

## The provincial intelligentsia and social values in Nižnij Novgorod, 1838-91

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THE HISTORY of the Russian intelligentsia in the nineteenth century has long had its accepted chronology. The 'parting of the ways' between state and educated society in the reign of Nicholas I was followed by a moment of consensus on the eve of reform, when even Alexander Herzen praised his royal namesake: 'Thou hast conquered, Galilean!' According to the classic picture bequeathed to us by the radical intelligentsia themselves, the upswing of 'going to the people' in the 1870s was followed by a lull in the 1880s when politics 'broke off, to be resumed only in the wake of famine in 1891. Here, I would like to trace a thread that runs counter to this story, by turning to the history of the intelligentsia from a *local* perspective. Bakunin, Cernysevskij, Lavrov, Nečaev, and other figures familiar from the history of Russian thought—and, it might be added, the revolutionary tradition—do not tell the whole tale of 'critically thinking individuals' in Russian society; nor do they exhaust the potential for the creation of 'social values' by such individuals. The life stories and ideas of Pavel Ivanovič Mel'nikov (1819-83), Aleksandr Serafimovič Gaciskij (1838-93), and Vasilij Vasil'evič Dokučaev (1846-1903) are closely intertwined with the history of Nižnij Novgorod province. Their evolution points at once to a different chronology, and to the existence of a provincial intelligentsia whose passionate engagement with things local provides a significant counterpoint to the apparent progression of Russian thought over the nineteenth century.

Pavel Ivanovič Mel'nikov is better known to us as the 'populist' author of the brilliant two-volume saga of Old Believer life, *V lesach* (1871-4) and *Na gorach* (1875-81). During the first forty-seven years of his life, however, mostly coinciding with the reign of Nicholas I, Mel'nikov made his career within the confines of Nižnij Novgorod province, where he was born. Mel'nikov grew up in the impenetrably forested district of Semenov, beyond the Volga, in a family of very petty gentry; his father was chief of police in the

provincial capital. Fascinated by history since childhood, Mel'ni-kov, at fifteen, joined the first generation of students from Nižnij to float down the Volga to receive a university education at Kazan'. The ten subsequent years were spent teaching history and statistics to high school students first in Perm' (an exile that resulted from a drunken evening at the university) and then Nižnij Novgorod. In 1840 his first literary effort appeared in *Literaturnaja gazeta*; this was a completely disastrous short story—an imitation of Gogol'—with the ridiculous title, 'O tom kto takoj byl Elpidifor Perfil'evič, i kakie prigotovlenija delalis' v Cernograde k ego imeninam' ('On who Elpidifor Perfil'evič really was and what arrangements were made for the celebration of his name day in Cernograd'). (It was supposed to be a spoof on provincial life but was hopelessly lumpy and provincial itself.) Mel'nikov's enthusiasm for archival work—he became the first to dig around in the hundreds of ancient documents lying untouched in the Kremlin tower—led him to a corresponding membership in the Archeographical Commission in St Petersburg, and eventually, at age 26, to a post as editor of the *Nižegorodskie gubernskie vedomosti* in 1845-50. His early life story was thus purely local—something that had only just become possible for an educated person.

Mel'nikov became a visible local figure precisely as the government of Nicholas I extended its reach into the provinces ; the Central Statistical Commission began its investigation of the empire, cadastral surveys were launched, the Imperial Geographic Society expanded its researches. Mel'nikov's prodigious appetite for knowledge coincided fully with the government's information-gathering enterprise, and led to the appointment as 'functionary for special tasks' (*členovnik osobych poručenij*) to the military governor, Prince Urusov, in 1847, and then to affiliation with the Ministry of Internal Affairs in St Petersburg by 1850. He received instructions to compile a general statistical survey of the province, a report on the state of the local Mordvinian population, an overview of trade at the Nižnij Novgorod fair, and his most important study, a secret report (1853-4) <sup>on the</sup> contemporary condition of the Old Belief in Nižnij Novgorod province. In the new reign, Mel'nikov's bureaucratic career took him to Moscow, where by 1866 he entered the employ of the governor-general.

Mel'nikov's status in Nižnij Novgorod, gained through his three major appointments—as provincial schoolteacher, editor of the *Gubernskie vedomosti*, and, finally, government bureaucrat—gave

him ample opportunity to influence local society. (Most of this time, incidentally, he was Vladimir Dai's neighbor on Pečerskaja Street—whence his eventual pseudonym, Andrej Pečerskij.) While the rank and file of his students evidently disliked him, he managed to provide the first spark of inspiration to the future historians S. V. Eševskij and K. M. Bestužev-Rjumin. Here, though, I would like to focus on his role as newspaper editor and as Nicholaevan *činovnik*. What views and principles characterized his tenure in these two offices?

The *Gubernskie vedomosti* had been founded in 1838, as part of Nicholas I's impulse for hands-on control of the far-flung regions of the empire. Until the 1870s, this remained legally the only locally published newspaper. The *vedomosti* emerged transformed on the very first day of Mel'nikov's editorship. A festive introduction (5 January 1845) announced the new editorial program. Striving to penetrate readers' souls with the spirit of Russian nationality (*duchom msskoj narodnosti*), the publication would be dedicated to the 'monuments of our [collective] childhood' (*pamjatniki detstva*), while paying equal attention to contemporary life. The rhetoric was of course fully in keeping with Nicholas I's intentions. Nonetheless the two-pronged formula: history on one hand, 'local color' on the other, was real, and could be achieved only by genuine local initiative. Initially Mel'nikov wrote all the articles himself; by 1847 he had 19 collaborators.

What vision of history did Mel'nikov propose in the *vedomosti*? It was above all *local*—though on a good scholarly level. Early on, Mel'nikov acquainted his readers with the myth of Nižnij Novgorod's origins: the city was founded by the Mordvinian prince Sparrow, who had eighteen wives. The soothsayer, Woodpecker by name, predicted that if Sparrow's children lived in peace among themselves all would be well; if they quarreled, they would be conquered by the Russians (*Nižegorodskie gubernskie vedomosti*<sup>11</sup> 1845:3). On another occasion, the *vedomosti* recounted how Dmitrij, the last Nižnij Novgorod grand prince in the second half of the fourteenth century, managed to play Moscow off against the Tatar khan while simultaneously keeping the Mordvinians and Bulgars at bay (NGV, 1845: 38-9). Readers could get an acute sense of Nižnij's history as a border outpost against the Kazan' khanate: one document recorded the story of 300 Lithuanian prisoners in the city

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<sup>1</sup> Henceforth: NGV.

in 1506, who were promised their freedom if they saved the city from Mehmet Amin (NGV, 1845:3). Another Lithuanian cannon, which locals were not really competent to use, accidentally hit a besieging Nogai murza, thus concluding the only serious military action ever to take place within the city (this was in 1506) (NGV, 1846:51). There were also plenty of fascinating materials on the local hero Koz'ma Minin, on Patriarch Nikon's childhood (NGV, 1845:2) and on the literary circles that took refuge in Nižnij Novgorod during Napoleon's invasion of Moscow and that included Karamzin, Bantys-Kamenskij, Neledinskij-Meleckij, V. L. Puškin, Batjuškov, and others (NGV, 1845: 58-9). Throughout, not only the material but the spirit was local: thus, despite Mel'nikov's patriotic introduction, the stories consistently recounted moments of glory in which local figures had been able to hold their own against the power-grasping center. The 'origins' myth is particularly telling: this was a *Mordvinian* tale, in which Russian conquest was presented in negative fashion.

I think it is worth remarking that Mel'nikov was promoting his local vision at the same time that Gogol' was doing the same for Malorossija (fragments of his history of Malorossija, which he characteristically destroyed, were published in the *Arabeski*.) In these years as well, Sergej Solov'ev was engaged on his voluminous history of Russia with the opposite perspective—the continuous tale of the gathering of the Russian lands and the steady aggrandizement of central power. Thus the *vedomosti* was Mel'nikov's organ for constructing an alternative, decentralized, version of Russian history.

Mel'nikov's presence equally infused color and emotion into the *vedomosti's* representation of contemporary local life. Statistical tables were replaced by more pointed parcels of information, for example the names of the sixty local landowners in possession of more than 1,000 souls (the largest were the Seremetev family, who collectively owned almost 25,000), the numbers of merchants by guild and by district (NGV, 1846: 28), the amount of capital declared by merchants in Nižnij Novgorod district (NGV, 1846:26), and so on. Along with home remedies, readers could now learn about the causes and incidence of the diseases they were supposed to cure: Mel'nikov's *vedomosti* detailed the possible damaging effects of the local environment (for Semenov district: 'In springtime the raw air causes catarrhs, rheumatic disorders and recurrent fevers. In summer bile fevers and vomiting. Towards the end of summer diarrhea

with chills, mucus, swelling, and bile.<sup>2</sup>), as well as of industrial practices (manufacture of wooden spoons and oil (*olifa*) polluted the air and caused cachexy in workers (NGV, 1846:63)). Epidemics were painstakingly documented. When cholera struck in 1847, readers in this strategic trading city, whither the disease travelled up the Volga from Astrachan', were kept constantly informed of its progress.

Both in historical writing and in local reporting, then, the *vedomosti* under Mel'nikov's editorship began to reflect local themes and interests, and even became the forum for a rudimentary effort at local self-definition.

Even while he was editor, however, Mel'nikov also wore a second hat—that of loyal state servitor. In this capacity, his main achievement was the secret report on the Old Belief in Nižnij Novgorod province. Most striking about this report, which was published only in 1911 under the auspices of the Nižnij Novgorod Provincial Archival Commission, was the prodigious and highly specific information it contained. Part I not only calculated the exact number of Old Believers in the province (170,506, as opposed to the mere 20,000 in the official governor's report), but pinpointed their precise places of residence (mostly in Balachna, Gorbatov, Knjagin, and Semenov), their distribution by social class (*soslo-vie*)—755 merchants, 7,034 *meščane* and artisans, 159,646 peasants and 3,071 military; the names of the several gentry Old Believers were also listed—and their migratory patterns. Mel'nikov was able to decipher the linguistic codes in which the Old Believers wrote their letters and to describe the workings of the 'Old Believer mail', including the exact names of the 'postmasters' (Mel'nikov 1910,96-101). The report also described, in painstaking detail, every one of the remaining sketes (hermitages)—there had been 94 before their destruction by Pitirim in the early eighteenth century, of which 16 remained by the 1840s; it counted all their inhabitants, and found hitherto unknown gathering-places of Old Believers, including those formed after some were closed in 1853. Mel'nikov recounted the history of the prominent Gorodec chapel, with its 50,000

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<sup>2</sup> «Весною сырость воздуха бывает причиною катаральных, ревматических страданий и перемежающихся лихорадок. Летом желчные горячки и поносы. Каждогодно к концу лета появляются нередко натужные ноносы простудного, слизистого, воспалительного и желчного свойства.» (NGV, 1846:62)

parishioners; and compiled a fascinating ethnographic account of Old Believer life and rituals, including commerce in old books and icons.

The report's inspiration, however, was not purely scientific: its author's evaluations and recommendations were unambiguous, and indeed reminiscent of Magnickij at Kazan' University a quarter-century earlier. With respect to the Gorodec chapel, for example, Mel'nikov advised, if it were not judged prudent to destroy it completely, at least to wreck all buildings around it, dig a moat around the cemetery, and remove the cross and basically all liturgical implements; so well did Mel'nikov know his subject that he could even recommend filling the hole in which baptismal water was poured and destroying the two rooms attached to the chapel, where truant Orthodox priests held confession (Mel'nikov 1910, 177-8). Likewise for the sketes, the ideal was

for the decisive termination of the temptations for the Orthodox represented by the sketes and for the ending of the debauchery of these schismatic gathering-places and dens of various immoral kinds—to *destroy the sketes completely*, never again allowing any building on their site except communities of the *edinoverie*; to transfer the schismatic inhabitants with families to other villages under state jurisdiction, and those without families—to Semenov, where local police supervision should allow them no movement outside the town.<sup>3</sup>

What is significant here is that Mel'nikov's intimate knowledge of the Old Belief—possible only through years of coexistence and research—, coupled with his genuine enthusiasm and belief in the necessity of conversion to Orthodoxy, made him a key player in the unfolding drama of the revitalized state campaign against the Old Belief. The repercussions for Nižnij Novgorod, with its major sketes of Kerženec and Semenov, and its significant concentration of wealthy and powerful Old Believer merchants, were of course immediate; and it is here that Mel'nikov's presence made an essen-

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<sup>3</sup> «для решительного прекращения происходящего от скитов соблазна православным и для положения конца беспутству этих раскольнических скопищ и притонов безнравственности всякого рода — следовало бы все скиты уничтожить совершенно, не позволяя на месте их никогда никаких построек, кроме единоверческих обителей; раскольников, приписанных к скитам и живущих семействами, перевести в ближайшие деревни ведомства государственных имуществ, а не живущих семействами — выселить в город Семенов, где надзор за ними возложить на местную полицейскую власть и не позволять им из Семенова никаких отлучек.» (Mel'nikov 1910, 156)

tial difference. On instruction from the government, Mel'nikov launched on an intensive investigation of the way of life of the Old Believer sketes and communities beyond the Volga—an investigation that opened the way to an unprecedented regulation followed by the closing of many sketes in the 1850s. Mel'nikov personally seems to have been responsible only for two specific actions—the conversion to *edinoverie* of a skete in 1847, <sup>and</sup> the removal in 1848 of the icon of the Kazan' Mother of God from the Sarpanskij skete to an Orthodox Church (a symbolic act which local Old Believers considered to signal the end of their faith). Yet his work was accompanied by the government's expulsion of many of the sketes' inhabitants, the destruction of six sketes and of many buildings in the remaining ten, and the closing of a series of Old Believer chapels. The success of the Nicholaevan ideal of control through knowledge depended on the enthusiasm, expertise, and cooperative spirit of purely local figures like Mel'nikov.

To all appearances, Mel'nikov promoted two contradictory sets of values: on the one hand he stood definitively for local self-definition and self-affirmation; on the other, he epitomized the type of a loyal and enthusiastic state servitor (*revnostnyj anovnik*), contributing to the annihilation of the very diversity he himself sought to encourage.

Aleksandr Serafimovič Gaciskij was born in Rjazan' in 1838 (the date, he could not fail to note, of the establishment of the *Gubernskie vedomosti* throughout Russia). His life story replicates Mel'nikov's with extraordinary precision—with adjustments for a later era. He was a Lutheran—his father was of Polish noble origin though born in Gorodec (in Balachna district of Nižnij Novgorod province), and his mother the offspring of vaguely defined Trench emigrants'. Brought by his parents to Nižnij Novgorod when he was nine, Gaciskij showed early literary inclinations: his archive is full of childhood diaries and short stories. He studied at Kazan' University where the boisterous atmosphere, on his own account, made it difficult to learn anything; a brief stint at St Petersburg University followed. Here he managed to get a short piece called 'Zapiski oficera' published in the literary journal, *Iskra*.

Gaciskij's future was determined by the timing of his return to Nižnij Novgorod: this was the fateful year 1861 when, as he put it, the

era of liberation... moved many people to the forefront At a time of spiritual uplift, of general energy, strength, and hope, everyone who feels God's spark in him abandons his reluctantly inhabited hole and gives himself, so far as his strengths and talents allow, to the common enthusiasm.<sup>4</sup>

Gaciskij immediately decided to devote the whole of his energies to the new challenges facing the Russian provinces. In other words, for the next thirty years, he was and did everything possible in and around the *gubernija* in which he lived—what he jokingly called *nižegorodovedenie* and *nizegorododelanie*.

His first task was something known at the time as 'enlivening' (*oživlenie*) the local *Gubernskie vedomosti*—that is, augmenting the 'unofficial' section that supplemented the newspaper's official government announcements. Gaciskij's curriculum vitae is a whirlwind of local activity: founder of the local statistical committee and editor of its papers, president of the local provincial archival commission, member of the *zemstvo* (at moments when he was able to meet the property qualification!) and at one time its president, author of some 400 articles on local history, popular religion, archeology, ethnography and statistics. Many of his endeavors were inspired by the same epistemological stance that shaped his biographical project: the introduction to volume VII of *Nižegorodskij sbornik*, for example (the organ of the Nižnij Novgorod Statistical Committee, which Gaciskij edited), proclaimed its purpose as the investigation of all possible aspects of the popular life of the *Nižegorodskoe Povolž'e* in its *past* and its *present*, and, so to speak, from an eternal and all-embracing rather than a temporary perspective—by publishing primarily source materials for its study..<sup>5</sup>

All these activities, by the way, he financed by an official post as (like Mel'nikov) 'functionary for special tasks' for the provincial governor.

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<sup>4</sup> «Освободительная эпоха... выдвинула у нас многих... В пору подъема духа, общей бодрости, крепости и надежд, всякий, чувствующий в себе божью искру, покидает свою подневольно-насиженную нору, отдает себя, по мере сил и способностей, общему увлечению.» (Gaciskij 1887, 223-4)

<sup>5</sup> «исследование всех, по возможности, сторон народной жизни Нижегородского Поволжья в его прошлом и настоящем, и при том не с какой-то временной, а, так сказать, с вечной и многообъемлющей точки зрения — путем печатания преимущественно материалов для познания о них...» (Save'ev 1893,4).



Gaciskij was no less—and probably more—a promoter of the local principle than Mel'nikov. As a laudatory speech soon after his death remarked, he 'devoted his entire life to raising the significance of local, provincial interests of local history, to imparting meaning to facts connected with local life'.<sup>6</sup> The same author attributed to him the invention of the 'idea of provincial autonomy and self-development', while another held him responsible for the idea of 'local self-consciousness'—the 'basic and guiding idea of his entire working life as a scholar and writer'.<sup>7</sup>

What then were the elements of Gaciskij's provincial idea, and how did it differ from Mel'nikov's? Gaciskij formulated his particular 'provincial idea' in part in the context of a heated polemical exchange, begun by the Petersburg publicist D. L. Mordovcev in 1875, over the relation between capitals and provinces. Gaciskij's pamphlet, *Smert' provincii Hi net?* (1876), catapulted him into the national limelight. His first argument was a fairly obvious one-decentralization. Simultaneously with the growing force and attraction of the capital cities, Gaciskij saw an expansion of provincial life and energy: 'along with the significance of the capital, other, so-called provincial centers, *are beginning to have*, and therefore *will have and should have* significance.'<sup>8</sup> The provincial press, far from having tried its wings and failed, was only in its early stages. The center was only as strong or weak as the multiplicity of regional centers that made up the notion of 'province'; true progress consisted in the infinitely broad dispersal and dissemination of knowledge and intellect, not just concentrated in the 'one' but spread throughout the 'many' (Gaciskij 1876, 7). This notion of the interconnection and mutual reinforcement of center and province found poetic expression in a jubilee celebration staged in 1889 to celebrate the 700th birthday of Nižnij Novgorod's founder, Prince Georgij Vladimirovič. On this occasion, a commemorative poem by A. I. Zvezdin compared the prince, by association with Puškin, to Peter the Great, positioned at the intersection of the Oka and Volga rivers rather than on the banks of the Neva:

<sup>6</sup> «всю свою жизнь посвятил на то, чтобы поднять значение местных, областных интересов местной истории, чтобы придать смысл фактам, совершившимся в районе местной жизни» (Save'ev 1893, 3).

<sup>7</sup> «Эта точка зрения руководила им в течении всей его научно-литературной деятельности» (Zvezdin 1893, 8)

<sup>8</sup> «рядом с значением столицы начинают иметь, а следовательно и будут иметь и должны иметь значение и другие, так-называемые провинциальные центры.» (Gaciskij 1876, 3)

Передо мной счастливое стеченье  
Двух русских многоводных рек...  
Досель их важного значенья  
Не понял русский человек !...  
Без жертв напрасных и без боя  
Я этот угол за собою,  
За Русью, укрепить могу, —  
И будет этот холм прибрежный  
Оплотом от мордвы мятежной,  
Отпором русскому врагу...  
(*bvezdin 1889, g 1-2*)

It is interesting, too, that the local Mordvinians, with whom Mel'nikov had easily identified, had now become the enemy, replacing the Swedes in Puškin's poem and thus affirming Nižnij Novgorod's allegiance to St Petersburg.

Gaciskij's second argument was as simple but more interesting in its implications. The *stoličnaja* intelligentsia, he argued, had acquired their favorite obsession—the *narod*—with the help of the provinces. Now this fixation on the *narod* was making them miss the real point. Hung up on reaching and communicating with the peasants, they looked past what was really important, and what would hit them in the face if they didn't willfully make themselves blind: this was *provincija*, the significant and steadily growing 'middling' population of Russia's regional centers and zemstvos which was becoming the backbone of Russian society and which, Gaciskij felt, had as good a claim to being the *narod* as anyone else. The capitals did not see the strength of the provinces for the simple reason that they ignored them: Petersburg which, with the help of the provinces, arrived at the necessity of studying the *narod*, but still has not seen the necessity of studying *provincija*<sup>9</sup>. *Provincija* stood for much more than geography: it referred to the middle strata of Russian society who were becoming increasingly active in the postreform period, yet whose existence remained unacknowledged by the prevailing *soslovie* system.

Gaciskij proposed his solution in a project, parts of which were published in the proceedings of the Nižnij Novgorod Provincial Archival Commission, called *Ljudi Nižegorodskogo Povolž'ja*. This

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<sup>9</sup> «Петербург [Г], который, с помощью провинции, додумался до необходимого!! и исследования народа, но еще не додумался до необходимости исследования провинции» (Gaciskij 1876,19).

was a collection of biographies, in painstaking detail, of local figures, constructed on Gaciskij's carefully formulated historio-graphical principle.

If it were possible, history should take as its task the detailed biography of each and every person on the earth without exception, because it is difficult to determine what in life belongs independently to each individual, what took seed in him from his contemporaries, what he received from his predecessors, and what from the world outside him in general. But such a task is of course beyond the powers of history, and therefore it must deal only with personalities that are outstanding in one or another respect, whose degree of historical significance is of course not absolute. Humanity has its kind of genius, peoples have another, provinces—still a third type.<sup>10</sup>

Characteristically, Gaciskij's principle was a blend of hyper-positivism—history as the totality of individual biographies—with the spirit of the 'small deed'. If the ideal of total biography was beyond reach, we could at least chart the path taken by some local personalities. With this inspiration in mind, Gaciskij collected dozens of biographies of figures like P.O. Bankal'skij—*meščanin*, bar-owner, petty merchant, and author of two major books that tried to reconcile the claims of religion and science; A. V. Stupin (1776-1861), founder of a well-known icon-painting school in the wilds of Nižnij Novgorod *gubemija*; L. P. Kosickaja (1829-68), beloved local actress.<sup>11</sup> Twentieth-century scholarship has devoted a good deal of energy to the discussion of Russia's supposedly missing middle class (see, recently, Balzer 1996 and Clowes, Kassow & West 1991). Gaciskij's suggestion is at least worth exploring, more than 100 years later: simple description in a collective biography can reveal what sociological analysis finds elusive.

A third element of Gaciskij's provincial vision complemented the principle of biography. This was a passion for statistics, and indeed for record-keeping of all sorts. Gaciskij was appointed head of the local statistical commission in 1862, under the governorship

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<sup>10</sup> «Если-бы это было возможно, история должна-бы иметь своей задачей подробнейшие биографии всех и каждого без исключения людей земного шара, так как трудно определить, что в жизни принадлежит самостоятельно каждому отдельному лицу, что запало в него от его современников, что воспринято им от его предшественников, или вообще от мира, вне его стоящего. Но такая задача конечно непосильна истории, и потому ей приходится иметь дело лишь с выдающимися в той или другой мере личностями, степень исторического значения которых конечно не безотносительна. Человечество имеет своих гениев, народы — других, области — третьих и т.д.» (Gaciskij 1887, vii)

<sup>11</sup> For a perspective on some these biographies, see Evtuhov 1998.

of the liberal A. A. Odincov. In this capacity, he produced the first complete *pamjatnaja knižka* for the province in 1865, and continued to compile them every few years.<sup>12</sup> As editor of the *Gubernskie vedomosti*, Gaciskij tried to hijack them and convert them into an organ of the local statistical commission. The culmination of these descriptive efforts was his *Nižgorodka* (1877), which presented a vision of local history in the guise of a simple guide to the region, and provided an exhaustive description of the region's economy, society, and civic life. Yet Gaciskij's true vocation was the study of small-scale industry and manufactures (*kustamajapromyslennost'*). In 1860 he had defended a dissertation on leather manufacture at Kazan' University, having spent a summer collecting materials in Berlin, Bad Kissingen, Main-am-Rhein, Paris, Brussels, and Aachen. Volumes 7-10 of the statistical commission's primary publication, *Nižgorodskij sbornik*, were under his direction dedicated to a remarkable study of artisanal production in various districts of Nižnij Novgorod—an extraordinarily sensitive investigation, as much ethnography as statistics, detailing the precise methods of manufacture of everything from fishnets to woolen boots, conditions of trade and credit, and sanitary conditions.

Gaciskij's provincial idea surpassed Mel'nikov's in sophistication. Moving beyond mere self-affirmation, Gaciskij presented a specific elaboration of local values, positing the importance of the province to the life of the center; biography and statistics became concrete and urgent tasks in the postreform vitalization of Russia's provinces. If two contradictory personae had managed to coexist side by side in Mel'nikov, the interrelation of local patriotism and state service was more intricate for Gaciskij. Gaciskij's career in state service was checkered at best. Up to 1873, his progress up the ladder of ranks was routine and regular: promotion to *tituljarnyj sovetnik* in 1866 (his university diploma granted an automatic *kolležskij sekretär'*, or 10 in the Table of Ranks), *kolležskij assessor* in 1869, and *nadvornyj sovetnik* in 1873. From then on, though, the appointment of a new conservative governor, Count Pavel Kutaj-sov, put a halt to his advancement (their conflicts included a letter by Kutajsov to Minister of the Interior A. E. Timašev, dated 15

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<sup>12</sup> Beginning in the 1850s, the *pamjatnye kniiki* were published, by the provincial statistical committees, throughout Russia. They contained a wealth of material on local life, as well as historical articles and listings of local officials and institutions. The provincial *pamjatnye kniiki* have recently themselves become the object of catalogization (see Balackaja 1994; *Pamjatnye kniiki* 2002).

October 1879, with an indictment of Gaciskij's character for living 'in sin' with a woman who was formally married to someone else) (Aleksandrov 1939, 92-4). The 'rebirth' of politics in 1891 found him caught between a state that suspected him of separatism and an intelligentsia that had little patience for his careful and quiet researches. His bitterness becomes evident at various junctures. Gaciskij died in 1893.

At first glance, little might seem to link the renowned Petersburg soil scientist Vasilij Dokučaev with Mel'nikov or Gaciskij. Dokučaev was born in Smolensk. He was educated at the local seminary, and then pursued his studies at the physical-mathematical faculty of St Petersburg University. Subsequently, he became curator of the university museum's geological collection and professor of minerology there and at the Institute of Civil Engineering. As his biographer notes, in a time when the exploration of distant regions was becoming fashionable, Dokučaev chose to focus his urge to discovery on the depths of the Russian provinces (Krupenikov 1949). He began his career with a study of riverbanks in his native Smolensk province, and then launched a series of expeditions to central and northern Russia and Finland, the southern steppes, Crimea and the North Caucasus, in pursuit of data for his studies of river formation and the Russian black soil. In this context, between 1882 and 1888, Dokučaev's name became inextricably linked with Nižnij Novgorod province; he accepted an invitation from the Nižnij Novgorod zemstvo to conduct a fully scientific, professional, and exhaustive study of the province, district by district, to evaluate the soil quality and potential productivity of absolutely every parcel of land. In terms of Dokučaev's own scientific career, the project was essential to his magisterial work, *Russkij cernožëm*, which earned him the doctoral degree and which made his name as one of the founders of the discipline of soil science.

Beginning in 1882, and for three summers running, Dokučaev and a team of three students arrived on the scene and spent their days combing the province, describing every stream and forested glade, every field and every ravine. They were methodical and thorough, dedicating the first summer to the southeast corner of the province (Lukojanov, Sergač, and Knjaginin districts); the second to the central province (Arzamas, Ardatov, Gorbatov, Nižnij Novgorod), and concluding in 1884 with the densely forested dis-

tricts beyond the Volga—the ancient refuge of the Old Belief (Makar'ev, Vasil', Semenov, and Balachna). There are some interesting aspects to the procedure itself: each researcher was supposed to keep a detailed daily journal, describing every type of soil, vegetation, and rock formation he came across; they moved *volost'* by *volost'*, in every case accompanied by the village elder—who, it barely needs mentioning, in the absence of written documentation, would prove an extraordinary repository of information about land boundaries, disputes, and changes in the land contour over time. To Dokucaev himself fell the task of coordination as well as an independent collection of samples. The finds were then catalogued and analyzed in a laboratory back in St Petersburg, and the results painstakingly recorded on a soil map (*počvennaja karta*), thus yielding a full geological and topographical portrait of the entire province. The scientists originally organized their investigation along the natural orographic and hydrographic boundaries of the region—i.e. in accordance with riverbeds and geological contours — but were requested by the zemstvo board to recraft the whole study using the artificial, political district boundaries to make the information usable for practical purposes.<sup>13</sup> In the late 1880s Dokučaeв headed similar expeditions to Poltava and to individual domains (those belonging to Naryskin and Voroncov-Suvalov among others).

With Dokučaeв, the discussion of the provincial intelligentsia and social values shifts onto a new plane. Though not a local figure himself, Dokučaeв possessed the technical and intellectual resources to bring to fruition some of the values that *provincija* (as defined by Gaciskij) held highest. The Dokučaeв expedition represented, first, the introduction of scientific precision and accuracy into the process of land measurement, in the interests of scientific management of agriculture and equality in the distribution of the tax burden. The project conceived by the zemstvo and executed by Dokučaeв was essentially the creation of a local *cadaster*. As such, it constituted the culmination of a series of efforts, over a long period of time, by both state and local authorities. The first cadastral surveys were initiated in the 1840s; Nižnij Novgorod was surveyed and catalogued in the mid-1850s (Dokučaeв [1886a], 19). But the

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<sup>13</sup> The materials of the expedition were published as *Материалы к оценке земель нижегородской губернии: естественно-историческая часть* (Ниžний Новгород, 1884-); they are reproduced in their entirety in vols 4-5 of the Soviet edition of Dokučaeв's collected works (Dokučaeв 1949-61 ).

task took off in earnest in the 1870s, when the zemstvos began their own process of assessing the land under their jurisdiction.<sup>14</sup> The Nižnij Novgorod study that began in 1882 was merely the latest and 'most perfect\* cadastral survey.<sup>15</sup> The results were sophisticated enough, when subsequently combined with a parallel investigation into economic conditions by the zemstvo statistician N. F. Annen-skij, to earn the Nižnij Novgorod method its own name in the system of zemstvo statistics—the 'territorial/cadastral' method (see Annenskij 1894). We might even see the Nižnij Novgorod investigation as a sort of ideal type, where the most advanced scientific methods available resulted in a thorough description of the entire province in both biological/geological and socio-economic terms.<sup>16</sup> While land ownership was taken into account as one of many parameters to be considered, property boundaries were not recorded on the map.<sup>17</sup> This is extremely unusual, since property ownership is in fact usually the single main criterion used in drafting cadastral maps ; in all likelihood, it reflects the limited utility of keeping such a record in a period where—as the materials themselves amply document—property ownership was very much in flux.<sup>18</sup> Thus the much more difficult task of scientific evaluation of the land was considered more urgent than a simple drawing of property boundaries.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> The 'parting of the ways' between zemstvo and administrative statistics was addressed already in Koren 1918, and has been reiterated in Darrow 1996, Mespoulet 1999, and elsewhere. Much of the history of descriptions of Nižnij Novgorod (from travelogues to statistical descriptions to guidebooks and histories), on the other hand, remains to be told.

<sup>15</sup> It is curious that another cadaster that earned the label 'perfect' was the map of the island of Putten, southwest of Rotterdam, made in 1617. Like the Nižnij Novgorod cadaster, it was commissioned locally—by the dike reeve and the *hooheemraden* (roughly analogous to the zemstvo board) of Putten itself, and drafted by the surveyor Daniel Schillincx. The equitable distribution of taxes was an acute problem in the seventeenth-century Netherlands because of the need to finance the construction and maintenance of dikes. This particular cadaster was used for tax collection for more than 250 years (Kain & Baigent 1992, 13-15).

<sup>16</sup> Incidentally a survey of the province's fauna was also under way, prompting Dokučaev to speak of Nižnij Novgorod as the region where the ideal of a complete cataloguing of 'all three Kingdoms of Nature' would be realized (Dokučaev[1886b],341).

<sup>17</sup> Names of peasant villages and *pomest'ja* alternate on the maps but their boundaries are not indicated.

<sup>18</sup> In the districts I have been able to review, much of the transfer of land was from gentry to peasant communes, except in Semenov, where wealthy merchants bought up most of what was offered, consolidating their status of a local elite with the further attribute of land ownership.

<sup>19</sup> In this sense the Nižnij Novgorod cadaster follows a Russian tradition. Isabel de Madariaga notes about the Catherinian land survey, launched in 1765, that it too did not delimit individual estates, and sought to incorporate labor rather than land as a decisive factor. 'Thus the basic principle was not the property rights of an individual landowner, but the establishment of the amount and the boundaries of the land which belonged to a given village, whether it had one or several owners or belonged to the state.' (de Madariaga, 109-10)

The Nižnij Novgorod cadaster was more than a triumph for natural science. It also represented the culmination of the passion for information promoted, in different ways, by local figures. The same spirit that inspired the endless statistical investigations reported in the *Gubernskie vedomosti*, the *Pamjatnye knižki*, as well as Mel'nikov's secret state reports and Gaciskij's effort at total biography, infused the Dokučaev expedition.

Dokučaev's contribution to the provincial idea had a second element. In 1882, Dokučaev wrote a proposal for a provincial natural history museum in Nižnij—the first of its kind in Russia. It would have two aspects: a scientific institution for studying all aspects of the provincial environment, and a means of teaching the local population the basic truths of natural science (Dokučaev [1882], 303). The museum, actually established in 1885, displayed not only samples of the variety of soils the Dokučaev expedition had collected in the region, but the local flora and fauna, rocks and minerals, and maps of various sorts. The Nižnij Novgorod museum became the prototype of an immensely popular network of such institutions throughout Russia: by 1888 plans for provincial natural history museums were approved by a commission of scientists in St Petersburg, and implemented in different provincial centers (Dokučaev [1888], 313-14). The word, 'museum', for inhabitants of provincial Russia, was associated much more with such representations of their natural environment than with painting or sculpture. Interestingly, it was the mystical hyper-positivist philosopher Nikolaj Fedorov (1828-1903), with his penchant for treating material objects as if they were philosophical concepts (see Masing-Delic 1992), who expressed a theoretical justification for the natural history museum:

The museum is the collection of everything irrelevant, dead, unusable; but for this very reason it is the hope of our age, for the existence of the museum shows that there are no completed tasks....There is nothing hopeless for the museum, nothing for which a funeral service has already been said, i.e. impossible to revivify and resurrect; for the museum even the dead are carried



from cemeteries, even prehistoric ones; it not only sings and prays like a church, it also works for all the suffering and for all the dead!<sup>20</sup>

Dokučaev's scientific theories and their possible implications for practice are of course far from exhausted in this cursory sketch. But my point here has been merely to show that his Nižnij Novgorod researches fit into the system of provincial values so important for the other two figures. The cadaster and the museum brought the provincial passion for knowledge onto an entirely new level; their creators were only too well aware of their potential transformative effect, both for local society and for local intellectual life.

With the possible exception of Mel'nikov, the three names I have looked at here do not usually appear in chronicles of nineteenth-century intellectual history; nor am I proposing that they should. But I would like to suggest that they represent a phenomenon—distinct from, if sometimes intersecting with, the filiation of ideas that we are accustomed to associate with 'the intelligentsia'—that may have been equally important in shaping how inhabitants of the Russian provinces lived and thought. This provincial intelligentsia espoused a rich spectrum of beliefs about society (articulated with a greater or lesser degree of clarity) and were extremely passionate about their dedication to things local and their search to know everything possible about them; in contrast to our usual assumption of an intelligentsia in opposition to the prevailing regime, they adopted a variety of positions ranging from total dedication to state service to open conflict or resistance. Their efforts resulted in the creation of a local history, statistics, ethnography, and anthropology, as well as their dissemination through a local press and through regional museums.<sup>21</sup> Certainly, the history of the provincial intelligentsia follows its own chronology. Born largely in response to state initiative in the 1840s, these *intelligenty* blossomed

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<sup>20</sup> «Музей есть собрание всего отжившего, мертвого, негодного для употребления; но именно потому-то он и есть надежда века, ибо существование музея показывает, что нет дел конченных... Для музея нет ничего безнадежного, „отпетого“, т.е. такого, что оживить и воскресить невозможно; для него и мертвых носят с кладбищ, даже с доисторических; он не только поет и молится, как церковь, он еще и работает на всех страждующих, для всех умерших!» (Fedorov 1982, 578)

<sup>21</sup> On the provincial intelligentsia, see also Makarichin 1991 and Vinogradova 1992.

in the 1860s and 1870s, achieving new levels of scientific and administrative sophistication in the 1880s and into the 1890s. From the perspective of Nižnij Novgorod province, the 1891 famine may have marked an end rather than a beginning. For the provincial intelligentsia, the brave new world of the 1890s—the 1896 national fair, the industrialization push, the hard-nosed politics of the zem-stvo statisticians—was an uncomfortable and intolerant place. The capacity, or not, of **PROVINCIIJA** to impose its vision on national politics on the eve of revolution (1904-7, and then again a decade later) still needs to be addressed.

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