ENLIGHTENING THE LAND OF MIDNIGHT:
PETER SLOVTSOV, IVAN KALASHNIKOV, AND THE SAGA OF RUSSIAN SIBERIA

Dissertation

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the lives, works, and careers of Peter Andreevich Slovtsov (1767-1843) and Ivan Timofeevich Kalashnikov (1797-1863). Known today largely for their roles as Siberian “firsts”—Slovtsov as Siberia’s first native-born historian, Kalashnikov as Siberia’s first native-born novelist—their names often appear in discussions of the origins of Siberian regionalism, a movement of the later nineteenth century that decried Siberia’s “colonial” treatment by the tsarist state and called for greater autonomy for the region. Drawing on a wide range of archival materials—including two decades of correspondence between the two men—this study shows that Slovtsov and Kalashnikov, far from being disgruntled critics of the tsarist state, were its proud agents. They identified with their service careers, I suggest, because they believed that autocratic rule was the best system for Russia and because serving the tsarist state provided what they saw as their greatest opportunity to participate in a progressive, world-historical saga of enlightenment. Their understanding of this saga and its Russian reverberations gave form and content to their senses of self.

An exploration of Slovtsov and Kalashnikov’s complex lives through the long paper trail that makes them accessible today offers revealing perspectives on the social, cultural, and intellectual history of Russia—in particular on topics of service, selfhood, bureaucratic culture, education, and the intersection of public and private life—as well as
on the history of Siberia and its place in the empire. Kalashnikov and Slovtsov lived during the apogee of the Russian Empire in the late eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth centuries, a period commonly described as a time of growing dissension between “the state” and “educated society.” But their lives offer a useful reminder that that “the state” and “educated society” were often one and the same. Slovtsov and Kalashnikov saw the tsarist state as a powerful agent of progressive change and argued passionately, both in their published works as well as in their private correspondence, in favor of an imperial narrative of enlightenment. They saw Siberia as a place made whole, improved, and, indeed, made “Russia” by imperial rule.
For my parents,

Dale and Milissa Soderstrom

And my wife,

Phuong Truong
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What follows is a dissertation about, among other things, a quarter-century long friendship between a teacher and a student. During my own quarter-century as a student, I have had many extraordinary teachers. Unlike the teacher at the center of the story that this dissertation tells, however, not one of them has travelled 20,000 Siberian miles to enlighten students like me. I remain immeasurably indebted to them all the same, and it is with great pleasure that I thank them—and the friends, family, and organizations who have helped out along the way—here.

My most immediate debt is to the members of my dissertation committee, both official and unofficial. Nicholas Breyfogle has been an unstinting advisor since I came to Ohio State six years ago. Both blagodetel’ and nachal’nik, he has provided needed advice, encouragement, freedom, inspiration, and a seemingly endless spring of good cheer (and reference letters). I have also benefited greatly from the support of the other members of my dissertation committee, Alice Conklin and David Hoffmann, as well as from numerous members of the Department of History—in particular Alan Beyerchen, Scott Levi, Geoffrey Parker, Christopher Reed, and Jennifer Siegel. I am similarly grateful to members of the Department of History staff who have done so much to make the dissertating life simpler: Joby Abernathy, Jim Bach, Steve Fink, Gail Summerhill, Jan Thompson, and Richard Ugland.
Had it not been for three truly outstanding mentors at Central Michigan University—Eric Johnson, Steve Scherer, and Jim Schmiechen—I might not have decided to study history as a graduate student. My debt to them is vast, and I do not blame them at all. I would also like to thank Gregory Crowe and Dave Smith, whose high-school English courses have proven to be the most useful time I ever spent in a classroom.

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and Jennifer Siegel also deserve a thank-you for many entertaining lunches at the RGIA cafeteria.

I owe the most to three people, and it is to them that I dedicate this dissertation. My parents, Dale and Milissa Soderstrom, have supported and encouraged me as long as I can remember, and there is nothing that, at least in some way, I do not owe to them. Thanks are not enough. And for the past decade I have been extraordinarily lucky to share my life with my wife, Phuong Truong. As much as I have tried to shield her from Peter Andreevich and Ivan Timofeevich’s incursions, she has been forced to share many of these years with them—and with all else that my taking the Ph.D. pill has entailed. I can only hope that I have managed to give her half of what she has given me.
VITA

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### ABBREVIATIONS

#### Archives:

**BAN**  
Biblioteka Akademii Nauk (Library of the Russian Academy of Sciences), St. Petersburg

**FRKR NBIGU**  
Fond Redkikh Knig i Rukopisei Nauchnogo Biblioteka Irkutskogo Gosudarstvennogo Universiteta (Rare Books and Manuscripts Collection, Irkutsk State University Library), Irkutsk

**GAIO**  
Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Irkutskoi Oblasti (State Archive of the Irkutsk Region), Irkutsk

**GAvgT**  
Gosudarstvennoe Uchrezhdenie Tiumenskoi Oblasti “Gosudarstvennyi Archiv v g. Tobol’ske” (State Institution of Tiumen’ Region “State Archive in the City of Tobol’sk”), Tobol’sk

**IRLI**  
Institut Russkoi Literatury (Pushkinskii Dom) Rossiiskoi Akademii Nauk (Institute of Russian Literature (Pushkin House) of the Russian Academy of Sciences), St. Petersburg

**OR RNB**  
Otdel Rukopisei, Rossiiskaia National’naia Biblioteka (Manuscript Division, Russian National Library), St. Petersburg

**NART**  
National’nyi Arkhiv Respubliki Tatarstan (National Archive of the Republic of Tatarstan), Kazan’

**RGADA**  
Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Drevnikh Aktov (Russian State Archive of Ancient Acts), Moscow

**RGIA**  
Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Istoricheskii Arkhiv (Russian State Historical Archive), St. Petersburg
Published Sources:

**ChIOIDR**

*Chteniia v Imperatorskom obschestve istorii i drevnostei rossiiskikh pri Moskovskom universitete*

**DKZhRP**


**IOS**


**KI**

*Kazanskiia izvestiia*

**PIS**


**PSZ**

*Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii*

**PVT**


**RBS**

*Russkii biograficheskii slovar’*

**TEV**

*Tobol’skie eparkhial’nye vedomosti*

**TGV**

*Tobol’skie gubernskie vedomosti*

**TPK**


Archival and Published Citations:

ch. chast’ (section)
d. delo (file)
f. fond (collection)
fol. folio (folio)
kn. kniga (book)
l., ll. list, listy (sheet, sheets)
no. nomer (number)
ob. oborot (reverse side)
op. opis’ (inventory)
отд. отдelenie (section)
prav. привлениюе (Kazan’ University board of directors)
pribav. прибавление (supplement)
sov. совет (Kazan’ University council)
t. том (volume)
uch. kom. uchilishchnyi komitet (Kazan’ University committee on schools)
vyp. вypusk (issue)

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INTRODUCTION:

The Death of an Enlightened Man and the Case for an Autopsy

Perhaps time as such does not exist at all, and instead there is only an endless web of endless stories, tracing patterns in the deafening silence of eternity? Perhaps time is but a means of retelling them and listening to them? Perhaps it is not stories that grow out of time, but time that grows out of stories?

-Alan Cherchesov

The reality of the past—national, familial, personal—does not lie in an assemblage of data but in a field of stories—a place where fact, truth, fiction, invention, forgetting, and myth are so entangled that they cannot be separated. Ultimately it is not the facts that make us what we are, but the stories we have been told and the stories we believe.

-Robert Rosenstone

[Tsar] Peter [I] is clear evidence that Russia will not develop her liberty and civic consciousness herself, but will obtain the one and the other from her tsars just as she has received so much of the one and the other from them already. It is true that we still do not have rights—we are, if you like, slaves; but that is because we still need to be slaves. Russia is still a child and needs a nurse in whose breast beats a heart full of love for her charge and in whose hand is a rod ready to punish if it is naughty. To give the child complete freedom is to ruin it. To give Russia in her present state a constitution is to ruin Russia. [...] It is not to parliament that the liberated Russian nation would go, but to the tavern to drink, break glass, and hang nobles—people, that is, who shave their beards and wear frock coats [...]. The entire hope of Russia is in enlightenment, [...] not in revolutions and constitutions.

-Vissarion Belinskii

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On the sixteenth of January 1843, state servitor, educator, historian, Siberian priest’s son, and lifelong bachelor Peter Andreevich Slovtsov (1767-1843) celebrated his seventy-sixth birthday in bed in his Tobol’sk apartment. He had two months left to live, and it was time to dictate his will: “In the name of the most holy, united and indivisible Trinity, the remnants that by divine blessing filled my life I distribute upon my death in the following manner…”

What followed was an inventory of an eventful life’s physical remains: the four-seat carriage, to be given to a cousin, a teacher at the district school in nearby Ialutorovsk; the diamond-encrusted Order of St. Anne medal, second class, awarded in 1824 for good service, to be sent to another cousin; the furniture, two cows, linens, dishes, and kitchen utensils, left to Stepanova Ivanovna Bizina, Peter Andreevich’s faithful cook of fifteen years, for whom he had also set aside an envelope of cash long ago; the “best” furniture, silver, and clothing, to be sold, the money distributed to his nephews and brother, a priest at Murzinskaia Sloboda in the Ural Mountains, not far downriver from Peter Andreevich’s birthplace; the treasured plant and mineral collections, bequeathed along with a gold pocket watch—a gift from Mikhail Speranskii, friend of fifty years—to Ivan Pomaskin, Tobol’sk teacher, executor of his will, and the man tasked with ensuring that his funeral be carried out “with simplicity and without vanity.”

Peter Andreevich also requested that a number of his belongings be sent to St. Petersburg, home for the past two decades of his best friend and protégé, Ivan
Timofeevich Kalashnikov (1797-1863). These were his three personalized seals; that Order of St. Anne medal and its diamonds (in the event that the cousin had died); the manuscript of the second volume of his *Historical Survey of Siberia*, which he instructed Kalashnikov to publish; and a special selection of his service and personal papers.²

It was the book manuscript that would eventually secure for Peter Andreevich a certain Siberian fame, but Ivan Timofeevich must have been most touched to receive his mentor’s papers. Among them he found the quarter-century of emotional letters he had sent Slovtsov—letters that, taken as a whole, told the story not only of the most consequential friendship of his life, but also of his departure from Siberia and ascent through the ranks of the empire’s service and literary hierarchies. Kalashnikov had met Slovtsov in 1815 in his home town of Irkutsk, where he worked for Peter Andreevich while the latter served as director of schools for a province as large as Europe and “European Russia” combined. Peter Andreevich took the eighteen-year-old Kalashnikov under his wing, honed his French skills, encouraged and critiqued his early writings, and helped him move to St. Petersburg in 1823.

The two never saw each other again (if, that is, one does not count Kalashnikov’s dreams, in which he claimed to see his mentor “every night”). Their close friendship endured, however, in epistolary form, and Ivan Timofeevich regularly reassured Peter Andreevich that he remained his “true father” and “polar star.” The years between their separation in 1823 and Peter Andreevich’s death two decades later were momentous ones for both men. Ivan Timofeevich married and fathered an enormous family (his wife gave

² OR RNB f. 702, op. 1, d. 1, ll. 1-4; d. 2, ll. 1-2.
birth to seventeen children in twenty years), served in a variety of posts in St. Petersburg, and achieved renown as Siberia’s first novelist—its very own James Fenimore-Cooper or Walter Scott, as he proudly styled himself. Peter Andreevich, meanwhile, spent the 1820s rattling across Siberia in his carriage as the first and last vizitator (inspector) of Siberian schools. He then settled in Tobol’sk, where he wrote the book that would make him famous, for many, as the first native-born Siberian historian and patriot. Having no family with which to share his feelings, he poured them out in a stream of letters to Kalashnikov—from whom he also exacted a heavy tribute of books, documents, chores for his research, and chocolate (which he considered “essential” to his health).

Their correspondence is a remarkable source, an impassioned and personal dialogue on, among other subjects, service, faith, place, separation, enlightenment, literature, philosophy, and, particularly as the years drew long, mortality. In 1840 Ivan Timofeevich, forty-three and in a funk, ruefully drew for his old mentor a picture of his changed appearance: “I’ve grown fat and am in a wig. What is to be done?” Peter Andreevich told Kalashnikov not to worry about the wig: “I lay at home always in my sleeping cap, which I’m without only at church. The entire bottom row of my teeth has fallen out except for one. I’ve gone completely grey, my eyesight has grown hazy, […] and I no longer read or write by candlelight. If I’m alone, as I always pass the time, I sit or lie in my room without a candle. Such is my life, and another I fortunately do not desire.”

3 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 38, l. 9ob. (5 November 1840); IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 104, ll. 6-6ob. (22 August 1840).
Peter Andreevich’s “fortunately” here was a mild reproach, his way of picking up the bright red thread that ran through his entire correspondence with Ivan Timofeevich. This was the topic of the *proveshchennyi chelovek*, or “enlightened man.” The *proveshchennyi chelovek*, as Slovtsov envisioned him, needed to be content with his lot in life—however far he might be from Petersburg’s glow—and find solace in selfless devotion to state service. Delighted as he was to hear about Ivan Timofeevich’s many promotions, Peter Andreevich had a nagging suspicion that his protégé was insufficiently grateful for the good life that serving the tsar provided him. When, for example, he learned from a mutual acquaintance in 1826 that Ivan Timofeevich was unhappy with his current post and had “gotten a swelled head,” he was quick to reprimand: “Well, young man, you need to do everything you are ordered to do and regard yourself as an insignificant person.”4 “Decorate your service with deeds,” he instructed Kalashnikov years before, “and fulfill orders without grumbling”—even if superiors “assign you to Kamchatka.”5

Although Kalashnikov was at times exasperated by his mentor’s criticisms—“Forty years lie on my head, which is covered by a wig. They vouch for a certain [level of] experience,” he pointed out in 1836—he nevertheless did his best to please.6 He adored his “dearest benefactor” and desperately wanted his approval. He even wrote a novel about his struggle to live the life that Peter Andreevich prescribed, a sort of

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4 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 102, ll. 7-7ob. (27 March 1826).
5 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d.100, l. 49 (19 October 1821); IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 100, l. 58 (28 December 1821).
6 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 37, ll. 6-6ob. (27 November 1836).
bildungsroman of the *prosveshchennyi chelovek*.⁷ Published in 1841, *Automaton* was the utterly autobiographical tale of an Irkutsk boy who, aided by his benevolent and wise benefactor, tries to make his way in the imperial capital, seeking no reward for himself beyond bread to feed and firewood to warm his large family. Slovtsov was not impressed. He saw the novel as further evidence that Kalashnikov remained overly self-centered, a quality incompatible with the selflessness that good service for the tsar required. A book about “the exceptional life of one man,” he fumed, “is not a novel, but a confession or jeremiad. […] I would frankly advise you to abandon this sort of business.” The “business” Peter Andreevich had in mind was writing novels, which, he added, neither he “nor anybody in Tobol’sk reads, aside from poorly educated and idle women.”⁸ This was hyperbole—he and Kalashnikov regularly discussed literature with mutual interest—but the aged mentor was trying to make a point, trying to instill a sense of duty in the forty-four-year-old man he still saw as his pupil.

As he penned his critique of Kalashnikov’s novel, Peter Andreevich gathered his most prized certificates, letters from superiors, and other such papers, placed them between two ornate covers, and gave the lot the following title: “The Service Papers of Actual State Councilor P. A. Slovtsov, upon my death send to I. T. Kalashnikov.”⁹ Slovtsov seems to have imagined that, after his death, Ivan Timofeevich, deprived of the stream of advice he had provided for so long, might find a model in his papers—the

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⁷ I. Kalashnikov, *Automat* (St. Petersburg, 1841).
⁸ IRLF f. 120, op. 1, d. 104, ll. 18-18ob. (31 March 1842).
⁹ OR RNB f. 702, op. 1, d. 2, ll. 1-2. The italics denote Slovtsov’s handwriting in the original.
written testimony of a meaningful life, lived in service of the tsar, recognized and rewarded for its accomplishments, but never openly pursuing recognition or reward.

Among those papers was a booklet about the Order of St. Vladimir. Slovtsov and Kalashnikov were both members—“cavaliers”—of the order, but Peter Andreevich probably imagined that Ivan Timofeevich would do well to brush up on its significance. Catherine II, the booklet explained, had created the Order of St. Vladimir in 1782 to recognize “ceaseless diligence, blameless performance of every kind of duty, and works that constitute direct service to the Empire.” The order was named in honor of “Saint Coequal to the Apostles Prince Vladimir, [who, as Grand Prince of Kiev in 988] undertook through Holy baptism many works for the sake of the enlightenment of Russia, and who even today fortifies through his prayers at the Throne of the All-powerful Creator the vigor and work of those who serve the Empire and Our Throne fervently and diligently.” Unlike other honorary orders, which were routinely doled out to members of the imperial family at baptisms, the Order of Vladimir was to be awarded in recognition of merit alone. “Cavaliers of St. Vladimir,” as those honored with the distinction earned the right to be called, were not to remove the order’s medal in public, intended as it was to serve as “proof to the world [svetom] of Our gracious favor for zealous and diligent service, industry, toil, and faultlessness in the performance of duties.”

10 OR RNB f. 702, op. 1, d. 6, ll. 1-16; PSZ (1), vol. 21, no. 15,515 (22 September 1782): 671-75; S. S. Shishkov, Nagrady Rossii, 1698-1917, vol. 2 (Dnieperopetrovsk: Art-Press, 2003), 239-91.
Slovtsov’s medal is conspicuously absent from his will. It had been his constant companion for many decades and many, many thousands of Siberian miles, an emblem of his exemplary service in pursuit of the most vaunted goal of imperial rule—the enlightenment of the “dark” lands and peoples of the empire. He had, so to speak, dressed himself in the ideology of imperial enlightenment when he put the medal on before emerging from his private quarters each morning. Its absence from his will suggests that the prosveshchnyi chelovek wanted to wear his badge of imperial honor even in death.

Questions

This is a dissertation about two men and their search for meaning during the apogee of the Russian Empire in the late eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth centuries. Peter Slovtsov and Ivan Kalashnikov, I suggest, identified with their service careers because it was through service that they found their greatest opportunity to participate in what they saw as a progressive, world-historical saga of enlightenment. Their understanding of this saga and its Russian reverberations was what gave form and content to their senses of self. An exploration of their complex lives through the rich paper trail that makes them accessible today offers revealing perspectives on the social, cultural, and intellectual history of Russia—in particular on topics of service, selfhood, bureaucratic culture,
education, and the intersection of public and private life—as well as on the history of
Siberia and its place in the empire.

This is not the dissertation that I imagined myself writing when I began archival
work in 2006. In Irkutsk to develop ideas for what I thought would be a history of the
city and its role in governing the empire’s easternmost frontier, I came across a
perestroika-era edition of Kalashnikov’s works in an old bookstore.11 I read the book—
which contained his major pieces of Siberian fiction, The Daughter of Merchant
Zholobov (1832), Kamchadalka (1833), Exiles (1834), and Automaton (1841)—with
interest, but what most caught my attention was a note to its biographical sketch. It
explained that Kalashnikov’s personal archive had been preserved at the Institute of
Russian Literature (Pushkin House) in St. Petersburg. Two circumstances made this
information interesting. The first was that my work at the archive in Irkutsk had not been
particularly fruitful. Much of its collections from the eighteenth and early nineteenth
centuries had been lost in the city’s devastating 1879 fire, while the files that had
survived seemed unpromising for the dissertation I hoped to write. The second was that I
learned that Kalashnikov was a close friend of Slovtsov—and that their long
correspondence had been preserved in Kalashnikov’s archive.

I had, so I believed, a fairly good idea of who Peter Andreevich Slovtsov was
before I arrived in Irkutsk in 2006. I knew that he was something of a hero for the
Siberian regionalists of the later nineteenth century, a group of writers who decried

11 Ivan Kalashnikov, Doch kuptsa Zholobova: Romany, povest’ (Irkutsk: Vostochnoe-Sibirskoe knizhnoe
izdatel’stvo, 1985). Hereafter DKZhRP.
Siberia’s treatment as a colony of Russia and called for greater autonomy for the region. His two-volume *Historical Survey of Siberia* (1838-44) had earned him a place of honor at the head of the regionalists’ genealogy. Prominent regionalist Grigorii Potanin called the book a “patriotic feat” (*patrioticheskii podvig*). Slovtsov, Potanin claimed, “has always been considered the first Siberian patriot.” In Slovtsov’s day, he wrote, “there were still no academic institutions, no geographic societies, no university. In Slovtsov alone was concentrated the entire intellectual life of Siberia, the entirety of her learning; he combined in himself an entire geographic society, an entire historical institute.” Potanin went on to liken Slovtsov to the famous regionalist Nikolai Iadrintsev, who “appeared” after a “thirty-year lull” to continue what Slovtsov had begun.

I found Potanin’s heroic, academic-in-the-wilderness Slovtsov intriguing, and reading other scholars further piqued my interest. E. A. Trusova described Peter Andreevich as a protomarxist who grasped the “idea of the inevitable death of capitalist states as a result of revolution.” V. G. Mirzoev wrote that he inaugurated a “bourgeois school” of Siberian history that focused on Siberia’s “internal processes.” Two recent editions of Slovtsov’s *Historical Survey of Siberia*, out of print since the 1880s, include an introduction that describes his view of history as “distinguished by its genuine

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democracy” (*istynnym demokratizm*). The claim echoes an earlier one that Slovtsov had a precociously modern sensitivity to the politics of naming: Peter Andreevich, we are told, called Siberia’s aboriginal peoples not *inorodtsy* (”people of other birth” or “aliens”), but *sograzhdane* (“fellow citizens”).

Here, I imagined, was a promising subject, an early intelligent with much to say about critical topics in the history of Siberia: its unusually self-reliant peasants, its role as Russia’s simultaneous “heaven” and “hell,” its many exiles, and its changing place in the empire, among other subjects. But when I first got my hands on a copy of his *Historical Survey of Siberia*—this time in a Novosibirsk bookstore—I noticed that in its pages alone he calls Siberian indigenes *inorodtsy* some forty-five times and *sograzhdane* just once. And when I returned to Russia in 2007 to read his correspondence with Kalashnikov, I found—once, that is, I managed to decipher Peter Andreevich’s distinctively poor handwriting (Figure 2)—a passionate conversation between two men preoccupied less with Siberia than with the question of what it meant to be a *prosveshchennyi chelovek* in an empire struggling with pan-European currents of change that shook the political, social, intellectual, and economic bases upon which it rested. No less intriguing were the casual asides in their letters that exposed the fabric of their daily

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18 For introductions to these topics see Galya Diment and Yuri Slezkine, eds., *Between Heaven and Hell: The Myth of Siberia in Russian Culture* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993); I. L. Dameshek, et. al, *Sibir’ v sostave rossiiskoi imperii* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2007).
lives and raised jarring questions about the figures I thought I knew: “I can report,” wrote an excited Slovtsov in 1822, “pleasant news on my behalf: the boy I bought—the one who studied culinary arts for 6 months in Kazan’—has finally deigned to come to me, and now I have good soup and sauce.”

Maybe I should not have been surprised that the Slovtsov who emerged from his private papers was quite unlike the protoregionalist hero I had been primed to find. Siberian history is rich in many things, but not in well-educated, attractive characters. That an extraordinary figure like Slovtsov has proven to be a magnetic character for Siberian scholars writing the genealogy of their own pursuits—of, in other words, themselves—is to be expected.

But the discrepancy raised a fascinating question: Who was Peter Andreevich? His glowing reputation, after all, was grounded in the actual events of his life: his 1793 sermon that denounced monarchies as “great tombs, which lock within themselves wretched and moaning corpses”; his wide reading in classic and contemporary European philosophy; his administration of Siberia’s nascent system of public schools; his

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19 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 101, l. 10 (2 February 1822).
authorship of numerous books and articles about Siberia. But Peter Andreevich was also a man of his time: a fervent Christian; a devoted servitor of the tsar; a master excited about the tasty sauce he would “finally” get to enjoy at his meals because the boy he purchased had arrived. What, if anything, did he make of the tensions between these roles? What did he think about his world, one defined by a tsarist state that justified its power in the transformative language of the Enlightenment but was rooted in a social system of serfdom? How did he understand its place in the broader world? And where did he think both were headed? How did his answers to such questions compare with and shape those of Kalashnikov, thirty years his junior? What can their friendship tell us about Siberia, the tsarist empire, and the era in which they lived? Who, in short, were they?

Storied Selves and Imperial Russia’s Social Saga

The vital role of narratives in self-fashioning is widely recognized. By framing particular events within a broader sequence, narratives provide a form of contextualization vital to human understanding. The self, it has often been said, is given content, defined, and embodied largely through narrative constructions or stories, and is best understood as a

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20 The most detailed biography of Slovtsov (though brief) is not without its merits, but it contains invented dialogue, romanticizes Slovtsov as a Siberian patriot, and spends little time discussing the service career that defined much of his life. L. Bepalova, *Sibirskii prosvetitel’* (Sverdlovsk: Sredne-Ural’skoe knizhnoe izdatel’stvo, 1973). The most thorough account of Kalashnikov’s life, though useful, is even shorter: A. A. Bogdanova, “Sibirskii romanist I. T. Kalashnikov,” *Uchenye zapiski: Novosibirskii Gosudarstvennyi Pedagogicheskii Institut*, vyp. 7 (1948): 87-121. Additional works are listed in the bibliography.
character much like those found in novels and plays. Together, the stories that give content to our lives comprise a mythology that “tells us what kind of world we inhabit […], whence came our world, what kinds of beings are in it, and how they act and are acted upon” and serves as the “very foundation of truth within any culture.”

Hannah Arendt wrote eloquently on the difficulty of trying to understand how others make sense of their selves. “Who somebody is or was,” she suggested, “we can know only by knowing the story of which he is himself the hero—his biography, in other words; everything else we know of him, including the work he may have produced and left behind, tells us only what he is or was.”

Surviving documents make answering Arendt’s “what” question relatively clear in the case of Slovtsov and Kalashnikov: Orthodox Christian, chinovnik, historian, novelist, popovich, servitor’s son, educator, Actual Privy Councilor, Cavalier of Holy Vladimir, Sibiriak, Petersburger, Irkutianin, Tobol’iak, and so on. But as the length of this list, which could be much expanded, suggests, answering the “what” question is only a starting point. Who did they consider themselves to be?

Asking such a question of long-dead men is, to put it gently, problematic. But if Arendt’s who/what dichotomy is a useful one, I think her suggestion that surviving

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24 An state official, functionary, or bureaucrat.
25 Son of a priest.
26 An ethnic Russian born in Siberia.
papers can tell us only what—as opposed to who—a person was is too categorical.
Kalashnikov and Slovtsov left behind a long paper trail: letters, service papers, family
notebooks, dream logs, poems, novels, histories, and more. Taken as a whole, these
materials offer ample evidence to outline the stories they used to give meaning to their
lives and their world.

Anthropologist Victor Turner’s concepts of the “star group” and “social drama”
are useful tools for making sense of these stories. Turner writes that

Most of us have what I call our ‘star’ group or groups to which we owe
our deepest loyalty and whose fate is for us of the greatest personal
concern. It is the one with which a person identifies most deeply and in
which he finds fulfillment of his major social and personal desires. We
are all members of many groups, formal or informal, from the family to
the nation or some international religious or political institution. Each
person makes his/her own subjective evaluation of the group’s respective
worth: some are ‘dear’ to one, others it is one’s ‘duty to defend,’ and so
on. […] It is in one’s star group that one looks most for love, recognition,
prestige, office and other tangible and intangible benefits and rewards. In
it one achieves self-respect and a sense of belonging with others for whom
one has respect.

“Star groups” are the main protagonists—whether as leaders of change, defenders of the
faith, and so on—in what Turner calls “social dramas.” Social dramas are “a fact of
everyone’s existence in every human society,” and they arise from the breach of a
fundamental norm or tradition in the public arena that splits a society into antagonistic
groups.27

The embrace of Western European cultural models during the reign of Peter I (r.
1689-1725) marked a watershed in the history of Russian culture and can be said to have

168. Quotations from 149-152.
inaugurated a protracted “social drama.” Indeed, Turner’s concept can be expanded in the Russian case. More than a brief drama, Russia’s engagement with European culture and notions of “enlightenment” (see below) was a saga—a multigenerational, centuries-long affair that shaped and gave meaning to many lives. Although European culture steadily took hold among elites and wealthy nobles in eighteenth-century Russia, it long remained foreign to those beneath them on the social scale. For the latter, European culture and “enlightenment” came as a transformative gift (or imposition) that could forever pull a person from his family roots. Whether in the ways they dressed, acted, or talked, “enlightened” Russians were increasingly distinguished from the people they described as their “unenlightened” or “dark” counterparts, and the cultural “gap” that emerged between them constitutes one of the most critical phenomena of Russian history.

Significantly, Russia’s was an imperial social saga, and the tsarist state was long its most active player. In one of the crowning events of his sweeping “cultural revolution,” Peter I proclaimed himself “emperor” in 1721. Though familiar today as a derogatory term, empire has historically carried many meanings, one being that of the bearer of civilization, unity, and stability to places of supposed chaos and barbarism. This was the image that Peter cultivated in adopting his new title—and the trope on

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which Count Golovkin drew when, at the ceremony declaring Peter emperor, he thanked the new emperor and “father of the fatherland” for ushering his “subjects from the darkness of ignorance into the theater of universal glory, [...] from nonbeing into being, and into the society of political peoples.”

Peter’s successors followed his lead, actively fashioning themselves as dynamic “reforming tsars”—“conquerors” who attacked a benighted Russia with civilization and progress.

Many educated servitors like Slovtsov and Kalashnikov saw themselves as active participants—on the side of the emperors—in this social saga of enlightenment and imperial civilization, and they defined their place in imperial society accordingly. They imagined themselves—emplotted their lives—as “enlightened men” (prosveshchennye liudi). This was, to use Turner’s language, their “star group,” a mental construction that foregrounded the attainment of “enlightenment” and its provision to a “dark” land and its peoples. It was also a physical reality, manifest in the accoutrements of service, whether ranks, salaries, pensions, uniforms, honorary orders, terms of address, or the number of horses to which one could lay claim at the post station. Slovtsov and Kalashnikov did occasionally refer to themselves as Sibiriaki, but the vast majority of Sibiriaki were illiterate—antagonists, therefore, rather than associates in the saga that gave purpose and meaning to Slovtsov and Kalashnikov’s lives. Although Peter Andreevich and Ivan Timofeevich are remembered today—when remembered at all—for their roles as Siberian “firsts,” they were, to borrow Geoffrey Hosking’s evocative phrase, men who

30 PSZ (1), vol. 6 (22 October 1721), no. 3,840, p. 445.
“wore the clothes and spoke the language of empire, [and in] a real sense the empire was their homeland.”

**Prosveshchenie**

The concept of “enlightenment” (*prosveshchenie*) that was at the center of Imperial Russia’s great social saga was among the most charged words in tsarist Russia. Never was this more true than during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, when the tsarist state made its first comprehensive efforts to sink the roots of a public education system. That Alexander I created a Ministry of Popular Enlightenment—as opposed to a Ministry of Education—was a telling detail, as the Russian word for education (*obrazovanie*) lacks the moral and religious connotations of *prosveshchenie*. The Book of John, for example, describes Jesus as the “true Light, which enlightens [prosveshchaet] every man that cometh into the world.” Nikolai Karamzin, the Russian state’s official historiographer in the early nineteenth century, wrote that Prince Vladimir, in choosing Orthodox Christianity and forcibly converting the people of Kievan Rus’ in 988, “endeavored to enlighten Russians” (*prosvet’ rossiian*). The dictionary of Vladimir Dal’, first published in the 1860s, defined *prosveshchenie* as “the light of

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learning and reason, inspired by pure morality; the development of the intellectual and moral strengths of man; scientific education with a clear awareness of its debts and the goals of life.” “Enlightenment by scholarship alone, of only the mind,” the dictionary pointed out, “is one-sided, and does not lead to the good.”

At its core, it has been said, the Russian Enlightenment was a “lived Enlightenment” that offered a program of moral development and spiritual perfectibility rather than any clear set of ideas to be realized through social and political change.

There is much truth to this claim, which captures nicely the yawning gulf between, for example, state proclamations about the enlightenment of the empire’s subjects and the scanty resources it allocated and halting steps it took to educate them. But it is also important to remember the extent to which prosveshchenie, in the wake of Peter’s reforms, was associated with—and seen to be effected by—the activist ruler and his state. Whereas the Enlightenment in Western Europe is often defined by its emphasis on criticism and, to use Kant’s phrase, daring to know, prosveshchenie tended to be seen as something to be doled out from above—something given to another rather than sought on one’s own.

38 I have chosen not to capitalize “enlightenment” throughout most of this dissertation. The term typically appears in sources from the period not as a marker of a period in European history—as “the Enlightenment” is now used in English—but instead as a marker of educational and moral attainment, something to be distributed to and inspired in the subjects of the empire by rulers, superiors, mentors, and teachers.
The enlightenment initiatives of the tsarist state were always, of course, more impressive on paper than “on the ground.” But when trying to understand how educated Russians made sense of their lives during the apogee of the empire, it is important that we take their words seriously. During a time of profound instability across Europe, the Russian Empire remained relatively calm, and its rulers launched sweeping programs of political, administrative, and educational reform. “Nowhere,” wrote Slovtsov’s friend and classmate Ivan Martynov, “has universal enlightenment, that most significant popular need, been the subject of such care as it is today in Russia.” Western Europe, Martynov admitted, had indeed had schools and universities “for some centuries now.” But “never,” he claimed, had laws been passed with such a direct and defined goal of “popular enlightenment” as the educational reforms of Alexander I. Efforts toward the creation of a public school system, however unsuccessful in so many ways, carried great meaning for many educated Russians, who found in them proof that the imperial state was a dynamic agent in the broader, world-historical saga of enlightenment that was at the center of so much debate during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

The Case for the Autopsy

The enlightenment lauded by the tsarist state and its servitors—like so many things lauded by the tsarist state and its servitors—barely touched the lives of the vast majority of people who lived in the empire. But there were many whom it did touch, and examining individuals like Slovtsov and Kalashnikov offers a reminder of the fundamental ways in which state institutions could transform lives.

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Most immediately, education and state service could remove individuals from the worlds into which they were born. Whereas a child’s sense of self traditionally emerges “within a crucible of family stories and cultural scripts”\textsuperscript{40}—a very local crucible in premodern times—Slovtsov and Kalashnikov, swept up by state efforts to bring education to the distant provinces of the empire, were raised on the stories of the imperial state and separated by great physical, cultural, and intellectual distance from the worlds of their childhoods. As a result, they occupied a transitional place in Russian society. They belonged fully to neither the peasantry, townspeople, clergy, nor the nobility. Slovtsov was born into the clergy, but he left this estate behind when he entered service in 1797. Repeated promotions in service eventually made him and Kalashnikov hereditary nobles—but of a particular type.\textsuperscript{41} Far beneath the polite svet (le grande monde, high society), yet well above the armies of clerks with only rudimentary training, they remained marked by their humble provincial backgrounds. They belonged to what has been called Russia’s “non-economic middle” whose rise from “dark” provincial backwaters was a product of official policy and opportunity.\textsuperscript{42}

But the transitional nature of their place in society did not dilute Slovtsov and Kalashnikov’s identification with the imperial state. On the contrary, it served as an enduring reminder of the extent to which their lives as they knew them were made

\textsuperscript{40} Eakin, How Our Lives Become Stories, 117.
\textsuperscript{41} Introduced in 1722, Imperial Russia’s Table of Ranks was a list of civil and military service grades that endowed their holders with varying privileges in Russian society. All ranked servitors achieved personal nobility, whereas those who reached rank five (rank eight after 1845) were also endowed with hereditary nobility.
possible by what they saw as an ongoing imperial enlightenment project. And the personal distinction that state policies provided was important to Slovtsov and Kalashnikov. When Slovtsov requested, for example, that a special uniform with at least “some sort of change in the embroidery” be created for his position as vizitator (inspector) of Siberian schools, he sought not only to distinguish himself from the teachers and school directors for whom he was nachal’nik (chief or boss), but also to underscore his distinction in the eyes of villagers who, in many respects, were not so different from the family into which he had been born. Such concern for looking the part reflected both the strict sartorial standards of the empire as well as Peter Andreevich’s personal interest in marking his place in society.⁴³

Because this is a study that is intensely focused on two individuals, it inevitably gives rise to questions about the extent to which they were “representative” of some group or another. They were not. They were extraordinary. They were extraordinary for their remarkably successful service careers (of the roughly 60,000 ranked officials in 1847, only 691 had equal or higher ranks than those at which Slovtsov and Kalashnikov retired)⁴⁴; for their rise from humble Siberian backgrounds; and, of course, for the literary ventures that brought them modest fame as Siberian “firsts.”

But the case for their autopsy is a strong one. That they were not “representative” of any one group should not dampen interest in the insights that studying their lives can provide.  

⁴³ NART f. 92, op. 1, d. 1879, ll. 1, 3; NART 92, op. 1, d. 2685, ll. 1-1ob; RGIA f. 733, op. 39, d. 295, ll. 121-123ob. OR RNB f. 702, op. 1, d. 14, ll. 20-21. This interpretation is inspired by David Cannandine, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw their Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001). For a treatment of the importance of ranks and uniforms in Imperial Russia, see L. E. Shepelev, *Chinovnyi mir Rossii XVIII-nachalo XX v.* (St. Petersburg: Iskusstvo, 1999).

offer. Rulers and radicals, after all, were by far the least representative groups in Russian society, yet they are the most representative subjects of the biographies that comprise much of the literature on Russian history. Slovtsov and Kalashnikov were neither rulers nor radicals, neither reactionaries nor revolutionaries, and their transitional place within imperial society makes them a fascinating source. It was, after all, only after much climbing that they approached the heights of the ladder of service, and they were intimately familiar—indeed, of—the “unenlightened” world at its base. Moreover, they lived empire-wide lives that brought them into regular contact with people of all types. And while they were well-versed in the intellectual currents of their day, these were currents they sampled while crisscrossing the empire and engaging its social, ethnic, and confessional diversity.

Slovtsov and Kalashnikov, I would suggest, can serve as useful tour guides to the Russian Empire during the period in which it was at the peak of its power. Focusing on them to the degree to which I will in the coming pages may seem quixotic or even voyeuristic (and chasing them through archives in Irkutsk, Tobol’sk, Kazan’, Moscow, and St. Petersburg for twelve months without a break certainly felt that way at times). But I think there is something about their lives that, to borrow Jill Lepore’s phrase, is “faintly exotic but somehow emblematic” of their world, and trying to make sense how they gave that world meaning can help us understand Russian history in a number of important ways.45

First, individuals are not easily categorized, and studying them requires examination not of one subject in isolation—administrative change, a region or town, an ethnic group, educational policy, and so on—but instead calls for an attempt to see how their senses of self formed within the myriad contexts that shaped society as a whole. As Stephen Norris and Willard Sunderland point out, individuals inevitably appear in scholarship on Russia, but “the stuff of their lives is rarely central to the arguments historians make about the empire or even the broader picture they draw. […] We read about individual figures, […] but we aren’t necessarily led to see the empire’s diversity reflected in them, [nor do we] find their experiences used to help us understand the dynamics behind the way the empire was formed, held together, or fell apart.”

“National” and “imperial” subcategories, Norris and Sunderland add, often make little sense at the individual level, and studying individuals prompts us to see the history of the empire not as peripheral to that of Russia, but rather as “a dynamic of diversity and power that turned like a drive shaft through all the facets of the country’s development.” Arriving at a well-rounded image of men like Slovtsov and Kalashnikov requires studying them not within a single topical frame—Siberia, education, bureaucracy, literature, or the like—but instead taking the fact that their lives were empire-wide in scope as a starting point and asking how they imagined their roles within Imperial Russian society—rossiiskoe rather than russkoe obshchestvo—as a whole.

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47 Norris and Sunderland, *People of Empire*.
48 *Russkoe* and *Rossiiskoe*, while both translated into English as “Russian,” are critically different terms. *Russkoe* means “Russian” in the ethnic sense, and is used to refer to the Slavic peoples who for centuries lived near what is now the western border of the Russian Federation, spoke Russian, and were Orthodox
Second, individual lives are engaging, accessible units of analysis. As Robert Rosenstone observes, “the more impersonal forces of history”—social class, nationalism, economic development, and so on—“never quite seem as real” as “people’s lives.” By offering Slovtsov and Kalashnikov’s lives and friendship as a window on tsarist Russia in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, I hope to make an engaging contribution to a growing body of scholarship that has done much to revise our understanding of Imperial Russia by drawing attention to its ethnic and confessional diversity, the complexity of its development, and the often surprising flexibility of the tsarist state in ruling its vast and diverse lands and peoples. At the same time, I also hope to augment a smaller, but also growing, body of work on Russia that is placing individual lives at the center of analysis.

Third, a focus on individuals and the places central to their lives is particularly useful for the study of Siberia. If provincial Russia sometimes seems an “unknown

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Christians—who were, in other words, ethnic Russians, or Russkie. Rossiiskoe, on the other hand, refers to the Russian state, its institutions, and all of the peoples who reside within its borders. For some reflections on this theme in writing about Russia, see Willard Sunderland, “Empire in Boris Mironov’s Sotsial’naia istoriia Rossii,” Slavic Review 60, no. 3 (Autumn 2001): 571-78.


50 For a discussion of these themes and an overview of recent scholarship see Nicholas B. Breyfogle, “Enduring Imperium: Russia/Soviet Union/Eurasia as Multiethnic, Multiconfessional Space,” Ab Imperio, no. 1 (Winter 2008): 35-86.

universe” for historians, Siberia is truly nebulous. Its colonial treatment as dumping ground for criminal elements and mine of natural resources has led scholars to treat it largely at the macro level. This wide-angle focus, however, offers only the foggiest notions of Siberia’s lived realities, gives an impression of homogeneity to a huge, dizzyingly diverse land, and leaves Siberia’s history told from the perspective of the state and the political exiles it banished there. Influential recent works have examined images of Siberia, but while these studies have been very fruitful, they are often based on the writings of people who spent little time in Siberia. Moreover, if we focus too long on Siberia’s alternating roles as Russia’s “heaven” and “hell,” we lose sight not only of the home it was and is to so many, but also of the broader process by which Siberia came to be seen as an integral part of “Russia” itself.

Finally, when viewed through the prism of complex individual lives, a different picture of what it meant to be alive in Russia during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries comes into focus. The familiar story of Imperial Russian history is one of fracture and collapse. As the tsar’s subjects became more free, more prosperous,

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54 The space/place dichotomy has been a major theme of the school of “human geography,” the most well-known work of which is Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977). Edward Casey evocatively frames the issue as follows: “In the past three centuries in the West—the period of ‘modernity’—place has come to be not only neglected but actively suppressed. Owing to the triumph of the natural and social sciences in this same period, serious talk of place has been regarded as regressive or trivial. A discourse has emerged whose exclusive foci are Time and Space. [...] For an entire epoch, place has been regarded as an impoverished second cousin of Time and Space, those two colossal cosmic partners that tower over modernity.” Edward S. Casey, *Getting Back into Place: Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World* (Bloomington: Indiana, 1993), xiv.
more educated, and more acquainted with “the West” and its ideas and institutions, many
of them turned away from a monarchy that increasingly turned toward an outmoded past for models of legitimacy. This story has been all the more influential because research on tsarist Russia has long focused on its revolutionary end and the “late imperial” period (1855-1917) that preceded it (a period we now call “late,” of course, only because we know about that revolutionary end). Undeniably pivotal though this era was, the overwhelming focus on it has tended to direct attention toward the sources of fission in earlier periods of Russian history as well, prolonging the life of a problematic image of earlier decades as static and reactionary.\textsuperscript{55}

For contemporaries like Slovtsov and Kalashnikov, the apogee of empire was a dynamic, exciting time. When Ivan Timofeevich looked back on his life shortly before he died in 1863, he found his Russia “difficult to recognize” because “enlightenment” had “penetrated, more or less, all layers of society” since the days of his childhood.\textsuperscript{56} His comment offers a reminder that the past looked radically different to those “in the thick of it” than it does to historians endowed with knowledge of outcomes and tasked with explaining their roots. Kalashnikov was in his prime during what has become famous as the time of the “parting of the ways” between “educated society” and “the state” in the wake of the Decembrist revolt of 1825—the beginning of a battle between a


\textsuperscript{56} Kalashnikov, I. T. “Zapiski irkutskago zhitelia.” \textit{Russkaia starina}, no. 8 (1905): 391. Hereafter \textit{ZIZh}. 

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disaffected intelligentsia and the tsarist state that would ultimately end in the latter’s defeat. But that intelligentsia was always tiny in number, and, as Kalashnikov and Slovtsov’s lives make clear, “educated society” and “the state” were often one and the same.

Moreover, focusing on divergence distracts our attention from a longer and ultimately more enduring story of convergence—that of the creation of a “Russia” that extends from Europe to the Pacific Ocean. Russia did not, after all, only fall apart and collapse as it became modern. It also became the largest country in history, a place in which people separated by thousands of miles saw themselves as sharing something—as a “we” participating in a grand story. In introducing Peter Andreevich and Ivan Timofeevich, I hope to shed some light on this process while capturing some of the dynamism, uncertainty, and hope that defined the era in which they lived.

No less important, theirs is a dramatic, human story—and one worth telling.

**Chapter Preview**

Chapter one, “The Rock and the City on the Hill,” explores Peter Andreevich’s childhood world in the Ural Mountains and describes the milieu against which he would measure his subsequent experiences. The family of priests into which he was born had much in common with their many counterparts across the empire who made the village cleric an infamous symbol of “unenlightenment” in Imperial Russia. The chapter explores some of the ways in which the tsarist state made new efforts to educate the provincial clergy

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during this period, describing in particular the relationship between the village priests of the Urals and Tobol’sk, the center of their diocese and cultural capital of eighteenth-century Siberia. When Peter Andreevich left to study at the seminary in Tobol’sk, he did so as part of a growing cohort of priests’ sons who were educated at the empire’s seminaries, and his time there, I suggest, was critical in that it prompted him to see his world within a broader frame.

Chapter two, “Slovtsov,” treats the most pivotal time of Peter Andreevich’s life—from the beginning of his studies at St. Petersburg’s Alexander-Nevskii Seminary in 1788 through his 1808 banishment to Siberia for suspected involvement in a Ministry of Commerce extortion scandal. In the intervening years Peter Andreevich studied and taught at seminaries in Tobol’sk and St. Petersburg, served a sentence of exile for a 1793 sermon that sharply criticized Catherine II, abandoned the clerical estate, and began his career in state service. As this sequence of events suggests, this was a time when Peter Andreevich struggled to define what it meant to be—and to fashion himself as—a prosveshchenyi chelovek in his world. He was briefly inspired by the French Revolution, getting himself into much trouble for criticizing the autocracy in terms that went beyond the accepted dialogue between ruler and ruled. But serving the tsarist state and benefiting from the education it provided fostered his internalization of the ideology of autocratic rule, which he came to see as the sole agent of progress in Eurasia. His sense of self was a product of this conviction, and he would continue to take

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pride in his role as a *prosveshchennyi chelovek* in service of a progressive tsarist state for the remainder of his life.

Chapter three, “Nachal’niki, Nastavniki, Namestniki,” is set in Irkutsk province. This was, as official documents of the period called it, the empire’s *samyi otdalennyi krai*, its “most remote region,” about which educated Russians and the central government knew miserably little. Its distance from St. Petersburg facilitated bureaucratic malfeasance on a stupendous scale, but it was, nonetheless, a place in which the ideals of imperial enlightenment could prove powerful and attractive. In examining the experiences of a young Kalashnikov and his father, the chapter highlights the paternalistic nature of Russian provincial government, in particular the ways in which roles of *nachal’nik* (chief), *nastavnik* (mentor), and *namestnik* (deputy) intertwined on the imperial periphery. Both Kalashnikov and his father saw their lives transformed by fatherly authority figures who blended these roles—and it was the ability to do so productively, Kalashnikov and Slovtsov believed, that marked the essence of good service in Siberia. The chapter also shows how the governorship of Ivan Pestel’ and Nikolai Treskin (1806-19), infamous in the historiographical literature as an example of provincial *proizvol* at its nastiest, held a number of attractions for educated Russians. Contemporaries like Slovtsov and Kalashnikov remembered Pestel’ and Treskin’s tenure not only for the problems their overbearing rule entailed, but also for the unprecedented order, safety, and development it brought to Irkutsk and its giant province.

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59 *Proizvol*, arbitrary tyranny, is closely associated with provincial government in Russia, where distance from “the center” gave governors great de facto power. The bureaucrats of early-nineteenth century Irkutsk are often spotlighted as its most infamous practitioners.
Chapter four, “Nomad-Chinovnik, Novelist-Chinovnik,” traces Slovtsov and Kalashnikov’s friendship from its beginnings in Irkutsk through the early 1830s. Peter Andreevich and Ivan Timofeevich met when Kalashnikov worked as a scribe for Slovtsov, who was appointed director of Irkutsk schools in 1815. Slovtsov mentored Kalashnikov while carrying out a major overhaul of Irkutsk’s gymnasium and overseeing the founding of schools throughout the province. He then served as the first (and last) vizitator (inspector) of Siberian schools (1820-28), spending much of his time travelling across Siberia and reporting to his superiors at Kazan’ University about Siberia’s nascent school system. In 1823 he helped Kalashnikov transfer to St. Petersburg, where Ivan Timofeevich served in a variety of positions, started his family, and achieved a degree of fame as the first Siberian novelist. Through Slovtsov and Kalashnikov’s experiences, the chapter explores Siberia’s place in debates about public education in the empire and in the “Golden Age” of Russian literature. In both spheres, the men argued passionately and confidently in favor of the imperial narrative of enlightenment, describing Siberia as a place for prosveshchenie, a land that was made whole, made better, and, indeed, made “Russia” by imperial rule.

The epilogue, “Diapers of Oblivion and Nineteenth-Century Man,” considers the final decade of Slovtsov and Kalashnikov’s correspondence, Kalashnikov’s autobiographical novel Automaton, and Slovtsov’s Historical Survey of Siberia, paying particular attention to their conceptions of historical change and their anxieties about Russia’s future. During this period, from the early 1830s until Slovtsov’s death in 1843, both men were more settled in their daily lives than ever before—Slovtsov a pensioner in
Tobol’sk, Kalashnikov a middle-aged father of a large family, established literary figure, and Petersburg chinovnik. Their letters abound with mounting concern about the pace and direction of historical change. They sought to justify their roles as enlightened men—and the place of the autocratic tsarist empire—in their world, I suggest, through two maneuvers. First, they reiterated their positive historical argument for imperial rule. Slovtsov based his *Historical Survey of Siberia* on the notion that, prior to the Russian conquest in the late sixteenth century, Siberia was a historyless land. It was, he claimed, imperial rule that extracted Siberia and its peoples from the “diapers of oblivion,” that made Siberia “Russia,” and that gave it hope for the future. Second, he and Kalashnikov increasingly imagined themselves as enlightened men less against the “dark” masses or high society (*svet*) as they had for so long, and increasingly against a specter they called the “man of the nineteenth century” (*chelovek deviatnadtsatogo veka*). This was the “freethinking” man without faith—typically inspired by German idealistic philosophy—who was “contaminating” the youth of Russia. He appears as the agent of “Antichrist” in their letters and as the primary villain in Kalashnikov’s final novel, *Automaton*.

By emphasizing the personal and emotional resonance of an era too often treated largely as a time of political “reaction” and by focusing on men who were simultaneously members of the state and educated society, the epilogue underscores the complexity of this important era and suggests its fundamental importance in the broader sweep of Russian history. In doing so it supports a broader aim of the dissertation. Instead of repeating a familiar (albeit well-founded) story of Russian history as a tale of a procession of foreign ideas that inspired legislation and reforms, but had little impact on
society—besides raising expectations and causing further problems—I seek to understand how, in this midst of this process, complex individuals came to understand themselves and their world.

But doing that requires that we first meet a family of clerics in the Ural Mountains. It is to them that I now turn.
CHAPTER ONE:

The Rock and the City on the Hill

And so passed two hundred years of Siberian history! And so lived our ancestors, about whom history can say the same as the evangelist’s blindman once said in Bethesda: ‘I see men as trees, walking.’ The Sibiriaki of these times truly did resemble trees, unable to shake off their leaves and the maggots that consumed them.

-Peter Slovtsov, 1830

By the time he wrote the book that would, in the minds of many Siberian writers, give him claim to the title of Siberia’s first patriot, Peter Andreevich Slovtsov was an old man who could—and constantly did—look back on a long and tumultuous, yet successful career of state service. The cause he had served throughout that career was “enlightenment,” and he believed that it was the moral imperative of the enlightened man to share his enlightenment with the less fortunate of the emperor’s subjects. By doing so, as he saw it, the enlightened man acted as agent of the Russian state in the central drama of Russian history: the provision of law, enlightenment, and Christianity to the diverse and “dark” lands its emperors ruled.

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1 *PVT*, 128 (citing Mark 8: 22-25).
As he aged, this narrative became so central to Peter Andreevich’s sense of self that it sharply colored his understanding of the past. When he wrote his history of Siberia—a story of what he called “the Church and the Government’s exceptional battle with the spirit of the world”—he cast his ancestors as integral players in Russian history’s central saga, suggesting that the priestly clan into which he was born had played a vanguard role in bringing “evangelical enlightenment” (evangel’skoe prosveshchenie) to Siberia.3 But the old man knew that such a telling masked complex realities that defined the world into which he was born. It was for this reason that he paused his sweeping narrative of progress with an introspective footnote, begging his reader pardon for a personal aside: “At Nizhnesusansk Zavod, if the reader will forgive my egoism, I was born in the year 1767. When considering the roots of my faults, I sometimes ask myself: was it not the clang of the hammers that blasted my ears from the very cradle that deafened me for so long to the gentle impressions of self-knowledge?”4

The comment is, at first, puzzling. The hammers and blast furnaces that distinguished Peter Andreevich’s Ural Mountains rodina from other places in the empire were among the features he most prized about the land of his youth. This archipelago of metallurgical villages made the Urals uniquely important to the imperial economy—and, indeed, made Russia the world leader in iron production shortly after Peter Andreevich was born. Peter Andreevich wrote fondly of the spirit of innovation, industry, and dynamism that the presence of heavy industry there represented. What if, he asked in 1809, while passing through the region for the first time in fifteen years, Russian

3 IOS, 490; Slovtsov, “Pis’ma iz Sibiri,” Aziatskii vestnik (January-June 1825): 390-91.
4 IOS, 211.
manufacturers could tap into the Chinese market and instill “a fancy in [Chinese] heads for drinking tea from Nizhnetagil’sk cups!”

Even more, Peter Andreevich cherished his birthplace for the abundant natural riches that had brought the metallurgical industry there in the first place. Over the course of his life he acquired an encyclopedic knowledge of plants and minerals—and extensive personal collections of each, much of which he gathered on trips through the Urals. As an adult he found it “impossible,” he wrote in 1809, not to find pleasure in gazing upon their “naked hills” and rocky riverbanks. He so enjoyed these landscapes, he proclaimed, that he needed to distance himself from the mountains in order for his imagination to “steam more properly” and for his “soul” to “act more independently.” This attraction was the consequence not of any mere “action of the organs.” No, Peter Andreevich believed nature spoke to him because he possessed “a certain conjunction of ideas” (nekotoromu soiu zu poniatiï) that enabled him to hear its voice. And to do so was important, he explained, because pondering nature’s beauties “prepares the wise man for inner action” (k vnutrennoiu deistvovaniu).

Tellingly—and here we begin to see what prompted that accusatory question about the hammers—Peter Andreevich did not believe that nature spoke to all men. Whereas the sight of majestic Urals landscapes prepared the “wise man” for “inner action,” it did no such thing for the “common man” (chelovek obyknovennyï). The latter, he wrote, merely “stops for a moment, looks with his entire physical organism, and then

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5 Slovtsov, “Pis’ma iz Sibiri,” Az iat skii vestnik (January-June 1825): 177-78. Nizhnetagil’sk was one of the larger metallurgical factory-villages of the eighteenth-century Urals.
is carried away like a cloud and blown about the field of his sensuality. Nature, with all its allegories, is silent for him.\(^6\)

The comment is revealing, for Peter Andreevich was himself born into a world of “common men.” The hammers he blamed for blasting his ears “from the very cradle” and “deafening” him to the “gentle impressions of self-knowledge” were metaphorical. He was a priest’s son, scion of a rough clan whose daily lives had much in common with those of “common men” throughout the empire: coarseness, drunkenness, brutality, ignorance—in brief, *neproveshchenie*, “unenlightenment.” Escaping these “hammers” was the signal event of his life, and it was with this thought in mind that he reflected on the reasons why his past self seemed so different from his present one when, as an old man, he wrote his *Historical Survey of Siberia*.

This chapter sets the scene and introduces the cast of characters who populated Peter Andreevich’s first two decades. Until he was thirteen, his world was comprised of the metallurgical villages of the central Urals, and the faces he knew were those of Sloptsov\(^7\) clerics and their parishioners. In 1780 he left to study at the seminary in Tobol’sk, eighteenth-century Siberia’s cultural and administrative capital. His departure was part of a broad effort by church and state leaders to educate village priests by forcing them to send their sons to seminary. Peter Andreevich was part of a growing cohort of priests’ sons who attended seminary,\(^8\) and he never forgot that his own enlightenment

\(^7\) Peter Andreevich’s original surname was Sloptsov. He received his new surname, Slovtsov, when he studied at the Alexander-Nevskii Monastery in St. Petersburg in 1789-92 (more on this topic below).
\(^8\) Seminary enrollments in the empire grew from 4,673 in 1766 to 29,000 in 1808. See Gregory L. Freeze, *The Russian Levites: Parish Clergy in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), 88. On the clergy in Imperial Russian history, see also Laurie Manchester, *Holy Fathers, Secular...
was a product of vigorous pressure from authorities from the world beyond his birthplace. He was also one of the most successful members of this cohort. His teachers in Tobol’sk sent him to St. Petersburg in 1788, when Catherine II ordered church leaders to dispatch their best pupils to the imperial capital for training so that they might later return to their native lands and elevate the cultural level of the world from which they came.

Although evidence about Peter Andreevich’s youth is fragmentary and often impressionistic, asking how he understood his early years is essential to understand how he internalized his role as a state servitor and made sense of the world around him over the course of his long life. A seminary education had many shortcomings, but, in bringing Peter Andreevich first to Tobol’sk and then to St. Petersburg, his gave him an opportunity to place his Sloptsov world in a broader, trans-local frame. This was a critical development: premodern Russia was no land of opportunity, and the shaping power of place over person was particularly strong in its provinces. It was truly a land where “to live is to live locally, and to know is first of all to know the place one is in.”

The Urals constituted Peter Andreevich’s first rodina and would retain a powerful influence over his imagination, but only by leaving them behind did he come to consider himself a “wise man” endowed with that “certain conjunction of ideas” necessary, among other things, to read nature’s allegories. His ideas about achievement, self-worth, right and wrong, enlightenment, and service took shape within a narrative he developed about

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the bounties that he believed tsarist rule offered—law and order, enlightenment and Christianity. Although he would remain at work on this narrative (as would it on him) for the remainder of his life, he never ceased to identify with what he saw as its most basic thrust: an imperial tide of enlightenment that transformed distant, disparate, and “dark” peoples and lands into a single, cohesive “Russia,” a tide that carried him to places far removed from the world of the village priest, where the din of daily life among “common men” had “for so long” left him “deafened” to the “gentle impressions of self-knowledge.”

**The Rock**

The Urals are most famous for being unremarkable. With a peak elevation of just 6,217 feet, they seem to lack the grandeur expected of the boundary between Europe and Asia, providing one of the more telling examples of the arbitrary nature of human geographies.  But for Peter Andreevich they marked a very real boundary. They were his *rodina*, and for much of his adult life they marked the line between the forbidden—the “interior” provinces, or “European” Russia—and the permitted—Siberia.

For Russians accustomed to the plains and rolling hills of central Russia and Ukraine, the Urals had long been an unfamiliar, fabulous land. Medieval Russians knew the Urals simply as “the Rock,” and most of their information about the region came

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through hearsay—tales of incredible abundance in particular. The *Tale of Bygone Years*, for example, describes how people in twelfth-century Staraia Ladoga spoke of the Rock as a place where great storm clouds rained hordes of young squirrels—a legend spawned by the impressive cartloads of pelts that Novgorodians collected there. Russians also saw the Rock as the threshold of Christendom, a land of mountains that reached “to the heavens” and were inhabited by dog-headed men. The name “Ural,” meanwhile, is Turkic in origin, and Bashkir legends offer varying stories about the mountains’ provenance. One holds that they are the burial mound of the great Bashkir hero Ural, while another tells of a giant who kept all of his riches in enormous pockets that hung from his even more enormous belt. The mountains, according to the latter tale, took shape when this giant cast his great belt across the land, leaving it and its mineral bounties behind.12

Peter Andreevich grew up in the central Urals, where his ancestors had long lived alongside the banks of the Neiva River. The Neiva runs down the Urals’ eastern slope for three hundred versts13 before merging with waters bound for the Arctic in the Ob River. This was a fertile, storied land, and the Neiva’s distinctively steep, rocky banks and their mysterious inscriptions were a favorite topic of Peter Andreevich’s musings. While growing up he would have heard many tales about the region. Neiva, for example, means “white” or “clear” river in the languages of the Mansi and Khanty peoples native to the area, but local lore also told of a beautiful girl by the same name. This Neiva lost

13 A Russian unit of measure roughly equivalent to a kilometer.
her lover, mourned his death for thirty days and, no tears left to shed, threw herself from a rocky cliff into the lake that her tears had formed. The thirty rivers that feed that lake—Tavatui, named in honor of her lover—are said represent the thirty nights Neiva cried, while her spirit lives on in the river, the only one that drains the lake.\(^\text{14}\)

When Russians began to settle the Neiva region in the seventeenth century, they populated the Neiva’s rocky outcroppings with their own stories. What they called the “Seven Brothers,” for instance, were a series of giant rock formations near the river’s source. These were said to be magical beings turned to stone when Ermak, on his way to conquer the Siberian Khanate, made the sign of the cross in their presence. In the eighteenth century, Russians in the region cultivated a persistent legend that the Neiva’s name derived not from native lore, but from the famous Russian industrialist Nikita Demidov, who was said to have named the river in honor of the Neva River, on which Peter I had founded his new capital of St. Petersburg in 1703—the same year that the Demidovs arrived in the Urals to build what would become a vast metallurgical empire.\(^\text{15}\)

Peter Andreevich never tired of repeating that the land through which the Neiva flowed was among the empire’s most attractive and historically seminal locales. Kalashnikov would later write, drawing on stories he heard from Peter Andreevich, that it was “in the bosom” of the Neiva that “Siberia was first acquainted with agriculture.”\(^\text{16}\) Peter Andreevich wrote glowingly that “One needs to gaze upon this space […]—this vivacious trapezoid with its fertile soil, running waters, beautiful banks, and jovial places


\(^{15}\) Matveev, *Geograficheskie nazvaniia*, 245-46. On the Demidovs see below.

\(^{16}\) IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 7, l. 30.
that alternate with ridges and inclined plains; one needs to see it in order to understand how many were the incentives [to settle this] space, which, after being planted with people itself, became the nursery for the dissemination of Russian settlement beyond the Enisei.”

Russians first began to settle along the Neiva in the 1620s. The Muscovite government encouraged the settlement of Verkhotur’e district, of which the first Neiva River settlements were a part, as a means to develop agriculture in the Urals and alleviate the provision of grain to Siberian forts. The first documented Russian settler on the river was the iamshchik Artemii Babinov, who had prospected a new road into Siberia in the late sixteenth century. In the year 7127 (1618/19) Babinov “and comrades” forcibly took ancestral lands from tribute-paying (iasachnye) Tatars and received permission to plow the land and build a village. Although Moscow soon ordered that Babinov return the Tatars’ land, Russians continued to settle the area—not least because, like much of the Urals, the Neiva region was a place of refuge for Muscovy’s runaway serfs and “wandering people” (guliashchie liudi). Abundant fertile land enabled its population to grow faster than those of nearby regions that had been settled earlier, such as the lands along the Tura and Tagil rivers, and by 1632—when there were still only some 200 homesteads in the region—thirty-two men and their families were dispatched from the Neiva’s banks to settle the new forts being built in Siberia at Tomsk, Eniseisk.

17 IOS, 72. The Enisei is a major river in central Siberia.
18 P. N. Butinskii, Zaselenie Sibiri i byt pervikh eia nasel'nikov (Khar’kov: Tipografiia Gubernskago Pravleniia, 1889), 54.
19 Coachman or driver.
and Krasnoiarsk. The two most significant early settlements along the river, Nev’ianskaia Sloboda (c. 1619) and Murzinskaia Sloboda (1639), were also the birthplaces of Peter Andreevich’s father and mother, respectively (Nev’ianskaia Sloboda was particularly important, as it served as a point of defense against often hostile, more numerous, and better-armed local peoples, and Russian peasants from surrounding villages regularly flocked to its palisade for protection).

Peter Andreevich’s Neiva homeland was also the epicenter of the metallurgical industry with which the Urals were to become so closely associated. Native peoples had long crafted tools from the mountains’ abundant iron ore, which played an important role in their cosmologies. One Bashkir legend, for instance, describes a universe in which the planets and stars are fastened to the heavens with thick iron chains. But early Russian settlers seem to have paid little attention to the Urals’ mineral riches. Although Moscow made scattered attempts to develop a mining industry during the seventeenth century, most settlers were preoccupied with feeding themselves. And promyshlenniki with the wherewithal to do more, Peter Andreevich wrote, were “blinded by the luster of Siberian beavers and sables” and did not consider taking advantage of the “incalculable Urals treasures.” One notable effort to change this equation came in the 1660s, when the brothers Aleksandr and Dmitrii Tumashev discovered iron, copper, and gemstones along the Neiva. Peter Andreevich, whose maternal relatives lived not far from the site, cited

24 Explorers, hunters, trappers, and traders who went to Siberia in search of wealth—primarily in furs—and played an important role in the Muscovite conquest of Siberia.
25 *IOS*, 116-17.
the Tumashevs’ efforts as an important moment in Russian history—the first Russian inkling of the buried riches in the “magnificent, untouched shrine of the Urals, this sarcophagus of nature.” But the ironworks that the Tumashevs established, if noteworthy for its claim to be the first private works in the Urals, was less impressive in its output: it was, Peter Andreevich concluded, a mere “child’s factory.”

As with so much in Russian history, the reign of Peter I marked a turning point in the history of Russian metallurgy. Like many educated Russians, Slovtsov regularly cited Peter I’s role in transforming all facets of Russian life. It was, after all, the famous tsar’s insatiable need for war materiel that gave rise to the metallurgical landscape into which Peter Andreevich was born. The Russian state had long acquired its iron from the Tula region and, at greater expense, from Sweden, but Peter I’s surveyors discovered that Urals iron was of higher quality. The Urals also had what to eighteenth-century minds were endless forests to fuel blast furnaces, and the region’s distance from Russia’s vulnerable western and southern borders offered security for the development of such a critical industry. Mikhail Bibikov, who at that time governed Nev’ianskaia Sloboda—where Peter Andreevich’s ancestors were the priests—oversaw the building of the first state metallurgical works in the region at Nev’iansk (1700-1702), and the first shipments of war materiel from Urals factories began arriving in Moscow the following year.

By the time that happened, Peter I had turned over the Nev’iansk works to Nikita Demidov. It was in large part because of the Demidovs that the Urals’ transformation

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26 IOS, 125-26, 162-63.
into the “all-Russian factory” (vserossiiskii zavod) was such a rapid one. Peter I, impressed by Demidov’s iron smelting and processing factory near Tula, urged Demidov to move to the Urals and take over state factories there. Demidov agreed, but only on the condition that he be given a number of key privileges: exclusive access to Neiva ore, freedom from local administrators, the right to sell iron not needed for state needs on the market, and the right (which, not being a noble, he did not possess) to purchase serfs to work at his factories. In return, Demidov supplied Peter’s state with pig iron and other products at reduced prices.28

In the decades that followed, Demidov and his sons built more than twenty factories in the Urals that would produce approximately half of the Russia’s iron during much of the eighteenth century. Nev’iansk, situated near the western terminus of the Neiva River, was the capital of their industrial empire. Its leading role in the region was undisputed—such that Peter Andreevich and others who lived nearby knew it simply as the “old factory.”29 With some 1,200 households in 1774, it also ranked among the more populous provincial settlements in the eighteenth-century empire.30 Its unusual leaning clocktower, complete with an elaborate musical clock imported from England, was familiar to everyone in the region, and its products—bells, arms, chests, icons, and more—were renowned throughout the empire. When Peter Simon Pallas passed through in 1770, he was struck by Nev’iansk’s prosperity, cleanliness, orderly canals and bridges, and, above all, the excellent roads that connected it to neighboring factories (nowhere in

28 Hudson, Rise of the Demidov Family.
30 GAvgT f. 156, op. 3, d. 423, ll. 96-99.
Russia, he claimed, were there better roads). “It is indisputable,” Pallas concluded, “that among all the Siberian iron factories Nev’iansk is the most significant and superior to the rest.”

Like other eighteenth-century visitors, Pallas was particularly struck by the number of Old Believers in Nev’iansk and the Neiva region. Although Peter Andreevich would later cite Old Belief—alongside invasions, bureaucratic corruption, “popular merrymaking,” and smallpox—as one of the five great adversities of Siberian life (he called Old Believers a “second smallpox”), the presence of Old Believers was almost certainly something he took for granted while growing up. Old Believers predominated in Priural’ia and made up roughly half of the Russian population in Zaural’ia by the end of the seventeenth century. They were also one of the key ingredients in the Demidovs’ success. The Demidovs relied on Old Believers to administer their factories, placing great stock in their sobriety and their knowledge of metallurgy (which they acquired in Olonets and Tula before they fled to the Urals). Old Believers provided the Demidovs with a reliable supply of qualified, experienced assistants—something that the (much less profitable) state-operated factories in the Urals lacked. It was, for instance, from their Old Believer agents that the Demidovs first

32 Orthodox Christians who opposed a series of reforms introduced by the Patriarch of Moscow in the mid-seventeenth century and, as a result, split from the Russian Orthodox Church. Persecuted by the state in the wake of the “schism” of the seventeenth century, many fled to remote frontiers, particularly the Russian North and the Ural Mountains.
33 IOS, 152-53.
34 Preobrazhenskii, Istoriiia Urala, 179.
learned of the vast ore deposits of Lake Kolyvano in the Altai Mountains, where they would build the next major center of their industrial empire in the 1720s.35

Similarly critical to the Demidovs’ success was the support they received from the central government. As promised, Peter I placed almost no restrictions on the Demidovs’ operations in the Urals, warning local administrators to leave them be and render assistance when asked. One 1720 edict, for example, stipulated that “Neither the governor, nor the voevoda,36 nor any other official is permitted to investigate [Nikita] Demidov’s factories or enterprises. No measure is allowed that would bring the factories to a halt. No insult against him is permitted under threat of His Imperial Majesty’s wrath and fury.”37 The Demidovs’ privileges were a sore point for other local administrators and factory operators. When the future historian—and early proponent of the Urals as a continental boundary—V. N. Tatishchev was sent to the Urals in 1720 to revive the flagging state factories there, he clashed bitterly with the Demidovs, not least because their prosperity was in part a product of their exploitation of local resources (human and natural) at the expense of the state factories in the area.

But however productive the Demidov factories were, they could not keep pace with the needs of growing domestic and export markets.38 To meet this demand, the state continued to found numerous factories of its own in the first half of the eighteenth century. Ekaterinburg (1723), which would eventually become the major urban center of the Urals, was by far the most famous of these. But for Peter Andreevich none was more

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35 Baidin, Ocherki, 122; Hudson, Rise of the Demidov Family, 47-49, 55-56.
36 A civilian administrator and military leader in district towns in pre-Petrine Russia.
38 Hudson, Rise of the Demidov Family, 62-65. On Tatishchev’s argument for the Urals as continental boundary, see Bassin, “Russia Between Europe and Asia,” 5-7.
significant than Susansk, the small iron-smelting factory-village where he was born into a family of priests in 1767.

**Hammers**

Peter Andreevich claimed that his earliest ancestors in the Urals had arrived at the behest of Moscow’s first patriarch, Iov (r. 1589-1607). If correct, that would place the Sloptsovs in the vanguard of Russian settlement in the decades following Ermak’s conquest of the Siberian Khanate in the 1580s. Although this may have been the case—there was a Sloptsov sexton at Nikolaevskii Monastery in Verkhotur’e in 1631—Peter Andreevich’s claim also reflects a habit he developed of writing himself into the defining narratives of Russian history.

Claiming a vanguard role for his ancestors was important to Peter Andreevich. As he grew older, he idealized their historical importance, imagining them as early protagonists in a centuries-old saga of enlightenment—something he believed flowed from Russia’s towns and monasteries to its “savage” peripheries. He wrote in 1809, for example, that “The great larches that matured in the same era as my forefathers” and the “cheerful slope that grins along the banks of the whirring Neiva” were special to him because they were “peppered with the dust of my ancestors, who first brought Russian letters and evangelical enlightenment from beyond the Urals frontier.”

Peter Andreevich elaborated on this claim in *Historical Survey of Siberia*, suggesting a place for his ancestors in the heroic tradition of Orthodox saints like Sergei

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39 *IOS*, 72.
40 I would like to thank Iurii Konovalov for sharing his research with me and helping to clarify this point.
of Radonezh (c. 1314-92) and Stefan of Perm’ (c. 1340-96). These were figures with whom Peter Andreevich would have been familiar as a boy, whether from sermons at his father’s church or study at the seminary. The stamp of Stefan of Perm’ is especially clear in his conception of his ancestors’ place in history. Like them, Stefan was from the Ustiug region of northeastern Muscovy. He was, in the words of his fifteenth-century biographer Epifanius the Wise, “leader of those whose sight has been darkened, cleanser of those who have been defiled.”42 In 1379 the wandering monk ventured into the lands along the Vychegda and Vym’ rivers, where he worked to convert the local Komi peoples to Orthodoxy, set up a school, and devised an alphabet so that they could read the religious works that he translated into their language. His converts became subjects of the expanding Muscovite principality, and the metropolitan of Moscow consecrated Stefan as the first bishop of Perm’ in 1383.43

Peter Andreevich placed special emphasis on the importance of St. Stefan’s—and his ancestors’—roots in the Ustiug region. St. Stefan, he wrote, was “an ustiuhanin44 in the flesh” who from the banks of the Vym’ “blessed a path to the east for his countrymen.” The saint’s work was indicative of what was for Peter Andreevich an enduring theme in Siberian history—the crucial role of ustiuhan in making Siberia a Russian place. Siberia, he wrote, was “searched, obtained, settled, built, and formed all by ustiuhan.” He suggested that ustiuhan led the way in Siberia “right down to

[Aleksandr Andreevich] Baranov,” the Russian merchant who administered the empire’s

44 A person from the Ustiug region (pl. ustiuhan).
settlements in America in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and,
according to Peter Andreevich, “carried ustiuzhanin learning [ustiuzhskiu obrazovannost’] to the banks of America.” “Without ustiuzhane,” he concluded, “nothing would have happened in Siberia” (Bez ustiuzhan v Sibiri ne oboidetsia nikakoe delo).  

Peter Andreevich even suggested that ustiuzhane brought a special kind of morality to Siberia. If Christian worship in Siberia’s towns was often a regrettable superficial “observance of external rites,” one could find, he suggested, true “Christian life in the slobody, populated since olden times by peasants rather than new settlers” (poselytskami). In those places—that is, tellingly, places like Nev’ianskaia Sloboda and Murzinskaia Sloboda, where his parents were born—Peter Andreevich claimed that the name of God is pronounced by family elders with reverence from morning to evening [and] everything begins and ends with the name of Jesus. Many times we have been witness to the decorum with which they quietly offer bread and salt [sidiat za khelbom-sol’iu], the gratitude with which they rise from the table, and the fear of God with which they gather the fallen breadcrumbs they revere as a gift from God. Many times we have also heard how these peasants get up in the night during thunderstorms, light candles before the icons, and pray with their families in deep silence. Prayers during the time of storms happen during the day as well, when behind closed shutters they respond with a devout cry to the voice of heaven in closed storerooms. No, this is not hypocrisy [litsemerstvo], the lesson of our age, but rather the remnants of the legacy of our forefathers, the legacy of the ustiuzhane [praotcheskogo, ustiuzhskogo].

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45 IOS, 109-10, 304, 437.
46 A sloboda (pl. slobody) was a village or group of villages that typically enjoyed some particular freedom from certain state duties or taxes.
47 IOS, 240.
By emphasizing the roles of *ustiuzhane* in the history of Siberia, and by braiding his own ancestors into this history, Peter Andreevich wrote his people into a broader story of Russian expansion and enlightenment that formed the core of his sense of self as he grew older. But as his comment about his “deafness” to the “gentle impressions of self-knowledge” suggests, the *ustiuzhane* legacy and Peter Andreevich’s understanding of his family’s place within it were far from straightforward.

The first problem with Peter Andreevich’s description of his ancestors’ place in the vanguard of a special *ustiuzhanskii* “evangelical enlightenment” in Siberia is that it passes over one well-known reality about life on Muscovy’s eastern frontier: sexual relations between Russian men and indigenous women. Ethnic mixing in Siberia was common during the early stages of Russian colonization, when Russian men vastly outnumbered Russian women there. Well into the eighteenth century, church leaders in Tobol’sk bemoaned that priests under their watch often viewed the women of the tribes they were supposed to be converting as sexual rather than spiritual conquests. The fruits of Russian-native liaisons were immediately visible to visitors from “European” Russia. While founding and administering many of the factories that Peter Andreevich’s ancestors called home in the 1720s and 1730s, Tatishchev, for example, described the faces of the Russians he met there as “swarthy, round, and quite mixed from birth with those of Kalmyks, Tatars, and Kirgiz.”

Sloptsov faces seem to have made a similar impression on contemporaries. Fëdor Priadil’schchikov was a freed serf who met Peter Andreevich in the 1820s while studying

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at Perm’ Gymnasium and Kazan’ University. He came across many Sloptsovs over the course of his life. “All” of them, he explained, had dark hair and “an unusually wise and somewhat pensive gaze.” The latter suggestion reflected the awe Priadil’shchikov seems to have had for Peter Andreevich, whose writings and educational work made him a figure of considerable renown for Priadil’shchikov (who would himself later work as director of the gymnasium in Perm’). But Priadil’shchikov was also struck by something that Peter Andreevich’s nineteenth-century biographers apparently considered unseemly to mention: “I will in no way belittle the dignity of these people,” he wrote, “if I express my hypothesis about their race (ikh rasy). Judging by the face and character of Peter Andreevich and those of his relatives whom I know, it is possible to conclude that, in all likelihood, they are the descendants of some Vogul [Mansi] who accepted Christianity and dedicated himself or his children to the service of the church.”

We need not accept Priadil’shchikov’s racial terminology, of course, but his emphasis on the Sloptsovs’ distinctive appearance—about which he had no reason to lie—suggests that Peter Andreevich’s heritage was more complex than his ustiuzhanskii narrative allowed.

Priadil’shchikov offered a second reason for supposing that the Sloptsovs had Mansi ancestors. “Does not their surname, taken from the trapper’s tool slopets,” he asked, “recall the way of life of him to whom it was first given?” Mansi hunters used a trap called a slopets to catch small game such as grouses and hares. It consisted of a number of logs rigged in such a way that, when an unsuspecting animal walked beneath

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50 IRLI f. 265, op. 2, d. 3961, l. 11.
them, the logs came crashing down, killing the animal and leaving its corpse concealed from scavengers until the trapper returned to retrieve it. It was after this device that, in all likelihood, Peter Andreevich’s family name derived. The fact that Peter Andreevich received a new surname after his arrival at St. Petersburg’s Alexander-Nevskii Seminary adds further support to Priadil’shchikov’s theory: Slovtsov—derived from slovo, Russian for “word” or “sermon”—suggested a more “enlightened” calling than Sloptsov, which was fitting, given that Peter Andreevich had been brought to the capital to be groomed as a teacher.51

Peter Andreevich was reticent on the question of his mixed ancestry, but he did have much to say about the Mansi. Before the Russian conquest of the Urals, Mansi had been united under the authority of the Pelym Principality, the southern frontier of which extended into the lands where Peter Andreevich was raised. And well into the eighteenth century Mansi maintained a shrine at a larch tree at Pelym that was the centerpiece of their sacrificial rituals.52 Peter Andreevich described the Mansi in Historical Survey of Siberia as “distinguished from other [native] peoples by their dialect and the peculiarity of their idols.” Before “being called to Christianity,” he wrote, they “worshipped a stone image of a spear near Pelym and, further down the Tavda and Konda [rivers], anthropomorphous idols dressed in sacerdotal robes.”53 After being “called,” they were

51 A 1790 list of seminarians at the Alexander Nevskii Seminary makes clear that Peter Andreevich was still called Sloptsov when he arrived in St. Petersburg (RGIA f. 796, op. 71, d. 417, l. 157). He acquired the new surname between that time and the time he returned to Tobol’sk at the end of 1792 to teach at its seminary. The Tobol’sk Seminary’s teacher roster for 1793 lists him as Slovtsov (RGIA f. 796, op. 74, d. 577, ll. 1ob.-3ob.).
53 IOS, 59.
“Christians by decorum, pagans by conviction.” To test their faith, Peter Andreevich claimed, one needed only to cut into a bear’s paw with an axe and—because the Mansi, like many Siberian peoples, believed the bear to be a particularly sacred animal (the “old man with claws” who embodied justice on earth)—watch as the “guilty ones fall into a certain sort of terror and proclaim the utter truth.”

When Peter Andreevich wrote his history, he accused the Mansi of ingratitude for the blessings Russian rule had brought them. When, for example, the Russian state was laid low and left tsarless during the Time of Troubles in the early seventeenth century, the Mansi, along with Ostiaks and Tatars, “rejoiced at the Russian calamity, already forgetting about the exemplary charity with which tsar Boris [Godunov] had given them an exemption from tribute for the entire year of 1600.” Thankfully, Peter Andreevich added, the Russian voevoda and his small detachment of Cossacks “knew how to deal with the fools” (umel upravit’sia s gluptsami).

The Mansi were indeed a problem for early Russian settlers. They regularly raided and set fire to Russian villages, took women and children captive, and drove away livestock. But their resistance to Russian expansion was not such that it merited the special emphasis Peter Andreevich gave it in his history. Whether his emphasis reflects a preoccupation on his part about his ancestry is impossible to determine. But he could not but have wondered about his ancestors’ heritage. He was, after all, well aware that sexual relations between Russian men and native women—“mixing with the hordes,” as he

54 _PVT_ 79-80. On the place of the bear in Mansi spirituality, see Forsyth, _A History of the Peoples of Siberia_, 15-16.
55 _IOS_, 67.
called it—was common in the early stages of the colonization of Siberia. The earliest Russian settlers, he wrote, “suffered greatly” in their “outward appearance,” retaining the “nobility of Slavic origin” only in their language.\textsuperscript{56} He must have wondered about his family’s distinctive appearance—at least, that is, enough to question on occasion his tale of \textit{ustiuzhanskii} enlightenment.

A second, better documented problem also tarnished Peter Andreevich’s heroic narrative. Namely, the Sloptsovs were village priests who, like so many of their kind, were as often the targets of “evangelical enlightenment” as the bearers of it.

Village priests were responsible for serving as keepers of the faith and maintaining watch over their parishes for deviant practices. Priests from all across the Urals sent biannual reports to their superiors in Tobol’sk that were intended to keep diocesan leaders informed about the state of affairs in the lands under their watch. In first half of 1767, the year Peter Andreevich was born, twenty-two priests in the Neiva region compiled reports about their parishes. Priests Mukhin and Tikhonov at the Nizhnii Tagil’sk spiritual administration were in charge of gathering the reports that year, and they wrote to Tobol’sk that nowhere

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in the parishes, factories, \textit{slobody}, \textit{sela}, and \textit{derevni},\textsuperscript{57} were there any sham miracles before the icons, wells, or springs; nor were there barefooted, pretender \textit{iurodivy} [fools in Christ] in the huts, un-eyewitnessed dead bodies venerated as relics or as living; and there were no sanctimonious persons wandering about posing as wizards and
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{56} \textit{PVT}, 79-80.

\textsuperscript{57} These three terms can all be translated as “village.” A \textit{sloboda} (pl. \textit{slobody}), as noted above, was a village or group of villages that typically enjoyed some particular freedom from certain state duties or taxes. A \textit{derevnia} (pl. \textit{derevni}) was a small village, whereas a \textit{selo} (pl. \textit{sela}) was a larger village with its own church (or a group of villages united under one parish church).
seducing [the people], nor any spontaneous immolations of false sectarian prophets. Everything was all right.58

Church officials in Tobol’sk could not but have been wearied by such reports, which almost always claimed that “everything was all right.” Of the more than one hundred compiled between 1779 and 1782 in the Neiva region, for example, only one contained any mention of irregularities—a case of klikushi, “hysterical screaming women,” at Rafailovskii parish.59

The simple truth was that village priests avoided reporting problems to their superiors because their superiors were more concerned with the conduct of the priests themselves. Any reports of abnormalities were likely to attract scrutiny, unwelcome investigations, and paperwork. Klikushi and “barefooted, pretender iurodivy” were, in other words, a minor headache for a church hierarchy that had daily to concern itself with policing its own underqualified and unreliable cadres. Evidence of this dilemma abounds in surviving diocesan archives—even in routine documents. When, for example, Peter Andreevich’s uncle Aleksandr requested permission in 1755 to be appointed sexton at his father’s church, he had to provide signed confirmation from the parishioners at Nev’ianskaia Sloboda that he was “a good man and without vices, able to read and write, not under any suspicion whatsoever of being in agreement with schismatics, a good resident, not a drunkard, not lazy in keeping his house, not a slanderer, not quarrelsome, not an adulterer, not a murderer, [and] has not been accused of trickery or theft.”60

58 GAvgT f. 156, op. 2, d. 1581, l. 13.
60 GAvgT f. 156, op. 1, d. 158, ll. 1-4ob.
That this list was not specific to Aleksandr Sloptsov, but was instead the standard curriculum vita expected of candidates for clerical office at the village level is suggestive of the low expectations Church administrators had of their village priests. The Tobol’sk diocese archive is filled less with files about how best to spread the Lord’s word than with often interminable investigations of outrages perpetrated by village priests: Koshukskoe village sexton Popov’s adulterous relationship with Neonila Anipina, the wife of a Mansi man; Bobylevskoe village priest Vavilov’s hiding of the Old Believers he ought to have been denouncing; sexton Komiakov’s brawl, which “bloodied the church” at Murzinskaia Sloboda; Isetsk priest Mikhailovskii’s drunken masses, including a sermon punctuated by his regular “belching” and “barfing” and a funeral during which he, drunk, lost his balance and knocked the corpse of the deceased peasant Vasilii Tsyriatev from its casket.61

Church authorities in both St. Petersburg and Tobol’sk were understandably disturbed by such reports. The Tobol’sk consistory sent the following circular to its parish priests in 1764:

…in various places of Tobol’sk diocese priests and churchmen in cases of drunkenness beyond all measure and other behaviors unattractive and improper to their calling spend their lives—in contradiction to the principles of the holy fathers and the Spiritual Regulation—loafing about, lying, and sleeping drunk in the streets, [and] stealing […] as a result cause considerable confusion among the people and temptations for the sectarians; […] in their drunkenness many are foul-mouthed and cause fistfights and other such indecencies both among the people and in the churches. […] As a result of which, they not only do not wean sectarians from their “sectarian errors,” but instead bring] much scandalous and

61 GAVgT f. 156, op. 2, d. 2409, ll. 1-16; f. 156, op. 2, d. 631, ll. 1-45; f. 156, op. 2, d. 844, ll. 1-26; f. 156, op. 2, d. 112; f. 156, op. 2, d. 1200, l. 1.
reproachful ridicule and abuse upon themselves and the entire clerical rank…

Peasant proverbs were no less damning: “A priest’s son is a thief and his daughter is a…”

The reasons for the lowly status of village priests in Imperial Russia are well known. Parish clergy subsisted by collecting voluntary gifts from their parishioners for performing rites and working the small plots of land owned by their churches. The problems inherent in such a system were many: meager material support for priests and their families; diversion from religious duties to agricultural work; unwillingness to send sons to seminary for education; low prestige in the eyes of parishioners; conflict with parishioners over payments for rites; and reluctance to challenge parishioners’ moral failings.

Moreover, the eighteenth century brought unprecedented challenges to the Church. Once the owner of a third of all land and possessor of a near monopoly over culture and art, the Church found itself threatened by the state Peter I created and the Western European culture it promoted. The 1760s were a particularly critical time, as Catherine II’s government confiscated Church lands and peasants and henceforth exercised a domineering influence over its budget. An especially profound development was the formation of a hereditary clerical estate—a dukhovnoe soslovie. “The Russian priest,” writes Gregory Freeze, “invariably came from clerical origins, married the

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62 GAvГ T f. 156, op. 2, d. 871, ll. 1-1об.
63 Quoted in Freeze, Russian Levites, 37.
64 Freeze, Russian Levites, 117-20.
daughter of another cleric, and passed his life in the cocoon of ecclesiastical society and culture."

This cocoon was Peter Andreevich’s most probable future when he was born in 1767. That his relatives had much in common with the clerical troublemakers listed above is indicated not only by numerous files on their conduct, but also by Peter Andreevich’s apparent reticence to talk about them with friends and acquaintances later in life. He seems, in fact, to have told acquaintances so little about his childhood that they were left guessing as to his exact birthplace and the identity of his father when they wrote biographical articles after his death. And although Peter Andreevich liked to imagine his ancestors within a narrative of Russians bringing Christianity to the Urals, when he wrote about the region he focused largely on places and things—scenic peaks, precious minerals, and metallurgical products—rather than people. When, for example, he published in *Moscow Telegraph* an open “letter” to his cousin Ivan Vasil’evich Sloptsov about his 1828 trip through the villages of their youth, he framed his return to their native land as an emotional experience, but at the very point where he promised to describe his feelings—to “start from the beginning, so as not to leave out the touching

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65 Freeze, *Russian Levites*, viii, 3.
66 Kalashnikov was perplexed to read in Slovtsov’s *Historical Survey of Siberia* that his benefactor was born at Susansk. He wrote in his memoirs that Peter Andreevich “personally said to me that he was born on the banks of the Neiva at Nev’ianskii Zavod—consequently—in Siberia.” But he almost certainly confused a story Peter Andreevich told about visiting Nev’ianskii Zavod—the largest settlement in the region. *ZIZh*, 398-99. Ivan Pomaskin, a Tobol’sk priest and teacher close to Slovtsov in his last years, was similarly confused, as he was on many details of Slovtsov’s early life and service career. I. V. Pomaskin, “Biografichesko izvesti o Slovtsove,” *Moskvitain*, no. 10, ch. 5 (1844): 385-87; Other commentators, trying to determine the identity of Peter Andreevich’s father, mistaked him for another Andrei Sloptsov in the region (Andrei Vasil’evich Sloptsov of Fominskoe Selo): I. Ia. Slovtsov, “Petr Andreevich Slovtsov,” *TGV*, nos. 7-8 (1 April and 16 April 1893), neofitsial’naia chast’, 149-53; Bespalova, *Sibirskii prosvetitel’,* 9. The archive in Tobol’sk, which now has a keyword-searchable database, contains numerous files that all confirm that Peter Andreevich was born in Susansk (Nizhnesusanskii Zavod), and that his father was the priest there, Andrei Ivanovich Sloptsov (see below).
details”—he stopped short, noting merely that “the continuation and conclusion of this letter are not considered proper reading for an outsider.”

So who were the Sloptsov? Surviving sources indicate that Peter Andreevich’s paternal ancestors had been priests at Nev’ianskaia Sloboda’s since at least the late seventeenth century. Although its growth had slowed after a major attack from Bashkirs, Tatars, and Mansi in 1662, Nev’ianskaia Sloboda remained one of the largest settlements in the region at the turn of the eighteenth century, the spiritual and administrative center for more than five hundred households in some thirty villages along the Neiva’s eastern terminus. The 1710 census lists three Sloptsov priests at its Bogoroditskaia Church: Iakov Emil’ianovich and his sons Grigorii and Anisifor. Iakov, born around 1652, lived with his wife Anna, their son Anisifor’s family, and one “wandering Guri” (listed in the census as “their man”). Iakov’s other son, Grigorii, had his own house, where he lived with his wife Dar’ia, six young children, and a thirty-five-year old “relative” (svoistvennik) named Ul’ian.

Peter Andreevich’s grandfather, Ivan Sloptsov (1709-79), was Anisifor Iakovlevich’s second son, and he spent his long life at Nev’ianskaia Sloboda. Brutal scenes were a basic fact of life there. In 1770, for example, parishioners complained to the bishop of Tobol’sk in 1770 that the illiterate church sexton, Ivan Soloninin, “does us

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many wrongs, mischiefs, outrages, and intolerable ruin.” This “ruffian,” according to their denunciation, stole from parishioners, beat numerous women “in the face,” beat “his own father [the second priest at Bogoroditskaia church] time and time again,” and beat one peasant “mortally.” The parishioners petitioned the Bishop of Tobol’sk to remove Solonin “wherever Your Holiness pleases.” In response, the Tobol’sk Consistory declared Solonin unfit for church service and asked Governor of Siberia Denis Chicherin to take him into custody and do whatever he liked with him. But when Chicherin dispatched a Cossack to arrest him, Solonin and his father (Ivan Sloptsov’s second priest) cursed the Cossack “in every way possible,” beat him, and chased him away with an axe. The next attempt was more successful, and Solonin was taken away to serve in Tobol’sk’s town command (gorodovaia rota).  

As the head of the parish, Ivan Sloptsov was responsible for reporting on Solonin’s conduct and helping his parishioners write their denunciation of him. But Tobol’sk Church leaders likely saw Ivan Sloptsov and the Solonins as troublemakers of the same ilk. Just months before the Solonins attacked the governor’s Cossack, for example, monks at the nearby Nev’iansk Monastery repeatedly complained to Tobol’sk that Sloptsov and priest Solonin had refused (“because of their hard drinking and stubbornness”) to compile and provide information about the clergy at Nev’ianskaia Sloboda.  

Sloptsov priests appear in an unfavorable light in numerous other consistory files. Making sense of their convoluted contents is not easy, and they certainly reflect

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70 G AvgT f. 156, op. 2, d. 2393, ll. 1-13.
71 G AvgT f. 156, op. 1, d. 2111, l. 1.
competing struggles for influence and office at the parish level. But they are nonetheless suggestive of the harsh realities of daily life and the often very low respect that parish clergy commanded. When parishioners at Kushvinsk Zavod, for instance, denounced their priest Peter Grigor`evich Sloptsov, they claimed that he acted grossly out of line on no less than twelve specific occasions in 1755. Among their charges were that Sloptsov left Old Believers unregistered and baptized their children; that he regularly failed to show up for mass; and that he committed a whole range of unseemly acts while drunk. The latter included playing cards; “growling […] and dancing strangely for a long time”; “cursing fouly” in front of parishioners; and going directly to the tavern after mass, after which he would “go see the widow Dar`ia Mokseeva and stay there the whole night until sunrise.” One day, “drunk beyond all measure,” Sloptsov entered the church vestibule and beat on the refectory doors and church windows with a wooden plank. On another occasion, again “drunk beyond all measure,” he “lost his clothes, which the local residents then found and hung in the administrator’s office […], provoking great laughter and abusive mockery.” Sloptsov denied each charge, but could offer no counterevidence or excuses. The exasperated authorities in Tobol`sk, meanwhile, complained that they could find “no clarity” in the whole affair.72

The scattered papers that have survived—many of them produced to investigate claims of clergy mischief—indicate that Peter Andreevich’s grandfather had at least four sons. Peter Andreevich’s father, Andrei, was the oldest, born in 1733 or 1734, while his younger brothers Aleksandr, Nikita, and Vasilii were born over the course of the

72 GAvgT, f. 156, op. 1, d. 2028, ll. 1-14. Other files confirm that Peter Grigor`evich was a very problematic priest. See, for example, GAvgT f. 156, op. 1, d. 2408.
following decade. We know relatively little about Andrei and Vasilii’s conduct, but Nikita and Aleksandr caused diocesan authorities problems on multiple occasions. In the summer of 1761, for example, the Tobol’sk Consistory sent a circular to all of the parishes under its jurisdiction with instructions to capture Nikita. That July, the seventeen-year-old Nikita, together with the family’s “swarthy-faced” dvorovyi chelovek Osip, stole two horses and disappeared into the night (and this despite Nikita’s bad right leg, which was broken above the knee). Nikita was a barely literate sexton at his father’s church, and he had not studied at the seminary. He was eventually caught, after which he resumed his post. Peter Andreevich’s uncle Aleksandr, on the other hand, managed to obtain a post as priest at Tobol’sk’s Khristorozhdestvenskaia Church. But he too was a thorn in the side of Tobol’sk church officials: a habitual customer at one of the town’s taverns, on one occasion he beat one of the sextons at his own church, while on another he was found sleeping in the street with a married woman.

No such tales have survived about Peter Andreevich’s father, Andrei Ivanovich Sloptsov. Unlike most priest’s sons of his day, Andrei was educated at the Tobol’sk Seminary. He appears to have spent as many as five years there, as he studied in its rhetoric class, which had been created in 1748 and was for more advanced pupils.

Like many members of his clan, Andrei spread the Sloptsov name throughout the Urals region when he moved to one of the many new factory-villages founded in the decades after the Demidovs started building their empire at Nev’iansk. Andrei’s

73 Household servant.
74 GAvGT f. 156, op. 1, d. 2512, l. 116; f. 156, op. 2, d. 1983, ll. 360-361; f. 156, op. 2, d. 111, ll. 1-12.
75 GAvGT f. 156, op. 4, d. 1090, ll. 1-3; f. 156, op. 4, d. 2198, ll. 1-6ob.
76 GAvGT f. 156, op. 3, d. 361, l. 12ob.
destination, Susansk, was short trip up the Neiva from his parents’ home at Nev’ianskaia Sloboda. Construction of a state-run iron-smelting factory at Susansk began in 1735 at Tatishchev’s orders, and the factory began production in 1739, specializing in making anchors for the Russian fleet. It remained in state hands until 1759, when it was sold to the first of a succession of private proprietors. The latter made repeated attempts to increase production at the factory, in part to meet growing English demand, but doing so remained an elusive goal, as the insufficient water supply in the factory ponds often brought work there to a standstill.\textsuperscript{77}

Andrei Ivanovich was the main priest at Susansk’s wooden Church of Sts. Peter and Paul. He appears to have arrived shortly after the church, built at the request of the parish’s peasants and “hammer masters” (molotovye masteri), opened in 1754. By 1759, Andrei was the elder of two priests at Susansk. The parish was comprised of 153 households at the time of the church’s consecration, a number that grew to 241 by 1778, when the total population of the village reached 1,941. Nearly all parishioners were either peasants (61%) or “people of various ranks” (37%), the latter comprised of “retired soldiers and various masters and their wives and children.” The remaining villagers included twenty-three prikaznye,\textsuperscript{78} five Old Believers, and seventeen clergymen and their families.\textsuperscript{79}


\textsuperscript{78} Scribes or chancellery employees.

\textsuperscript{79} GAvGT f. 156, op. 2, d. 1983, ll. 360ob.-361; GAvGT f. 156, op. 1, d. 1597, ll. 65-70; GAvGT f. 156, op. 3, d. 1339, ll. 341ob.-344. See also Oksana Korneva, “Neivo-Shaitanskii, ili inache, Susanskii Zavod.”
Andrei Sloptsov married the daughter of a priest from the Rybolov’ev clan at Murzinskaia Sloboda, situated about ten versts upriver from Susansk. Whereas the Sloptsov name came from an animal trap, the Rybolov’ev name suggests that Peter Andreevich’s mother’s ancestors descended from people engaged in fishing. Murzinskaia Sloboda was a larger settlement than Susansk, founded in 1639 and named after a Tatar prince (murza) who had resisted Ermak’s men at the time of the Russian conquest. The settlement was famed for its rich deposits of topaz, aquamarine, amethyst, sapphire, tourmaline, pyrite, and other minerals,80 and it is not unlikely that Peter Andreevich developed his lifelong hobby of collecting minerals while visiting his maternal relatives there.

About Peter Andreevich’s mother, unfortunately, surviving documents permit us to say almost nothing—even her given name. About the women in Peter Andreevich’s family more generally, we are told only that in 1769 there was precisely “one big one and the same number of young” (bol’sikh odna, малоletnykh to zh).81 In other words, Peter Andreevich had a sister, and his mother was still alive in the years after his birth.

Peter Andreevich’s parents appear to have married shortly after Andrei Ivanovich came to Susansk. Their oldest surviving sons, Ivan and Mikhailo, were born in 1759 and 1761. By 1772, Ivan and Mikhailo served as deacon and sexton at their father’s church, though neither appears to have attended the seminary. Andrei likely taught his boys to

80 F. P. Dobrokhotov, Ural severnyi, srednii, iuzhnyi; spravochnaia kniga (Petrograd, 1917), 486; Miller, Istoriia Sibiri, I: 215; Butsinskii, Zaselenie Sibiri, 53.
81 GAvgT f. 156, op. 2. d. 1983, ll. 360ob.-361.
read and write himself, and a file from 1769 lists the ten-year-old Ivan as “learning book reading and writing” and his eight-year-old brother as “memorizing the Psalter.”

Peter Andreevich began learning to read in 1774, on the twenty-sixth of December, according to the diocesan file. Beyond that strangely precise date, specific information about the events of Peter Andreevich’s childhood is sparse. He later recalled the days when Pugachev’s forces threatened their village and he had to take cover with his mother. He traveled around the region some, often in the company of his cousin Ivan Vasil’yevich Sloptsov, whose father had remained at the Sloptsov ancestral home at Nev’ianskaia Sloboda. He visited the famous “Old Factory” with its leaning clocktower, and he also spent much time at Nev’ianskaia Sloboda, where, in addition to visiting family, he examined the palisade that had protected its earliest residents from Bashkir attacks. When he was nine, he took a trip with his father to Verkhotur’e, where they saw an eccentric factory owner by the name of Pokhodiashchin. Though very wealthy, Pokhodiashchin—to Andrei Sloptsov’s great surprise—dressed in simple, threadbare

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82 GAvGT f. 156, op. 2, d. 2857, l. 9ob. “Ivan” might have actually been named Fëdor: GAvGT f. 156, op. 2, d. 1983, ll. 360ob.-361.
83 GAvGT f. 156, op. 3, 1192, l. 113ob.
84 A Cossack who claimed to be the deceased emperor Peter III and led the largest peasant uprising in Russian history (1773-75).
85 P. A. Slovtsov, “Pis’ma k bratu I. V. Slovtsovui, v Sterlitamake,” Moskovskii telegraf (1830): ch. 31, no. 3, p. 299. According to Sulotskii, peasants “everywhere” in the part of the Urals in which Peter Andreevich’s family lived supported Pugachev and took the oath to the false Peter III. Priests like Andrei Sloptsov were tasked with reading their parishioners what a “terrible crime before God and before the world (svetom) it is to break the oath taken to their Sovereign, and that such criminals our holy Church has always and will always commit to eternal damnation.” A. Sulotskii, “Materialy dlia istorii pugachevskago bunta,” ChIOIDR (1859), kn. 1, smes, pp. 49-56. The works at Susasnk were shut down for the first three months of 1774 during Pugachev’s insurrection. D. Kashintsev, Istorii metallurgii Urala (Moscow, 1939), 286.
peasant clothing: “I was also surprised,” Peter Andreevich later recalled, “not knowing why or what for.”86

Such excursions would likely have marked the extent of Peter Andreevich’s horizons had he not been sent to study at the seminary in Tobol’sk in 1780. That Andrei Sloptsov did not send his older sons to the seminary, having studied there himself, suggests that Peter Andreevich’s departure was not entirely to his father’s liking. Village priests often went to great lengths to keep their sons away from the seminary, not least because they often needed them at home to work the family plot. They also tended to place little value on seminary education, the Latin curriculum of which they found to be extraordinarily difficult and entirely lacking in practical use. Common excuses that fathers used to keep their sons at home included the distance of the seminary from home, the dangers of the road, and inability to pay for the trip or support the son while he was away. Most commonly, they simply claimed that their sons were too ill to leave home, often including graphic details to bolster their claims (“has a pain in his head, from which pus occasionally flows”).87

The likely reason that Peter Andreevich’s fate diverged from those of his brothers was that, from 1770 onward, Church authorities began to enforce more vigorously the requirement that all priests’ sons attend the seminary before taking a position at the parish church.88 Before the reign of Peter I, parish clergy received no formal training. Rulers throughout the eighteenth century deplored the state of affairs in parishes across the

87 Bespalova, Sibirskii prosvetitel’, 13.
88 Freeze, Russian Levites, 89.
empire: “We are grieved,” lamented Catherine II in 1762, “to see that our simple people are quite far removed from proper conduct. Many priests, wearing the pastoral robe, not only do not know the true path to the people’s enlightenment, but they themselves—often being barely literate—frequently serve as a harmful example for the simple people.”

Although there were attempts throughout the century to increase seminary enrollments, it was only from the 1760s onward that the numbers began to rise. Particularly significant was the requirement, implemented from 1770 onward, that all priests’ sons attend seminary before being appointed to a position. Total seminary enrollment in the empire grew from 4,673 in 1766 to 29,000 in 1808. Tobol’sk was no exception to the rule, and its enrollment rose from 114 in 1767 to 286 by 1791.

Whereas his brothers Mikhailo and Ivan had already obtained positions at their father’s church by 1770, Peter Andreevich, still a toddler, would have been required under the new rule to attend the seminary before he could expect any appointment. His departure for the seminary in 1780 would prove to be one of the defining events of his life, for the prolonged separation it provided from the world of the Sloptsovs afforded him the opportunity to place his experiences in a broader frame. His family, meanwhile, remained wary of the world beyond the Rock. In 1797 his brother Mikhailo, then a priest at Murzinskaia Sloboda, was arrested when he refused to send his own son to the seminary. By that time, Peter Andreevich was far away, intellectually as well as geographically, about to embark on what would prove to be a successful career in state

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89 Freeze, Russian Levites, 79.
91 Biriukov, “Tobol’skaia seminariia pri rektore Veniamine (1794-1799 g.),” TEV, nos. 12-16 (1904): 261.
service. That success—like Mikhailo’s punishment—was a product of Church and state efforts to enlighten provincial priests like the Sloptsovs.

The City on the Hill

“Whoever wants to see something beautiful in nature should travel to Tobol’sk.” So wrote V. Dmitriev in 1818 about his visit to the old capital of Siberia. Dmitriev was most impressed by the view from Tobol’sk’s “majestic” promontory, the rocky ridge known as Holy Trinity Hill that rose, almost perpendicularly, some two hundred feet over the Irtysh River floodplain and was home to Tobol’sk’s most important government and Church buildings (Figure 3). He marveled at the view it afforded of the lower town that spread out across the floodplain and the vast expanse of forests and villages that lay beyond, extending as far as the eye could see.

Peter Andreevich was similarly impressed with the view, and during the three decades he lived in Tobol’sk he often came to the promontory to sit and think. He described one such visit in 1830:

I sat on the tall promontory that towers above the town and the Irtysh, near the stone buildings in which once, during the magnificent [pyshnoe] reign of Catherine, the namestnik [viceroy] and the administrator of the province [pravitel’ gubernii] lived… The sun was already sinking toward the forest beyond the river […] I breathed the refreshingly cool air and looked in calm silence on the vast scene that spread before my eyes. Every spring for more than twenty years, I thought, I have had the chance to look upon this scene and to this day it has never wearied me. Is it because there is nothing else to see? Or is it because the whole of the location is so alluring?

The whole is indeed truly alluring. You sit atop the tall, mountainous arc and see how it skirts the shimmering Irtysh—itself a second, flowing arc—and between the two, as though within in a vast space [otrezke], are packed so many cathedrals, buildings, schools, and institutions, amidst which stir so many thousands of people. Strewn alongside the Irtysh arc you also see hamlets, yurts, and cemeteries, guarded by thoughtful copses; you see the two disappearing estuaries of the Tobol’ River; and a few coves, picturesquely formed from the spring waters. And then the Irtysh and the promontory! The very Irtysh and promontory on which I now refresh myself—does it not speak for itself?93

When Peter Andreevich first arrived in Tobol’sk in 1780, the obvious answer to that question was yes. The city was at the peak of its fortunes, and the sights it afforded—the “many cathedrals, buildings, schools, and institutions, amidst which stir so many thousands of people”—were like nothing he had seen while growing up along the Neiva. It had a population of approximately 15,000 and a teeming market filled with goods from Europe, Central Asia, and China.94 August von Kotzebue, who visited

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93 PVT, 106.
94 The Description of the Tobol’sk Namestnichestvo compiled in the 1780s gives a figure of 13,279. The actual number was likely larger, given the number of itinerant traders coming through town and the number of residents who sought to avoid being counted. Opisanie Tobol’skogo namestnichestva (Novosibirsk: Nauka, 1982), 40.
Tobol’sk at the end of the eighteenth century, described the market as “crowded incessantly with people of all nations” and particularly well stocked with fish and “caviar of every color.” “Had it not been for the disagreeable smells in this market,” Kotzebue added, “I should often have loitered there.”

Tobol’sk could also boast of a built environment that few of Russia’s provincial towns could match. Particularly striking when viewed from the promontory were the six monumental baroque churches—all erected in the mid-eighteenth century—that soared above the roofs of the wooden lower town. The Church of Saints Zacharias and Elizabeth, under construction for decades and finished just before Peter Andreevich arrived, ranked among the most ornate churches in the empire.

What most fascinated Peter Andreevich about Tobol’sk as he grew older was its crucial role in Siberian history. From the conquest of the Siberian Khanate in the late sixteenth century until the end of the eighteenth century, Tobol’sk was Siberia’s city on a hill, the point through which church and state orders funneled into Siberia and much of the Urals. The city could claim “many significant feats,” Peter Andreevich wrote, “in a land familiar through fairy tales, yet unexplored.” In Valentin Rasputin’s words, Tobol’sk was Moscow’s “left hand”: while Siberia remained a land of mystery to Russia, Tobol’sk, “from its vantage point on Holy Trinity Hill, had to see and know everything; to build and acquire; to demand and promise; to rule and be held accountable; to attend to rations and provisions, government servants, peasant farmers, artisans, furs, and ores; to

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95 Augustus von Kotzebue, The Most Remarkable Year of the Life of Augustus von Kotzebue; containing an account of His Exile to Siberia and of the other extraordinary Events which happened to him in Russia (London, 1802), II: 16-17.
96 See William Brumfield, Tobol’sk: Arkhitekturnoe nasledie v fotografakh (Moscow: Tri kvadrata, 2006).
take stock and keep watch; to administer capital punishment and show mercy; and to
conduct diplomacy with local princelings across the entire expanse of a vast region as
well as with foreign rulers beyond its boundaries."

The city traces its roots to 1587, when the Cossack Daniel Chulkov built a fort at
the confluence of the Tobol’ and Irtysh rivers, a short distance from the site of Ermak’s
victory over the Siberian khan Kuchum six years earlier. Early Russian chronicles called
Chulkov’s fort Ladeinyi Ostrog—Boat Fortress—because his men built its first palisade,
barns, and dwellings from their dismantled boats. At the time of the conquest, what
would become Tobol’sk’s lower town was settled by Tatar subjects of the Siberian
Khanate, who knew the hill on which Tobol’sk’s kremlin would be built as “Crown Hill,”
in honor of the Tatar princes who lived atop it. Tatars continued to reside on the
floodplain after the Russian conquest, but Russian settlers increasingly crowded them
into a “Tatar quarter” along the boggy bank of the Irysh (the “putrid corner,” as it was
known to Tobol’iaki).

Tobol’sk’s location near the capital of the former Siberian Khanate and the
confluence of the Irtysh and Tobol’ rivers facilitated its emergence as seventeenth- and
eighteenth-century Siberia’s most important city. Its voevody tended to be significant
figures, and they had wide-ranging authority to enforce their rule in the region, collect
tribute, and encourage further settlement. It was a vital node of trade between Russians,

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100 K. Golodnikov, *Gorod Tobol’sk i ego okrestnosti* (Tobol’sk, 1887), 1.
101 *PVT*, 148.
Tatars, Kalmyks, Nogai, and, especially, Bukharans—who received special privileges from the state and often settled permanently in town. Its prestige increased enormously after 1621, when it became the center of a new Siberian diocese. A century would pass, however, before Tobol’sk began to acquire a built environment befitting its role as Siberia’s cultural capital, for the wooden city burned time and time again during the seventeenth century. The Cathedral of St. Sophia—the first stone church in Siberia—was built atop the main hill in the 1680s, followed at the turn of the eighteenth century by Siberia’s only stone kremlin. The latter was the work of Tobol’sk architect, chronicler, mapmaker, and artist Semen Remezov, whose oeuvre, as Valerie Kivelson has shown, offers a window on a long-departed “Tobol’sko-centric” worldview. Remezov’s ornate maps reveal a world dominated by three major “cities”: Moscow in the West, “China” in the East, and, always at the center and “particularly chosen and protected by God, shining in its beauty, the glorious, ‘god-saved’ city of Tobol’sk.”

When Peter Andreevich arrived in 1780, Tobol’sk was Denis Chicherin’s city. Catherine II, who sought to increase the power her governors—the “trusted personage of the sovereign, the head and master [khoziainom] and genuine guardian all entrusted to him in the supervision of his province”—placed virtually no restraints on Chicherin’s power, according him the right to correspond with her directly and, given the distance of Tobol’sk from the capital, to act as he saw fit in administering the vast province.

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Chicherin made use of this authority, and his tenure as governor (1763-80) was marked by frenetic, paternalistic activity in nearly all spheres of city life. He founded Tobol’sk’s first geodesic school, apothecary’s shop, stone hospital, workhouse for exiles, and bank. He sought to make Tobol’sk an attractive, orderly city and rode around town on horseback, personally ferreting out all activities that jeopardized this goal. When, always to his “extreme displeasure,” he noticed shortcomings—izvoshchiki104 driving too fast, bridges in disrepair, cockroaches, garbage in yards or streets, stench from tanning reindeer hides—he demanded immediate answers and meted out physical punishments himself. To combat theft—a regular occurrence “only,” he explained, “because of monsters of the human race” (izvergov roda chelovechestvo)—he ordered that all homeowners keep a loaded rifle and “try to shoot thieves in the legs.” He especially hated seeing animals roaming around his town, and ordered that unsupervised cows be confiscated and dogs be killed on the spot. To ensure compliance, he sent subordinates around town to read his myriad decrees aloud and collect thousands of signatures.105

Chicherin’s rule was heavy-handed, but Peter Andreevich—at least when he looked back years later—lauded his approach. Part of the reason was personal. He fondly remembered how Chicherin tried to speak Latin with seminary pupils and donated fowl and beef during Christmastime—particularly welcome gifts, given the meager seminary fare.106 More important, Chicherin fulfilled the role of paternal nachal’nik that Peter Andreevich came to believe was essential for Siberia. He called Chicherin one of

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104 Hired carriage and sledge drivers.
106 IOS, 305.
Siberian history’s dostopamiatnye muzhi—“memory-worthy men”—and praised his active rule, highlighting the steps Chicherin took to improve Siberia’s main road (ensuring, among other things, that post stations, hitherto between 150 and 200 versts apart, were maintained at twenty-five-verst intervals); to initiate settlement of the forbidding Baraba Steppe; and to develop agriculture in the Tobol’sk region. The latter, Slovtsov wrote, was “trifling” before Chicherin, who personally and “imperiously prompted peasants to plough better” during his hunting trips outside of town. Since Chicherin’s time, Peter Andreevich wrote, “the soil has improved from its unnatural stubbornness and hardness and has become receptive to sewing.” When Peter Andreevich encountered disorganized peasant villages in his later travels, he “heartily lament[ed]” that Chicherin was no longer around to goad them into shape. He found Chicherin impressive because he believed that active rule was essential for what, in time, he came to see as a land of lethargy. He ended his magnum opus, Historical Survey of Siberia, with a tribute:

Do you want to understand Chicherin? Then here are his traits! Demanding order from towns, honest trade from merchants, craftsmanship from townspeople [ot posadskikh remeslennosti], cleared land and good plowing from peasants, industriousness from chinovniki, he unremittingly prosecuted any transgressions. […] He treated leading merchants with goodwill; he obliged the poorer sorts toward their crafts, peasants and settlers toward their fields and household chores; and he strictly supervised the conduct of servitors. Because of his harsh character the righteous nachal’nik easily crossed the limits of his authority; but even with the arbitrariness that made him frightful in rumors among the people […], he could relax quickly, paid compliments in conversation, enjoyed passing the time gaily, hosted evening balls, went hunting like a nobleman

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108 IOS, 484.
of his time, and—in accordance with the requirements of the day—
celebrated festive days with magnificence and pomp. Because of
Chicherin’s lively and active participation in all circumstances of the
province—and in some cases private circumstances as well—his name, as
though classical, is preserved in the memory of Siberia.

Peter Andreevich connected his personal fate with this larger-than-life governor, one of
the first renowned figures he encountered after leaving Susansk. He fondly remembered,
among other things, a spring celebration that Chicherin organized atop the city hill, where
musicians and a choir would sing and drum while watching the sun set.109

Chicherin was reaching the end of his tenure when Peter Andreevich arrived in
Tobol’sk. Catherine II had heard rumors about disorders in the province and
misappropriation of public emergency funds, but investigations that followed turned up
no criminal activity and Chicherin was allowed leave Tobol’sk for his family estate in
1781. Mounting reports of corruption, particularly in Eastern Siberia, did, however,
convince the empress to curtail her reliance on “trusted personages” in governing Siberia
and attempt to regularize and institutionalize its administration by extending her 1775
provincial reforms there. This was the impetus behind the opening of the Tobol’sk and
Irkutsk namestnichestva (viceroyalties) in 1782 and 1783.110

Tobol’sko-centrism was never more convincing than on August 30, 1782, the day
of the ceremonial opening of the Tobol’sk namestnichestvo. It would prove to be the
brightest day in in the city’s history. The epicenter of the festivities was the namestnik’s
palace, a giant neoclassical building that overlooked the lower town from atop the

109 IOS, 490-91.
110 Akishin, “Gubernskaia reforma Ekateriny II v Sibiri,” 268-94; Isabel de Madariaga, Russia in the Age of
Catherine the Great (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 277-91; PSZ (1), vol. 21 (19 January
1782), no. 15,327, p. 385.
promontory. Tobol’sk’s largest structure, it had been under construction since Peter Andreevich had arrived in town and was finished just in time for the ceremony. It would stand “forever,” the new namestnik Evgenii Kashkin proudly informed the empress. The main ceremony took place in the palace’s throne room, where Kashkin sat surrounded by portraits of the imperial family and representatives of the Siberian peoples under his watch: the khan of the middle Kazakh horde Vali Khan and “a few sultans; the Obdorsk prince and a number of his subordinate Ostiak and Samoed princes and elder; and Mansi elders from the Turinsk region.”

Peter Andreevich was also in attendance. The “unheard-of solemnity” of the ceremony, he later explained, was forever “engraved” in his memory. Bishop Varlaam set the tone with his opening sermon, after which he ceded the floor to the rector of the seminary, Il’ia Shumilevich, who gave what Peter Andreevich remembered as an “elaborate speech.” But for Peter Andreevich the highlight of the ceremony was undoubtedly the ode that followed, which he had the honor of delivering. Titled “To Siberia,” it cast an excited glance toward Siberia’s future:

Daughter of Asia, abundantly endowed!  
On stately and stout shoulders  
Clothed in beaver and porphyry,  
With sable tails along your breasts  
Tsarevna! Bearing a silver crown  
Piled with shining jewels!  
Confidante of the Slavs, mother of ferocious hordes,  
Siberia—I love to sing your praises.

Two centuries have lapsed into eternity

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111 RGADA f. 24, op. 1, d. 60, ll. 34-40; K. Golodnikov, Al’bom tobol’skikh vidov (Tobol’sk: Tip. Gubernskago Pravleniia, 1864), 5-6.  
112 PVT, 130.
Since your khans before the white tsar
Obediently removed their puffy turbans.
I thank their devotion.
And though diverse and wild hordes
Settle the majestic hills and mountains of Siberia’s proud backwaters,
From Tura to the Island of Il’i
They live like children of a peaceful family.\(^{113}\)

On the square outside the palace, the scene was even more festive (if less solemn).

Tobol’iaki and visitors from nearby villages thronged to the square for an enormous feast unlike any they had ever seen: steers roasted whole and stuffed with pastries and treats, barrels of beer, “fountains” of wine. After sunset, an elaborate “illumination” cast an array of tinted light on a grand “transparent picture” of the empress.\(^{114}\)

For the Sloptsov boy from Susansk, taking part in the opening ceremony was a moving experience. Peter Andreevich never ceased to emphasize the significance of the namestnichestva for Siberian history. He wrote in 1830 that their creation dampened the “sad belief of people of those days that Siberia is not Russia”:

The opening of the two namestnichestva, thank God, brought Siberia close to the tsar and central government [sdelalo Sibir’ nedalekoïu ot tsaria i verkhovnogo pravitel’stva]. Illuminated by a bright conception of government [...] and gladdened by the philanthropic nakaz of a philosophical pen, orphan Siberia together with her mother [Russia] saw lawful protection in court and patronage in the person of the namestnik. Since 1782, since that blessed epoch, when many new towns were created, when labor and humanity were guaranteed [poruchitel’stvuju trudu i liudkosti], when the administration of justice—until that point the justice of the voevoda—began to be spoken in verdicts determined according to laws [...], when congresses of settlers were authorized to trade in the towns, when peasants started to exchange public ideas and interpret the

\(^{113}\) Bespalova, *Sibirskii prosvetitel’*, 15-17. The ode Slovtsov read in 1782 might have differed slightly from the above, as the version Slovtsov published in 1796 included elements that he clearly added after he had moved to St. Petersburg (such as reflections on “freethinking” and Rousseau). N. N., “K Sibiri,” *Muza* (February 1796): 100-03.

\(^{114}\) I. V. Shcheglov, *Khronologicheskii perechen’ vazhneishikh dannikh iz istorii Sibiri, 1032-1882 g.g.* (Irkutsk, 1882), 306.
meaning of authority and the goals of societies, when the children of commoners became acquainted with schools organized by the best means, and when every moral being was given the right and power to act in the general life of humanity—since that intellectual-political era Tobol’sk became one of four namestnik towns. It seemed that the old town that prided itself upon the power of its nachal’nik, from whose hands were carried stern [groznye] orders now to Kamchatka, now across the Urals, lost some of the magnitude of its influence, but through the organic system of provinces and district towns it could not but sense a new vivacity in civil life and swiftness in industry itself.  

The opening of the namestnichestva, Slovtsov wrote in 1809, inaugurated a new “epoch” in which “a certain spirit of transformation has left its mark everywhere and in almost all things.”

The practical effect of the opening of the namestnichestva was rather less dramatic than Peter Andreevich suggested—Siberian administration, remained, like the rest of Russian provincial administration—terribly inefficient and corrupt. But the ceremony helped Peter Andreevich envision himself within a broader story of imperial transformation, an essential ingredient of official mythology in an empire in which rulers styled themselves as “reforming tsars,” powerful outsiders who conquered Russian backwardness. Peter Andreevich’s breathless excitement about the namestnichestva, still ardent decades later, reflected his own personal investment in this story—his recollection of a moment in which he felt himself a part of something bigger than he had previously experienced. This was one reason that he would later describe the reform as a critical turning point in Siberian history—the moment, after two centuries during which

Sibiriaki like his ancestors, who “truly resembled trees, unable to shake off their leaves and the maggots that consumed them,” began to “act in the general life of humanity.”

Of course, most of Peter Andreevich’s days during his first stay in Tobol’sk were more mundane than August 30, 1782. He had, after all, come to study at the seminary. It had been founded in 1743—not long before his father first attended. Initially housed in the kremlin, it was moved in 1770 to the Znamenskii Monastery at the foot of the Holy Trinity Hill. Its first thirty years were characterized by a rather slipshod administration, as it lacked firmly established guidelines, and it comes as no surprise that graduates like Peter Andreevich’s father often went to great lengths to keep their sons away.

By the time Peter Andreevich arrived in 1780, however, the seminary was undergoing something of a transformation. Enrollment, as noted above, had grown rapidly for more than a decade. Just as important, during the five years before Peter Andreevich’s arrival the seminary developed a more clearly defined curriculum and set of rules. This was largely the work of Archimandrite II’ia Shumilevich, who came to Tobol’sk from Kiev and served as rector from 1773 to 1784. At only thirty-five years old, he was energetic and “of strict principles,” and he immediately set about organizing all facets of seminary life.

118 PVT, 127-28.
119 Biriukov, “Tobol’skaiia seminariia pri rektore archimandrite II’ia Shumileviche (1773-1784 g.),” TEV, nos. 4-29 (1914): 338-44.
120 Biriukov, “Tobol’skaiia seminariia pri rektore archimandrite II’ia Shumileviche,” 342-44; GAVgT f. 530, op. 1, d. 1, l. 2; II’ia’s guidelines are reproduced in Biriukov, “Mnenie o poriadke, koim v seminarii Tobol’skoi prepodavat’ uchenie, i imeno, chego v kotoroi shkole uchit’, polezno usmatrivaetsia, uchineno i Preosviashcheniishemu Varlaamu, Pravoslavnому Episkopu Tobol’skomu i Sibirskomu, na blagorazmotoienie predstavleno ot rektora seminarii Tobol’skoi, Arkhimandrita Znamenskago monastyria II’ia 1774 goda—sentiabria,” TEV, no. 4-29 (1914): 354-62, 378-81, 416-21.
Il’ia attempted to outline all of the things “very necessary for enlightenment of children’s minds.” He provided precise instructions about how the Latin grammar texts were to be used, devoting special attention to the importance of making sure students did not, among other things, confuse masculine and feminine nouns. He discussed how instructors should teach rhetoric through Cicero, poetry through Lomonosov, and sermon composition through Gedeon Krinovskii, the Bishop of Pskov. His instructions were similarly detailed about life outside the classroom: reveille at five, bed by eight; no leaving seminary grounds without permission; no playing games—cards in particular. Teachers, Il’ia explained, should remind their pupils that youth was the “summer” of life: rather than being “grasshoppers” who hop about irresponsibly in the sun, they should be industrious “ants” and prepare for the harder autumns and winters of life by cultivating their souls.121

Il’ia devoted special attention to relations between pupils and their teachers. The teacher’s duty, he explained, was to curb the resistance many pupils would have acquired toward seminary education from their families. Teachers must, he advised, “explain to their pupils concisely, but clearly, the virtue, usefulness, and importance of genuine learning [nastoiashchago ucheniia] […] so that the pupils see the shore toward which they swim and better form an inclination for learning and daily comprehend its benefit.” Restraint in the use of corporal punishment, according to Il’ia, was essential in achieving this goal. Teachers were not to inflict more than ten blows of the vine (loza) on their pupils, while the rod (ferula), Il’ia admonished, had “no place in the seminary.” If

121 Biriukov, “Mnenie,” 381, 418.
treated with more respect, pupils would respond in kind, “knowing that their father teachers enrich [them] with imperishable wisdom from heaven, of which all else [chastnoe] is unworthy.”

Reality fell well short of prescription. Teachers’ treatment of their pupils, wrote one historian and graduate of the seminary, “often approached torture.” To be sure, many pupils gave their teachers much cause for concern. When Peter Andreevich arrived in 1780, for example, Il’ia and his colleagues were embroiled in two highly unpleasant investigations. The first, which would drag on for the next four years, was an inquiry into complaints of “sodomy” among pupils. The second was an investigation of the theft of vast stores of alcohol—fifteen “buckets” of “French vodka” and mead, valued at 180 rubles—from the seminary cellar. A merchant had been renting the space as storage, and twenty of Peter Andreevich’s classmates broke in one night and drank to their hearts’ content. The seminary curriculum also left much to be desired. In particular, many pupils were mystified by their primary subject of study, Latin. Highly impractical for the sons of village priests—many of whom were only marginally literate in Russian—it would be of little use in their future employment. In a mid-nineteenth-century exposé of the seminary, Ioann Belliustin decried the “monumental stupidity” of a system that makes “dead languages the chief subjects while relegating one’s mother tongue to a status of minor importance.”

123 Biriukov, “Tobol’skaia seminariia pri rektore archimandrite Il’ia Shumileviche,” 528.
124 On the first case, see Biriukov, “Tobol’skaia seminariia pri rektore archimandrite Il’ia Shumileviche,” 503; on the second see GAvG T f. 156, op. 3, d. 1965.
Peter Andreevich, at least after he grew older, saw things differently. In part, this was because reading classical authors became one of his favorite activities—and a key means through which he made sense of his own world. After he retired from service in 1828, he wrote a book that proposed to explore Tobol’sk in “microscopic detail” because, he explained, Tobol’sk was where “I first learned Latin grammar and rhetoric.” He also had a higher opinion of the seminary because he was one of its most successful pupils. In addition to Latin, he was one of only twenty-one pupils who studied Greek. Nearly all of the latter were from Tobol’sk, and Peter Andreevich was one of the few village-born pupils to succeed in the course. In his last few years at the seminary he also taught the seminary’s elementary Latin classes.

Beyond these basic facts, any search for archival remains from Peter Andreevich’s seminary years is punctuated by few finds. Part of the reason is that the seminary archive was housed inside the bell tower of the Znamenskii Monastery, which, N. A. Biriukov noted while sorting through its contents in the early twentieth century, was a “cold, damp place with broken windowpanes and befouled with bird dung.” More problematic: most of its files from the 1780s perished in a massive fire of 1788.

That fire offered Peter Andreevich, who had been so impressed by the majesty of the imperial state as manifested in the grand ceremony of 1782, a vivid illustration of what would become a recurring theme in his thoughts: the vast gulf that separated state-sponsored reforms and lived realities. Tobol’sk was particularly telling in this respect in

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126 PVT, 66
127 GAVGt f. 156, op. 4, d. 194, ll. 27-28.
129 N. A. Biriukov, “Tobol’skaia dakhovnaia seminariia v 1791 g.,” TEV, no. 17 (1903): 424.
the 1780s, which was both the brightest and gloomiest decade in the city’s history. Just two years after the opening of the namestnichestvo, the city suffered its most devastating flood, when in spring 1784 the Irtysh overflowed its banks and wreaked havoc across the lower town. One Tobol’iak inscribed a poem on the underside of the roof of the Krestodvizhenskaia Church—at the high-water mark of the flood—“so that every man remember this flood until his death.” Peter Andreevich recalled that the flooded lower town resembled a harbor of dismantled boats, through which Tobol’iaki scrambled to herd their livestock toward the upper town.

However severe, the 1784 flood was a minor event compared with what came to be known as Great Fire of 1788. From the outset, fires had been the scourge of Tobol’sk, and scarcely a decade passed in which the city did not experience a severe one. Many Tobol’iaki, mindful of the devastation fires could bring, believed that cockroaches—new arrivals to eighteenth-century Tobol’sk on the Kiakhta caravans—could anticipate a fire and would move from house to house accordingly. Active governors like Chicherin regularly exhorted Tobol’iaki to maintain a close watch over their candles and ovens, but in the largely wooden city, exhortations had little effect: the fire of 1757, for example, destroyed more than eight hundred buildings.

The Great Fire of 1788 began on the morning of April 27, 1788, when a resident of the lower town ignited his roof while boiling mead. Strong winds spread the flames quickly through the tightly-packed wooden houses of the lower town. Tobol’sk governor

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131 PVT, 78.
Aliab’ev initially ordered his motley crew of firefighters—some 1,000 military men, many of them “old and decrepit”—to focus their efforts on protecting the gostinnyi dvor (market stalls). It was, he later reported, “impossible to imagine” that the upper town might be in danger, given that its nearest buildings had iron roofs and were situated 200 feet above the burning lower town. But the “horrible wind” turned northward, pouring “great fiery debris” on the city on the hill. All efforts to save the key buildings were, he wrote to the namestnik, “in vain”:

Debris fell like rain on all of the buildings of the upper town, such that the Archbishop’s Residence, your residence [the namestnik’s palace, sight of the 1782 celebration], mine, and the vice governor’s caught fire nearly instantaneously, each in five or more places. Proof of how strongly the debris fell onto the hill—not only buildings, but people were also showered by it—is that the youngest daughter of the vice governor, Ekaterina, unable because of her youth to defend herself, was wounded in the chest from burning debris. And a number of people died right in front of the eyes of others. When that began to happen we saw clearly that the salvation of the town was no longer possible.

Town chinovniki frantically heaped piles of official papers in the upper town’s squares, but these, like the belongings of most Tobol’iaki, could not be removed far enough away from the burning town in time.  

Tobol’sk burned for two days, and when the smoke began to clear on the morning of April 29, Peter Andreevich looked upon a different city: among the destroyed or severely damaged buildings were the namestnik’s palace with at all of its outbuildings and furniture; the governor’s and vice-governor’s residences; fifteen stone churches; the schoolhouse; the old gostinnyi dvor, together with the pharmacy, bank office, and

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treasury; fourteen alm-houses, four taverns, and thirty-eight bridges and livestock corrals; two alcohol stores with their more than two hundred barrels of spirits; twenty-three taverns (*piteinnye doma*); and two grain storage buildings containing over 44,500 pounds of flour and 210,000 of rye. Forty-one people were dead, and most Tobol’iaki were left homeless: of the 2,173 houses in the city, only 1,051 remained. Those who could afford to do so fled town; those who had nowhere to go dug makeshift dwellings (*zemlianiki*) in the side of Holy Trinity Hill.\(^{134}\) Peter Andreevich was probably among the former, as the seminary, left with no place to house its pupils, sent them back to their parents’ villages until autumn.\(^{135}\)

It was, in the end, the Great Fire of 1788—not the opening of the *namestnichestvo* in 1782—that would prove to be the event by which Tobol’iaki would come to separate “before” from “after” in telling the story of their city’s past.\(^{136}\) The city never fully recovered, and the shining white palace on the hill—built to stand “forever”—would remain an empty, burned-out shell for decades. But however ineffective state institutions might have been in the face of a disaster like the Great Fire, Peter Andreevich’s recollections illustrate the powerful ways in which grand plans could act upon the imaginations of provincial Russians. As he aged he would often look back fondly on the opening of the *namestnichestvo* not only because of the lofty ideals by which it was underpinned, but also because it marked a pivotal first moment when he imagined himself within a saga of imperial enlightenment. The stories he would come to tell about

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\(^{134}\) RGADA f. 24, op. 1. d. 60, ll. 94-96. Reprinted in *Sibirskie i tobol’skie gubernatory*, 130-32. On the fire see also RGIA f. 796, op. 69, d. 223.

\(^{135}\) GAvgT f. 156, op. 4, d. 186.

his parents and ancestors—as bearers of “evangelical enlightenment” to the Urals and Siberia—were stories he developed as he grew older and placed his childhood within this larger narrative frame.

And that frame was about to get much bigger: as one of the top students in his class, Peter Andreevich had been summoned by the empress to continue his studies in St. Petersburg. Armed with his certificate of completion from the seminary, testimony of “honest morals” and “distinguished success and diligence,” he left for the imperial capital on December 22, 1788.  

He would return to Tobol’sk, but not as a Sloptsov.

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137 GAvgT f. 156, op. 4, d. 194, ll. 5-6; “Attestat uchenika Tobol’skoi dukhovsnoi seminarii P. Slovtsova. 5 dekabia 1788 g.,” in Nash krai v dokumentakh i illiustratsiiakh, 190 (Sverdlovsk, 1966).
CHAPTER TWO:

Sloptsov Slovtsov

Will we always think beautifully and live dissolutely? Oh people! If you do not want to admit to these contradictions in yourself, then divorce yourself from society, go away with your enlightenment to wander through the mountains, deny your happiness, disdain the eye of God, and dare to do anything...

-Mikhail Speranskii, 1791

Though Russia has long read the freethinkers,
It’s too early for her own sons to dare be wits;
She thanks the Montesquieus and the Rousseaus,
But her own son is her enemy when he is a philosophe.

-Peter Slovtsov, 1794

There was a savage time when I clambered up a steep, naked cliff and relied on my compass alone.

-Peter Slovtsov, 1830

1793. Peter Andreevich, having completed his course of study in St. Petersburg, is back in Tobol’sk. He has a new surname, Slovtsov, which distinguishes him as a man of the word—slovo—and he is delivering a sermon—a slovo—in the Cathedral of St. Sophia in celebration of Grand Duke Alexander’s wedding. His sermon shocks the audience, made up, as the bishop of Tobol’sk later reported, of the “entire public” of the old Siberian

capital. Just months after Louis XVI was beheaded in Paris, Peter Andreevich warns his listeners that monarchies without equality before the law are “great tombs, which lock within themselves wretched, moaning corpses.”

1794. Peter Andreevich lies in a monk’s cell in the Valaam Monastery archipelago on Lake Ladoga. He is a prisoner, exiled to the monastery as punishment for his “freethinking” sermon of the previous year. When not taking part in the communal work of the monks, he writes emotional poems to his best friend, Mikhail Speranskii.

1807. Peter Andreevich works in his St. Petersburg office. He is now a leading figure in the Ministry of Commerce, having long ago left behind the clerical estate of his birth. He has just been inducted into the Order of St. Vladimir in recognition of his outstanding service to the state, and he is putting the finishing touches on A Word in Praise of Tsar Ivan Vasil’evich, a celebratory book about Russia’s most infamous tsar, Ivan the Terrible.

1810. Peter Andreevich wanders the frontier between the Romanov and Qing empires, inspecting the mines of the Altai Mountains. Having been implicated in an extortion scandal at the Ministry of Commerce, he now finds himself an exile running errands at the behest of the Governor-General of Siberia. On July 19, he ascends a shale cliff along the Charysh River and carves his name and the date into the cliff’s face.²

As this brief chronicle suggests, the decades between Peter Andreevich’s departure from Tobol’sk in 1788 and his exile from Petersburg in 1808 were the most

² RGADA f. 7, op. 2, d. 2382; P. A. Slovtsov, “Tri propovedi P. A. Slovtsova, ChIORDR (1874), kn. 3, otd. 5: 150-53; idem., Pokhval’noe slovo tsariu Ioannu Vasil’evichu (St. Petersburg, 1807); idem., “Pis’ma iz Sibiri,” Aziatskii vestnik (July-December 1825): 253.
pivotal years of his life. During this time he was a seminarian (1788-92), teacher and preacher (1793), prisoner (1794-95), teacher and aspiring poet (1795-96), secretary to the General Procurator of the Senate and then to the State Council (1797-1801), trusted agent of the state on the Black Sea (1802-03), head of a bureau in the Ministry of Commerce (1803-08), and an exile in the chancellery of the Governor-General of Siberia (1808).

How did Peter Andreevich understand his changing fortunes during these years? What did he have in mind when, after two decades of remarkable personal milestones—set against a backdrop of revolutionary change across Europe—he climbed that cliff in the Altai Mountains and inscribed his name on its shale face?

This chapter attempts to answer these questions by exploring the events and environments of Peter Andreevich’s life during these years. This was a time of intense personal struggle to define his place—and to define what it meant to be a prosveshchennyi chelovek—in the world in which he lived. Exposed to new ideas, new people, and news of revolutionary events in Europe, he found himself by turns attracted to and repelled by the radical critiques that the nascent Age of Revolution had to offer. Priests’ sons commonly took on new (or received their first) surnames when they studied at seminary, but Peter Andreevich’s new name was emblematic of a profound shift in his sense of self that took place during the 1790s and 1800s. The exposure to the ideas and experiences that the imperial capital had to offer, as well as the distance—physical and mental—that life there placed between him and his Urals roots ensured that his future as Peter Andreevich Slovtsov would be utterly unlike anything for which the world of the Sloptsovs could have prepared him.
But if Peter Andreevich left behind the “dark” world of the Sloptsovs, he had difficulty figuring out what it meant to be Slovtsov. The radical ideas at the center of many of the Enlightenment classics he read, together with the news arriving from revolutionary France, offered fundamental challenges to the ideology of enlightened absolutism on which the Russian state rested. Like many educated Russians—the future emperor Alexander among them—Peter Andreevich was inspired by these radical critiques and dreamed of major change. But enlightened absolutism remained a constitutive component of his sense of self. Even after being twice exiled as a result of what he believed were unwarranted persecutions from tsarist officials, Peter Andreevich maintained a firm belief in the imperial state’s power to bring enlightenment to its “dark” lands and peoples. He did so both because he recognized that the state had facilitated his escape from the world of his ancestors and because he came to believe that the paternalistic enlightenment it offered its subjects held the greatest promise for orderly progress in a time of shocking instability on the European stage. His calling, as he came to see it, was to be an agent of the state in a world-historical saga of enlightenment. Subsequent events would call his confidence in this role into question, but it remained a fundamental component of his sense of self to which he would regularly return for meaning, solace, and inspiration.

Petersburg Summons I

Peter Andreevich arrived in St. Petersburg at the beginning of 1789, and he must have been captivated by the urban panorama that opened before his eyes. Tobol’sk left an enduring impression on the young popovich from Susansk, but by 1788 he had grown
used to its sights, and after the Great Fire of 1788 these were in a sorry state. St. Petersburg, by contrast, was grand and growing; its population of more than 200,000—fifteen times that of Tobol’sk—and the size and unity of its neoclassical built environment were unlike anything Peter Andreevich had ever seen. He arrived in the midst of Catherine II’s transformation of the city: major landmarks completed shortly before his arrival included the empress’s monument to Peter I, the Marble Palace, the Duma building, the Hermitage Theater, the Academy of Sciences building, and the famed granite embankments along the Neva River.³

Peter Andreevich’s destination, the Alexander-Nevskii Monastery, was an integral part of this building project. Its new centerpiece, the Trinity Cathedral, had been under construction for over a decade, and the finishing touches were being completed when Peter Andreevich first entered the monastery’s gates. At its consecration in April 1790, he and his new classmates were treated to a grand spectacle: Catherine II, together with the Cavaliers of the Order of Saint Alexander Nevskii, looked on as the remains of the monastery’s patron saint were transferred to the new cathedral. The Metropolitan of Novgorod and St. Petersburg, Gavriil—brother of Peter Andreevich’s former shepherd, Bishop Varlaam of Tobol’sk—led the ceremony.⁴

Peter Andreevich and his classmates had come to Petersburg from all parts of the empire at the empress’s command. In May 1788 Catherine had instructed Metropolitan Gavriil to combine the funds that supported the Alexander-Nevskii Seminary and the

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Novgorod Seminary to create a new “Main” Seminary in St. Petersburg. Gavriil was to summon the best two pupils from each of the empire’s seminaries. They were to be trained under his watch and then return, armed with an education only Petersburg could provide, to raise the intellectual standards at their home seminaries.\(^5\) Thirty-seven other pupils joined Peter Andreevich in this first class.\(^6\) One, Ivan Martynov, recalled their first meeting with the Metropolitan: “Here, I thought, is the lamp [svetil’nik] whom the sage Empress has commanded to kindle the light that will spill into the remotest limits of her dominion!” “Gavriil,” Martynov continued, “reminded us of the goal for which we had been called: ‘Justify the choice placed upon you by your superiors through your behavior and successes in study.’ With these words he blessed us and released us to act.”\(^7\)

Uprooted from all corners of the empire, Peter Andreevich and his classmates became fast friends. Martynov wrote that they “breathed the same air, ate the same fare, were shaped by the same lessons, and merged into one feeling, into one soul.” Theirs was a diverse class, with pupils from as far away as Irkutsk. It would also prove to be an impressive one, as many of its members went on to hold important posts throughout the empire: Dem’ian Illichevskii would become governor of Tomsk; Nikolai Annenskii would rise to high rank (rank four) in service in the Ministry of Justice, translate French literature into Russian, and publish a novel of his own; and Mikhail Sakharov would go

\(^5\) *PSZ* (1), vol. 22 (17 July 1788), no. 16,691, pp. 1090-91.

\(^6\) RGIA f. 796, op. 71, d. 417, ll. 153-158.

\(^7\) Martynov’s autobiography is OR RNB f. 468, op. 1, d. 2. It was published as I. I. Martynov, “Zapiski I. I. Martynova,” *Pamiatniki novoi russkoi istorii*, vol. 2 (St. Petersburg, 1872): 69-109. Quotation from p. 76. Emphasis in the original (na delanie). Peter Andreevich later recalled how close Catherine II and Gavriil were, noting that Gavriil was widely respected for his wit and the brief speeches he gave to the empress. *PVT*, 133.
on to became Bishop of Orenburg, Ivan Pavinskii Archbishop of Tver’, and Fedor Rusanov Metropolitan of Georgia.⁸

Ivan Martynov, whose memoir is a key source on the Main Seminary during these years, was one of its more famous alumni. He came to Petersburg from the Poltava Seminary, where he had studied and taught Greek. He would go on to teach at the Smol’nyi Institute, found St. Petersburg’s Pedagogical Institute, play a leading role at Alexander I’s Ministry of Popular Enlightenment, and oversee the translation of a wide range of Greek classics—twenty-six volumes of Sophocles, Homer, Herodotus, and others. He also edited a number of literary journals, among which were Muse (to which Slovtsov contributed poems in the 1790s) and Northern Courier (in which Martynov published articles on enlightenment in Russia, translations of Rousseau, and a chapter from Aleksandr Radishchev’s banned Journey from Petersburg to Moscow). Martynov maintained a long friendship with Slovtsov, the closeness of which found reflection in a series of letters he wrote to Peter Andreevich about Petersburg’s devastating 1824 flood.⁹

None could compete, however, with the subsequent renown of Mikhail Speranskii, who hailed from the Vladimir Seminary. He came to Petersburg a year after Slovtsov, and he would go on to become Alexander I’s most influential advisor in the first decade of the nineteenth century, author of major plans for reform, Governor-General of Siberia, and editor of the empire’s first comprehensive law code. Speranskii

⁸ Martynov, “Zapiski,” 77, 86.
was widely recognized as the top student at the seminary, and Martynov even claimed that “if our course of study included nothing other than him, there would have been no need for further proofs of its value.” Slovtozov agreed. He later told Kalashnikov that Speranskii was the best student in the class, distinguished by his “chastity of thoughts, words, and feelings.” “His heart,” wrote Slovtozov, “already exuded a certain fresh, pure fragrance.”

The curriculum at the Main Seminary was broader than anything to which these new friends had been exposed at their home seminaries. Compared to the Academy in Kiev, where Western scholasticism was more firmly established—the scholasticism that had guided Archimandrite Il’ia’s reform of the curriculum at Tobol’sk—the Main Seminary had a more secular and even, as the Metropolitan Filaret described it, “materialistic” bent. This inclination was manifest in the teaching of modern languages such as French and German, history (adopted from the program of Catherine II’s new public school system), natural history, mechanics, physics, and geography. But if the seminary was relatively innovative in its subject matter, its teachers were less impressive. Archimandrite Innokentii regularly failed to show up to his lectures, and Archimandrite Nikolai was, Martynov recalled, “a great scholastic who belonged to the ranks of those scholars who screen their ignorance of their primary subject with knowledge of Latin and the pomposity of dignity.” Speranskii recalled another teacher who was “either drunk or, if sober, preached Voltaire and Diderot to us.” The same teacher gave private lessons

10 Martynov, “Zapiski,” 77.
11 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 104, ll. 1-3 (6 February 1840).
around Petersburg, and—not always sober enough to do them himself—often called on Speranski to fill in.\textsuperscript{13}

Naturally, the seminary’s curriculum was hardly the center of attention for these young provincials. That, Speranski later remembered, was reserved for “carousing and drunkenness”: “At nine in the evening the nachal’niki would already be asleep while with us life of the most dissolute kind would just be getting started.” Card playing was a favorite pastime, but because none of the seminarians had cash to spare, they placed bets with scraps of red and blue paper. Speranski eventually foreswore cards for good, though he did continue to take snuff as a way to make himself appear more mature in the eyes of his comrades.\textsuperscript{14}

When not “carousing,” Peter Andreevich and his friends broadened their horizons through what Martynov obliquely described as the “other means, which the capital city presents in abundance.” Among the more edifying of these were informal Greek lessons with former archbishop of Kherson Evgenii; public lectures at the Academy of Sciences by mathematician Semen Kotel’nikov, chemist Nikita Sokolov, and naturalist Nikolai Ozertsovskii; and lectures in physics at the Medical Institute by Vasilii Petrov.\textsuperscript{15}

Speranski and Slovtsov read together from the works of authors such as Descartes, Locke, Leibniz, Newton, Condillac, Rousseau, and Voltaire. This was the program of study that Speranski most valued. He later reflected that, “if there was any sort of education for me [at the seminary], then it was really from the composition of the

\textsuperscript{13} Korf, Zhizn ’grafa Speranskago (St. Petersburg, 1861), I: 26; Martynov, “Zapiski,” 77-78.

\textsuperscript{14} Korf, Zhizn ’grafa Speranskago, I: 26-28.

\textsuperscript{15} Martynov, “Zapiski,” 78-79.
argumentative essays [spornykh dissertatsii] that two or three of us assigned of our own accord and then examined together.”16

The most arresting topics of debate likely came not from books or lectures, but from news around town. Slovtsov and his friends arrived in Petersburg just months before the French Revolution transformed Europe’s political ecosystem. Petersburghers were enthralled by the Revolution, detailed coverage of which they could find in the papers. If the seminarians happened to read, for instance, the August 7, 1789 Saint Petersburg Gazette, they would have learned from the paper’s Paris correspondent that

Here [in Paris] major events follow one after the other […]. Last Monday, on the morning of the thirteenth [of July], Paris no longer resembled the capital renowned for the splendor of the customs of France, but an enemy town taken by storm. Everywhere wild and armed people; everywhere the signs of their unruliness […]. All of the gunsmiths’ shops were ransacked during the night. The French Guard and certain other forces abandoned the Sovereign and entered the service of the townspeople. […] They eventually reached the Bastille, where they took captive Commandant Marquis de Launay, the local Major, and a number of invalid cannoneers, and took them to the Place de Grève. There, the first two were slaughtered in sacrifice to the people’s rage [zakoloty v zhertvu buistvu Narodnomu]; the two cannoneers were hung; the others were pardoned. The hand shudders from horror, describing the events that can occur from such disregard for the duty to Sovereign and to Humanity! But one must write!…. The rebels, not satisfied by the killing of unfortunate Marquis Launay and his comrades, cut off their heads and carried them and the keys of the Bastille ceremoniously around the entire city…17

In addition to relating the unfolding events, the Saint Petersburg Gazette provided its readers with excerpts from speeches by Mirabeau, Barnave, and “other favorites of the restless people,” as well as a translation of all seventeen articles of the “Declaration of

16 ZIZh, 399.
17 Sankt-peterburgskie vedomosti, no. 63 (7 August 1789): 989-90.
Rights of Man and Citizen.” Print runs of the paper more than doubled from 900 in 1787 to 2,000 in 1790, largely to meet the new demand that readers had for international news. Booksellers who advertised in the paper sought to capitalize on Petersburgers’ interest in the Revolution. Evers’ bookshop, for example, enticed readers with “new books about the recent rebellion in Paris,” such as The Day of Paris, or the Triumph of France, a celebratory pamphlet on the taking of the Bastille, or An Authentic Description of the Bastille (complete with a plan and figures for readers who wanted to visualize more concretely the Revolution’s most iconic event).

What made such reading so fascinating for Petersburgers was the notion that revolution could happen in Petersburg. As events in France grew more radical, the Saint Petersburg Gazette increasingly urged its readers toward conservative conclusions, underscoring the “ruinous consequences of French anarchy.” The peasants of France, the paper reported in 1790, “deal with their landlords even inhumanly”: in Brittany twenty-six estates had been plundered and burned, whereas in Quersy “one murder follows another.” “One portion of His Majesty’s subjects,” the paper luridly reported, “is exterminating [istrebliaet] the other with the most savage tortures and murders. The mob rages in the provinces.”

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18 Sankt-peterburgskie vedomosti, no. 74 (14 September 1789): 1168
19 M. M. Shtrange, Russkoe obshchestvo i frantsuzskaia revoliutsia, 1789-1794 (Moscow, 1956), 60.
21 Sankt-peterburgskie vedomosti, no. 20 (8 March 1790): 315; ibid., no. 43 (28 May 1790): 694; Shtrange, 49-51.
For the seminarians, the French Revolution raised provocative questions about Russia’s social inequalities. They would not have failed to notice, for example, how, alongside its coverage of events and enticing book advertisements, the *Saint Petersburg Gazette* continued to advertise products more familiar to the Russian reader: “For sale: 27-year-old house-serf girl of good behavior who is capable of serving in the kitchen and can iron and wash linens.” The questions that such juxtapositions raised—How can a dynasty claim to be enlightened and rest on a social foundation of serfdom? What was Russia’s future in a revolutionary age?—were presumably those at the heart of the essays that Speranskii later described as their most important course of study.

These were, it is worth emphasizing, intensely personal questions for the young men. Their clerical backgrounds and material circumstances set them utterly apart from Petersburg’s *svet* (“high society”). In his famous *Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow*—with which the seminarians were almost certainly familiar, given the gossip it generated at town bookshops following its publication in summer 1790—Aleksandr Radishchev, a noble by birth, described meeting a seminarian from Novgorod, who was on his way to St. Petersburg “to acquire learning.” Radishchev wrote that, although he instinctively liked the boy, he could not but conclude that the seminarian’s “polite bearing” was “malapropos to his long caftan and kvas-slicked hair.” “Forgive me, reader, for my conclusion,” Radishchev wrote ironically, “I was born and grew up in the capital, and if someone is not curly-headed and powdered, then I pay him no respect.”

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22 *Sankt-peterburgskie vedomosti*, no. 20 (8 March 1790): 325.
23 *Kvas* is a fermented drink with minimal alcohol content made from bread.
Slovtsov and Speranskii knew the ostracism suggested by Radishchev’s sketch, not least because their material circumstances were truly meager. When Speranskii had to fill in for Archimandrite Nikolai’s private lessons, for example, he had to borrow a frock coat from a fellow seminarian, as he did not have his own.25 He and Slovtsov even shared a shirt, likely for similar purposes.26

One outlet for the seminarians’ social frustrations was the sermons they composed and delivered not only at the monastery, but also at churches throughout town. Martynov fondly recalled their debates about what made an effective sermon. Some pupils, he explained with a note of self-righteousness, adopted a florid, exuberant style, while others—himself among them, of course—sought simplicity, concision, and thoughtfulness. In delivery, some took on “the theatrical tone, following [the famous actor] Iakovlev,” while others sought to speak as though in a “typical conversation.”27 Speranskii was considered an especially effective orator, and Peter Andreevich never forgot his friend’s special gift for sermonizing. Even five decades later he vividly remembered the sermon Speranskii delivered on October 8, 1791 on the topic of the last judgment. “This sermon,” Peter Andreevich recalled, “was so captivating that persuasion was visibly expressed on the faces of the audience.”28 He remembered the sermon not only for Speranskii’s impressive performance—his animated facial expressions in particular—but because Speranskii took on a topic that was to be in the

26 ZIZh, 399; Korf, Zhizn’ grafa Speranskago, I: 27.
28 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 104, l. 2ob. (6 February 1840).
foreground of Peter Andreevich’s thoughts for the rest of his life: the *prosveshchennyi chelovek* and his role in society.

The text of the sermon has survived, and it makes clear that Speranskii had contemporary events in mind. “Enlightenment without morals,” he claimed, was wreaking havoc because the “wise men of society” (*mudretsy sveta*) had grown too confident in their use of reason. Speranskii followed Rousseau’s infamous argument from *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality* and blamed education for alienating man from a supposed state of nature, multiplying human needs, and prompting humans to “seek pleasure distant from themselves” (*daleko ot sebia*).29 The enlightened man, Speranskii argued, needed to balance reason with “the heart.” Enlightenment, he explained, was not the “personal property” of the enlightened man. Rather, it came with a duty to uplift others: “we cannot look upon it as anything other than a pledge, entrusted to us so that can return it, with a surplus, to society—a sort of loan that we, having borrowed from our predecessors, must return with a profit to our descendants” by acting morally, with a “zeal for the general good.”

This duty, Speranskii suggested, had major implications for the conduct of government. “Reason,” he explained, has a “depraved heart,” capable of producing the “best plan for the transformation of society,” yet devoid of pity. The latter was for Speranskii the most essential virtue. The monarch who lacked it, he suggested, was doomed:

29 On the topic of Rousseau and Russia, see Thomas Barran, *Russia Reads Rousseau, 1762–1825* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2002).
If you will not be a human being on the throne, if your heart is not acquainted with the circumstances of man [...], if you do not come down from the throne to wipe the tears of the last of your subjects, if your learning only lays a path for your lust for power, if you use it only to gild the chains of slavery, to [feign concern for the people while serving only your favorites], to support general error, so as to efface completely the conception of freedom, so as through the most secret channels to collect for yourself all the belongings of your subjects, to make them feel the weight of your right hand and through terror convince them that you are more than human: then, with all of your gifts, with all of your brilliance, you will be only a lucky scoundrel [zlodei]; flatterers will inscribe your name in golden letters in the list of great minds, but history will add with a black brush that you were the tyrant of your fatherland.

Being a “human being on the throne,” Speranskii suggested, was a monarch’s only means to convince the exasperated subject to give up his “ultimate consolation—the desire for your ruin.” There were, he explained, moral and immoral enlightened men, and a monarch must avoid the latter at all costs (enemies “all the more dangerous because they are enlightened enemies”). Their ideas, he suggested, were destroying the states of Europe, and they would be judged most harshly on Judgment Day. God, Speranskii warned, would return to earth seeking moral, not intellectual achievements, and would ask not “Have you defined the space of the heavens?” nor “Do you comprehend the nature of the fiery spheres that hang over you?” but “Have you been torn to pieces by pity at the sight of the unfortunate man whom you could not help?”

None of Slovtsov’s Petersburg sermons have survived, but his other writings from the period suggest that he fully shared his friend’s sentiments. Adopting the familiar device of the foreign observer, he took on the topic of monarchy in a revolutionary age in

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Some of Speranskii’s other sermons from this period were published in Iaroslavskiia eparkhiial’nyia vedomosti (1862), chast’ neoffitsial’naia, no. 6: 59-65; no. 13: 127-31; no. 25: 235-40.
his 1792 poem “A Chinaman in Petersburg.” The poem describes in joking tone the confusion that Russia’s imperial capital created in the mind of a Chinese visitor. Peter Andreevich’s Chinaman writes to a friend back home that Russians live “in a dark land” where “people live in ignorance, don’t bind their [women’s] feet, don’t weave Chinese cloth, and drink little tea.” “Everything,” he concludes, “is inside-out in Rus’,” as though “some Englishman turned the world on its axis.” Most shocking was that Catherine II’s palace had no high walls, no lions on guard. Unlike the emperor of China, secluded from his subjects in the Forbidden City, Catherine lived surrounded by the “rabble.” The poem praised the empress’s relative proximity to her people, but in spotlighting that proximity in 1792—at the very time Louis XVI and his family had been arrested by “their” people—Slovtsov offered a reminder that the ultimate fate of Russia’s monarchy lay in the hands of those at the bottom of the social scale.  

On the day Speranskii delivered his sermon, Metropolitan Gavriil was in the audience. Gavriil, Slovtsov later explained, was highly impressed with Speranskii’s performance and decided to appoint Speranskii teacher of rhetoric at the seminary rather than send him back to Vladimir province according to protocol. Slovtsov’s sermons were apparently less impressive, and by late 1792 the time had come for him to leave St. Petersburg and take up the Tobol’sk teaching post for which he had been trained.

32 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 104, l. 2ob. (6 February 1840).
**Petersburger in Tobol'sk**

Much had happened in the city on the hill since Peter Andreevich had left in 1788.

Town governor A. V. Aliab’ev sought to emulate Catherine II as the enlightened patron of culture in his city. His home became the meeting place of the town’s musical society, and in 1791 the first theater in Tobol’sk was built across the street. Like many other towns across the empire that decade, Tobol’sk also founded a public school. Opened in 1789, it soon had an enrollment of more than 130 students.

While Peter Andreevich was in Petersburg, Tobol’sk had also become the only provincial town in the empire to have its own journal: *Irtysh, Transformed into the Hippocrene*. Named after a mythological Greek fountain whose water was supposed to bring poetic inspiration, *Irtysh*—the name of Tobol’sk’s major waterway—highlighted the city’s role as Siberia’s font of enlightenment. In a 1790 ode, Tobol’sk teacher Timofei Voskresenskii wrote that “The midnight land marvels” as the Irtysh transforms into the Hippocrene and “pours bliss upon her.” *Irtysh* was published in monthly runs of 300, most of its pages filled with poetry, reprints of older materials, and translations. Teachers at the newly opened school edited the journal, but they were not paid for this work, and often had to use their personal salaries to supplement *Irtysh*’s budget, given its small

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35. It was not, however, the first. The Iaroslavl’ namestnik Aleksei Mel’gunov had published a literary journal, *Uedinennyi poshekhotens*, in 1786-87.
number of subscribers (eighty percent of the latter were chinovniki—unsurprising, given the governor’s vigorous promotion of the journal).³⁷

Peter Andreevich later claimed to be unimpressed with *Irtysh*. A more apt title, he quipped, would have been *Hippocrene, Transformed into the Irtysh*. Nor was he impressed with other books printed in Tobol’sk, among which he claimed to find only one “practical book” (*del’naia knizhka*), a compendium of information about the administrators of Siberian towns and forts. But even it, he added, “sinned frequently.”³⁸ These were, however, the judgments of a seventy-year-old man. The young teacher who returned to Tobol’sk in 1792 was a budding poet, and—even if he could not help but make unflattering comparisons with Petersburg—he enjoyed the company of the editors of *Irtysh*.

But he must have been disappointed by the scene that opened before him when he first set eyes on Tobol’sk after being away for four years. Having grown accustomed to the sights and sounds of the empire’s granite-lined capital, he returned to a Tobol’sk that still lay prostrate in the wake of the 1788 fire. Many Tobol’iaki still lived in the makeshift structures they had constructed after the fire, while most of the city’s signature buildings remained in a sorry state.³⁹

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³⁸ IOS, 270-71. The “practical book” Slovtsov mentioned was *Kratkoe pokazanie o byvshikh kak v Tobol’ske, tak i vo vsekh Sibirskikh gorodakh i ostrogakh s nachala vziatiia Sibirskago Gosudarstva, voevodakh i gubernatorakh i prochikh chinakh, i kto oni imeno, i v kakikh gorodakh byli, i kto kakoi gorod stroil i kogda* (Tobol’sk, 1792).
Reuniting with relatives in town must have been similarly uninspiring. Only months before his return, the Tobol’sk Consistory had put together a file bearing the following title: “On the committing of a beating at the Tobol’sk Khristorozhdestvenskii Church of sexton Serebrennikov by priest Aleksandr Sloptsov.” The offender was Peter Andreevich’s uncle, who, according to Serebrennikov, had gotten drunk one afternoon, entered the church, and “grabbed me by the hair and dragged [me about] as much as he pleased in front of the populous gathering then in the church.” Serebrennikov sought protection from the Consistory, but he seems to have worked things out privately with Sloptsov (the two signed a joint statement that they had “reconciled in a Christian way”—my s nim Khristsianski primirilis’). The Consistory was not impressed. Having dealt with Sloptsov before, it did not fail to mention that it was well aware of his habit of visiting the tavern with his sextons. His only punishment was to sign a statement that he would “take all measures to refrain from drunkenness, and therefore not go to taverns” or “cause fights and rowdiness with clerics [prichetniki] in the church or anywhere else.” But Aleksandr Sloptsov continued to get in trouble. A few years later a Cossack found him drunk in the street in the middle of the night with a married woman, after which the Consistory revoked his right to perform services and ordered that he move to Krasnoiarsk to live with his son there.\textsuperscript{40}

How much of uncle Aleksandr Peter Andreevich saw in Tobol’sk is hard to say, but he regularly encountered Aleksandr’s son, a pupil in the philosophy class he taught at the seminary. The class had an enrollment of 19 pupils, and Peter Andreevich also

\textsuperscript{40} GAvgT f. 156, op. 4, d. 1090, ll. 1-3; GAvgT f. 156, op. 4, d. 2198, ll. 1-6ob. It is not clear, however, whether Aleksandr Sloptsov did actually move to Krasnoiarsk.
taught a rhetoric class of 30. Some of the philosophy students studied mathematics with him as well.\textsuperscript{41}

Like the rest of the city, the seminary had not recovered from the fire. Before the fire, many of its roughly 250 pupils had lodged in Znamenskii Monastery’s shabby wooden outbuildings. These had vanished in the fire, and nearly all facets of seminary life—classes, mess hall, kitchen, accommodation for teachers and pupils—now took place in the monastery’s single stone building, itself severely damaged. The overcrowding was exacerbated by the fact that the building also housed, in addition to its own monks, the staffs of two nearby churches.\textsuperscript{42}

As its sluggish recovery suggests, the seminary was on a tight budget. Plans for a new building had been drawn up after the fire, but funding never followed. Its annual budget, delivered in irregular installments from the treasury, was 2,000 rubles—a sum that had remained unchanged for over a decade of rising enrollment numbers. When one considers that, of the 250 students in attendance, half were completely reliant on these funds for support—as were teachers like Peter Andreevich—the meager nature of life at the seminary becomes clear. To help make ends meet, the seminary took loans and donations from Tobol’iaki (twenty-five rubles and ten \textit{puds} (roughly 360 pounds) of beef from the merchant Mameev; ten rubles from the priest Karaul’shchikov; a thousand bricks from abbot Margarit, and so on). The budget remained so tight, however, that when seminary administrators instructed parents to send their children back to Tobol’sk

\textsuperscript{41} GAvgT f. 156, op. 4, d. 1406, ll. 5ob., 20, 25ob.-26.
\textsuperscript{42} GAvgT f. 530, op. 1, d. 1, ll. 1-2; Biriukov, “Tobol’skaia seminariia pri rektore Veniamine (1794-1799),” \textit{TEV}, nos. 12-16 (1904): 268-69.
in fall 1788, they threatened that pupils who returned with insufficient clothing, shoes, and grain or cash for their support would be turned over to the military. 43

Seminary administrators did make a number of improvements in 1792. That these consisted, however, of such basic steps as purchasing stockings for orphaned seminarians, building a bathhouse, and hiring a doctor to treat sick pupils, is further evidence of the difficult conditions that prevailed. Biriukov offers a harsh conclusion about rector Gennadii, who was in charge at the time. Gennadii’s ten-year administration, he wrote, would not be a “notable page” in the history of the seminary. Busy with his duties at the Consistory and as Archimandrite of Znamenskii Monastery, Gennadii seems to have been better suited to these positions. He was, Biriukov suggests, an “extreme lover of repose” who was unfit for the “bothersome position of rector.” 44

Peter Andreevich, on the other hand, appears to have taken his teaching responsibilities quite seriously. His comments on his pupils’ work suggest that he was unusually interested in his new role. Most teachers at the seminary invariably turned to the stock phrases of the day to comment on their students’ performance (literally “successes,” uspekhi) and lifestyles (zhitie): “praiseworthy,” “average,” “good,” “not bad,” “poor,” “stupid,” “completely hopeless.” Peter Andreevich’s comments were uncommonly verbose. He wrote, for example, that his pupil Il’ia Petukhov “is already beginning to reason [myslit’] and is distinguished by his constancy” and “loves the study of rhetoric.” Other comments include: “successes and gifts arouse the envy of his peers,”

43 N. Biriukov, “Tobol’skaia dukhovnaia seminariia v 1791 g.,” TEV, no. 17 (1903): 434-36; GAvgT f. 156, op. 4, d. 186, l. 1. Presumably, this order applied to only those seminarians who were not on treasury support.
“expanding his knowledge in a visible way,” “succeeds sufficiently, but one must hope for a better constitution in his heart,” “understands the value of philosophy,” “combines joy with meek morals,” “modest morals do honor to his heart,” “growing accustomed to the qualities of a writer,” “captivated by the beauties of writers,” and “sensitive.”

Peter Andreevich’s lessons also stood out. His notes for an assignment he prepared for his rhetoric class suggest that he wanted his pupils to learn the arts of persuasion so that they might challenge authority. He used the topic of Alexander the Great—“so-called great Alexander,” as he called him—as an entry point for discussion.

It was an audacious choice: Catherine II, after all, imagined her grandsons as potential Alexander and Constantine the Greats of their day and had named them accordingly as part of her “Greek Project.” Peter Andreevich saw similarities between Alexander the Great’s conquests and those of Catherine (particularly in Poland), but the lesson he drew for his pupils was a negative one. Alexander the Great, he explained, was a “monarch who busied himself only with his name, a conqueror who spread ruin across all Asia, an indefatigably ambitious man” who, blinded by the pursuit of glory, was incapable of thinking sensibly about his undertakings. Peter Andreevich instructed his students to imagine that they were commanders in Alexander’s army and compose a speech to deliver at the next class that would convince Alexander to abandon his “pompous plans”:

“And so, my lads [gosudari moi], I ask you, how to persuade him? How to slay

46 RGADA f. 7, op. 2, d. 2832, ll. 24-24ob.
47 Andrei Zorin, Kormia dvuglavnogo orla: Literatura i gosudarstvennaia ideologiia vRossii v poslednej tret’i XVIII-pervoi tret’i XIX veka (Moscow, 2004), 62-64; Wortman, Scenarios, 1: 144-45.
invincible ambition? […] How to speak before a vain but ultimately unsuccessful conqueror?”

One can only imagine how the pupils responded, but we do know that Peter Andreevich had not impressed the prefect and at least one other teacher, Ivan Serebrennikov, since his return. Serebrennikov wrote that

Soon after his arrival Slovtsov was not on good terms with the father prefect and carried himself too freely, like a student, in his private life. His apartment in the seminary building became a gathering point for the teachers who were not monks [uchitelei-beltsov]. Conversations there commonly went on past midnight and the noise of the young men reached the ears of the father prefect. In vain the nachal’nik tried, through his attendants, to remind the lodger and his guests of the proper order [of things]. But the attendants were sent back with answers of the most unfavorable character—and sometimes simply chased away physically by Slovtsov. And this was nothing! When he would go out for a stroll, this Petersburger dressed himself in the latest fashion, a white hat on his head—[the symbol of] liberty, sickening to the taste of the entire spiritual brotherhood. You played the fool, you really played the fool, Peter Andreevich! [Duril, ochen’ duril, Petr Andreevich!]

To what extent Serebrennikov’s thoughts reflected those of others at the seminary is unclear. Serebrennikov’s resentment of “the Petersburger” might have reflected envy of Slovtsov’s Petersburg experiences and higher salary (Serebrennikov taught a lower-level class). He clearly saw Slovtsov’s “liberty” as unbefitting sons of the church, as he did secular learning more broadly. In charge of a number of secretarial tasks at the seminary, Serebrennikov described seminarians who left the clerical estate for state

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48 RGADA f. 7, op. 2, d. 2832, ll. 24-24ob.
49 IRLI f. 265, op. 2, d. 3961, ll. 11ob.-12.
service as going over to the “pettifoggers” (*kriukotvortsy*) or the “clan of clerks” (*rod prikaznykh*).\(^{50}\)

But Serebrennikov’s description suggests that “the Petersburger” did raise eyebrows in Tobol’sk. And Peter Andreevich soon caused such a stir that Tobol’sk authorities—secular and sacred—felt compelled to respond.

It was an October 1793 sermon that would get Peter Andreevich in trouble, but he had developed some of its themes in sermons he delivered earlier that year. His three favorite topics—the role of autocracy, the nature of “great men,” and the faults of *svet* (high society)—were at the center of the sermon he delivered on April 21, 1793 on the occasion of Catherine II’s birthday and Grand Duke Alexander’s name day. In it, he explained that autocracy was history’s motivating force. The “rise and fall of peoples” occurs not according to their “merits,” he suggested, but instead as a result of a “certain autocratic capriciousness” (*nekoe samovlastnoe svoenravie*) that “drives empires,” “transforms the great bodies of states,” and lifts a country from centuries of “rudeness and abasement.” Though autocracy may be burdensome for other lands, it was beneficial for Russia, which was “once miserable.”

Peter Andreevich tempered this positive appraisal in treating his two other themes: high society (*svet*) and the nature of greatness. He lamented that *svet* labels as “great” men who attain their place through fortune or birth rather than “true merits.” “*Svet,*” he explained, “makes mistakes” and “steals” respect from “us.” He claimed that true greatness was to be found not in awards or honors, nor in the “philosopher” who

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\(^{50}\) Biruikov, “Tobol’skaia duxhovnaia seminariia v 1791 g.,” *TEV*, no. 17 (1903): 427.
“discovers unknown lands on the map of human cognitions,” but instead in the man who enlightens a people, extracts it from its “slavery,” “broadens the province of truth [oblast’ istiny], and thereby “uproots the scepter from the hands of coercion.” Here Slovtsov spoke not against autocracy per se, but instead reiterated the argument of Speranskii’s sermon—that the ruler must be “a human being on the throne.” Great rulers become “great” not by listening to svet and its self-interested advice, but instead by working to ensure that the general interest accords with individual ones. Because few subjects, Peter Andreevich claimed, knew what was good for them, the “great” ruler was the one with a mind broad enough—“equal to the space of the country” he rules—to anticipate the general good in ways that ordinary mortals cannot. The life of such a ruler is a “replacement for the life of an entire people.” If subjects “grumble” at the great ruler’s actions, it is because they cannot appreciate his plans, which become comprehensible only upon completion. Slovtsov offered Peter I, who famously did not follow the svet of his day, as the ideal great man, the “peaceful [sic!] citizen who taught our ancestors to be humans.” Although he concluded the sermon on a high note about Catherine’s future place in the ranks of the greats, this was a perfunctory move: the empress’s absence from the body of a sermon delivered in honor of her birthday was conspicuous.51

Peter Andreevich delivered another sermon that year on August 6, this time in commemoration of the Transfiguration. Whereas his earlier sermon was on the whole an optimistic one, a ringing endorsement of enlightened absolutism with a veiled criticism of

51 Slovtsov, “Tri propovedi P. A. Slovtsova,” 144-46.
favoritism and noble privilege, this one was more pessimistic. His topic was the conflict between faith and reason. “Everywhere bewilderment!” he began:

The Transfiguration was a “divine event,” but its splendor was visible only to those with Jesus on Mount Tabor. What to think? Either to have faith and constrain reason, or to have reason and constrain faith? What! Constrain faith? A criminal thought! Must one flout holiness and piety, these laws of a moral age? Must one destroy the altar, that sanctuary to which the hero comes to record his vows to the fatherland? Must one undermine Divine law, upon which the rights of Monarchy are founded? Must one scorn the sources of government by which this great machine moves and shake the thrones [of Monarchs]?

Peter Andreevich then invited his audience instead to “calm down.” Human imagination, he explained, is attracted to “everything incisive and eloquent,” but should instead seek its model in Christ alone, for “philosophy” has uncovered nothing new in the field of morality. Instead, he claimed, “nearly all of the savage vices which the rabble wouldn’t dare commit are preached in the writings of the enlightened.” Peter Andreevich therefore warned his audience not to be enticed by “clever systems and fiery writings.” Like Speranskii, he followed Rousseau. Ever since “philosophy started to rear the citizen,” he claimed, it tore him from a simpler, “natural state.” Slovtsov delivered his sermon as events in France were becoming increasingly radical, and his conclusions reflect their influence. “Philosophy,” he warned, offers a picture of the world in red and black colors and introduce[s] into society […] a tiger, not a citizen! Multiply the numbers of such pupils and you will see the current mode of our troubled politics. People are armed against Sovereigns, Sovereigns against peoples, just as religion once armed the Church against Sovereigns, and Sovereigns against the Church. The despotism of superstition in bygone ages seems terrible to us; but isn’t the despotism of reason in the present era even more terrible? See how ceremoniously force rages; how irrevocably the tyrant’s sword swings over all heads; how the blood flows from the most August of thrones; how God’s anointed sovereigns….but let’s stop!
“Freethinking,” he claimed, introduces “calamitous contradictions” into society and, in challenging faith, “shakes the foundations of government.” Therefore, truly enlightened men had a duty to be more circumspect in their discussions. “If it is beyond controversy,” he asked, “that outspoken enlightenment [priamoe prosveshchenie] cannot be the lot of an entire people but only of a chosen segment, then is pointing out errors not the same as giving the perilous sign of rebellion?”52

This was a question, of course, with which Peter Andreevich himself struggled. If he did believe in the potential of enlightened absolutism to uplift its subjects—not least because he could now look back on his Sloptsov past as evidence that “the people” were far from ready to wield political power—he was pessimistic about its current state in Russia. He described himself in a 1793 letter to a Nizhni Novgorod friend as “one of those men who [is] annoyed at the poor lot of his rodina.” People in Tobol’sk, he wrote, imagine that Petersburg is a brilliant place, but “the capital’s hopes, like the pleasantness of its perspectives, vanish as one draws near.”53

Peter Andreevich gave full vent to his pessimism in his final Tobol’sk sermon, delivered on November 10, 1793. All of the leading figures in town, including the governor, had assembled for a mass in celebration of the future emperor Alexander I’s wedding to the Princess of Baden. The sermon bears quoting at length, both because it is revealing of the extent to which the Revolution’s influence could be felt even in distant

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53 RGADA f. 7, op. 2, d. 2382, ll. 30-30ob.
locales like Tobol’sk—and because its consequences would forever alter the course of Peter Andreevich’s life.

He began on an optimistic note:

Once again we gather in the temple to unite our longings! Once again we receive from the Throne a new gift and new consolation. Russians [Rossy], bless your Monarchy! Bless the Lofty Couple!

A sensitive sovereign, under whose hand the people does not count its breaths, we can honor with the title of sage; but we would not be correct in doing so. Rarely is this title used. For all the services and plans a sovereign leaves as a legacy, he must have been able to survive his death and rule from the grave over his progeny—so as to ensure, that is, that the scepter does not fall from the hand of his successor. What circumstances, thus, do we find to thank the monarchy that increases its possessions? What sorts of joyous insights present themselves before the eyes of Russia? All signs point to our coming bliss.

But then Peter Andreevich invited his audience to “put aside these hopes and, so to say, ourselves,” and instead “reflect broadly upon the features of the people’s happiness.”

For a preacher to offer criticism of the ruling regime was not out of line; it was, to be sure, part of a vital dialogue between ruler and ruled that had long existed between Russian monarchs and writers in the eighteenth century.54 But to invite local society in 1793—the year that began with Louis XVI’s beheading—to reflect critically on the “features of the people’s happiness” was rash. What followed was the stuff of scandal:

The people’s calm is sometimes a forced silence, lasting only so long as the vexations that gradually exasperate society’s forbearance do not break it. If all citizens are not furnished with the very same laws—if the hands of one group clench the advantages, distinctions, and pleasures, while to the rest are left the labor, the weight of the laws, or only misfortune, then the tranquility deemed to be the guarantor of the common fortune is a deep gasp, delivered to the people in the form of a painful blow. It is true that orderly calm comes with obedience. But the space between obedience

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and consent is the same as that which separates slave from citizen. And since time immemorial, never has an entire people been unanimous in anything but superstition and political errors. Thus, when calm serves mostly as a marker of oppression, what do monarchies resemble? Great tombs, locking within themselves wretched and moaning corpses. And their thrones? Pompous headstones, painfully pressing down on these tombs. The unfortunate peoples!

Peter Andreevich did measure his critique with an obligatory reference to Russian exceptionalism, but he immediately followed it with implied criticism, this time of Catherine’s expansive foreign policy:

To thunder in victories in foreign lands, to hinder the authority of peoples rather than their glory, and to expand one’s glory rather than one’s authority is always honored as the path to the people’s happiness. But in vain! [...] The might of a monarchy is an insidious implement that emaciates itself; we can say even more—that a monarchy’s most majestic epoch is always the fatal year. Rome the proud, Rome, reared on the blood of entire peoples, had prepared herself to overwhelm nearly the entire world, and what happened? We deplore her arrogant policies, for she fell under her own weight at the very time she breathed most strongly and ferociously. There are lengths beyond which the happiness of peoples is not to be violated. And to what end this glory, when its increase breeds malice and vengeance? What good are trophies, when they are soaked in the tears of peoples? What good are crowns that are plucked from inviolable heads? What good are they?

What was needed, Peter Andreevich claimed, was for someone to speak up and “give vent to all bile” against the “esteemed heroes” who benefit from the personal glory that military action brings. This was a job, Peter Andreevich lamented, that passive Church leaders had failed to perform:

Do not conclude that the Church grumbles against these patrons of the fatherland. No! She offers sacrifices of incense before their bloody shadows and reveres the martial sword as a tool of salvation. Well aware that war is the ransom of citizens, she requires only that the hero, lulled to sleep by his proud laurels, does not disregard his duties; that, amid his grandeur and decorations, he does not find glorifying the Christian Faith to be a nuisance…
This weakness on the part of the Church, Slovtsov continued, returning to the theme of his previous sermon, was all the more tragic because faith was what was most needed in a time of turmoil. He walked back his claim of a few months before—that autocrats decide the fates of empires—and suggested instead that it was the faith of peoples that matters most. The autocrat who fails to treat faithful subjects well invites ruin:

How many times has it been proved that Faith decides the fate of entire states! How many times have blessings from above been promised to those whose soul is that of the gospels? […] Evidently, it is the lot of poor creation to wander in the darkness. Yes! The freethinker boasts of being the best subject, and exhibits his love to the fatherland and loyalty to the sovereign. But the freethinker is [merely] a man […]. Does he carry in his heart the security of Christianity? Does he maintain the pledge, that testimony of Faith? Let us take leave of him, this imitator of the patriot, and put a Christian in his place. The latter, taught lofty and reverential thoughts about authorities, knows better than anyone the happy science of submitting [schastlivuiu nauku povinovat’ sia]. Rather than setting himself between people and sovereign, he places the sovereign between the people and God. The supreme law for him is the word of the Highest, prophesied at monarchical altars since the oldest times. His property is the property of the fatherland, and his life is his tribute for the Throne. Monarchs, recognize your subject in the Christian!

But we will not fail to mention here how they pass him without notice when the time comes for preference; how they abandon him, when they should call him forth for degrees and dignities! Such contradictions are, of course, cruel. Let them assure us that virtue will not go unrewarded. Let them cherish virtues. But what is the use, when all that is left to the virtuous is to sigh! Amen.55

Governor Aliab’ev, listening in the audience, later claimed to have had difficulty following Peter Andreevich’s sermon, citing his poor hearing and distance from the altar. But he knew something utterly improper was afoot, particularly given the “indecent gestures” Peter Andreevich made throughout his delivery. He immediately ordered that a

55 RGADA f. 7, op. 2, d. 2382, ll. 3-6; Reprinted in Slovtsov, “Tri propovedi,” 150-53.
copy of the sermon’s text be sent secretly to him. Upon reading it, he explained in his
denunciation to General Procurator of the Senate Aleksandr Samoilov, he found the
contents to be “quite confused” (dovol’no zaputan), but full of ideas “against the highest
authorities [that were] impermissible for a loyal subject of Her Imperial Highness.”

Bishop Varlaam also wrote to Petersburg, but he sent his letter to his brother,
Metropolitan Gavriil. Something had to be done, he admitted, for Slovtsov’s sermon was
indeed full of “impudent expressions against monarchical power” and had been delivered
“before the entire public” of Tobol’sk. But Varlaam seems to have hoped to lighten
whatever punishment was in store for Peter Andreevich. He claimed that Slovtsov had
written the sermon hurriedly and that, because Peter Andreevich had delivered many
other sermons without any “harmful or suggestive thoughts,” there had been no reason
for suspicion. He added that Slovtsov—who knew he was in trouble, despite the
governor’s efforts to keep the investigation secret—had fallen ill, terrified of “whatever
torture there might be.”

Varlaam’s primary concern, however, was to clear his own name. The Procurator
of the Synod, Aleksei Musin-Pushkin, scolded him for negligence. Varlaam knew
“perfectly well,” Musin-Pushkin chided, that it was his responsibility to examine the
contents of sermons before they were delivered. Had he not found sufficient instructions
in the Spiritual Reglament about the sorts of topics that were appropriate? About
moralizing? About the use of bodily gestures? On the latter the Spiritual Reglament was
clear: a preacher must not “throw his arms about,” sway “as if rowing oars on a ship,” or

56 RGADA f. 7, op. 2, d. 2382, ll. 1-2.
57 RGADA f. 7, op. 2, d. 2382, ll. 7ob.-9ob., 15-16.
jump, laugh, or sob, any of which can “incite the audience.” Preachers who touched on inappropriate, “even political” topics and used improper historical analogies and “ridiculous expressions that are tempting and intolerable in society,” Musin-Pushkin warned, were a grave threat both to society and the Church. He added that, in light of Slovtsov’s sermon, he was ordering all bishops to inspect sermons personally, and, in distant locations where that was impossible, find “other learned clerics with sufficient enlightenment” to do so.58

Varlaam was indignant to think that he might be blamed for Slovtsov’s actions, and he now came down harder on Peter Andreevich. He had, he wrote, diligently supervised Tobol’sk preachers during his twenty-five years as bishop. It was only, he explained, Peter Andreevich who “fogged up this pure water.” But the real culprit was St. Petersburg: “It is surprising,” Varlaam noted ironically, “that [Slovtsov] absorbed such strange and absurd thoughts—and indecent gestures—in St. Petersburg, whither he had been sent solely to learn that which is wholesome for the church and society.” Varlaam requested that Gavriil remove the two Tobol’sk seminarians currently under Gavriil’s watch at the Main Seminary from its French classes. That language was “unnecessary” in Tobol’sk—and, Varlaam implied, one of the sources of Slovtsov’s audacity.59

Varlaam and Aliab’ev received a response from Petersburg during the second week of February 1794—three months after Peter Andreevich delivered the sermon.

58 GAvGT f. 156, op. 4, d. 1714, ll. 1-2; PSZ (1), vol. 6 (1721), no. 3718, pp. 338-40. On the implementation of this decree in Tobol’sk, see GAvGT f. 156, op. 4, d. 1611.
59 GAvGT f. 156, op., 4, d. 1714, ll. 8-9.
Gavriil had discussed the matter with General Procurator Samoilov and head of the Secret Expedition Sheshkovskii. They agreed that the sermon was of the “most insolent and uproarious” kind and “by no means bore any resemblance” to anything “a person taught at seminary” should write.\textsuperscript{60} They turned the matter over to the empress, who ordered that Slovtsov be arrested and brought to St. Petersburg for interrogation (Gavriil, for good measure, told his brother that not only would he remove the Tobol’sk pupils from the French class, but, in light of the concerns Slovtsov’s conduct had raised, he had decided to eliminate the teaching of French altogether).\textsuperscript{61}

Slovtsov’s sermon had left Tobol’sk talking, and Governor Aliab’ev was concerned to avoid creating further “hubbub” in arresting Slovtsov. He therefore instructed Varlaam to invite Slovtsov to visit him in his personal quarters “at twilight,” soon after which he would dispatch a guard to arrest and take Peter Andreevich away quietly. Slovtsov was not, Aliab’ev instructed, to be allowed to return to the seminary and gather his things for the journey. Instead, he was to be taken to a nearby village of Shishkin, where, after Aliab’ev had searched and sealed his papers, these would be sent to the courier, along with a fur coat to keep Peter Andreevich warm on the journey.\textsuperscript{62}

Peter Andreevich was arrested on February 13, 1794. His guard, one Timofeev, was instructed to ensure that he did not commit suicide or exit their sleigh within the limits of any settlements while on the road to Petersburg. Aliab’ev gave Timofeev money for the road from his own private funds “so as not to give the public here occasion

\textsuperscript{60} RGADA f. 7, op. 2, d. 2382, ll. 1-2, 7.
\textsuperscript{61} GAvgT, f. 156, op. 4, d. 1714, l. 3; RGADA, f. 7, op. 2, d. 2382, l. 17.
\textsuperscript{62} GAvgT f. 156, op. 4, d. 1714, ll. 4-7.
for unnecessary commentary.” Peter Andreevich’s thoughts during this long trip, so much less optimistic than his first trip to the imperial capital, were likely trained upon Stepan Sheshkovskii. Chief of Catherine II’s Secret Expedition, Sheshkovskii’s was a name infamous for his cruelty in punishing Pugachev as well as his more recent interrogations of Novikov and Radishchev. He was, as Petersburgers called him, the knutoboets—the knout warrior.  

**Petersburg Summons II**  
Peter Andreevich was spared the knout. His first interrogator was Metropolitan Gavriil, who the authorities hoped could use his personal acquaintance with Peter Andreevich to elicit the sources of the scandalous sermon. He then went before Samoilov and Sheshkovskii, who prevailed upon Slovtsov to confess his guilt and “open his heart about the intention with which he delivered the sermon.” Why, they asked, had he dared deliver a sermon that was “against not only the principles of theology but also those of philosophy […] and completely filled with agitation of the people and against the government?” Where else had he “spoken these words, which of course, do not foster a favorable opinion about you?” Peter Andreevich, according to the interrogation record, replied that he “now understood” that his sermon was “deserving of condemnation,” but claimed that it was a product of the “weakness of his mind, not wicked intention.” He

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63 RGADA f. 7, op. 2, d. 2382, ll. 20-2; On Sheshkovskii see A. S. Babkin, Protsess A. N. Radishcheva (Moscow and Leningrad, 1952), 48; RBS, “Shebanov-Shiuts,” 268-70.
acknowledged that he had friends among Tobol’sk’s merchants and teachers, but claimed that he had not discussed the sermon with them.64

Also on the interrogators’ agenda was Peter Andreevich’s lesson about Alexander the Great. Slovtsov claimed to have been ill when he prepared the lesson, much of the contents of which he had taken from the Roman historian Quintus Rufus. Whatever the case, he was wrong, his interrogators told him, to “burden his pupils with such ideas, which defame monarchs.”65

Considering the climate—revolutionary terror in France, terrified nobles and monarch in Russia—Slovtsov’s punishment, delivered after he had spent a month locked in Petersburg’s infamous Peter and Paul fortress, was light. Although his sermon was clear evidence of his “freethinking ideas” and Peter Andreevich was therefore “deserving of the strictest punishment,” he was, because of the empress’s “humanity and charity,” to be spared. But so that he might “feel in his soul the entirety of the burden of his unsanctioned act,” the empress turned him over to Metropolitan Gavriil, whom she instructed to send Peter Andreevich away to a monastery to perform a year’s penance.66

Gavriil chose Valaam Monastery, situated on an archipelago near the northern shore of Lake Ladoga.67 Peter Andreevich arrived in May 1794, after spending a month waiting for the ice on the lake to clear. The metropolitan instructed the monastery’s abbot, Nazarii, to make certain that Slovtsov not leave the monastery, that he attend service morning and night, and that he follow all of the rules required of Valaam’s

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64 RGADA, f. 7, op. 2, d. 2382, ll. 22-23.
65 RGADA, f. 7, op. 2, d. 2382, ll. 23-24ob.
66 RGADA, f. 7, op. 2, d. 2382, ll. 31-31ob., 34. Strikethrough in original.
67 Valaamskii monastyr’ (St. Petersburg, 1864), 55-69; A. P. Andreev, Ladozhskoe ozero (St. Petersburg, 1875).
monks. Nazarii’s bimonthly reports indicate that Slovtsov was well behaved (“proved himself to be currently and henceforth unequivocal in his faith”).

But Peter Andreevich was miserable and unrepentant. Shortly after arriving at Valaam he vented his grief in a poem to Speranskii. Melodramatically titled “The Testament of a Dying Man to His Friend,” the autobiographical poem describes a man whose “cramped soul” is leaving his body behind. It also reveals a more radical Slovtsov than his sermon let on. As classmates he and Speranskii, he wrote, were of one mind: “The muse breathed an inclination for literature into you / And a philosophical century gave freedom to ideas / You too were inclined to daring opinions, / And like I, you loved to blaze with audacious features.” But their passion for ideas was too pure for their era: “Treacherous fate” laid Slovtsov low, and Speranskii, he urged, should learn a lesson from his misfortune. In particular, Speranskii should avoid expressing radical opinions—“playing with the Volterian quill”—and be circumspect in his actions:

Though Russia has long read the freethinkers,
It’s too early for her own sons to dare be wits;
She thanks the Montesqueius and the Rousseaus,
But her own son is her enemy when he is a philosophe.

Rossiia khot’ davno chitaet vol’nodumov,
No rano ei svoikh ovtazhit’ ostroumov;
Ona blagodarit Monteskhiiev, Russov,
No syn eë ei vrag, kogda on filosof.

Slovtsov urged Speranskii to “be daring” and to “be a tyrant” against prejudices, but to do so in such a way that svet—high society, le monde—“does not understand you.”

Speranskii should not, he advised, seek to be a writer, but should instead “wear a mask in

68 RGADA, f. 7, op. 2, d. 2382, ll. 33-35.
society” and philosophize only in the safety of his private study—and with “poison in your pocket just in case.”

Slovtsov ended the poem with self-pity. “What kind of life is mine now?” A life worse, he suggested, than that of a slave, a beast, or a corpse: the slave could choose to die by his own hand; the beast “does not tremble at future blows”; the corpse is at rest. But he sits, “swollen and enfeebled,” between cell walls, watching his candle melt: “So wanes the citizen, like a feeble light in the fog, / And then he is lost, like a river in the ocean.” He asked Speranskii to tell his parents that he died “innocently persecuted.”

The poem also contains the only evidence that Slovtsov had a romantic relationship with a woman:

Oh fate! You pierce my heart from all sides,
But are the arrows only yours? You, my friend, understand…
Tell your, I’m afraid to say it… your little sister,
That I hoped… Love and friendship—farewell!

O rok! So vsekh storon ty serdtse mne pronzaesh’,
No tol’ko l’ strel tvoikh? Ty, drug moi, ponimaesh’…
Tvoei… boius’ skazat’… sestritse vozvesti,
Chto l’stilsia ia… Liubov’ i druzhestvo—prosti!69

Given his close friendship with Slovtsov during their time at the Alexander Nevskii

Seminary, it is not unlikely that Peter Andreevich accompanied Speranskii on a summer

69 The text has been published in several places, though they differ from the two manuscript versions I have found. The first is a manuscript collection of poems by various Russian writers that dates to 1802. It contains a number of Slovtsov’s published poems as well, along with others by writers such as Martynov, Karamzin, and Magnitskii. It is BAN, Sobranie M. I. Uspenskogo, no. 123. Slovtsov’s “Zaveshanie umiraiushchago k drugu” is l. 100. The other manuscript is preserved in the archive of Il’ia Iakovlevich Slovtsov, a Siberian scholar who believed himself to be Slovtsov’s nephew, but was actually a few degrees farther removed than he realized. It is GAvgT f. 146, op. 1, d. 1, ll. 8-90b. These manuscript versions contain minor variations from the version that was eventually published in Iu. M. Lotman, ed., Poety 1790-1810-godov (Leningrad, 1971), 208-10. The reference to Montesquieu, which appears in the Academy of Sciences version, is replaced by a reference to Montaigne in the published text. Given the influence of his Montesquieu’s Spirit of the Laws on Catherine II’s Nakaz, which seems to have been the target of Peter Andreevich’s criticism here, Montesquieu seems more plausible.
visit to Speranskii’s family home in Vladimir province—possibly because the longer trip home to Susansk was not worth the effort. Such a trip might have been how he first met Speranskii’s sister Marfa.  

Metropolitan Gavriil had Peter Andreevich brought back to St. Petersburg from Valaam in March 1795. He reported that Slovtsov had grown ill from the severe weather on the island and “especially from his complete recognition of his misdeed.” Peter Andreevich was, Gavriil claimed, in “despair over his fortune.” More likely, Gavriil wanted Slovtsov back in Petersburg so he could have him teach rhetoric at the monastery, which he appointed him to do after his return.

Teaching at the seminary reunited Peter Andreevich with Speranskii, who was employed there as prefect and philosophy teacher. The two friends wrote poems together, which they published in Martynov’s journal Muse, alongside works by some of Russia’s leading writers, Derzhavin and Karamzin among them. Peter Andreevich published a revised version of “To Siberia,” the ode he had delivered at the 1782 opening of the Tobol’sk namestnichestvo, and also contributed a new poem, “Matter,” a ponderous piece on the ubiquity of matter in all things (from the “Venus Flytrap to the centipede, the crab to the Kamchatka sea-ape”).

He did not, however, publish the most substantial poem he wrote during these years. And for good reason: “Antiquity,” as it was titled, was clear proof that he still held
on to the “freethinking” ideas that had gotten him sent to Valaam. A rumination at a
gravesite, a lionization of heroes from the passing Age of Enlightenment, and a critique
of Catherine II’s foreign policy, “Antiquity” was above all a reflection on historical
change and the role of “great” men in bringing it about.\(^73\) In “adorning its mausoleum,”
he wrote, “antiquity”—that is, history—would not give pride of place to rulers, but would
instead honor men like Russia’s most famous poet, Gavriilo Derzhavin; Benjamin
Franklin, who “fractured the British scepter”; and French writer Guillaume Raynal, the
“oracle of a free nation.” Slovtsov described Catherine II’s Russia as the oppressor of
Poland, a “shadow amidst the fog . . . that drifts along the Carpathian ridge,” a “gigantic
profile [that...] spills across the currents of the bright Vistula.” Belligerent monarchs,
Peter Andreevich wrote, were “smoking Chinggis Khans” who should find isolated
corners of their own realms in which to “sharpen their swords” rather than engage in wars
of conquest. He also returned to a favorite theme—greatness as a reward for merit alone:

Even if nature has granted you,
In the princely cradle, the title of count,
Even if a star fell onto your breast from above,
And tossed [honorary] orders over your shoulders,
Believe, that this bright phenomenon
Is treacherous for your virtues [dostoinstvo],
All of these incisions [nasechki] will fall in a flash.
And titles that clink without deeds,
Will also, like the din of hereditary glory,
Not reach the mountains of posterity.
Know this: only the enlightened mind
Will break through the ages!\(^74\)

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\(^73\) For commentary on the poem see Iu. M. Lotman, “Kto byl avtorom stikhotvoreniia ‘Drevnost’?” in O
poetakh i poezii, ed. Iu. M. Lotman (St. Petersburg: Iskusstvo, 1996), 750-54; and Luba Golburt,

In February 1796 Slovtsov penned another poem to Speranskii. Titled “An Addendum to Yesterday’s Conversation,” it was an attempt to win Speranskii over in an argument the two friends had been having over whether they should become monks or enter state service. Slovtsov made the case for service, urging that Speranskii, whose writing skills had drawn the attention of government leaders, should make use of his good fortune. Rather than “hiding in the desert” with books, ruminating on “boring ideas,” and “withering from sorrow without people,” it was better, he wrote, to “enter the whirlwind with the world” and “spin along the steppes of honor.” Moreover, Slovtsov claimed, the temptations of the flesh were simply too much to resist:

Correctly you have considered high society [svet] to be torture,
[And weighed] the burden of its golden chains;
But have you considered the boredom of the monks
And reckoned how much it weighs?
The motley cloak with golden necklaces
Will cover your figure and way,
But will it cover your helpless eyes
From those female swindlers of pious beauties,
Who enter the church with bared breasts
To show themselves to bachelors
And, exuding perfume before the icon,
To receive incense from their hearts?
It’s difficult to guard oneself from their contagion,
Even though you fence yourself in with cross upon cross;
Forever the heart will take its stand and beat,
Even with Panagia75 on the breast.
Panagia, friend, is not strong armor,
And the shining miter is, after all, no helmet,
If naughty winged cupid
Breaks into the archpastor’s chamber.
Enough, my friend, dancing about with ideas,
Enough sitting with a book and amassing intellect;
It’s time, time to push off from the landing

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75 Panagia is one of the titles of Mary common in Orthodox Christianity, and in this case it refers to a medallion with an icon of Mary that Orthodox bishops wear when conducting liturgies.
And unfurl your sail in the wind.\textsuperscript{76}

Speranskii took his friend’s advice. At the time Emperor Paul I came to power in 1796, he had been working as a private secretary for Prince Aleksei Kurakin. Paul made Kurakin the General Procurator of the Senate and, among other things, treasurer of the Order of Malta. Speranskii requested permission to enter state service from Metropolitan Gavriil, and he began serving in the General Procurator’s chancellery in January 1797 as a Titular Councilor with a salary of 750 rubles—three times what he had been paid at the seminary.\textsuperscript{77}

Speranskii also convinced his employer to hire Slovtsov. When Kurakin agreed, Speranskii advised Peter Andreevich to be practical and “choose the way of life they offer you.” State service, Speranskii explained, now urging Slovtsov to take up service, might fall short of the dreams that had long fueled their ardent debates, but it was nevertheless a field in which they might distinguish themselves and do some good.

“Believe me,” Speranskii wrote, “things sparkle only from afar; up close they are nearly all the same—that is, all are full of vanity and absurd dreams, with the difference only that there are in the world situations that require neither breaking your conscience nor undermining your soul’s strengths [silam dushevnym]; circumstances conformable to the simplicity of a good heart, and so I consider yours.”\textsuperscript{78}

Peter Andreevich wrote to Kurakin, beseeching him to give him a new lease on life:

\textsuperscript{77} Korf, \textit{Zhizn’ grafa Speranskago}, I: 44-6
\textsuperscript{78} M. M. Speranskii, \textit{V pamiat’ grafa Mikhaila Mikhailovicha Speranskago. 1772-1872} (St. Petersburg, 1872), 407. The original is OR RNB f. 702, op. 1. d. 38.
One of those unfortunate people who make themselves known to the government only by their misdeeds [postupkami] dares to remind Your Illustriousness about his fate. The mistake may be innocent and, of course, unintentional; it has already been sufficiently proven that I have a heart and am able to feel the entire weight of the law—even though it condemned me according to the notions of other people, but not in my own conscience.

Most Illustrious Prince! If there are limits to punishment, and if the vengeance of the law lasts no longer than rectification, then maybe it is not completely necessary to deprive me forever of the freedom to arrange my life. Kind sir! You have been granted [the power] by the Throne to remove the fetters from me.  
The loss of my post, the lack of hope, and the lack of prospects compelled me to desire the monk’s state, which my heart has since repudiated. If the business of my fate is to be decided on the court of charity, I ask in the name of your glory, to furnish me with the protection of your Illustriousness and place me in state service.

Your obedient servant,
Peter Slovtsov

Kurakin brought Slovtsov’s case before emperor Paul. He could not have failed to mention Peter Andreevich’s troublesome sermon. But suspicious as Paul was of “freethinking,” he was just as keen to undo everything his mother had done, and he might have freed Slovtsov—as he had Radishchev and Novikov—with this in mind. He gave his approval on June 19, and two days later Metropolitan Gavriil received a letter from Kurakin with instructions to send Peter Andreevich to him immediately. With this, Peter Andreevich entered “the world” (svet), embarking on what would prove to be a remarkable thirty-five year career in state service and bringing to a close the tumultuous period that he had opened with his bold sermon of 1793.

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79 RGADA, f. 7, op. 2, d. 2382, ll. 36-37, 38-38ob.
Ministering Humanity

Although scholars who have examined Slovtsov’s career have been most interested in his radical sermon, the years of state service that followed were of more enduring significance for his worldview. While he was a seminarian, teacher, and aspiring poet, he had been an outsider, critical of and aloof from Russia’s leading figures. His provincial, clerical roots assured that such would remain the case even after he entered state service, but his new career gave him a clearer stake in the state’s mission and led him to soften his criticisms of Russia’s leading men. Although he would remain distant from svet for his entire life, his service career provided for a level of material comfort he had never previously known and fostered a belief in the value of the tsarist state’s civilizing mission that he would retain until he died.

Slovtsov worked in the General Procurator’s chancellery for four years. The post must have been an unsettling one, given the quick changeover of his superiors and the climate of Paul’s reign more generally. But Peter Andreevich did well for himself: he made his name known to leading figures in the central government and achieved rapid promotion. In recognition of his education, he entered the civil service at the rank of Titular Councilor (rank nine), five ranks higher than the bottom rung on which most men began their service careers. Less than two years later he achieved personal nobility when he was promoted to rank eight, which was followed the by another promotion the following year to the rank of Court Councilor.

Emperor Paul’s murder in March 1801 sharply affected the fates of state servitors, and Peter Andreevich was no exception. Shortly after Alexander I succeeded the throne,
Slovtsov was transferred to the chancellery of the new State Council (Nepremennyi sovet), which the new emperor had created to oversee state affairs “of particular importance.” The committee included many of the most influential men of the period and considered issues including the confirmation of Catherine II’s charters to the nobility and the towns, the abolition of the Secret Chancellery (which had investigated Peter Andreevich in 1794), tax reform, and a range of other issues. Slovtsov’s title was “assistant to the director” (pomoshchik ekseditora). In all likelihood, he obtained the position through Speranskii, who was director (ekseditor) of the chancellery’s third bureau (ekseditsiia), which oversaw “civil and spiritual” affairs.

Peter Andreevich did not remain long in the position. His talents, Kalashnikov later wrote, brought him “broad renown” (obshchaia izvestnost’) among the capital’s leading men. Among the latter was the Minister of Commerce, Nikolai Rumiantsev, who recruited Peter Andreevich to travel to the Black Sea coast and inspect Russia’s ports there. Rumiantsev sought a “dependable and skillful person” who would “delve into all aspects of the region’s trade” and make recommendations for improvement. This, he added, was an assignment “especially agreeable for a noble person.” Rumiantsev chose Slovtsov to carry out the assignment alongside Aleksei Vasil’chikov, who worked for Rumiantsev at the Commerce Ministry.

Peter Andreevich’s Black Sea assignment is worth examining in detail. The expedition would bring him considerable favor and permanent employment in the

82 ZIZh, 401.
83 RGIA f. 13, op. 2, d. 556, ll. 1-10b.
Ministry of Commerce when he returned to Petersburg the following year. The assignment was also his first as a trusted agent of the state on the imperial periphery—a role with which he would identify after he returned to Siberia.

Working for Rumiantsev was a formative experience for Peter Andreevich. Contemporaries and scholars alike have described the early nineteenth century as the “age of Rumiantsev” (Figure 4). The minister’s father, Peter Rumiantsev-Zadunaiskii, was one of eighteenth-century Russia’s most famous generals, a hero of the Russo-Turkish wars, and governor of Ukraine for nearly all of Catherine II’s reign. Nikolai Rumiantsev was educated at the University of Leiden and travelled widely around Western Europe, meeting such figures as Necker and Voltaire. To Catherine II, he was “Saint Nicholas,” her most trusted diplomat in revolutionary Europe. It was through him, for example, that she offered French émigrés asylum during the Revolution—something which, one of her orders to him read, “any foreigner, friend of peace and order has a right to expect in enlightened countries.”

Out of favor under Paul I, Rumiantsev immediately became one of the key figures of Alexander I’s reign. He had “vast and grand plans” for the Ministry of Commerce.

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84 V. F. Molchanov, Gosudarstvennyi Kantsler Rossii N.P. Rumiantsev (Moscow: Pashkov dom, 2004). Quotations from 5-6, 149.
under his control and was personally responsible for its creation. Whereas Alexander’s original plan for ministerial reform called for commercial affairs to be handled by a branch of the Ministry of Finance, Rumiantsev successfully argued that the Minister of Finance’s goal, increasing state revenues, was an objective not always compatible with the improvement of commerce, which he argued should have its own ministerial patron. A follower of Adam Smith, Rumiantsev dreamed of capitalizing on Russia’s position between Europe and Asia to make Russia a vital player in international commerce. He was therefore particularly concerned with improving the empire’s ports and its transportation system, tasks he was in a position to facilitate in his other post as director of the empire’s road- and canal-building administrations. He also sought to spread information about trade, founding the Saint Petersburg Commercial Gazette toward that end in 1803.85

Peter Andreevich’s Black Sea assignment, then, placed him under an active and powerful nachal’nik pursuing an ambitious plan of state-led transformation. It also gave him a more immediate sense of participation in imperial governance than Petersburg’s offices could offer. He and Vasil’chikov arrived in Odessa in September 1802, during a pivotal time in the Black Sea’s transformation from the “Turkish Lake” of the Ottoman Empire into the Chernoe More, the Russian Black Sea.86 Odessa and Kherson, Slovtsov and Vasil’chikov read in Rumiantsev’s instructions, were “two apertures” through which wheat, timber, wax, butter, livestock, and other key Russian commodities “stream into

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foreign lands.” But trade at Kherson paled in comparison to that of Odessa. Whereas Odessa remained open to ships year-round, the Dnieper estuary on which Kherson was located froze in winter, and even during the rest of the year large ships could not anchor within thirty versts of its port. Rumiantsev instructed Vasil’chikov and Slovtsov to seek out all possibilities for reviving Kherson’s trade. Russia’s southern trade, he suggested, could flourish only through the reciprocal strengths of the two towns, not least because Kherson was the major port through which the Dnieper region released its goods. Odessa had developed quickly with the encouragement of government, Rumiantsev pointed out, but “the time is now at hand when government, having accelerated the natural course of things, is obliged to come to aid in order to extract all possible benefit from the situation.”

In addition to inspecting Odessa and Kherson, Rumiantsev instructed Slovtsov and Vasil’chikov to explore the region, review the work of local officials, and inform him of any sources of delay, “oppression,” and “mercenariness” (korystoliubie). Rumiantsev had heard rumors of “great abuses” in the Odessa trade. He was especially suspicious of the registers of imported goods, which listed fruits, oils, and wines, but “very few handmade Asian wares.” If these latter, as he suspected, were being smuggled into the empire, bypassing the standard quarantine process, it “could easily come to pass, God preserve us, that plague could suddenly appear in the very heart of the nation.”

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88 RGIA f. 13, op. 2, d. 556, ll. 1-6.
Slovtsov and Vasil’chikov were, in brief, to consider themselves entrusted with the future of a region and the potential health of the nation. They took their assignment seriously, reporting to Rumiantsev in a stream of detailed, often passionate reports. But they also enjoyed each other’s company and the new sights that the trip afforded. Peter Andreevich wrote to Vasil’chikov years later, reminiscing on how they explored the ruins of Genoese settlements on the coast, “ran up the decaying turrets” imagining “in our souls the feelings and thoughts of the ancient resident,” and “in friendly conversation occupied ourselves with the survey of past and present trade.”

Their first task was to compile a brief description and history of Kherson. Greeks “from the Archipelago,” they wrote, began to settle Kherson in 1780, and they were followed by other Russian and foreign traders, who set up a number of commercial offices. The Kherson trade “was so extensive” during these years that Russian goods reached not only Istanbul and Greek ports, but “all ports of the Mediterranean” as well. Slovtsov and Vasil’chikov included an enticing register of imports: Viennese wines and wares shipped down the Danube; silk and shawls from Istanbul; tobacco from Salonika; resin from Chios; sweets, coffee, and macaroni from Trieste; Lyons silks, wines, perfumes, prunes from Marseilles. This trade was beneficial for the empire, they concluded, because it spurred the region’s agriculture and industry.

But the Kherson they found in 1802 was little more than Odessa’s “warehouse town.” It had never recovered from the war with Ottoman Empire that began in 1787,

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89 Slovtsov, “Pis’ma iz Sibiri,” Aziatskii vestnik (January-June 1825), 121.
90 On the growth of Black Sea trade see Mose Lofley Harvey, “The Development of Russian Commerce on the Black Sea and Its Significance,” (Ph.D. Diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1938).
which prompted traders to abandon the town, leaving behind, Slovtsov and Vasil’chikov reported, “only the burdens of war, which lasted some three years for the state, but far longer for commerce.” Like nearby Ochakov and Nikolaevsk, Kherson’s remaining commerce consisted largely of shipping goods to Odessa for export, as Odessa had the only remaining quarantine station on the Black Sea’s northern coast. Kherson did have a shipbuilding industry, but its poor timber supply, comprised of varied, often scrap, stocks rather than a uniform source, meant that “all Kherson ships, having gone a small distance, begin to leak.” If the town had more capital, they claimed, its cheap labor, good location, and abundant materials—better wood could be floated down the Dnieper—would make it the best shipyard on the Black Sea. They recommended that a quarantine station and merchant shipyard be built in Kherson and a bank in both Kherson and Odessa.⁹¹

What is most striking about Slovtsov and Vasil’chikov’s Black Sea dispatches is their attention to the human consequences of policymaking. They objected, for instance, to a plan to close a turnpike on the Strait of Kerch, which connects the Sea of Azov to the Black Sea. The Albanians and Greeks who lived there, they pointed out, lived by catching and drying fish to sell to ships passing through from Taganrog and would be ruined if the turnpike were closed. It was the duty of the state, Slovtsov and Vasil’chikov argued, to look out for these already poor people who had “left their homelands behind for the promise of free trade and now have no other homeland but here.”⁹²

This concern for human costs was at the heart of Slovtsov and Vasil’chikov’s most impassioned dispatch from the Black Sea. In a letter written in Slovtsov’s

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⁹¹ RGIA f. 13, op. 2, d. 556, ll. 26-33.
⁹² RGIA f. 13, op. 2, d. 556, ll. 40-41.
ponderous style, they begged the minister to give “a few moments” of his attention to “that salutatory house, where human life is entrusted to healthy wardship, where approaching death, it seems, is taken under a certain guard.” If, they added, this duty was not spelled out in Rumiantsev’s list of responsibilities as Minster of Commerce, “there is at least no doubt that it is mentioned among the duties of a Minister of Humanity (ministra chelovechestva).”93 The phrase is noteworthy: Slovtsov and Vasil’chikov believed it was the duty of the state to work actively to provide for its subjects’ safety, dignity, and wellbeing.

The subject of the dispatch was Odessa’s quarantine house. Protocol required that quarantine houses be surrounded by a ditch and bank and be built in elevated, open areas near water, yet at least one verst downriver from any settlements. Slovtsov and Vasil’chikov found “no sign” that Odessa authorities had “even thought” about digging a ditch or building a bank, while the location of the quarantine house in the very outskirts of town “sins against public health.” Moreover, because it was “built on, or to tell the truth, carved out of” the coast and situated between the sea and a steep, loamy bank, it became a moldy mess each spring when melting snow flooded it. Most offensive, however, was the quarantine house’s insufficient size. Its official capacity was twenty-four, but Slovtsov and Vasil’chikov watched as 150 Bulgarians (bolgar zadunaiskich) arrived and had to pile on top of the fifty people already lodged in the house. It was “impossible to imagine without tender sorrow,” they wrote, the lot of these people, who “having given up their homeland, need hospitality and a fatherland!” They lamented that

93 RGIA f. 13, op. 2, d. 556, ll. 44-47.
“small places” such as these go unnoticed in the “vast views of the government” and begged Rumiantsev to help them “justify” the hopes of settlers who had, after all, been invited to settle in Russia by the state in the first place.

The source of Odessa’s ills, they claimed, was—like so many problems in Russian history—a personnel problem. The inspector of the quarantine station was one Kiriakov, whose “unheard-of tortures, inhumanity, and torments” in his former post as police chief no Odessan had forgotten. Slovtsov and Vasil’chikov spared Rumiantsev the details (“the half of which we could not read without heartfelt emotion”). An investigation had supposedly been ordered, but “nothing is known here” of what came of it, and Kiriakov had since been appointed inspector of the quarantine station—a position in which, Slovtsov and Vasil’chikov noted ironically, “the law promises to place chinovniki of proven honor.” Kiriakov’s cousin, they added, was director of the customs-house, where he oversaw a similarly unimpressive operation.94

Rumiantsev received Slovtsov and Vasil’chikov’s final report in March 1803, and he was very pleased with its detailed and critical nature. It was, he declared, a true “feat” (podvig).95 He was especially impressed with Slovtsov. He praised Peter Andreevich’s “work and talents” in a private letter: “I cannot but express to you,” he wrote, “that your handling of the business entrusted to you reveals your renowned knowledge and compels me to seek an opportunity to use you for the good of the state in a way befitting your merits.” He wrote again two months later to inform Peter Andreevich that he had obtained permission to appoint him director (ekspeditor) of a bureau in the Ministry of

94 RGIA f. 13, op. 2, d. 556, ll. 44-47ob.
95 RGIA f. 13, op. 2, d. 556, ll. 118-121, 135.
Commerce chancellery with an annual salary of 2,000 rubles and stipend of 500 rubles for accommodations. Rumiantsev wrote again in May that the emperor expressed “special satisfaction” with Slovtsov’s work and, as a sign of his good will, had awarded Peter Andreevich a signet ring.\(^9^6\) It is not difficult to imagine Peter Andreevich reflecting on his radical sermon of a decade before and wondering whether he might have been wrong—that svet might indeed be capable of recognizing and rewarding the deeds of the “virtuous.”

In his new position, Peter Andreevich was one of the ministry’s key figures. His bureau oversaw matters relating to the empire’s foreign trade and the administration of its customs houses, and the attention he would later give in his works to commerce indicates that this was a time of great learning for him. Whereas at the seminary he and his friends had focused their thoughts on abstract questions such as the nature of virtue, in the ministry he began to study the empire as an economic organism.

His new position also provided a revealing vantage point on the many ventures that Rumiantsev was pursuing at the time. Having been one of the leading supporters of the Russian-American Company—Russia’s first joint-stock company—the minister now obtained imperial permission to create a new company based in Archangel to foster trade on the White Sea. At the same time, he was a leading figure in arranging the first Russian circumnavigation of the globe, intended to establish trade with China and Japan, found a settlement in California, and investigate the possibilities of trade with South America. The fleet—the first of some twenty-five circumnavigation voyages of

\(^9^6\) OR RNB f. 702, op. 1. d. 34, ll. 3-6. The file on Slovtsov’s appointment is RGIA f. 13, op. 2, d. 653, ll. 1-5.
Alexander I’s reign—left Kronshtadt under the lead of Adam Johann von Kruzenshtern in the summer of 1803, just months after Peter Andreevich took his new post.97

One of the more remarkable sights Peter Andreevich would have seen at this time was a Japanese delegation Rumiantsev hosted in 1803. Given that Japan remained a “closed” country, this was a very unofficial delegation, comprised of ten sailors who had washed up on the coast of Kamchatka in the 1790s and had since been living in Irkutsk (one of them teaching Japanese at the school there). Rumiantsev, having recently sent a mission to Japan which failed to gain permission to land, hoped to use these Japanese as a means to facilitate the establishment of trade relations with Japan. He convinced the emperor to bring them to St. Petersburg, hosted them at his mansion, and gave them a splendid reception. They were astounded by Rumiantsev’s “seven hundred servants” and the military maneuvers they watched at Tsarskoe Selo. “It seemed to us,” one wrote, “that either we saw it all in a dream or had been transported to some kind of new and enchanted realm.” Rumiantsev’s hope was that the Japanese, having received such warm treatment, would report favorably to their emperor upon their return and thereby incline him to rethink his refusal to allow trade with Russia. Alexander I received the men on May 16 in a personal audience. Because he wanted to see them in “their national costume”—impossible, given that their decade in Russia had worn away the clothes they were wearing when their ships wrecked—he paid one of Petersburg’s best tailors to make Japanese clothing per the sailors’ instructions. As had been promised before they left Irkutsk, Alexander fulfilled their wishes, paying to send four home to Japan and allowing

the remaining six to stay in Russia. Trade relations with Japan, however, did not follow.  

Among the affairs of “external” trade that fell under Slovtsov’s purview in the ministry was trade with the Chukchi. He was tasked, for example, with responding to an 1802 request of Fëdor Berezhkov, a third-guild merchant from Zashiversk in Irkutsk province. Berezhkov wrote that the Chukchi, who “to this day have not been made subjects of His Imperial Highness,” made an annual trip to the Angarka River to trade tusks and furs for tobacco, metal pots, and other items. In doing so, Berezhkov pointed out, the Chukchi brought no “profit whatsoever to the treasury of His Imperial Highness.” He requested that he be given a division of twenty-five men from either the military or Cossack commands in Zashiversk for “no more than a month” in order to collect “proper duties” from the trade. He would also, he promised, endeavor to make the Chukchi aware of “monarchical charity” and “incline them to become subjects of His Highness, to pay tribute like other peoples, and, on top of that, convince them to receive holy baptism.” After reviewing information on the Chukchi sent from the Senate archives, Slovtsov denied Berezhkov’s request. The amount of tribute was too insignificant to justify the potential trouble involved, he reasoned, especially considering that the Chukchi were as yet unwilling to become subjects of the emperor. And the very “sight of

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a military division,” even in the unlikely event that it exercised “extreme temperance,”
would likely “sow terror toward Russia” in the minds of the Chukchi.99

It was not, however, working with these more obscure cases that had the greatest
influence on Slovtsov. Rather, it was the ability to envision the empire as an organic,
interconnected whole, something he had to do on a regular basis in preparing the
ministry’s annual reports on the state of trade in the empire.100 Scholars have cited
Slovtsov’s preference for liberal economic ideas as evidence of opposition to state policy
in Siberia. But it is important to remember that he developed his ideas about commerce
while serving the state in St. Petersburg. The seminaries had served as his moral training
grounds; Rumiantsev’s ministry was his school on economics and Russia’s place in the
broader world.

“The New Summer of the Nineteenth Century” and Russia’s “Great Affair”

Peter Andreevich began his career at the Ministry of Commerce at a time of extraordinary
optimism in Russia. While Europe reeled from the effects of the French Revolution,
Russia, many contemporaries imagined, was overseeing an orderly process of progressive
change.

Much of this optimism was tied to the accession of the young Alexander I, whose
“freethinking” ideas were well-known. Thomas Jefferson wrote in 1802 that the
“apparition of such a man on a throne is one of the phenomena which will distinguish the
present epoch so remarkable in the history of man.” Jefferson recognized that

99 RGIA f. 13, op. 3, d. 806, ll. 1-4, 10-26. Other Commerce Ministry documents in Slovtsov’s hand
include RGIA f. 13, op. 2, d. 808 and RGIA f. 13, op. 2, d. 811.
100 See, for example, RGIA f. 13, op. 2, d. 1224.
Alexander’s challenge—to “devise and establish the means of securing freedom and happiness to those who are not capable of taking care of themselves”—was a “herculean” one (even the French, he lamented, had proven “incapable” of “self-government”). But Jefferson found “exalted pleasure,” he wrote to Alexander in an 1804 letter, in “observing the various acts of your administration.” “Sound principles, pursued with a steady step, dealing out good progressively as your people are prepared to receive and hold to it fast, cannot fail to carry them and yourself far in the improvement of their condition.”

Peter Andreevich later looked back on the beginning of Alexander’s reign, marked by sweeping reforms of central government institutions, as Russia’s “transition to modern ideas of monarchy.” Most exciting for him at the time were the personal opportunities—the “vistas” as he later called to them in a letter to Kalashnikov—that opened before him and his friends from the seminary at this time. Whereas the 1790s was a time of anguished debates about svet and the state, the decade that followed found the provincial seminarians playing leading roles in the central government.

Among the most noteworthy reforms of Alexander’s first years on the throne was the founding of the Ministry of Popular Enlightenment. Slovtsov would become the ministry’s most trusted agent in Siberia in the 1810s and 1820s, but in the meantime he had regular occasion to learn about its operations from his old friend Ivan Martynov, who from 1803 to 1817 directed the ministry’s main administrative organ. Martynov expressed his hopes for the ministry in the inaugural issue of his new journal, *Northern*

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102 PVT, 131 (“пerekhodom k sovremennym ideiám monárkh’”).
His article, “A Portrayal of the Enlightenment of Russians” opened with a claim emblematic of the optimism of the age: “Nowhere has the general enlightenment, that most pivotal national need, been the object of such care as in Russia today.” He had the long term in mind: “This tree, planted by the hand of Alexander, will extend its branches [...] and provide for many thousands of years shade for the good of the human race.”

Martynov’s optimism echoed that of Karamzin’s *Vestnik Evropy*, which made a similar claim about Alexander’s educational statute: “Peter the Great founded the first Academy in our fatherland, Elizabeth the first University, and Great Catherine the town schools, but Alexander, multiplying the universities and gymnasiums, says something more: *let there be light in the huts!*”

Speranskii provided Peter Andreevich another window on the operations of Alexander I’s government. He was the rising star of Petersburg’s bureaucracy during these years, and Peter Andreevich was one of the few people with unrestricted access to him. Others in their circle included Frants Tseier, a bureaucrat in the Ministry of Internal Affairs who had served with Speranskii and Slovtsov before and lived with Speranskii, taking care of his daughter after the death of Speranskii’s wife in 1799; Andrei Zherve, a key figure at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and author of the 1801 treaty with Napoleon, which he had travelled to Paris to conclude; Fedor Lubianovskii, a priest’s son from Poltava province who had studied at Moscow University and served with Speranskii at the Ministry of Internal Affairs; Arkadii Stolypin, a wealthy...

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pomeshchik from Penza province, who met Speranskii while serving at the General
Procurator’s office; Peter Masal’skii, a priest’s son from Iaroslavl’ who had taught with
Speranskii and Slovtsov at the seminary (and would later become Kalashnikov’s father-
in-law); and Mikhail Magnitskii, a bureaucrat in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs who had
studied at Moscow University (and would become an infamous figure in the history of
Russian education for his tenure as curator of Kazan’ Educational District—a position in
which he would be Slovtsov’s boss).105

At the time of Slovtsov’s return from the Black Sea, Speranskii regularly hosted
these friends at the home of one of Petersburg’s most remarkable characters: Vasilii
Alekseevich Zlobin. Speranskii knew Zlobin through his sister-in-law, who had married
Zlobin’s son in 1802 and lived at Zlobin’s together with Speranskii’s daughter and
mother-in-law. The son of an Old Believer peasant from Saratov province, Zlobin made
millions after being appointed tax-farmer of the distilleries there. He also oversaw
fisheries in Astrakhan, collected taxes on playing cards, supplied provisions to Moscow
and Petersburg, and managed the delivery of salt from Lake El’ton—the largest salt lake
in Europe—to twenty provinces. He claimed to have an income of 1,000 rubles per day.
Despite his enormous wealth, Zlobin maintained his peasant dress, walking about the

Maikov, “Andrei Andreevich Zherve: Biograficheskii ocherk,” Russkaia starina 92 (October-December
1777-1834,” (Moscow, 1872); On Stolypin and Masal’skii: Korf, Zhizn’ grafa Speranskago, I: 81, 84-85.
capital in caftan and full beard: “there was not,” it was said, “a single person [in the capital] who did not know him.”

One of the visitors at Zlobin’s during this time, the gossipy memoirist Fillip Vigel’, left a description of Speranskii’s circle both revealing of his own prejudices and suggestive of the ways in which Slovtsov and Speranskii might have seen themselves within Petersburg society. Speranskii’s circle was, Vigel’ claimed, a “business-like people” (narod delovoi) who talked only about profits and uniforms. Vigel’ suggested that this was why the women of the house—he was pursuing Speranskii’s married sister-in-law at the time—preferred his company. Speranskii treated Vigel’ well at first, leading Vigel’ to wonder whether Speranskii hoped to make him one of his “sayyids.” Sayyid is an honorific title given to men accepted as descendants of the Prophet Mohammed, and Vigel’s use of the term reflected a widespread revulsion among nobles of the growing influence of men of non-noble backgrounds like Speranskii and Slovtsov and the heretical religion of meritocracy they represented.

Vigel’ despised Speranskii, who had risen “from nothingness” to his influential position. Mikhail Mikhailovich was, he wrote, a “demon,” a “secret enemy of Orthodoxy” indifferent to “everything except himself and his creations”:

He did not like the nobility, whose scorn for his previous estate [sostoianie] he had experienced; he did not like religion, whose principles hampered his actions and opposed his vast schemes; he did not like monarchical government, which blocked his path to the very top; he did not like his fatherland, for he considered it insufficiently enlightened and unworthy of him. Secret foe of Orthodoxy, of autocracy and Rus’, and

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especially one of her estates [the nobility], he did not, however, hate them, contenting himself with the thought of their future fall, but not destruction.

If Vigel’ could not but share in the “general respect” for Speranskii’s abilities, he remained disturbed by what he saw: “it always seemed to me,” he later wrote, “that I could sense a sulphurous smell and see in his blue eyes the bluish flame of the underworld.”

Vigel’ believed that Speranskii’s circle represented a new force in Russia. “In the private study of Speranskii, in his drawing room, in his company,” he noted, “was spawned a completely new estate [soslovie], hitherto unknown, which, ceaselessly multiplying, it can be said, covers all Russia like a net: the estate of bureaucrats.” Vigel’ added that Speranskii sought to “ennoble civil service…by means of prosveshchenie” and thereby “rear on new principles a new generation of chinovniki.”

(Figure 5)

What Vigel’ found repulsive, Peter Andreevich must have found most attractive. Speranskii’s influence with the emperor, Martynov’s role in the Ministry of Popular Enlightenment, his own place in the Ministry of Commerce—these all could serve for him as evidence that the empire was moving in the right direction. Whereas he had long bemoaned the ignorance of svet and the influence of high-born, undeserving men, he could now see himself and men like him receiving the recognition he believed they deserved. The peak of his own fortunes came in 1807, when

107 F. F. Vigel’, Zapiski (Moscow, 1928), I: 167-75.
he was awarded the Order of St. Vladimir, fourth degree, at the recommendation of Rumiantsev. ¹⁰⁸

Peter Andreevich’s confidence in enlightened absolutism and its future in Russia found expression in two brief books he published in 1807: *A Word in Praise of Prince Pozharskii and Kuzma Minin* and *A Word in Praise of Tsar Ivan Vasil’evich*. The first he composed after seeing a preliminary sketch for Ivan Martos’ statue of Minin and Pozharskii,¹⁰⁹ soon to become one of the defining monuments on Moscow’s Red Square. In it Peter Andreevich looked back on the Time of Troubles from what he called “new summer of the nineteenth century.” It was, he claimed, the way that that the nobleman Prince Pozharskii cooperated with the commoner Minin that saved Russia: “Nature, it seems, created the one closer to the throne and the other nearer the peasant’s hut expressly so that, guided by the minds of all estates [soslovi], they could work with all the more vigor for the general good.”¹¹⁰

The second book took up the theme of monarchy. Ivan the Terrible, according to Slovtsov, deserved praise for the harsh way in which he dealt with Moscow’s leading boyar families (the svet of the sixteenth century). Peter Andreevich defended the infamous tsar against charges of tyranny: “In those days, when the majesty of autocracy had been insulted by the pretensions of haughty boyars and had lost value in popular opinion, could the usual measures be sufficient for curbing an unenlightened people?

¹⁰⁸ OR RNB f. 702, op. 1, d. 6, ll. 7-10.
¹⁰⁹ Kuzma Minin was a merchant and Dmitrii Pozharskii was a prince who together organized and led the volunteer army credited for pushing Polish-Lithuanian forces out of Moscow in 1612. The event helped bring to a close the “Time of Troubles” between the death of the last Riurikid tsar in 1598 and the election of Mikhail Romanov in 1613.
¹¹⁰ [P. Slovtsov], *Pokhval’noe slovo kniaze Pozharskomu i Kuzme Mininu* (St. Petersburg, 1807), 5, 16-17.
Forgive me, Russians, for calling your ancestors unenlightened, but they were no better than other European peoples.” He also praised Ivan’s expansive foreign policy: “In those days Russia was threatened by as many hostile peoples as she now can count as her subjects. Their names no longer frighten us, now that the wisdom of our monarchs has scattered them, transformed some into our compatriots, and repelled the rest into the wilds of Asia.” The “current space” of the empire, he claimed, was the “realization of [Ivan’s] thoughts.” The growth of Russia under Ivan “promised Europe an insurmountable bulwark against new Attilas, Alarics, and Odoacers” (“Where have those mighty scarecrows that stood between Russia and Asia gone?”). The conquest of Siberia, meanwhile, did not happen by chance, but was also the “realization” of monarchical will: “The glory of the white tsar was a miraculous force that passed through like lightning. With the fall of Kazan’ its thunder resounded beyond the Urals, distant hordes were struck dumb, and in trepidation they dreamed of Ivan’s right hand.” Finally, Peter Andreevich praised what he saw as Ivan’s “attention to commerce—an attention truly rare in that century,” which he claimed found reflection in the tsar’s attempts to expand the borders of the empire and create ports for its goods. The recent expansion of Russian trade and circumnavigation of the globe, Slovtsov suggested, were feats whose lineage could be traced back to the expansion of Russia’s overseas trade under Ivan, when Russia first began “to sense in her gigantic composition a life-giving ferment.”

More than anything else, Peter Andreevich’s idiosyncratic reading of Ivan’s reign was born of his growing confidence in the power and utility of paternal, autocratic rule

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111 [P. Slovtsov], Pohval’noe slovo tsariu Ioannu Vasil’evichu (St. Petersburg, 1807). Quotations from 12, 28-30, 54-59, 67.
and his optimism about Russia’s future. He closed the book with a reflection on his own roots and an argument about what he called Russia’s “great affair” (*velikoe delo*):

An inhabitant of the Urals, a witness of the unusual sights with which nature covers herself there, accustomed to looking on the wild heights, on the sharp cliffs, on whirlwinds, lightning, and rising hills, I have been carried away by the rising sun when it mingles rays and shadows through the irregular mountain ridge—an inhabitant of the Urals, I would judge the age and affairs of Ivan with a sympathetic impression […]. I would inscribe on the foot of Ivan’s statue a sweet inscription: *He imposed his strong arm on arrogant Hordes, prepared the people to be great, and thought to gather under one scepter the scattered Slavic tribes who were of the same brood as Russia [slavenskiia kolena, Rossii edinoplemennyia].

Russians! Peter I and Catherine II acted according to his plan; and when their sacred successor [Alexander I] finishes the great affair, Ivan will then remain IV [and, thus, no longer be called “terrible”].”

With the last line, Peter Andreevich suggested that Ivan “the Terrible,” whatever his faults, deserved praise for inaugurating Russia’s “great affair”: the enlightenment of Russia through an active, paternal ruler who works for the good of his subjects regardless of the objections of *svet*. The ruler’s agents in that affair were, of course, *chinovniki* like Peter Andreevich and his friends.

It was in state service, then, that Peter Andreevich found a meaningful place for himself in Russia’s “great affair.” He looked back on the peak of his fortunes in 1807 years later in a letter to Kalashnikov: “You should distinguish yourself in the field of civil service, from which I was expelled by foul weather, and to this day I cannot manage to forget completely the perspective that opened before me in my day.”

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113 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 100, ll. 25-25ob. (8 September 1821).
“Foul Weather”

What did Peter Andreevich mean by “foul weather”? Kalashnikov learned more details when he received his deceased mentor’s papers in 1843, but his understanding of the event remained colored by his heroic image of Slovtsov. Ivan Timofeevich blamed “fate” for his hero’s fall: “A brilliant future,” he wrote, “had opened before Slovtsov. Count Rumiantsev, a powerful man, was enraptured by him; Speranskii, at that time already having entered into the tsar’s trust, was his friend and comrade, and his talent and knowledge brought him enormous renown. He had much to dream about, much to hope for… and suddenly a terrible blow again came down over his head and again he was in exile”¹¹⁴ Nikolai Abramov, a Tobol’sk teacher who would spend much time with the elderly Peter Andreevich, blamed Slovtsov’s fall on the envy of those around him.¹¹⁵

Perm’ teacher Fëdor Priadil’shcikov even made the extravagant claim that Slovtsov was a sacrifice offered to preserve Russia’s relations with Napoleonic France. According to the 1807 Treaty of Tilsit, Russia was obliged to join Napoleon’s Continental System and implement an embargo against British trade. Many Russian officials, however, secretly warned British merchants in advance of the treaty’s publication so that they might take measures to limit their losses. When Napoleon’s ambassador demanded an explanation, Russian diplomats, Priadil’shcikov claimed, resorted to their “usual trick” in such situations: they created a false investigation, blamed two chinovniki from the Ministry of Commerce, and exiled them to Siberia. Because

¹¹⁴ ZIZh, 401.
¹¹⁵ N. A. Abramov, “Petr Andreevich Slovtsov.” In PVT, 182-83.
Slovtsov was a significant figure, Priadil’shchikov surmised, his fall would appease the angry French ambassador.\textsuperscript{116}

The reality was rather less dramatic, even though the case’s outcome would leave Peter Andreevich a Siberian exile for the next twenty years. The investigation began in December 1807 when Riga officials confiscated a letter from Matvei von Gedenshtrom (Matthias von Hedenstrom) to his boss, one Boriskovskii, inspector of the customs house at the Baltic port of Libava. The letter revealed that Boriskovskii had bribed Ministry of Commerce officials into appointing him to lucrative inspector positions at a number of Baltic customs-houses. When the emperor was informed of the affair, he ordered that Gedenshtrom be arrested and brought to St. Petersburg “without any publicity.”\textsuperscript{117}

Gedenshtrom, arrested within days, immediately confessed. He explained that he and Boriskovskii met while serving in Riga as translators for the Governor-General. Boriskovskii gave him much financial assistance and, when Boriskovskii left Riga in 1806 for a post as customs-house inspector in Iurburg, he hired Gedenshtrom as his secretary. What Boriskovskii did not reveal, Gedenshtrom claimed, was how he had obtained this new position. Boriskovskii had petitioned the Ministry of Commerce for the post, but when he met with no success, one Stratinovich, who claimed to have connections in the ministry, offered to use his influence to obtain the post for Boriskovskii. Boriskovskii was soon appointed inspector not only of the Iurburg customs house, but of those at Libava, Vindava, and Riga as well. “What he paid for these I don’t know,” Gedenshtrom explained, “but I think not a little.”

\textsuperscript{116} IRLI f. 265, op. 2, d. 3961, ll. 12ob.-13.
\textsuperscript{117} IRLI f. 1286, op. 54, d. 69, ll. 1-12, 21.
Gedenshtrom learned about these dealings in early 1807, when Boriskovskii sent him to Riga to find Stratinovich—in town from Petersburg—and request that he visit Boriskovskii in Libava. Unaware of their connection when he arrived in Riga, Gedenshtrom soon learned all when Stratinovich called Boriskovskii “ungrateful” and told Gedenshtrom to tell his boss that, if he wanted to keep his posts, he should send him more money. Stratinovich added that, if Boriskovskii paid up, he might also be “given” the Revel’ and Pernov customs houses.

Apparently untroubled to learn of his boss’ corruption, Gedenshtrom now served as Boriskovskii’s messenger in his illicit dealings. Boriskovskii sent him to Petersburg with 15,000 rubles to pay Stratinovich for an order in the minister’s name giving him control of the customs houses. Stratinovich produced a copy of the order, the original of which he claimed had already been sent to Boriskovskii, for which Gedenshtrom paid him and then returned to Libava. But Boriskovskii not only never received the said order, but instead received a formal letter of rejection. He had not, apparently, met the asking price. He borrowed another 5,000 rubles, sent them to Stratinovich, and was in turn appointed inspector of Revel’ and Pernov. Uncertain how to proceed, he again sent Gedenshtrom to Petersburg to see how things stood. Stratinovich received Gedenshtrom coldly and informed him that he was challenging Boriskovskii to a duel because the latter had compromised him and sent little money. Suspecting that Stratinovich’s anger was a ruse, Gedenshtrom concluded that Boriskovskii was Stratinovich’s “toy.” Instructed by Boriskovskii to find a new connection, Gedenshtrom turned to one Panin, an employee at
the ministry. “Six weeks I lived in Petersburg,” Gedenshtrom confessed, “and I gave some 7,000 rubles in cash and gifts to Panin—and obtained nothing.”\(^{118}\)

Such was the state of affairs at the time of Gedenshtrom’s arrest. Boriskovskii fled abroad, never to return. Stratinovich was arrested, found guilty of serving as the “direct instrument of Boriskovskii in his illegal actions,” and “seducing chinovniki” on Boriskovskii’s behalf. His testimony substantiated the accusations against Panin, whom he claimed to have paid “not less than ten thousand” to obtain the positions for Boriskovskii. When Panin was arrested, he was accused, in addition to receiving the money from Stratinovich, of extorting gifts—English razors, French tobacco in a golden box, madeira, wines, cognac—and 6,000 rubles cash from Gedenshtrom.\(^{119}\)

And Peter Andreevich? His connection to the affair was less clear. He was arrested on January 7, 1808, following the testimonies of Stratinovich and Panin. Stratinovich claimed to have given him, “as best as he can remember, 7,000 rubles,” whereas Panin claimed to have given him 2,000 of the 6,000 he had extracted from Gedenshtrom.\(^{120}\) No record survives of what Slovtsov supposedly did on their behalf in return for this money, and Peter Andreevich denied any wrongdoing. Brought before his two bosses for the past decade, Rumiantsev and Kurakin—the latter now Minister of Internal Affairs—he cited his modest lifestyle as proof of his innocence. After “much persuasion,” however, he admitted that he had received money from Panin, but only on loan. He provided a more detailed explanation after being placed under house arrest:

\(^{118}\) IRLI f. 1286, op. 54, d. 69, ll. 19-21
\(^{119}\) IRLI f. 1286, op. 54, d. 69, ll. 104, 115ob., 139ob.
\(^{120}\) IRLI f. 1286, op. 54, d. 69, ll. 104, 139 ob.
My awakening today was so extraordinary that I could hardly stop my involuntary tears. I stopped them only because maybe in the next forty years of my life I will have time to sob sufficiently. And so I have already measured in my imagination all that is threatening me and have decided to write and declare:

The slander made against me by […] Stratinovich I declare to be a lie. The testimony of Court Councilor Panin I confirm because from him I received 2,100 rubles and another 400 that he took into account against my former debt to him. […] I believed that this money came from Boriskovskii and [I received it] in the sincere belief that I was not obliging myself to perform anything in my service duties in return. Never and not for anything have I twisted the law or my conscience in the line of service, not for pleasure, and not for favors or gifts. […]

The justice of the law does not frighten me; the justice of conscience is more frightening. It has found me guilty and that is already enough. Just execute the lawful form quickly and hasten to receive the Sovereign’s confirmation.

I am ready for anything because God in his mercy gives me the strength to hear the ruling about me.121

The question of Slovtsov’s guilt came down to his word against those of Panin and Stratinovich. Gedenshtrom had never met Peter Andreevich, of whom he had heard only from Stratinovich, who told him that Slovtsov was a “misanthrope who has no access to anyone and is himself very difficult to access.” Slovtsov, to the best of Gedenshtrom’s knowledge, “did not enter into this affair” and had “no occasion to be useful [in it]” because another employee at the ministry was in charge of Rumiantsev’s papers.122

As a result of Gedenshtrom’s testimony, Stratinovich’s claim against Slovtsov was dropped. An account Slovtsov gave of the case twenty years later made clear, however, that he had benefited from his acquaintance with Stratinovich. Panin, he claimed, had introduced Stratinovich to him as landowner (pomeshchik) from Ekaterinoslav province. Stratinovich occasionally treated Slovtsov to entertainments

121 IRLI f. 1286, op. 54, d. 69, ll. 48-50, 124-26.
122 IRLI f. 1286, op. 54, d. 69, ll. 137, 139.
(приятством) and loaned him money, noting merely that he hoped Slovtsov would do the same if their economic situations were reversed.\textsuperscript{123}

The question in 1808 was whether the money Slovtsov received from Panin was a bribe or an innocent loan. After being detained “like a criminal” for a month, Slovtsov wrote to Kurakin. “What is my crime, I finally dare ask you, kind sir? Can it really be that I borrowed 2,500 rubles from Panin?” Rumiantsev pointed out that Panin—whose 1,200-ruble salary was less than Slovtsov’s\textsuperscript{124}—was in no position to make such a loan. Slovtsov’s response—that he had borrowed from Panin in the past—dodged the issue. Slovtsov tried to claim that his actions, however they might appear, were sensible the context in which they were taken:

> When this entire scene [the case] was revealed, when all circumstances and words were observed with rigor, in a natural confusion of feelings and all ideas, I judged myself to be guilty. […] But if you will allow me to note here that Boriskovskii and I were scarcely acquainted, that he never asked me about anything, and that I never did anything for him; if, on top of that, I knew that he was an old friend of Panin, and was by [Panin’s] approval appointed inspector, bypassing me, though matters of this type pertain to my office; that he even sent his reports, which I happened to see, in letters written in Panin’s name, who presented them personally to the Minister of Commerce in person; if in all of this there was no secrecy; if even the Minister himself more than once deigned to praise Boriskovskii in my presence, then I don’t know what it will please your Illustriousness to do on account of my morality if I borrowed money from Panin, knowing that it belonged to Boriskovskii.

> I know only that I have served the SOVEREIGN in good faith and justly, of which my conscience is testimony enough…

\textsuperscript{123} OR RNB f. 702, op. 1, d. 11, l. 113.
\textsuperscript{124} RGIA f. 13, op. 2, d. 1224, ll. 74-75.
It was not “indulgence” that he now sought from Kurakin, Slovtsov explained with a favorite image, but judgment befitting Kurakin’s duties as a “minister and a human.”

Kurakin and Rumiantsev found Peter Andreevich guilty. They believed Panin provided “ample evidence” against Slovtsov’s claim that the money was an innocent loan. As punishment, Slovtsov was banned from serving in the ministry to “prevent further temptation,” but because his “talents and abilities were well-known,” he was to continue his career in the chancellery of the Governor-General of Siberia (with the proviso that he was forbidden from leaving Siberia). Panin, in view of his youth and remorse, was sent to his family’s estate. Boriskovskii, who had fled abroad, was to be tracked down and exiled to Tobol’sk. Stratinovich was exiled to Tomsk “forever.” Gedenshtrom, after an attempt to convince Kurakin to make him special investigator of official corruption—he had had, he pointed out, “sufficient occasion in the course of my life to learn nearly all means by which people in service and not in service seek to improve their fortunes”—was also sent to serve in Siberia, where he soon found himself surveying the banks of the Arctic Ocean.

Slovtsov was released from house arrest on February 5, but he did not set off for Siberia for months. He claimed to have fallen ill, and Rumiantsev gave him permission to remain in Petersburg during his recovery. He may well have been sick: he had written earlier that he was in despair over the “loss of my good name, which was my only acquisition” and described his health as “utterly ruined.” More likely, he wanted to buy

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125 IRLI f. 1286, op. 54, d. 69, ll. 100-101ob.
126 IRLI f. 1286, op. 54, d. 69, ll. 42-44, 115-123ob. Gedenshtrom, who Speranskii and Slovtsov would both meet again in Siberia, published an account of his Siberian experiences as M. Gedenshtrom, Otryvki o Sibiri (St. Petersburg, 1830).
127 IRLI f. 1286, op. 54, d. 69, l. 257.
time, hopeful that Speranskii—now the emperor’s closest advisor—might come to his rescue. But his letters went unanswered, and he set off for Siberia on May 5. He finally received a response after his arrival in Tobol’sk:

We [here in Petersburg, Speranskii wrote] philosophize, while merciful Providence has nominated you to act: Be his loyal and harmonious instrument. Man truly joins the Son of God [...] and shares in the honor of the Deity, when he joins the will of God with the submission of his will. [...] And besides, the Kingdom of God is near: In the million centuries that remain for us to live, our current life is a mere flash—how can one distinguish the years, months, and days? How can one find in this abyss the distance that separates Siberia from Petersburg?\(^\text{128}\)

Vexed as he must have been with such abstractions, Peter Andreevich held out hope. His opportunity came at the end of the year, when Governor-General Pestel’—overlooking the fact that Slovtsov had been expressly forbidden from leaving Siberia—returned to St. Petersburg and sent Peter Andreevich ahead of him with his chancellery, instructing Slovtsov to wait for him in Novgorod.

Slovtsov again wrote to Speranskii, and again he was disappointed. “Everything that happens with us,” Speranskii wrote, “cannot be tallied within normal human reckonings. Your path is a special one, and Providence guides you in his own way completely.” When it became clear that Peter Andreevich would have to return to Siberia, Speranskii wrote to his “dear martyr” and urged him to “abandon all designs and expect nothing, desire nothing, and think about nothing except about the One.” Any “other consolations”—by which he meant intervention with the emperor—Speranskii

claimed to be unable to provide. He also urged Peter Andreevich to abandon talk of losing his mind (the “fare of vanity, and nothing more”).

Although he would eventually reconcile with Speranskii, Peter Andreevich was angry with his old friend and would never stop believing that he had let him down. “God be with him!” he said of Speranskii while on his deathbed, “I forgive him for everything he did for me, and for everything that he did not do, but could have done!” When Speranskii was himself exiled from Petersburg just a few years later, he wrote to Slovtsov, insisting that he “never forgot” about his friend, and that he had done all he could “toward the restoration of your standing.” He tried to convince Slovtsov that all the rumors Peter Andreevich might have heard about his influence over the emperor were “utterly false”: he had, he explained, “some trust in public and state matters, but none in private ones” (as evidence of which he pointed to his own downfall).

Peter Andreevich would never see St. Petersburg again. But his time there had changed him. He left the imperial capital believing that his superiors had failed him—maybe even imagining that, to return to his favorite refrain of the 1790s, the man of virtue had been crushed by the men of svet. But however embittered he was when he left Petersburg, he had internalized many of its values. Once an outspoken critic of Russian monarchy, a youth frustrated by the empire’s social inequalities and expansive foreign policy, he had become one of its apologists, a convinced and enthusiastic participant in its “great affair.” Once a poorly-clad popovich from the Urals, he had become a

gosudarstvenyi chelovek—a man of state—clothed in a fine uniform and draped with medals that proclaimed his diligent service.

But let’s leave him and his medals, for now, alongside the road to that shale cliff in the Altai, and see what was happening at his ultimate destination: Irkutsk.
CHAPTER THREE:

Nachal’niki, Nastavniki, Namestniki

I profoundly respect Treskin. He was a genius administrator. Of course he acted despotically; but such were the times, such was the spirit. It is necessary to transport yourself to his times—to crawl into his skin and see how things were in those days. The savagery [dich’] was utterly horrible.

-Nikolai Bulatov, 1869

There were ill-starred times even in our fatherland, when the degenerates were in a state of bliss and the virtuous perished. Thank God these terrifying times are long forgotten; even stories about them are now considered to be fables, for the two generations of the current century, old and new, were born and came of age under a wise and gentle government.

-Ivan Kalashnikov, 1834

In 1813, while Peter Andreevich made his circuitous journey toward the empire’s eastern frontier, a sixteen-year-old copyist at the Irkutsk Treasury Chamber daydreamed about, to use a modern phrase, what he would be when he grew up. Vaniushachka, as family and friends called him, had no doubt as the answer to that question: like his father and brother before him, he would be a chinovnik, a servant of the emperor.

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1 Nikolai Bulatov was an Irkutsk chinovnik who began his service career during the tenure of civilian governor Nikolai Treskin (1808-19). His recollection of his experiences during this time is “Raszkaz Nikolaia Bulatova (D. S. S.; zapisan 15 fevr. 1869 g.)” in Istoricheskie svedeniia o deiatel’nosti Grafa M. M. Speranskago v Sibiri, s 1819 po 1822 goda, ed. V. Vagin (St. Petersburg, 1872): I: 569-574. Quotation from 572; DKBZhRP, 455.
Excitement at the thought of becoming a career bureaucrat might strike modern sensibilities as strange, but it made sense to Vaniushachka. He had grown up in an Irkutsk that was undergoing sweeping change at the hands of an activist, paternalistic government. Much of this change, such as the 1805 founding of Irkutsk’s gymnasium where Vaniushachka studied, was fueled by the same optimism that had prompted Slovtsov to call these years the “new summer of the nineteenth century.” And 1813 was a particularly poignant year for optimism: even in remote Irkutsk people had eagerly followed news about the tsar’s campaign against Napoleon’s armies, and news of the Grande Armée’s flight from Russia produced enormous joy.2 Vaniushachka celebrated the event by writing a poem on the “banishment of the enemy from Russia.” His father, “enraptured” by his son’s poem, noted proudly that Vaniushachka had impressed many around town, including the vice-governor, who made him a gift of five volumes of poetry and looked upon this copyist of his at the Treasury Chamber more favorably.3

Shortly thereafter, Vaniushachka, who had served as a copyist since he was eleven, learned that he was to receive his first rank in the civil service. Delighted, he pulled out a family notebook and, over and over again, sketched his uniform-clad self and proudly tried out his new signature: Collegiate Registrar Ivan Kalashnikov.4 (Figure 6)

Kalashnikov would identify with his role as an imperial servitor throughout a long career of fifty years. For many of these years he had an exacting mentor in Slovtsov, for whom he worked as a scribe after Peter Andreevich arrived in Irkutsk in 1814.

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2 ZIZh, 209-10.
3 TPK, 182.
4 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 232, inside cover.
Kalashnikov saw Slovtsov as the ultimate *chinovnik*, a selfless enlightener who uplifted the empire’s benighted subjects through example, exhortation, and exacting execution of his duties. In his work first as director of Irkutsk schools, and then as *vizitator* (inspector) of Siberian schools, Peter Andreevich fulfilled what he and Kalashnikov saw as the three critical roles of the enlightened servitor. He was the good *nachal’nik*—the enlightened and caring, yet firm chief. He was the ideal *nastavnik*—the mentor and role model, eager to set those less well endowed with enlightenment on a more proper path. Finally, he was the trusty *namestnik*—the reliable deputy, eyes and ears of the emperor in a remote region where decisive, lawful, and judicious action was critical.

But if Slovtsov would prove to be Kalashnikov’s most influential role model, Ivan Timofeevich, as his excited rehearsal of his new signature suggests, had been prepared in advance for state service. His friendship with Slovtsov is the subject of the next chapter; this one will use his memoir and that of his father to explore the Irkutsk world into which he was born.

Irkutsk province was the empire’s *samyi otdalennyi krai*—its “most remote region”—and educated Russians and the central and local governments had little reliable information about its vast expanses. Irkutsk was far from Petersburg’s oversight—five
thousand verst as the crow flies, many more by muddy roads—and this distance was an enabler of prodigious bureaucratic malfeasance (“God is high above and the tsar is far away,” as the proverb went). But as the memoirs of both Kalashnikov and his father illustrate, it was also a place in which the ideals of imperial enlightenment could prove compelling. In scrutinizing their lives and the words they wrote about them, this chapter highlights the paternalistic nature of Russian provincial government, in particular the ways in which roles of “chief” (nachal’nik), “mentor” (nastavnik), and “deputy” (namestnik) intertwined on the imperial periphery.

Kalashnikov and his father saw their lives transformed by officials who blended these roles, and their faith in the efficacy of active, paternal rule offers a revealing perspective on the realities of life in the empire’s provinces. Ivan Timofeevich grew up during the tumultuous governorship of Nikolai Treskin (1808-19), famous in the historiographical literature as a paradigmatic example of provincial proizvol5 at its most extreme. To be sure, Irkutsk province during Treskin’s tenure was awash in the “green-collar crime” endemic to provincial government offices across the empire (a problem immortalized in Nikolai Gogol’s Inspector General). Given the empire’s overwhelmingly rural nature, its vast distances, its poor roads, and its sparse, population—not to mention the meager salaries of its officials and the deficit of educated people from whom to recruit them—there were few provincial locales that were not plagued with this problem.6

5 Arbitrary tyranny or despotism.
6 The phrase “green-collar crime” (a reference to the green uniforms provincial officials wore) is from S. Frederick Starr, Decentralization and Self-Government in Russia, 1830-1870 (Princeton: Princeton
But Treskin’s tenure was remarkably complex for educated Russians who lived through it. Kalashnikov sharply criticized the arbitrary, personal nature of Treskin’s rule—but he did so with major reservations. He believed that Treskin acted with the best intentions, recognized that he faced a daunting and exhausting task in governing the vast province, and concluded that, in the end, Treskin’s rule was as remarkable for the unprecedented order, safety, and development it brought to Irkutsk and Irkutsk province as for any of its shortcomings. Treskin’s active rule, in other words, found a place in the narrative of paternal, state-led progress that defined Slovtsov and Kalashnikov’s vision of Russian and Siberian history. A little proizvol, they implied, was sometimes necessary to make a mark on an unenlightened land and move ahead with Russia’s “great affair.”

Timofei’s Tale

Ivan Timofeevich Kalashnikov was born on October 22, 1797 in Irkutsk. Founded in 1661 to collect tribute from the Buriat and Evenk tribes around Lake Baikal, Irkutsk gradually emerged as the empire’s most important eastern outpost. It was the administrative center of a province of breathtaking proportions, stretching from the Enisei River in the west to the Pacific Ocean in the east, and from the Arctic Ocean in the north to the Russo-Qing frontier in the south—a place, in other words, the size of Europe and

“European Russia” taken together. “This,” Peter Andreevich wrote to Ivan Timofeevich in 1822, “is a *derzhava*, not a province.”

Kalashnikov’s first stories about the vast expanses that lay beyond Irkutsk came from his father, Timofei Petrovich Kalashnikov, a *chinovnik* at the Irkutsk Treasury Chamber. Timofei Petrovich was born in 1762 in Nerchinsk, a remote town situated roughly one thousand versts east of Irkutsk. His service career took him around much of the province—to Buriat and Evenk camps, to peasant villages, to Nerchinsk’s penal labor mines—and the tales he told shaped how his son, who sometimes accompanied his father on these tours of duty, understood the world around him. Timofei’s tales also provided the future novelist with a rich source base from which he would craft the plot of his first (and the first) Siberian novel: *The Daughter of Merchant Zholobov: A Novel Based on Irkutsk Legends.*

An equally fitting, if less catchy, subtitle for that novel could have been *A Novel Based on My Father’s Papers*. Timofei Petrovich was an extraordinary character, a fact immediately apparent in the sheaf of manuscripts—diaries, errant notes, descriptions of dreams, correspondence, service papers, and more—he left behind when he died in 1828. Almost certainly at his request, the family sent these papers to Ivan Timofeevich, who had by that time had started his own family in St. Petersburg. In them Ivan Timofeevich found abundant material for his novels. For the last year of his life, for example, Timofei Petrovich diligently maintained a daily diary on all things Irkutsk—a diligence that his

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7 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 101, l. 10ob. (2 February 1822). *Derzhava* can refer to a “power,” or state, as well as the orb that symbolizes monarchical power.

8 I. Kalashnikov, *Doch’ kuptsa Zholobova: Roman, izvlechenniy iz irkutskikh predanii* (St. Petersburg, 1832).

9 These are IRLI f. 120, op. 1, dd. 174-201.
son caricatured in his novel *Automaton*, in which Timofei Petrovich’s character does not fail to make a his daily entry even for his final day on earth: “the 17th, Death.”

Maybe most remarkable among Timofei’s papers is his 1794 memoir, an introspective and free-ranging tale that Timofei gave the following title: “The Life of Unrenowned Timofei Petrovich Kalashnikov from the years 1762 to 1794, described in simple style.” It is worth examining closely not only because it was the key source behind Ivan Timofeevich’s first novel, but also for the perspective it offers on how Ivan Timofeevich first gained a sense of the past and of the world around him. Its themes—the progress of enlightenment, the positive role of the state and its servitors in guiding that progress, and the importance of individual nachal’niki, for good and for ill, in governing Siberia and shaping individual lives—would prove central to Ivan Timofeevich’s worldview, and they offer striking evidence of the degree to which many of the ideas at work in Catherine II’s reign reached even the most distant of the empire’s provinces.

What is most remarkable about the memoir is that Timofei Petrovich wrote it at all. He knew, as he explained in its first lines, that there was something highly odd about an “unrenowned” man such as himself committing his life story to paper. The exercise was one of self-discovery. Written on his birthday in 1794, Timofei’s tale was his attempt to explain what he had achieved in his thirty-two years on earth, to make sense of

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10 *DKZhRP*, 543.

11 The memoir is IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 195. It was published in 1904 as T. P. Kalashnikov, “Zhizn’ neznamenitago Timofeia Petrovicha Kalashnikova prostym slogom opisannaia s 1762 po 1794 god.” *Russkii arkhiv*, kn. 3 (1904): 145-183. Hereafter TPK.
a family history about which he knew frustratingly little, and to leave his progeny with the account of their family roots that he sorely lacked:

I myself know that my ancestors were of simple origins, and the same goes for my father; consequently, it is superfluous that I have wished they would have left behind something on paper for me to remember them by; but that is what I have desired, and my descendants will forgive me for this weakness, so long as God blesses me with them.¹²

What little Timofei did know about his ancestors was that, socially, they were a motley crew—peasants, Cossacks, meshchane, and servitors, a number of whom had served in forbidding Anadyrsk and Kamchatka. But beyond such basic facts, he explained, he had to make do with mere “stories” (razskazami) that “little satisfied my curiosity.” He recalled that his father had at one time sent the family a few letters that might have offered more insight, but these, he noted ruefully, had been lost, left to his brother Grigorii (“who, though older than me, didn’t even know the letter A”).¹³

Although Timofei called himself “unrenowned,” he believed that he had accomplished much in his thirty-two years that set him apart from his ancestors. It was for this reason that he decided to “leave something behind on paper” for his children. The product was a tale of progress, an occasionally incredulous reflection on his emergence from the darker, coarser world of “those days” (togda). The latter phrase appears throughout the text, typically to mark what Timofei saw as a growing gulf that separated the world of his adulthood—its material, educational, and social realities—from that of his youth.

¹² TPK, 147.
¹³ TPK, 147-50
That youth began in Nerchinsk. Founded by the Cossack Peter Beketov 1653, Nerchinsk was the empire’s most far-flung administrative center along on the Russo-Qing frontier. It was a key collection point for tribute from native Evenk and Buriat peoples, site of the 1689 treaty with the Qing that defined the empire’s southeastern border into the mid-nineteenth century, and home to the empire’s most infamous penal mines. It was also a dreadfully poor, ramshackle settlement. Its original name—Neliudskii Ostrog, or “Peopleless Fort”—captured the hardships that poor soil, low population density, and distance from supply centers inflicted on its residents. Often unable to feed itself, Nerchinsk, like many Siberian outposts, relied on imported grain and often suffered miserably as a result (in the 1740s famine and epidemics killed some 75% of its population). One visitor to the town in the 1790s described Nerchinsk as the “very worst in the entire Russian empire”: “All” of its buildings, he reported, were “dilapidated and rotten,” many of them lacking roofs. This was a town, he concluded, “comprised almost solely of decay.”

When Timofei Petrovich looked back on his childhood in this inauspicious place, he could not help but conclude that he had been destined for greater things than Nerchinsk could offer. As would his son, Timofei sought to endow his life with a broader narrative frame. Take, for example, his description of his birth:

On this day today I am already 32 years old; my date of birth, the 13th of February (on Wednesday during Cheese week\textsuperscript{15}), is particularly notable—even my illiterate mother probably distinguished it from the rest—for on this very day the town of Nerchinsk, my native home on the rivers Nercha and Shilka, which flows to the Eastern Ocean, had the honor of receiving, via special courier, joyous, and at the same time sad news: joyous because Emperor Peter III had ascended the throne, yet sad because the benefactress beloved by all subjects Elizabeth Petrovna had passed away at the end of the year 1761 during Christmas. The news was announced by a ringing of the bells at an unusual afternoon time. And so it was, on this day—and at the very time of the bell-ringing—that I came into the world in order, my Lord, to live and to die, but with hope—life’s balsamic wet-nurse \textit{pitatel’ nitsa}—of resurrection.\textsuperscript{16}

In opening his memoir by citing a special connection between his personal fate and that of the empire at large—and by doing so on a note of hope—Timofei Petrovich contrasted his story with those of his family and ancestors. They, he implied, had lived and died in obscurity, whereas he had the good fortune to embark on a service career that saved him from a similar fate.

The world of Timofei’s childhood was indeed an unpromising one. His parents, Orina Iakovlevna Muromova and Peter Prokop’evich Kalashnikov, married after each had lost a spouse. Peter Prokop’evich worked as a scribe in town, but, Timofei later learned, “he didn’t much look after the house or after us” and “was prone to getting drunk (How do you hide that which is known to all?).” Worse, just months after Timofei’s birth, Peter Prokop’evich abandoned the family to serve in Irkutsk, never to return. Aside from the (very) occasional package, Timofei’s mother received no support from her

\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Syrnaia nedel’ia}, Cheese week—\textit{Maslenitsa}—is the week before the beginning of Lent. Orthodox Christians are forbidden to eat meat during this week, which is the last week in which they can consume dairy products.

\textsuperscript{16} TPK, 147.
husband. To get by, she and her daughters baked bread and pirogis, which they sold alongside the onions, hops, and cucumbers they grew in their vegetable garden. Timofei and his older brother Grigorii, meanwhile, delivered hay, wood, and bread around town. Making ends meet became more difficult when Timofei’s older sisters married (both unhappily, one destined for what her brother called “the most severe tortures” from her husband). The family had a cow, but no horse, and their little house (domishko) that abutted the town palisade, Timofei wrote, was decrepit to the point that it was “dangerous.” Winters often left Timofei and his brother shivering (about something as warm as fox fur, he explained, they “could not even dream”). But relatives from nearby villages did help the family out, furnishing firewood, beef, and salt when they could. Timofei’s uncle Afanasii, a Cossack at Tindansk Fortress, also provided Chinese tea and fabric, likely acquired in illicit trade with Mongols across the border (uncle Afanasii would have been more useful had he not drank so much, Timofei explained).17

In addition to describing his inauspicious beginnings, Timofei made the broader claim that the entire world of his childhood—the world of “those days”—was a coarse, unforgiving one that contemporaries in 1790s Irkutsk might find difficult to imagine. He described the countryside between Nerchinsk and Irkutsk as a particularly cruel and untamed place. When his father left for Irkutsk in 1762, he explained, family and friends would have seen him off in the customary way:

This trip, it is true, was no more than 1,000 versts, but in those days it seemed farther than Moscow or Petersburg do today; and how could it not, when roads had not been built at all and there was only mud, swamps,

17 TPK, 149-154.
dense forests, carnivorous beasts, and devilish brigands? Consequently, people mourned those who, like him, left for Irkutsk just as they would someone they never expected to see again.

Timofei’s father never did return, dying six years after he left Nerchinsk. His family learned of his death only six months after the fact—“No sooner than half a year later! That’s how fast the post was in those days!”—but they never found out how Peter Prokop’evich had died. They assumed he had met an ugly end because, Timofei emphasized, he had lived in “harsher times,” when “misfortunes” were “all the more likely to happen.” Timofei’s mother claimed to have been visited by haunting specter of her husband on the day of his death: “She lay down to sleep in the barn and had just dozed off when she saw standing over her a man, covered in bloody wounds, who kissed her very coldly.” Timofei tried to learn more about his father and find his grave when he himself moved to Irkutsk in 1782, but, after failing to turn up any leads, he was left with only his mother’s grisly vision.¹⁸

The difference between “those days” and the age in which he became the reflective memoirist, Timofei believed, was especially apparent in matters of education. His son found this difference so striking that, when he read his father’s memoir while writing The Daughter of Merchant Zholobov, he could not help but conclude that his father’s contemporaries had had more difficulty acquiring basic literacy skills than his own children would have learning astronomy.¹⁹

¹⁸ TPK, 147-50. ¹⁹ DKZhRP, 7.
Timofei’s course of study was indeed rudimentary. At age seven he was “turned over” to “old man Ivan Ivanovich Pochekunin,” whom his mother paid fifty kopecks to teach Timofei the Church Slavonic alphabet over the course of seven days. One could hope for no better then, Timofei pointed out, because the state “had not yet managed to spread its intentions about upbringing and instruction” (vospitanii i nauchenii). For a textbook Timofei used an old Book of Hours his mother managed to obtain for him: “the poor woman, I don’t know where she managed to wheedle such a worn Book of Hours that had neither a beginning nor an ending, no cover, and a jacket [sewn] from hat trimmings.” Pochekunin suggested that Timofei also study the Psalter, but Timofei’s mother considered such an idea “excessive.” She could not afford to buy another text, Timofei explained, and learning from one book was in any case sufficient by the standards of “those days.” As for his teacher, Timofei remembered him fondly. Pochekunin caned Timofei “only twice,” and then not for poor performance, but because domestic chores made him late for lessons (“I was an honorable shepherd of my calf,” which, Timofei explained, Nerchinsk boys liked to beat). Timofei noted with regret, however, that Pochekunin “did not bother to teach me to write with exactly the letters that had been written for a hundred years or a bit less.” He had in mind the civilian script, introduced by Peter I in 1708, which he learned only after finding “good people” to “give him over” to the chancellery of the Nerchinsk voevoda to complete his training.20

20 TPK, 151. The voevoda was both a civilian administrator and military leader in district towns in pre-Petrine Russia. In the eighteenth century voevody were purely civilian officials, and their chancelleries, located in district towns, were the main loci of administration in the provinces until Catherine II’s provincial reform of 1775, after which power was concentrated in the hands of provincial governors. See Yaney, Systematization, 54-55; George V. Lantzeff, Siberia in the Seventeenth Century: A Study of the Colonial Administration (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1943), 47-61. On voevoda chancelleries...
It was his work as a civil servant that was to provide Timofei with his most significant education. “June 16, 1772,” he proudly recalled, “is a renowned day in my life, the day on which I entered service in the Chancellery.” Ten years old at the time, he shared his first copyist post with four other boys. The salary—93 kopecks per “third,” per, that is, four months of work—was meager, but Timofei recalled that he was more than proud to receive it (“a great sum for me!”). So too was his mother, who set about sewing her son a new frockcoat of Chinese fabric so that he might look more presentable on the job. Timofei spent most of his time in the position copying letters for the voevoda and his “comrade,” a task that helped him, among other things, sharpen his spelling skills (he learned the difference between the letters “щ” and “ш” because his boss pulled his hair for confusing them).

Working for the voevoda also gave Timofei Petrovich the opportunity to learn about the world beyond Nerchinsk. His first “voyage” (voiazh) as an imperial servitor came when he accompanied the voevoda on an inspection tour of “affluent” (zazhitochnykh) Buriat and Evenk villages on the Aga River. Such trips, Timofei explained, were a source of income for Nerchinsk chinovniki: “Things were good for the former voevoda” he noted, “he would get the Tungus [Evenk] or Buriat drunk, give him a few shreds of cloth, a jar of tobacco, or a brick of tea, and they would give him a horse or two, a cow, or something.” Timofei profited too, returning to Nerchinsk from his first “voyage” with a new black sheepskin. Beyond the extraction of resources, however,


21 TPK, 151-52.
Timofei offered little idea as to what such excursions actually achieved. This limited vision of governance that his stories suggest stands in striking contrast to the activist administration under which his son would grow up in Irkutsk. Another “voyage,” this time to the village of the Evenk Prince Pavel Alekseevich Gantimurov—who had travelled to Moscow to participate in Catherine II’s Legislative Commission of 1767, and whose family’s loyalty had long been a bone of contention between the Romanov and the Qing empires—Timofei found most memorable because Gantimurov and the voevoda got drunk and nearly shot one another.22

Administrative changes made in St. Petersburg sharply affected Timofei Petrovich’s fate, bringing him in 1776 to the newly established provincial capital of Verkhneudinsk (now Ulan-Ude), and then in 1782 to Irkutsk. Administrative shakeups often had wrenching consequences for the families of chinovniki, and it is not unlikely that some, like Timofei, came to look upon their nachal’niki as father figures not merely because such a pose was part and parcel of the paternal ideology of the imperial state, but also because service separated them from their families while they were still boys. For Timofei’s mother—who attempted to bribe Timofei’s superiors into leaving her son in Nerchinsk by offering them a sheep—her son’s departure came, like his father’s fifteen years before, as a heavy blow: “What a seeing-off, what tears, what sobbing!” Timofei

22TPK, 154-55. On Russia’s relations with the Qing Empire and issue of the Gantimurov clan’s subjecthood, see Mark Mancall, Russia and China: Their Diplomatic Relations to 1728 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971).
recalled, explaining that, as they had his father, his family “mourned” him as though he had died.23

It was in Verkhneudinsk that Timofei began to develop the image of the good, paternal nachal’nik that would remain a staple of his and his son’s worldviews. Catherine II’s provincial reform of 1775 consolidated the administration of the Transbaikal region—the lands once administered by Nerchinsk and Selenginsk voevody—by creating a new provincial chancellery in Verkhneudinsk. In charge of the newly-created province was a group of men Timofei Petrovich called the “the three Ivans”: the voevoda, his “comrade,” and the procurator, each named Ivan. When he wrote his memoir in 1794, Timofei believed that the region’s administration had improved much since his youth, and he found it striking in hindsight that the government of such a vast region—“in a word, all of the residents beyond the sea [Lake Baikal], excluding those attached to the Nerchinsk factories”—had been left to military men who had not “served with the pen, but only with the rifle.” But if Timofei found two of the Verkhneudinsk Ivans unimpressive, he was captivated by the third, voevoda Ivan Vasil’evich Teviashov. Although Teviashov, Timofei explained, “had never dealt with papers before, he lived an austere life, was endowed with sound judgment, consistent reasoning, […] and industriousness, and with quick steps he delved into all aspects of the administration.” Teviashov was, in other words, Timofei’s model nachal’nik. Timofei was particularly impressed that Teviashov, having served in the artillery at Tsarskoe Selo, was “a man known by the empress” and even had an order written in Catherine II’s hand.

23 TPK, 155.
“I, for the first time in my life,” he reverently recalled, “was honored to see the hand of the empress.”

Serving the good nachal’nik was central to Timofei Petrovich’s sense of self. He later looked back on his early career and compiled a proud list of “Nachal’nki, under whom I served.” It was Teviashov who would, like Peter Andreevich for his son decades later, exercise the most decisive influence to improve Timofei’s lot. Teviashov, Timofei explained, “needed a man like me for his correspondence” and “accepted me and loved me such that I have been his loyal secretary ever since.” Timofei Petrovich cited his relationship with Teviashov as the source of much of his subsequent success: “Maybe it was because I was always in his sight and with him almost permanently—and because I was not without work—that I kept myself in order and acquainted myself with paperwork” (poznakomilsia s bumagami).

If Teviashov provided Timofei Petrovich a model of the good nachal’nik, Vasilii Naryshkin, appointed director of the Nerchinsk mines in 1775, provided the foil. By the time Timofei Petrovich wrote his memoir, Naryshkin had become a famed figure in Siberia. After arriving in Nerchinsk, he locked himself up like a monk for a year and then proceeded to indulge in a spree of wildness shocking even by Siberian standards, indiscriminately distributing ranks, throwing enormous drunken feasts with treasury money (and throwing, literally, fistfuls of cash to crowds of astounded townspeople and villagers), and travelling to Buriat and Evenk camps in order—through bribes and booze—to win converts for Christ and create armed regiments from their numbers. The

24 TPK, 156-7
25 TPK, 156-7, 183.
official investigation of Naryshkin’s actions concluded that, contrary to his duties as nachal’nik, Naryshkin “sought to tempt unenlightened hearts”—an aim explicable only as “madness and utter lunacy.”26

Naryshkin’s reign of folly left an enduring impression on Timofei—and on his son, who made it one of the central events of *The Daughter of Merchant Zholobov* and a symbol of provincial abuse of power at its messiest. Timofei became closely involved in the affair when a Buriat taisha (prince) fled Naryshkin’s men for the voevoda’s office in Verkhneudinsk. Teviashov instructed Timofei to work with the taisha’s interpreter to write an account of Naryshkin’s deeds. The voevoda also sent daily reports on the affair to the Irkutsk governor, who took no action, possibly because the Nerchinsk mines lay outside of his jurisdiction. Given the governor’s failure to act, Timofei explained, it was left to Teviashov to play the role of the conscientious namestnik and act judiciously, yet decisively and independently, to bring the affair to a successful conclusion. When Naryshkin eventually arrived in Verkhneudinsk—and beat violently on the town gates as he called Teviashov’s men thieves and rebels—Teviashov managed to calm him long enough to place him under arrest. In doing so, Timofei suggested, Teviashov successfully averted a potential siege and an uprising from “the people” (*narod*), who had streamed into town in hopes that Naryshkin would again be throwing away money.27

Timofei described working for the good, paternal nachal’nik as a transformative personal experience. As he made himself useful to Teviashov, his material circumstances

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27 TPK, 158-64.
improved. Six months after his transfer to Verkhneudinsk, he began to receive a higher salary that enabled him to bring his mother and brother to town and provide them—by comparison with their circumstances in Nerchinsk—with a life of luxury, well stocked with brick tea, omul,28 beef, and bread. Being in Teviashov’s company, Timofei explained, also refined his conduct. He began “to live a life completely unlike my former one,” attending “large assemblies” (sobraniiia), drinking tea “every morning,” and “dining with the masters [s gospodami] every day.” He described the voevoda’s treatment of him as fatherly. Teviashov promoted him, he explained, in order to “give me an incentive toward honor so that I would become in time a man” (sdelalsia so vremenem ia chelovekom). When he fell ill, Teviashov visited daily. And when he made an imprudent joke about a fire at the office, Teviashov decided to teach him a lesson and caned him—“not too harshly,” Timofei explained, “but genuinely, to be sure, which is the fatherly thing to do.”29

Timofei’s position as the voevoda’s man made him a sought-after bachelor in Verkhneudinsk. “I was already around 17 then,” he wrote, “and, I say, girls [devushki] thought it an honor to seek my affections.” Once again, the good nachal’nik was there to help arrange Timofei’s life, standing in for Timofei’s father at his wedding in 1779. And when the first years of the marriage proved difficult for his new wife, Anna Grigor’evna—Timofei’s mother now drank “terribly” and treated her new daughter-in-

28 A whitefish species of salmon endemic to Lake Baikal.
law abominably—Teviashov intervened and urged Timofei Petrovich to stand up for his wife.  

In late August 1782—at the very time that Peter Andreevich was preparing to recite his ode in Tobol’sk—Timofei Petrovich, Anna Grigor’evna, and their two new daughters moved to Irkutsk. Like Tobol’sk, Irkutsk had been made the center of a new _namestnichestvo_, and its _chinovniki_ were making preparations for a grand opening ceremony. Teviashov left Verkhneudinsk ahead of Timofei. He had been appointed to Irkutsk’s new Treasury Chamber, where was to oversee tax-farming on state salt and alcohol monopolies, and he arranged to have Timofei appointed to serve under him as an accountant. When Timofei arrived in Irkutsk, he recalled fondly, Teviashov was there, waiting to receive him “like a father.”

Timofei Petrovich began his memoir on a note of rootlessness, describing a boy who knew little about his ancestors and could find scant affection—and less education—in his family milieu. If he had managed to make something of himself, he suggested, it was because of the family and education that state service had provided. He found in service not only work and remuneration, but something more. His tale offers a reminder that, although the empire’s provincial administration is justly famous for inefficiency and flagrant abuses of power, remote government offices were also scenes of human dramas—places where a boy could, at least on occasion, could find a paternal role model in his _nachal’nik_ and satisfy vital emotional needs for human contact, belonging, meaning, and purpose.

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30 TPK, 175-77.
Ivan Timofeevich’s Tale

Ivan Timofeevich also wrote a memoir about the world of his youth. When he penned his Notes of an Irkutsk Resident in the early 1860s he was a sixty-year-old man at the end of a long career in service that had taken him far from Irkutsk, much as Timofei Petrovich’s career had taken him far from the cruel world of his Nerchinsk childhood.

But the basic themes of his memoir—the vast differences between “those days” and the present, the importance of active nachal’niki, and his personal debt to one of the latter—echoed remarkably closely those of his father’s tale.32

Ivan Timofeevich’s beginnings were, however, more auspicious than his father’s. Whereas Timofei had been born in dreary Nerchinsk, Ivan Timofeevich was born in Irkutsk, which by the turn of the nineteenth century had emerged as one of the empire’s

most pivotal cities.\textsuperscript{33} A critical administrative center, Irkutsk had over the course of the eighteenth century become the key distribution point for the empire’s expanding trade with China. The China trade enabled many Irkutsk merchants to amass vast fortunes and influence. One visitor to the city, impressed by its well-stocked market, noted that it seemed as if one could find everything among its stalls “except bird’s milk.”\textsuperscript{34} The city’s population swelled together with its fortunes, reaching approximately 20,000 by 1820.\textsuperscript{35} Irkutsk was also the headquarters of the Russian-American Company, which oversaw Russian settlements and trade in Alaska and the Pacific Northwest. Speranskii, reflecting on the linkages between Irkutsk, China, and the New World, wrote to his daughter in 1820 that “Siberia is the true fatherland of Don Quixotes. In Irkutsk, there are hundreds of people who have been to Kamchatka, the Aleutian Islands, and America with their wives and children, and all of them talk about these things as though they were typical affairs.”\textsuperscript{36}

But if Irkutsk was fast becoming one of the empire’s crucial cities, Kalashnikov remembered the town of his childhood as a place of unenlightenment. Irkutsk’s built environment, he explained, did little to suggest that this was a vital imperial city.

Although its more than 2,000 buildings made Irkutsk large by provincial Russian standards, it had the look “more of a dirty little district town—even a big village—than of

\textsuperscript{34} M. Aleksandrov, quoted in Kudriavtsev and Vendrikh, \textit{Irkutsk: Ocherki po istorii goroda}, 70.
\textsuperscript{35} Dameshek, \textit{Irkutsk v panorama vekov}, 48.
\textsuperscript{36} M. M. Speranskii, \textit{Pis‘ma k docheri} (Novosibirsk: Novosibirskii gos. universitet, 2002), 155.
the capital of Siberia.” State surveyors had made numerous plans to give the city a facelift. One stunning watercolor map of 1790, for example, is crisscrossed with bold red lines to denote the thoroughfares that would cut through the chaotic tangle of Irkutsk streets. But these were so many paper dreams.\(^{37}\) Irkutsk, Kalashnikov wrote, “paid no attention” to plans; its ornate wooden houses, wholly unlike the “regular,” neoclassical ideal then in vogue, preferred either to lean forward, “as though trying to see what was happening in the streets,” or hang back in their yards, “as though seeking to retire from the noise of the town.” The result, another Irkutian recalled, was a town that “did not resemble anything” and was filled with *kultuki*—blind alleys. There was such an “abyss” of the latter that “You didn’t even think about going anywhere on a dark night—you would bang your head on a fence or a wall where completely didn’t expect it. Day and night, not only the visitor, but even the local could get lost.”\(^{38}\) Irkutsk was also, in Kalashnikov’s words, a world of “never-drying mud” where cows wandered freely, dogs roamed in packs, and rains left streets impassable and town squares submerged under “boundless,” waterfowl-covered puddles. Ivan Timofeevich remembered how children tore off their boots while walking home from school to play in the latter, which their landlocked “childish imaginations” transfigured into “something like a sort of ocean.” The entire Irkutsk “scene,” he wrote, was “consummated” by “thousands” of tall well

\(^{37}\) The 1790 map is RGIA f. 1293, op. 168, d. 3, l. 1. On urban planning in Irkutsk, see B. I. Ogly, *Irkutsk: O planirovke i arkhitekture goroda* (Irkutsk: Vostochno-Sibirskoe knizhnoe izdatel’stvo, 1982).

levers that were built from tree limbs and towered over Irkutians’ vegetable gardens like giant storks.\footnote{ZIZh, 191, 194.}

More than most of the empire’s towns, Ivan Timofeevich explained, Irkutsk was subject to the vagaries of the natural world. On winter’s coldest days—those of what Irkutians called the “scorching” (paliashchii) frost—temperatures regularly dipped below negative forty degrees Celsius. At such times, the cold split wooden beams and one had either to wear “enormous bearskin boots” or “bid farewell to your feet.” Such intense frosts exacerbated the near-annual flooding of Irkutsk’s main river, the Angara. The unusually fast current of the Angara—the only river to empty Lake Baikal, the world’s largest lake—inundated the town with scores of giant ice floes from Baikal (shuga, as Irkutians called them). These often obstructed the river at the sharp bend at which Irkutsk was located and jeopardized its poorly maintained wooden embankment. When the Siberian Governor-General requested funds in 1814 to repair the latter, he warned that, without a major reconstruction, the Angara might break through and “make itself a new channel right through the center of town.”\footnote{RGIA f. 1285, op. 8, d. 643, ll. 1-4; on shuga see DKZhRP, 125-27.}

What Ivan Timofeevich found most menacing about Irkutsk’s natural situation, however, were the earthquakes. Minor quakes were a near-annual event, but three major ones (1804, 1809, and 1814) he never forgot. Irkutians were anxiously awaiting the 1809 quake when it struck in the middle of the night on February 14, he noted, as it had been preceded by a strong sulfurous smell that left the town air “asphyxiating.” The 1814 quake lasted so long that Ivan Timofeevich managed to run out into the street and
complete a number of genuflections as he prayed for his safety. “Meanwhile,” he recalled, “all of the buildings surrounding our house creaked and shook. A terrifying scene—a more frightening one can hardly be imagined!”

Irkutians found some solace from such reminders of nature’s supremacy in faith. Kalashnikov described Irkutsk as an intensely religious place. The “entire town,” he recalled, took part in religious processions, however cold the weather. Especially popular was the annual procession on the twenty-first of May, when Irkutians accompanied the revered Kazan’ Icon of the Mother of God to the village of Kuda, some twenty versts north of the city. There they followed the icon through the peasants’ fields as they prayed for good weather and abundant harvests. Kalashnikov’s description of the piety of Irkutians, to be sure, is laced with a heavy dose of nostalgia, written as it was by an old man spooked by the philosophical challenges of modernity and looking back on a simpler world: “The religious spirit,” he noted wistfully, “penetrated all hearts equally. Freethinking was foreign to the town, with very few exceptions—two, three persons, who the entire town knew of and considered mad.”

But Ivan Timofeevich’s nostalgia for the mores of old Irkutsk had its limits. Irkutsk, he explained, was a place where the “daybreak of enlightenment was only just beginning.” In other words, superstition reigned. Particularly remarkable among Irkutians, according to Kalashnikov, was a “fervent” belief in house spirits—susedki, as Irkutians called them. On the evening before a child’s baptism, Irkutians “guarded” their homes by inscribing crosses on their doors with chalk or coal. “Shrewd old women,”

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41 ZIZh, 198-99; RGIA f. 797, op. 1, d. 2556, l. 1.
42 ZIZh, 195-96.
meanwhile, baked special treats to appease one particular spirit that, it was said, liked to
choke people in their sleep. Irkutians also believed, Kalashnikov wrote, in “every sort of
omen.” An owl landing on one’s house portended death. The great comet of 1811-12,
meanwhile, created a great stir: having followed the progress of Napoleon’s campaigns,
Irkutians interpreted the fire in the sky as a sign of Russia’s impending doom. Like
provincial towns throughout the empire, Kalashnikov concluded, Irkutsk remained
“submerged in deep superstition in all branches of learning.”

Ivan Timofeevich, in sum, looked back upon the Irkutsk of his youth as a
benighted world. But he also cited two broad major forces of improvement that he saw at
work in the city. The first of these was the institutionalization of system of public
schools. Whereas his father described the haphazard training he had received in
Nerchinsk as the best that could be hoped for “in those days,” Ivan Timofeevich grew up
in the first years of Alexander I’s reign, when the state took unprecedented steps to create
a unified, ladder-system of public schools. Kalashnikov believed that, although the
schools founded in Irkutsk during these years “endured great vicissitudes,” they
nevertheless sent “rays of enlightenment” into the “depths of the darkness” of old Irkutsk
that gradually “penetrated and drove away the gloom of ignorance.”

Much of what struck Kalashnikov about the Irkutsk schools of his youth was
novel. Eighteenth-century Irkutsk did, however, have a range of educational institutions.

From the 1720s onward, priests’ sons could attend classes at the city’s Voznesenskii

\[43\] OR RNB f. 588, fol. IV, no. 814, vol. 2, ll. 3-6, 22-23, 330, 388-91. See also [Ekaterina Avdeeva],
_Zapiski i zamechaniiia o Sibiri_ (Moscow, 1837), 53. For a broad study see W. F. Ryan, _The Bathhouse at
Midnight: An Historical Survey of Magic and Divination in Russia_ (University Park: The Pennsylvania
State University Press, 1999).

\[44\] OR RNB f. 588, fol. IV, no. 814, vol. 2, l. 23.
Monastery, which prepared them for positions in churches around the province and, less regularly (and with less success), attempted to teach them Mongolian, Chinese, and Buriat for missionary work. Ecclesiastical education became more institutionalized after 1780, when the Irkutsk seminary opened—four decades after the founding of the seminary in Tobol’sk (many of the teachers at Irkutsk’s seminary—those not so fortunate as Peter Andreevich—were graduates of Tobol’sk seminary). In the 1740s, the state opened a school to train small numbers of students for maritime service along the empire’s eastern seaboard, offering classes on subjects such as geodesy, cartography, and navigation. Educational opportunities further broadened at the end of the century. Irkutsk’s governor Frants Klichka founded a secular “town school” (gradskaia shkola) in 1781 and, like other provincial cities, Irkutsk saw the opening of a two-year primary school (maloe narodnoe uchilishche) and five-year high school (glavnoe narodnoe uchilishche) at the end of the decade. The primary school taught reading, writing, arithmetic, and moral education, while the high school offered a broader program that included natural history, physics, geography, architecture, history, and Latin. It also offered, very briefly, Chinese, Mongolian, Manchurian, and Japanese.45

The high school boasted an impressive library. Among other items, including a large collection of Chinese books, there was a complete edition of Diderot and d’Alembert’s Encyclopedie, a gift from Catherine II (purchased for 2,000 rubles—the same amount as the annual budget of the Tobol’sk seminary at the time). Attached to the

library was a museum of sorts, with models, machines, and various curios collected throughout the vast province: a birdskin parka from the Aleutian islands, a sea lion’s throat, a mammoth’s skull, and so on. Also on display was an impressive assemblage of shells and minerals that Alexander I purchased from the widow of Erik Laxmann, a renowned natural scientist and member of the Academy of Sciences who died in 1796.46

As was the case across the empire, however, it was the first years of the nineteenth century that were especially pivotal for Irkutsk schools. Alexander I founded a Ministry of Popular Enlightenment to direct and expand his empire’s nascent school system; divided the empire into six educational districts (okrugi), each headed by a university; and placed those universities in charge of a three-tiered system of schools that, at least on paper, were open to all estates: one-year parish schools, two-year district schools, and four-year gymnasiuims. Irkutsk’s gymnasia, district school, and parish school opened in 1805, and over the next six years five more district schools would open in the province. Very few parish schools—the weak link in the educational reform, as their support was left largely to individual villages—opened in the province before 1816, when Slovtsov and Treskin brought a new zeal to the undertaking (see chapter 4).47


Ivan Timofeevich began attending Irkutsk’s primary school in 1802, and he joined the first class at the district school when it opened in 1805. The following year he entered the gymnasium, which, he remembered, was well run in its first years and staffed by impressive teachers trained in St. Petersburg.48 He began his service career as a copyist at the Treasury Chamber in 1808, but he continued to attend classes at the gymnasium and eventually completed its entire course in 1813, when he was sixteen years old. Surviving records suggest that he was a successful pupil. An 1806 roster, for example, describes him as a top student in his class, well behaved, of “sharp” capabilities, and with a solid attendance record (he missed seven of 226 class meetings for the school year). His personal archive also contains a number of pokhval’nye listy—certificates of commendation—from the gymnasium administration that he not only took with him to Petersburg in 1822, but kept safely preserved for his entire life.49 (Figure 8)

As his careful preservation of such documents suggests, studying at the gymnasium was important to Ivan Timofeevich. Most notably, it provided him with a broad training, the likes of which his father could hardly have imagined while dividing his time between Pochekunin and the ill-starred family calf. The gymnasium curriculum

48 ZIZh, 393.
49 NART f. 92, op. 1, d. 135, ll. 30-34; IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 139, ll. 6-9ob.
at the time Ivan Timofeevich attended included history, natural history, geography, mathematics, Latin, French, German, Latin, drawing, and mythology. Scattered notes suggest that Timofei Petrovich enjoyed seeing his sons study at the gymnasium—and that, indeed, he enjoyed learning about their subjects himself (he toyed, for example, with writing in German, and liked to sign his signature in Latin characters: “timofei calashnicov”). Most parents, however, were less interested in sending their sons to the gymnasium, as the basic literacy that they sought could be obtained at the parish and district schools or from private tutors (in 1809 the city police knew of 23 such teachers who taught roughly 150 pupils—at a time when the enrollment in Irkutsk’s three public schools was 159). Of the 31 pupils at the gymnasium when Ivan Timofeevich started there in 1806, nearly all (26) were the sons of state servitors of various types. The district school, which focused on the more practical reading and writing skills that more parents sought, had a more diverse student body, with half of the 46 students in its two classes coming from other social groups (mainly the meshchane and merchantry, but also a few sons of peasants and household servants).

In completing the entire course of study at the gymnasium, Ivan Timofeevich acquired a liberal arts education of which he was proud. No less significant, however, was that the time he spent there helped him form the optimistic vision of Russian history he would cultivate for the rest of his life. This vision was on display in bold colors at the gymnasium’s opening ceremony of November 12, 1805. On that day, teachers, town

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50 RGIA f. 733, op. 39, d. 103, ll. 11-14; RGIA f. 733, op. 39, d. 115, l. 8. See also Koreisha, Irkutskaia gimnaziia, 68-78; Aleshintsev, Istoriia gimnazicheskago obrazovaniia, 13-55.

51 NART f. 92, op. 1, d. 135, ll. 12-14, 31-34.
chinovniki, and leading townspeople participated in a grand procession behind the city’s revered Kazan’ Mother of God icon—the same one at the center of the annual harvest procession—through the center of town, after which Bishop Veniamin blessed the building and pupils with holy water and the school building was illuminated for all the town to ponder.52

The elaborate ceremony, designed to convince wary Irkutians of the importance of sending their children to school, featured grand speeches on the significance of education to Russia’s past, present, and future. After a reading from Alexander I’s education statute, the mathematics teacher Stepan Bel’shev delivered a speech that urged parents to make their children “useful to society.” This was a task, he argued, that parents were unequipped to complete alone. It was the “holy duty” of parents to keep their children well-fed, warm, and away from “hard drinks;” to repay a “tender smile with a thousand tender kisses;” and to send for a doctor when necessary (to raise children better than “the good peasants” raise theirs, Bel’shev summed up). But parents also, he insisted, had a duty to recognize that they must eventually entrust their children to “enlightened” people:

It’s a pity that children’s first years are spent in ignorance. The child is around stupid and unknowing people and he receives the most absurd notions and ideas, which sometimes remain in his head forever—or require much effort to destroy. Moreover, the more absurd the idea, the stronger it impresses the mind of the child. Therefore I consider it my duty to advise parents to monitor those people to whom they entrust their children so that they do not entertain them with empty stories, fairytales, cock-and-bull stories, and other rubbish. They, in entertaining the children, ruin their brains. […] Ach, if only mothers were more

52 RGIA f. 732, op. 1, d. 162, ll. 379-81; Koreisha, Irkutskaia gimnaziiia, 11-15.
enlightened, much of this foolishness would disappear and we would make a great step toward enlightenment.

Bel’shev explained, of course, that there was no place better to protect children from “foolishness” than at Irkutsk’s new schools. He added that he received complaints about the gymnasium “every day”—about, presumably, the broad curriculum that most parents considered superfluous. But Bel’shev considered these unworthy of attention, for he believed they ran against the tide of history: “To speak to the pig-headed is in vain. Time will teach them, much as [it will] our stupid raskol’niki.” Irkutians, he continued, needed to take up enlightenment with the same “bravery” that Russians “in previous centuries made themselves glorious on the banks of the Dnieper, the Dniester, and the Danube.” And to do so, he concluded, was a matter of existential importance. Europe’s “wealth, commerce, and power in all parts of the earth” had proven the necessity of enlightenment for a country to remain powerful—“in the current state of the world, woe to that people who takes it into its head to fall behind in enlightenment, its ignorance will of necessity sooner or later pay tribute to the skill of another.”

After Bel’shev finished, the history and geography teacher Efim Florinskii delivered a speech that claimed that enlightenment was what had made Russia “Russia” in the first place. The gymnasium, he explained, was a “nursery” built to grow “worthy members of society.” In doing so, he claimed, it carried on a great affair that could be traced back to Grand Prince of Kiev Vladimir I (r. 980-1015). When “nearly all of Europe was blanketed with the gloom of ignorance,” he proclaimed, Vladimir initiated

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53 “Schismatics,” or Old Believers.
54 “Rech’ uchitel’ia Bel’sheva,” in Koreisha, Irkutskaiia gimnaziia, 15-23.
the process of raising Russia to the level of an “educated nation” (*obrazovannoi natsii*) by “extracting his people from the darkness of pagan superstition” when he adopted Orthodox Christianity for Rus’. Florinskii tied Vladimir’s undertaking to Alexander I’s educational reforms, suggesting (fancifully) that Vladimir founded many schools to teach children Russian literacy and Christianity—even as the children’s parents, “wallowing in ignorance,” “grumbled” against him. Florinskii concluded with a paternal image:

Incomparable MONARCH, great ALEXANDER! To you alone has been granted to make greatness in all things! Soon, soon the streams of enlightenment will overflow the entire breadth of YOUR dominion, and in this great family YOUR fatherly heart in the sweetest rapture will collect a tribute of the purest love and gratitude from children who have come to know the beauty of truth because of YOU!

He then turned to Kalashnikov and his peers and summoned these “fortunate children” to “perfect your capabilities in service of the Fatherland and thereby become loyal, enlightened, and dear progeny of the most dear MONARCH and meek Father of the Fatherland.”

In exhorting Irkutsk parents to take part in Russia’s great affair by giving their children over to the school for improvement, Bel’shev and Florinskii acted as *nastavniki*. The Russian term can be translated as “tutor” or “mentor,” but it also carries the stronger meaning of one who directs another toward a new path. While the teacher’s ebullient language was standard fare for proclamations of the time, it was also meaningful to many who heard and spoke it. Indeed, both Kalashnikov and Slovtsov would use similar

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language throughout their lives—publicly and privately—when they referred to Russia’s historical course.

It was also the sort of language that Ivan Timofeevich would have heard in his father’s house. Timofei Petrovich was fully convinced of the importance of giving his sons a school education. His memoir and surviving notes about the progress of their studies make clear that he took great pride in offering his children an education that had not been available to him in Nerchinsk. He even wrote a letter to Florinskii to thank him for his work and to request additional lessons for Ivan Timofeevich’s older brother, Vasilii.56

Ivan Timofeevich was the seventh of Timofei Petrovich’s eight children with his wife Anna Grigor’evna. About her we know almost nothing, as she died when Ivan was six and his papers contain no description of her. He was their youngest surviving child, four of his siblings having died in infancy. Extant letters and notes suggest that Timofei was a caring father, loved by his children. Their deaths were clearly difficult for him, and he remembered all of their birthdays and days of passing when he later compiled a “map” of his life’s most significant events. About the 1794 death of his three-week-old son, also named Timofei, he noted sadly that he “buried him alongside Fedin’ka,” a two-year-old toddler who had died eight years earlier (“1786, June 13th. Son Fedin’ka passed away because of a tumor in the throat (burst open June 3rd, from within”).57

No death was more painful for Timofei Petrovich than that of his eldest son, Vasilii. Born in 1790, Vasilii was one of the top students at the school in Irkutsk, and

56 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 179, l. 1; IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 193, l. 1.
57 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 196; IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 231, l. 1; TPK, 177-81.
teachers like Bel’shev regularly chose him to deliver the speeches they wrote for the annual public examinations of their pupils—a great honor, Ivan Timofeevich recalled. Ivan Timofeevich remembered how his brother recited a long speech Bel’shev had composed for the 1804 examination. Vasilii memorized the entire speech—“On the Benefit of Enlightenment”—and the Siberian Governor-General Ivan Selifontov, who was watching in the audience, was sufficiently impressed that he recruited Vasilii to serve in his chancellery.

Ivan Timofeevich looked up to his brother, who he described as a boy whose talents made him popular throughout town. “There was not a single social gathering,” Ivan Timofeevich wrote, “to which [Vasilii] was not invited, and where he was not cherished by all.”58 Vasilii’s papers, which Ivan Timofeevich preserved alongside those of his father, testify to a wide range of interests. They include notes from history and German lessons, a piece on taxidermy, and various poems and sketches. Among the latter is a watercolor Vasilii painted of Fu Xi, the mythical Chinese figure said to be the creator of the I Ching and inventor of writing and fishing (Figure 9).

Vasilii’s papers also suggest that he had ample

58 OR RNB f. 588, fol. IV, no. 814, vol. 2, ll. 31-31ob.
reading material for the making of a young patriot. For his history class, for example, he copied out the following text on Peter I, Russian history’s most lauded nachal’nik: “Who established laws in the Russian State? PETER THE GREAT. Who introduced sciences and arts into the Russian State? PETER THE GREAT. Who expanded trade? PETER THE GREAT. Who cultivated [obrazoval] the morals of Russians? PETER THE GREAT.” Vasilii also copied a long 1806 ode from The Moscow Gazette that celebrated Alexander I’s manifesto on war with Napoleon and eagerly looked forward to seeing the “Gauls” “drown in their own blood.”

Vasilii’s letters reveal a tender relationship among the members of the Kalashnikov family. His positions at the Irkutsk Treasury Chamber and in the chancellery of the Siberian Governor-General required that he spend much time travelling around the province, and he regularly wrote home while doing so. His letters offer descriptions of some of the sights he saw on his travels: the troupe of 100 well-armed Mongols; the caravan of camels from China that “howled” and “jumped (“quite a scene!”); the Kiakhta man who died from—as the autopsy revealed—a drink at the local tavern that was laced with saltpeter. For the most part, however, the letters are expressions of homesickness: Vasilii complained repeatedly that he was “dying of boredom” away from the family; he wrote his father a poem for his birthday; he urged “Vaniushachka” not to cry when their grandmother died.60

59 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 209. For a study of the changing image of Peter I see Nicholas Riasanovsky, The Image of Peter the Great in Russian History and Thought (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).
60 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 183, ll. 7ob., 13, 16-17, 50, 55-55ob.; IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 60, ll. 1-6; IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 202, ll. 1-9ob.
These letters also open a window on a family in which state service was a respected and rewarding affair. In one from 1805, for example, Vasiliii broke with his customary juvenile style and adopted the rhetoric characteristic of official correspondence to describe himself as a zealous “son of Russia” and servitor of the emperor. He was receiving what was for him a large salary, and he decided to make a gift of a portion of it to his father. His explanation is suggestive of the pride he took in service: “THE SOVEREIGN, looking out for the good of the sons of Russia, and, seeking not to leave their labors without reward, has ordered that they be given salaries. […] I have received twenty-five rubles, and it is my desire to give a certain part of this as a gift to you.”

When Vasiliii died suddenly of measles in March 1807, Timofei Petrovich was devastated. Vasiliii, Timofei jotted in his a notebook, died “when he had just succeeded on the 9th of March in receiving the rank of Collegiate Assessor!” Timofei Petrovich drafted a number of epitaphs for his boy’s tombstone, all of which drew attention to his son’s promise as a state servitor. “Under this stone,” one version began, “is buried the body

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61 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 183, ll. 3-4.  
62 TPK, 181.
of the slave of God Vasilii Timofeevich Kalashnikov, Collegiate Registrar, who served at the Irkutsk Treasury Chamber and, in the seventeenth year from his birth, on the 30th day of March of the year 1807, passed away, to the general regret of all who knew his meek disposition and outstanding talents, and above all to the eternal sorrow of his father, by this premature death grieved.”63 (Figure 10)

Vasilii’s death left Ivan Timofeevich with impressive shoes to fill. His father received condolence letters from friends and relatives around the province, and Timofei underlined the passages in the letters he found most moving. Among the latter was a line from a letter from Mikhail Muromov, a Nerchinsk relative, who reminded Timofei that, in Ivan Timofeevich, he still had “another hope to fill Vasil’ka’s place.”64

It is not unlikely that, when Vaniushachka learned in 1813 that he had been nominated for his first service rank—the one at which Vasilii had died—he had his big brother’s example in mind when he began practicing that new signature.

Ivan Timofeevich would more than exceed his father’s expectations. Timofei Petrovich’s papers provide abundant evidence that the proud father spent the years before his death in 1828 musing about Ivan Timofeevich and his successful Petersburg career. His diary, for instance, is packed with notes on his son’s promotions, a table he drew up of the “Number of Posts from St. Petersburg with Letters from Ivan Timofeevich,” and numerous descriptions of dreams in which Ivan Timofeevich was the star actor (“August

63 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 217, l. 7.
64 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 187, l. 3ob. Another condolence letter is IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 182, l. 1.
11 [1827], Thursday. IN MY SLEEP: I saw my Van’iashka, as though travelling to Petersburg. […] His face is darling, it preserves its beauty.”.  

“It must be admitted—it was about time!”

Chapter four will explore Ivan Timofeevich’s service career in more detail. In the meantime, it will be useful to examine the second of the two forces Kalashnikov saw at work in improving the Irkutsk of his youth. As noted above, the first of these was the ongoing project of creating the public education system of which he and Vasilii were early beneficiaries. The second was Nikolai Ivanovich Treskin, civilian governor of Irkutsk during the tenure of Peter Andreevich’s new boss, the Governor-General of Siberia Ivan Borisovich Pestel’ (1806-19).

Pestel’ and Treskin’s administration has long been cited among the primary examples of corrupt provincial government at its nastiest—the culminating catastrophe in a long history of Siberian malfeasance. Bruce Lincoln put the case as follows:

Figure 11: Selection from Timofei Kalashnikov’s 1827-28 diary, including a table of the “Number of Posts from St. Petersburg with Letters from Ivan Timofeevich” (detail). Courtesy of the Institute of Russian Literature (Pushkin House), St. Petersburg.

65 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 198, ll. 59ob., 68.
More than a hundred years had passed [by the beginning of the nineteenth century] since the days of Siberia’s rapacious military governors, but the priorities of its high officials had remained the same. True to this tradition, Governor-General Ivan Pestel and his close ally Nikolai Treskin, the civil governor of Irkutsk province, imposed a corrupt regime from one end of Siberia to the other between 1805 [sic] and 1819. By then, Siberia’s merchants had stretched their trade networks from California to Canton to Cadiz and London, and they had become a part of the economic life of both East and West. Although they lived and traded in the modern world, the government that Pestel and Treskin imposed upon these traders dated from an era long since past, and the two inevitably came into conflict.  

Among the richest eyewitness sources regularly used to support such a characterization—though it does not provide evidence for the romanticization of the mercantile it implies—is Ivan Timofeevich’s memoir. But Kalashnikov’s assessment of Treskin’s tenure, like most surviving assessments of Treskin’s tenure, was highly conflicted. Although he decried Treskin’s protection of corrupt, often brutal subordinates and his extreme suspicion of disloyalty, Kalashnikov nevertheless believed that Treskin had an extraordinarily complex job as governor, that he acted with the best intentions, and that he did much to improve Irkutsk and its giant province. His Treskin, far from a “remnant of premodern government,” 67 was an overzealous example of the modern state’s urge to intervene in the lives of its subjects. Treskin’s reign, Kalashnikov explained, was “a curious and frightful drama, in which the hand of God was visible, and which can serve forever as an instructive example to the rulers of remote provinces.” 68 This was, to Kalashnikov’s mind, a tragic drama—the story of a well-meaning man who attempted to

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68 ZIZh, 189-90.
play the paternal roles of nachal’nik, nastavnik, and namestnik to improve Siberia, but who was overcome in the process by unenlightened subordinates, personal failings, and the sheer enormity of the task before him.

Understanding how Ivan Timofeevich reached such a conclusion requires some context. The task of administering Siberia had long presented the Russian state with intractable problems. The greatest challenges stemmed from its vast size, sparse population, wretched roads, lack of a landed nobility, and the deficit of reliable knowledge about the region (whether in the capital or in local administrative centers).

“The enormous, difficult to traverse, and little-investigated spaces of Siberia,” writes Anatolyi Remnev, “helped to generate two seemingly mutually exclusive phenomena: the absolute power and the lack of power of the local state apparatus.”69 In other words, the central government could exercise little direct control over its far-away provincial officials, yet those officials had a similarly challenging time trying to bring order to sparsely settled and vast lands where qualified chinovniki were few, where inhabitants could often easily dodge supervision, and where taking action often depended on receiving approval from the distant imperial capital.

Throughout the eighteenth century, Russian rulers vested their representatives in Siberia with increasing authority to act on their own initiative. It was with this end in mind that Alexander I appointed Vasilii Kalashnikov’s nachal’nik, Ivan Selifontov, Governor-General of Siberia and gave him vast authority to take action. As a result of

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Selifontov’s proposals, Irkutsk became the new capital of all of Siberia and seat of its sole Governor-General in 1803.

The problem, of course, with deputizing broad powers to a single man on the periphery—a namestnik—was that doing so created equally broad opportunities for malfeasance. Officials in distant Petersburg often had little choice but to take the reports of their namestniki at face value. Not long after Selifontov arrived in Irkutsk, to cite one example, he reported to Minister of the Interior Kochubei that he had found an “infinity” of disorders. He requested permission, among other things, to send the provincial procurator Gornovskii, whom he disliked, “at least” to Tomsk (why Tomsk was unclear). When Kochubei passed the request to Gornovskii’s superior, Minister of Justice Lopukhin, Lopukhin refused to comply, citing Gornovskii’s good standing and the necessarily superficial nature of Selifontov’s brief inspection. It was not the duty of the procurator, Lopukhin argued, to bend to the “capricious” will of the head of the province. Kochubei, incensed, fired off a twenty-page harangue on the necessity of interministerial cooperation and the need to trust the Governor-General: “you cannot,” he reproached Lopukhin, “be indifferent to the Governor-General’s opinion about a chinovnik serving 6,000 versts away.”

But frequent complaints against Governor-General Selifontov also reached St. Petersburg. When the emperor sent Iurii Golovkin in 1805 to lead an embassy to China, he—making sure to take advantage of the opportunity that having a well-trained official passing through the region offered—instructed Golovkin to report on most everything he

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70 RGIA f. 1286, op. 1, d. 229, ll. 1-19, 40-40ob.
saw en route to China. In particular, he asked his ambassador to see how well Selifontov was doing in remedying the “evil” that Siberia’s lack of “capable and reliable chinovniki” created. 71 Golovkin concluded that the primary problem in Irkutsk was Selifontov himself, and as a result of Golovkin’s report the emperor dismissed the Governor-General and replaced him with Ivan Pestel’. 72

Pestel’ did his best to dodge the appointment, citing poor health, debts, and Siberia’s harsh climate. More than anything else, however, he feared the post because he was well acquainted with the fates of his predecessors: there was not a single governor of Irkutsk province, he wrote in his memoirs, who had “ended in any way other than by being stripped of his post and spending many years in legal proceedings.” It was therefore, he explained, only with “terror and trepidation” that he accepted the job. Saying no to the emperor was, after all, well-nigh impossible, all the more because Alexander had promised Pestel’ an interest-free loan of 40,000 rubles to cover his debts. 73

In taking on his new position, Pestel’ was most worried about Irkutsk Province. “This province,” he explained, “broke the necks, so to speak, of all of my predecessors […] and I therefore needed to choose as its [civilian] governor a completely reliable man. 74 He chose Nikolai Ivanovich Treskin, who had served under him for a decade at the Moscow Post Office. With his trusted man installed in Irkutsk—and invested with

71 RGIA f. 1286, op. 1, d. 118, ll. 1-14.
complete authority to act on his behalf—Pestel’ in 1809 hurried back to Petersburg, from where he would govern Siberia for the next decade. In defense of the move, he claimed that he needed direct access to the tsar in order to administer the region more effectively, adding that being in Siberia was torture because he feared that denunciations would reach the emperor and end his tenure much as they had those of his predecessors. Serving as Governor-General, he wrote, “undoubtedly shortened my life by many years and prematurely weakened my physical strengths” (just thinking about the position, he added, still made him “shudder” long after his retirement).\(^{75}\)

Treskin and Pestel’, then, came to their posts with deep reservations and a cool-headed awareness of the unlikelihood of succeeding in the position. It is perhaps not surprising that they doggedly pursued anyone they suspected might try to denounce them, arbitrarily exiling a number of the city’s leading merchants and chinovniki who fell under their suspicion. Ivan Timofeevich expressed great sympathy in his memoirs for those who fell afoul of Irkutsk’s new rulers, but his sympathy was not unalloyed. He did have much praise for Irkutsk’s merchants, for example, noting that they performed many useful deeds for the town and that their denunciations helped to keep overbearing officials in check. But he also believed that the merchants often overstepped their bounds. He described them as being possessed by a certain “merchant haughtiness” (\(kupecheskii spes’\)) that led them to act audaciously, such as when many would refuse to doff their hats before the nachal’nik.\(^{76}\)

\(^{75}\) Pestel’, “Bumagi,” 381.

\(^{76}\) ZIZh, 200-01.
Pestel’ and Treskin’s main concern—besides preventing denunciations from reaching Petersburg—was to develop agriculture in the region. Toward this end, Treskin did much to increase settlement of the province and encourage Buriats to take up the plow. Most significant, however, was his intervention in the grain trade. He orchestrated vast purchases of grain for state-controlled reserves, reckoning that, by offering high prices, he would give peasants incentive to increase their yields in order to make a profit. He also believed that leaving the grain trade in the hands of Irkutsk’s merchants risked ruin during times of poor harvests, and he hoped that buying up as much grain as possible for state-controlled reserves would curtail merchant speculation. 77

This approach brought Treskin and Pestel’ into conflict with the Ministry of Finance, the Irkutsk Treasury Chamber, and Irkutsk merchants. In Siberia, the distillation of alcohol was a state monopoly administered by agents of the Ministry of Finance at the provincial Treasury Chambers, who purchased grain at low prices to brew alcohol in state-run distilleries. But when Treskin’s administration claimed that Irkutsk Province was suffering from harvest failures and, as a result, began to offer accordingly high prices to buy up grain for the state reserves, the Treasury Chamber could not compete. Treskin held a paternalistic belief that his bureaucracy should be the sole agent directing affairs in his province. He requested that he be given control over the distilleries and the purchase of grain for them and, without waiting for approval, proceeded to exercise that control

77 Raeff, Siberia, 26-28.
and attack Treasury Chamber employees and any others who be believed were working against him.\textsuperscript{78}

Ivan Timofeevich and his father both served at the Treasury Chamber at this time.

Looking back on the experience, Kalashnikov described the relationship between Treskin’s administration and the Treasury Chamber as “one of those inky Punic Wars, with which the chronicles of government offices in remote provinces are filled.” The “Island of Sicily” over which they fought, he wrote, was the grain trade.\textsuperscript{79} Treasury Chamber officials saw Treskin’s claims of regular harvest failures as a ruse to justify growing purchases for the grain reserves and win support for his plans to exercise control over the Treasury Chamber. Chinovniki like Kalashnikov and his father travelled in vain to villages around the province to purchase grain for distillation, finding that peasants preferred to sell to Treskin’s officials for the higher prices they offered. Ivan Timofeevich praised his own nachal’nik, vice-governor and head of the Treasury Chamber Levitskii, who, he claimed, “stood up for the truth.” Levitskii pointed out the incongruity between claims of harvest failures and Irkutsk’s “not only full, but overflowing” grain reserves. He also uncovered abuses among Treskin’s officials, discovering, for example, that false measures were being used in grain purchases from peasants (not surprising, Kalashnikov noted, given that the inspector of the grain reserves was an exile who had been “twice lashed for theft”).\textsuperscript{80}

\textsuperscript{79}DKZhRP, 494.
\textsuperscript{80}ZIZh, 225-27. The employment of exiles was common practice in Siberian administration.
Levitskii’s diligence in probing the actions of Treskin’s officials proved costly for Timofei Petrovich. In 1812, the emperor had decreed that, in lieu of conscription, peasants in Irkutsk province were to pay twenty rubles per soul. The order was soon cancelled, but only after the money had been collected throughout much of the province. Levitskii, suspicious, instructed Timofei Petrovich, who was travelling to distilleries around the province, to find out whether the money was being returned in due time (it was not). But Timofei had been tailed by one of Treskin’s chinovniki, who wrote a petty denunciation against him. His supposed transgressions, wrote Ivan Timofeevich in his outraged account, included allowing peasants to call him “nachal’nik” and drinking. Siberian peasants, wrote Kalashnikov, called every chinovnik “nachal’nik”; the two words, he explained, were “synonyms” in a peasant’s mind. And the implication that drinking was a crime, Kalashnikov explained, was “ridiculous” (“Lord! And who, having lived to [the age of] gray hair, has not had a drop too much?”). But however flimsy the case, Timofei Petrovich was turned over to the court, given a “strict reprimand,” and deprived of his right to a pension.81

Kalashnikov saw the persecution of his father as emblematic of the extreme paranoia and arbitrariness that characterized Treskin’s administration—as well as of the crippling bureaucratic turf wars rife throughout the empire. The only “crime” that anyone in the Treasury Chamber committed, he acerbically noted, was failing to follow the will of the governor without asking questions. And that, he explained, was no crime: because provincial treasury chambers reported to the Ministry of Finance, their

81 ZIZh, 228-230; IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 199, ll. 24-25ob.; Kalashnikov also wrote about the affair in his novel Automaton. See DKBZhRP, 498-99.
employees could follow only the orders of the governor that did not contradict those of
the ministry. Treskin’s personal rule, Kalashnikov suggested, was a despotism wholly
unbefitting nineteenth-century Russia: “Was it that the spirit of Chinggis Khan, who once
roamed in Siberia, still hung over her and infected minds with the plague [iazvoiu] of
Asian despotism?”

Remarkably, however, Ivan Timofeevich alternated such accusations with verbose
praise of Treskin. He experienced Treskin’s reign as a pupil at the gymnasium, as a
scribe at the Treasury Chamber and the gymnasium, as the son of a persecuted chinovnik,
and, during the last year of Treskin’s governorship, as a secretary for Treskin himself.
If he saw Treskin as often too heavy-handed, he also saw him as a human with a terribly
difficult job—a conflicted, yet well-meaning nachal’nik memorable as much for his
many achievements as for his failings. He praised in particular Treskin’s unprecedented
intervention in all spheres of Irkutsk life. Treskin’s was a level of activity unthinkable
for the Nerchinsk voevoda under whom his father began service, for whom a successful
day on the job was a “voyage” to the nearby Buriat camp that, with the help of a little
vodka, produced a big cartload of gifts.

Treskin’s feats were many, but none was more immediately obvious than the
facelift he gave Irkutsk. The new governor’s arrival in 1808, Kalashnikov wrote, was a
“black day” for the old village “scene” of his childhood, as Treskin “tirelessly set about
fixing the town.” He drained and raised the squares, widened the main streets, and paved

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82 The complex, contradictory nature of lines of authority in Imperial Russia would continue to plague provincial government. For an illuminating study of a later period see Robbins, The Tsar’s Viceroyts.
83 ZIZh, 231-32.
84 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 141, l. 10ob.
those and the rest with wood and gravel—such that, wrote one Irkutsk teacher, “there is almost never mud.”

This work, like so much in Siberia, was carried out by exiles. Their supervisor was one “Gusha,” himself an exile who, Kalashnikov recalled, “walked around in some sort of nachal’nik uniform he himself had improvised.” Irkutsk, explained the chinovnik Nikolai Bulatov in 1869, was never the same again:

Houses [before Treskin’s tenure] were built abominably, without any order. You probably remember how, a few years ago, there used to be a few old, abominable houses scattered along the Angara’s bank? In those days the entire town was scattered about in such a way. When Treskin consolidated his position, when he became convinced that he would meet no resistance, he took the most energetic measures toward the organization of the city. He ordered first that the town be planned out. Planners walked around town and set out stakes. The people watched, astounded: here there was a stake on a roof, there one on a fence, there one in the middle of a yard. But the people didn’t dare touch them: there was such a taboo about doing such a thing that it was impossible even to consider it—they already understood Treskin. Once the whole town was planned out, the police gave the order that the residents had until a certain date […] to rebuild their homes and fences and build streets according to the plan. It goes without saying that many did not hurry to do so; there would, they imagined, be time. The deadline passed, and only a few houses had been rebuilt. The police demanded explanations and designated a new deadline […], with the stipulation that if the reconstruction was not at least begun during this time, then the police would take their own measures. And then people became livelier. But even after this deadline there remained many kultuki and odds and ends. Some did not want to act because of willfulness, some on the basis that our fathers and grandfathers lived in such a way, and some could not because of poverty. But after the final deadline it was announced that people would come and knock the houses down. This stupefied everyone. And really, on the designated day the demolition began.

The demolition work, Kalashnikov explained, was left to Gusha and his “detachments,” who often simply sawed off the parts of houses that upset the new town plan. Ivan

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85 NART f. 977, op. sov., d. 74, ll. 88-88ob.
86 Vagin, Istoricheskie svedeniia, I: 573-74.
Timofeevich’s boyhood home, though eventually spared, was under threat for some time. The “terrible image of Gusha’s detachment drawing near,” he recalled, long unsettled his “childish imagination.”

While Ivan Timofeevich believed that Treskin acted “a bit too unceremoniously” with the houses that offended his plan, he also thought that the imperious renovation was necessary: “It must be admitted—it was about time!” When he looked back on the town of his youth, he saw a place of disorder and unenlightenment, and he believed that its improvement would not have been possible without the steady, firm hand of an active nachal’nik. He opened his first novel with a tribute to Treskin’s accomplishment remarkable for its contrast to the filthy, puddle-laden Irkutsk “scene” that opens his memoirs:

Among the provincial towns of Siberia Irkutsk, indisputably, is the largest and most beautiful. […] The town’s buildings are also very striking, and are continually improving. Stone houses number roughly a hundred, wooden ones a thousand or two, and stone churches as many as fifteen. Irkutsk’s age of growth began about twenty years ago, and today’s visitors, to their surprise, are met by fine houses (most of them painted), streets (most of them straight and even outfitted with sidewalks), a nice public garden, and even… a coffee house: the very clearest sign of enlightenment.

Ivan Timofeevich was far from alone in his assessment. Irkutsk meshchanin Nikita Serdiukov recalled that “it was all rubbish before [Treskin] came, all of it, you know, even the roads […] all of this was N[ikolai] I[vanovich Treskin’s doing]. Before

87 ZIZh, 191-92. On Irkutsk streets, see GAIO f. 70, op. 1, d. 595, ll. 1-340.
88 DKZhRP, 5-6.
him, the homes—it’s disgraceful to say it—they threw their offal into the streets.” The Irkutsk merchant Peter Obukhov was convinced that

Treskin was an excellent, active nachal’nik. Oh what there was before him! I remember four ravines in Irkutsk, where before his time calves and piglets drowned. [...] One has to remember [what it was like in] those days: there was no education; the gymnasium opened only in 1811 [sic]. One has to weigh his good and bad deeds—and then judge.89

Bulatov made the same point, even more emphatically, calling Treskin a “genius administrator”: “Of course he acted despotically; but such were the times, such was the spirit. It is necessary to transport yourself to his times—to crawl into his skin and see how things were in those days. The savagery [dich’] was utterly horrible.”90

Such assessments are remarkably similar to Peter Andreevich’s positive characterization of Denis Chicherin’s tenure in Tobol’sk. Treskin, indeed, was no less detail-oriented and frenetic than Chicherin in his approach to administration. He habitually walked the streets with Irkutsk chinovniki to point out problems in need of remedy. Vexed, for example, to find “utter filthiness” at the grain reserves, he ordered that monthly reports be prepared on the condition of public buildings. He instructed town guards to make rounds at regular times each day and oblige residents to remove any trash or animal carcasses they discovered. He took new measures to increase town safety, seeking out vagrants, killing wandering dogs, and ordering that guardsmen themselves be policed more strictly. Butchers’ stalls were to be kept clean “so that not the slightest sign of blood is visible.” He even gave orders regarding what sorts of children’s games were

90 Vagin, Istoricheskie svedeniia, I: 572. Emphasis in original.
permissible: no playing in the street, no releasing snakes (which could scare horses or passersby), and “by no means will there be any playing ball at the marketplace.”

Part of the reason that such active paternalism received high praise from later commentators was that turn-of-the-century Irkutsk was a dangerous, brutal place. Kalashnikov, like so many eyewitnesses who recalled Treskin’s Irkutsk, gave the governor credit for bringing an unprecedented level of safety to the city. He described, for example, the capture of one Khylzov, an escaped convict laborer who had hidden out under the floor in his wife’s home while robbing and terrorizing the town at night. When Khlyzov was punished, he died under the knout: “this was during the time of Treskin,” Kalashnikov wrote, “and they didn’t like to joke around in those days.”

Particularly impressive was Treskin’s attack on brigandage. Kalashnikov recalled that the most popular pastime for Irkutians was strolling and picnicking along the Ushakovka River not far from town. But doing so, he explained, had long been dangerous: the forests and hills around the river were the favorite hiding place of armed “gangs” (shaiki) that regularly robbed and killed passersby. These gangs were comprised largely of convict laborers from nearby distilleries and saltworks, from which they easily escaped (they were often sent into the forests to cut wood with few guards to watch over them, and the guards, Kalashnikov wrote, were typically “half-armed Cossacks or incense-breathing invalids”). Treskin’s predecessors had made no progress in alleviating the brigandage problem, despite spilling much ink on a grandiose plan to transfer the

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91 GAIO f. 70, op. 1, d. 878, ll. 32-34.  
92 ZIZh, 197-98.
factories to Ol’khon Island on Lake Baikal. Treskin, by contrast, established a regular Cossack patrol, pursued the brigands relentlessly, and punished them fiercely. Once Treskin’s system was firmly established, Kalashnikov wrote, “not even a rumor about brigandage was heard. An important accomplishment in a country filled with criminals!”

The Decembrist Vladimir Shteingeil’ offered a summary of Treskin’s tenure remarkably similar to Kalashnikov’s. Shteingeil’ worked in Irkutsk province during much of Treskin’s time in office, and when a friend asked him in 1834 for his thoughts on Siberian government, he replied with a detailed account (written, of all places, at the Nerchinsk mines, where he was a convict laborer at the time). “Neither Pestel’ nor Treskin,” he wrote, “can be called wicked men [zlymnii liud’mi]. They seem to have believed in good conscience that they were strangling scoundrels, miscreants, and slanderers ‘for the benefit of the entire region.’” About Treskin’s administrative skills Shteingeil’ was ebullient. Treskin, he wrote, found utter chaos when he arrived in Irkutsk: “everywhere—settlers roaming all about; everywhere, even in Irkutsk itself—robberies and murders; on the roads—brigandage; in the courts—sluggishness; in government offices—extreme neglect of affairs.” Shteingeil’ wrote that Treskin brought order to all spheres through indefatigable activity, following after “everyone” and knowing the status of “every case”:

I truly have never seen a man with more ostensible and actual activity. Only when he was eating lunch was he not busy. Whenever it was necessary to make some decree or another for the improvement of things

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93 See RGIA f. 1374, op. 6, d. 169, ll. 18-19; RGIA, f. 1374, op. 3, d. 2459, ll. 1-519.
94 ZIZh, 202.
local [k uluchsheniui mestnomu], right there, wherever he was, he would collect the ‘experienced fellows’ [byvalykh]—chinovniki, merchants, meshchane, peasants, Buriats, lakuts, it made no difference to him. He would then ask all there was to know and, so as better to succeed in the matter, listen to the various arguments, take down testimonies about disagreements, and right then and there draw his conclusions.

Shteingeil’ listed Treskin’s numerous accomplishments, which included (in addition to items already mentioned above): improvement of the Okhotsk road, administrative reform for Kamchatka, improvement of the Tel’minsk factory to the point that it could supply all Siberian regiments with cloth for their uniforms, maintenance of the grain reserves in good order, and construction of a facility to receive visitors at the Turkinsk mineral waters. That many of the above projects fell into disrepair after Treskin left Irkutsk in 1819 was only proof, Shteingeil’ suggested, of Treskin’s superiority over his successors. “In a word,” he explained to his friend, “there was nothing that he left without attention, and he firmly held the reins of government in his province. At the very least you will recognize that, if [on the one hand] Treskin is deserving of strong censure by unbiased judgment, then, on the other, there is much to counterbalance that [censure]. I dare say that, in terms of administrative worth, Irkutsk really has never had another governor comparable to him.” As he wrapped up his letter, Shteingeil’ could not help but add a closing salvo: “I admit it: I love, I even hold Treskin in respect.”

Kalashnikov was no less awestruck by Treskin’s capacity for constant labor. He recalled that the governor began receiving reports at six each morning and worked late

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into the night. He was similarly impressed by the nachal’nik’s piety—Treskin “always” cried when receiving communion at church, Ivan Timofeevich recalled—and he was convinced that the governor sought the best for the province. His summary of Treskin’s achievements offers a stunning contrast to the picture his father’s memoir paints—“only mud, swamps, dense forests, carnivorous beasts, and devilish brigands”—of the eighteenth-century road between Nerchinsk and Irkutsk:

The external appearance of the province was fixed up gloriously. Roads, corduroy roads, and bridges were put into excellent order, swamps were drained, mud was purged, and impassable roads were made passable; station houses—comfortable, spacious, warm, and clean; horses—well-fed and good; iamshchiki—daring. Robberies on the roads were put to an end. Places hitherto uninhabited were furnished with new settlements; the [new] settler colonies surpassed the old villages, big and small, in many ways; settlers who were once vagrants were made honorable and industrious farmers. Government offices, from the main provincial office [in Irkutsk] to the village izba were remodeled or built anew and maintained in strict tidiness; the archives were in exemplary condition. Towns, as much as possible, were improved, straightened out [vypravleny], and cleaned. Fire brigades, if not in quantity, then in quality, conceded little to those of the capitals. It would be difficult to calculate all of the infrastructural improvements [naruzhnye ustroistva] completed during the active administration of Treskin—and which very justifiably bring glory to his name.96

Treskin, Kalashnikov explained, “had enough intellect and activity for ten provinces” and would have been a “glorious” governor in a province that was not so challenging and so

96 ZIZh, 236-37. Slovtsov would reach a similar conclusion: “The current organization of the police in Irkutsk, the organization of the very city itself—which in the first years of the nineteenth century resembled a village—the organization of the roads, the safety of journeying on them, the establishment of settlements in Nizhneudinsk [district] and beyond the lablonovyi mountains, truly are the work of the energetic administration of Mr. Treskin, which lasted until the year 1819. Under his watch the Circumbaikal road, about which the government had repeatedly troubled itself with since 1796, was skillfully thrown across Khamar-Daban, like a pleated ribbon. A horseback ride during summertime through the breast of the wild mountains and gol’tsy is comfortable and captivating: you are astonished at the courage of the undertaking!” IOS, 276.
bereft of reliable subordinates as Irkutsk. If only there had been more “philanthropy” and “justice” he added, “what a miraculous administration Irkutsk province would have had in those days!”

The end of Pestel’ and Treskin’s tenure is well known. Despite their efforts to prevent denunciations from reaching Petersburg, many did. The emperor finally took action in 1819, appointing Slovtsov’s old friend, Mikhail Speranskii, to replace Pestel’ as Governor-General of Siberia and “correct everything that can be corrected.”

Kalashnikov described Speranskii’s appointment as proof of the tsar’s concern for Siberia: “The genius of a great man flew over Siberia,” he wrote, and “took in everything with his eagle’s view, and gave it all a new life.”

But if Speranskii more harmoniously united the critical roles of nachal’nik, nastavnik, and namestnik than Treskin had, Kalashnikov could not help but conclude that Treskin played a critical role in the great story of Siberia—that of the active, paternal nachal’nik acting upon society for its own good. Ivan Timofeevich came to see Siberian history as a saga of state-directed progress toward order and enlightenment, and he believed that Treskin’s activity was an essential component of that story. “Irkutsk,” he wrote, “saw [Treskin] off, if not with regret, then also neither with reproach: Siberia is

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97 ZIZh, 222-23.
98 ZIZh, 236-37.
100 DKZhRP, 111.
not vindictive. On the contrary, the dark affairs were forgotten and the luminous ones are to this day remembered with gratitude.”

But Treskin was only the first of two pivotal nachal’niki of Ivan Timofeevich’s early years. The tireless governor lorded over what Kalashnikov called the “external side” of Irkutsk life. As for the “interior,” that was Peter Andreevich’s province.\(^\text{102}\)

\(^{101}\) ZIZh, 245-46.
\(^{102}\) ZIZh, 189-90.
CHAPTER FOUR:

Nomad-Chinovnik, Novelist-Chinovnik

When I began to read to Pushkin the first chapters of Dead Souls as they were written at that time, Pushkin, who always laughed during my readings (he was a lover of laughter), became gloomier, gloomier, and finally became completely somber. When the reading was finished, he said with a depressed voice: ‘God, how sad our Russia is!’ This astonished me. Pushkin, who knew Russia so well, had not noticed that it was all a caricature and my own invention! It was then that I appreciated how important is a work drawn from the soul [...] and the horrifying way in which man can imagine darkness and the frightening absence of light.

-Nikolai Gogol

All sorrows can be borne if you put them into a story or tell a story about them.

-Isak Dinesen¹

On the twenty-ninth of August 1819, just before seven in the evening, a flare shot into the sky over Voznesenskii Monastery. Situated a few versts downriver from Irkutsk, the monastery had been tasked with alerting the town to the approach of the new Governor-General of Siberia, Mikhail Speranskii. It was a moment “all Irkutsk” had been waiting for, teacher Semën Shchukin recalled. The bank of the Angara was illuminated, Cossack

trumpeters readied their instruments, *chinovniki* in their best uniforms assembled in neat rows, and Irkutians of all estates thronged to the river to greet their new *nachal’nik*. There were so many people, one eyewitness recalled, that the riverbank “seemed to want to collapse.” When Speranskii arrived an hour later, he bowed to the crowd, spoke briefly with Treskin, and sent for the director of schools, Peter Andreevich Slovtsov. A decade had passed since the old friends had seen each other, and, as they would often do during Speranskii’s year in town, they closed the door on the whispering crowd and stayed up until one in the morning trading stories.²

Peter Andreevich had arrived in Irkutsk in 1814 after years of itinerant work inspecting mines and factories of the Ural and Altai Mountains for Governor-General Pestel’. These were long years, and Speranskii was shocked by the toll they had exacted from his friend. This was not, he wrote to his daughter, the Slovtsov they had known in Petersburg, a man who “loved to be conspicuous with his wit,” but his greyed apparition, “sick and aged”—an “extinct volcano that flares up only occasionally.”³ Peter Andreevich, Speranskii told Mikhail Magnitskii, “gives himself entirely to piety, and his spiritual vigor increases as his bodily strengths dilapidate.”⁴ To another friend from their old Petersburg circle, Arkadii Stolypin, he wrote that “Solitude has refreshed his thoughts and consoled his soul to such an extent that, it seems, he seeks nothing and prepares himself to die calmly.” Speranskii added that he planned to make a plea on Slovtsov’s behalf before the empire’s powerbrokers: “I am going to make a strong case for him, but

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² This paragraph is drawn from eyewitness accounts in V. Vagin, ed., *Istoricheskie svedeniia o deiatel’nosti Grafa M. M. Speranskogo v Sibiri, s 1819 po 1822 goda* (St. Petersburg, 1872): I: 580-81, 588-606.
³ M. M. Speranskii, *Pis’ma k docheri* (Novosibirsk, 2002), 152; On Slovtsov’s appearance: ZIZh, 642.
⁴ “Biografia zamechatel’nykh administrativnykh deiatelei,” *Pamiatnaia knizhka Tobol’skoj gubernii na 1884 god* (Tobol’sk, 1884), 106.
even if they offered him the place of chancellor it appears that he would not go anywhere.”

This was quite a claim. Only eleven men were honored with the title of chancellor (kantsler) during the history of the Russian Empire (the only one alive in 1819 was Rumiantsev, Slovtsov’s old boss). If true, it would have reflected a striking change on Peter Andreevich’s part, for he had desperately hoped to return to Petersburg in the wake of his 1808 exile. When Speranskii proved to be of little help then, Slovtsov appealed to the Minister of the Interior in 1810 for a transfer to Saratov province. He claimed that he was “drawing near the grave” and needed respite from Siberia. Pestel endorsed the plea, noting that he had been an “eyewitness” to Peter Andreevich’s “sufferings”: Siberia and the shame of exile, Pestel wrote, were “utterly killing him.”

Nothing came of the request. But Peter Andreevich not only did not die, he came to terms with his Siberian lot. When Speranskii asked him to leave Irkutsk and join him in reforming Siberia’s administration, he declined. He felt an obligation to Pestel, who had treated him well, and therefore, Kalashnikov explained, he considered it unbecoming to take part in Speranskii’s administration, built as it was on the ruins of Pestel’s tenure. But Slovtsov must have imagined that, had he went with Speranskii—himself an exile of sorts at the time—he might have ended up in Petersburg. And he never did stop thinking about the charms that awaited him there—above all, conversations with the “enlightened men” who were so few and far between in Siberia (the men who surrounded him in

6 OR RNB f. 702, op. 1, d. 14, ll. 22-25ob.
7 ZIZh, 622-23.
Siberia, he wrote to Ivan Martynov, were “hell”). But he chose to stay in Siberia, and he would do so even after 1828, when he received an imperial pardon for the 1808 affair and unrelenting pleas from Ivan Timofeevich to join him in Petersburg.

One clue as to Peter Andreevich’s rationale is found in the correspondence over the 1810 transfer request. When he organized his papers long after that appeal had failed, he re-read Pestel’ and the minister’s letters and scrawled a note across one of their margins: “Friends wanted to help me, but their intentions were not pleasing to God.”

It was more than a phrase, his “pleasing to God.” Peter Andreevich’s letters make clear that he saw God at work in his life. And what he believed was “pleasing” to God was devotion to service, whatever it entailed. Over and over he would admonish Kalashnikov about the importance of serving God and tsar with a steely sense of duty, of humbly fulfilling orders and subordinating lesser, personal desires. He did feel an attachment for Siberia, its natural bounties in particular, but what attracted him most was a belief that Siberia was the ultimate arena for the project of imperial enlightenment with which he identified. And as the Ministry of Popular Enlightenment’s most trusted chinovnik there—first as director of Irkutsk schools (1815-20), then as vizitator (inspector) of Siberia’s entire school system (1821-28)—he would have many opportunities to take part in that project. While the development of Siberia’s schools would often prove disappointingly slow and lurching, Slovtsov identified with his work

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8 I. I. Martynov, “Navodnenie 7 Noiabria 1824 goda, ili pis’ma v Irkutsk” in Pamiatniki novoi russkoj istorii, vol. 2 (St. Petersburg, 1872): 139-164. Quotation from 164. Slovtsov’s letters to Martynov have not survived, but a few of Martynov’s letters contain quotations from them.
9 OR RNB f. 702, op. 1, d. 14, l. 22.
because he found in it a role in the saga of enlightenment that was vital to his sense of self.

This chapter will explore Slovtsov and Kalashnikov’s friendship and careers from their meeting in 1815 until the early 1830s, by which time Slovtsov had retired and Kalashnikov had moved to Petersburg, established a family, and made a name for himself as Siberia’s first novelist. Despite their age difference, they were remarkably close. Slovtsov found in Kalashnikov, his copyist in Irkutsk, a friend with whom he could share his grief as he adjusted to his Siberian lot. “Cast away without everything,” he wrote to Ivan Timofeevich in 1829, “at the edge of the world, fully the prey of daring despotism [samovlastii a derznovennago], without a voice and even without an echo, I held onto the world by a hair, and that hair was you, dear friend. If you had not been near me in those days I probably would have lost my mind.”10 But Peter Andreevich found more than a friend in Ivan Timofeevich: he also found a pupil, and he took pride in his role as Kalashnikov’s mentor, a role wholly befitting his duties as an enlightenment-bearing chinovnik.

Ivan Timofeevich, meanwhile, found in Slovtsov what his father had found in voevoda Teviashov decades earlier: a caring, paternal nachal’nik. He reflected on their friendship in his memoir:

What need was there for him to look after me, a person utterly extraneous to him? When I first began serving under his direction, I was no more and no less than his subordinate—and are there many nachal’niki who look upon their subordinates as upon people, rather than as upon machines that,

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10 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 102, ll. 30-30ob. (9 November 1829). ZIZh, 635-36, 642-43. RGIA f. 1285, op. 8, d. 1220, l. 5.
once they go bad or become superfluous, can be thrown away and replaced with others? Slovtsov did not think that way!\textsuperscript{11}

Peter Andreevich was Kalashnikov’s model chinovnik, a flawless executor of the critical roles of nachal’nik, nastavnik, and namestnik in his work as the Ministry of Popular Enlightenment’s man in Siberia.

Slovtsov and Kalashnikov’s friendship was a product of state service. Serving the tsar not only brought them together, it also provided the basic content of their conversations. When Ivan Timofeevich married in 1824, he became, in Slovtsov’s words, a muzh-chinovnik (a “husband-chinovnik). And when he became a father later that year, he became, again in his benefactor’s words, the “nachal’nik of his family” (nachal’nik vashego sem’ia).\textsuperscript{12} These were men for whom the notion of a gulf between “educated society” and “the state” was folly. They were convinced that Russia’s future depended on the cultivation of enlightened men—that is, chinovniki like themselves—a conviction that, as this chapter will show, found expression in their letters, Kalashnikov’s novels, and Slovtsov’s writings. Their Siberia was the Siberia of Russia’s “great affair”—a place for prosveshchenie, made whole, made better, and, indeed, made “Russia,” by servants of the enlightened cause of empire.

\textit{“His gymnasium is quite possibly the only one in Russia that works well...”}

When Peter Andreevich arrived in Irkutsk in 1814, he immediately became acquainted with Treskin’s legendary zeal.

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\textsuperscript{11} ZIZh, 635.
\textsuperscript{12} IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 101, ll. 34-35ob. (8 December 1823); IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 102, l. 12ob. (17 March 1834).
\end{flushright}
In order to carry out his myriad reforms, Treskin needed reliable information about the vast province under his watch, and he used Slovtsov to help him obtain it. He first sent Peter Andreevich on an inspection tour of the massive Transbaikal—to Nerchinsk and back—with instructions to examine, in addition to “all” government institutions, the “very condition and behavior of the residents.” Along the route, Peter Andreevich, among other chores, was to inspect roads, bridges, post houses, and settlements; identify places to found parish schools; and urge peasants to send their children to those schools when they opened. In Kiakhta, he was to gather information on trade with China, ensure that the town, like Irkutsk, was being rebuilt according to plan, and investigate reports of counterfeiting. Treskin concluded his meticulous instructions with an expression of confidence that Slovtsov would “act exactly as I myself would act.”

Treskin was extremely pleased with Slovtsov’s work, which, Kalashnikov later explained, the governor received not in “dry and brief reports, but whole articles and books.” The ability to produce clear and thorough reports was a talent rare in the empire’s provinces, and Treskin proceeded to make heavy use his new chinovnik, sending him on an exhausting marathon of inspection tours in 1814-15 of the Nizhneudinsk and Irkutsk districts and the (very) remote Kirensk and Iakutsk regions.

Peter Andreevich’s inspection reports burned along with much of Irkutsk’s paper trail in the city’s 1879 fire, but some of his impressions survive in a series of articles he published in The Kazan’ News. Although he described with dismay the poverty he saw in

\[13\] OR RNB f. 702, op. 1, d. 39, ll. 1-48.  
\[14\] OR RNB f. 702, op. 1, d. 39, ll. 1-48.  ZIZh, 614, 617.
parts of the Transbaikal and Iakutsk regions, the general impression his articles convey is one of optimism that a new level of order was taking root in this vast land. He proudly described, for example, how he taught peasants along the road about agriculture, and he suggested that the settlements Treskin established east of the lablonovoi Mountains were in better shape than those of peasants long settled in the region. The new settlers, he wrote, were “vagrants no more, but people living in society.” The Russian state should take more credit for such accomplishments, he believed. Rather than retain “barbaric” local names for its new settlements, he wrote, it should furnish this land with a new, imperial toponymy. If the goal was to “merge manifold tribes into one body,” then why “retain the names of hordes in the provincial lexicon? Could [the state] really want them to recall the condition of Russia in the fourteenth century [when Russia was ruled by Mongols from the region]?”15

Peter Andreevich, in short, saw the Russian state in this vast region as a bearer of progress. Although the empire was a place administered by difference—whether social estate, bureaucratic rank, or confessional affiliation—Slovtsov, as his remarks on Transbaikal toponymy suggest, looked forward to a (distant) future of unity. He offered a summing-up in his “A General View of Irkutsk Province.” He described the empire’s eastern periphery as a land of natural bounties finally being recognized for its worth.

Readers might ask, he wrote, whether Irkutsk province was “moving gradually toward its perfection.” He suggested that it was, citing the “just” efforts taken over the course of the past decade—the efforts, that is, of Treskin’s administration—to learn about the region, settle the “Transbaikal wastelands,” transform forests into “splendid villages,” build roads, found schools, plant potatoes, and expand the domain of agriculture (“even among the inovercheskie clans”).

In January 1815 Treskin appointed Slovtsov judge at the Irkutsk conscience court. Created as part of Catherine II’s 1775 provincial reform, conscience courts consisted of a judge and two representatives from the local population. They were intended to “safeguard personal security” by providing members of individual estates judgment from their peers, but the statute that created them was vague and haphazardly implemented, and they rarely acted in practice (that of Ufa, for example, heard twelve cases in twelve years). Such appears to have been the case in Irkutsk: for much of the year following his appointment, Slovtsov was away from town on his inspection tours, and Kalashnikov, who met Peter Andreevich when he was appointed to serve as his copyist at the court, never mentioned the post in his detailed memoirs.

When he finished his inspection tours in summer 1815, Slovtsov took on a second post as director of Irkutsk schools. Appointing school directors was the responsibility of

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16 P. Slovtsov, “Obshchii vzgliad na Irkutskuiu guberniiu, 43-44, 47-48; On the settlements see RGIA f. 383, op. 29, d. 345; RGIA f. 383, op. 29, d. 943; RGIA f. 383, op. 29, d. 924; RGIA f. 383, op. 29, d. 945. Inovercheskii means “of another creed,” and in this case refers to Buriat and Evenk peoples native to southeastern Siberia.
18 The Irkutsk conscience court archive from Slovtsov’s time in the city has not survived, likely lost in the major fire of 1879.
the Ministry of Popular Enlightenment, but Pestel’ and Treskin nominated Slovtsov and campaigned on his behalf. He was, Treskin claimed, “the only chinovnik” “capable of improving the educational institutions here.” Pestel’ added that Irkutsk’s gymnasium was a “nursery” that provided little benefit to the town because it was nearly impossible to convince qualified chinovniki to move to Irkutsk for the small salary the director’s post provided. Because the conscience court heard few cases, Pestel’ asked that Slovtsov be allowed to hold both posts, which together might provide a salary worthy of an “enlightened and loyal man, suffused with love for the fatherland”—a “chinovnik with the kind of talents that anyone who goes [to Irkutsk] is unlikely to have.”

Slovtsov’s confirmation as director of schools reached Irkutsk in August 1815. He would receive an annual salary of 1,000 rubles (to which was added 200 rubles for an apartment and 3 puds—105 pounds—of candles) on top of his conscience court salary of 1,000 rubles.

Treskin and a priest administered the oath August 20:

I, Peter Andreevich Slovtsov, promise and vow to the Almighty God, before His Holy Gospel that I will serve HIS IMPERIAL HIGHNESS, my true and natural MOST GRACIOUS HIGHNESS SOVEREIGN ALEXANDER PAVLOVICH, AUTOCRAT OF ALL THE RUSSIAS and HIS HIGHNESS’ Successor to the All-Russian Throne, loyally and frankly and obey in everything, not sparing my life to the last drop of my blood […], to endeavor to assist in everything that loyal service to HIS IMPERIAL HIGHNESS and the good of the State in all situations requires […], to carry myself and act as is decent and necessary for a loyal subject of HIS IMPERIAL HIGHNESS, and I will always attest to this before God and His Judgment Day […]. In concluding this my oath I kiss the Word and Cross of my Savior. Amen.

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20 OR RNB f. 702, op. 1, d. 8, ll. 1-5.
21 Koreisha, Irkutskaia gimnaziia, 53.
22 NART f. 977, op. sov., d. 218, ll. 20-21.
What, having kissed the cross, did Peter Andreevich make of his new position? It was his first post as a *chinovnik* of the Ministry of Popular Enlightenment, which he would spend the remainder of his career serving. All evidence suggests that he identified with the new role. When, for example, he wrote his *Historical Survey of Siberia* after retiring in 1828, he wrote himself into the story of what he called “our enlightenment”: public schools, he explained, were “lamps” that had on occasion been “lit with ardor by chosen men, and were often on the verge of dying out until the tsars and sons of the fatherland of the nineteenth century took to the task with skills and love.”

As director of Irkutsk schools, Slovtsov was the ministry’s highest ranking official in Siberia (until 1821, that is, when the position of *vizitator*, which he would occupy, was created). He reported to Kazan’ University, which had been founded in 1804 with the intention that it would bring enlightenment to Russians and the native peoples of the empire’s vast and vague “east.” Alexander I’s university reform divided the empire into six educational districts, each administered by a university. Kazan’s “district” included the entire Volga region, the Caucasus, the Urals, and Siberia—the overwhelming majority, in other words, of the empire’s territory.

As director of schools, Peter Andreevich was, in effect, *nachal’nik* of enlightenment in Irkutsk province. He was responsible, in addition to directing the

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23 IOS, 324.
gymnasium, for administering the province’s seven district schools and nineteen parish schools (sixteen of the latter he founded), managing teaching personnel, and working with locals and officials to enhance the status of schools. Because he was accountable to the Ministry of Popular Enlightenment, he could act relatively independently of Irkutsk authorities. But the size of the province brought special challenges. In particular, it made obtaining reliable and timely information difficult and made performing inspections of remote parish and district schools—which directors were supposed to do annually—utterly impractical. Irkutsk’s distance from Kazan—and the disorder that characterized the university’s early years—also meant that the director was often left with little direction from his superiors.

Most troubling when Peter Andreevich started at his new post in 1815 was that his predecessor, Ivan Miller, had left behind a terrible mess. Slovtsov wrote to Kazan’ that he “immediately saw that I had been appointed director, if I can dare say it, of the ruins of a gymnasium.” Miller, like so many in Russia’s educational institutions at the time, was a German by birth. A graduate of Leipzig University and member of the Academy of Sciences, he ought, Kalashnikov wrote, to have been “not only a director, but a treasure for the Irkutsk gymnasium.” But Miller was a poor nachal’nik: he had a shaky knowledge of Russian, drank heavily, got into fistfights with his teachers, squandered school funds, and let the gymnasium building fall into disrepair (broken windows, Kalashnikov remembered, were simply papered over and pupils wore fur coats

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25 NART f. 92, op. 1, d. 584, l. 5.
throughout class). Irkutians lost what little trust they had in the gymnasium during Miller’s directorship, and enrollment—31 at the 1805 opening—reached a nadir of ten.26

In fairness, it should be said that Miller’s sad tenure is indicative of the challenges that working as an educator in Imperial Russia’s provinces posed. A product of Dresden, Leipzig, and St. Petersburg, Miller came to Irkutsk with little experience of provincial Russian life—he had held only brief posts in Astrakhan and Kazan’—and he suffered accordingly. Irkutsk did offer the occasional scientific curiosity (Miller sent, for instance, the “head of an unknown beast” found by a Iakut on the Arctic coast to the Academy of Sciences). But he lived in Irkutsk, he wrote in a self-pitying letter to Kazan’, “alone with his sciences.” He was demoralized by the town, and his letters dwell on the Irkutsk phenomena that left him aghast: the “coachmen and settler-exiles” (posel’shchikami) at town balls who “sang the kind of songs the likes of which I, having once been a student myself, would never have approved—and that make even Irkutsk women blush”; the convict laborers at the workers’ house (rabochii dom) on the town’s outskirts who were a “sad commentary on humanity.” Miller came clean in 1812: “I don’t know what to do or how to suffer this place any longer.”27

Unlike Miller, Peter Andreevich, raised in the land of the Sloptsovs, came to the director’s post well acquainted with the “dark” realities of provincial Russian life. No less important, he began the job after impressing Treskin. Miller, on the other hand, had had an antagonistic relationship with the governor. He described Treskin as a man who tolerated “neither enlightenment, nor men of the learned estate, nor the fact that the

26 ZIZh, 394-95; RGIA f. 1287, op. 11, d. 262, l. 365.
27 Koreisha, Irkutskaiia gimnaziia, 249-56, 260.
gymnasium does not fall under his authority.” If the last charge was probably fair, the others were less so: Treskin would do much to assist Slovtsov in his work as director. What the governor seems to have disliked most about Miller was the disorder at his gymnasium (the school, Treskin claimed, existed “in name only”). When Miller complained that Irkutsk parents preferred private teachers to his schools, Treskin observed that, instead of complaining about “simple townswomen who teach reading and writing,” Miller should “busy himself with acquiring the attention and trust of the public by providing children with a good education.” This was not something Treskin believed Miller capable of doing, for, as he bluntly told the embattled director, his “personality” (lichnost’) was “incongruous” with the director’s calling.28

In contrast, Treskin and Slovtsov seemed to have been pleased with one another (at least initially). Treskin’s support proved decisive in Peter Andreevich’s first task as director: renovating the dilapidated gymnasium building. The “ugliness” of its rooms, the “slovenliness” of its exterior, and its lack of proper heating, Slovtsov wrote to Kazan’, were alone enough to “ward off decent [parents] from giving their children over to public schools for instruction.” Rather than waiting for permission, he set to work immediately and asked Treskin for assistance. Treskin convinced the town duma to pay to repair the gymnasium’s floor and provided Cossacks and convict laborers from the workers’ house—the ones who prompted Miller to reflect on humanity—to complete the work. Slovtsov was delighted with the renovation, proudly describing the paint colors he chose, the garlands and “symbolic representations” that adorned the ceilings and lecterns,

28 RGIA f. 733, op. 39, d. 103, l. 9; RGIA f. 733, op. 39, d. 83, ll. 1, 17-20; RGIA f. 733, op. 39, d. 115, ll. 1-17.
and the thrift with which he completed the job (projected at 3,000 rubles, it cost 503 with Treskin’s help). The results were sufficiently impressive, he claimed, that “the public is beginning to show a certain trust in the schools.”

Renovating a building was, however, far easier than refurbishing a faculty. Peter Andreevich’s steepest challenge in his director and vizitator posts was to enlighten through often unenlightened teachers. The Ministry of Popular Enlightenment repeatedly admonished its teachers to guide their pupils—much as the Church repeatedly admonished its village clerics to guide their flocks—through exemplary conduct. But teachers, poorly paid and often miserably unhappy at their posts, were far from moral paragons. The ministry warned in 1814, for example, that not only would it fire any teacher who “turned to hard-drinking, a vile vice, particularly for the nastavniki of youth,” but that errant teachers would receive no assistance in finding future employment and accounts of their misdeeds would be published for all to see. Such threats were, of course, usually paper tigers: the ministry had little choice but to make do with the teachers it had.

Peter Andreevich became fast acquainted with that dilemma in February 1816, when Irkutsk teachers engaged in a nasty brawl. His investigation produced an enormous file of 243 double-sided sheets (“an almost unbelievable epic of drunken dissipation and moral licentiousness,” according to one Kazan’ University historian). All that is clear about the fracas, however, is that there was drinking, cursing, and beating: three teachers

29 NART f. 92, op. 1, d. 584, ll. 1-2ob., 5-7ob, 15-23ob. When he wrote his memoirs four decades later, Kalashnikov confirmed Slovtsov’s account, and also gave much credit to Treskin’s support: ZIZh, 619.
30 NART f. 977, op. sov, d. 105, ll. 2-2ob.
claimed that the Latin teacher Nenashevskii, drunk, called them names, attacked them, and threatened to “kill” them; Nenashevskii claimed, on the contrary, that the others—who were, he noted, usually his sobutyl’niki (“comrades of the bottle”)—beat him senseless, dragged him around by the scalp, cursed his wife, and frightened his daughter. “What measures,” Peter Andreevich asked Kazan’, “can curb teachers of disreputable behavior?”

In the end, officials at Kazan’ University approved Slovtsov’s recommendation to reprimand the three teachers and remove Nenashevskii from his post. But their verdict was a year in coming. Meantime, Peter Andreevich and his wayward Latin teacher were at each other’s throats. When Nenashevskii informed Slovtsov not long after the brawl that pupils were not attending his Latin class, Slovtsov observed that that was because “you have not taught them anything” and “they rarely find you in class.” Nenashevskii, stung by such criticisms, denounced Slovtsov to Kazan’. Slovtsov had “rendered great services” to the gymnasium, he explained, but had “taken it into his head to oppress” its teachers. Slovtsov wrote to Kazan’ that, while Nenashevskii’s denunciation might “impel a different nachal’nik” to become defensive, he would “endure” the teacher’s presence while he waited for a verdict on the brawl.

Assisting Peter Andreevich with such paperwork was his copyist, Kalashnikov. The two quickly bonded, not least because Slovtsov, like Miller before him, was lonely in Irkutsk. He initially lived in a two-room apartment in the empty Governor-General’s

32 NART f. 977, op. prav, d. 170, ll. 1-5ob. This file contains a summary of the original report, which was destroyed after the revolution (see NART f. 977, op. sovet, d. 13,598, l. 61). Excerpts from the original are in Zagoskin, Istoriiia imperatorskago kazanskago universiteta, III: 236-38.
33 Koreisha, Irkutskaja gimnaziia, 149.
34 NART f. 977, op. uch. kom., d. 203, ll. 1-10ob.
mansion, which had stood empty since Pestel’ had left town. It was, Kalashnikov wrote, a “gloomy, half-collapsing ruin, extremely in harmony with the gloomy soul of its only resident.” Kalashnikov lodged with him for some time, and recalled that Slovtsov’s only regular visitors were one Solomoni, a Sicilian Peter Andreevich found annoying, and the town procurator Gornovskii, whom he liked, but whose “irreconcilable hatred and bitterness” toward Treskin he could not stand. Kalashnikov described his friendship with Slovtsov at this time in his novel *Automaton*: Peter Andreevich, he explained, needed companionship, whereas he was a young and inexperienced—a “goblet, ready to receive the treasures of [Slovtsov’s] soul and heart.”

Slovtsov made an impression on Kalashnikov not only because he was a mysterious figure from Petersburg who treated him well, but also because in working for him Kalashnikov was able to take part in effecting a turnaround at the school—well run at first, but increasingly troubled as Miller’s tenure had dragged on—where he had studied. Slovtsov, he wrote, ushered in a “new era for Irkutsk schools” and gave “movement” (*dvizhenie*) to schools in town and around the province.

By “movement” Kalashnikov meant active stewardship. Slovtsov visited the gymnasium twice daily, and his regular presence induced teachers toward more decorous behavior. He managed (eventually) to remove teachers like Nenashevskii who caused dissension, and he did what he could to improve the image of the gymnasium in town. He had the Irkutsk Bishop Mikhail—a fellow teacher from his seminary days in

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35 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 102, ll. 30-30ob. (9 November 1829). ZIZh, 635-36, 642-43; RGIA f. 1285, op. 8, d. 1220, l. 5; DKZhRP, 504.
36 ZIZh, 398, 624.
Tobol’sk—chastise parents for not sending their kids to school.Both Mikhail and Treskin made donations to the gymnasium in order to set an example for Irkutians, and over the course of 1816 Slovtsov collected 8,650 rubles in such donations (a sum sufficiently impressive that Kazan’ presented his work to ministry officials for recognition). He also tried to integrate the gymnasium more fully into town life, staging plays at the newly-renovated building and introducing dancing lessons, to which all Irkutians were invited (and many attended). Through his attentive leadership, Kalashnikov claimed, the gymnasium “rose up from the ashes,” and, from a low of 10 pupils under Miller, enrollment reached 40 under Slovtsov.

Peter Andreevich also tried to improve the lot of his teachers—to speak out “for the good of the soslovie,” as he put it—by campaigning on their behalf. He complained to Kazan’ that teachers did not receive promotions as reliably as other chinovniki (even though the latter often “know nothing more than how to read and write”). He also pointed out that prices in Irkutsk had increased by 300 percent since teacher salaries had been set in 1804. He eventually managed to achieve salary increases, but he also found other means to supplement teacher income, creating, for example, paid librarian and inspector positions that teachers could hold concurrently. Although most Irkutians continued to see the gymnasium as superfluous—nobles and merchants, Slovtsov wrote,

37 NART f. 92, op. 1, d. 769, ll. 47-48ob.
38 KI, no. 82 (11 October 1816), 382; NART f. 92, op. 1, d. 600, ll. 72ob.-73; ZIZh, 203-04, 619-20.
remained “extremely cold-blooded toward enlightenment”—the image of teachers seems to have improved somewhat in Irkutsk.39

Irkutsk teachers, however, lived lives of comfort compared to their counterparts at district and parish schools. The status of district school teachers—let alone parish school teachers—was so lowly that university faculty threatened to use appointments to such posts as punishment for wayward students. In 1817, for example, the faculty at Kazan’ decided to penalize a group of students for “insubordination” by appointing one of them—“as an example to the rest”—to teach at the district school in the Urals town of Kurgan. When the students begged for mercy, the disciplinary committee rescinded its ruling: the students’ conduct was “bad” (durnym), but because their offences betrayed “neither a spirit of riotous conduct [buistva] nor of frantic zeal [ozhestocheniia],” the committee reasoned, “they should not bring upon the guilty such strict punishment as placement in district school teacher positions.”40

Irkutsk had seven district schools during Slovtsov’s directorship.41 They were founded after 1805, and their elementary curriculum—focused on reading, writing, and arithmetic—made them less objectionable to parents than the gymnasium. But they were terribly difficult to staff with qualified teachers. The district school at Nерchinsk will serve as an example. Its two teachers, Ivan Golubtsov and Gavriil Chernyshev, had been

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39 NART f. 92, op. 1, d. 1246, ll. 2-14; RGIA f. 733, op. 39, d. 347, ll. 1-14; RGIA f. 733, op. 39, d. 205, ll. 1-2, 5, 18-19ob.; NART f. 977, op. sov., d. 330, ll. 1-10ob.; Koreisha, Irkutskаia gimnaziia, 60, 262.
41 These were in Irkutsk (1805), Verkhneudinsk (1806), Iakutsk (1808), Nерchinsk (1811), Troitskosavsk (Kiakhta) (1812), Kirensk (1814), and Nizhneudinsk (1817). Their total enrollment in 1818 was 334. NART f. 92, op. 1, d. 769, ll. 83-87.
Kalashnikov’s classmates at the gymnasium. Neither was happy with his post, and both asked Slovtsov for transfers, citing the high cost of living in Nerchinsk. Golubtsov also sent frequent private letters to Slovtsov, explaining that Chernyshev persecuted him “every minute,” that he felt unsafe in his quarters at the schoolhouse (Chernyshev attacked him with a saber, he claimed), and that Chernyshev drank so much that he was often incapable of doing paperwork. He begged Slovtsov to “save me from an agonizing life in Nerchinsk,” which, he wrote, “has almost brought me to insanity.”

Making sense of such requests occupied an inordinate amount of Slovtsov’s time as director. He and Kalashnikov spent years in correspondence trying to figure out what exactly was going on in Nerchinsk. They learned that Chernyshev regularly travelled to villages outside of town, where he made gifts of vodka (typically “a bucket and a half”) to peasants in order to buy grain at lower prices than could be found in Nerchinsk. When Slovtsov questioned him, Chernyshev explained that there was “not a single resident” of Nerchinsk who did not do the same. However “unseemly” Peter Andreevich considered such a practice for a teacher, he conceded that it was excusable given the cost of goods in Nerchinsk and the low salaries teachers received. But he could not abide Chernyshev’s other misdeeds, and he requested permission from Kazan’ to remove the “hopeless” teacher. To his great frustration, five years would pass in correspondence over the request. In 1820 he abandoned his formal requests and sent a private letter to Kazan’, begging his superiors to remove “a teacher who brings disgrace to the school, and about

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42 RGIA f. 733, op. 83, d. 5, ll. 45-48ob.; NART f. 977, op. uch. kom., d. 182, ll. 1-1ob., 4-7ob.; NART f. 977, op. prav., d. 444, ll. 3-4.
whom it would be improper for me to spend such time corresponding without receiving, moreover, attention to my judgments.”

Slovtsov would be even more frustrated in managing Irkutsk’s parish schools. The foundational 1803 educational statute called for the founding of “at least one” school in every parish “or two,” depending on population and distance. The critical flaw of this vague measure—indeed, the critical flaw of Alexander I’s educational reform—was that it left the establishment and support of these schools to local initiative. By 1825, only six hundred such schools had been founded in the empire, half of them in towns. The “ladder” of schools that Alexander’s reform was intended to create was, in short, left without its bottom rungs. Not until the late 1830s, with the establishment of the Ministry of State Domains, did the state take more active measures to found parish schools.

One of the most remarkable aspects of Slovtsov’s directorship, however, was its vanguard approach in this sphere. By 1818 Irkutsk Province had nineteen parish schools, sixteen of which Slovtsov founded. Many of these would close after only a few years, but even in 1821, when their number had declined to 10, Irkutsk still had twice as many

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46 These were Olekminskoe (1802), Irkutskoe (1805), Oninskoe Buriatskoe (1806), Balaganskoie (1816), Biriul’skoe (1816), Cheremkhovskoe (1816), Indinskoe (1816), Kamenskoe (1816), Mal’tinskoe (1816), Manzurskoe (1816), Markovskoe (1816), Nizhneilimskoe (1816), Oëkskoe (1816), Petropavlovskoe (1816), Tunkinskoe (1816), Verkholenskoe (1816), Znamenskoe (1816), Urul’ginskoe Tungusskoe (1818), Selenginskoe Buriatskoe (1818). Their total enrollment in 1818 was 410. NART f. 92, op. 1, d. 769, ll. 83-87.
parish schools as any province in the educational district—including the far more populous provinces of Kazan’ and Nizhegorod.47

Slovtsov saw parish schools as the linchpin of educational reform. He drew on experiences gained during his 1814-15 inspection tours to recommend locations for their founding, recruited teachers from Irkutsk seminary, and personally supervised the teachers’ training before dispatching them to their new posts. Sixteen schools opened at the “voluntary consent” of village communities (though donors who contributed to their founding were enticed to do so with gifts of medals and daggers).

Most critical to the initial success of the schools was the support of Treskin. The governor had, in fact, ordered Slovtsov to look into the issue on his inspection tours, and he quickly approved his recommendations to found the schools in 1816. More importantly, Treskin pressured village communities to support them, circulating the educational statutes around the province together with a personal note that he was “certain that not only town dwellers, but even villagers” would admit the necessity of providing their children with an education that supplies the “learning necessary to every person in society.” He also tasked his officials with ensuring the schools were built, that each village provided an inspector to oversee their upkeep, and, crucially, that a compulsory annual collection be established for their support. No less important was that

47 NART f. 92, op. 1, d. 769, l. 86; NART f. 92, op. 1, d. 1276, ll. 1-2ob.; Koreisha, *Irkutskaia gimnaziia*, 189-95. The male population of Irkutsk province in 1815 has been estimated at 291,772, whereas those of Kazan’ and Nizhegorod provinces were 475,666 and 459,389, respectively. V. M. Kabuzan, *Narodonaselenie Rossii v XVIII-pervoi polovine XIX v.* (Moscow, 1963), 159-63.
Treskin had his own *chinovniki*—who had far more authority in the eyes of peasants than did teachers—visit the schools regularly.  

Treskin’s leadership in the endeavor was for Slovtsov a telling example of the necessity and power of active government in Siberia, and he gave the governor much credit for the founding of the schools. But he also blamed him for their failure. Less than a year after most of the schools opened, Treskin countermanded his own order requiring an annual collection for their support, and left their funding to the initiative of the peasants. He appears to have been uncertain about the legality of the collection (the educational statute left the opening of schools to the initiative of villages, and did not require, as Treskin had, that villagers must continue to fund the schools once they were opened). He also was angry about the cost of sending teachers from Irkutsk to inspect the schools—an expense, he pointed out, to which peasants had not agreed when the schools were founded. He reinstated the compulsory collections three months later, only to cancel them again in 1819. Peasants in many villages, receiving mixed signals from Irkutsk, stopped supporting the schools. The consequences for teachers were dire. In 1820 Slovtsov received, for instance, a letter from a favorite teacher, who worked at the school in the village of Mal’ta eighty versts down the Angara from Irkutsk. The peasants, he explained, had not paid his salary for months, his family was suffering.

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48 NART f. 977, op. sov., d. 285a, ll. 34-38; NART, op. sov., d. 234a; NART f. 92, op. 1, d. 769, ll. 53-56ob.; RGIA f. 1281, op. 11, d. 46; RGIA f. 733, op. 39, d. 204; RGIA f. 733, op. 39, d. 20; ZIZh, 620-21.
terribly, and he now spent much of his time searching for “firewood, splinters, and whatever else to stoke the furnace.”  

Many of Slovtsov’s parish schools would receive a new lease on life in 1820, when Speranskii restored the annual collections for their support. Peter Andreevich hoped that his experiences with Irkutsk’s parish schools might serve as a model for the empire. He urged his superiors at Kazan’ University to promote the annual collection model, stressing that parish schools were the “foundation of institutions of higher education.” But although his experiences in Irkutsk stoked debates even in Petersburg about whether peasants should be forced to support parish schools, the issue was not pursued further. And even in Irkutsk the annual collections lasted only until 1824, when the Governor-General of Eastern Siberia Lavinskii, citing their lack of legal basis, again cancelled them and left their support to the initiative of peasants.

Dealing with wayward teachers, working to increase interest in schooling, and trying to found parish schools were Peter Andreevich’s most challenging tasks as director. The post also required that he serve as a source of information about the empire’s most remote province. In 1813, for example, the Ministry of Popular Enlightenment, seeking to publish “the most reliable geography of the Russian empire” possible, tasked its school directors with exploring their districts and compiling data to revise the standard geography textbook. Many wrote back, understandably, that they had no idea how to go about fulfilling such a task, and Miller seems to have simply

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49 RGIA f. 733, op. 39, d. 348, ll. 1-5; NART f. 92, op. 1, d. 742, ll. 1-1ob., 3-4, 7-8; NART f. 92, op. 1, d. 1031, ll. 12-15, 16-19; RGIA f. 732, op. 2, d. 6, ll. 3-4ob.; RGIA f. 733, op. 40, d. 199.
50 NART f. 92, op. 1, d. 1031, ll. 12-15.
51 RGIA f. 733, op. 40, d. 199, ll. 1-123; NART f. 977, op. uch. kom., d. 604, ll. 1-5ob.
52 This was E. F. Ziablovskii, Noveishee zemleopisanie Rossiiskoi Imperii (St. Petersburg, 1807).
allowed the matter to disappear. Peter Andreevich, however, took an interest in the assignment and personally edited the often detailed reports that teachers throughout the province prepared. In addition to pointing out errors in the existing geography text—“in all of the Iakutsk region there were and are no camels”—the reports included descriptions of topography, soil, agriculture, population, and sights of interest (the annual Omul run at the mouth of the Selenga River, when in ten days fishermen would fill a thousand barrels of 1,200 fish apiece; the prosperous Old Believer settlements of the Transbaikal; the ancient gravesites in the Nerchinsk district that the locals called “lighthouses”).

When Speranskii was in Irkutsk in 1819-20, he regularly visited the gymnasium, and took pleasure in quizzing its pupils. Peter Andreevich, he wrote to their friend Arkadii Stolypin, was “respected by all” in town and “his gymnasium is quite possibly the only one in Russia that works well and with success; he is there every day.”

“To ride 8,000 verst at my age is no joke…”

While Speranskii and Slovtsov caught up on old times in Irkutsk, another of their old friends from St. Petersburg, Mikhail Magnitskii, had been appointed curator of the Kazan’ educational district—and, as such, Slovtsov’s new nachal’nik. It would prove a fateful development for Peter Andreevich.

Magnitskii is well-known as one of the most notorious figures of the mystical, reactionary world of Russia’s Bible Society years. Corresponding roughly with the last

decade of Alexander I’s reign and his Holy Alliance experiment, this period saw in Russia the amalgamation of the Holy Synod and the Ministry of Popular Enlightenment into a single Ministry of Popular Enlightenment and Spiritual Affairs, a project to translate the Bible into Russian, and the institution of a range of measures to ward off revolution by policing the “morality” of society and promoting a broad, non-denominational Christianity.\(^55\)

Few events of this period are more infamous than Magnitskii’s 1819 inspection of Kazan University. The inspection was occasioned by the poor condition of the university as well as by Alexander I’s concern about student disturbances at Prussian universities. The tsar’s confidante, Aleksandr Sturdza, had convinced him that universities were hotbeds of political unrest and that educational institutions needed to forge a tight bond between faith, learning, and obedience to the state. Magnitskii arrived in Kazan with such ideas in mind and, after finishing his inspection, flamboyantly recommended that the university be “destroyed” and its grounds “sprinkled with salt so that nothing grows there.”\(^56\)

As Elena Vishlenkova has recently emphasized, however, Magnitskii was neither “hero” nor “scoundrel,” and his inspection was a more complex affair than his eminently


quotable recommendations suggest. Indeed, Kazan’ University was badly in need of reform. In its fourteen years of existence it could boast of only 43 graduates, each costing the state an average of 40,000 rubles. Magnitskii’s firing of professors, regularly described as a tragedy, made sense to contemporaries distressed by the disorder that prevailed at the university. Vishlenkova suggests that Magnitskii’s notoriety, albeit well founded, has much to do with the self-images of the late-nineteenth century scholars who wrote about him. Whereas they tended to oppose the material and the spiritual, lauded opposition to authority, had narrow specializations, and prioritized public over private life, university figures of the early nineteenth century were supposed to be broadly trained “pedagogue-encyclopedists.” It was partly for this reason that professors in Alexandrine Russia were responsible not only for teaching and research, but also for inspecting gymnasiums, district, and parish schools, managing libraries, exercising control over the private lives of students, overseeing university maintenance, and a range of other tasks.  

Among the most unloved of faculty duties were “visitations.” Alexander’s education statutes required professors to perform annual inspections of the schools in their districts. Their purpose was to acquaint faculty with the gymnasiums, district, and parish schools under their administration in a more direct way than the reports of gymnasium directors like Peter Andreevich could allow. Visitations were, however, extraordinarily laborious tasks that required long hours on the road, nights in strange houses and post stations, and much direct contact with “common people.” For most

professors at Kazan’ University—many of them Germans like Ivan Miller—life in Kazan’ was bad enough.58

The distances that separated Siberia’s schools made performing visitations there all the more impractical, and it was for this reason that Magnitskii appointed Slovtsov “permanent vizitator of all Siberian schools” (as well as of the schools of Perm’, Viatka, and Kazan’ provinces). Magnitskii’s creation of the position was a way around the unworkable situation created by Alexander I’s university reform: because Kazan’ was the head of an educational district that covered the vast majority of the empire, its faculty had no way to carry out the required visitations. With the creation of the Siberian vizitator position, Peter Andreevich became, in short, the university’s Siberian division: all matters relating to Siberia, whether inspections, complaints of directors and teachers, issues regarding the upkeep of buildings, and so on, were to go through him before reaching Kazan’.

Magnitskii treated Slovtsov well in the position, allocating him an annual salary of 3,000 rubles (in addition to travel costs) and regularly recommending him for promotions and rewards. Peter Andreevich left Irkutsk for his first inspection tour, which took him all the way to Kazan’, in November 1820. But because Kazan’ lay outside the boundaries of Siberia (Slovtsov’s place of exile), he first had to secure permission from Petersburg to undertake the trip. That soon arrived, though with the stipulation that he

58 PSZ (1), vol. 28, no. 21,500 (5 November 1804): 623-24; Zagoskin, Istoriia imperatorskago kazanskago universiteta, III: 175; Vishlenkova, Kazanski universitet, 158-60.
could not travel west of Kazan’ province. Even so, Kalashnikov later explained without a touch of irony, Peter Andreevich could once again “inhale the free air of Russia.”

Magnitskii sent Slovtsov a copy of the general instructions for the vizitator post, but he also asked Peter Andreevich to compose a set of instructions for his new role and “define the goal and methods of the enlightenment of Siberia appropriate to her situation.” Slovtsov drew up the instructions in 1821, and their contents offer a window into his thinking about the task before him. Although they also reflect the trends of the “Bible Society decade,” Peter Andreevich’s letters and later writings make clear that he was genuinely convinced of the need to blend secular and sacred education—a conviction fully in line with his and Speranski’s sermons and writings from their seminary days.

The “goal of public [narodnogo] education in Siberia,” he explained, was sixfold: to prepare the children of chinovniki for service, and thereby avoid having to rely on the expensive alternative of importing chinovniki from Russia; to provide the children of merchants, meshchane, and peasants with learning essential to their estates (or “at least to teach them to read, write, and count correctly”); to guard the children of “unfortunates” (exiles) from the “contagion” so close to them (i.e., their parents); to “arouse a desire for enlightenment in half-savage [tribes] and attract their children to schools”; to prepare

59 ZIZh, 623-24, 631; OR RNB f. 702, op.1, d. 29, ll. 1-6; NART f. 977, op. uch. kom., d. 1025, ll. 1-2ob., 133-34ob., 137-37ob.; NART f. 92, op. 1, d. 886, l. 50; NART f. 977, op. prav, d. 309; NART 92, op. 1, d. 1012; RGIA f. 733, op. 39, d. 295, l. 10; RGIA f. 733, op. 39, d. 35, ll. 1-9ob.; RGIA f. 732, op. 2, d. 122, ll. 1-5.
60 OR RNB f. 702, op. 1, d. 29, ll. 4-6; NART f. 92, op. 1, d. 886, ll. 49-53ob.
61 Slovtsov’s instructions were not presented for confirmation because there was an ongoing project about the founding of an institute of higher education (vyshee uchilishche) that would have eliminated his position as vizitator. The school was never created, though Slovtsov was a leading player in discussions about it (see below). RGIA f. 733, op. 39, d. 295, ll. 129-30.
62 The phrase “Bible Society decade” is from Flynn, University Reform.
qualified teachers; and “above all to establish and root in this land domestic enlightenment, the enlightenment of our fathers, founded on the teachings of Jesus Christ, and thereby hinder the destructive spirit of Western European pseudoenlightenment from entering this remote region of the world.”63

The vizitator, Slovtsov explained, was to play the role of the university rector and director over the gymnasiums under his watch. Having experienced in Irkutsk the problems of having to wait on Kazan’ to take action, he requested that the vizitator have “his own right to threaten” (sobstvennoe pravo ugrozy) rather than be allowed merely to send his opinions to the university. If, he explained, the vizitator had to write to the university for approval on all occasions, then the “authoritylessness” (beznachal’vstvennost’) that reigned among the schools would not improve, as vizitator reports would reach the university alongside those of “careless or undeserving school chinovniki.” “I speak not for my own good,” Slovtsov added, “but for the good of the pursuit.”64

Most remarkable about Slovtsov’s post was the amount of travel it required. At the time of his appointment there were some 80 public schools in the provinces under his watch.65 During his first tour of duty in 1820-21, he spent four winter months wandering between schools along the long road from Irkutsk to Kazan’. Exhausted, he appended a single-sentence note to the report he submitted to Magnitskii: “I see the shore of my

63 RGIA f. 733, op. 40, d. 181, ll. 15-16.
64 NART f. 92, op. 1, d. 1598, ll. 23-32ob. (“Ia govoriu ne za sebia, a za delo”).
65 Slovtsov’s first inspection tour included Kazan’ Province (which had 17 schools in 1821). He would inspect Kazan’ schools only during that tour of duty, after which he focused on the schools of Siberia (Tobol’sk, Tomsk, and Irkutsk provinces, which had 13, 6, and 18 schools in 1821, respectively) and the Urals (Perm’ and Viatka provinces, which each had 13 schools in 1821). NART f. 92, op. 1, d. 1276, ll. 1-2ob.
visitation, and rejoice that I will soon cease to be a nomad." When he arrived in Kazan he wrote to Kalashnikov that “To ride 8,000 versts at my age is no joke.” After a brief stay there, he left for Tobol’sk, his base for the next three years. In 1824 he again went eastward, inspecting the schools along the road between Tobol’sk and Nerchinsk. That winter he journeyed up the Lena River to Jakutsk, after which he spent 1825 in Irkutsk and returned to Tobol’sk in 1826. February 1827 saw another Arctic excursion, this time to Berëzov in Western Siberia, followed by an inspection of Tobol’sk province. He finished his last tour of duty in 1828, when he inspected the schools of Perm’ and Viatka provinces, exploring the villages of his youth along the way. All in all, Kalashnikov calculated, Slovtsov’s work as a *vizitator* “cost” him more than 29,000 versts (“nearly, that is, a trip around the world”).

What did Peter Andreevich do in all of these places? According to protocol, he had to arrive unannounced and begin his inspection immediately, so as to catch teachers and pupils by surprise. In addition to observing and testing teachers and pupils, he was responsible for auditing school accounts and properties, making sure buildings were in good repair, collecting testimony from locals on teachers, and attempting to resolve any major problems. Inspections of parish and district schools typically lasted one or two days, while those of gymnasiums could last a week or more. Because the “fates of *chinovniki*” hung on his inspections, Slovtsov explained in the instructions he compiled,

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66 NART f. 92, op. 1, d. 1012, l. 113.
67 IRLI f. 120, op .1, d. 100, l. 30ob. (5 March 1821).
68 OR RNB f. 588, fol. IV, no. 814, vol. 2, l. 114; ZIZh, 630-32. Inspection “journals” from all of Slovtsov’s tours of duty as *vizitator* have survived. They include NART f. 977, op. uch. kom., d. 596; NART f. 977, op. uch. kom., d 1054; NART f. 977, op. sov., d. 715; NART f. 977, op. sov., d. 940; NART f. 977, op. uch. kom, d. 595; NART f. 92, op. 1, d. 2506; NART f. 977, op. sov., d. 586; NART f. 92, op. 1, d. 1507; NART f. 92, op. 1, d. 1683; NART f. 977, op. uch. kom, d. 1225.
he tried to carry himself “as though performing a mass.” He administered oral examinations to pupils, both on curricular subjects and moral questions (“When your mother or father admonishes you, what do you feel?”; “Is it possible to consider the Tatar or Kalmyk close to you?”). Finally, before moving on to the next school, he compiled a report, which all school chinovniki were required to sign. 69

The content of these reports suggests that collecting signatures was often a demoralizing affair. For Peter Andreevich gave many teachers truly unflattering reviews: the Kainsk teacher who “cannot teach, has no learning whatsoever, and is of unreliable conduct”; the Ekaterinburg teacher who “smells of alcohol”; the two Verkhotur’e teachers, one a “model lazy-bones,” “known in town as a man incapable of good behavior,” the other “unworthy of his position even by his appearance.” The pupils of such teachers tested as might be expected. Ekaterinburg’s district school, Slovtsov reported in 1828, was so badly run that, because pupils “learned nothing” that year, he decided to cancel the scheduled public examination “so that the school did not shame itself.” Teachers at the district school in Irbit, meanwhile, relied so heavily on rote memorization in teaching their pupils—officially discouraged by the ministry—that “it is difficult to imagine the wretched stupidity to which the pupils have been reduced.” Schoolhouses,

69 RGIA f. 733, op. 40, d. 181, ll. 32ob.-35ob.
meanwhile, were often in shoddier shape than their occupants, and Slovtsov often found himself writing his reports while sitting in chairs in which, he wrote, “even a decently dressed young boy is ashamed to sit.”

But Peter Andreevich was convinced that, “despite the frequent shortcomings,” education in Siberia was improving. On occasion, he was even delighted with what he found: the “zeal of the young nastavnik” Kablukov in Iakutsk; the Krasnoiarsk pupils who answered his questions with no trace of memorization, but freely and thoughtfully; the teacher at the Tunkinsk village school, Khudiakov, a “good Christian” sufficiently popular with his Buriat pupils that they spent time with him outside of class reading books together. He also believed that, given their low compensation and the difficulty of their work, teachers deserved leniency. When he submitted an 1820 report to the curator, for example, he appended a private request: “I most humbly beseech you not to punish too severely the school chinovniki who have not been exacting at their posts. They are all decent people in their way of life—much better than chinovniki in other areas of service.”

Above all, Slovtsov’s experiences as Siberia’s nomadic vizitator confirmed his conviction that what was most needed for improvement was nadzor—unremitting supervision—from well-meaning chinovniki like himself. The very creation of his vizitator position was for him evidence of progress in this respect, and he believed that the service he rendered Siberia’s schools was essential. When, for example, he reached

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70 NART f. 92, op. 1, d. 2506, ll. 34, 35-35ob., 36ob., 44-44ob.; NART f. 977, op. uch. kom., d. 1225, ll. 379-80.
71 NART f. 92, op. 1, d. 1683, l. 75; NART f. 977, op. uch. kom. d. 596, l. 17. NART f. 977, op. uch. kom., d. 1054, ll. 17-18ob.; NART f. 977, op. uch. kom., d. 595, l. 22-22ob.; NART f. 92, op. 1, d. 1012, ll. 4-5ob.
Irkutsk in 1824—after, he proudly reported, spending “four months on the inspection of 15 schools separated by 6,381 verst[s]”—he asked whether it was necessary to continue on to Iakutsk (“from Kirensk to Iakutsk and back is 3,200 verst[s], but there are only two schools in this distance”). But even after his superiors gave him permission to do as he pleased—as they did for most all of his requests—he decided that it was his duty to make the trip.\textsuperscript{72} Surveillance, he believed, was essential: after boasting of the unprecedented order his 1824 inspection brought to Tobol’sk’s gymnasium, he added that he would not “make bold to vouch for the continuation of this strict order for long, knowing by many years of experience that only unremitting local surveillance is mighty enough to maintain the educational machine, ready at any minute to break down.”\textsuperscript{73}

Alongside his inspections, Peter Andreevich completed a variety of irregular tasks as \textit{vizitator}. These were often tedious. When a Tobol’sk merchant donated his garden to the gymnasium, Slovtsov was tasked making it useful (and when he explained that its distance from town made the garden useless, he was tasked with selling it).\textsuperscript{74} When Nicholas I wanted to know, for no apparent reason beyond curiosity, what sorts of commemorative medals were on hand at schools around the empire, Slovtsov had to conduct an investigation as to why 26 such medals had long ago disappeared from Viatka’s gymnasium (a “hopeless” affair, he explained, that caused “more grief and

\textsuperscript{72} NART f. 977, op. uch. kom., d. 595, ll. 6ob., 28. He also seems not to have questioned the \textit{cost of nadzor}: to send Slovtsov on the Iakutsk trip cost the treasury nearly 1,800 rubles—six times, that is, the annual salary of one district school teacher (300 rubles). NART f. 92, op. 1, d. 1683, ll. 72-72ob.

\textsuperscript{73} NART f. 977, op. uch. kom, d. 596, l. 1.

\textsuperscript{74} RGIA f. 733, op. 744, op. 40, dl. 27, ll. 1-1ob., 10-10ob., 31-32.
embarrassment for the careful director of schools than [the medals] are worth”). 75 But other chores were more gratifying. In 1828 he secured permission for Tobol’sk musicians to give concerts in the gymnasium’s main hall and was put in charge of reviewing their programs before each concert. 76 And when Kazan’ University decided to create a professorship of Mongolian in 1827, its curator asked Slovtsov to arrange for two students to study with Aleksandr Igumnov, a translator for the Irkutsk governor who had been raised among Buriats. Igumnov was a friend of Slovtsov’s, and he wrote to Peter Andreevich of his delight to have the opportunity before he died to make the students “complete heirs of everything that I to this day have acquired and know” (unlike so many ambitious ventures, this one would prove successful: the student, Osip Kovalevskii, after five years of study with Igumnov and travel throughout the Transbaikal, Mongolia, and China, returned to Kazan’ University as Europe’s first professor of Mongolian in 1833). 77

As the empire’s most informed chinovnik on matters of Siberian education, Slovtsov also played an important role in debates over its reform. Magnitskii asked for his opinion about the future of Siberian schools in 1819, and Peter Andreevich responded with a series of reports that reflected lessons he had learned in Irkutsk about the importance of teacher compensation, the need for active support of parish schools, and the challenge of convincing parents of the need for anything beyond basic literacy. The primary goal for Siberian schools, he noted, ought to be the same as for other schools in

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75 NART f. 977, op. uch. kom, d. 1081, ll. 1-139. Quote from 64-65.
76 NART f. 92, op. 1, d. 2887, ll. 1-6ob.
77 NART f. 92, op. 1, d. 2237, ll. 1-7ob.; NART f. 977, op. kom., d. 1164; NART f. 977, op. sov, d. 1266; NART 977, op. prav, d. 1761; NART f. 10, op. 5, d. 843a. On Kovalevskii see G. F. Shamov, Professor O. M. Kovalevskii: Ocherk zhizni i nauchnoi deiatel’nosti (Kazan’: Izdatel’stvo Kazanskogo Universiteta, 1983).
the empire: to “ward off the contagions” of “drunkenness, idleness, and their consequences.” Although he did believe that the “freethinking” that scandalized officials like Magnitskii during these years was a problem, he emphasized that Siberia’s challenges were more basic:

In the Siberian gymnasiums, as far as I know, there is no reason to fear or even to presume the existence of a spirit of deism. [...] In a place where people are indifferent to all but worldly gains [zhiteiskikh vygod], the errors of a fiery mind cannot even flare up without dying out that very same moment. Unfortunately, it must be said that Siberia is extremely cold, both to abstract subjects as well as spiritual truths. Neither Fenelon nor Spinoza are likely to form any sects here. 78

But while he emphasized the need for parish schools, Slovtsov did hope that Siberia’s gymnasiums would offer more advanced instruction about Siberia. Siberia, he pointed out, had a complex history and frontier with China worth studying. It had long been of great interest to “Parisian and Petersburgian academics,” whose scientific expeditions offered a reminder that “even the air and land of eastern Siberia offer a special spectacle for the sciences.” But such expeditions were a costly means, Peter Andreevich noted ironically, to measure “the mouths of a few rivers in Irkutsk province.” He suggested that Siberia should have its own institute of higher education that would not only train Sibiriaki to do such work, but also save the treasury money by producing competent chinovniki in Siberia. The latter were particularly desirable, he explained, for they would relieve Siberia from relying on chinovniki from the “interior provinces”

78 NART f. 92, op. 1, d. 1598, ll. 30-31ob.
(many of whom came only for the hardship benefits that Siberian service offered—higher salaries and faster promotion in particular—and left as quickly as possible).\textsuperscript{79}

Drawing on Slovtsov’s recommendations, Magnitskii proposed the founding of a “Higher Siberian School” (\textit{Vysshee Sibirskoe Uchilishche}) that would prepare Siberian boys for university study, teaching positions, service careers, and trade with China. Plans for a Siberian university had been part of Alexander I’s educational reform, which called for the founding of a university in Tobol’sk as soon as possible. Slovtsov was delighted to learn that Magnitskii had supported his recommendations and thus revived talk of an institute of higher education for Siberia (a “lighthouse,” he explained, from which “rays of enlightenment could spread gradually across these remote and vast provinces”). Kazan’ University, he added, was simply too remote to “provide Siberia with the proper level of enlightenment.” But rather than found the school in Tobol’sk, he urged Magnitskii (successfully) to consider Barnaul, both for its more central location and better climate.\textsuperscript{80}

The project, however, slowly died over the course of the 1820s. Slovtsov and Magnitskii’s main suggestions received approval, but Siberia’s governors, tasked with finding a means to fund the school, failed to do so.\textsuperscript{81} Moreover, as correspondence over

\textsuperscript{79} NART f. 92, op. 1, d. 1598, ll. 18-23ob.
\textsuperscript{80} NART f. 92, op. 1, d. 1598, ll. 88-88ob., 103-04; V. S. Manassein, \textit{Voznikovenie i razvitie idei uchrezhdeniia Sibirskogo universiteta v sviazii s istoriej prosveshcheniia v Sibiri v pervoi chetverti XIX stoletiia} (Irkutsk, 1924).
\textsuperscript{81} They did have remarkable suggestions for collecting the funds, however. The Governor-General of Western Siberia Kaptevich suggested that profits from the fishing industry on a number of Siberian lakes be used to support the school, but when he asked his counterpart, Governor-General of Eastern Siberia Lavinskii, to assist by contributing profits made from fishing the annual Omul run on the Selenga River delta, Lavinskii refused. Instead, Lavinskii suggested that funds be collected by confiscating the “rich properties” of the former Jesuit Academy in Vil’no, which, he explained, was controlled by Vil’no
the project dragged on, many questioned whether Siberia was ready to support such a school, particularly given the difficulty of getting students to complete a full course of study even at the existing gymnasiums. Shortly before the project was scrapped in 1828, Senators Bezrodnyi and Kurakin, in Tobol’sk while performing an inspection of Western Siberia, asked Slovtsov whether one higher institute of education would be sufficient for Siberia, given its enormous size. Peter Andreevich responded that it was too soon for even one.82

Peter Andreevich’s change of heart on the project reflected his anger over the fate of Irkutsk’s parish schools. As a result of his initial cooperation with Treskin, their number had at one point reached nineteen. But, citing the lack of a legal basis for compelling annual collections for their support, the Governor-General of Eastern Siberia Lavinskii again cancelled the requirement in 1824. The schools closed in rapid succession, and only four were left by 1828. With Lavinskii’s act, Slovtsov explained in his report to the senators, Siberia “took a step back” and now “practically begins and ends her enlightenment in district schools alone.”83

Slovtsov took the parish school closings personally. He wrote to Kalashnikov that he had once planned to spend the rest of his life in Irkutsk, but because doing that would require remaining in the same town as Lavinskii—a “boor and a lout” who had

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82 RGIA f. 737, op. 1, d. 35, ll. 1-21; RGIA f. 733, op. 40, d. 67, ll. 1-154, especially 4-14.
83 RGIA f. 737, op. 1, d. 35, ll. 23-29.
“destroyed” his schools but “cannot destroy or relocate a single tavern”—he could no longer abide the idea. When he returned from Iakutsk in 1825, he wrote to Magnitskii:

The beautiful, but empty schoolhouses that I saw along the road at five villages remain witnesses, but witnesses to what truth it is difficult to grasp. Did the peasant communities truly wish […] to repudiate the schools, without which their children have no place to learn religious dogma, reading, and writing? If they did wish for that, in defiance of their own benefit, in defiance of the Church and the good discretion of our MONARCH-educator, then are the provincial authorities obligated, and by what, instantly to fulfill the immature desires of peasants?

The sad fate of parish schools was for Slovtsov a reminder of what he considered the enduring truth of Russian history—the need for active state leadership of society.

“Resolute will,” he had written years before, was needed to cut through the “rude vice” of village life. If the state would force every village of 300 inhabitants to support a school, he suggested, it could forever alter village mentalities. Even if the requirement lasted just fifteen years, he wrote, “Siberia once and forever would acquaint itself with learning” and then “one could sensibly pin one’s hopes on the will of the parents themselves.”

Long days and nights passed in carriages and sleighs were, of course, as fertile for reveries as for plans of educational reform (which, of course, were not always so different from one another). Peter Andreevich described many of his experiences on the road in a series of writings he published during the 1820s. During his first years as vizitator, when he was just beginning his “nomad” life, he wrote an article called “The Shadow of Chinggis Khan.” He contrasted Siberia’s fate under Mongol rule with its optimistic

84 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 101, ll. 44-45ob. (3 January 1825).
85 NART f. 92, op. 1, d. 1683, ll. 75-75ob.
86 NART f. 92, op. 1, d. 1012, ll. 33-37.
future as part of Russia (Chinggis Khan, he explained, did not have a “mind of a size corresponding to his successes” because he did not “establish anything in service of abundance, trade, and education”).\(^8^7\) He picked up this theme of progress in his “Letters from Siberia in the Year 1826,” an introspective series of reflections he published first in *Moscow Telegraph* and then in 1828 as a book. The “letters” covered a range of topics, but a defense of his role in Russia’s “great affair” of enlightenment was at their core. He concluded with an argument for the importance of his work:

> I know that conspicuous successes in literature require sensitivity of the soul, capacity for delight, study of theory of the refined, taste, and, it follows, company—and all of this Siberia yet lacks; but one cannot fail to see that attention to the education of the head is more or less beginning to take shape. Educated men, having not long ago repaired the title of teacher, and modest tribes of young men, having studied in the provincial gymnasiums, are manifestly improving the regularity and clarity of official paperwork, and, what is more, adorning their relations with unheard-of learning. And even village-level paperwork in Western Siberia is the fruit of the district schools. Meanwhile, as a security for enlightenment [в залог просвещения] a modest family of nastavniki does not cease to grow that considers it the honor of its calling to dedicate its leisure time to learning. Concealed in the seclusion of the gymnasiums, they, naturally, are not conspicuous personages; their peaceful evening lamps do not attract outsiders, who might come to reflect, and through whom rays of conversation might break into society. But someday these rays will constitute a pleasant lamp that does not blind. […]

Although, as this passage suggests, Peter Andreevich believed that Siberia’s best days lay ahead, he also felt it necessary to recognize accomplishments:

Honorable chinovniki who have earned their titles through feats of service, well-intentioned merchants, caring meshchane and people from the

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humbler town estates have in recent years begun to consider public educational institutions a proper place for the education of their children. Having participated in a certain way in the supervision of Siberian schools, […] I am impelled by a feeling of justice to certify for you on the open courtroom of all Siberia that some ten years ago there were no more than a third as many pupils as the current number. […]

To this day nearly all of you who live west of the Urals have reckoned in your accounts only the products of Siberia: her metals, her marbles and jaspers, her amethysts and berylliums, her Kiakhta trade, her sables and beavers. Allow into your accounts, at least on this occasion, our hopes of enlightenment and have a look at the table I have attached.88

The table, which did not include data from the provinces of Viatka and Perm’, indicated that in 1826 there were a total of 1,588 pupils studying at two gymnasia, twenty district schools, and ten parish schools. Almost none of the schools on his list, he might have pointed out, existed two decades earlier.89

Peter Andreevich’s “Letters from Siberia” contain less businesslike musings as well. Take, for instance, his description of his February 1827 visit to remote Berëzov:

Not without some pride I would like to tell you about the dandified equipage that I made in Berëzov on a flying sledge, harnessed with a troika of white, fast-legged reindeer, whose heads, besides majestic, branchy horns, were also adorned with crimson leather appendages. Carried about town on a picturesque Dianna-like sledge, I had the sensation of being in some kind of new, fabulous situation.90

While not being pulled around by his troika of reindeer, Peter Andreevich also traced in Berëzov the steps of Aleksandr Menshikov, the famous assistant to Peter I who died in exile there after Peter I’s death. As he would do again in his works, Slovtsov wrote a

88 *PIS*, 61-63.
89 *PIS*, 64. Slovtsov’s table is comparable with the 1828 enrollment data collected for the schools, which indicate that there were 1,554 pupils. RGIA f. 732, op. 1, d. 293, ll. 307-12.
90 *PIS*, 37.
description of Menshikov that was as much autobiographical as historical. The “final activities of this strong soul,” he wrote, included building a wooden church “with his own hands” and reading “edifying books to the simple people”: “Not only did he not grumble about his lot, he used every opportunity to thank God with vivacity that He had humbled him. […] Menshikov served the Great [Peter I] and then, after his pride was humiliated, he went to serve the Almighty with the most splendid selflessness” (prevoskhodneishim samootverzheniem).\(^\text{91}\)

The whole time Peter Andreevich was performing his nomadic vizitator service he remained, like Menshikov, an exile. The stigma weighed on him, and numerous officials appealed on his behalf. The Governor-General of Western Siberia held Slovtsov in high regard, and he asked Nicholas I in 1827 to grant him permission to travel freely in the empire. But the tsar ordered that Slovtsov continue serving in his current place. Later that summer, when the senators were in Tobol’sk during their inspection, Slovtsov presented, along with his changed opinion on the Barnaul school, an explanation of his own circumstances. He asked them to renew his plea that his “zealous service in Siberia rescind the operation of the secret decree of 18 February 1808.” He seems not to have expected much to come of their efforts. One of the senators was “filled with tender goodness,” he told Kalashnikov, but the other was a “scented doll that barely swings its mouth open”: “The Spirit preaches to me, in the words of Paul, eternal bonds, for even my name day is the day of chains” (den’ verig). But the senators’ appeal was successful,

\(^{91}\) PIS, 47-48.
and on February 24, 1828, after two decades of banishment, Slovtsov received word that the tsar had granted him permission to live and serve wherever he pleased.\footnote{OR RNB f. 702, op. 1, d. 11, ll. 111-19; IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 102, l. 19ob. (14 May 1827); IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 102, l. 32 (13 November 1827); ZIZh, 631-32.}

As soon as the curator of Kazan’ educational district learned of his vizitator’s changed fate, he urged Slovtsov to stay at his post. Siberia’s schools, he wrote, “would lose in you a nachal’nik who would be very difficult to replace.”\footnote{OR RNB f. 702, op. 1, d. 34, ll. 1-8; f. 702, op. 1, d. 19, l. 1.} Slovtsov did as he was asked, finishing the inspections of Perm’ and Viatka provinces scheduled for that summer. But his days as vizitator were numbered. On December 8, 1828 the position itself was eliminated when a broad educational reform removed Siberia’s schools from the supervision of Kazan’ University and placed them under the authority of local governors. The reason for the change was the eternal Russian challenge: distance. Kazan’, it was finally admitted, was simply too remote to administer Siberia’s schools effectively. It was, of course, for that reason that the position of vizitator had been created in 1821. But even after eight years and more than 29,000 versts, Slovtsov had managed to inspect most of the schools under his watch only once. His performance received universal praise from his superiors, but to inspect all of Siberia’s schools, the ministry concluded, was “practically impossible for one man.” Moreover, because the vizitator is “completely independent” of governors and, “because of the distance of the place, just as independent of Kazan’ University,” a chinovnik less conscientious than Slovtsov might “take it into his mind to use this circumstance for wickedness.” It was for this reason that, “for the good of enlightenment in Siberia,” Siberian schools were
removed from the oversight of Kazan’ and put under the immediate supervision of the governors.\textsuperscript{94}

Peter Andreevich learned of the elimination of his post in a letter directly from the new Minister of Popular Enlightenment, Karl Lieven. Lieven and the curator in Kazan’ were both extraordinarily impressed with Slovtsov and they urged him to continue service. The curator, “not wishing to lose in Slovtsov a zealous, experienced, impartial chinovnik” hoped to appoint him to direct Kazan’ University’s administration of the remaining schools in its district. The minister, however, wanted Slovtsov in Petersburg. He sent Peter Andreevich a personal letter, urging him to come to the imperial capital and offering 1,000 rubles and six horses to cover the trip. When Slovtsov declined, Lieven tried again, this time informing Slovtsov that he had been awarded another Order of Vladimir and offering him the directorship of the Richelieu Lycée in Odessa, which he believed was perfect for Slovtsov’s talents (like Miller’s gymnasium, he pointed out, it was “a shaky temple” in a “remote region”). Again Slovtsov declined, claiming—dubiously—that he could no longer make the trip because of old age and poor health. He was finally awarded a full pension in September 1829. Because he had not served the required twenty years in the Ministry of Popular Enlightenment, he was not entitled to the full pension, but the minister, citing Slovtsov’s “outstanding diligence and zeal for the good of popular enlightenment” and “exemplary morality,” received permission from the tsar to make an exception.\textsuperscript{95}

\textsuperscript{94} RGIA f. 737, op. 1, d. 35, ll. 37-37ob.
\textsuperscript{95} RGIA f. 733, op. 39, d. 295, ll. 200-06, 229-29ob.; OR RNB f. 702, op. 1, d. 28; OR RNB f. 702, op. 1, d. 12, ll. 1-7; RGIA f. 733, op. 39, d. 295, ll. 202-06; ZIZh, 633-34.
In addition to his pension, Slovtsov made just one other request: permission to continue wearing after his retirement the special *vizitator* uniform he had petitioned for years earlier. As the request implies, Peter Andreevich’s career as the *nachal’nik* of Siberian enlightenment, however taxing, lonesome, and riddled with disappointments, was one in which he took great pride. In it he found a role for himself in Russia’s “great affair.” He wrote to Kalashnikov in 1825 that he was “utterly alone, losing vision and strength,” but if he were to abandon his *vizitator* position, he explained, “Siberian Minerva will scarcely ever see another servant as dedicated as I was to her; wiser and more erudite than me there will be many, but more dedicated—unlikely!”

It was an assessment with which the staff at Irkutsk’s gymnasium agreed. After learning of Peter Andreevich’s retirement, its new director requested permission to make a portrait of Slovtsov and hang it in the building he had renovated:

Irkutsk’s schools, and its gymnasium in particular, owe their current situation largely to their *vizitator*, Actual State Councilor Peter Andreevich Slovtsov, under whose management they saw not simple execution the responsibilities bestowed on him from above, but true, fatherly concern and heartfelt affection for the nurseries of enlightenment in Russia’s remote land. In commemoration of the feelings of profound gratitude to His Excellency and in order to remember him even when Irkutsk schools are under a different administration, I take the liberty to ask Your High Nobleness permission to place a portrait of him in the gymnasium hall. I consider it my duty to add that these feelings inspire not only myself, but all the *chinovniki* of the gymnasium as well.

The curator in Kazan’ thought this a splendid idea, adding that the request confirmed everything he had come to know about Slovtsov. Moreover, he noted, “subordinates very

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96 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 101, l. 50ob. (17 April 1825).
rarely remember the care of their nachal’nik,” and the proposal “does them no less honor than it does to Slovtsov himself.”

But no portrait followed. Only the emperor, the Minister of Popular Enlightenment explained, could enjoy such an honor.97

“I prepared you through a broad plan…”

Peter Andreevich did not neglect Ivan Timofeevich during his nomadic decade. On the contrary, his vizitator years were the most active in their correspondence. Their separation was a difficult one that, as letter after emotional letter attest, they hoped would end in reunion. They met again only briefly, but the lessons Peter Andreevich sought to instill in Ivan Timofeevich about service, enlightenment, and God would prove foundational. “In time you will recognize,” he wrote to Kalashnikov after they parted in 1823, “that I prepared you through a broad plan and sought to unite in you the academic and the man of state, the artist and the Christian.”98

Peter Andreevich took great interest in shaping his pupil. He shared his salary with Kalashnikov to encourage him to “remain honorable” and avoid bribes in service.99 He urged Ivan Timofeevich to keep at his violin practice, offering the violin-playing governor of Perm’ as an example of a man who combined talents in music and service. He also directed Kalashnikov’s reading, sending many books along with his letters: renowned physicist Leonhard Euler’s Letters to a German Princess about Various Physical and Philosophical Subjects; Jean-Louis de Lolme’s The Constitution of

97 RGIA f. 733, op. 39, d. 295, ll. 232-37.
98 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 101, ll. 36-36ob. (8 December 1823).
99 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 101, ll. 1-2 (24 January 1822).
England; Prussian historian Friedrich Ancillon’s *Table of Revolutions in the Political System of Europe since the Fifteenth Century*; and Polish mathematician and astronomer, Jan Śniadecki’s *Geography, or a Mathematical and Physical Description of the Earth* (a book, Slovtsov pointed out, that should not only be required reading for *chinovniki*—so that the *chinovnik* has a “true perception of the state of the earth”—but should be “inseparable from us, like Adam Smith, like the Bible”).¹⁰⁰

Peter Andreevich was proud of the course of study he provided Kalashnikov. “Young Sheremetev,” he boasted, “does not have such extensive practice from the multitude of teachers who tend to him all day.”¹⁰¹ He gave Kalashnikov essay prompts and passages for translation, and was punctual in providing feedback (remarkably so, given the Siberian distances that separated them). When Kalashnikov lamented being left behind in Irkutsk, Slovtsov offered encouragement: “Everywhere, even in Irkutsk,” he counseled, “one can make oneself an enlightened and literary man, so long as you want it.”¹⁰²

Peter Andreevich was, however, a stern critic—particularly when Kalashnikov ventured into the realm of what he called “idiotic grandiloquence.” One manuscript from these years, Kalashnikov’s “Melancholic View of Siberia: An Autumnal Fantasy” (1821), offers an example of what Slovtsov had mind with the phrase. In the piece, Kalashnikov sits on the bank of the Angara, surrounded by “speechless mountains” and “pensive birch

¹⁰⁰ IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 101, ll. 48ob., 50ob. (17 April 1825). He also set aside twelve volumes of Voltaire for his pupil—a donation he originally had made to the Tobol’sk gymnasium, but had to take back when Voltaire was declared “injurious” to young minds (a judgment with which Peter Andreevich did not wholly disagree). IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 101, l. 7 (18 January 1822).
¹⁰¹ IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 101, l. 7ob. (18 January 1822). The Sheremetevs were among the wealthiest and most famous of Russian noble families.
¹⁰² OR RNB f. 702, op. 1, d. 17, ll. 1-1ob. (29 June 1821).
trees.” He describes the wilds of Irkutsk province as a land lost to time where man is doomed to “sleep” until the “alarm [budil’nik] summons him to eternity.” He casts the Evenki as stereotypical noble savages, and contrasts their lot to his own:

I envy you, son of the wasteland! Disturbed neither by the pursuit of desires, nor by dreams, you sleep calmly amidst the din of the forests, in the embrace of sweet love, you sleep, while meanwhile in the better region [v luchshei polose] of the world, the victim of the distinctions of status [sostoianii], the poor youth, withers in the prime of his years. He falls, struck by the arrows of grief at that very moment when youth proffers him a cup of pleasure and joy; he falls like a careless skylark struck by murderous metal during festive hymns for the rising sun. Sensitive hearts! Would you not like to exchange the magnificent embankments of the Neva and the Seine for the wild cliffs of the Vitim?103

Peter Andreevich was not impressed by such self-pity (“Oh, foolishness,” he scrawled in the margin).104 “To write, as you would have it,” he elaborated, “is the same thing as to soil paper. I am extremely displeased by your carelessness, and if I were there in person I would scold you.” He urged Kalashnikov to abandon verbosity—“the decoration of nonsense”—and look to Catherine II and Speranskii for literary models.105

Peter Andreevich was firm because he believed that good writing skills, as never before, were indispensable to a successful service career. He would have been a better writer himself, he wrote, had he not grown up “in such an age and in such circumstances when there was not a great need for it.” Such was no longer the case, he explained: “today the young man, with or without wealth [sostoianie], is obliged to enter state

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103 The Vitim River is major tributary of the Lena River.
104 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 5, ll. 17-18.
105 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 100, ll. 34-35ob. (8 June 1821); IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 101, ll. 30-30ob. (18 October 1823).
service with this competence.”106 He promised Ivan Timofeevich that, if he kept up with his exercises, he would become “a conspicuous and useful man in society.”107 Speranskii, he pointed out, “would not have earned the glory of a man of state” had he not first become an excellent writer.108 Even while reproaching Kalashnikov, however, Peter Andreevich did take advantage of his position as *vizitator* to promote his pupil, sharing Kalashnikov’s writings with faculty at Kazan’ University and facilitating his election to St. Petersburg’s Society of the Lovers of Literature, of which he was himself a member.109

Peter Andreevich took his mentorship role seriously not merely because he cared for Kalashnikov, but also because he believed that cultivating “men of state” was his duty. He considered Ivan Timofeevich’s proud verbosity unbefitting the “man of state,” and when Kalashnikov proudly presented an 1825 memorandum for his approval, Peter Andreevich took him to task: “Everywhere you loudly proclaim: *I know everything.* […] What decency is there, when reporting to the government, to cite Smith, Leibniz, and such like? The government needs only a logical and reliable exposition—not convictions and names esteemed in the academy; it has its own reason, and in great measure.”110 It had taken the young Slovtsov time to learn this last point, and he wanted Kalashnikov to avoid making the mistake he had made in delivering his 1793 sermon. When, for example, Kalashnikov cited Brutus’ famous saying at Caesar’s assassination—*Sic semper tyrannis!*, “Thus always to tyrants!”—Peter Andreevich warned him to think twice:

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106 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 101, l. 4 (24 January 1822).
107 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 100, l. 26 (22 February 1821).
108 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 101, ll. 7ob.-8 (18 January 1822).
109 OR RNB f. 702, op. 1, d. 36; IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 100, ll. 28-28ob. (5 March 1821).
110 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 101, ll. 48ob.-49 (17 April 1825).
One thing that did not please me was that you came down, without any need or good logic, in favor of Brutus’ immoral maxim. If I enjoyed writing and were to come across this maxim, I would consider it a fortunate opportunity to refute this ruinous, anti-social [protivo-obshchestvennuiu], and anti-religious idea. After all, people with heads and people without heads have long repeated Brutus’ desperate maxim: the former were Volterian teachers, [who did so] in order to overthrow the inner and outer human order through such a doctrine; the latter [did so] in order to prove the presence of a genius that they never knew. Let sensible logic preserve you, dear friend, from lies and vanity! […]

Brutus was the last Roman—this phrase has echoed through the ages. But wouldn’t it be more accurate to call him the last madman? How could an intelligent Roman not see that a vast empire quickly turns into chaos without absolute rule? Don’t trust writers of the 18th century in all things: they were truly mistaken in arming themselves against monarchy. Mistakes or weaknesses—or even abuses—would not have lead them toward the stupidities of republican Rome if they had not, in their arrogance, considered themselves to be the instructors of Governments [nastavnikov Pravitel’stv].”

The government, in brief, did not need nastavniki for its own edification; armed with “its own reason,” its purpose was to furnish nastavniki for the edification of its subjects.

Peter Andreevich also took pride in mentoring Kalashnikov’s closest remaining friend in Irkutsk. Vasilii Krivogonitsyn—“nash Krivogonitsyn,” as he appears in Kalashnikov and Slovtsov’s letters—was a Cossack from the remote Arctic outpost of Nizhnekolymsk. He had served as Slovtsov’s guide during the 1814-15 inspection tours, during which time, Kalashnikov wrote, Peter Andreevich “raised and refined his soul.” Subsequently, Krivogonitsyn worked as overseer of the convicts at Irkutsk’s workers’ house (rabochii dom) and the Tel’minsk cloth factory. Krivogonitsyn regaled Kalashnikov with tales of the murders, escapes, and drunken chaos that were his daily

111 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 101, ll. 2ob.-4ob. (24 January 1822).
fare at these posts. Ivan Timofeevich remembered Krivogornitsyn as a fearless nachal’nik of the hardened criminals under his watch, from whom, he wrote, Krivogornitsyn created “the sole nursery of handicrafts and trades in Irkutsk.”

Krivogornitsyn carried on a long, effusive correspondence with his “benefactors,” as he called Slovtsov and Kalashnikov. And the “benefactors” took pride in Krivogornitsyn’s accomplishments: “Amidst […] the dark people of Siberia,” Kalashnikov wrote to Slovtsov, Krivogornitsyn “is a pearl that local nachal’niki should cherish.”

After Slovtsov left Irkutsk, Krivogornitsyn was Kalashnikov’s main companion until their near-daily visits came to an end in October 1821, when the Irkutsk governor sent Ivan Timofeevich on an inspection tour of the Transbaikal. He enjoyed the trip, reporting to Peter Andreevich on the many sights he saw as he traced the path his mentor had taken in 1814. He marveled at the vast Khamar-Daban range along Lake Baikal’s southern shore—“Whether I ascended the peak of Khamar-Daban or examined the ruins of mountains in its wild fold, you were with me everywhere”—and at the “titanic” accomplishment that was the road that ran through the mountains. The latter, to his mind, was proof of the imperial state’s ongoing success in taming this wild region. “One

112 ZIZh, 625-27.
113 With the exception of one letter (IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 240), the fate of Krivogornitsyn’s correspondence with Slovtsov is unknown (though Slovtsov’s regular mention of Krivogornitsyn’s letters suggests that they wrote frequently). His letters to Kalashnikov (1822-1841) have survived: IRLI f. 120, op. 1, dd. 78-79.
114 IRLI f. 120, op. 1. d. 35, l. 35ob. (25 April 1830). Kalashnikov described Krivogornitsyn’s rabochii dom in glowing terms in an article he wrote about it. Irkutsk residents, he explained, long had to spend great sums to order furniture from the capitals, but Krivogornitsyn’s workers made it possible to purchase good furniture in Irkutsk. Regarding the convict laborers, he noted that Krivogornitsyn “earned the love of these people” and worked to make them good Christians: “In a word, all measures are taken to open Heaven to people who have lost everything on earth. What country, what government can boast of similar philanthropy?” IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 252, ll. 1-6ob. A detailed description of the regime at the rabochii dom has also survived: FRKR NB IGU, no. 205.
cannot but be thankful,” he explained, “for the concern of Treskin,” whom he credited with ensuring that clean huts, complete with floors covered with fresh juniper boughs, were built and maintained along the forbidding road: “After a prolonged ride on horseback, for the tired traveller to be able to find in the thick taiga a cozy refuge where he can warm the kettle or boil pelmeny is a paradisiacal pleasure!” At Kiakhta he played his violin for Peter Andreevich’s old friend from Tobol’sk Seminary, Peter Galliakhovskii, now director of the customs-house. He also crossed the border into Maimaicheng. Chinese for “trade-town,” it was a place of wonder for Kalashnikov, who dined with Chinese merchants, marveled at their chopsticks, pidgin Russian, and “enormous, hideous, and disgusting idols” (and also at the Russian women there, who could gain entry into the all-male town only by dressing as men). He was not, however, impressed with the Chinese he met in town—“utter swine in human form,” he reported to Slovtsov.

Inspection tours, in other words, offered Ivan Timofeevich—as they had his father and Slovtsov before him—an opportunity to broaden his horizons. The primary reason, for his 1821 trip, however, was to inspect settlements along the Circum-Baikal road and investigate complaints about Verkhneudinsk officials. He proudly reported on his work to Slovtsov, transcribing long excerpts from his reports as evidence of his accomplishments. He was surprised to find a crew of 150 Buriats who had been

115 A dish of small pockets of dough filled with seasoned meat and served fried, boiled, or in a soup.
116 ZIZh, 627-30; IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 35, ll. 1-10ob., 10-10ob. (24 November 1821). For other Kiakhta travel accounts see Ivan Kirilov, “Poezdka v Kiakhtu v 1834 godu,” in Prozaicheskiiia Sochinenia Uchenikov Irkutskoi Gimnazii (St. Petersburg, 1836); V. Parshin, Poezdka v Zabaikal’skii Krai (Moscow, 1844).
117 The letter containing instructions from Irkutsk governor Ivan Tseidler is IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 114.
dispatched by the governor to undertake repair work on a road that was “completely frozen” and therefore “impossible” to repair until spring. Worse, Kalashnikov pointed out, the duty was burdensome for the Buriats, who would be distracted from hunting during the best time of year. He sent a report to the governor, suggesting that the work be put off until the ground thawed. “Such,” he wrote to Slovtsov, “was my first step in the mission, which I sought to fulfill in glory [v slavu] of Him, by whom we live and move forward.”

As this passage suggests, Ivan Timofeevich saw himself as playing a vital, God-sanctioned role in his work. That he identified with his assignment is particularly evident in his account of his time in Verkhneudinsk. His primary assignment there was to investigate the local police chief (ispravnik) Kossovich, complaints against whom had reached Irkutsk. Kossovich, he reported, “when sober, is good, just, unselfish, and loved by the peasants, but when drunk—an utter lunatic. He actually wrecked an entire house […] and tore out one respected old man’s beard—which, as a proof of [Kossovich’s] conqueror-like muscles, is now preserved at the police [office].” While rescuing the inhabitants of Verkhneudinsk from such a character, Ivan Timofeevich proudly told Slovtsov, he also worked to bring a new level of order to the offices he inspected and, among other things, to alleviate the lot of the orphaned daughter of a local merchant (entitled to an inheritance of 100,000 rubles, she had been receiving only a small allowance and had been “abandoned without any upbringing”).

118 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 35, ll. 1-26 (24 November 1821).
119 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 35, ll. 1-26 (24 November 1821).
Kalashnikov’s account of Verkhneudinsk is reminiscent of Slovtsov’s dispatches from the Black Sea. The trip gave him the opportunity to play nachal’nik and namestnik and right wrongs in the name of the state. He described to Slovtsov the feeling of being addressed as nachal’nik and seeing local chinovniki bow low before him. It was, he explained, a “role wholly unfamiliar to me,” even “not very proper to my [young] age.” But he believed that he made it work by acting as an exemplary nastavnik—“civil without abasement, important without excessive pride”—and ensuring that “everyone loved me, or at least did not conceive a hatred for me.” Local chinovniki, he told Peter Andreevich, were “astonished” not to find in him “that pride and pedantry that they had imagined they would.” He “dealt with everyone as an honest man,” taking no bribes and leaving Verkhneudinsk “just as wealthy as he had arrived” (he did, he explained, buy a violin from a meshchanin in town, but at a fair price).  

Kalashnikov later reflected on his Verkhneudinsk trip in his novel Automaton, in which he compared his experiences to Gogol’s infamous farce, The Government Inspector:

All of the district chinovniki gathered early in the morning to bow before inspector Evgenii [i.e. Kalashnikov]. First was the mayor [gorodnichii], and then followed the district judge, the police chief, and so forth. In their physiognomies and their costumes they resembled those eccentrics that are splendidly depicted in the delightful farce of Gogol, but this obsequiousness, this quivering of the district chinovnik, this awkwardness so amusing in the eyes of the inhabitant of the capital, did not strike Evgenii as amusing in any way, in part because he was himself accustomed to respecting his nachal’niki to the point of obsequiousness, but even more because he knew the true source from which the laughable timidity of the provincial [chinovnik] resulted: here one should sooner feel

120 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 35, ll. 1-26 (24 November 1821).
Evgenii strove to treat the poor men [bedniakov] kindly, to develop in them spirit and ideas [dukh i mysli].

There were, in other words, good nachal'niki and bad nachal'niki, and Ivan Timofeevich sought to be the nachal'nik and nastavnik that Slovtsov had been for him.

Peter Andreevich was delighted by Ivan Timofeevich’s account. He read it along with another Kalashnikov sent about a trip to Nizhneudinsk—where Ivan Timofeevich had been sent to hire contractors to transport alcohol and maintain post stations—and he beamed at his pupil’s “attention to enlightenment” and “capacity for service”:

Really, isn’t your situation charming? To have at 24 a not insignificant post in the province, to maintain the attention of the nachal’nik through your own work, and to have (what is more) in your soul an unselfish purpose in service! And on the other hand, to enjoy education of the mind, […] to love learning and reading, and, moreover, to tread by the mercy of God along the path of faith and the Gospels—what more does one need for a happy life?

“Without any doubt,” he wrote, “you have truly pleased me.” “I’m dazzled to receive such news from you, dear friend Ivan Timofeevich.”

Kalashnikov was less dazzled. His “sole desire,” he claimed, was to reunite with Peter Andreevich. Krivogornitsyn helped him pass the time in Irkutsk—what he called a “sad orphanhood” without Slovtsov—but he wanted to leave. He wrote that he even avoided leaving his quarters so as not to be reminded that Slovtsov was no longer in town. “I look upon you like seamen look upon the Polar Star,” he wrote, requesting

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121 DKZhRP, 534.
122 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 139, ll. 14-14ob.
123 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 100, l. 51 (15 December 1821); IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 100, ll. 55-58 (28 December 1821).
permission to join Peter Andreevich and “be your true son” because “you are my true father, who gave me moral and political existence.”

As much as Peter Andreevich enjoyed reading of such devotion—he had what Kalashnikov described as an “almost childish tenderness of heart and sensitivity” and regularly cried “like a baby”—he was not impressed by Ivan Timofeevich’s melancholy. He was also displeased by Kalashnikov’s claims that he deserved faster promotion in service. Such “vanity” was unbefitting the enlightened servitor. Ivan Timofeevich, he scolded, should not be a “mercenary, who immediately expects rewards for selfless work.” There were two kinds of “self-interest” (korystoliubie), he explained, and the enlightened servitor should know how to subordinate the self and tell them apart:

The difference between common and, so to speak, noble self-interest is that, while neither seek to do work gratis, the [latter] rewards itself through its own action while the [former] looks into the eyes of the government, and, upon seeing an unpleasant expression, pities itself, grumbles, and, in time, quite possibly gives himself over to canons of dangerous self-interest. Toil at your post with diligence, toil in honest simplicity and do not nominate yourself for rewards; if they come to you in time, they will be all the more desired. You need to be above the rabble [vyshe cherni] according to the concepts of service and never forget that you want to be a Christian and, consequently, prepared for a holocaust of vanity [gotovym na vsesozhzenie samoliubia].

Slovtsov urged Kalashnikov to “be content with your current place, with your current rank, and with service.” It was absurd, he noted, for someone of Kalashnikov’s age to expect more than he already had:

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124 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 35, ll. 19ob.-23 (24 November 1821).
125 ZIZh, 398.
It is highly unpleasant to sense that a young man with commendable qualities thinks too much of himself. More than anything else, he should fear the consequences of his self-conceit becoming intolerable. Tell me, great young man [velikii molodoi chelovek], should the translation of a few pages, a bit of talent for composition, the reading of ten books, and the completion of the basics of mathematics, lay down a path to the top spot in the province [...]? It would be more pleasant for me to hear about your accomplishments in enlightenment, about your accomplishments in service—but about accomplishments alone, without any bitterness at the expense of others. There is no point in poisoning myself for nothing.126

But Peter Andreevich did recognize that Ivan Timofeevich stood at a crossroads. Even as he chastised his pupil, he wrote to Speranskii and requested that Kalashnikov be transferred to Tobol’sk. In the meantime, he warned Kalashnikov, “You must with fulfill your commissions with all zeal, even if they send you to Kamchatka.”127

In the end, Peter Andreevich wanted Kalashnikov to leave Irkutsk. As vizitator of Siberian schools, his most pressing task was staffing schools with well-qualified men. But when approached about making Kalashnikov director of Irkutsk schools, he recoiled, believing that Ivan Timofeevich deserved something more: “I guarded you,” he explained, “a man with prospects, from the flattering honor of the directorship.” He saw in Kalashnikov an opportunity to complete vicariously his own, detoured service career, and wrote to him of his 1808 misfortune: “You should distinguish yourself in the field of civil service, from which I was expelled by foul weather, and to this day I cannot manage to forget completely the perspective that opened before me in my day.”128

126 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 101, ll. 5-8ob. (18 January 1822).
127 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 100, ll. 55-58 (28 December 1821).
128 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 100, ll. 25-25ob. (8 September 1821).
Ivan Timofeevich left Irkutsk on March 15, 1822. His meticulous packing list—two pieces of gum-rubber, an earwig, “linens from Peter Andreevich,” two pillows (“one feather, one down”), two pillowcases “with sky-blue trim,” “towels (10—including two for tea)”—makes clear that he had long been anticipating the trip. Peter Andreevich provided detailed instructions, urging Kalashnikov to pay all Irkutsk officials due respect before leaving and to see as much as possible on his trip, particularly the factories at Barnaul.

When Ivan Timofeevich arrived in Tobolsk, he lodged briefly with Peter Andreevich. But Slovtsov did not consider it proper that they continue living together. To do so, he explained, would have been beneath Kalashnikov’s “current title.” Kalashnikov served as a councilor (sovetnik) in the chancellery of the Tobolsk governor. The governor gave Kalashnikov a range of assignments: monitoring chancellery officials and assessing the “capability” or “stupidity” (tupost) of each; inspecting offices in the district town of Tara; bringing the provincial press into “proper order”; and closing as many outstanding cases as possible (a task that required “great attention and effort,” the governor wrote, for many had been unresolved for over a decade). The governor was impressed by Kalashnikov—particularly his closing of “1,102 files over the course of no more than eight months”—and for his work in Irkutsk and Tobolsk, Ivan Timofeevich was awarded a gold watch at the recommendation of Speranskii.

129 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 121, ll. 1-8ob.
130 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 101, ll. 13-14ob. (16 February 1822).
131 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 139, ll. 16ob.-21ob., 32-33ob.; IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 89, l. 1; IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 107, l. 1.
But Kalashnikov’s time in Tobol’sk would be brief. He later justified his departure by citing tensions between the town governor and the new Governor-General of Western Siberia—“I saw that Siberia still had long to go,” he wrote, “before it would become a country of peace [strannoiu mira], and I decided to seek happiness elsewhere”\textsuperscript{132}—but his primary reason for leaving was that, again, Slovtsov and Speranskii had opened a path for him. After an emotional parting with Peter Andreevich, he left for Petersburg on February 17, 1823. He would recall the moment time and time again in his letters over the next two decades: “I see you now,” he wrote in 1840, “just as when I left you […]. I did not think that we were parting, quite possibly forever.”\textsuperscript{133}

“I leave you in a new and agreeable situation, in a new world of things, faces, and ideas…”

Peter Andreevich saw his protégé’s move to Petersburg as the capstone to the educational program he had provided. He urged Ivan Timofeevich to make the most of his time in the imperial capital: “It is essential,” he explained, “for the Sibiriak to be acquainted with everything, so as more quickly to exchange the physiognomy of ignorance.” Recalling his own first impressions of the city, he called Kalashnikov “lucky” to have arrived with the “flame of curiosity and an open mind”: “I leave you in a new and agreeable situation, in a new world of things, faces, and ideas. Farewell!”\textsuperscript{134}

Proud of the opportunity he had given Ivan Timofeevich, Slovtsov expected regular updates and instructed Kalashnikov to write at the beginning of each month

\textsuperscript{132} ZIZh, 630.
\textsuperscript{133} IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 38, ll. 9ob.-10 (5 November 1840).
\textsuperscript{134} IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 101, ll. 18ob.-19ob. (5 May 1823).
(“some order in friendly correspondence is needed”). Part of his interest in Kalashnikov’s fate stemmed from the secondhand joy it provided him. As he aged—
“death is taking possession of all the outposts of my life,” he reflected in 1823—he found comfort in thinking of his young friend. “It is pleasant for me to imagine, as I often do,” he explained, “that in your free time you are enjoying your sojourn in P. Burg. In youth there is something to see there.” He gave Kalashnikov suggestions about what to see—such as the sculptures at his old nachal’nik Rumiantsev’s mansion—and warned him not to follow gossip about “counts and princes,” but to focus on “public institutions,” “culture, art, science, and all useful inventions in general.” Above all, he urged Ivan Timofeevich to put state service first. He encouraged him to continue playing the violin, but now cautioned his pupil to keep his passion for the instrument in perspective: “Enlightenment and service must rule over music.”

Having Ivan Timofeevich in Petersburg also enabled Slovtsov to keep better abreast of happenings there and better utilize its resources. He asked Kalashnikov about Petersburg chinovniki: Were the departmental offices “filled with enlightened men, or at least with men who have studied in higher institutions of education, or are they filled floor to ceiling with clerks [pod’iachimi]?“ He used Kalashnikov to assist other Sibiriaki, directing a handful of acquaintances to Kalashnikov and asking him to help them in their service careers. He was “delighted by the idea,” he explained, “that

135 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 101, l. 22 (8 June 1823). Unfortunately, while all of Slovtsov’s letters to Kalashnikov have survived, Kalashnikov’s letters between 1823 and 1828 have not. Much of their content can, however, be surmised from Slovtsov’s letters.
136 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 101, l. 20 (26 May 1823); IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 101, ll. 22-23ob. (8 June 1823).
137 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 101, l. 27 (1 September 1823).
138 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 101, ll. 24-25ob. (8 June 1823).
[Siberia’s] young and learned people” would go to Petersburg for training and return to
serve in Siberia (“Then even enlightened people would find [in Siberia] engaging
collection—without punch, cards, and darkness”). He also made sure, of course, to
have Kalashnikov procure the many essentials that he could not find in Siberia: numerous
books, a new black suit (so as “once more before death to wear a good outfit”), and
chocolate from the Petersburg chocolatier Imsen (“the sole means that can support my
health”).

Part of the reason Peter Andreevich was not more worried about what might
become of his pupil in the big city was that he and Speranskii had set Ivan Timofeevich
up with “good people.” When Kalashnikov arrived, he found a room at the house of
Peter Grigor’evich Masal’skii, an old seminary friend who had done well for himself in a
range of business ventures. Masal’skii was devoted to Speranskii, whose financial affairs
he managed after Speranskii was exiled from Petersburg in 1812. He proved
extremely useful for Kalashnikov, who found in his home a refuge as he settled in town;
in his son, future novelist Konstantin Masal’skii, a friend and literary collaborator; and in
his daughter, Elizaveta Petrovna, a wife. She and Ivan Timofeevich married on February
8, 1824, less than a year after he arrived in Petersburg. Speranskii, who was Elizaveta
Petrovna’s godfather, stood in for Kalashnikov’s father at the wedding.

139 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 101, l. 29 (22 September 1823).
140 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 101, l. 23 (14 July 1823); IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 101, ll. 33-33ob. (3 November
1823).
141 K. Masal’skii, Druzheskia pis’ma Grafa M. M. Speranskago k P. G. Masal’skomu (St. Petersburg,
1862), 12; IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 8; Korf, Zhizn’ grafa Speranskago, I: 84-85.
142 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 44, ll. 1-2ob.
When Kalashnikov told his benefactor of his plans to marry, Slovtsov was not pleased. “How,” he asked, “can a schoolboy think about marrying?” He wanted Kalashnikov first to pass the exam required for promotion from his rank at the time—rank nine, Titular Councilor—to the next rank (Collegiate Assessor), which entitled its holders to hereditary nobility. Speranskii had authored the controversial 1809 law that placed stricter educational requirements on the empire’s chinovniki, and Slovtsov hounded his pupil about the examination because he firmly believed in the value of the law, intended as it was both to improve Russia’s bureaucracy and buttress the Alexandrine educational system to which he was so devoted. “All aspects of State service,” the law explained, “require well-versed executors, and the longer that the firm and native [otechestvennoe] education of the youth is postponed, the more perceptible will be the resulting deficiency.” Slovtsov even vowed not to send Kalashnikov any letters until he received a copy of the certificate from the university.

When Kalashnikov informed Slovtsov that he had passed a preliminary examination at the end of 1823, Slovtsov was overjoyed. He saw his pupil’s success as vindication of the course of study he had provided. “You, dear friend Ivan Timofeevich, have returned my sweet right to write to you. […] It’s true, reading this part of your letter of 8 November, I rejoiced like a child. Like a child—just judge to what degree I have wished you well for so very, very long!” He was also impressed by the “decisiveness and firmness” with which Kalashnikov defended his decision to marry—

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143 PSZ (1), vol. 30, no. 23,771 (6 August 1809): 1054-57. For discussions of reactions to the law see Martin, Romantics, Reformers, Reactionaries, 54-56; Raeff, Michael Speransky, 63-65.
144 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 101, ll. 33-33ob. (3 November 1823).
evidence, he suggested, that Kalashnikov was developing the “full character required of the husband-\textit{chinovnik}” (he did request, however, that Kalashnikov not argue his points by listing them by number: “This,” he explained, “is proper for a serfowner [\textit{pomeshchik}] writing orders to his steward,” but had no place in “friendly correspondence”).\footnote{IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 101, ll. 34-35ob. (8 December 1823).}

Having to maintain their friendship through letters alone was, nevertheless, difficult for Slovtsov and Kalashnikov. Reading about Kalashnikov’s Petersburg career and marriage forced Peter Andreevich, during the long hours in his \textit{vizitator}’s sleigh, to reflect on the life he never lived. Kalashnikov, meanwhile, wrote constantly of how he missed Slovtsov. And he was sensitive to any perceived slights. He expressed disappointment, for example, that Peter Andreevich did not always pay his respects to his new wife in his letters. “I beg you to believe once and forever,” Slovtsov responded, “that I truly respect your spouse, but to speak or not to speak in a letter about my respect for her I do not regard as evidence of feeling or a deficiency of it.”\footnote{IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 101, l. 48ob. (17 April 1825).} He urged Kalashnikov to believe that he was utterly devoted him: “It’s now already the 4\textsuperscript{th} year since you and I parted,” he wrote in 1826, “and I do not cease to converse with you by letters or to speak with someone about you almost daily—and each morning I remember you in my prayer, not having any other means to help you in the passage of your life with your spouse and your young ones.”\footnote{IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 102, ll. 6-7 (27 March 1826).}

Kalashnikov’s marriage was a fruitful and, to all appearances, happy one. Few of his wife Elizaveta Petrovna’s papers have survived, but those that have—along with
Kalashnikov’s remarks about her in his own letters—suggest that she and her “dear Van’ia” enjoyed each other’s company. Elizaveta gave birth to their first child, Vladimir, in 1824, and she would remain almost perpetually pregnant for the following two decades. After the birth of their last child—the seventeenth in twenty years—in 1844, the proud father took stock of their feat:

Birthdays and Name-days of my children:
- **Vladimir**: b. 1824 October 18 at 12 in the morning; n[ame-day] 15 July
- **Pëtr**: b. 1825 Dec. 24, evening; n. 16 Jan.
- **Leonid**: 1829 April 22 at 10 in the morning; n. 5 July; d. 5 Sep. 1851 at 6 in the morning
- **Klavdïa**: b. 1831 January 10 at 12 midnight; n. 18 March
- **Viktor**: b. 1832 July 25 at a quarter of the third hour in the afternoon; n. 11 November; died January 21, January 1835
- **Mariïa**: b. 1833 October 23, 1833 at 10 in the morning; n. 18 May
- **Iliïia**: b. 29 October 1835; n. 18 May […]
- **Twins: Katerina and Iliïia**, 11 Nov. 1826, in the afternoon
- **Nikolai**: 1827 Dec. 4 in the night […]
- **My darling Evgenii**: born at 5 in the evening 26 July 1837; died 23 March 1838 […] in the afternoon
- **Iakov**: 9 October 1838; died the very same day
- **Nikolai**: 9 October 1838. Afternoon (twin).
- **Aleksandr**: b. December 9 1841 at 1:30 in the afternoon; d. 4 Jan. 1842 at 4 in the morning
- **Natasha**: b. 26 April 1840 at 5 in the afternoon
- **Evgenii**: b. 6 October 1842 at 2 in the middle of the night
- **Il’ïa**: b. 18 July 1844 at 8 in the morning

**Total children**: 17
- **Total living**: 9 (5 sons, 4 daughters)
- **Deceased**: 8
- **Twins**: 2 (Iuliia and Ekaterina (d); Nikolai and Iakov (d))

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148 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 125, ll. 45ob.-46ob.
Ivan Timofeevich took great pride in his role as father—or, in Slovtsov’s words, as “nachal’nik of your family.” In addition to an impressively branchy family tree (Figure 13), his papers contain many notes about his children: “22 April [1829]. In the morning at five minutes of the tenth hour God gave us a son, Leonid”; “October 6, [1829], Sunday. Volodin’ka for the first time began to read without backtracking. Uncle Peter Petrovich Popov praised him.”

Ivan Timofeevich was also productive in service during his first years in the capital. Just weeks after his arrival in 1823, Speranskii obtained for him a post as nachal’nik of a bureau (stol) in the Second Department of the Executive Police of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The department was responsible, among other things, for supervising the empire’s police and prisons, monitoring criminal cases, and taking measures to reduce brigandage. By the end of 1824 he had received two honorary orders for his good service (Order of Anna, third degree; Order of Vladimir, fourth

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149 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d.102, l. 46ob. (9 April 1832).
150 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 125, ll. 53ob.-54.
151 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 139, l. 31. Vysshie i tsentral’nye gosudarstvennye uchrezhdrenia Rossii, 1801-1917 (St. Petersburg: Nauka, 2001), 26-27.
When he received the Order of Vladimir, just a month after the birth of his first son, Slovtsov sent his praise:

I sincerely congratulate you, esteemed cavalier Ivan Timofeevich, on the Vladimir and even more on the birth of Vladimir, and I wish you success in being a father worthy of his family and son grateful to his fatherland. The Sovereign or—what is the same—the fatherland, having yet to wait for the conclusion of your studies, hurries to distinguish you from your contemporaries.¹⁵³

Peter Andreevich’s remarks are suggestive of the degree to which the public affair of service could penetrate the private world of family life, and one cannot but suspect that Kalashnikov, anticipating his forthcoming honor, named his son with it in mind. Slovtsov’s suggestion that serving the sovereign was “the same” as serving the fatherland, meanwhile, is emblematic of the confidence he and Kalashnikov had in autocracy as well as of their belief that Russia was a land made whole by the work of its autocrats and their servitors. (Figure 14)

Peter Andreevich was, however, simultaneously proud and disturbed by Kalashnikov’s successful first years of service in Petersburg. He took pleasure in imagining that Kalashnikov was “up to your ears in significant

¹⁵² IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 139, ll. 31, 37-38.
¹⁵³ IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 101, l. 44 (3 January 1825).
matters,” and often addressed his pupil by his official titles (“Greetings nachal’nik of the department and man of state”). But he worried that Ivan Timofeevich might get carried away with himself. When in 1826 he heard from a mutual acquaintance that Kalashnikov had “gotten a swelled head,” he chastised his pupil, urging him to “do what is instructed” and consider himself “an insignificant person.” He told Kalashnikov to calm his “ambitious soul” and recognize that, at his age, he could not expect to be more than a “good secretary.” Slovtsov was particularly insistent on this point after the Decembrist rebellion. When he learned that Gavriil Baten’kov, whom they knew from Irkutsk, had taken part in the “terrible affair,” he was appalled. Baten’kov, Slovtsov suggested, had failed in his duty to act as an enlightened chinovnik and had instead acted like a “mathematician” whose calculations were “founded on false data.” Slovtsov saw the rebellion as the “fruit of grumbling” and he hoped it would offer Kalashnikov a lesson: “What terrible consequences from a favorable opinion about oneself, mixed with distress. Guard [yourself] against anger in service, grow angry but don’t sin.”

Peter Andreevich was most bothered by Kalashnikov’s frequent transfers in service, which he saw as evidence of willfulness on his pupil’s part. Ivan Timofeevich left his initial post in November 1825 for a position at the Ministry of Internal Affairs’ Department of Spiritual Affairs and Foreign Creeds, where he worked as overseer of the department’s accounts until June 1827. He then served as the nachal’nik of the first bureau of the Department of Appanages—in charge of managing the properties of the

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154 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 102, l. 24 (5 September 1827).
155 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 102, ll. 7-7ob. (27 March 1826); IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 102, ll. 10ob-11ob. (10 June 1826). Emphasis in original.
imperial family. He was released from that position in February 1829 when he fell seriously ill, after which he was without a position for a year. He then served briefly as director of the chancellery at the Ministry of the Interior’s Medicinal Department before again being released in 1831 for illness, this time for two years. He received an annual pension of 600 rubles during this period, which he supplemented by teaching history and geography at the Smol’nyi Monastery and Cadet Corps.¹⁵⁶

Ivan Timofeevich described his Petersburg world in an 1828 letter to his father. He comes across as a man excited with his new life, but overwhelmed. He was “a hundred times to blame,” he apologized, for not writing more often. But service, he explained, kept him occupied “without any exaggeration” for the entire day, after which he needed rest because of the toll it was taking on his health (“I confess, I’ve already sat in place for so long that I’ve got hemorrhoids and [I suffer from] fainting spells, which forced me a few days ago to let blood from my arm”). His wife and children, he wrote, were his “only comforts in this foreign place, to which, however, I am beginning to grow accustomed.” His eldest, Vladimir, was beginning to read “Our Father” in the prayer book and always remembers “Grandpa Timofei” in his prayers, while his toddler Pet’ia was “starting to babble and is very amusing.” But his family was also his chief source of woe, as supporting them was expensive and Elizaveta Petrovna’s pregnancies often proved nerve-wracking. She gave birth in 1827, to cite one case, to a baby boy with a “bifurcation of the backbone” who suffered for a long week before dying. Elizaveta herself, Ivan Timofeevich wrote, barely escaped being “dispatched thither, whither all

¹⁵⁶ IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 141, ll. 4-7; IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 35, ll. 39-40ob. (25 July 1830); Vysshie i tsentral’nye, 189-193.
mortals sooner or later go.” Such trials were more difficult because Kalashnikov did not have his Irkutsk friends and family nearby, a circumstance on which he blamed his frequent bouts of “melancholy.” “Where,” he asked, “we will see each other again, my dear, precious father?” Timofei Petrovich did not receive the letter, having passed away on the very day that his son was writing to him.157

Much of Kalashnikov’s “melancholy” during these years can be traced to such personal challenges. For, on the whole, he was delighted to be in Petersburg, the many conveniences of which he quickly came to take for granted. But there was much about the big city that disturbed him: the cost of living, the climate, the many “bad houses” where “a young man can easily fall into debauchery and sickness.” “Petersburg is not Kirensk,” he told his father.158

Petersburg was a particularly frightening place when it received a visit from what Kalashnikov called the “guest” of cholera in 1831. From mid-June until early August that year, Kalashnikov wrote to Slovtsov, the city was wracked with “indescribable fear.” He had the priest bless his entire family because “death, so to speak, hung over everyone’s nose.” Mass hysteria and violence made the situation worse as rumors spread that the cause of the mounting death toll was not cholera but poison. Such rumors stemmed from apprehensions against foreign doctors (dealers in black arts, to the minds of many Russians), fear of hospitals, whispers about dissections, and the harsh measures

157 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 30, ll. 21-22ob. (17 February 1828). Emphasis in original.
158 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 30, ll. 21-22ob. (17 February 1828). Kirensk was a small district town in Irkutsk Province where Ivan Kalashnikov’s sister lived.
of the Petersburg police, who treated the cholera as if it were a crime wave. For
Kalashnikov, the riots, killings, and disorder that followed were evidence of the crudity
of “simple people.” Experiencing the cholera epidemic confirmed one of his deepest
convictions: that firm, yet loving autocratic rule was essential in an empire filled with
“unenlightened” subjects:

The simple people, who are everywhere the same, from Athens to Paris to
Petersburg, went hog wild, trashed the hospitals, killed a number of
doctors, and did not settle down until the Sovereign himself arrived at the
square. When he started to reproach them for the disorder they caused,
the entire people fell on their knees and began to weep. They say that
even the SOVEREIGN himself shed tears. After that, right there on the
square he ordered a requiem be performed for the dead and told the people
to pray for them. Everyone was astonished at the steadfastness of the
Monarch’s spirit, and every good Russian could not but grieve over the
countless troubles His Great soul must bear.”

At the time of the cholera Ivan Timofeevich was only just recovering from an
illness that had harassed him for the better part of three years. Slovtsov learned about
Kalashnikov’s health problems from Krivogornitsyn, who had paid Kalashnikov a visit in

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160 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 36, ll. 1ob.-2 (14 August 1831). Nicholas confronted a crowd of more than 5,000
angry Petersburgers on June 23, 1831. The harangue he delivered was of precisely the sort that
Kalashnikov believed necessary:

Are you Poles and French to act so, or are you Russians? At my coronation I swore to maintain
order and the laws: I shall keep my oath. To the virtuous I am kind, they will always find me a
friend and a father, but woe to evil-doers! I am armed against them! I do not fear you, it is you
who fear me! A great burden has been given us by God: a plague. We must take measure to stop
its progress. All these measures have been taken by my orders! Therefore it is against me that you
complain—Me! And I order obedience!

You, peaceful men, fathers of families, I have confidence in you, and I am persuaded that
you will always be the first to enlighten the ignorant, to calm the mutinous! But woe unto those
who oppose my orders: they will be hunted down without pity! (Quotation from McGrew, *Russia
and the Cholera*, 112-13).
Petersburg in 1829. “What could it mean,” the concerned mentor asked, “that at your young age you, dear friend Ivan Timofeevich, already are beginning to look like me?”  

Slovtsov’s question is a difficult one to answer. Kalashnikov blamed his illness on a range of causes: Petersburg’s “moist and odious climate”; the long walk to and from his place of work (fourteen versts each day, he claimed); and “moral causes”—longing to see family and friends, changing fortunes in service, the burden of providing for his growing family, and the health of his wife and children. But if the precise nature of his illness is difficult to ascertain, Ivan Timofeevich was clearly in bad shape. His notes and letters brim with complaints of “agonizing hemorrhoids,” acute pressure in his chest, and fainting spells. He wrote to Slovtsov in 1830 of his year-long experiment with a diet of porridge and fish soup that brought no relief. Peter Andreevich, never without advice, recommended that Kalashnikov drink beer or kvas with oat flour after each meal: “You will,” the mentor promised, “be an illness-free bogatyry if you follow my prescription.”

Ivan Timofeevich had no such luck. He later wrote that he was “covered in yellow spots” and so sick that, whenever he returned from work in 1830 his wife would run out to meet him, relieved that he was not dead. His condition sharply worsened in October of that year, when he suffered from what he called a “nervous fever” that left him bedridden for five weeks and so “withered and weakened” that he “did not resemble a human being.” No sooner had he begun to recover, he added, than he “fell into another illness, even more agonizing: again for three months I was incapable—in the exact

161 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 35, l. 30 (9 November 1829).
162 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 35, ll. 38-38ob. (13 June 1830); IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 102, ll. 35-36 (1 March 1830). A bogatyr was a heroic warrior (some were mythical, some were historical) of Kievan Rus’.
163 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 37, ll. 1-2ob. (5 March 1836).
meaning of the word—of walking, of laying, of sitting. It was a terrible rheumatism in the back and in the legs, with terrible cramps in the stomach. For three days I screamed [krichal] almost incessantly, and I was unable to move either my arms or my legs.”

When his nachal’nik at the ministry asked for an explanation, Kalashnikov provided dramatic detail. His doctor “doubted,” he explained, whether he would survive, and after weeks of being bedridden, he had to “learn to walk like a toddler.” He appended to his story a doctor’s note that confirmed the account and explained that Kalashnikov’s myriad affections—the “intense hemmorhoidal attacks, the stomach cramps, the inflammation in the back, the rheumatism”—were all the fruit of service and the “prolonged sedentary life” it imposed.

When Speranskii had caught a glimpse of the waning Ivan Timofeevich a year earlier, he warned him that he was “dying in the chair.”

The comment stuck with Kalashnikov, and he would pick it up from time to time as he grew older. But as he pondered his poor health, he reflected on its cause and took some comfort in placing his pain within the context of that sweeping story of Russia’s “great affair” that meant so much to him and Peter Andreevich. State service, he believed, was vital to the health of the empire, however taxing on the individual chinovnik, who never received the recognition he deserved. “Military men die on the field on honor,” he wrote to Peter Andreevich, “whereas we die on the chair of honor. The goal is the same, though the roads are different.”

164 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 36, l. 1 (14 August 1831).
165 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 40, ll. 1-5.
166 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 37, ll. 1-2ob. (5 March 1836).
167 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 35, l. 34ob. (25 April 1830).
"To Acquaint My Readers with Siberia…"

It was with such a notion in mind that Ivan Timofeevich, lying ill in his Petersburg bed, spooked by the cholera epidemic, and even more disturbed by the reactions of the city’s “simple people” to the latter, became Siberia’s first novelist.168

He wrote during the heyday of the historical novel, a pivotal time in the history of Russian literature that is usually dated from the 1829 publication of Mikhail Zagoskin’s Juri Miloslavskii, or the Russians in 1612 to that of Pushkin’s The Captain’s Daughter in 1836. During these years the historical novel so dominated Russia’s prose scene that the terms “novel” and “historical novel” became synonymous. Zagoskin’s novel was by far the most popular—far outselling now classic works by Pushkin and Gogol—and it would go through eight editions, six translations, and win the author an audience with the tsar, himself a great fan of Walter Scott, the godfather of the entire historical novel craze. Not surprisingly, Zagoskin’s success encouraged numerous imitators: “All booksellers were caught in the crossfire,” wrote Aleksandr Bestuzhev-Marlinskii in 1833, “and novel after novel was thrown at the heads of the good Russian people.”169


169 Dan Ungarianu, Plotting History: The Russian Historical Novel in the Imperial Age (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2007), 13, 19-34; Mersereau, Russian Romantic Fiction.
Among these novel-slingers were Kalashnikov and his brother-in-law Konstantin Masal’skii, both of whom set to work on their first novels in the wake of Zagoskin’s success. Kalashnikov began writing *The Daughter of Merchant Zholobov*, as he told Slovtsov, while recovering from his illness at the end of 1830. He wrote to Peter Andreevich that he “read and re-read the novels of Walter Scott,” which he claimed comprised the “only pleasure in this life.” He recognized that such a statement might seem excessive, and anticipated his benefactor’s criticism: “Again you ask why? And what about my children, my wife? I love them such that it is impossible to love them more, but a person in this world is happy only in his dreams. *Walter Scott* carries me away to some sort of enchanted world, the soul forgets all that is material and unites with the people that his imagination creates: it lives their lives and suffers or finds bliss along with them.”

Without a service post for the first time in two decades, Ivan Timofeevich had time to write, which, health permitting, he did until he finished his first novel in January 1832. For much of this time he was bedridden, and it might have been for that reason that he began exploring the heavy sheaf of papers that had arrived from Irkutsk after his father’s death in 1828. In Timofei Petrovich’s introspective memoir about his journey from the harsh Nerchinsk of “those days”—via the good nachal’nik Teviashov—to Irkutsk, Ivan Timofeevich found his own story. Just over thirty years old at the time he wrote his novel, he was about the same age as had been Timofei Petrovich when he wrote his memoir. Impressed by his father’s tale, both for the deprivation it suggested and the

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170 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 35, ll. 37ob.-38 (13 June 1830). Emphasis in original.
171 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 36, l. 7 (10 March 1832).
moral it offered, he wrote his novel and cast Slovtsov as the benevolent Verkhneudinsk voevoda.

These personal circumstances are important for understanding Kalashnikov the novelist. Because he would make a name for himself—indeed, proudly proclaim himself as—Siberia’s first novelist, commentators have understandably taken Siberia as their starting point in analyzing his works. But in doing so they have often assumed that Kalashnikov opposed Siberia to Russia and was critical of the tsarist government. One recent article even locates the “seeds” of the later Siberian regionalist movement in the writings of Kalashnikov and other writers. Kalashnikov’s contribution, the article suggests, was the creation of the image of Siberia as a “prisoner” of the uncaring central government”: “For Kalashnikov, as for many other Siberian writers who were to follow him, the ‘darkness’ is always imposed on Siberia from the outside—in his case, by ignorant and uncaring Petersburg officials, militant and rootless Cossacks, and brutal ex-convicts who are recruited to watch over the locals.”172

Kalashnikov’s novels are, to be sure, awash in violent, crude officials, many of them from Petersburg. But his message could not have been more different: Petersburg, far from the source of Siberia’s “darkness,” was the font of its enlightenment, and in his eyes Siberia’s woes were caused above all by the region’s distance from the imperial capital’s benevolent tutelage. After The Daughter of Merchant Zholobov received a positive reception, he told Slovtsov that this point would be the driving idea behind his second novel, Kamchatalka:

Approved by the reception of the public, I want to write another novel, 
*Kamchadalka*, where I will depict Kamchatka and the northern lands of 
Siberia. With a topographic and ethnographic goal I also want to mingle a 
political one: to show the harm of excessive power distant from the 
Throne and the evil that comes from the fact that *chinovniki* in Siberia are 
not required to study. In a novel, where it is possible to act on the mind 
and move the heart, this will be very effective. Who knows, maybe even 
the SOVEREIGN EMPEROR will deign to read my book. The current 
novel [*The Daughter of Merchant Zholobov*] I also want to present to 
HIM.”

These are not the words of an oppositional writer, but of a novelist-*chinovnik*. Although 
Kalashnikov was delighted to receive the attention of the public, what he really hoped for 
was to catch the eye of the tsar, the greatest *nachal’nik* of all.

Kalashnikov’s fiction also had an additional “political goal” not mentioned in the 
above passage. Along with calling for better trained *chinovniki* and closer supervision of 
Siberia from Petersburg, Kalashnikov made the positive argument that Siberia had 
already achieved much under tsarist rule. Like Timofei Petrovich in his memoir, Ivan 
Timofeevich used his novels to describe a harsher world of “those days” that had 
improved greatly. As he explained in *Exiles*:

> There were ill-starred times even in our fatherland, when the degenerates 
were in a state of bliss and the virtuous perished. Thank God, these 
terrifying times are long forgotten; even stories about them are considered 
to be fables, for the two generations of the current century, old and new, 
were born and came of age under a wise and gentle government.”

The narrative voice in Kalashnikov’s novels is always one that looks back on a horrible 
past from a more enlightened present. When Kalashnikov explained that he wrote his

\[173\] IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 36, ll. 7-8ob. (10 March 1832).
\[174\] *DKZh*, 455.
novels “to acquaint my readers with Siberia,” the Siberia he had in mind was a Siberia improving at the hand of caring, active nachal’niki.

As for the “topographical and ethnographical goal,” Kalashnikov intended his novels to serve as a source of information about vast, poorly understood Siberia to people who would not read more scholarly articles (such as, for example, those found in Grigorii Spasskii’s *Siberian Herald*). Each novel contains a melodramatic love story, and as two young lovers experience trials and tribulations over the course of the plot, Kalashnikov introduces a wide range of information on Siberia: climate, topography, descriptions of native peoples, history, and so on. He wrote, he explained, for readers “uninitiated in the secrets of the geography of the fatherland” (*otechestvennoi geografii*). Take the following scene from *The Daughter of Merchant Zholobov*:

“Frosts round here [in Irkutsk] ain’t nothing!” objected Korenev. “You can, as they say, eat them with bread. After all, we’ll soon have clear and calm days, better than in summer even. But the frost in Piter [Petersburg], now that’s the real thing!”

“You mean it’s colder than here?” asked Savvishna. “Colder or not, it’s much wetter! There, I hear, it cuts right through you!

It’s on the sea, with its high humidity and winds. Today snow up to your knees, tomorrow—pouring rain.”

“So it turns out that our Siberia-*matushka* is better than everywhere else?”

“Better! What are you thinking! Don’t you know what they think about this place?”

“What?”

“That here the snow never melts, and that the people are all exiles.”

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176 *DKZh*, 18.
“Ha, ha, ha!” laughed the old women in unison. “Enough, Petrovich! You’d think up just about anything!”

Although he did not cast Siberia as a “heaven,” Kalashnikov attempted through similar scenes, copious descriptions of beautiful landscapes, and abundant footnoting to interest Russian readers in his homeland and see it as theirs as well. The result, as one commentator noted about *The Daughter of Merchant Zholobov*, is a “novel of mores, a grab bag of ethnological, geographical, gastronomical, and meteorological information.”

Recognized in Petersburg as an expert on his Siberian themes, Kalashnikov was widely praised for such descriptions. Ivan Timofeevich beamed with pride over the praise his books brought him. The success of *The Daughter of Merchant Zholobov*, he wrote, “exceeded my expectations” and the “city is filled with flattering reviews.” He claimed to have made a profit of 3,000 rubles on the novel and had, he explained, become acquainted with “nearly all the local literary men,” citing Zhukovskii and Krylov in particular (the latter, he wrote, was “the patriarch of our literature, a man who in mind, in character, and in his very appearance, resembles the wise men of antiquity”). He sent his books to Pushkin as well, who wrote back that he enjoyed them. He also informed Slovtsov that *The Daughter of Merchant Zholobov* was being translated into other languages (and attached an advertisement for the German translation “as proof” of that fact to his benefactor). “And so my name is becoming well-known in Europe. Is that not

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177 DKZh, 127-28.
179 Mersereau, *Russian Romantic Fiction*, 143.
strange? Nobody in Siberia will be more gladdened by this than you—to whom I am indebted for everything.”180

Not all reviews, of course, were flattering. Polevoi, for example, took Kalashnikov to task, suggesting that his characters were underdeveloped, that he simply copied Scott, and that he would be better off writing nonfiction.181 Ivan Timofeevich was defensive, responding to the critique in the preface to *Exiles*: “It’s true that I did not invent a new form of composition and have not been ashamed to write according to the model of the immortal Scot. But the events, characters, ideas, feelings, and scenes are my property, and for very valid reasons my ownership of them is inviolable. I was the first to write the Siberian novel: whom could I imitate, but forms?”182

Kalashnikov claimed that he simply was not interested in writing nonfiction. Siberia was, he wrote, his “rodina, where I passed the best or, at least, the first years of my life.” He had, he explained, little inclination to compile information about a place that was the constant subject of his “dreams.” “History,” he wrote, “speaks coolly, dryly, and lifelessly,” and “tells about the past but does not revive it.”183 In *Exiles* he sought to do the latter in telling the story of Nikita Shalaurov, a Iakutsk merchant who attempted in the mid-eighteenth century to reach the Aleutian Islands by travelling through the Bering Straits. Shalaurov left Iakutsk with a crew of 70 in 1757 and then spent four years just reaching the Arctic Ocean before spending another three in unsuccessful attempts to sail

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180 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 36, ll. 4-9ob. (10 March 1832); A. S. Pushkin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (Leningrad, 1979): X: 512; *DKZhRP*, 443-46.
181 *Moskovskii telegraf* (1833), ch. 50: 244-47.
182 *DKZhRP*, 443-46.
183 *DKZhRP*, 446.
out of the Arctic. Abandoned by much of his crew, he died in 1764, though whether by
cold, starvation, or at the hands of Chukchi is unknown.\textsuperscript{184}

As befit such a subject, \textit{Exiles} was Kalashnikov’s darkest story. Its setting was a
tiny settlement on the Arctic coast, some two hundred versts from Nizhnekolymsk (the
home of Krivogornitsyn). In the story, two exiles—Sud’ba (Fate) and Nevolia
(Captive)—have lived in this desolate place since they were wrongly exiled by Biron,
favorite of Empress Anna (r. 1730-40), thirty years earlier. Although they got on well
with the local Iukagirs, theirs was an isolated existence in a dark, isolated wasteland
(“only rarely a polar bear appeared, neither fierce nor angry, but somber and morose like
the nature that surrounded him”).\textsuperscript{185} The families learned to cope with their situation and
lived together harmoniously until Nevolia’s prideful wife sought to prevent the marriage
of her daughter to Sud’ba’s son, going so far as attempting to marry her daughter off to a
sixty-year-old chinovnik who “looked more like a walrus than a man.”\textsuperscript{186} Sud’ba’s
son gives up hope of marrying his love and leaves to join Shalaurov’s ill-fated
expedition. Word of his death leaves the families in despair at the very moment news
arrives from St. Petersburg that Sud’ba and Nevol’ia had been pardoned.

Kalashnikov had two primary aims in telling this dreary tale. The first was to
emphasize the nobility of explorers like Shalaurov. Kalashnikov pointed out that, as a
novelist, he sought to “raise the curtain on the fate [Shalaurov] met and guess the

\textsuperscript{184} \textit{RBS}, “Chaadaev-Shvitkov,” 489; IOS, 437. Kalashnikov took most of his information for the story from
G. A. Sarychev, \textit{Puteshestvie flota kapitana Sarycheva po severo-vostochnoi chasti Sibiri, Ledovitomu
moriu i Vostochnomu okeanu, v prodolzhenie os’mi let, pri Geograficheskoi i Astronomicheskoi morskoi
ekspeditsii, byvshii pod nachal’stvom flota kapitana Billingsa s 1785 po 1793 god} (St. Petersburg, 1802).
\textsuperscript{185} \textit{DKZhRP}, 455.
\textsuperscript{186} \textit{DKZhRP}, 464.
thoughts of this unusual man” by “supplement[ing] history with dreams.” The dreams he chose to add were his own. He knew from his father’s papers and stories that many of his Kalashnikov ancestors had also spent time in remote arctic outposts, and in the story he uses an authorial “I” to claim that his own great-grandfather had almost joined Shalaurov’s ill-fated expedition. He suggested that Siberian conquerors and explorers like Ermak, Khabarov, and Shalaurov were motivated not by greed, but by “genius.” Adopting one of Slovtsov’s favorite images, he added that such men appear “in the distance of time like beautiful lamps, illuminating the dismal darkness of everyday life.” When Kalashnikov’s Shalaurov dies on the sea surrounded by ice floes, he proclaims that “God sees that I pursued not greed, that I desired, maybe insanely, good for my fatherland.” The vast tracts of Siberia, Kalashnikov’s logic ran, were made Russian not by greed alone, but also by patriotism.

Kalashnikov’s second theme was the beneficent work of men in Siberia who, having submitted themselves to unfortunate fate, work to make the best of their situation. Like all of his fiction, Exiles has a Slovtsov double. Sud’ba—“Fate”—adapts to his circumstances, creates a tranquil world, and sets about improving it by educating his and his friend’s children. Wherever “enlightened” Russians went, Kalashnikov suggests, they make the best of things. Sud’ba and company even joined the local Iukagirs in hunting reindeer in the spring, spearing enough reindeer to provide meat for the year:

Both families took part in [the trip to the river to kill reindeer]. Even [Sud’ba and Nevola’s beautiful daughters] Ol’ga and Elizaveta went with pleasure […] because] the spectacle itself truly amused them. ‘The

187 DKZhRP, 445.
188 DKZhRP, 458-59, 479, 484.
spectacle itself?” you ask with astonishment. ‘Could such a spectacle amuse such sweet, tender girls?’ Precisely so, esteemed sirs! Are not Spanish girls, the most beautiful maidens in the entire world, amused by the slaughter of bulls, or—what is worse—the disgusting death of some matador hitched up on the horn? Every country has its extravagancies [prichudy]!

Even in the Siberian tundra, Kalashnikov suggested, patient men of enlightenment (“luminous souls”) could create order, fruitfulness, and happiness—even if it was of its own type.189

Peter Andreevich was beyond delighted with his pupil’s literary success, which he saw as further vindication of the training he had long provided. He told Kalashnikov not to worry about Polevoi’s negative review (“I found it unjust and barbed, but what can one expect from a petty-bourgeois soul (meshchanskoj dushi)?”). The Daughter of Merchant Zholobov, he enthused, was a “rare phenomenon in our literature,” the “first of its kind.” He admitted that, when Kalashnikov first proclaimed to him the “originality” of his novel, he had been so vexed with his pupil’s “audaciousness” that he did not even want to read an advance excerpt of the novel. But he was so impressed when he did read it that he did something utterly out of character: he refrained from telling Ivan Timofeevich what to do next (“you know better than me; my business is to read and admire”). And when Kalashnikov sent him Kamchadalka, he enjoyed it even more, explaining that he cried as he read and re-read its “edifying” (nastavitel’noe) conclusion: “Such wit, such feeling, such economy, such taste in this Kamchadalka that I don’t know how to direct or end my praise.” It would, he prophesized, be “read with pleasure in all provinces.” And

189 DKZhRP, 468-70, 490.
Exiles he liked best of all for its “meekness of feeling” and “well-developed judgments.”

“You have comforted me with your success in literature,” the proud mentor wrote.

“Continue to bring me joy and news about yourself.”

“Believe me, wherever this man finds himself, he will be inseparable from Rome…”

While Ivan Timofeevich made a name for himself in the capital as the Siberian Scott, Peter Andreevich settled into a life of retirement in Tobol’sk. He could be seen around town in his long grey frockcoat, carrying the green umbrella he used to protect his fast fading eyes from the sun. But mostly he stayed indoors, living what he called a “completely solitary” existence in the boggy lower town at the foot of his favorite hill. In the evenings he received visits from local teachers, who read to him to save the strain that candle-lit pages put on his eyes. A few of those teachers left descriptions of his domestic regime—notable, one recalled, for its “methodical precision.” He rose at six, after which his doors were “almost always locked,” for he did not like to be disturbed while praying and reading, which he did until one in the afternoon, when he drank a single glass of red wine, ate a meal of two dishes (three on feast days), and, after a brief walk, continued reading and writing into the evening.

But only rarely was Peter Andreevich entirely alone. He had a number of servants with whom he seems to have been close. He prayed regularly with at least one

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190 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 102, ll. 43-45, 46ob. (9 April 1832); IRLI 120, op. 1, d. 103, ll. 1-3ob., 5 (3 June 1833; 15 July 1833).
191 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 102, ll. 36-36ob. (1 March 1830); IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 102, ll. 38-38ob. (26 April 1830).
of them, Poliver, a serf he purchased for 500 rubles in Viatka province during his first tour of duty as vizitator. “Poliverka,” he told Kalashnikov, always made sure to remember Ivan Timofeevich in his prayers. Slovtsov freed Poliver in 1834, but he had others, two of whom, Il’ia and Filip, appear in his letters. Filip’s fate is unclear, while Il’ia was freed no later than 1827 (Slovtsov asked Kalashnikov in a letter that year if he had seen “my freedman” (otpushchennik) in Petersburg). Peter Andreevich also hired a cook, Stepanova Bizina, who worked for him from his retirement until his death.193

What Ivan Timofeevich could not understand as he read his mentor’s descriptions of this domestic world was why Peter Andreevich, having received permission to return to Petersburg in 1828, chose to stay in Tobol’sk. Kalashnikov waged a decade-long campaign to convince his mentor to join him in the capital. Why not, he asked in 1829, leave “that gloomy region” where “it is difficult, if not impossible, for the virtuous and enlightened man to find himself some friends?” Kalashnikov promised to furnish his lonely benefactor with the family he never had: “Here I will share my last crumb with you, my last corner, my last minute of life. You will find in me a sincerely loving son, in my wife a respectful daughter, in my children—your own grandchildren.” To greet his benefactor in Petersburg, Kalashnikov added, would be a “holiday for my soul.”194

Emotional pleas were Ivan Timofeevich’s preferred line of attack, but he also tried to lure his benefactor with the charms that Petersburg offered the “enlightened man”:193

193 GAvG f. 329, op. 5, d. 93, ll. 1-2ob.; IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 101, ll. 10-10ob. (2 February 1822); IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 101, l. 20ob. (26 May 1823); IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 101, l. 41ob. (15 March 1824); OR RNB f. 702, op. 1, d. 1, ll. 1-4; IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 102, l. 41ob. (4 July 1827); Golodnikov, “K biografii,” 430.
194 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 35, ll. 30ob.-31 (6 December 1829). IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 35, l. 35ob. (25 April 1830).
Life here, or at least my life, however vicissitudinous and filled with various types of suffering, is at least life and not the unchanging slumber in which the *Sibiriak*, like a wind-up automaton, comes and goes to and from some provincial chancellery or another, sups, and falls asleep—and then again buries himself in papers or goes to his comrade’s in order to curse his boss or kill time playing cards. Thus, I thank the Creator that I could cross over from the land of slumber to the land of life! Here one unwittingly becomes an intelligent man because at his every step he comes across—if one can so put it—houses of knowledge. Here a reading library; there a collection of books printed from the time of Gutenberg to the latest press [...]; further along, the museum of the famous chancellor [Rumiantsev] *for the good of enlightenment*; take another step and you find all of the possible places on the planet earth in their actual image and you learn, inadvertently, geography, cosmography, dioramas, and so on. I admit, seeing such things every day, I have already grown accustomed to them. But how important they are! How precious they seemed to me from the depths of Siberia!”

Peter Andreevich agreed with the appraisal, but he was unbending: “All of your attempts to convince me to move from the cheap north to the expensive north I let fly by my ears, even though the polar aurora borealis of enlightenment shines there. What need do I have of enlightenment, when I have grown old and seek rest?” He added that he had neither health to make the trip nor wealth to support himself once he arrived. In Tobol’sk, he explained, he could afford a pair of horses and his “essential servants”; in Peters burg, he would “expire as a beggar with rank.”

Ivan Timofeevich saw through such excuses. “My God!” he wrote in 1832, “Why do you wish to let this most splendid opportunity pass?” He pointed out that, having spent a decade on the road, Slovtsov surely could stand the trip. As for money, with his

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195 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 36, ll. 4-6 (10 March 1832). Emphasis in original.
196 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d.102, ll. 46-46ob. (9 April 1832).
197 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 102, ll. 39-40ob. (12 July 1830).
own salary—no larger than Peter Andreevich’s pension—he not only supported his family, but also employed a whole “family” of servants. Because Slovtsov was a bachelor, he would be able to afford more amusement in Petersburg on his 3,000-ruble pension “than you could find in Tob[ol’sk] for 30,000 rubles.” Kalashnikov even appended an enticing catalog of the imperial capital’s delicacies: “oranges in summer (10): 1 ruble!”; “a pair of hazel grousers in winter: 40 kopecks”; “the best regular tea: 7 rubles per pound (the same price as in Irkutsk).” “Come dearest my dearest benefactor Peter Andreevich, come!”

If Slovtsov was physically and financially able to leave, then why did he stay? Part of the answer was that he had grown attached to the place that had become his home:

Regarding your belief that I should move to P.B. I must respond that force, and not rhetoric, is required to tear me away from the soil to which I adhere. And from the tables and chairs, the sledges and the roofs, the books, the streets along which I walk, the pair of horses, the cow that supplies, on average, two glasses of cream, the chickens, and the motley heifers that come up to me when I grow soft in soul [raznežhus’ v dushe]. These are the roots of my Tobol’sk existence.

His other, more substantial motive was that, as he frequently reiterated, he wanted time to reflect and pray as he prepared for death. He had, he believed, many sins to atone for—particularly because, as he confided to Tobol’sk seminary teacher Aleksandr Sulotskii, he had “once reeked the musty stench” of “freethinking.” He told Kalashnikov that he was

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198 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 36, ll. 14-16 (5 May 1832).
199 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 102, ll. 50ob.-51 (4 June 1832).
now an “old man who takes no comfort in worldly pleasures,” for whom all that remained was to “think about how to close my eyes most calmly.”

For all of its enlightened attractions, the Petersburg Kalashnikov described in his letters— the “fuss,” the “bustle,” the cholera, the wretched weather— was no place to do such a thing. Kalashnikov habitually complained that his many obligations left him little time to devote to God (“The entire day, from 7 onwards, I thrash about like a fish on the ice,” he moaned in 1835). As he read such descriptions, Peter Andreevich came to idealize his Tobol’sk as a quiet sanctuary from “worldly” concerns. “It’s too bad,” he wrote to Kalashnikov in 1834, “that the troubles about which you complain do not allow you to occupy yourself with preparing for the future life. You seem to have convinced yourself that you are going to live all eternity on the Karpovka [River] or on Vas’il’evskii Island [in St. Petersburg]. What a pitiable certitude!” On another occasion he pointedly observed: “Tomorrow is Easter here [in Tobol’sk…]. This is the New Year, from which everything begins for the Orthodox, but as for you over there, I don’t know what it is.”

But even in his Tobol’sk sanctuary Peter Andreevich could not escape the nagging question of what his career had accomplished. This was the topic at the center of the first two books he wrote after his retirement. These were free-ranging in content, but his personal story, his role in Russia’s “great affair,” and Russia’s place in history were

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200 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 101, ll. 5-5ob. (27 February 1826); IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 103, ll. 8-8ob. (12 August 1833); Aleksandr Sulotskii, “Peter Andreevich Slovtsov,” Irkutskiiia eparkhial’nyia vedomosti (1872), pribav. k no. 45, 576-88; also printed in Aleksandr Sulotskii, “Peter Andreevich Slovtsov,” ChIOIDR (June-September 1873): 130-40. Quotations from 138-39.

201 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 36, ll. 43-45 (12 July 1835). Emphasis in original.

202 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 103, l. 12ob. (17 March 1834); IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d.102, l. 46ob. (9 April 1832). Emphasis added.
their driving themes. When Kalashnikov later tried to explain his mentor’s introspective writing style, he explained that Slovtsov had a “greater inclination for state service than for literary works,” to which he turned as a way to occupy his mind in retirement. With the exception of *Historical Survey of Siberia*, Kalashnikov added, Slovtsov’s books were “more the conversations of a wise and enlightened man than serious works of an academic or litterateur.”²⁰³

Peter Andreevich’s first book from this period, *Strolls around Tobol’sk in the Year 1830*, was among his most ponderous. He described it as a “band of feelings and judgments, with a supplement of local information.” Among the latter was detailed information on Tobol’sk’s climate, soil, flora, and much else. He explained that he had decided to write about the “microscopic details” of Tobol’sk life because Tobol’sk was where he began his education (“bygone impressions even today shimmer in my recollections, and in order to unburden my soul [*sdat’ s dushi*] once and for all I have intertwined them with ideas from present life”).²⁰⁴ Tobol’sk, in other words, was the place where his encounter with enlightenment began—and therefore an ideal point of departure from which to reflect on his life and that of the empire he served.

In the book, Peter Andreevich used Tobol’ sk scenes as a starting point for reflections on broader questions—particularly those of enlightenment, history, and botany. The latter was a favorite hobby, about which Slovtsov regularly corresponded with Semën Shchukin, an old colleague from the Irkutsk gymnasium. He wrote to

²⁰³ ZIZh, 637. For a more detailed discussion of Slovtsov’s style see K. V. Anisimov, *Problemy poetiki literatury Sibiri*.
²⁰⁴ PVT, 66-67.
Shchukin in 1832 about the annual pilgrimage he made with Tobol’sk teacher Ivan Pomaskin to the site of Isker, capital of the former Siberian Khanate, where the two went to reflect on the earliest days of Russian Siberia. The letter, in addition to musing on botany and Tatars—who Slovtsov imagined visited Isker to mourn past glories—described two peasants Slovtsov and Pomaskin met in a nearby village. The peasants, Slovtsov told Shchukin, asked why he and Pomaskin made the annual trip, what it was they saw there. “The same thing that you see each day,” Slovtsov answered. “We, Your Honor,” the peasants respond, “see nothing, and are surprised that Tobol’sk gentlemen come to stare.”

Attacking such ignorance, Peter Andreevich believed, was the duty of the enlightened man. But it was hard work, its results elusive. He grappled with the inevitable disappointments that serving the cause of enlightenment in a place like Russia entailed in the opening chapter of Strolls around Tobol’sk. He set the scene during Christmas—a time, he explained, when Tobol’iaki donned masks, walked the streets with lanterns, and entered the houses of strangers:

One evening during Christmastime, when the best creatures of the noble estate amuse themselves with dancing and cards at assemblies; when honorable citizens [grazhdane pochetnye] amuse themselves and their families with sweets and preserves and rap their shot glasses on trays to the noise of the piano; when people of modest means gather at someone’s place to crack cedar nuts after tea and play blind man’s bluff [zhmurki], a strange Mask unexpectedly came to me and captivated my attention. Startled, I broke the magnifying glass with which I had been examining the Irkutsk herbarium recently sent by Mr. Shchukin, and unwittingly invited the Mask to have a seat.

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The masked visitor plays the role of Peter Andreevich’s conscience in the ensuing dialogue. Dressed as an “Egyptian mummy,” he reveals that he is Hermes Trismegistus, a legendary sage who embodied both the Egyptian God Thoth and Greek God Hermes and served as intermediary between this world and the next.206 Slovtsov has Trismegistus’ character give voice to his deepest convictions, whereas his own character raises questions to keep their conversation moving.

The focus of their debate is “popular diversions” (uveseleniia obshchestvennye) and their meaning. The mysterious mummy tells Slovtsov that, having visited “towns of all countries and times,” he was astounded by the “rude gaiety” of Russian society. “As I listened to your public merrymaking, I had to ask: is this a Christian country in which I find myself?” Slovtsov objects—“What are you talking about, wandering mummy?”—and asserts that people have always and everywhere “made merry in the same [unenlightened] way,” that they “listen to rules, history, and admonitions, but live as though they hear nothing.” The mummy responds that people need direction, and he draws a contrast between ancient Egypt and ancient Greece to prove the point. In the former, he claimed, people occupied themselves not with bawdy amusements, but with “holy processions,” and the “ancient Egyptian was calm, introspective, and bound to law and family.” In Greece, by contrast, people gave themselves over to the Olympic games and “other such disgraces that bring about irritability in the nervous and mental tissue.”

As a result, the ancient Greek was “brave, sharp-witted, fickle, quarrelsome, and frivolous”—and Greece a short-lived, unstable society by comparison with ancient Egypt.

When Peter Andreevich’s character suggests that popular amusements are products of the “character of peoples,” again the wise mummy refutes him. Such is true, he explains, only of “primitive” popular diversions, those of peoples who had yet to join history (the “march of [a people in] competition with its neighbors or [the march] of education”). It was the task of the enlightened ruler to set his people on that path:

Why […] did the raids of your Monomakhī, your toboggan hills and swings, clounding the head with folly, change from diversions into cold spectacles? Because your Peter the Great sought knowledge and justice amidst his subjects—and with his index finger rapped on their skulls.

Once placed on the path toward enlightenment, the mummy suggested, the only acceptable public diversions were those that “promote the development of intellectual-moral life” (umstvenno-nravstvennoi zhizni). But what if philosophizing, Peter Andreevich asks—with “freethinking” and its influence in mind—leads men away from Christian thinkers and toward “other lamps.” The mummy reassures him that these are sources of only “artificial illumination.”

Humanity, in regards to higher spiritual enlightenment, travels along a great elliptical orbit, at times at apogee, at others at perigee. You may be a great eccentric today, but you will again reach perigee as happened during the times of Noah, Moses, David, the blessed age of the Gospel, and the time of the Bible Societies. Have faith: eternal truths do not decay—because complete men [sovershennye muzhi—i.e., enlightened, Christian men] have lived, and will live on earth, and not without joys.

207 The princes of Kievan Rus’.
When Peter Andreevich responds that they were not talking about “complete men,” but entire societies, the mummy answers unequivocally: “It’s time for me to say bluntly that public amusements [uveselenii obshchestvennykh], if they do not rise to the mind and soul, cannot exist outside of two periods: when a people finds itself in either an equally savage or an equally intellectual [umstvennom] condition.” Because the world was in neither condition at present, society could not amuse itself as a whole, but instead people must make merry with others like them and in the fashion that their mental development allowed. To the “complete man” was left the task of rapping on the skulls of those behind him on the spectrum of enlightenment.  

For Peter Andreevich, Tobol’sk was a particularly poignant place to ponder the mummy’s lesson. Its architectural ensemble had long served for him as proof of the power of enlightened imperial rule, and he interrupted his discussion of Tobol’sk architecture in Strolls Around Tobol’sk with the reflection that, if a Russian took it into his head to begin his journey from the granite hill erected at the base of the [monument] to Peter I from Catherine II [in St. Petersburg], and travel all the way to Kamchatka, to the Bering Strait, or further, everywhere across this unbounded space he would find a monument to the former and to the latter, at which the soul of the traveller could relax and reflect in pleasure. About what else is there to reflect upon? About the fact, clever Russian, that the entirety of your Russia and our Siberia until the nineteenth century was a world created by two crowned heads. Peter, like the Creator, parted darkness from light and presented a new fortress [tverd’] for Russia […]. Great was the night between the evening of the Former [Peter I] and the morning of the Latter [Catherine II], but then the day was beautiful. God created man according

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208 PVT, 68-76.
to his image and likeness, but Catherine created the Russian according to the image and likeness of a human being.\textsuperscript{209}

This was not the same Slovtsov who, four decades earlier, had spoken out against Catherine II in Tobol’sk’s cathedral.

Peter Andreevich’s second book from this period was a collection of invented dialogues called \textit{Two Scipiones Africani}.\textsuperscript{210} Ostensibly about ancient Rome, it was another argument for autocratic, imperial rule in Russia and a defense of the life Peter Andreevich had lived in service of that system. He chose to write about Rome not only because of his longstanding fascination with the topic, but also because he believed that Roman history was useful for Russian readers. Writing at the time of the Greek war of independence against the Ottoman Empire—a war that excited and enthralled European imaginations—Slovtsov made a deeply anti-Greek case. He lamented that ancient Greek authors were more popular than their Roman counterparts, whose world, he pointed out, was “far closer to us.” He expanded his criticism of Greece from \textit{Strolls around Tobol’sk}, describing antiquity’s archipelago as a land of “intestinal strife” between “children”—“playful, willful, ingenious, and even marvelous, but […] children nonetheless.” Greece lacked “firm foundations for general [obshchago] happiness,” he suggested, because it lacked a capital city. It was a land capable, therefore, of producing “philosophers and sects, but not political enlightenment” (\textit{politicheskago prosveshcheniia}). For Russians to look to such

\textsuperscript{209} \textit{PVT}, 134-35.

\textsuperscript{210} The book was published in two editions, the second one significantly revised and expanded: [P. A. Slovtsov], \textit{Dva dnia iz rimskoi istorii, ili dvoe stshiponov afrikanskih} (Moscow, 1830); [P. A. Slovtsov], \textit{Dvoe stshiponov Afrikanskih}, 2d. ed. (St. Petersburg, 1835). All citations are from the second edition.
an “incoherent nation” for civil and political models, he concluded, would not be “prudent.’’

Instead, he urged, Russians should look to ancient Rome. He saw both Russia and Rome as empires that brought peace and order by suppressing the “perpetual enmities” of “tribes.” His choice of characters in Two Scipiones Africani was telling. The Scipiones were men who achieved extraordinary fame and glory in expanding Rome’s borders: Scipio Africanus the Elder (c. 234-183 BCE) defeated Hannibal in the Second Punic War, and Scipio Aemilianus Africanus the Younger (c. 185-129 BCE) oversaw the siege and destruction of Carthage in the Third Punic War. But both also died under a cloud—the Elder far away from Rome at his estate, accused of taking bribes; the Younger murdered, having lost his popularity in Rome when he opposed the populist reforms of the Gracchi brothers. Peter Andreevich described both as “enlightened” men of moderation who devoted their lives to serving the greater good—the Elder in expanding Rome’s borders, but remaining humble while doing so; the Younger in trying to save Rome from becoming the “den of popular anarchy” that he believed the populist Gracchi reforms promised. Their lives, Slovtsov wrote, were examples of “love for the fatherland and respect for the laws” that offered “indisputable testimony to the nobility of enlightened men.”

When Ivan Timofeevich read Two Scipiones Africani, he noted correctly that Peter Andreevich had written a book that was more autobiographical than historical.

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211 Slovtsov, Dvoe stihipionov, iii-viii. For an examination of the influence of the Greek Revolution on Russia see Theophilus C. Prousis, Russian Society and the Greek Revolution (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1994).
212 Slovtsov, Dvoe stihipionov, iii-viii, 19, 105, 142.
“You yourself will agree,” Kalashnikov pointed out, “that you put in their mouths the elevated thoughts and feelings that your soul professes; it cannot be otherwise; [...] everyone writes according to his type [...]and in your characters] I saw only you, your fate, your firmness.”213 The book was, in the end, an examination of issues that had long given shape to Slovtsov’s sense of self—what it meant to be a “great man” and to serve the “great affair” of empire.214

It was also an attempt to respond to Kalashnikov’s ongoing attempts to convince him to return to Petersburg. In one scene, the Carthaginian military leader Gispal, freed from captivity after Scipio the Elder’s victory in the Second Punic War, is making his way back to Carthage when he meets Scipio. He found “the great Roman at the plow, immersed in thought.” Shocked to imagine such a man would end his days in provincial obscurity, Gispal questions Scipio’s friend, the writer Quintus Ennius (through whom Peter Andreevich voices his opinions in much of the book). Ennius explains that Gispal, being a “mercenary” Carthaginian, does not understand what it means to be a Roman: “With us,” Ennius asserts, “happiness” is not a matter of satisfying the “five senses,” but instead something found “only in the service of Rome, in sacrificing oneself for Rome.” A great man like Scipio, Ennius claimed, had no need to return to the imperial capital because, given his accomplishments in service of Rome, he had acquired “stockpiles of happiness” sufficient to sustain him in provincial retirement:

We, like children, demand a seemingly equal level of happiness over life’s entire course, without interruption. We desire the impossible. […]

213 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 36, ll. 35ob.-36ob. (12 July 1835).
214 Slovtsov also treated these themes an article (“On the Greats”) he published at this time: P. A. Slovtsov, “O velikikh,” Moskovskit telegraf, no. 31 (November 1831): 18-34.
Would it become our Scipio, who accomplished everything he was destined to accomplish, to complain about vicissitudes when he already stands on the great pathway to heaven itself? A life dedicated to the general welfare of the people, from youth until utter old age, spent in service—even longer than the prescribed period of time—is like a great poem, and it will now conclude naturally in a quiet denouement.\(^\text{215}\)

But Gispal, like Ivan Timofeevich, continued to ask questions:

G: But who would believe me that Scipio, having served Rome to such a degree, would not wish to die in Rome?
E: Would you constrict the greatness of a man by a place and his happiness by a city wall?
G: You yourself said it first, that for the Roman the object of happiness is Rome.
E: Yes. Because he seeks to make the entire world Rome alone, it follows that his death is glorious anywhere.
G: And is it glorious if he lives and dies in glory, but in exile?
E: In exile as well […]. Believe me, wherever this man finds himself, he will be inseparable from Rome."\(^\text{216}\)

Whether Peter Andreevich had indeed acquired “stockpiles of happiness” in his provincial life or whether he wrote about such happiness largely in the hope of convincing himself that he had is difficult to say. But as he reflected on his long career, he hoped he would be remembered like his Scipiones. These were, he wrote, “enlightened men”—the “men of virtue and glory” whose lives were the stuff of history. And for Peter Andreevich, history—the chronicle of the feats of “enlightened men”—was

\(^{215}\) Slovtsov, Dvoe stsipionov, 26-36.

\(^{216}\) Slovtsov, Dvoe stsipionov, 37-38.
the great nastavnik, the shining “star” over the “hyperborean night of an outermost land.”217

217 Slovtsov, Dvoe stsipionov, 105, 111-12.
EPILOGUE:

Diapers of Oblivion and Nineteenth-Century Man

_Time was when men could (so to speak) of a given man, by nourishing and decorating him with fit appliances, to the due pitch, make themselves a King, almost as the Bees do; and what was still more to the purpose, loyally obey him when made. The man so nourished and decorated, thenceforth named royal, does verily bear rule..._

-Thomas Carlyle, 1837

_For us the history of Siberia emerges from the diapers of oblivion no earlier than the fall of the khan’s turban from Kuchum’s head._

-Peter Slovtsov, 1838

_The clock struck three in the morning. Evgenii still sat over a file in his tiny study. Many other chinovniki served together with him, but most of them were men of the nineteenth century..._

-Ivan Kalashnikov, 1841

The train left Tsarskoe Selo not long before midnight on Sunday, August 11, 1840. Packed with tipsy passengers fresh from a party at the imperial palace at Pavlovsk, it barreled down the single, 30-verst track that for three years had connected Petersburg to the royal family’s suburban palaces—Russia’ first, and for the next decade, only rail line. Confused, forgetful, or, as many soon guessed, drunk like many of his passengers, the

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English conductor Robert Maxwell missed his scheduled stop. As a result, the locomotive “Bogatyr” and its eighteen overcrowded cars slammed into an oncoming train from Petersburg, leaving six dead and seventy-eight injured in the countryside not far outside the imperial capital.²

“It is difficult to convey the terror,” Ivan Timofeevich wrote to Peter Andreevich, “that we experienced when we felt the impact and heard the breaking of the carriages and the jingle of the glass. The wagon began to shake, and we all thought we were done for.” Kalashnikov and his wife were on the Petersburg-bound train, returning from a weekend spent with their oldest son, Vladimir, a student at the Lycée at Tsarskoe Selo. It was a trip they had made many times since the line opened in 1837, but after that August night, Kalashnikov told his benefactor, “our inclination to travel by the iron road has disappeared.”³

Like many things new to 1830s Russia, the Tsarskoe Selo train left Ivan Timofeevich feeling unmoored. It was a topic of fascination in Petersburg: depictions of locomotives like “Bogatyr” appeared in cheap popular prints and on candy boxes and letterheads, and the impression left by the iron road’s brisk ride had already spawned a play.⁴ “What is the force,” one newspaper inquired, “that carries these enormous

³ IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 38, ll. 6ob.-7 (5 November 1840).
⁴ Haywood, Beginnings, 137.
carriages with the speed of a wind through the desert, that obliterates space and devours time? This force is the human mind!“5

Ivan Timofeevich did not know what to make of it all. Not long after his first ride in 1838, he wrote to Peter Andreevich, both to share his misgivings and bring his old benefactor—still mired, to Kalashnikov’s enduring vexation, in that Tobol’skian “land of slumber”—up to speed on this latest wonder:

I often travel to Tsar[skoe] Selo—where my son is at the Lycée —on the iron road. An astonishing invention! Imagine 12 carriages, each as big as three coaches—the big ones, the eight-seaters. And thus each carriage seats 24 people, 288 in all. These carriages, taken together, are some 15 sazhens6 in length. The whole of this frightening host, this ship of the land, flies to Tsarskoe Selo (20 verst) in half an hour. But you don’t notice the speed if you don’t look at the objects that surround you: there is no shaking, and one can read a book in this flying ride in complete tranquility. You barely manage to sit and you are already there!

Meanwhile the fiery steed sends out puffs of smoke that spread out like a sublime, endless weathervane. At nighttime this smoke is illuminated by the locomotive’s blaze, and sparks often pour out. An astonishing scene! It’s impossible to get used to it. Utter sorcery. There was once some ancient tale that Emelia the Fool rode on a furnace: today that which was once only fairy tale we see in reality.

“Our century,” the train-pondering Ivan Timofeevich could not help but conclude, “is the century of the idolatry of reason because, really, reason is much too skillful [razum slishkom daleko umel], especially in its inventions.” To further bolster his conclusion he cited talk around town of plans to illuminate Nevskii Prospect, St. Petersburg’s main street, “by means of a flame produced by Galvanism”: “They say that the light from one lamp is so incredible that for [the entire length] of Nev[skii] Prospect no more than five

5 Frolov, Vokzaly Sankt-Peterburga, 17.
6 One sazhen’ is approximately 2 meters.
lamps are needed. It all puffs up human reason—and how unlikely that it’s not at the expense of morality and religion!”

More and more, Ivan Timofeevich and Peter Andreevich wondered what did not come “at the expense of morality and religion.” Like many educated Russians, they saw the 1830s as a time of transformation, and they increasingly asked what came next. As Ivan Timofeevich dealt with middle age—“I have entered my 43rd year. Time is doing its thing”—and Peter Andreevich pondered his mortality—“I have begun the last, sorrowful seventh decade”—they turned to their letters to share their anxieties about the gamut of political, social, and intellectual changes that Russia and Europe faced. In doing so, they defended the narrative of imperial enlightenment that had long given contour to their senses of self. Their letters, as well as the intensely personal writings they produced in defense of this narrative, provide a vivid example of the ways in which questions of self intertwined with understandings of Russia’s historical trajectory during what has been called the “apogee” of Russian autocracy in the 1830s and 1840s.

Take, for example, another letter Kalashnikov sent Slovtsov in 1833:

It is ten years, since I have been in Petersburg, and still the day when I parted from you is as vivid as before: you stood on the porch, in a blue fur coat, as I remember. My god! Time is truly frightful! Just imagine, I am already 36 years old! Four more and that’s forty! […] Here [in Petersburg] there is something dreadful every year. How many of the most ferocious epochs I have survived! The flood of 1824, the uprising [bunt] of 14 December [1825], the cholera and another uprising [i.e., the

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7 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 37, 19-21ob. (25 August 1838). Emphasis in original.
8 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 38, l. 3ob. (2 November 1839); IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 102, ll. 5-5ob. (27 February 1826).
9 See W. Bruce Lincoln, Nicholas I: Emperor and Autocrat of All the Russias (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1989), 152-54.
Polish uprising of 1830-31], and now the most terrible news has spread: an attempt on the life of the SOVEREIGN who is so wise, so beloved. They say that Poles put together a plot and even awaited the SOVEREIGN during his trip to Dinaburg [now Daugavpils, Latvia]; but the hand of the Most High, blessing Russia, preserved his anointed sovereign. Now there is nothing to fear: measures, in all likelihood, have all been taken, and it is said that many have already been arrested.

Our century is the century of plots. The war that Napoleon led was evil, true; but this inclination for revolts is even worse. It appears that Napoleon understood his century, his Frenchmen! It ended in a general war—and the hydra of rebellion has again come to life in France. What will be next? Can the mind solve the riddle of the future, examining charters of the past?

Have you had a look at the Svod Zakonov? Now there is a great monument that Nicholas has raised for himself! It gave me an idea: Peter the Great died in 1725, and after exactly one hundred years Nicholas ascended [the throne]—a wise, firm, shield of Providence against the ruinous spirit of the times. Whatever people say, Russia’s purpose [naznachenie] is significant, and the hand of Providence keeps an astonishingly vigilant watch over her.11

The breathless passage contains many of the themes characteristic of Kalashnikov’s letters from this period: fond recollections about his benefactor, worries about the “ruinous spirit of the times,” and an assertion of the value and need for paternal autocratic rule. Ivan Timofeevich was especially insistent on the latter, writing to Slovtsov in 1838 that, “If the Lord prolongs the reign of our current Sovereign, then Russia will move far ahead. With his wisdom and firm desire for the people’s good, with his power, is anything impossible?”12

10 The Svod Zakonov was a digest of the empire’s laws published in 1832 and compiled under the direction of Mikhail Speranskii.
11 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 36, ll. 23-23ob. (Spring 1833).
12 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 37, l. 21ob. (25 August 1838).
Ivan Timofeevich’s dogged defense of autocracy in his letters—a private medium, where doing so was not required—reflected the integral importance of the autocratic system to his sense of self. Peter Andreevich, though usually more measured than his pupil, also believed that Nicholas I was an ideal ruler for their turbulent age. He was greatly impressed by the emperor’s support for the codification of Russia’s laws, a project spearheaded by his old friend Speranskii. He even took upon himself the task of reading, sequentially, the many dense volumes of law code. “I read, not skimmed them,” he wrote to Kalashnikov. “After the Bible the laws of the fatherland are my main study.”¹³ (Slovtsov did admit a few months later that he also enjoyed reading Balzac—no guiltless pleasure, he explained, for Balzac “is a contemporary of revolution.”).¹⁴

The codification of the laws was for Slovtsov and Kalashnikov evidence of the steady progress that they believed only autocratic rule could provide Russia. When Kalashnikov informed Slovtsov in 1839 of the death of Speranskii, who had played such a pivotal role both in their lives and in that of the empire at large, he used the occasion to reiterate his admiration for Nicholas I:

Russia has lost [in Speranskii] a man of state; the SOVEREIGN—his best advisor; the people—a tender friend of humanity. It is bitter for me to convey this news to you! He was buried at [the Alexander] Nevskii [Monastery cemetery]. The SOVEREIGN paid homage at his funeral. The SOVEREIGN cried and wrote to Prince Vasil’chikov that ‘the death of M. M. [Speranskii] he received among the ranks of those ordeals that Heaven inflicts upon him.’ Without flattery, the SOVEREIGN is a great man. Maybe in all Russia he better than anyone understood the merits of M. M. Was it not during his reign that Count Speranskii made his career

¹³ IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 103, ll. 9-9ob. (12 August 1833). In a private letter to Speranskii, Slovtsov congratulated him on the law code (RGIA f. 1251, op. 1, ch. 1, d. 39, ll. 5-7).
¹⁴ IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 103, l. 11 (16 December 1833).
and achieved that which was the constant goal of his life: to give Russia laws?

Ivan Timofeevich ruefully added that “many people” still did not understand the significance of the codification of the laws. The reason: “we still have not been enlightened as we need to be” (my eshche ne prosvetilis’, kak dolzhno).\(^\text{15}\)

This enlightenment deficit was, of course, the problem that Ivan Timofeevich and Peter Andreevich had long regarded as Russia’s most pressing challenge. But it was a challenge that they believed Nicholas I’s government was intent on meeting. Ivan Timofeevich served in the Fifth Section of the emperor’s chancellery as an assistant to Pavel Kiselev, who was in charge of overseeing an important reform of the administration of the state peasantry. Theirs was, Kalashnikov wrote to Slovtsov, a truly “enlightened and beneficent” cause that would “satisfy the very strictest patriotism.” Through their “onerous, constant, and diligent work,” he explained, “twenty million people received a new administration,” marking an “important epoch in the reign of NICHOLAS.”\(^\text{16}\) Peter Andreevich, given his own experiences trying to install village schools across Siberia, was ecstatic to hear of Kiselev’s plans—which included the projected founding of some 2,000 schools—and congratulated Ivan Timofeevich on this “truly patriotic act.” “Praises to the government,” he wrote, “for having such paternal care! And you, dear Ivan Timofeevich, should thank God that you played no small role in this affair.”\(^\text{17}\)

\(^{15}\) IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 37, ll. 31-32ob. (17 February 1839).
\(^{16}\) IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 37, l. 14ob. (6 May 1838).
\(^{17}\) IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 103, ll. 23-23ob. (27 May 1838); IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 104, ll. 23-23ob. (7 August 1842). A literal translation of Slovtsov’s words would be “And you, dear Ivan Timofeevich, should thank
And that, in the end, was what Slovtsov and Kalashnikov believed service should be all about: playing a role in a great affair. It was through service to the state—and through the education that the state had made possible—that they had left behind the constricting environments of their youths and learned to place their lives within a broader, world-historical narrative of enlightenment. They believed that they promoted this cause by serving the state, for their intimate acquaintance with the “dark” realities of the empire’s provincial locales—brutality, drunkenness, greed, “unenlightenment”—left them convinced that firm paternal rule offered Russia’s best path to progress.

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But as Peter Andreevich and Ivan Timofeevich aged, they worried. They worried, among other things, that enlightened chinovniki like themselves were being superseded by a creature they called the “man of the nineteenth century” (chelovek deviatnadtsatago veka). This was a man, they believed, who failed to understand the paternal enlightenment that the tsarist state provided and, as a result, did not appreciate his “place” in the world. They saw the “man of the nineteenth century” at work in the Decembrist rebellion of 1825. They saw him behind the Polish uprising of 1830-31. And they saw him behind the many other “plots” they imagined were brewing against Nicholas I.

While writing to Kalashnikov in 1840, for example, Slovtsov heard the ringing belltower outside his Tobol’sk home. Its sound, he told Ivan Timofeevich, prompted him to reflect the many “privileged days” he had lived. “One thing,” he added ominously, “saddens

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God that you were not the last spoke in this affair” (byli v etom dele ne posledneiu spiseiu). By 1855, the number of schools founded for state peasants had reached 2,434. On Kiselev and the Ministry of State Domains, see RBS, “Ibak-Klucharev,” 702-17; Lincoln, Nicholas I, 188-94; N. M. Druzhinin, Gosudarstvennye krest’iane i reforma P. D. Kiseleva, 2 vols. (Moscow: Nauka, 1946-1958).

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this old man—that these days soon change into dates. May the Lord prolong the days of our Sovereign!”18 In a letter he wrote two years later he told Ivan Timofeevich of rumors he had heard that not only were “miscreants” “threatening to burn down all Tobol’sk,” they had even set a date to do so: “Will,” he asked, “the All-good [Creator] guard his poor creatures from such an affliction?”19 Ivan Timofeevich had also heard the rumor—it had reached Petersburg along with news of fires in other cities—and he could not help but ask: “Have the words of the Apostle [Peter] already begun to come true, [that] ‘the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up’?”20

Slovtsov soon assured Kalashnikov that Tobol’sk had been saved—“The Lord God preserves our Tobol’sk”—but both men continued to harbor grave fears about the future. Most troubling was their anxiety that the younger generation might turn away from their cherished vision of Russia. It was an especially worrisome notion, given that Ivan Timofeevich and Peter Andreevich had long imagined that Russia’s youth would benefit from state enlightenment projects, as they had themselves, and serve as a bulwark for orderly progress. “The more we live in the world,” Ivan Timofeevich wrote to Peter Andreevich in 1836, “the more we drift apart from the coming generation: we become detached in our type of ideas, in our feelings, in enlightenment itself, in our manners, in everything. You put it splendidly: the new generation regards old men as foreigners. It’s bad to outlive one’s generation!”21

18 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 104, l. 7ob. (22 August 1840). Emphasis added.
19 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 104, l. 27ob. (16 October 1842).
20 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 37, l. 36 (21 October 1842). Emphasis in original. The quotation is from 2 Peter 3:10.
21 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 37, ll. 3ob.-4ob. (5 March 1836). Emphasis in original. Their fear was, of course, well grounded. For a seminal study of Russia’s youth in the mid-nineteenth century, see Abbott Gleason,
In particular, Kalashnikov and Slovtsov were alarmed by a fascination among educated youths with materialism and German idealistic philosophy. Kalashnikov wrote to Slovtsov in 1834 that

It’s a pity, really a pity, that these devilish teachings are stealthily entering young Russia [iunuiu Rossiuu]. Standing amidst the ruins of false teachings, [Russia] can and should present an image of true enlightenment, in the spirit of J[esus] C[hrist] […]. How sad and terrifying to imagine that I am the same sort of machine as the world that surrounds me! Then everything is topsy-turvy: virtue, laws, oath, fatherland, family, friendship, love! Write, unforgettable benefactor, write to me about Jesus; remind me about him amidst the vanities and fuss of life…

Ivan Timofeevich lamented that not enough was being done to stem the influence of German idealism, which he saw as a “religion of haughty reason” (kichlivago razuma) emboldened by impressive human achievements such as train travel. Russia’s priests, he wrote, needed to be more active, for the “Western spirit, the spirit of Antichrist” was strengthening. He found it deplorable that priests remained “satisfied with their sermons” when “the spirit of the century is the spirit of Antichrist.” “It is time,” he added, “to stand up, to keep vigil, and to fight.”

Ivan Timofeevich decided to fight by writing a novel. He wanted, he told Peter Andreevich, to write “precisely in the spirit of Christianity, and I ask J[esus] C[hrist] to aid me in this.” He explained that his central theme would be the necessity of human

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23 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 36, ll. 37-38 (3 August 1834). Emphasis in original.

24 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 37, ll. 18-19ob. (25 August 1838); IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 38, l. 8ob. (5 November 1840). Emphasis in original.
belief in immortality, without which, he believed, all is permitted and “man is an automaton.”

“My God,” he ruminated, “what is it with people nowadays? Freethinking, immorality, filth everywhere [gadost’-povsiudu]. Everywhere vice with an open face. My novel is an antipode to the century. It’s unlikely that the century will not crush it, but my purpose is firm.”

Peter Andreevich was delighted to hear of Ivan Timofeevich’s new project. He thought Kalashnikov was “exactly right” about “German philosophy”—which, he noted with grief, was “settling into the academy and the universities along with the Germans.” These latter were, he explained in a language similar to Kalashnikov’s, “hell’s brothers,” who sought to “lure our youth toward the slushy impasse [rasputitse] of erudite unbelief (uchenago bezveriia).” Like Kalashnikov, he wished Russia’s clergy would denounce “the pantheism of Schelling” in their homilies. He even wished that the censors—the infamous censors of Nicholaevan Russia—would be even more vigilant.

“Do us a favor,” he encouraged Ivan Timofeevich, “and stand up against the Antichrist in your novel!”

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25 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 37, ll. 18-19ob. (25 August 1838).
26 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 37, l. 39 (17 February 1839).
28 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 103, ll. 25ob.-26 (20 September 1838). Slovtsov discussed idealist philosophy in his correspondence with his nephew, the chinovnik Vasilii Rybolov’ev. As he did for other young Sibiriaki, he asked Kalashnikov to help Rybolov’ev find a post in Petersburg—even though he was a “lover of German philosophy and an admirer of Hegel.” Rybolov’ev died in 1842, and Peter Andreevich suggested his passing was not unrelated to his fascination with German philosophy, noting mysteriously in his letter to Kalashnikov that his nephew “was sentenced to death by intensification of hemorrhoids by the local faculty.” See IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 104, ll. 10ob.-11 (11 March 1841); IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 38, ll. 17-18ob. (21 February 1841); IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 104, l. 31ob. (1 December 1842). The letters from Rybolov’ev to Slovtsov are OR RNB f. 702, op. 1, d. 35.
Tellingly, Kalashnikov decided that the best way to take up the task was to write a novel that was, in effect, his autobiography. He had originally planned to title his work *Survivor*, in honor of the protagonist—himself—but instead chose to call it *Automaton* after its antagonists, those “men of the nineteenth century” ruined by Western European ideas and threatening to ruin Russia with them. Published in 1841, the novel closely followed Kalashnikov’s life: Evgenii, the hero, studies at the Irkutsk gymnasium, serves at the Treasury Chamber, watches his father become a casualty of Irkutsk’s “inky punic wars,” meets his benefactor (Neivin, named for the Urals river where Slovtsov grew up), and moves to Petersburg, where he struggles to support his fast-growing family.\(^29\)

Ivan Timofeevich framed his life as that of the good *chinovnik*, a moral paragon and loyal servant of the tsar. Evgenii meets his foil in St. Petersburg, where his co-servitors—“men of the nineteenth century” who were immoral, incapable of consistent work, and carried away by abstract theorizing and “European views of things”—receive undeserved promotions and rewards from an ignorant *nachal’nik* while Evgenii is passed over and can barely provide for his family. The “men of the nineteenth century” consider Evgenii a pathetic man who, “burrowing like a mole through his papers,” has fallen “behind the century.” They mock his diligent work, his faith, and his large family. Men who live “in the nineteenth century,” they tell Evgenii in Schellengian language, should recognize that the “world spirit” animates all things and that man is no different from an animal. Because he needs to support his family, Evgenii cannot jeopardize his position

\(^{29}\) I. Kalashnikov, *Avtomat* (St. Petersburg, 1841). Ivan Timofeevich did, of course, allow for some dramatic license. Evgenii, to take the most notable example, makes his way to Petersburg not because his benefactor opened a path for him, but after he had been wounded while fighting as a volunteer against Napoleon.
by confronting his coworkers and, at wit’s end, he slips into a delirium. He dreams that he is in a cavernous lecture hall, where the devil—a German professor, naturally—lectures about the “materiality of spiritual phenomena” as he picks apart the nerves of a human head he holds in his hand. The devilish professor informs the audience, comprised not of men, but of alabaster-headed automatons, that “Germany’s great teachers have finally opened blind humanity’s eyes” and henceforth “the duty of man should be pleasure, the goal of his actions, earthly bliss—his own ‘I’” (ego sobstvennoe ‘ia’). The automaton audience sings, in response, “Glory to the age of enlightenment!”

Kalashnikov’s use of “enlightenment” was meant to shock. The professor’s enlightenment—comprised of skepticism, materialism, and atheism, those “fruits of nineteenth-century research”—is utterly unlike the enlightenment Evgenii embodies throughout the book, which is rooted in faith, service, and opposition to corruption and injustice. Kalashnikov ended the novel, however, on a bright note, suggesting that “true” enlightenment always triumphs. Fittingly, its triumph in the novel comes in the form of a good nachal’nik, who, Evgenii learns upon waking from his terrible dream, has replaced Evgenii’s previous boss and requested that diligent Evgenii be promoted. “Service for the tsar,” the novel closes, “is truly never wasted!”

Peter Andreevich agreed with the moral, but he hated Automaton. “The exceptional life of one man,” he wrote, “is not a novel, but a confession or jeremiad.” He found Kalashnikov’s biographical approach wholly unbecoming of an enlightened servitor, who should selflessly bare the hardships that service entailed. He also thought

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30 DKZhRP, 589, 593-95, 600-05, 610-12.
31 DKZhRP, 616.
Ivan Timofeevich needed to show more firmness of purpose: “The protagonist loses his mind and collapses into mental debility because an erudite European calls man an automaton. In this there is nothing terrifying and nothing tragic besides ridiculous stupidity.” He advised Kalashnikov to “burn” any remaining copies of the novel and write something more “practical” (del’nyi). As he often did, Peter Andreevich also suggested that Kalashnikov look to Speranskii for inspiration. Speranskii, he observed, “did not occupy himself with aesthetic twaddle while in service.”

Stung by his mentor’s critique, Ivan Timofeevich returned to the topic regularly in his letters: “I don’t cease to grieve about Automaton because Automaton and I are one and the same.”

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While Ivan Timofeevich smarted, Peter Andreevich finished his Historical Survey of Siberia. He pointedly described his undertaking to Kalashnikov as one that called for “rigor, and not fantasy.” Kalashnikov, after reading the first volume of the work, had suggested that Peter Andreevich consider spicing up his prose by mixing “deeds with idleness” (dela s bezdel’em). But Slovtsov rejected the advice: “No, sir, from history is required all possible accuracy.” He sought, he claimed, “only to transmit reliable information about Siberia.”

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32 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 104, ll. 26ob.-27 (7 November 1842).
33 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 104, ll. 18-18ob. (31 March 1842); IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 104, ll. 20ob.-21 (19 May 1842).
34 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 38, l. 32ob. (2 September 1842). Also IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 38, ll. 26-26ob. (9 June 1842). Kalashnikov even named his son born that year Evgenii, like the protagonist of his novel.
35 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 103, l. 19ob. (26 September 1836).
36 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 104, ll. 6ob.-7ob. (22 August 1840).
Because he was in Tobol’sk, Peter Andreevich often had to go to extraordinary lengths to obtain such information. His most critical source, the newly completed law collection, was available in town, but most other sources he had to order—and sometimes wait years to receive. He even carried on a correspondence with a priest on Kamchatka, where mail arrived only twice annually, to gather information about the far-flung peninsula’s eighteenth-century clergy.37 His letters to Kalashnikov, meanwhile, were filled with requests for materials and questions about unresolved details (How to spell Oirat? How many rubles is a tenth of a den’ga?). And he was always quick to reproach if Kalashnikov tarried in completing his errands. After years spent waiting for Ivan Timofeevich to obtain data about a 1742 census from Petersburg’s archives, for example, he called Kalashnikov a “schoolboy,” threatened not to write him any more letters, and acidly observed that “People who are afflicted with poor memory keep in their wallet a notepad and write down needed information.” 38

The product of Peter Andreevich’s labors was an encyclopedic survey of Siberian history from the Russian conquest in the late sixteenth century to the mid-eighteenth century. Its preface made clear, however, that Slovtsov sought to do much more than “transmit reliable information.” In dedicating the first volume to Gerhard Friedrich Miller, whose History of Siberia remained the standard work on the subject,39 he criticized Miller for not furnishing “the shelves of curious descendants” with a more

37 “Dva pis’ma P. A. Slovtsova k Protoiereiu Prokopiiu Gromovu v Kamchatku,” Irkutskiia eparkhial’nyia vedomosti (1872), pribav. k no. 47, 620-21; pribav. k no. 48, 635-37.
38 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 103, l. 17ob. (23 November 1835); IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 103, l. 19 (26 September 1836); IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 103, l. 30 (14 February 1839); IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 103, l. 31ob. (2 June 1839).
unified narrative. Peter Andreevich considered it his “calling, heard from under the ruins of 250 years,” to provide that narrative, to “remove trifling details,” and “stretch across the given space of time a historical thread.”

He approached that task with a goal not unlike that with which Kalashnikov approached Automaton. But whereas Automaton offered an emotional appeal, Slovtsov’s Historical Survey endeavored to prove in painstaking detail that Russian rule was the creative, enlightening force in a “dark,” disorganized, and dangerous land—and that those who served its cause loyally did God’s work. It was, in a sense, the culmination of a career in service and the final feat of a servitor who, even in retirement, poor health, and deteriorating eyesight, sought to be *del’nyi*—of practical use—to his fatherland.

Peter Andreevich’s basic point in the book was that Russian rule created Siberia. He warned his readers not to expect a “fairy tale about Tatar history” and instructed “enthusiasts of Asian clothing and customs” to seek satisfaction elsewhere. His Siberian history, he explained, was a Russian story that began with the sixteenth-century conquest. “The history of Siberia,” as he put it, “emerges from the diapers of oblivion no sooner than the khan’s cap [*chalma*] falls from Kuchum’s head.” It was only in the mid-seventeenth century, once Russians had reached the Pacific Ocean and had begun to establish connections between their growing numbers of settlements, that Siberia had “clearly taken shape in her gigantic space.” What followed thereafter was an “appendix” (*dobavka*) to the broader story of Russian history—the provision of law, order, Orthodoxy, and enlightenment to disparate, disorderly, and “dark” lands and peoples.

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40 *IOS*, 45, 52-53.
This was, Slovtsov noted, an ongoing process; Siberia’s story remained, he explained, “a chronicle of government wardship [opeka] over a land that, so to speak, is still a minor.” But eventually, he predicted, the progress of “legislation and education” would “equalize” Siberia with Russia and thereby remove any justification for treating its history as anything but Russian history.41

Peter Andreevich’s vision of Siberian history, then, was a story of becoming—of Russians and “subject tribes” coming to “consider themselves as members of one great family.” He saw this as an inspiring story: “Is it not joyful,” he asked, “to envisage the building of an interconnected life—a life unprecedented—in a country spawned from manifold embryos, even if these embryos were themselves not yet thinking ones?” Its driving force was the Russian state, which pursued the establishment of order and enlightenment in Siberia with increasingly diligent attention (zabotlivost’) over time. For this reason, he urged, “History should look with respect look upon the genius of Russian government.” He did acknowledge that his triumphalist reading of Siberia’s past downplayed the experiences of those who suffered as a result of the Russian conquest. But history, he believed, was about progress, not individual suffering: “History would shame its dignity and defile its pen” he wrote, if she “took it into her head to complain about sacrifices” that were “offered on the holy altar of the fatherland.”42

Not surprisingly, Peter Andreevich’s approach left little room for Siberia’s native peoples to play a positive role in Siberia’s development. The peoples of the taiga and tundra, he claimed, were historyless tribes—a “chaotic mixture” of “savages,” barely

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41 *Ios*, 52-3, 115, 279-80.
42 *Ios*, 97, 166, 170, 187, 200, 239, 440.
subsisting, “babbling in various dialects,” “roaming in search of prey across gloomy hunting grounds,” and believing in a Shamanism that was “hocus-pocus.” He believed that they had “some kind of link between the generations,” but thought that they remained “completely unfamiliar with the concepts of social order.” They were the “riffraff of humanity” (svoloch’ chelovechestva) that had “condemned itself to all the consequences of the hard encounter” that Russian conquest entailed. Peter Andreevich had spent much time learning about the peoples of the taiga and tundra and even had acquired some knowledge of their languages. But he concluded nevertheless that they “more or less resembled one another,” comprising what he called an “ancient north-Asian type” (drevneaziiskii severnyi tip). He even suggested that, in time, contact with Russians would “rub off” this “type” from their “faces and souls.”

Similarly unflattering was Peter Andreevich’s characterization of the peoples of the steppe. “Time,” he wrote, “has shown that, because of the sluggishness of [his] constitution [organizma], the stupidity of his head, his laziness, his inclination toward drunkenness, and the impulse toward theft and cheating that is in his blood, one must not expect anything good from the steppe person.” The steppe itself he described as a land of danger made safe by imperial rule. “Have a look toward the southeast,” he wrote of the

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44 See, for example, PIS, 41-47.
45 IOS, 115. In another passage Slovtsov used similar language to describe the faces of ethnic Russians: “Between 1810 and 1827 I happened to travel across the Baraba Steppe three times in June and July. In each village on Sundays the maidens, women, and young men, dressed nicely, sang and danced the round dance in the streets, with merry carelessness until midnight. It must be admitted that among them there were not many well-formed faces [lits pravil’nykh]. But what a difference from the primitive way of life of their grandparents! In time even their faces will straighten out.” IOS, 415.
steppe at the time of the Russian conquest of Siberia, “and count the enemies!” The great achievement in the history of the steppe, he claimed, was the expansion of the Romanov and Qing empires, which built across the steppe a “moral-political partitioning wall [sredosteniem] of mutual friendship and peace […] between two unwavering empires.” This expansion, he argued, was wholly justified: “tribute is the post-diluvian law of the entire world,” and an untilled, unsettled steppe “by popular right belongs to the first to set up cannon or make a furrow with the plow.” But unlike the Mongols centuries before, Peter Andreevich claimed, Russians “appeared with an offer of friendship, trade, and order” (blagoustroistva).46

Scornful as his descriptions of Siberian peoples were, Peter Andreevich was often no more charitable in describing ethnic Russians. Indeed, he explained that he used the word “enlightenment” with a “two-fold meaning”: 1) the conversion of Siberia’s native peoples to Orthodoxy and 2) the education of Russians in Siberia. He considered the latter task—to which much of his career had been devoted—to be the most critical issue facing the Siberia of his day because better government required educated men to implement the orders of Russia’s “wise” rulers and the nachal’niki tasked with doing their bidding. There was, he believed, much work to be done: many chinovniki held fast to what he called the greedy and grasping “promyshlennik spirit” of the Cossacks, traders, and adventurers who preceded them in Siberia, while “the rude Russian people, in

becoming free from the iron order of time, does not quickly grow accustomed to philanthropic government.” But Slovtsov expressed optimism, placing his hope in a tsarist state that had grown more “humane,” “magnanimous,” and “philanthropic” over the course of the eighteenth century—and whose work was taken up in the nineteenth century by tsars and “sons of the fatherland” like himself who, particularly in the field of public education, “took to the task of enlightenment with skills and love” that were unprecedented.\(^{47}\)

A mix of fact and fantasy, Slovtsov’s *Historical Survey of Siberia* was, in the end, a morality tale. Siberian history, he wrote in its concluding pages, was, like Russian history as a whole, the story of “the Church and the Government’s exceptional battle with the spirit of the world.”\(^{48}\) Like Kalashnikov in *Automaton*, Peter Andreevich believed that the critical contemporary front of this battle was that of ideas. He took his book’s epigraph from the Book of Jeremiah—the prophet who called on his people to give up their idols and turn to God—and, indeed, seems to have imagined himself as a modern-day Jeremiah.\(^{49}\) He touched directly on contemporary topics only in passing—as, for instance, in discussing the veneration of saint’s relics in Siberia (of which he approved, hoping that the “angelic inspirations” such piety produced would “fan our minds with the secret perfume” and thereby overpower “the puffs of pantheism or pseudopolitics” (\(lzhepolitiki\))).\(^{50}\) He did not believe it was the business of the historian to predict how the Church and state’s “battle with the spirit of the world” would end. But, again like

\(^{47}\) *IOS*, 75-76, 170, 187, 243, 246-47, 294, 302, 324, 485-86.

\(^{48}\) *IOS*, 490-91.

\(^{49}\) The epigraph is Jeremiah 31:29: “In those days they shall say no more, the fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children’s teeth are set on edge.”

\(^{50}\) *IOS*, 299.
Kalashnikov in *Automaton*, he closed on an optimistic note—and with an image of a good *nachal’nik*. He chose governor Chicherin, whose tenure, he explained, was “so stately and well-intentioned” that it had left an enduring impression on him ever since he first encountered the impressive man as a pupil at the Tobol’sk seminary. After an affectionate recollection of Chicherin’s visits to the seminary, Peter Andreevich left his readers to ponder the paternal *nachal’nik* atop Tobol’sk’s great hill, celebrating a spring sunset with pious singing and instrumental music.51

He closed his long book, in other words, at the very moment at which the story it told swept him from the Sloptsov world and into history. Like Ivan Timofeevich’s autobiographical novel, Peter Andreevich’s history was an argument for Russia’s “great affair” and for the story of his self.

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Ivan Timofeevich received his last letter from his benefactor, along with instructions to publish the second volume of *Historical Survey of Siberia*, on March 17, 1843. Six weeks later, on the morning of Sunday, April 25, he received another letter from Tobols’k, this time from the teacher Ivan Pomaskin, who provided him a detailed account of his benefactor’s death. When he finished reading, Ivan Timofeevich took out his last letter from Peter Andreevich, read it over again, and wrote across its reverse side:

The last letter from my unforgettable benefactor and only friend PETER ANDREEVICH SLOVTSOV, who honored me with his friendship for twenty-eight years.

51 *IOS*, 481, 490-91.
Goodbye forever, my unforgettable one, until our meeting in the kingdom of God—if only I will be worthy of it!\textsuperscript{52} (Figure 15)

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\text{Ivan Timofeevich himself died twenty years later, on September 20, 1863, apparently from complications with a kidney problem. In a futile attempt to treat the affliction, he became a habitual visitor to the bathhouse near his family’s Petersburg apartment. “The people of Penza terribly love to take a steam,” he told his son Nikolai, and “I have become an utter Penziak.”}\textsuperscript{53}
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Ivan Timofeevich’s thoughts during these last years lingered on his legacy. He had retired in 1859, not long after receiving an honorable citation for five decades of “faultless service” and being promoted to the high rank of Privy Councilor—rank three on the Table of Ranks.\textsuperscript{54} His archive contains a packet of papers on this last promotion. Much of its contents is what one would expect of such a document: tedious papermaking of the mid-nineteenth century empire. But like so much of his archive, Kalashnikov lovingly arranged and labeled this file himself. And while doing so—on “the 26th of

\textsuperscript{52}IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 104, l. 33ob. (25 February 1843).
\textsuperscript{53}IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 27, ll. 13-14, 20.
\textsuperscript{54}IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 144, ll. 32-34.
January, 1859, in the House of Gorianskii in St. Petersburg, at no. 31 Furshatskii Street”—he composed for future readers of his archive a detailed narrative of the process by which he received the rank. That there would someday be such readers he was certain, for, as his detailed dating and placing of the narrative suggest, he saw this personal milestone as an event of historical import.

“Few Sibiriaki,” Ivan Timofeevich explained, “have managed to obtain this honor. I’m the first of them to become a Privy Councilor, and I am likely the first to be honored to speak with the SOVEREIGN. Glory to the Lord Jesus, who to this day has not relinquished from me his divine mantle of protection.” Later that year, Kalashnikov’s promotion and imperial audience were followed by an invitation to a state dinner hosted by the emperor. Alongside a meticulous diagram he drew of the seating arrangement in the hall, Kalashnikov exclaimed: “I was at the SOVEREIGN’S dinner! It’s truly marvelous to think that a mere undersecretary from the Irkutsk Chamber of the Treasury now finds himself a Privy Councilor invited to dinner with the SOVEREIGN! Glory to God, our benefactor!”

Ivan Timofeevich’s excitement over his success, like the itch that compelled him to write about it, reflects the importance of his service career to his sense of self. He had come a long way from the world of his father and their ancestors—as he well knew, having kept his father’s revealing papers carefully preserved for decades in his cramped, children-filled Petersburg apartment. Like his father, he attributed his success to service, and even after he retired, he continued to work on what he considered the ultimate feat of

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55 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 145, ll. 26ob., 28-29.
his long service career: his mammoth—3,496 pages—“Historical Survey of the System of the State Peasants and Domains under the Direct Authority of His Majesty Emperor Nicholas the First.” He had begun writing the survey in 1850, while employed in Kiselev’s Ministry of State Domains, and continued to work on it until his death thirteen years later. He believed that it was a new type of history—“administrative history”—sorely needed in the nineteenth-century world. Historians, he complained, focused on wars and international relations, rarely touching upon the “administrative actions of SOVEREIGNS [and the] excruciating burdens and anxieties [that they suffer] in their private offices for the good of their peoples.” If historians would occupy themselves with such matters, he explained, there would be “fewer false rumors and more appreciation among people toward their rulers.”

Kalashnikov’s administrative history was never published. He made repeated appeals on its behalf, claiming that he loved it “like one loves a child” and had worked on it “without any incentive whatsoever,” guided “solely” by his patriotism and “deep devotion” to the emperor. The Ministry of State Domains convened a committee to consider publication, but it concluded that Ivan Timofeevich “completely” failed “to meet the requirements of contemporary scholarly, literary, and administrative works.”

Kalashnikov, the reviewers icily noted, “believes completely not only in the infallibility

56 The fate of the manuscript is unknown, though at some point after Kalashnikov’s death the Ministry of State Domains did procure it from his family. The above quotations are taken from the correspondence that arose as a result of Kalashnikov’s failed attempts to publish the manuscript: IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 138, ll. 35-35ob.
57 IRLI 120, op. 1, d. 138, ll. 9-10ob.
of any statute and general measure, but even in their indispensible success and use in reality.”

Ivan Timofeevich was deeply offended. He countered that his work was a survey of the “incontestable ideas which flowed from the height of the Throne.” Its conclusions were not “empty laudations” but rather, he snapped, “the very essence of the facts.” He explained that Nicholas I “did everything” in his power to improve Russia, and where the tsar came up short it was not his fault, for “to remake an entire generation of chinovniki would have been beyond human strengths.” Here Kalashnikov revealed one of his and Slovtsov’s deepest convictions: if only Russia’s rulers and their better nachal’niki had more chinovniki like them, then Russia could accomplish anything. If, Kalashnikov concluded, his beloved survey did not correspond to trends of the day, then “then it remains only to pity such trends—not to adapt oneself to the sad errors of the age” (pechal’nym zabluzhdeniiam veka).

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The quixotic task of composing a 3,496-page history to honor the actions of the deceased—and, to growing numbers of educated Russians, very discredited—Nicholas I seems, at first glance, a stupendously sycophantic enterprise. And, at some level, it was. But when one considers that Kalashnikov completed much of the project on his own time; that in return for his efforts he would receive only a snuffbox (albeit a gold, diamond-encrusted one valued at 2,600 rubles); and that the rhetoric with which he

58 IRLI 120, op. 1, d. 138, ll. 11-21.
59 IRLI 120, op. 1, d. 138, ll. 22-29ob., 35-38.
60 IRLI f. 120, op. 1, d. 138, ll. 39-39ob.
defended his work was the same as that which had filled decades of his private letters, the undertaking appears instead as an poignant example of the degree to which service could be a sacred, defining element in the lives of educated Russians.

It also provides a telling reminder of the difficulty of interpreting the past, composed as it is of multifaceted individual lives. As Robert Rosenstone noted when he finished his biography of the journalist and Communist activist John Reed, “a man’s life ‘is’ rather than ‘means.’” Lives, in other words, are complex. Slovtsov and Kalashnikov, known largely for their roles as Siberian “firsts,” have long been assumed to have had a special affinity for Siberia. And they did. It was their rodina, and they delighted in its natural bounties. But an accompanying assumption—that, as well-educated men, they were likely critical of the tsarist state and anticipated the later Siberian regionalists who decried that state’s treatment of Siberia—does not accord with the evidence that their long paper trail provides.

When examined not for their special Siberian significance, but on the round, the lives of Slovtsov and Kalashnikov illustrate, maybe above all, the power of stories. Like most people, they were men who, while having convictions to which they clung mightily, recognized that the world was a complicated place. And like so many “modern” people, they watched with simultaneous excitement and trepidation as the future invaded their present and gave shape and meaning to their past. They identified with the tsarist system not merely because it paid their salaries, made their remarkable careers possible, offered spiritual sustenance, and provided them with an enlarged sense of family, but also

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because the narrative that underpinned that system—that of the “great affair” of the provisionment of enlightenment to “dark” lands and peoples—helped them endow a complex, often disappointing reality with meaning, order, and direction.

Many educated Russians, of course, reacted very differently to the innovations—whether train travel, idealistic philosophy, or democratic revolution—that alarmed Ivan Timofeevich and Peter Andreevich as they aged. Their worry that the younger generation might see them as strangers and regard their stories as cock-and-bull tales was well-placed. That conflict, immortalized in a novel far more enduring than anything than Kalashnikov and Slovtsov produced—Ivan Turgenev’s *Fathers and Sons*—was very real, and its implications were profound. It is one of the most familiar stories of Russian history, the tale of a “parting of ways” between “the state” and “educated society” and the emergence of an oppositional intelligentsia that sought to enlighten the people directly, without imperial intermediaries—and, ultimately, was bent on overthrowing the tsarist state to do so.62

But that story is the story of the Russian Revolution. And, just as studying Slovtsov and Kalashnikov for what they reveal about Siberia would miss much of what gave their world meaning, so too does digging for the roots of 1917 in their world obscure another, ultimately more enduring story of Russian history. This is the story of the emergence of an integrated polity and community across the entire swathe of north Asia that, with significant reductions in size, exists to this day. This is the story not of the roots of revolution, but of the roots of modern Russia in its empire. Educated

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Russians who writhed over the “cursed questions” of the nineteenth century did so in a dizzyingly diverse and little developed multiethnic, multiconfessional empire the size, contiguous nature, and crudity of which confounded categories of debate. The tsarist state under which they lived faced unprecedented criticism during this time, but it was also at the apogee of its power. Whether in the proliferation of Roman architectural forms, the growing penetration of European culture to lower levels of society, the building of roads, the creation of a network of schools, or the growing power and visibility of non-noble, uniformed officials like Slovtsov and Kalashnikov, imperial institutions were making themselves manifest on an unprecedented scale.

Kalashnikov and Slovtsov’s lives were transformed by such developments, and they underscore just how fundamentally the concepts of nation, empire, and state have blurred in Russian history. When he wrote his memoir not long before he died—and sought to explain, as his father had before him, how his current self came to be so different from his former one—Ivan Timofeevich stressed his connection to the broader story of Russia: “Siberia sees Russia as its mother,” he wrote, “and the Sibiriak does not, has never, and will never separate himself from the general fate of the fatherland. […] Siberia is not a colony, but a continuation of Russia to the banks of the Pacific Ocean.”

For Ivan Timofeevich and Peter Andreevich, the saga of Siberia was the saga of Russia—a great, multigenerational affair in which active rulers and their enlightened servitors brought (or tried to bring) order, unity, and enlightenment to disorderly, distant, and “dark” lands and peoples.

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63 ZIZh, 209.
This vision of Russian history, given the emphasis that many narratives of Russian history tend to place on binary oppositions between “state” and “society,” “Russians” and “non-Russians,” and “center” and “periphery,” might seem outmoded. But it is a narrative that has endured, profoundly shaping conceptions of identity, belonging, and place in Eurasia—past, present, and future. Many Russians continue to see their history as a story of state-driven enlightenment, of a state—whether the tsarist empire, the Soviet Union, or the Russian Federation—that has given the “gift of civilization” to places and peoples in need of it, including, perhaps especially, Russians themselves.  

64 And Siberia—forty percent of the Asian continent and home to the natural resources that feed the life-support system of Russia’s claim to great-power status—appears on modern maps not as Russia’s colony, but simply as “Russia.”

How this Russian Siberia happened is an extremely complex story. As Peter Andreevich put it, “It was not all of a sudden, of course, that Russia, destined for spiritual and then intellectual ascent, could illuminate the darkness of the northeastern land; that it could put order in a derelict country; that it could discover in its mountains treasures for the world’s use and put a price on hidden goods.”  

But what is clear is that the hand of the state and its servitors in the process has been, and remains, a very heavy one. When Russians today speak in the first-person plural about their history, the “we” to whom they refer—like the “we” to whom Slovtsov and Kalashnikov referred when they spoke of Russia’s “great affair”—is comprised less often of the people who have

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64 For a recent exploration of this theme as it relates to Russia’s relationship with the Caucasus, see Bruce Grant, *The Captive and the Gift: Cultural Histories of Sovereignty in Russia and the Caucasus* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009).

65 *IJS*, 117.
lived in this vast place—the *narod* and the *narody*—as of the *nachal’niki* who have ruled and “enlightened” them and the *chinovniki* who have done their bidding.

Peter Andreevich and Ivan Timofeevich told—and lived—quite a tale.
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