:109).

42. For more on the St. Petersburg Jewish liberals in 1907–17 see Pozner 1937; Orbach 1990; and especially Gassenschmidt 1995:45–142.

43. The ENG was not the only Jewish party established in 1906–7. Dubnov, the great Russian Jewish historian, organized his own Jewish People's Party (*Evereiskaia Narodnaia Partiia* or *Volkspartei*), which, while not being Zionist, advocated a more nationalist platform and disassociated itself from the ENG because of its attacks on the Zionists (Dubnov 1998; Rabinovitch 2005).

44. I am indebted to Simon Rabinovitch's unpublished recent paper "Remember Your Narodnost': The Origin and Development of Jewish Ethnography in Fin de Siècle Poland and Russia" for this idea (cf. Rabinovitch 2005).

45. He was much less critical of the mass immigration of Russia's Jews to the United States, which he viewed as inevitable (see his article in *Svoboda i Ravenstvo* entitled *K voprosu ob emigratsii* (On the issue of emigration).

46. It is noteworthy that as one of the most influential and respected figures in the Jewish liberation movement, Shternberg was among the three delegates sent by the Petrograd Jewish leadership to Korolenko to ask him to speak at the Beilis trial as a defender of the accused (Shternberg 1922a:72).

47. Shternberg was not present at that meeting; the issue of the blood libel was raised by his friend and fellow Populist Eduard Pekarskii, a Polish-born ethnographer of the Yakuts.

48. The precursor to this society was the Jewish Historical-Ethnographic Commission (affiliated with the Society for the Spread of Enlightenment among the Jews of Russia). Established by a group of St. Petersburg lawyers and historians, it was inspired and led by Dubnov (Dubnov 1998:163–64; Gassenschmidt 1995:7–8). The group conducted seminars, collected and published documents on the history of Russian Jews, and prepared bibliographic works on this subject.

49. The only other active member of the JHES and contributor to its journal who shared Shternberg's scholarly interests was Samuel Weissenberg (1867–1928). Educated in medicine in Russia and physical anthropology in Germany, he traveled widely throughout North Africa, the Middle East, and the Russian Empire in search of Jewish communities, conducting anthropometric measurements while also collecting ethnographic data and folklore. He published numerous articles and several monographs in German and Russian on the physical anthropology of the Jews as well as some works on Jewish cultural anthropology (Efron 1994:91–122; Mogil'ner 2004). Weissenberg corresponded with Shternberg (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/46:1).

50. For the most detailed discussion of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Jewish scholars' views on Jews as a race see Efron 1994; see also Patai and Wing (1975).

51. The main works on An-sky's life and scholarly contributions are Roskies 1992; Lukin 1995; Rabinovitch 2005; and a more recent volume edited by Safran and Zipperstein (2006).

52. A partial transcript of this meeting is located in the Central State Historical Archives in St. Petersburg, while a copy is now in the Central Archives for the History of

the Jewish People at Hebrew University in Jerusalem. I am grateful to Benjamin Lukin and Deborah Yallen for sharing with me their notes on these documents.

53. In 1912–13, thanks undoubtedly to Shternberg, An-sky's expedition was cosponsored by the MAE (*Otchiot o deiatel'nosti Impertarskoi Akademii Nauk za 1912 god*, 1912:146).

54. In 1911, upon Shternberg's recommendation, An-sky was elected a corresponding member of the Ethnography Division of the Russian Geographic Society, where he gave a lecture on Jewish folklore.

55. Between April and June 1910 *Novyi Voskhod* continued to be published under the name *Evreiskaia Nedelia*.

56. For example, in 1912–13 Shternberg received several letters from A. Berman, the head of the Jewish community of Nikolaevsk-on-Amur, who informed him of the restrictions imposed by local authorities on the Jews' movement throughout the region (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/24).

57. Shternberg found support for his view of the uniqueness of Judaism in the writing of his favorite evolutionary anthropologist, James Frazer, who admitted in the second edition of *The Golden Bough* that the Hebrew prophets had advocated a religious and moral reform that had no parallel in history (*Novyi Voskhod*, 1910, no. 6:6; cf. Robertson-Smith's *Religion of the Semites*).

6. The Years of Turmoil, 1914–17

1. The term *defensist* (*oboronets*) applied to those who supported the war effort.

2. Sarra Ratner-Shternberg was also active in Jewish relief work. In mid-1915 she was one of the St. Petersburg Jewish women who walked door-to-door soliciting donations for the Jewish victims of war (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/339:48–49).

3. This trip was sponsored by the Union of Cities, an all-Russian organization of municipal governments established in 1914 to assist the government in meeting the soldiers' material needs, helping the wounded and the refugees. It was a liberal organization of industrialists dominated by the Kadets. The ЕКОРО must have cosponsored Shternberg's trip.

4. Two years later he took part in a major gathering of Jewish liberals aligned with the KD but strongly dissatisfied with that party's weakening support for Jewish causes (M. I. Sheftel Collection, TSGIASP, 249/1/192).

5. The money for expanding the MAE had been promised by the tsar himself, who in March 1914 visited the museum and was very impressed with its collections (Ratner-Shternberg 1928:55).

6. In 1912, when the MAE began a major expansion, it organized several large and expensive expeditions that were supposed to take several years. Once the war began, it became much more expensive to continue these projects because of a sharp increase in prices and the decline of Russian currency abroad.

7. Despite this valuable advice from Shternberg and their amicable relations, Shirokogorov stopped acknowledging his mentor's influence on him after he left Russia. The various scholarly and political reasons for this falling out are discussed in chapter 8.

8. This special interest in the role of the individual in society reflects Shternberg's

1890s research on Nivkh folklore as well as new interests he was developing in the mid- to late 1910s in the course of his work on Siberian shamanism (see chapter 7).

9. The published version of the paper on the twin cult contained an appendix entitled “The Twins’ Grave Houses among the Gilyaks” (Shternberg 1936:105–108).

10. The Commission suggested that detailed information on the ethnic groups residing on both sides of Russia’s international borders would be particularly important during the postwar peace negotiations.

11. Volkov was a particularly prominent scholar who conducted research in cultural anthropology, archaeology, and physical anthropology and taught the last two subjects at St. Petersburg University.

12. It is worth noting that during the same period, the head of the Moscow anthropologists, Anuchin, finally agreed to establish one central national research institution for the study of Russia’s ethnography and geography after decades of resisting proposals to do so (Alymov 2004:13).

13. Shternberg also prepared a course on his favorite subject—“primitive religion.” While the text of the first few lectures in this course have survived, it is unclear if he had a chance to teach it in 1915–17 (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/14, 282/1/122:1–12; Shternberg 1936:1–17). This course, which had a definite evolutionist thrust, became the foundation of his very popular course under the same title that he offered at the Geography Institute during the Soviet era (see chapter 7).

14. While the government initially provided some modest funding for the Geographical Courses, in the 1916–17 academic year this funding ended because of the country’s deteriorating economic conditions (Edel’shtein 1930:32). Tuition fees also supported the Courses (Gagen-Torn 1975:168; Ratner-Shternberg 1935:138).

15. While Shternberg taught ethnography (cultural anthropology), Sergei Rudenko (1885–1969), a promising young anthropologist, offered instruction in archaeology and physical anthropology (*Nauka v Rossii*, 1920:54).

16. This link between geography and cultural anthropology existed in a number of other Russian institutions of higher learning that offered courses in “ethnography.” The most prominent among them was Moscow University, where Anuchin taught various courses in cultural and physical anthropology at the Department of Geography. Another was the Higher Natural Science Courses for Women in St. Petersburg (*Vysshie Zhenskii Estestvenno-nauchnye Kursy im. M. Lkhvitskoi*), where Mogilianskii taught between 1907 and 1918.

17. Because of the war and especially the upheavals that followed the February Revolution and the Bolshevik coup, Iokhel’son’s monograph was never published in Russian; it did finally appear in English in the United States, where he lived and worked after 1922 (see chapter 7) (Jochelson 1925).

18. In 1915 a special ethnography (anthropology) section was established within the JHES (*Novyi Voskhod*, January 17, 1916:3). Shternberg undoubtedly played a major role in this new development.

19. This summary is based on Hasegawa 1997, Pipes 1990, and a variety of other sources.

20. One of the Jewish organizations Shternberg became active in after the February Revolution was the old and respected Society for the Promotion of Artisan and Agricultural Labor among the Jews of Russia (ORT). In April 1917 he was elected a member of the commission set up to review the society's affairs (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/108:730).

21. Dubnov also hailed this decree as “an act of Jewish emancipation” and wrote in his diary, “The dream of my entire life and the goal of the four decades of suffering and struggle have has been fulfilled” (1998:379).

22. In mid-July 1917 Shternberg participated in a Petrograd conference convened to prepare an all-Russian Jewish congress.

23. In the aftermath of the February Revolution, the ENG was reenergized. It developed a new program and took an active part in the preparation of the National Jewish Congress (Aronson 1968:7).

24. Shternberg must have made a good impression on his audiences. Soon after his visit he received a letter from a junior officer who asked him to fulfill his promise to send him books on history and politics as well as the literature of the SR and SD parties, written in a simple language accessible to the soldiers (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/95:1–2). The officer also complained about the defeatist mood prevailing among the soldiers and the officers' fear of mass defections.

25. Among the well-known old Populists who signed this appeal was a major figure of the pre-SR Populist movement, German Lopatin (1845–1918), as well as Shternberg's old comrades Aleksandr Pribyliov (1857–1936) and Anna Pribyliova-Korba (1849–1939).

26. In every issue of *Volia Naroda* Shternberg's name appeared in its list of contributors (though not among the editors).

27. See, for example, his article “Where Is the True Counter-revolution,” published on June 18 (*Volia Naroda*, 1917, no. 43:2–3).

28. For a discussion of Jewish political life between February and October 1917 see Klier 1997 and Beizer 1999:27–49.

29. While he advocated autonomy for the country's non-Russian peoples, Shternberg opposed national separatism and was disappointed by Ukraine's secession.

30. See Shternberg's article “The Secret of Our Success” in *Evreiskaia Nedelia*, 1917, no. 52:1.

31. The PSR was also very active in the Soviet of National-Socialist Parties, which included several ethnic socialist parties.

32. Ivan Mainov was the chairman of the group, while the “grandmother of the Russian Revolution,” Ekaterina Breshko-Breshkovaskaia (1844–1934), a legendary old Narodnik and one of the founders of the PSR, was its the honorary chairwoman.

33. Despite this split, the Right SRs never formed their own party; once they were elected to the Constituent Assembly, many of them joined the main SR faction.

34. The decree on land was lifted bodily from the program of the PSR, replacing the old Bolshevik slogan of the transfer of land to the state (“nationalization”) with its transfer to the peasant communes for use (“socialization”) (Pipes 1990:499).

35. Most of the Jewish political parties, with the exception of those on the far left,

opposed the Bolshevik coup. Even the Bund, the main social-democratic Jewish party, was angered by it. Shternberg's friend and colleague Dubnov described the Bolsheviks as "the destroyers of Russia, the Jewish people, and the entire ethical culture of humankind" (1998:384). His characterization of the October coup was equally negative: "Like all of the supporters of the February revolution, which overthrew tsarism and established a democratic republic, I saw the October coup as counterrevolution from the left, as a crime against democracy" (1998:391) (cf. Beizer 1999:49–54).

36. For their support of the Bolshevik coup the Left SRs were expelled from the PSR in November and formed their own separate party.

37. The split within the PSR also explains why *Delo Naroda*, the organ of its Central Committee, was not as vocal in its protests against the Bolshevik raids on *Volia Naroda* as the latter would have liked (1917, no. 179:1). In late November, however, *Delo Naroda* also began to be subjected to such raids.

38. Although the PSR did win more votes in the Constituent Assembly elections than any other party, it lost to the Bolsheviks in Petrograd and Moscow.

39. Zimmerwald was a town in Switzerland where European antiwar socialists met in September 1915 and issued a manifesto that became the platform of the new left-wing socialist internationalist movement. Many of the Russian socialists present at the conference, including many from the center of the PSR, supported the manifesto (Melancon 1990). *Anarchists* was a term often applied to the Bolsheviks by their socialist and liberal foes. *Jacobins* was a reference to the radical leftist participants in the French Revolution.

40. On the Constituent Assembly see Radkey 1990 and Protasov 1997.

41. They were released after spending two months in prison.

42. The government claimed that the woman who fired on Lenin was an SR, but the PSR denied it. The entire affair might have been staged by the Bolshevik secret police in order to justify the Red Terror.

43. In 1908 Krol' had moved from the capital to Irkutsk, where he became one of the leaders of the local SRs. Like Shternberg, he belonged to the right wing of the PSR and was a "defensist" during World War I. In 1917 he participated in the third PSR congress in Moscow and was elected to the Constituent Assembly as an SR delegate from the Irkutsk region. He arrived in Petrograd the day after the dispersal of the parliament and met with Shternberg and other old friends, bringing them food. According to Krol's memoirs, Shternberg and his family were deeply disturbed by the Bolshevik coup and the events that followed it (Krol' 1941:190–193).

44. I have not been able to find evidence of any clandestine anti-Bolshevik activity by Shternberg. Of course, this does not rule out his participation in those SR organizations that continued to operate in Petrograd during the Civil War.

45. Among them was the Academy's permanent secretary, Sergei Ol'denburg, who became the justice minister.

46. Some academicians, including such luminaries as Ivan Pavlov, continued to oppose any compromise with the new regime (see Tolz 1997:123–140)

47. For a Soviet perspective on the history of higher education in the first year of

Bolshevik rule see Kupaigorodskaja 1984 and Chanbarisov 1988. For a more balanced presentation of that history by Western scholars see McAuley 1991:338–351 and especially Konecny 1999.

48. The majority of the academicians, many of whom were members of or sympathetic to the Kadets, were equally happy with the events of February–March 1917. In their August 1917 reply to the greetings they received from a group of members of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, they wrote, “We are happy to think that some of us have contributed to the cause of the world’s freedom and that our sympathy to America is based upon ideals and a common spirit, which has become a reality. Although conscious that the storm is not over, we hope, however, that it will prove to be for many of us a ‘clearing shower’ after which we may be able to live in peace and profit of our new national liberty for the benefit of mankind and the progress of civilization” (Sobolev 1999:111–112).

49. Although prepared during the early days of the new regime, the document still refers to the Provisional Government. Like other academics, Radlov must have been expecting a quick end to Bolshevik rule.

50. Among other things, it was decided that on the anniversary of Radlov’s death flowers would be placed on his grave, while his birthday would be marked by an annual meeting of the staff devoted to reviewing the museum’s work in the previous year and making plans for the coming one (Reshetov 1995a).

51. The new study group appears to have been modeled on the Uralo-Altai one, which Radlov had presided over for many years (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/191:259).

52. Reshetov (1995b:42) is mistaken in stating that Bartol’d was the one who organized the Radlov Circle. Bartol’d himself acknowledged as much in his speech at Shternberg’s funeral (cited in Umniakov 1976:313–314).

53. See Shternberg’s petition to the dean of the Oriental Faculty (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/103:135–136).

54. In the Russian usage, “humanities” included both the humanities and the social sciences.

7. Building a New Anthropology in the “City of the Living Dead”

1. For the discussion of PSR activities after the Bolshevik coup, see Pipes 1990:789–840, 1994:3–140; Brovkin 1994; and Anoprieva and Erofeev 1996:445–450.

2. By reassembling in various locations outside Bolshevik control, former members of the PSR faction of the Constituent Assembly acted as legitimate elected legislatures.

3. Fearing arrest by the Kolchak forces, Shternberg’s friend Moisei Krol’, a prominent Siberian SR and a member of the anti-Bolshevik democratic government of Siberia, escaped to China and settled in Harbin. In 1921 his wife, another prominent Siberian SR, was arrested by the Bolsheviks. After spending two years in jail, she was finally able to join her husband in China (Krol’ 1941:233–261).

4. The major studies of Petrograd’s socioeconomic and political life during the Civil War include articles by Brower (1989) and Koenker (1989), a monograph by McAuley (1991), and a recent collection of essays edited by Shishkin (2000).

5. See also Shternberg's letter to his Swedish friend and colleague Carl Hartman, dated December 8, 1920. He wrote, "For four years we have not seen a single periodical or a new book of science!" (Hartman Collection, Folkens Museum Etnografiska Archive, Stockholm).

6. While a few individual scientists and other members of the intelligentsia did participate in anti-Soviet conspiracies, most of the tens of thousands of people arrested in 1918–21 were charged with imaginary crimes (Kolchinskii 2003:437–438).

7. My discussion of the relationship between the Russian academia and the new regime is based on the work of Kupaigorodskaia (1984), Chanbarisov (1988), McClelland (1989), Fitzpatrick (1992), and Tolz (1997, 2000).

8. Among the leading professors who began to favor a more pro-Soviet approach was Nikolai Marr, an iconoclastic linguist and archaeologist who in 1917 had hired Shternberg to teach at the university and in 1919 became the head of the Institute for the Study of the History of Material Culture (i.e., archaeology).

9. Nonetheless, the ultimate goal of the FONs was "the development and dissemination of the ideas of scientific socialism and materialist worldview in all of the social sciences" (Mavrodin 1969:210). Cf. Lenin's statement made to a group of university professors and administrators at a 1920 meeting: "It is imperative that the teaching of the social sciences be carried out according to a Marxist program" (Chanbarisov 1988:134).

10. Perks for academics came with strings attached: those lucky enough to be assigned, based on the value of their scholarly work to the state, to the first category of food rations had to provide proof that they had mastered the basics of the socialist ideology and were applying it to their research (Kupaigorodskaia 1984:157).

11. They included such leading scholars as the sociologist Pitirim Sorokin, historian Aleksandr Kizevetter, and philosopher Nikolai Berdiaev. A number of the expelled had been deans and rectors of the country's leading universities (Sorokin 1963:192; Fitzpatrick 1992:51–52).

12. Marr was the FON's first dean; in 1920 he was replaced by historian Mikhail Priselkov.

13. For obvious reasons, in the 1917–18 academic year it was practically impossible to offer regular lecture courses at the Geography Courses. Instead various professors gave public lectures. On May 30 Shternberg delivered an obituary of Radlov (Lukashevich 1919:57). Because many professors left Petrograd in that difficult year, the few that remained, like Shternberg, had to do a great deal of work. He was a member of a three-person delegation representing the Courses' professors that went to Moscow in the fall of 1918 to lobby for the proposed Geography Institute (Lukashevich 1919:61).

14. According to Sarra Ratner-Shternberg (1935:139), in 1917–18 instruction and attendance at the Geography Courses came almost to a standstill.

15. In addition to the unpublished records of the Geography Institute located in several St. Petersburg archives, its history is described by Edel'shtein (1930), Ratner-Shternberg (1935), Staniukovich (1971), and Gagen-Torn (1971, 1975).

16. Shternberg's commitment to the new institution was not weakened by a tempting offer he received in 1918 from the Faculty of Oriental Languages to head the department (*kafedra*) of ethnography (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/4/9:176).

17. A 1921 memo concerning the Geography Institute's curriculum mentions that the Ethnography Faculty would eventually be divided into departments of ethnography and economic geography. The former was supposed to concentrate on the study of ideational culture, while the latter would focus on material culture (*Izvestiia Geograficheskogo Instituta*, 1921, 2:185).

18. In 1919 Shternberg was elected head (rector) of the entire Geography Institute, but weak health soon forced him to relinquish this position to Aleksandr Fersman, a prominent Russian geographer.

19. After a few years the preparatory year was abolished.

20. He also taught some of the same courses at Petrograd University.

21. During the Civil War the students had to perform various public works duties in return for their meager stipend and food ration.

22. Lev Iakovlevich's generosity with money and total inability to keep track of his personal finances were legendary.

23. See Minutes of the Meetings of the Historical-Philological Division of the Russian Academy of Sciences, 1920–21.

24. The temperature at the MAE often went down below the freezing mark (Reshetov 1995b:42). In 1918–21 all the MAE staff members suffered from illnesses, many of them very serious (Kolchinskii 2003:411).

25. In 1919 KIPS managed to send three ethnographers to various locations in Russia and one to Central Asia (*Otchet o deiatel'nosti Rossiiskoi Akademii Nauk za 1919 god*:305–319).

26. According to the 1919 annual report of the Academy of Sciences, he had prepared an article on the subject of “the classification of the composite north Asiatic bow in connection with the question of the original homeland of the Yakuts” (*Otchet o deiatel'nosti Rossiiskoi Akademii Nauk za 1919 god*:148).

27. Ol'denburg lamented this breakdown in communication between Russian and foreign scholars in his annual report on the state of the Academy of Sciences (*Otchet o deiatel'nosti Rossiiskoi Akademii Nauk za 1919 god*:12–13).

28. The fact that this essay ends on a more optimistic note than the one on ethnography and social ethics probably owed to a certain degree of improvement in the country's life in the early 1920s (see chapter 8).

29. In the first half of 1918 the Jewish People's Group was still functioning in Petrograd. As one of its founders and leaders, Shternberg delivered several lectures to the ENG's student members (Beizer 1999:136).

30. Dubnov was particularly suspicious of Ivan Blinov, one of the Russian historians. He believed that Blinov was once close to the tsarist minister of justice, Ivan Shcheglovitov, who was responsible for the Beilis trial. Dubnov suspected that Blinov was trying to sabotage the whole project (Dubnov 1998:436–452).

31. Another failed undertaking that Shternberg had been asked to participate in was the publication of the “Jewish People's Encyclopedia” in Yiddish. As the leading Jewish ethnologist, Shternberg was commissioned to write a number of entries, including “Animism,” which he actually completed (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/176:346–350; Beizer 1999:311).

32. The extent of the SRS' involvement in the Kronstadt-related propaganda is still debated by historians (Avrich 1970).

33. Cf. Dubnov's entry in his diary, dated February 27, 1921: "They have taken away Shternberg, a sick old SR who in the last few years has not been involved in politics" (1999:456).

34. Archive of St. Petersburg University, f. 95, d. 3410:47–49.

35. In the spring of 1921 the secret police carried out a liquidation of the entire Central Committee of the PSR (see Pavlov 1999:62).

8. The NEP Era and the Last Years of Shternberg's Life

1. Clark has aptly called NEP a period of "quiet revolution" in Soviet intellectual life.

2. In the 1930s the majority of these PSR members were executed (Pavlov 1999:95–100).

3. Several liberal Populist journalists who had worked closely with Shternberg at the *Russkoe Bogatstvo* journal were also exiled.

4. In 1923, when Kareev was no longer allowed to teach at Petrograd University, he was still able to do so at the Geography Institute. However, when he submitted his lecture course on the methodology of the social sciences for publication, it was rejected by the censor (Kareev 1990:295, 358).

5. Sarra Ratner-Shternberg reminisced that he was an archenemy of any form of apostasy, whether religious or political (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/140:313).

6. Bogoraz went even further: according to one of his students, in a private conversation at the MAE in 1928 he referred to German fascism as "communism upside down" (Tishkov 1993:112).

7. In an article about an old Populist mentor of his, Lev Kogan-Bernshtein, Shternberg mentioned the man's son, Matvei, a prominent SR executed by the Bolsheviks in 1918. Although he does not name the party the younger Kogan-Bernshtein belonged to, he referred to it as the heir to the People's Will (Shternberg 1925b).

8. Shternberg personally knew many of the SRS who were on trial.

9. The signatories included prominent members of the Populist movement like Mikhail Ashenbrenner, Aleksandr Pribyliov, Anna Pribyleva-Korba, Osip Aptekman, Moisei Bramson, Ivan Mainov, and a number of others. Several of them had known Shternberg since the 1880s and '90s.

10. For biographical information on Briullova-Shaskol'skaia see Reshetov 1994:190–191; Shelokhaev 1996:88–89; Antsiferov 1992:466; Vasil'kov and Sorokina 2003:77–78. The most valuable source of information on this subject is her own reminiscences about Shternberg that she sent to Sarra Ratner-Shternberg in the late 1920s (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/136:33–43). See also my own article about her scholarly work and political activities (Kan 2008).

11. Named after the great Russian sociologist and ethnologist Maxim Kovalevskii, the society had been organized in 1916 and brought together many leading non-Marxist, liberal social scientists, including Pitirim Sorokin, Nikolai Kareev, Mikhail Kulisher, and

others. Shternberg had been one of the society's members since its creation (Klushin 1970:224–225). In 1924 it was closed down.

12. In a letter to Bogoraz dated May 7, 1928, Briullova-Shaskol'skaia wrote: "In my life in the last 7–8 years he [Shternberg] was the central point; thoughts about him, his moral support and his letters were my main support during these rather difficult years" (Bogoraz Collection, SPFA RAN, 250/4/51:4a).

13. See their letters to Shternberg in Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/342.

14. Another student of Shternberg's who corresponded with his teacher after having been expelled from Petrograd University and exiled was Oskar Vizel' (1895–?), a son of an Austrian-born art history professor. While in an "administrative exile" in the Komi region in 1923–25, he conducted some ethnographic research. When his exile ended, he was subjected to a "residential restriction," which meant not being allowed to reside in the major cities of European Russia. He spent the next five years working in the Ashkhabad Museum in Turkmenistan (Vasil'kov and Sorokina 2003:98–99; Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/358:93–96, 115–116; Kan 2008).

15. A massive campaign against Trotsky and his followers began in late 1923.

16. In August 1924, when he visited Dubnov in Berlin, Shternberg complained bitterly about the student purge and other forms of governmental political and ideological pressure on the faculty and students of institutions of higher learning (Dubnov 1998:506).

17. Among them was Sergei Schliemann (1856–1940?), the son of the famous archaeologist Heinrich Schliemann, who had lived in St. Petersburg for twenty years after marrying Sergei's mother, who was Russian (Bogoraz Collection, SPFA RAN, 250/2/322).

18. The money was to be divided into twelve equal monthly installments for the year 1922.

19. Since it was very difficult to transfer foreign currency to a private individual in Russia, Shternberg asked Boas to give the money to his wife's cousin, Iosif Ratner, who had immigrated to the United States long before 1917.

20. The Russian version was somewhat longer than the English one.

21. He attributed this lack of evidence to his predecessors' inability to look beyond the "hereditary" principle in the transmission of the shaman's gift and their preference for descriptive ethnography over a combination of description and a theoretically grounded analysis.

22. This source was a university-educated Buryat man (A. N. Mikhailov) who had practiced shamanism himself and had studied it as an ethnographer.

23. Because Dyrenkova began her fieldwork in 1926, her data appears only in the 1927 version of Shternberg's paper (see Dyrenkova 1930).

24. Despite the distinction drawn by Shternberg between the spiritual love that dominated the relationship between Christ and the devout Christians and the centrality of erotic sentiments between deities and their devotees in pre-monotheistic religions, his discussion of Christianity deeply offended at least one Russian ethnologist who otherwise was very fond of him. She was Vera Kharuzina (1866–1931), the first Russian female professor of ethnography. After reading Shternberg's "Divine Election", she wrote to

him in 1927, “I must tell you frankly that I am shocked by your linking of this topic [divine election] and the New Testament story. For me such linkage is theoretically incorrect, just as those who characterize Christian rites as pagan by focusing only on their outer forms are incorrect. The truth is that there is a fundamental difference between the two because of the idea central to the New Testament. The name of Christ is so precious for me and for many others and that is why I am writing to you so boldly about this—I know that hurting the religious feelings of others is foreign to your entire inner soul” (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/304:21–21a).

25. Note, however, that the reviewers of Smoliak’s 1991 monograph on Amur River shamanism suggest that her Soviet-era informants might have been reluctant to discuss sexuality (Karaketov and Chesnov 1994).

26. For a discussion of the origin of the Ainu from a late-twentieth-century perspective see Fitzhugh 1999; Arutiunov 1999; and Ishida 1999.

27. Several of his lectures were written down by his students and later typed out. With the exception of “The Evolution of Religion,” they remain unpublished (Shternberg 1936:241–525).

28. Shternberg offered modifications of Tylor’s theory of animism and his scheme of the evolution of religious beliefs (Shternberg 1936:277).

29. As an interesting aside, he rejected the Zionists’ “naïve dreams” of transforming the Jews into a nation of farmers and manual laborers. For him, the Jews would always prefer intellectual labor to these other activities (Shternberg 1924a:30–31).

30. As a reflection of Shternberg’s own political sympathies, he mentioned the Jewish leaders of the People’s Will and the SR parties by name but refrained from naming “the leaders of the modern-day Communist movement” (Shternberg 1924:37).

31. Several sources indicate that he kept abreast of the most recent developments in physical anthropology. For example, as soon as Louis Bolk’s new ideas about the role of the endocrine glands in the development of physical differences among human populations became public, he included this material in his introductory anthropology lecture course (Petrov 1930:1082; cf. Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/140:318). His wife reminisced that he often conversed with his brother, a prominent physician and the head of the Tuberculosis Institute, about that topic (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/140:318). There is also evidence that Aron Shternberg was involved in the work of the Leningrad branch of the Russian Eugenic Society, which was organized in 1920 and attracted many prominent biologists, physicians, physical anthropologists, and ethnologists (Kolchinskii 1999:113–119).

32. In the 1920s Shternberg also wrote a paper entitled “On the Psychology of Creativity” (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/105:63). Unfortunately I have not been able to locate it in his archive.

33. Of course, Shternberg’s idea about the Jews being a unique “spiritual nation” was not terribly original. The great Jewish historian Semion Dubnov, whose ideology, like Shternberg’s, had been influenced by Russian Populism, had expressed similar ideas (see Dubnov 1958).

34. Shternberg’s view on the uniqueness of Jewish monotheism and the ancient

Israelites' prophetic consciousness bears a striking resemblance to the ideas of two prominent German Jewish philosophers and psychologists of an earlier generation, Heymann Steinhahl and Moritz Lazarus. In 1860 the two of them founded the *Zeitschrift für Völkerpsychologie und Sprachwissenschaft*, which they continued coediting until 1890. Like Shternberg, these two scholars combined a commitment to liberal progressivism and relativism with evolutionism and the notion that the Jews possessed a *Volksgeist* that was superior to those of other peoples (Bunzl 2003).

35. Some scholars (e.g., Slezkine 1996) have suggested that Marr was at least in part motivated by his own ethnic background as a half-Georgian, his inferiority complex vis-à-vis the speakers of Indo-European languages, and his hostility toward Indo-Europeanists in linguistics, especially foreign ones.

36. According to Bogoraz, Shternberg gave at least one other presentation on the Japhetic theory, a lecture on “The Japhetides in Light of Ethnography” that he delivered at the Japhetic Institute in 1923 (Shternberg 1935:57).

37. As the secretary of the Academy of Sciences, Ol'denburg served as the journal's editor-in-chief.

38. V. D. Vilenskii-Sibiriaikov, the only scholar who was a Bolshevik, stayed on the editorial board only for one year.

39. See Reshetov 2001 on the history of *Etnografiia*.

40. Upon Shternberg's passing, the essay was assigned to his student Zakharii Cherniakov (1927), with Bogoraz acting as its editor.

41. In the end Hartman was unable to raise enough money to bring Shternberg and his family over (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/52:21–21a). The Swedish anthropologists did succeed, however, in helping Iokhel's son obtain a foreign passport for his journey to the United States. (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/52:28, 31).

42. The two previous congresses were held in the New World (in the United States in 1915 and Brazil in 1922) and were poorly attended by the Europeans.

43. The same letter indicates that Boas was also trying to get Shternberg to write a summary entry on the Gilyak language for some sort of a volume on eastern Siberian languages, which Boas was going to edit. Unlike his work on the Gilyak manuscript, this essay was to be provided free of charge (Boas Papers, APS).

44. For over a decade Boas, dissatisfied with the number of anthropologists taking part in the Americanists' congresses, tried to organize an international anthropological congress, but he ran into opposition from Van Gennep and several other European scholars. This national rivalry prevented the congress from convening until 1934 (Barkan 1992).

45. Although Russia had fought on the side of the Entente, its separate peace with Germany helped create a strongly pro-Russian sentiment among many of the German intellectuals.

46. To Shternberg's great disappointment, he was unable to meet with his old Swedish friend and colleague Hartman, who had been suffering from a mental illness.

47. In return Nordenskiöld gave the Russians a letter from Kropotkin to his father.

48. See, for example, Preuss's letter to Shternberg dated February 1, 1926 (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/38:21–21a).

49. In their letter Mauss and Shternberg addressed each other as “my dear friend.” In 1925 Mauss used his connection in the foreign affairs department to help Shternberg’s brother and sister-in-law obtain French visas (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/203:3). In 1925 he sent Shternberg his newly published book *The Gift* and asked him for the names of important new works in Soviet ethnology that could be reviewed in *l’Année Sociologique*.

50. Thanks to Silvain Lévi’s close ties with Ol’denburg, he was elected to the Russian Academy of Sciences as a foreign member in 1918.

51. In 1927 Shternberg met with Lévi in Tokyo, where they once again discussed the AIU’s funding for Jewish educational and cultural ventures in the USSR (Bongard-Levin et. al. 2002:152).

52. Mauss even visited Russia in 1906 as a correspondent for the socialist newspaper *l’Humanité*.

53. In 1920 the French Socialist Party (SFIO) refused to join the Third (Communist) International, controlled by Moscow.

54. On the way back, Bogoraz and Shternberg traveled to Berlin, where they also selected recent publications in anthropology and museum equipment for purchase by the MAE.

55. According to an unpublished essay about Shternberg (written most likely by his widow), he continued to experience some resentment from the Academy’s old guard even after he had been elected to it. In 1927, when two vacancies became available in the ranks of the academicians, he was not included in the list of candidates for full membership (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/195:194).

56. The largest contingent of foreign scholars came from Germany.

57. This was the last letter Shternberg sent to Boas.

58. Among the anthropologists Shternberg found to be particularly interesting were Saburo Hatta, Yoshikiyo Koganei, John Batchelor, and Thomas Griffith Taylor (Shternberg 1927b); see also Hatta’s letter to Shternberg of March 19, 1927 (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/305).

59. It is surprising that Shternberg described the colonial regimes in New Guinea and other Pacific territories as “benign,” especially given the fact that he expressed this sentiment in a Soviet academic journal (1927b).

60. Shternberg received some of these objects, along with scholarly books in Japanese and other languages, from Nevskii, an old student of his who had been living and doing ethnographic and folkloristic research in Japan since 1915.

61. In the 1920s Shternberg renewed his membership in the American Anthropological Association.

62. It is interesting that, except for his criticism of Durkheim’s view of the role of the individual in primitive society, Shternberg did not discuss the contemporary French anthropology of the *l’Année Sociologique* tradition, particularly given his close relationship with Mauss. It is possible that he simply did not consider Mauss’s work to be particularly innovative and had not had a chance to review his influential 1925 work *The Gift*.

63. For Shternberg’s correspondence with the Mervarts see Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/201 and 282/2/195.

64. For the most detailed information on Shirokogorov's life after 1917 see Kuznetsov 2001 and Revunenkov and Reshetov 2003. Shirokogorov's relationship with Shternberg is discussed in a recent article by Reshetov (2004a), whose conclusions I do not fully agree with.

65. Marie Czaplicka was an Oxford-trained Polish anthropologist who specialized in Siberian cultures.

66. Not surprisingly, his work was very well received in Germany in the 1920s and '30s and made a strong impact on Wilhelm Mühlman (1904–88), a prominent German ethnologist and a member of the Nazi Party (Johansen 2002; Mühlman 2002). Shirokogorov's drift from liberalism to Russian nationalism and monarchism, which began after 1917, eventually led him toward great admiration for Nazi Germany and hatred for liberal western Europe (Johansen 2002; Mühlman 2002).

67. Another one of Shternberg's former students, Mark Azadovskii expressed a similar reaction to Shirokogorov's „Ethnos“ in a 1923 letter to his mentor (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/2).

68. According to Sarra Ratner-Shternberg (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/195:301), however, it was Shirokogorov who borrowed ideas about shamanism from Shternberg without acknowledgement.

69. These plans were detailed in his memo outlining the new department's divisions and categories (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/136).

70. This research on the evolution of decorative designs in Siberian cultures was conducted by one of Shternberg's brightest students, Sergei Ivanov.

71. In the 1920s Shternberg was also part of a group of Leningrad scholars interested in folklore and ethnology who produced the journal *Zhivaia Starina*. Named after the pre-1917 journal of Russian ethnographers, it was affiliated with the Institute for the Comparative Study of Western and Eastern Literatures and Languages. A number of prominent scholars, many of them old colleagues of Shternberg's, participated in the meetings of this group, including Bogoraz, Pekarskii, Zelenin, Frank-Kamenetskii, and others (Reshetov 2004b:155–156).

72. For example, in December 1925 he received an invitation from the Far Eastern Planning Commission to take part in a Khabarovsk conference on the study of the “productive forces” (labor resources) of the Far East. One of the officials who signed the invitation was his former student N. A. Serk (SPFA RAN, 281/1/117:9).

73. For a detailed discussion of the role of ethnographers and other researchers in the formation of Soviet national identities and border making, see works by Hirsch (2000, 2003, 2005:101–145) and Edgar (2004).

74. True to his earlier views on ethnicity, Shternberg instructed the 1926 census takers to record the “self-definition” of all the adults in each household and to make a list of all local names for each ethnic group (Hirsch 2005:112).

75. For a detailed discussion of the Committee of the North, see the work of Slezkine (1992; 1994:131–183).

76. In 1924 TSBK began reporting to the Scientific Department (*Glavnauka*) of the Commissariat of Education.

77. A humanist and believer in ethnic cooperation, Shternberg criticized the conduct of the Georgian participants in this conference for taking a rather hostile position toward the Russians and refusing to deliver their presentations in Russian. Such behavior, however, was understandable, given that the fact that the invading Red Army had destroyed Georgia's brief independence only four years earlier.

78. I am indebted to my research assistant, Ludmila Kovalchuk, for this interpretation as well as the research it is based on.

79. For the English translation of this document see Shternberg 1997.

80. Soon after Shternberg's death, his widow solicited memoirs from dozens of his former students that she used in her own biographical sketch of her late husband and probably intended to publish as well. They are part of the Shternberg archive (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/110).

81. One of his students reminisced that he managed to save her from losing her job fourteen times!

82. As one of Shternberg's and Bogoraz's students recalled, both of them proudly mentioned that they had been students of Boas (Cherniakov in Shternberg 1999:248).

83. Nonetheless, in 1924, upon Shternberg's and particularly Bogoraz's request, Boas tried to obtain funding for the GI ethnographic expeditions from Jewish philanthropic organizations in America (Boas to Boris Bugen, December 8, 1924, Boas Papers, APS).

84. In 1923 Bogoraz, known as a wheeler-dealer, managed to supplement the students' meager expedition budget with a pile of servants' uniforms, obtained from a former Winter Palace warehouse. Made of red cloth, they could be used by students to purchase food from the natives (Gagen-Torn 1975:167–168).

85. The most detailed account of Vasilevich's biography is a recent article by N. Ermolova (2003).

86. Biographical information on Kreinovich can be found in his own monograph-memoir on the Nivkh (Kreinovich 1973) as well as in a fine essay by Roon and Sirina (2003).

87. According to Karger, Shternberg had initially planned to use only his own, old linguistic materials to teach his two students. However, while conversing with the two Nivkh students, he became so excited that he started recording new information on the language (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/110:51–51a).

88. For a discussion of Kreinovich's experience on Sakhalin in the late 1920s by an American ethnologist who did research there some sixty years later, see Grant 1995:75–80.

89. In a letter sent by Shternberg to his old Nivkh friend and informant, Churka, Lev Iakovlevich advised him not to forget "the old laws" (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/110:98–99).

90. Kreinovich also located several of Shternberg's fellow exiles from the 1890s still living on Sakhalin and restored the graves of several of his deceased comrades (Kreinovich 1973:12, 70–71).

91. A firm adherent to evolutionist anthropology and Marxism, Kreinovich "found" confirmation of Shternberg's interpretation of Nivkh social organization (Kreinovich 1936; 1973).

92. For a detailed discussion of the field research of another one of Shternberg's students, Georgii Prokof'ev, which includes excerpts from his field diaries and letters, see Gagen-Torn 1992.

93. On Poppe's scholarship see Poppe 1982 and Alpatov 1996.

94. It is interesting to note that initially there were two student circles: one of them brought together "the most advanced students of the old school" and the other was composed of "the student masses and a small core of students of proletarian background." During the 1924–25 academic year the two were united into a single circle (*Etnograf-Issledovatel'*, 1928, nos. 2–3:3–4).

95. According to Olderogge, Shternberg and Bogoraz often argued with each other so passionately that they would forget about a graduate student making a presentation (Kochakova 2002:189).

96. It appears that compared to the other Leningrad institutions of higher learning, the GI was dragging its feet in introducing the "social science minimum" in its curriculum.

97. The new emphasis on practical skills and practice-oriented knowledge was also emphasized by the new requirement that students spend some time working at a factory or state office.

98. A comparison between the minutes of the Communist Party and the Young Communist League meetings of the LGU and the GI shows that the atmosphere at the former was much more politicized than it was at the latter (Collection of the Division of the Peoples Commissariat of Education, TSGIASP, f. 2556).

99. The first reference to government plans to "liquidate" the GI that I was able to find in its correspondence appeared as early as July 1924 (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/201:207).

100. In a letter to Kreinovich dated September 1, 1926, Shternberg mentioned that he and Bogoraz had been removed from teaching at the IAMFAK because they refused to have the ED become part of it (Shternberg 2001:206).

101. Ethnological education in Moscow followed a very different path than its counterpart in Leningrad. When, in 1925, the Moscow University FON was transformed into two faculties, one in jurisprudence and the other in ethnology, the Ethnology Faculty was subdivided into four divisions: ethnography (the main one), literature, fine arts, and historical-archaeological. As a result of this scenario, Moscow ethnology students received a somewhat broader education that exposed them to a variety of humanities and "softer" social sciences. As Solovei pointed out, this emphasis aligned with the view of the Ethnology Faculty's dean, Piotr Preobrazhenskii (1894–1941) (Solovei 1998:124; cf. Ivanova 1999).

102. At a March 7, 1925, general meeting, the GI's students passed a resolution opposing the planned closing of the institute and asking the authorities to strengthen the GI as an independent institution of higher education (Collection of the Division of the Peoples Commissariat of Education, TSGIASP, 2556/1/534).

103. For a detailed, though overly charitable, discussion of Matorin's biography and scholarly contributions, see Reshetov 2003a.

104. Not only was there a new approach to matriculating students, but the number of applicants admitted was decreased to fifty, thus further weakening the ED.

105. I owe this insight to Ludmila Kovalchuk, who compared the records of student purges at the GI to those at a variety of other institutes and the LGU. Nonetheless the 1924 purge did result in the GI losing 140 of its 390 students (Informational Reports for 1922–25, no. 165, TSGAIPDSP).

106. It is quite possible that the student discontent had been fueled not only by their political views but also by more pragmatic, career-related considerations. Such careerism was totally unacceptable to Lev Iakovlevich. Vladimir Arsen'ev, Shternberg's protégé and friend, reminisced that in 1924 he witnessed a conversation in Moscow between Shternberg and some government official. When this man offered him a better paying (administrative?) position, Shternberg replied, "I am indeed in need of money but will not betray my science" (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/110:24).

107. This quote is from one of Shternberg's last unpublished papers, an introduction to the Russian-language edition of an introductory ethnology text by the prominent German scholar Karl Weule.

108. With the exception of the left-wing Zionist societies, all Jewish political parties and organizations were closed down in the early 1920s. By the late 1920s even the Zionists were under attack (Beizer 1999:132–171). The only remaining political institution with a definite Jewish "face" was the Jewish Section of the Communist Party (*Evsel'ctsiia*). However, it opposed most of the cultural and educational initiatives undertaken by Leningrad's Jewish intelligentsia (Gitelman 2001). After experiencing a rather brief revival, Jewish religious life in Leningrad began to be curtailed, so that by the early 1930s its presence was minimal (Gitelman 2001:172–135).

109. According to Dubnov's cynical observation, the Jewish University "was invented only to offer a slice of bread to a dozen or two of Jewish writers and artists" (1998:420)

110. Shternberg's obituary in *Evreiskaia Starina* referred to him as "the unifying center" of the journal and the JHES (*Evreiskaia Starina*, 1928, 15:403).

111. The JHES sponsored the publication of three collections of essays on the "biology and pathology of the Jews." Shternberg's last presentation at a JHES meeting was entitled "Current Goals of the Physical Anthropology of the Jews and the Role of Physicians."

112. This issue also featured a brief article by Shternberg on the Jewish levirate, written from a typical evolutionist perspective (1924b).

113. It should be noted that despite proposing changes in the research agenda for the study of Jewish ethnology in the 1920s, Shternberg never changed his basic view on Judaism and the spirit of the Jewish people. As one of his colleagues from the JHES circle of the 1920s pointed out, "In his view, 'the spirit of the people' was expressed in moral purity, active social engagement, and deep optimism" (Perel'man 1998:317).

114. Shternberg also remained very interested in the physical anthropology of the Jews. See his review of Fritz Kahn's 1922 book *Die Juden als Rasse and Kulturvolk* (Shternberg 1924c).

115. I would like to thank Deborah Yalen for bringing the transcript of this lecture to my attention.

116. By the late 1920s Vinnikov realized that this index would not be published in Soviet Russia and was considering publishing it in English abroad (see Vinnikov to Bogoraz, August 31, 1928, Bogoraz Collection, SPFA RAN, 250/4/64:1). Vinnikov continued working on the index for the rest of his life (Gessen 1995:196).

117. In his lectures on the evolution of religion, Shternberg cited Vinnikov's data about beliefs and practices surrounding name changes among the Jews (1936:311).

118. The museum was called Tuzemno-evreiskii muzei (Museum of Aboriginal Jews).

119. For biographical information on Braudo see the collection of essays by his comrades and friends from the Jewish and Russian liberation movements published in Paris (Blank et. al. 1937).

120. An unsigned copy of this presentation is located in the Archive of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences, in the JHES file of Shternberg's fund. Because of its location and the similarities with Shternberg's published essay on the same subject, I am attributing it to him (Shternberg 1928c).

121. One well-known aspect of Braudo's biography that explains his impressive ability to bring together prominent Russian political figures of very different camps was his active membership in the Freemason movement, where he interacted with many leaders of the Duma and the future leaders of the Provisional Government (Frumkin 1966:55; Serkov 1997:107–126). Under the Bolsheviks, Freemason activities in Russia stopped altogether. This explains why Shternberg chose not to mention this organization by name, even though his audience understood him very well when he said, "The reactionary atmosphere that set in after the 1905 revolution made it necessary to create a broad-based yet also ultra-secretive political organization, whose membership included all the progressive elements, from the left-wing rightists to socialists and even persons who today are members of the Communist Party. This organization played a major role in the struggle against tsarist despotism" (Shternberg 1928c:396; Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/176:6).

9. All Humanity Is One

1. On the train to Kislovodsk, he happened to share his compartment with a Jewish man from the Caucasus, whom he interviewed about the unique culture of his people (Shternberg to Vinnikov, May 22, 1927, Vinnikov Collection, SPFA RAN, 1045/3/56).

2. Two days before Shternberg's death a special meeting of the presidium of the ED, chaired by Bogoraz and attended by Professor Kagarov and Zakharii Cherniakov, Bogoraz's assistant and former student of the ED, appointed Kagarov temporary head of the division. The job should have been assigned to Bogoraz, but he was planning a trip abroad at the time (Bogoraz Collection, SPFA RAN, 250/3/174:153).

3. Bogoraz also contributed a large sum of his own money to cover the funeral expenses.

4. Details about Shternberg's funeral can be found in Bogoraz's paper (SPFA RAN),

several Leningrad newspapers, and his students' reminiscences (Gagen-Torn 1975:226–229; Grant 1999:254–255).

5. A former member of the Central Committee of the PSR, Pribyliov had participated in anti-Bolshevik movements and governments during the Civil War (Pribyliov 1989).

6. In a letter dated two days after Shternberg's death, Bogoraz appealed to an official in charge of the Jewish cemetery to bury Shternberg next to Antokol'skii "because of the friendship linking the two families" (Bogoraz Collection, SPFA RAN, 250/1/219:2).

7. Several of Shternberg's obituaries and commemorative articles cited his deep involvement in socialist causes in the pre-1917 era but did not mention the PSR by name; with many of the PSR leaders in exile or in jail, it was no longer safe to mention this party (e.g., Bogoraz 1927:269).

8. *Etnografiia*, the USSR's major ethnology journal, co-founded by Shternberg himself, carried not only his obituary but two of his articles as well.

9. According to Vinnikov, there were plans to name the student research society after Shternberg, but they apparently never materialized (Vinnikov Collection, SPFA RAN, 1045/1/211:2).

10. Two years later their presentations, which dealt with the various aspects of Shternberg's scholarship, were published by the Academy in a special volume dedicated to him (Ol'denburg and Samoilovich 1930).

11. The only material evidence produced by the commission was a number of historical documents pertaining to the overthrow of the tsarist regime (and the abdication of the last tsar), which the plotters had allegedly kept from the authorities in order to use them to legitimize its restoration.

12. This so-called Case of the Academy is detailed in several Russian-language publications (e.g., V. P. Leonov 1993). For English-language work on the subject see Tolz 1997.

13. His wife Liudmila Mervart, also a fine ethnologist, linguist, and museum professional, was sentenced as well. After spending years in the camps, she returned in 1944 to Moscow, where she made a living teaching languages of Southeast Asia. She died in 1965 (Vigasin 2003).

14. Having returned to Leningrad from Japan in 1929, Nevskii had a successful career as a Japan specialist, working at the Institute of Oriental Studies and the Hermitage Museum. In 1937 he was arrested and sentenced to death for allegedly spying for Japan. His Japanese wife was executed as well. In 1957 Nevskii was "rehabilitated" and was posthumously awarded the Lenin Prize for his brilliant monograph *Tangut Philology*. Startsev was arrested in 1937 for "bourgeois Komi nationalism" and remained in a labor camp until 1942, when he was released and sent to the front; he was killed in action a year later. Vera Tsintsius was arrested in 1937 and sentenced to five years in a labor camp for counterrevolutionary activities and anti-Soviet propaganda among the students of the Institute of the Indigenous Peoples of the North, where she served as the head of the Tungusic-Manchurian section. She was one of the fortunate ones: her case was reviewed in 1939 and she was released. Forshtein, who was unable to extend his three-month long research trip to Denmark in 1936, was arrested in late 1936 or

early 1937 and released only in the mid-1950s (see Vasil'kov and Sorokina 2003; Krupnik and Mikhailova 2006).

15. Gagen-Torn's biography is documented by Reshetov (1994) and her daughter (G. Gagen-Torn 1999).

16. As it later turned out, one of Shternberg's other students had provided information on the "illegal anti-Soviet gatherings of ethnographers at Gagen-Torn's apartment" (G. Gagen-Torn 1999:327).

17. The most detailed sketch of Kreinovich's life is an article by Roon and Sirina (2003). See also Reshetov 2005; Kreinovich 2005.

18. Ironically, the same person who had been forced to make false accusations against Gagen-Torn was instrumental in preserving all of Kreinovich's unpublished manuscripts and field notes (Roon and Sirina 2003:71).

19. The ranks of ethnographers trained in the Leningrad school were further decimated by the privations of field research in harsh conditions and by the violence of World War II. For example, Pavel Moll died of pneumonia on the Chukchee Peninsula in 1931, while Nikolai Shnakenburg, Sergei Stebnitskii, and several others died on the battlefield. Several of Shternberg's students starved to death during the Nazi siege of Leningrad.

20. It should be pointed out that some of the younger graduates of the Leningrad school of ethnography, inspired by the political rhetoric of the time, shared this critical view of the state of ethnology in the country. Several students of Shternberg and Bogoraz who had been working at the MAE joined their colleagues from other ethnological institutions and museums in signing a letter to the presidium of the Russian Association of Scientific Research in the Social Sciences. In it they argued forcefully that the current status of ethnography and ethnographic museums prevented ethnographers from engaging actively in the work of building socialism. What seemed to trouble the young radicals was the absence of a unified method and viewpoint in ethnography (Bogoraz Collection, SPFA RAN, 250/3/178).

21. This conference is discussed by Slezkine (1991), Solovei (1998, 2001), and Kan (2006).

22. A prominent Bolshevik of the old guard and the head of the Communist Academy, Martyn Liadov, had formulated the goals of the conference (Shangina 1991:72).

23. As a matter of fact, as early as the spring of 1928 Matorin, who was genuinely interested in empirical ethnographic research, unlike Aptekar', began pressuring Bogoraz to include his own proposed new courses Ethnography and Marxism as well as Ethnography and Soviet State Building in the curriculum of the Ethnography Division of the Geography Faculty of the Leningrad State University (Bogoraz Collection, SPFA RAN, 250/5/123).

24. The radical comments of Aptekar' were echoed in a declaration issued later that year by a small but aggressive group of Marxist students of the Ethnography Division. Entitled "Our Platform," it proclaimed that ethnography–ethnology "had been slain by Marxism" (Bogoraz Collection, SPFA RAN, 250/3/178).

25. In the late 1920s and especially 1930s, after Hitler's seizure of power, Wilhelm

Schmidt and his school became the primary enemy of the Soviet ethnographers. The fact that Schmidt was both a devout Catholic and a German made him an easy target.

26. Bogoraz offered a Marxist rethinking of his earlier interpretation of Eskimo social organization (Bogoraz 1936), while Sarra Ratner-Shternberg contributed an essay entitled “Family and Clan among the Indians of the Northwest Coast” (Ratner-Shternberg 1936).

27. At a meeting held soon after Shternberg’s passing it was decided that the MAE lacked the space and specimens to maintain a separate department of evolution and typology of culture. Sternberg’s widow was deeply disappointed.

28. In 1930 one of Shternberg’s pet projects—the Radlov Circle—was also done away with.

29. For similar changes in the exhibits produced by the Ethnography Department of the Russian Museum see Hirsch 2000, 2005:187–227.

30. The existing sources do not provide any information on how this new department was intending to portray “primitive communism” in its displays and exhibits.

31. Modeled on the old KIPS, the IPIN was established in 1930. Marxist ethnologists and linguists dominated the institute, which had Marr serving as its head and Matorin as the second in command (Solovei 1998:194–196).

32. In June 1928 Bogoraz, who had replaced Shternberg as the head of the Ethnography Division, prepared a detailed memo to the authorities in charge of academic research outlining his plan for the establishment of an Ethnographic Scientific Research Institute. Except for its stronger emphasis on applying Marxist methods to ethnographic research, his proposal was quite close to what Shternberg had been advocating (Kan 2006).

33. The heavy ideological pressure exerted upon the museum by Stalin’s “revolution from above” and the persecution of the old ethnographers and other scholars and intellectuals involved in the preservation and study of the country’s historical and ethnographic heritage affected another important endeavor that Shternberg had contributed to—the *kraevedenie* movement. The first major change in the activities of the *kraevedenie* professionals and lay activists occurred in 1928–29, when they were directed to “closely link their activities with the construction of socialism” rather than concentrate on the pre-1917 history and culture. As a result of this emphasis on present-day issues and the politicization of *kraevedenie*, the quality of its research and museum exhibitions declined significantly. In the 1930s many of the movement’s leading figures were arrested, and by 1937 it was virtually eliminated (Shmidt 1992).

34. Ethnological education in the new capital suffered a similar fate when the Ethnology Faculty of Moscow University was closed down in 1930–31. Like their Leningrad colleagues, Ethnology Faculty professors were accused of “having an orientation that was insufficiently Marxist.” Ethnographic instruction at Moscow University did not resume until 1939 (Markov et al. 1999).

35. A detailed discussion of the rise and fall of the CN can be found in Slezkine 1992, 1994; see also Kan 2007.

36. As Grant (1995:96) reported, Kreinovich, who returned from Sakhalin to Leningrad

in 1929 to teach at the Northern Division of the Institute of Eastern Languages, spoke out against the claims that Nivkh social organization had been by nature exploitative and was censured for his views.

37. These changing policies toward indigenous northerners also affected the work of ethnologists. For example, Bogoraz felt obligated to rethink his interpretation of indigenous societies by identifying manifestations of class differentiation and exploitation in them (1931, 1936; cf. Kagarov 1931; Karger 1931; Kan 2006).

38. Bogoraz's paper with the same title was published in *Etnografiia* in 1927. A year later he published a paper dealing with Shternberg's filed research (Bogoraz 1928b).

39. While afraid of openly challenging such critiques of Shternberg's ideas, his widow tried to counter them subtly in her biographical publications about him as well as through a lengthy biographical manuscript she was working on throughout the 1930s for his proposed collected works. In an article on Shternberg as field ethnographer, for instance, she argued that he "understood very well the link between the ideological superstructure and its economic base" (Ratner-Shternberg 1931:34).

40. There is some archival evidence suggesting that at least one draft of the introduction to Shternberg's works on religion had been co-authored by Al'kor and Bogoraz but that Bogoraz's death in 1936 prevented it from appearing (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/19:84–85).

41. In fact, a collection of Shternberg's writings on the family and clan among the peoples of Northeastern Asia opened with Engels' article "A Newly Discovered Case of Group Marriage" (1933b:xvii–xix).

42. A special edition of the journal *Sovetskaia Etnografiia*, published in 1934 to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of Engels' *Origin of the Family*, included the article "Engels and Shternberg" by Virendranat Chatopadaia (1934), an Indian Communist and Communist International leader who settled in the USSR in 1931 and worked at the IAE. Arrested in 1937, he was soon executed (Vasil'kov and Sorokina 2003:408–409).

43. The last presentation at the OBPS on Shternberg's revolutionary activities was given by his widow in 1931. There were also plans to publish her reminiscences about these activities in *Katorga i Ssylka*, but they never happened (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/5/51).

44. One of the harshest indictments of Populism was a brochure entitled "The Destruction of Populism" by Emel'ian Iaroslavskii, an old Bolshevik and the head of the OBPS from 1925 until 1935 (Iaroslavskii 1937).

45. Among those arrested in Leningrad as part of his case was Briullova-Shaskol'skaia. Several prominent People's Will members, including the already deceased Pribyliov, had allegedly acted as Ivanov-Razumnik's co-conspirators (Ivanov-Razumnik 2000:159–243; Kan 2008).

46. Before it was shut down for good in 1929, the JHES managed to publish two issues of *Evreiskaia Starina*.

47. The "safer" ethnographic research on the Jewish minorities of the Soviet Union, which stayed away from controversial topics like Judaism and used Yiddish or other local

languages of the country's various Jewish minorities rather than Hebrew, survived for a few more years but eventually fell victim to the Great Terror of 1937–39 and the rising anti-Semitism of the late Stalinist era. For example, in the early 1930s the Samarqand Jewish Museum was accused of showcasing the old cultures of the local Jews (especially religion) and failing to display signs of their social and ideological progress. Its director, Isaak Lur'e, was fired, while the museum was turned into a Jewish branch of the Samarqand State Museum; in 1937 it was closed down altogether. Lur'e's fate is unknown, though it is likely that he perished in the GULAG (Nosonovskii 2002:4)

48. In 1938 the Council of Peoples' Commissars issued a special directive on the work of the Academy of Sciences. As far as ethnography was concerned, it called for reprinting and studying the works of such "classical" scholars as Morgan, Bachofen, Bogoraz, and Shternberg (Reshetov 2003b:37).

49. The MAE Archive, K-I/1/45:1–13.

50. To be fair to Kagarov, I must point out that he worked hard to get Shternberg's works published and that in his 1930s correspondence with officials at the Academy of Sciences he referred to him as "one of our greatest scholars" (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/20:160–160a).

51. After all, in her 1930 letter to her son, Sarra Ratner-Shternberg told him that in case of her death, he was to ask Vinnikov to sort out her husband's papers and place them in the Academy of Sciences archive (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/4/23).

52. It is worth noting that even though he did not fully agree with Shternberg's critique of contemporary German anthropological theories, Preuss was very interested in it. In fact, he and his German colleagues added to this article references to the works that had appeared after Shternberg had written it (Preuss to S. Shternberg, 1928–32, Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/2/36, 282/4/9:185).

53. An example of Sarra Ratner-Shternberg's caution is a passage from her manuscript on Shternberg's life and work in which she described Preuss's high evaluation of his essay on the eagle cult. In a footnote to that passage she wrote, "Of course, this happened before an [attempted] fascist coup of 1929" (Shternberg Collection, SPFA RAN, 282/1/195:180).

54. As I have mentioned earlier, in 1930 *Zeitschrift für Völkerpsychologie und Soziologie* published a lengthy essay on Lev Shternberg by Briullova-Shaskol'skaia. Thanks to these German publications, a major German-language history of anthropology published soon after World War II contained a substantial number of references to Shternberg's work (Mühlman 1948).

55. The saga of the unfortunate manuscript is described in detail in two of my publications (Kan 2000, 2001a); cf. Grant 1999; Shternberg 1999.

56. Boas's interest in the remaining unpublished manuscripts of the JNPE revived two years later, with the arrival in New York of the great Russian linguist Roman Jakobson. Boas asked Jakobson to compare the English-language version of the Shternberg manuscript with the 1933 Soviet publications on the same subject (Boas to Wissler, July 31, 1941, AMNH). Jakobson must have convinced Boas that the Russian-language publications were essentially the same or very similar to the manuscript in his possession.

Wissler's October 1941 letter (AMNH) had informed him that the museum's publication budget was at that time "hopelessly deficient," and Jakobson's argument must have provided Boas with an additional excuse to end his four-decade-long effort to publish the *Social Organization of the Gilyak*. With World War II raging in Europe and the Pacific, nobody had the energy or the resources to fight this battle. Boas's last letter to Wissler on this subject, dated April 16, 1942, eight months before his death, sums up his thoughts on this subject and is worth quoting here in its entirety:

As you remember the report by Sternberg on the Gilyak has been hanging for a long time. I have the whole manuscript ready, but owing to financial conditions of the world and the death of Dr. Sternberg, nothing could be done. I have had the Russian publications by Sternberg relating to the Gilyak investigated and I find that all the material has been published in Russian, so it seems to me there is no sense in trying to publish it now in English. . . . I think it would be best to use this translation as a book in your library. [AMNH]

57. In the last decades of her life Sarra Arkad'evna published her works under this hyphenated name.

58. According to a recent article by Aleksandr Lavrov, when he asked Gagen-Torn whether her description of Shternberg's stay in the Odessa jail had been influenced by her own GULAG experience, she said "yes" (2004:134).

59. Today the work on Shternberg's biography and scholarly legacy is being conducted as a cooperative venture between Russian and Western scholars. Especially noteworthy in this regard is the work of the staff of the Sakhalin Regional Museum and the Institute for the Study of the Legacy of Bronislaw Pilsudski (see Pilsudski 1996; Roon 2000; Roon and Sirina 2004; Kan 2000, 2001a, 2003, 2004a, 2004b, 2007).

60. It should be pointed out that the study of ethnogenesis was led not only by Leningrad scholars but by Moscow ones as well, particularly Boris Dolgikh, Il'ia Gurvich, and several others.

61. Nonetheless, Russian scholars of several generations have also produced some seminal works (especially in linguistics and archaeology, but in ethnology as well), like Vakhtin (2001b) and Golovnev (1995). One of the most prominent figures in Siberian ethnology, Igor Krupnik, is a Russian émigré scholar who has been working at the Smithsonian Institution since the early 1990s (e.g., 1993, 2000; Krupnik and Jolly 2002).

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