In her Paper, Dr. Dunja Dogo aims to reconstruct how the stories of two Russian revolutionists, such as M. S. Beideman and S. G. Nechaev, were treated in «The Palace and the Fortress» (A. V. Ivanovsky, 1924) — the first Soviet full-length fictional film based upon the history of Russian Populism. The screenplay of this work was written by the prominent historian and man of letters P. E. Shchiogolev, who made use of newly available archival and literary materials, for purposes of moulding a history specific to masses. Dr. Dogo gives rise to the thesis that, in early Soviet Russia, the Bolshevik leadership notably promoted historical films in order to feature a past suitable to their political interests, as the giant example of «The Palace and the Fortress» demonstrates. Refs 71.

Keywords: Soviet history, film History, film and history, Russian Revolutionists of 19th century, Pavel E. Shchiogolev.

As is commonly maintained by a number of historians across the globe, in post-revolutionary Russia the interpretation of history was crucially important for the Bolsheviks in power, since on it would depend the legitimacy of the absolute dictatorship they had established in October 1917, and consolidated soon after the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly in January 1918 [1–2]. But in the obvious absence of a past of its own to which the young Bolshevik Party could anchor itself, its ruling elite had to invent one: this they did by assimilating various pre-revolutionary movements, not directly connected with their Party, and then trying to place themselves in the mainstream of the revolutionary tradition by locating in the earlier movements the origins of their own political outlook [3–5].

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What was especially cultivated in the 1920s was the memory of the heroic period of the previous century, distinguished by the punishments (arrests, executions, exiles) which the Tsarist Monarchy inflicted on the revolutionaries — from the Decembrist Masons [6, л. 62] to the «Society of United Slavs» («Общество соединенных славян»), through to Populists both moderate and radical. In this context, that particular current of thought and action that went under the name of «Russian Populism» («Народничество») — which included several underground groups who, in the second half of the C19th, supported the socialist movement by engaging in the struggle to liberate the country from autocracy and so give power to the people—acquired the status of an inheritance to be treasured. A place of honour was reserved for the radical Populist party «People's Will» («Народная Воля», 1879–1887) on the grounds of its having upheld the socialist ideal despite persecution and prison, thereby elevating its members to the status of martyrs in a yet-to-be-written history of the fallen and redeemed. Their martyrdom provided a source of inspiration to succeeding generations of Russian dissidents, particularly during the period of the numerous open court political trials, which marked the years before and after the regicide on 13th March 1881 [7, c. 4, 42–43, 146–176].

One factor which at that time favoured the revival of interest in Populism was without doubt the plethora of primary sources that appeared thanks to the thorough overhaul of the Russian archival system — something mooted by the first Provisional Government in 1917 and eventually brought about under the supervision of the Narkompros (People’s Commissariat for Education of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic) in the following five-year period. In the aftermath of the October Revolution, the Populist movement was considered not only an inheritance to be exploited by the Party, but also an object of study for the purpose of telling a multi-voice story [8–9]. The newly founded cinematography of the Soviet Union also paid attention to the above-mentioned past, to such an extent that from the mid 1920s till the early 1930s nearly one third of the feature-films produced by the Soviet studios were concerned mainly with Russian revolutionary history [10–14]. The majority of these films were made with the help of historians and men of letters who could serve as professional screenwriters [15–16], if not actual witnesses of the revolutionary events—as in the case of the famous feature-film «Battleship Potiomkin» («Броненосец Потёмкин»), S. M. Eisenstein, 1925) [17, с. 46–54].

In the first ten years of Soviet Russia, historical-revolutionary films enjoyed a success with young audiences by adopting the genre of the costume melodrama, the plots of which focused on the story of the «important individual» — an historical paradigm that the institutional Soviet Marxist historiography of the time eventually avoided to adopt.

1 The historian N. A. Troitsky has shown how the judicial inquiries instructed by the Tsarist authority for crimes of a political order increased significantly over a period of almost twenty years (between 1872 and the end of the 1880s), amounting to two hundred for that period; among these, the investigative proceedings that saw the народоволец terrorists involved enjoyed ample publicity in the pages of one of the most widely-read papers of the time, namely «Русский Вестник», and attracted the attention of the international periodical press, helping to confer undisputed notoriety on the members of The People’s Will [7].

2 From a comparison of the data supplied by the two basic compilations—that contained in the catalogue «Советские художественные фильмы: аннотированный каталог» and that of Nikolai Lebedev—there emerges a concurrence equal to a third between the number of Soviet full-length films of the historico-revolutionary genre issued in the period 1924–1930 inclusive and the overall consistency of the national film production during the same span of time [10–11].
in its discourse\(^3\). For instance «The Palace and the Fortress» («Дворец и крепость», 1924) and «Stepan Khalturin» («Степан Халтурин», 1925) — both produced by one of the most prominent State companies as concerns the motion-picture industry of Petrograd, the «Sevzapkino» (North-Western Regional Photo and Film Administration) [19, c. 131–135], and both directed by A. V. Ivanovsky who was strictly tutored by the historian P. E. Shchiogolev—presented two stories centred on a small number of outstanding figures in the Russian radical Populist movement, chosen from those whom the Tsar in person sentenced either to life imprisonment or to death for conspiring regicide in Imperial Russia (M. S. Beideman, D. V. Karakozov, S. G. Nechaev, S. N. Khalturin).

«The Palace and the Fortress» and «Stepan Khalturin» were conceived together as an artistic project devoted to the theme of radical terrorism in autocratic Russia, and therefore they were, initially, both planned to appear in Soviet film-theatres in 1924, and possibly at the same time as the general release [20–21]. The first work preceded another important Soviet filmic account set in Tsarist prisons: «Iron Hard Labour» («Железная каторга», V. Barsky, 1924), an action-movie which was expected to become one of the hits of the season, and featured an episode relating to the history of the Bolshevik Party [22]. «The Palace and the Fortress» dramatised the vicissitudes of Michail Beideman, a promising young democrat born of a noble family in the Bessarabia Province. He forsakes his own class and professional background as a military officer (he is a lieutenant serving as a Junker, a member of the higher ranks of the Imperial Guard) to join the revolutionaries and become a typesetter in A. I. Herzen’s printing plant in London. Beideman espouses socialist ideas in order to further his plan to assassinate the Tsar\(^4\) and thus liberate the people, to whom he has pledged self-government [23–25].

«Stepan Khalturin» deals with the actions of the carpenter Stepan Khalturin, who joined the «People’s Will», and was hanged by Tsar Alexander III—whom he had earlier tried to assassinate — for his part in the assassination of Prosecutor-General Strel’nikov in 1882\(^5\). As late as 1929 both films continued to enjoy widespread distribution and popularity.

\(^3\) To investigate further the position adopted by Pokrovsky in the field of Soviet historical sciences during the years of the Leninist management and at the beginning of the Stalinist era, see the monograph by G. Enteen, one of the most complete works on this theme [18].

\(^4\) In the film released in 1924 (3000 metres long), Beideman’s historical character was turned into the type of the strong-minded terrorist who came back to the Motherland from Western Europe, where he had joined Garibaldi’s revolutionary units, eager to commit regicide. In the screenplay written by Shchiogolev, Beideman does not hide his project, when he is asked by the General Shubalov to provide a written confession for the Tsar: «Я видел в цареубийстве начало того движения, которое разрушит настоящий порядок вещей» [«I had seen in the method of regicide the beginning of that mainstream that would destroy this order of things»] [23, л. 20]. Beideman’s commitment to terrorism is made even more explicit as suggests the press of the time. One reviewer reports the words Beideman pronounces in the film when he is asked by Tsarist gendarmerie to state the reason for his return to Russia: «Я вернулся на родину, чтоб убить царя» [24].

\(^5\) A. Morozov, the actor that played Stepan Khalturin in the eponymous film, paid a public tribute to the glorification of Stepan Khalturin that the eponymous film was to achieve. In an article coeval with the film, the actor declared: «Такие темы, как Степан Халтурин, вызывающие в нашем представлении героические образы того прошлого, где закладывался фундамент нашей современности» [«Themes such as that one concerning Stepan Khalturin remind us of heroic images of that past over which the foundation of our contemporaneity lays»]. In this same article, Morozov revealed that «The Palace and the Fortress» and «Stepan Khalturin» should have come out together, in the same season, if it had not been for an accident that delayed it [21]. In 1924 the first film version of «Stepan Khalturin» was burnt during a chance fire, and «Sevzapkino» had a second copy prepared, a duplicate of the first, which entered the distribution market a year later, in 1925.
despite negative publicity by some Party critics. In particular, «The Palace and the Fortress» was a great success for the «Sevzapkino», that profited from it throughout time more than from other else film within its distribution chain [26]: thus it was screened on the occasion of the 7th anniversary of the October Revolution and would be shown for the jubilee celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the birth of the «People's Will» [27, л. 71, 106; 28].

«The Palace and the Fortress» was produced by the State company «Sevzapkino» —the cinematographic organ of the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party—which at the outset of its exporting activity had invested a large amount of money in its creation. The idea was to produce a grandiose Soviet film to be widely distributed not only at home but also abroad, Europe in particular. It was stated in a promotional article published in the Bolshevik newspaper «Pravda» that since the film novelized history in a passionate way, it perfectly fulfilled the task for which it had been sponsored by the State. Other reviews echoed this opinion, underlining how the drama emphasized the most enlightening aspects of some Populists’ heroic commitment to the Revolution [22; 29–34], but did not, however, give expression to the parallel social protest of the peasants, or a voice to the lower classes as the State production «Sevzapkino» — in the person of L. Nikulin, one of its leading screenwriters and chief administrators — had initially demanded [35–36]6.

Unlike most dramatisations of the period, «The Palace and the Fortress» was a costume melodrama that gave ample space to secondary plot lines. These introduced other, almost unknown, political convicts in the pursuit of socialism during the reign of Alexander II such as Dmitrii Karakozov and Sergei Nechaev, as Shchiogolev declared publicly in an interview [38]. These figures eventually enter into secret contact with the protagonist, the young revolutionary Beideman, as soon as they too became political convicts in the maximum security prison inside the Alexei barbican of the Peter-Paul Fortress. At the story’s centre is the tragic account of Beideman, who has gone down in history as the mysterious prisoner of the Peter-Paul Fortress, and hence named as the legendary Iron Mask of the Russian Bastille [37–39]7.

The action of «The Palace and the Fortress» takes place between 1860 and 1887: Beideman loves Vera Lagutin, the heiress of a wealthy landowner who has, however, planned for her a marriage of convenience to a rich old prince. Having given up all hope of Vera, who in the meantime has married into the upper echelons of the nobility, Beideman devotes himself to the cause of the annihilation of despotism. He therefore join the socialist movement and escapes abroad. In 1861, at the Russian border he is arrested and given a life sentence, without even a trial, by direct order of Tsar Alexander II. Being held in solitary confinement in a cell of the Alexei barbican for twenty years, Beideman eventually loses his mind, and so is committed to the psychiatric hospital of Kazan8.

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6 See the reviews appeared in «Известия» throughout 1924 and mentioned at the end of the present Paper.

7 The story of Beideman made very little impact in the legally published press before 1917, except for one article in which the author, A. S. Prugavin, called for contributors to shed light on the dossier of the «mysterious prisoner» called Shevich of the Peter-Paul Fortress, who would have worn an iron mask and, in the end, died there unidentified. Following this article, Prugavin wrote more on the Mysterious Prisoner essentially on the basis of the anecdotes reported by Nechaev in his writings (edited by Shchiogolev and published in «Byloe» in 1906, № 7) [39].

8 This synopsis corresponds to the subject of the film «The Palace and the Fortress» as presented in the new edition of the film released in 1937, the original of which is still preserved on safety print in the Russian State Film Archive (Gosfil’minofond).
Alexander Ivanovsky conceived «The Palace and the Fortress» as a visual transposition of the works of two other authors: the novel «Clad in Stone» («Одеты камнем», Olga Forsh, 1924–1925) and the historical account «The Mysterious Prisoner» («Таинственный узник», Pavel E. Shchiogolev, 1919–1924). «Clad in Stone» was one of the most popular historical novels of the 1920s: first published as a feuilleton in the journal «Россия» between 1924 and 1925, it was later printed in a single volume which ran to more than twenty editions, amounting to almost one million copies, and was accompanied by an historical essay depicting the life of the last prisoners in the Peter and Paul Fortress [40, с. 319, 329]. Its author, Ol’ga Forsh, made her own use of primary sources by combining them with memoirs so as to work out the language of the dialogues and the psychology behind them, and wrote the film synopsis which was completed by late 1923 [41, с. 262]9. Shchiogolev provided her with material since he had exclusive access to a very precious collection of archival material written by and related to Beideman as well as Nechaev. Afterwards, for the whole of 1923 till early 1924, he was involved in writing the technical screenplay for «The Palace and the Fortress» while Ivanovsky was staging it [42–44]10.

The main protagonist of the novel, as well as the film, is Beideman; he, together with another terrorist student, Dmitrii Karakozov (the first Russian revolutionary to make an attempt on the life of the Tsar in 1869), is presented as a flat character with no other inner drive apart from his blind political beliefs. Beideman is mortally convinced that one single deed could rouse the masses to revolt as, in the film, he asserts before Tsarist police. The second most important protagonist, Karakozov, would express this same conviction when he is tried and sentenced to death by the Supreme Court, in 1869. The latter made an attempt on the life of Alexander II because he wanted to carry out his own plan and not the plan of the «Hell» («Ад»), group to which, in the historical reality, he had sworn allegiance11. Driven by an inner force he deliberately behaves as a martyr. As is clearly stated in the chapter on the trial, both the lives of Beideman and Karakozov were made «holy» by the deeds they committed and the death they suffered [45, с. 260–266]12. In «Clad in Stone» Forsh made Beideman a solitary hero who acted in the vanguard of history as a sort of martyr, who died unknown for the glory of his revolutionary beliefs. This specific aspect of sacralisation given to the main protagonist appears to be somewhat pronounced in the dialogues invented by Forsh but returns to a far lesser degree in the film, which was otherwise firmly based on the novel.

The second book to act as a basis for «The Palace and the Fortress» was the novel «The Mysterious Prisoner» written by Shchiogolev, and was issued in 1920 by the publishing house of the scholarly journal «Byloe» («Былое»), which he had co-founded with V. L. Burtsev and V. Ya. Bogucharsky and to which as editor in chief, he made an important contribution. This book published for the first time extracts from the principal dossier on the Beideman’s case («Основное дело о Бейдемане — Архив III Отделения») [46]: this

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9 For her novel Forsh studied both original items from the archive and secondary literature on the story of Karakozov [41, с. 262–263].
10 A prime montage of the film was finished in January 1924, and soon afterwards its complete copy was first publicly screened on 15th February 1924. Then the film was shown for one year in several film theatres whilst exported abroad, and sold as the «Sevzapkino» chef d’œuvre to Germany and the United States [42].
11 In the mid 1860s, «The Hell» was the student conspirators’ group inner to the secret revolutionary Society named after its leader, Nikolai Ishutin, who was Karakozov’s cousin.
12 See the paragraphs dealing with the trial against Karakozov for having made an attempt on the life of the Tsar in the novel by Forsh [45, с. 260–266].
collection of documents, which had been preserved secretly till then in one exemplar, gave
the real reason why Beideman was condemned to life sentence in 1861, either it made of

There are many departures from Shchiogolev’s novel in its cinematic adaptation and,
among these, the most significant is unquestionably an excision: in the film the Leitmotif of
Beideman’s mysterious identity—a topic taken from Dumas to which the author calls the
reader’s attention in the opening paragraphs—is totally missing, whereas it was extensively
employed in the historical literature (albeit rather scant) prior to the 1917 Revolution as
well as in most of the promotional publications accompanying the film.

In the screenplay of «The Palace and the Fortress», Shchiogolev presented strong, soli-
tary personalities, who fully embodied political ideals, but it neither described the social
 crisis amid which these personalities made their appearance, nor placed them in the revolu-
tionary mainstream. As regards the film itself, this aspect was even made more perceptible:
the result was an exaltation of Populist individuals with their own ideals, only one of whom
was specifically designed to be a precursor of the Bolsheviks. Among these positive heroes
there was Sergei G. Nechaev, who was treated sympathetically in the subplot in which he
was involved [50–51]14.

However, Shchiogolev moulded Nechaev’s fictional character on grounds other than
those afforded by the memoirs that saw the light at the turn of the C19th. The historian
departed from the distinctly negative portrait of this revolutionary that had been produced
by the press as a result of the public trial which found Nechaev guilty of having caused the
death of the student I. I. Ivanov in 1869. Possibly, Shchiogolev re-shaped Nechaev’s portrait
built up in the past by many different voices and produced a rather positive image of him:
thus, he could contribute greatly to Nechaev’s biography by conveying visually the image
that had set out some years before, at the dawn of the 1905 Russian Revolution, in two eulo-
gistic articles on Nechaev which had cost him two months’ penal detention [52]. Likewise,
Shchiogolev commended Nechaev as an impressive revolutionary in 1921 during his les-
sons at the Faculty of History of the St. Petersburg State University [53–54].

Since 1917 Shchiogolev had been studying extensively the official reports provided by
the Tsarist police on Nechaev, part of a vast amount of archival material documenting the
lives of several protagonists of Russian revolutionary history. He had exclusive and direct
access to such items, being both the person in charge of directing the reordering of the
fonds of the Tsarist secret police departments (documents of the trials, written testimonies
such as missives and confessions) to be archived at the Museum of the Revolution in Petro-
grad, and an executive member of the Central ISTPART Commission (Committee for the
History of the October Revolution and the Russian Communist Party) [49; 55–57].

Shchiogolev narrowly elaborated extensive archival records for «The Mysterious Pris-
oner», records which he had originally been compiling as a chapter of a whole monograph
designed to retain and transmit a memory of the Russian Populism of the 1860s and 1870s
[58, c. 245–246]. Both books, «The Mysterious Prisoner» and «Clad in Stone», played a

13 Other archival dossiers covered the fundamentals of this first account of Beideman’s life and they
 contained official papers produced by the Third Section and the Commandant of the Peter-Paul Fortress in
 1860, and the Ministry of Justice in 1861 [49].

14 A number of institutional scholars drew attention to Kantor’s belles-lettres book and an argument arose
over whether to rehabilitate Nechaev or not. See the lively debate which took place in the pages of the journal
«Красный Архив» under the authority of ISTPART in the years 1922 (N 1), 1923 (N 3–4) and 1926 (N 14).
prime role in arousing genuine public interest in Russian Populism, precisely because for the most part they novelized unpublished items formerly belonging to the archives of the Tsarist Secret Police. This archival material, indeed, had come into the hands of the Bolsheviks through the process of normalizing the Russian archives that had been going on for six years—at first under the management of the TsKUA (Central Committee for the Administration of the Archives), chaired by D. B. Rjazanov, and later directed by the Glavarchiv (Main Archive Administration) supervised by the historian M. N. Pokrovsky [59, c. 1–142].

On the one hand, the «Sevzapkino» funded this specific film substantially so as to obtain a commercial work intended to both entertain and make a profit—as one clause in the 1924 budget for production expenses makes quite clear [60, p. 17]. On the other hand, «The Palace and the Fortress» was to meet the expectations of the Bolsheviks, i.e., transmitting to a large public an image of Populism that would redound to their own credit. In the staging phase, Ivanovsky dramatised as faithfully as possible, and in a vivid and striking way, the account that Shchiogolev gave him. This he did by incorporating the archival material he had to hand—after all, he was in charge of the Seventh Section—into a pre-planned scheme for obtaining a certain cinematic result, namely the martyrdom of the Populist hero set in an historical context to be revealed publicly for the first time. That the story was being revealed for the first time was emphasised by many preparatory reviews and advertisements for the book [61–62], and later for the film [34; 63–64], as well as by the promotional brochure that «Sevzapkino» printed with a front cover richly illustrated by Sergei Chekhonin, one of the most promising professional artists of the time [65].

In the final part of the film, Beideman, old and mentally ill, dies of a heart attack just after having recognized his beloved Vera, who appears to him, in 1887, twenty years after she had faded into oblivion. Then a number of historical characters belonging to different epochs are brought together in a very short sequence: Shchiogolev established an overt connection between the first successful regicide in Russia for Socialist commitment on the one hand, and the 1917 October uprising on the other. Soldiers, mariners, and workers attacking the Winter Palace are here presented as executors of that revolutionary process which the Populists started in 1881 by their act of regicide, and their followers and emulators had tried to accomplish by attempting to kill the new Tsar soon afterwards, in 1887.

Apart from V. I. Lenin, who would have even performed a bit part if he had not died during the making of the film [47; 48, c. 26 об.; 23, c. 44 об.], no other historical personality appears in this sequence, while the Bolsheviks are given a collective image rather than a mention in the captions, insofar as they are portrayed visually as a whole with the people in arms entering the White Hall of the Winter Palace and seizing power. In such a way, late C19th Populists deeds would find a crystal-clear accomplishment in the Bolshevik ascent to control over Russia, ascent that was to be acknowledged by the Soviet audience as resulting from a spontaneous mass striving performed by the people: crowds made up of soldiers, sailors and workers would act in close-up to overthrow the Provisional Government sitting in the White Hall and, in the end, seize power as Eisenstein would have later staged in the sequence of «The Storming of the Winter Palace» [«Взятие Зимнего дворца»]—ending his masterpiece «October» («Октябрь», 1927), another film strictly supervised by the ISTPART Petrograd Commission [66]. There is sound evidence of this Epilogue in the detailed literary screenplay that Shchiogolev composed and Ivanovsky thoroughly staged for duly directing the film, whose 1924 complete print is nowadays apparently missing.
«Эпилог [Epilogue]

396. Февральская революция смела царскую власть. [The February Revolution has swept away the power of the Tsar.]

397. Зимний дворец. Октябрь. Иорданский вход. Текут толпы солдат, матросов и рабочих. [The Winter Palace. In October. The Jordan Staircase. The flowing crowd of soldiers, sailors and workers.]

398. Белый зал. Толпа народа прорвалась в зал. [The White Hall. The crowd of people burst into the Hall.]

399. Кабинет Александра. Солдаты, рабочие наполнили кабинет. [The study of Alexander. Soldiers and workers have filled the study.]

400. Комната Николая. Рабочие, солдаты срывают портрет Николая. [Nicholas's room. Workers and soldiers tamper with Nicholas's portrait.]

401. Комната в архиве. Писатель Щёголев рассматривает дела узников равелина, он узнает, что таинственным узником был Бейдеман. [An inner room of an archive. The writer Shchiogolev examines the archival documents of the prisoners of the Ravelin, and comes to know that the mysterious prisoner was Beideman.]

402. Трубецкой бастион. Экскурсия детей на место уничтоженного равелина. Конец. [The Trubetskoï rampart. A tour of the place where the rubble of the Ravelin is to be found.]» [67, л. 44 об.]

Both Shchiogolev and Ivanovsky satisfied Bolshevik expectations by presenting the radical struggles of the in 1881 and 1887 as a preparation for the happy ending marked by the Epilogue described above. In other words, the conspiratorial plans foreseen by 1870’s extremist Populists were presented, in the film, as they would set the way for subsequent uprisings and find a crystal-clear accomplishment on the road to Revolution thanks to Bolshevik leadership. Despite the fact that they gave space to individuals and not masses as main actors in the story, both the historian and the director shared the Bolsheviks’ rigidly dialectical view of history inasmuch as they inserted into the melodrama two unquestionably direct connections—conceptual, such as the propaganda captions (N 396 and 397), and visual, such as the flash-forward to the Russian overthrow on 25th October 1917—between the glorious fight of the «People's Will» in the 1880s and the tumultuous ascent to power of the Bolshevik Party in 1917.

Though Shchiogolev had novelized a number of individual human stories (most importantly that of the pathetic Beideman) amid the very worst months of deep social unrest among the peasantry in the Kazan’ province (namely in the village of Bezdna) in the immediate outcome of the 1861 serfdom Reform, he attempted in the film to exceed this specific historical scenario. At the end of the narration he adopted the above-mentioned foreshadowing narrative device, which bound together two epochs: the one characterized by the Populist fight for the people against autocracy and the one starting with the Bolshevik seizure of power—as though they belonged to two consecutive stages of a common revolutionary historical process. Likewise a point in common binding the two temporal planes, the present and the past, characterised also the «Epilogue» of the newly set montage of «The Palace and the Fortress» that would be released by the Soviet censorship authorities six years later, on June 1930, and thereafter in 1932. On the one hand the images commemorat-
ed the people's upheaval in 1917 [«270. Революция смела царскую власть… Народ взял власть в свои руки и объявил своим достоянием недоступные царские дворцы…»] («270. The Revolution succeeds to the Tsarist power… The people have taken control and have proclaimed as their own the Tsarist palaces that before were inaccessible»), and on the other hand a view of the Peter-Paul Fortress committed to memory the sacrifice of Karakozov and Nechaev whose names were specified by the heading recalling their internment [«273. По этой дороге ехала тюремная карета с Каракозовым, с Нечаевым…»] («273. The prison coach with Karakozov and Nechaev followed this road») [27, л. 107].

In «The Palace and the Fortress» every episode was diachronically developed within a range of time covering almost three decades of the C19th (from early 1860 till late 1887), except for the «Epilogue» reported above — intentionally placed at one precise point in the filmic historical timeline, i. e. in 1917 and its aftermath—in order to make past and present coincide synchronically. Such a connection between Russian past and post-revolutionary present can also be found in «Veterans of the Russian Revolution» («Ветераны русской революции», Semën Posel'sky, 1924) [67], the non-fiction film that «Sevzapkino» had produced to commemorate on 12th March 1924 the first yearly «Day of the Society for Former Political Prisoners and Exiles» or else known as «The Day of Liberation from Prison» [«Праздник освобождения из тюрьем»] honouring Russian and internationalist political prisoners [68, л. 15]. In «Veterans of the Russian Revolution» documentary footage shot during a series of political conventions was organized together with miscellaneous material of a biographical type (mainly photographic portraits) supplied by the Central ISTPART Commission [69, с. 11]. This material was combined with commemorative captions and, therefore, was meant to pay homage to extremist Populists sentenced to hard labour and exile, even death, for having acted against the Tsarist system: P. I. Pestel', K. F. Ryleev, S. I. Murav'ev-Apostol', P. G. Kakhovsky, A. I. Herzen, M. A. Bakunin, L. G. Deich, S. G. Nechaev, the five members of the «People's Will» Executive Committee executed in 1881, notably A. I. Zheliabov, S. L. Perovskaia, N. I. Kibal'chich, N. I. Rysakov, A. D. Mikhailov, then S. F. Kovalik, N. A. Golovina, E. N. Koval'skaya, A. A. Kviatkovsky, A. I. Zundelevich, and many others—M. D. Berman, V. N. Figner, M. F. Frolenko, A. V. Yakimova-Dikovskaya, M. Yu. Ashenbrenner, M. V. Novorussky, M. P. Shebalin, M. A. Braginskii, S. V. Plekhanov. None of them had any other connection with Bolshevik Party except for the fact of having either survived or endured till the death years of prison for revolutionist ideals. Among these latter, Nechaev occupied a special position for having been the leading person in one of the first organized terrorist groups to pursue the annihilation of the Tsar by whatever means.

In «Veterans of the Russian Revolution» Nechaev’s story was treated at some considerable length: his spirited resistance to the Tsarist gendarmerie in the Alexei-Ravelin was conveyed by means of fictional footage that was taken from the second half of «The Palace and the Fortress» giving prominence to Nechaev’s last ten years spent in prison before dying in 1882. Both films featured his conviction for murder, the sentence to detention in 1872, the corporal punishment inflicted by Tsarist authorities before the people the following year and, subsequently, his incarceration in solitary confinement till death.

After having so far outlined how Shchiogolev constructed the narrative of «The Palace and the Fortress», I have come to the conclusion that the historian treated the Populists by focusing on two of them, Beideman and Nechaev, on whose specific individual stories he shed light by constructing a vivid narrative on them. However, their heroism rested only in
part upon their unique passionate tragedy as the idealists and terrorists of their day insofar as they were eventually glorified by an overt and forceful parallelism with the Bolshevik overthrow in 1917. When Shchiogolev took part in the project of «The Palace and the Fortress» he certainly suited the interests of the Party, which wanted to exploit history for its own purposes.

Specialist readers might be tempted to accuse Shchiogolev of compromising his professional integrity by following the Party line, and then producing what the Bolsheviks wanted at the expense of historical accuracy, especially as he expected to be warmly rewarded for what he would achieve as a screenwriter for the State motion-picture company «Sevzapskino» [43, л. 1–106. 2, 6]. Moreover, since at the time he was in charge of many institutional duties for the Party, he was certainly in a position to exploit his capacity, in the realm of professional historical writing, for serving corporate benefit. Whether or not such an assertion is justified is, however, beyond the scope of the present article. My primary concern has been to recount what Shchiogolev did, and to a certain degree explain why and in what context he did it. Another article, based on additional research, especially into Shchiogolev’s correspondence and unpublished autobiography [70, с. 285] as well as his personal documentation in the film-company’s fond [71], could see whether there is any foundation for the assumption that Shchiogolev as historian and Shchiogolev as screenwriter provides a classic case of «conflict of interests».

In-depth investigation of the issues arising out of the present essay could lead to the enlightening of topics that go beyond the specificity of my material subject — i. e. the screenplay of «The Palace and the Fortress» — and would concern the construction, in the early Soviet society, of a politically oriented memory strictly grounded on newly emerged archival material and, in good part, created by means of cinema.

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