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# The Pavlovtsy of Khar'kov Province, 1886–1905: Harmless Sectarians or Dangerous Rebels?

G. P. CAMFIELD

To Konstantin Pobedonostsev, Over-Procurator of the Holy Synod and adviser to Tsar Alexander III, the Russian Empire in the 1890s was under threat from enemies within and without. Organized revolutionary activity at this time was at a low ebb, but no less menacing was a dramatic rise in religious dissent. Two movements in particular claimed Pobedonostsev's attention at this time, namely Stundism and Tolstoyism. Both were considered anti-governmental and anti-Orthodox in character, in fact dangerous manifestations of socialism which threatened the very fabric of Russian society. Indeed, the threat to Church and State was considered so serious that both Stundism, in 1894, and Tolstoyism, in 1897, were outlawed as 'particularly dangerous sects'.

This study will focus on one community of dissenters in Pavlovki (Khar'kov province), who came to be regarded as both Stundists and Tolstoyans and suffered accordingly. The Pavlovtsy, as they were known, were influenced above all by the example and teaching of Prince Dmitrii Aleksandrovich Khilkov (1858–1914), whose family estate was nearby. Remembered chiefly as a Tolstoyan, Khilkov also made a significant contribution to the growth of Stundism in Khar'kov.<sup>1</sup> Regarded by the authorities as a socialist and revolutionary agitator he was exiled to Transcaucasia in February 1892. Thereafter the Pavlovtsy were subject to constant harassment from both civil and ecclesiastical authorities. Indeed the situation at Pavlovki became a notorious example of official intolerance of dissent.

Like the vast majority of Russian dissenters, the Pavlovtsy lived peaceably and bore their trials for many years with great forbearance. It was therefore with astonishment and disbelief that reports were received in September 1901 of a violent attack by sectarians on the Orthodox church in Pavlovki. This appeared to justify official claims

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<sup>1</sup> P. I. Biriukov, *L.N. Tolstoi: Biografiia*, 3 vols, Berlin, 1921, III, p. 319. On Khilkov, see n. 11 below.

that the Pavlovtsy were revolutionaries and as such should be duly punished. The subsequent trial and exile of the offenders provoked widespread indignation among liberals and radicals at home and abroad.

Pobedonostsev and the authorities clearly felt threatened by Stundism and Tolstoyism and actively sought to curb their growth and influence. Taking the example of the Pavlovtsy, this paper seeks to examine the nature of this threat, real or imagined, and to assess its revolutionary significance.

By 1890 the term Stundism had become a generic term for a variety of dissenting opinions. Its origin, however, was more specific. Starting as an evangelical movement in Kherson in the mid-1860s, Stundism spread rapidly into neighbouring Kiev and beyond. Labelled 'Stundists' by the authorities, these Russian evangelicals called themselves simply Christians, Russian brethren, Friends of God, or Baptists.<sup>2</sup> From the first there was a diversity of opinion on matters of faith as Stundist preachers, often barely literate, began to interpret scripture for themselves. As the movement spread during the seventies and eighties it is clear that Stundists mixed freely with other sectarians, whether in meetings or in prison and exile. It is no wonder, therefore, that in time Stundism diversified from its evangelical roots, as it absorbed other beliefs and traditions.

The 1870s was a period both of militant expansion and of inner division. The rapid spread of Stundism alarmed both ecclesiastical and civil authorities. In the villages the clergy regarded Stundists as troublemakers. A common lament among them was 'abo bunt, abo shtunda' (either rebellion or Stundism).<sup>3</sup> From about 1878 there were increasing calls from members of the clergy for police assistance in dealing with the heretics. About this time also the inherent differences within Stundism began to polarize into two broad divisions: the evangelical Stundobaptists and the Neostundists. The latter were primarily at odds with the emergent Baptist Church, with its emphasis on dogma and organization. Favouring a freer approach,

<sup>2</sup> 'Baptists in Southern Russia', *Free Russia*, 1 August 1892, pp. 5-7 (6). The name Stundist derives from the German 'Stunde' (hour). The first Stundists were influenced by their contact with evangelical German colonists in Kherson, who would meet together for times (Stunden) of prayer and Bible reading. The first Russian converts followed this practice. For the early history of Stundism, see Andrew Q. Blane, *The Relations Between the Russian Protestant Sects and the State, 1900-1921*, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina, 1965 (hereafter Blane, *Relations*), chapter 1.

<sup>3</sup> *Hromada: ukrajin'ska zbirka*, ed. M. Dragomanov, 5, 1882, p. 120.

the Neostundists had more in common with the Spiritual Christians,<sup>4</sup> showing the same tendency towards either rationalism or mysticism. The Pavlovtsy are also comparable, being influenced in turn by the rationalism of Tolstoi and Khilkov and the mysticism of the Malevantsy.

Any attempt to systematize Stundist beliefs is difficult, but certain general characteristics may be identified. In relation to the Church there was a common rejection of Orthodoxy with its rituals and sacraments, and the authority of the clergy. In matters of faith there was wide divergence of opinion. Good works were held in esteem by all, but the evangelicals emphasized personal salvation by faith alone. In relation to the State there was also division between the more conservative evangelical Stundobaptists and the Neostundists. The former mostly accepted state obligations such as military service; the latter, always more radical, commonly refused. In their social relations all Stundists sought to live out the ethical teaching of the Gospel, with a strong emphasis on mutual aid and assistance. Most also rejected alcohol and tobacco. The strict moral and ethical quality of their lives proved to be a powerful attraction to the surrounding populace.

Finally, there was a common belief in the fundamental equality of all men and a common vision of a more just society. In official eyes this was regarded as nothing less than communism. In 1866 the Archbishop of Kherson wrote:

It is my opinion that the aims of the Stundists are very far reaching; they are striving, in fact, to establish something in the nature of communism; but they conceal these plots marvellously well.<sup>5</sup>

Persecution of Stundists, and indeed of all dissenters, entered a new phase in 1880 with the appointment of Pobedonostsev as Over-Procurator of the Holy Synod. For the next twenty-five years he dominated and directed the religious life of the Empire. Since Pobedonostsev was one of the most influential statesmen of his day, the Orthodox Church in his hands was made to serve the interests of the State. As A. E. Adams has shown, his religious policy was motivated by

<sup>4</sup> The term Spiritual Christians embraced a great many sects, which rejected ritual and outward observances, believing in the direct revelation of God to the inner man. For some, such as the Khlysty and Skoptsy, who tended towards mysticism, this was aided by extreme ascetic practices, while others, such as the Dukhobors and Molokans, looked to the 'inner light' of conscience and reason. The Malevantsy were followers of K. A. Malevannyi (1845-1913), a former Baptist whose teaching combined elements drawn from Stundism and the Khlysty (see n. 50 below).

<sup>5</sup> E. B. Lanin, 'The Tsar Persecutor', *Contemporary Review*, 61, 1892, 1, pp. 1-5 (11). Another charge often levelled at Stundists was their 'German' protestant origins. To Pobedonostsev the individualism of Protestantism was un-Russian and alien to the spirit of Orthodoxy. Stundists were, moreover, suspected of having German sympathies. This remained an undercurrent throughout the period, surfacing in particular at the time of the First World War. See Blane, *Relations*, pp. 87-89.

political considerations.<sup>6</sup> Regarding all dissent as rebellion, Pobedonostsev pursued a vigorous and repressive anti-sectarian campaign in which three key elements may be identified. First, to educate clergy and laity in the dangers of sectarian teaching; secondly, to train and organize a vanguard of missionaries to conduct work in the villages; and, thirdly, to apply the full weight of the law against recalcitrants.

Pobedonostsev trained as a lawyer, and it was to the law that he directed his first efforts as Over-Procurator — specifically, to the task of defining the legal rights of Old Believers and sectarians as a means of strictly controlling and limiting their activities. The result was a new law, published in May 1883, which granted sectarians the right, among others, to carry passports and hold religious services in homes.<sup>7</sup> This was in no way a step towards toleration, for it remained a criminal offence for a Russian to leave the Orthodox Church or to proselytize for another faith. Public demonstration of dissent was also prohibited. Rather, the new law formed the basis of Pobedonostsev's anti-sectarian policy by denying dissenters everything not specifically granted in the law. In addition, beyond the law lay an array of special powers, incorporated in various orders and circulars. Among these was the power of provincial governors to exile offenders by 'administrative process', without trial.

Early in 1884 it became clear that open expressions of religious dissent would not be tolerated. In March a conference of Evangelical Christians in St Petersburg was summarily curtailed. The organizers, V. A. Pashkov and M. M. Korf, were exiled from Russia. In the provinces also the campaign against the Stundists was stepped up. Bishops and higher clergy were pressing for action against the 'national evil of Stundism', calling on governors to exercise their powers of administrative process.<sup>8</sup> In September 1884 an assembly of bishops met in Kiev to consider measures against sectarians.<sup>9</sup> In Khar'kov the lead was taken by the new Archbishop, Amvrosii (Kliucharev), appointed in 1882. A close associate of Pobedonostsev, he was to prove a vigorous opponent of Stundism and Tolstoyism.<sup>10</sup>

In 1884 Prince Dmitrii Aleksandrovich Khilkov returned from military service in the Caucasus to his family estate at Pavlovki (Sumy

<sup>6</sup> Arthur E. Adams, 'Pobedonostsev's Religious Politics', *Church History*, 22, 1953, pp. 314-26. See also Gerhard Simon, *K.P. Pobedonostsev und die Kirchenpolitik des Heiligen Sinod 1880-1905*, Göttingen, 1969, and Robert F. Byrnes, *Pobedonostsev: His Life and Thought*, Bloomington, Indiana, 1968.

<sup>7</sup> *Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossiiskoi imperii, Sobranie 3-e*, St Petersburg, 1885-1911 (hereafter PSZ), III, No. 1,545, 3 May 1883.

<sup>8</sup> M. A. Morrison, *The Stundists: The Story of a Great Religious Revolt*, London, 1893, p. 29.

<sup>9</sup> Gregory L. Freeze, *The Parish Clergy in Nineteenth-Century Russia: Crisis, Reform, Counter-reform*, Princeton, New Jersey, 1983, pp. 444-46.

<sup>10</sup> Amvrosii (A. O. Kliucharev, 1820-1901). Formerly suffragan bishop of Moscow, Amvrosii was noted for his eloquent sermons and implacable opposition to all enemies of the Church.

district, Khar'kov province), with the intention of devoting himself to the land and the welfare of the peasants.<sup>11</sup> During the Russo-Turkish War (1877-78) he had undergone a profound spiritual crisis after killing a Turk in combat. At the same time he encountered representatives of Russia's Spiritual Christians, in particular the Dukhobors. Having come to abhor violence, he was impressed by their pacifism and humanity. Reading the gospels and studying the sects he concluded that the beliefs and practices of the Spiritual Christians were closer to the teaching of Christ than were the beliefs of the Orthodox. While in the Northern Caucasus, he wrote a short exposition on the Spiritual Christians, relating in particular to the Dukhobors.<sup>12</sup> Greatly influenced by their teaching, Khilkov finally relinquished his military career at the rank of lieutenant-colonel and returned to Pavlovki to put into practice his new found ideals.

The Khilkov estate lay close to the *sloboda* of Pavlovki. More than a village, Pavlovki extended for some distance (over seven kilometres). Khilkov's mother, Princess Iuliia Petrovna, managed the estate on traditional lines. Devoutly Orthodox and a true conservative, she soon clashed with her son over the management of the estate. Unable to agree with his ideas, she gave over to him 430 *desiatins* (1100 acres). In the light of his new convictions, the Prince could not, with a clear conscience, claim the land as his own. Thus, within two years, by mid-1886, he had made over all but seven *desiatins* (nineteen acres) to the peasants. On their newly acquired land they built a new community, known as Kniazevo or Dmitrievka. Khilkov, for his part, built a *khutor*, or farmstead, and proceeded to live and work as one of the peasants. This marked the beginning of his influence among the peasants and the origin of dissent in Pavlovki.

After the great change in the Prince's life, he began to go among them, New Testament in hand, talking with them in brotherly fashion, showing them a better way, a happier mode of life, ready with advice and help on all occasions, just as he had already given up all his property for their sake.<sup>13</sup>

At the request of his friends Khilkov wrote a brief statement or 'Confession' of his new found faith. The chief points may be summarized thus.

<sup>11</sup> Khilkov's curious life passed through several distinct and seemingly contradictory phases: career officer, Tolstoyan, Socialist Revolutionary, and, finally, loyal son of the Church and ardent patriot. For biographical details, see L. N. Tolstoi, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 90 vols, Moscow, 1928-58, LXXXV, pp. 414-15. See also Khilkov's autobiographical 'Zapiski' in *Svobodnoe slovo*, 1, 1898 (hereafter Khilkov, *Zapiski*), pp. 79-125; and M. A. Novoselov's introduction to *Pis'ma kniazia Dmitriia Aleksandrovicha Khilkova*, Sergiev Posad, 1915, pp. 1-12.

<sup>12</sup> A first edition entitled *Kratkoe ispovedovanie dukhovnykh khristian* appeared in typescript in 1888 and was enlarged in 1890. Then in 1903 Khilkov published a new edition entitled *Uchenie dukhovnykh khristian* in the series *Biblioteka narodnykh listok* (Geneva, 1901-03). All are bibliographical rarities.

<sup>13</sup> Jonas Stadling, *In the Land of Tolstoi: Experiences of Famine and Misrule in Russia*, London, 1897 (hereafter Stadling, *In the Land of Tolstoi*), p. 170.

To do good to all impartially and sacrificially, to lighten their burdens, both physical and spiritual, to bring spiritual enlightenment. To seek self-perfection for the better service of God and man, looking not to outward ceremonies but to the individual conscience. To pass no judgements, and to return good for evil. To recognize God alone as King. To recognize no obligation to human government, but to serve state officials as brothers within the will of God. To seek for oneself and allow others complete liberty in the pursuit of truth, making no commitment by pledge or oath, and establishing no creeds.<sup>14</sup>

Khilkov's statement clearly sets his faith within the broad bounds of Spiritual Christianity and Neostundism. The similarities with Tolstoyism are also evident, since both had common roots in a rational interpretation of the Gospel. At the heart was a fundamental challenge to authority, both secular and spiritual, expressed in an unswerving allegiance to the Kingdom of God. It was only a matter of time, therefore, before Khilkov had a confrontation with representatives of authority.

At first suspicious of his intentions and motives, the peasants soon found in Khilkov one whom they could trust and who was genuinely concerned for their welfare. Before long he had gained a reputation beyond Pavlovki as one who 'lived fully in accordance with the Gospel and who often quarrelled with the priests'.<sup>15</sup> The initial cause of these disputes was complaints by peasants that clergy were overcharging for the celebration of vital services. Khilkov would write on their behalf to the priest and then to the Archbishop to obtain a reduction. This naturally angered the priests, who saw it as a threat to their livelihood.<sup>16</sup> The decline in priestly income was accompanied by a decline in church attendance. Khilkov himself had ceased to attend for some time. Now, under his influence, several peasants followed.

Those who responded to his teaching were soon themselves in conflict with the priests, who urged them to return to the Church.<sup>17</sup> Others, perplexed by the new teaching, sought enlightenment from the priests, only to be met with rebuke. Unable to defend their Orthodox faith with reason, the clergy resorted to threats, thereby damaging their cause. They also spread a rumour that those who had ceased to attend church were destroying their ikons. In response some took their ikons to

<sup>14</sup> Summarized from the extract of Khilkov's Confession in *ibid.*, pp. 180–81.

<sup>15</sup> *Pis'ma Petra Vasil'evicha Ol'khovika krest'ianina Khar'kovskoi gubernii, otkazavshegosia ot voinskoi povinnosti v 1895 goda*, London, 1897 (hereafter *Olkhovik, Pis'ma*), p. 24.

<sup>16</sup> Khilkov, *Zapiski*, p. 107.

<sup>17</sup> 'Nachalo zhizni khristian i stradanie ikh v sele Pavlovkakh', in *Materialy k istorii i izucheniiu russkogo sektantstva i raskola*, ed. V. Bonch-Bruевич, 1, St Petersburg, 1908 (hereafter 'Nachalo zhizni khristian'), pp. 186–205 (186). V. D. Bonch-Bruевич (1873–1955) was a Social Democrat and close associate of Lenin. From 1896 onwards he collected and published much valuable material on the Russian sects. Between 1899 and 1902 he worked in uneasy alliance with V. G. Chertkov and other Tolstoyan exiles, publishing, among others, works on the Dukhobors and, of course, the Pavlovtsy. From 1945 to his death in 1955 he was Director of the Museum of Religion and Atheism.

the priests, saying that they were no longer needed. Those who did so were from this time regarded as Stundists.

Towards the end of 1886 Khilkov made the acquaintance of Tolstoi, in whom he found a kindred spirit. Tolstoi reciprocated with great admiration for Khilkov's pragmatic Christianity, and appreciation for his work on the Spiritual Christians. Since the early seventies he had shown a keen interest in sectarians, particularly the Molokans. In 1881 Tolstoi sought out V. K. Siutaev, a peasant sectarian of Tver Province, who had come independently to an interpretation of the Gospel close to his own. With his family Siutev lived a strictly communal life, fully in accordance with his professional beliefs. Tolstoi was greatly impressed and came to regard him as one of his chief teachers. Siutaev and his followers may be classed among the Spiritual Christians.

The connection with Tolstoi drew Pavlovki into the wider circle of Tolstoyan colonies which were formed in several places during the 1880s. These were attempts by committed Tolstoyans to establish a communal life based on the teaching of Tolstoi and supported by their own labour. Inner tensions and persecution by the authorities meant that most were short lived. Khilkov, as we have seen, came to his views independently of Tolstoi. Before long, however, he was widely regarded as a Tolstoyan and his *khutor* at Pavlovki as a Tolstoyan community. For a time other Tolstoyans did live and work there, notably N. F. Dzhunkovskii and M. V. Alekhin.<sup>18</sup> Through Khilkov and others Tolstoyan literature was widely disseminated in the locality. This and Khilkov's personal influence were major factors in the strengthening of dissent there. For this reason it was inevitable that the sectarians of Pavlovki also became regarded as Tolstoyans.

It is important to note, however, that there were other influences at work there. By the end of the 1880s there was already a strong body of sectarians, Stundists and others, in the area, who, while not necessarily adhering to all his views, readily received Tolstoi's works as valuable spiritual reading.<sup>19</sup> In speaking of the Pavlovtsy as a whole, therefore, the only label that may be safely applied is that of Neostundist. Certainly there were some Tolstoyans among them, but to regard all as such is misleading. The openness and freedom of Khilkov's creed, as shown above, was reflected by the Pavlovtsy. In matters of faith there were important differences of opinion among them. Some, for example, regarded Christ as God, while others saw

<sup>18</sup> N. F. Dzhunkovskii (1862–1916), cousin and brother-in-law of Khilkov, later abandoned Tolstoyism and entered government service. M. V. Alekhin (1857–1935) was one of three brothers, all Tolstoyans, who founded a colony in Smolensk.

<sup>19</sup> L. Tikhomirov, 'Epizod iz istorii "Tolstovshchiny"', *Moskovskie vedomosti*, 17 December 1896, p. 3; and Bonch-Bruevich's note in 'Nachalo zhizni khristian', p. 188.

him as a man who taught Truth and suffered for it.<sup>20</sup> This is typical of Neostundist communities, where dogma took second place to a practical working out of Christ's teaching.

Faced with the spread of heresy in his diocese, Archbishop Amvrosii mounted a vehement campaign against Stundism. Missionaries of the Inner Mission were sent into the villages to lead the work there, supported by lay brotherhoods, founded to involve the zealous Orthodox in the fight. Since much of the appeal of Stundism lay in its strong sense of community, participation and mutual aid, and its emphasis on self-improvement, the Archbishop took steps to undermine this and to provide an Orthodox alternative in the villages. Church schools were established, church choirs were promoted to involve the laity in worship, charitable work was encouraged, and free popular literature was distributed.<sup>21</sup> At the same time he initiated a propaganda campaign against Stundism. Anti-Stundist placards began to appear in public places,<sup>22</sup> the tone of which may be judged, perhaps, by a pamphlet which appeared at this time (July 1889). Entitled *Proklyatiyi stundist* (The Damned Stundist) and penned, apparently, by the Archbishop himself, it set out to denigrate and vilify the Stundists, arousing the Orthodox against the enemies of the Church. This was widely circulated throughout the Khar'kov diocese and was ordered to be read in all schools.

Before long a copy fell into Khilkov's hands. Angered at the groundless accusations contained in it, he wrote beneath each verse a refutation from scripture and on the back wrote a lengthy compilation of scripture verses under the title 'Life's power and meaning'. This was sent to the Archbishop via the priest at Pavlovki. Several hundred more copies were similarly annotated and distributed.<sup>23</sup> Khilkov's indignation found a sympathetic response even among some sections of the

<sup>20</sup> T. V. Butkevich and V. M. Skvortsov, 'Tolstovstvo kak sekta', *Missionerskoe obozrenie*, 2, 1897, 1 (hereafter Butkevich, *Tolstovstvo*), pp. 807-31 (814-16). Skvortsov was head of the Inner Mission of the Russian Orthodox Church and editor of *Missionerskoe obozrenie*. From 1894 he was special envoy of the Over-Procurator for sectarian affairs and as such often appeared as expert witness in the prosecution of sectarians, including the Pavlovtsy. See V. A. Maeveskii, *Vnutrenniaia missiia i ee osnovopolozhnik*, Buenos Aires, 1954, p. 74.

<sup>21</sup> Butkevich, *Tolstovstvo*, p. 820. Orthodox missionary work among sectarians intensified following the First Missionary Conference in 1887. Recognizing its political significance, the Synod in 1888 devised regulations for work among dissenters. From this time, as in Khar'kov, missionaries were introduced into dioceses to take the burden off parish priests, who were generally ill equipped for the task of combating sectarianism. See *Tserkov' v istorii Rossii: (IXv.-1917g.): kriticheskie ocherki*, ed. N. A. Smirnov, Moscow, 1967, p. 283. To assist the missionary effort around Pavlovki Archbishop Amvrosii founded a lay brotherhood in Belopol'e. Since the early 1860s, when they were first formally established, such brotherhoods (*tserkovnye bratstva*) sought to involve the laity in the life of the Church, particularly to defend it against non-Orthodox creeds and dissent. See 'Tserkovnye bratstva' in Brockhaus and Efron, *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar'*, ed. I. E. Andreevskii, 82 vols, St Petersburg, 1890-1906, LXXV, pp. 95-99 (98).

<sup>22</sup> Stadling, *In the Land of Tolstoi*, p. 236.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 171.

government. The offending pamphlet was not only withdrawn from schools, but banned altogether.<sup>24</sup>

Khilkov's reputation as one who 'often disputed with the priests' and his help to peasants in conflict with local landowners did not go unnoticed by the authorities. On 11 March 1890 (OS) he was summoned before the Governor of Khar'kov and informed that his presence in the country could no longer be tolerated and that he should move to the city. Refusing to oblige, he was threatened with exile for inciting the peasants and wishing to foment revolution. Four days later, on 15 March, in response to denunciations from the priests, an official investigation came to Pavlovki. Khilkov was charged with 'falling away from Orthodoxy' and twenty peasants were named with him. It was only a matter of time therefore before the authorities acted, and the following year was to see a concerted effort against both Tolstoi and his followers, and the Stundists.

In July 1891 Pobedonostsev summoned a Conference of Orthodox Church leaders (Second Missionary Conference) in Moscow to consider the best methods of preventing the further spread of sectarianism, especially Baptism, Pashkovism, and Stundism. Of these, Stundism was singled out for special consideration. The outcome of the Conference was the approval of measures aimed at severely restricting Stundist activity. Those areas which had the greatest numbers of Stundists were to be placed under the strict surveillance of the local administration and police. Stundists were to be confined to their villages by strict control of internal passports, they were to be denied work and property rights, and any guilty of propagating their faith, particularly leaders, were to be exiled.<sup>25</sup>

Having acted against the Stundists, Pobedonostsev sought a way to deal with Tolstoi and his influence. Tolstoi's relations with the sects had been a cause for concern for some time. As early as 1883 his meetings with Molokans had been the subject of police surveillance. With the spread of Stundism the government feared a mass sectarian movement led by Tolstoi, whose influence extended also among the upper classes. Throughout 1891 the Count's involvement in famine relief was closely monitored. Then in November his article on the famine ('Pis'mo o golode'), with its revelations of government mismanagement, caused a tremendous stir at home and abroad (it was published in the *Daily Telegraph* in London, and also in French and Danish newspapers). By the beginning of 1892 rumours were circulating that Tolstoi would be imprisoned for revolutionary propaganda. Protected by powerful friends and public opinion, the Count proved

<sup>24</sup> D. A. Khilkov, 'Iz otkrytogo pis'ma k Khar'kovskomu arkhierieu', *Svobodnoe slovo*, 2, 1899, pp. 128-40 (129).

<sup>25</sup> *Moskovskie vedomosti*, No. 239, 28 August 1891.

untouchable. Pobedonostsev therefore vented his wrath on Tolstoi's friends and disciples.

As one of the chief centres of Stundism and Tolstoyism the neighbourhood of Pavlovki was a prime target. Among the first to suffer was D. A. Khilkov, whose home in Pavlovki had become a focal point for dissent, frequented by intellectuals and peasant sectarian leaders alike.<sup>26</sup> In November 1891 Pobedonostsev wrote to the Tsar complaining of the harmful effect of Tolstoi's works. In the letter he made special mention of Khilkov and his influence in and around Pavlovki. He accused him of 'preaching to the peasants the Tolstoyan gospel with its repudiation of the Church and marriage, which is based on the principles of socialism'. This baneful influence was now spreading over the border into Kursk province, 'in districts where for some time an unquiet spirit has been observed among the people'. Local churches stood empty and peasants were refusing to take oaths. This undermining of authority in already troubled districts was a situation 'pregnant with the greatest danger'. Pobedonostsev therefore demanded that immediate action be taken against Khilkov.<sup>27</sup>

Ideally, Pobedonostsev wished to have Khilkov incarcerated in the remote Solovetskii Monastery, but he was prevented by the intervention of prominent friends of Khilkov.<sup>28</sup> In February 1892 Khilkov was exiled to Transcaucasia for five years. Soon after, other Tolstoyan activists in the area were also exiled.<sup>29</sup> By removing the leaders the authorities hoped to put an end to dissent in the area. According to the deacon Krushodol'skii: 'It was difficult to pluck the root [i.e. Khilkov], but the shoots will dry up of themselves'.<sup>30</sup> But it was not so. Dissent in Pavlovki remained a live issue throughout the 1890s, despite attempts to check it. Indeed, this decade, which saw both Stundism (in 1894) and Tolstoyism (in 1897) outlawed, was to prove the most difficult and trying time for the Pavlovtsy, as it was for dissenters elsewhere.

The intention of the authorities soon became clear. Within weeks of Khilkov's departure, at a village meeting in Pavlovki on 22 March 1892 (OS), the district police officer and the priests, in the presence of a rural dean, berated the Orthodox for tolerating Stundists in their midst and called for their expulsion from the community. 'In other parts of Russia', they said, 'such people are torn in pieces'. 'Fortunately', writes

<sup>26</sup> S. Groman, 'Peshkom po Rossii' in *Letopis' Gosudarstvennogo literaturnogo muzeia*, xii, Moscow, 1948, pp. 331-62 (352-53).

<sup>27</sup> Letter dated 1 November 1891 (OS). *Pis'ma Pobedonostseva k Aleksandru III*, 2 vols, Moscow, 1925-26, II, pp. 252-53. This translation from E. J. Simmons, *Leo Tolstoy*, London, 1949, p. 499.

<sup>28</sup> Stadling, *In the Land of Tolstoi*, p. 177.

<sup>29</sup> N. N. Gusev, 'Pavlovtsy', Pt. 1, *Russkaia mysl'*, 1907, 7 (hereafter Gusev, *Pavlovtsy*, Pt. 1), pp. 40-71 (53).

<sup>30</sup> 'Nachalo zhizni khristian', p. 188.

Khilkov, 'the peasants proved better than their spiritual shepherds.'<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, the priests tried by all means to harass and isolate the Stundists. At their request the offenders were not given land on the neighbouring estates, nor were they hired for work.

As the decade progressed, two issues above all brought confrontation between the Pavlovtsy and the authorities. They were interconnected and both ultimately concerned the relation of the Pavlovtsy to civil authority, namely the swearing of oaths and the fulfilment of state obligations, particularly military service. According to the authorities the Pavlovtsy refused to take oaths and enter military service. Khilkov, however, denied this, asserting that no one had refused to draw lots and enter the service.<sup>32</sup> The truth of the matter is hard to judge, but it does seem from the evidence that such refusals were not uncommon in and around Pavlovki. In 1892, for example, three men from Pavlovki refused to bear arms at the time of the reserve training period (*uchebnyi sbor*) and were imprisoned for sixteen months. In 1895 the sectarian P. V. Olkhovik from nearby Rechki declined to serve and was accused of having learnt his anti-military views from Khilkov, although they were not personally acquainted. In 1896 there were more refusals in Pavlovki.<sup>33</sup> At that time, of course, the authorities were also much alarmed at the militant pacifist activities of the Caucasian Dukhobors, again under the influence of the insidious Count Tolstoi and his 'agent' Khilkov.<sup>34</sup>

The year 1894 saw increased pressure on the Pavlovtsy. In the spring a police search of many homes uncovered, it was reported, a large amount of anti-government and anti-Orthodox literature. Strangely, there were no arrests made.<sup>35</sup> In July the Council of Ministers published a decree which outlawed Stundism as a 'particularly dangerous sect' and banned all Stundist meetings. From this time the Pavlovtsy were subject to every kind of harassment: meetings were broken up and participants physically abused and fined; they were not permitted even to visit one another or work together, nor were they permitted to be employed.<sup>36</sup> In September four leading Pavlovtsy were exiled.

Towards the end of the year, in November, they faced yet another test of their convictions, the oath of allegiance to the new Tsar, Nicholas II. Thirty-nine heads of families refused to swear on religious grounds, despite threats from priests and police. Attempts to oust them from the

<sup>31</sup> Khilkov, *Zapiski*, p. 123.

<sup>32</sup> Gusev, *Pavlovtsy*, Pt. 1, p. 54; Khilkov, 'Iz otkrytogo pis'ma', pp. 128-40 (133).

<sup>33</sup> Gusev, *Pavlovtsy*, Pt. 1, pp. 54, 56; Olkhovik, *Pis'ma*, p. 5.

<sup>34</sup> V. Chertkov, *Gde brat tvoi?: ob otnoshenii russkago pravitel'stva k liudiam, ne mogushchim stanoviti'sia ubiitsami*, Purleigh, 1898, pp. 21-22. For his involvement with the Dukhobors Khilkov was transferred to a new place of exile in Estonia, under much stricter conditions. In 1898 he was allowed to leave Russia and assisted the Dukhobor exodus to Canada.

<sup>35</sup> Butkevich, *Tolstovstvo*, p. 813.

<sup>36</sup> 'Nachalo zhizni khristian', p. 188; Gusev, *Pavlovtsy*, Pt. 1, p. 54.

community were frustrated by lack of support from the village meeting. In the immediate area there were also twenty-one other refusals, making sixty in all. Over the next two years the authorities watched with growing concern the further undermining of authority and respect for the Tsar. At the time of the coronation of Nicholas II in May 1896, when special services were held, they were shocked to find the local Orthodox church practically devoid of peasants. Most galling of all, however, was the fact that all this went unpunished, which could only encourage disloyalty among the local populace.<sup>37</sup>

In September 1896 the situation around Pavlovki was discussed by the Missionary Council for Sectarian Affairs of Khar'kov diocese. The report of the Council appeared in November in the journal *Vera i razum*, published by the Khar'kov seminary.<sup>38</sup> In December what was hitherto a cause for local concern was brought to national prominence in the pages of *Moskovskie vedomosti*. The issue for 17 December (OS) carried a leading article on the worsening situation in Khar'kov and the dangerous influence of the Tolstoyans. It claimed:

Colonies of Tolstoyans are springing up on all sides and in Khar'kov province, where the peasants were formerly loyal and patriotic, there are now hundreds of malcontents who refuse to pay taxes, fulfil their military duty only under compulsion, and declare themselves the enemies of all established law and order.<sup>39</sup>

The article concluded with a call to the government for firm and immediate action against the Tolstoyans, who were 'enemies of State'. The same issue and the following one also carried an article by Lev Tikhomirov detailing the situation around Pavlovki, which was drawn from the earlier report in *Vera i razum*.<sup>40</sup>

Five years had passed since, in November 1891, Pobedonostsev had written to the Tsar about empty churches and growing disloyalty around Pavlovki. Now the situation was even more acute. Stern measures had been applied against the Stundists since 1894. Similar action was now demanded against the Tolstoyans, who in many respects constituted a more serious threat. For while Stundism drew its adherents chiefly from the peasants and urban proletariat, Tolstoi's influence reached also among the intelligentsia and upper classes. Moreover, his international renown extended that influence beyond Russia. Angered by his exposure of the famine in 1891, the government

<sup>37</sup> Butkevich, *Tolstovstvo*, pp. 816, 823.

<sup>38</sup> *Vera i razum: zhurnal bogoslovsko-filozofskii*, 22, 1896, 2.

<sup>39</sup> 'Gosudarstvo i tolstovskaia propaganda', *Moskovskie vedomosti*, 17 December 1896, p. 2.

<sup>40</sup> L. Tikhomirov, 'Epizod iz istorii "Tolstovshchiny"', *Moskovskie vedomosti*, 17-18 December 1896, pp. 3-4. Both articles provoked a sharp reaction from Khilkov, who wrote an open letter to Archbishop Amvrosii, accusing the authors of inaccuracy and falsification. First published as 'Slovo zashchity' in the Evangelical journal *Beseda* (London), now extremely rare, it later appeared in *Svobodnoe slovo* (n. 24 above).

was further outraged, from 1895 onwards, by revelations abroad by Tolstoi and others of the brutal treatment of the Dukhobors. In December 1896 the Tolstoyans Chertkov, Biriukov, and Tregubov issued an appeal for help (*Pomogite*) for the Dukhobors, a damning indictment of government repression. This was followed in January 1897 by an attempt to present a memorandum on the subject to the Tsar. The authorities acted swiftly and exiled the three Tolstoyans.

By mid-1897 the clamour for action against Tolstoi and his followers came to a head. In August of that year the Holy Synod convened its Third Missionary Conference in Kazan'. Far from diminishing since the 1891 Conference, sectarian activity had continued at an unacceptable level. In addition to the old enemy, Stundism, new sects had emerged. Among these were numbered the followers of Tolstoi, now considered a 'completely formed sect' and like the Stundists 'particularly dangerous to Church and State'. The Conference strongly recommended that the Tolstoyans should be treated in the same way as other dangerous sectarians.<sup>41</sup> Tolstoi himself was declared antichrist, giving weight to the suggestion, already made by Pobedonostsev, that he should be excommunicated from the Church. Demands for this now grew, voiced by, among others, Archbishop Amvrosii of Khar'kov, until February 1901, when it was formally decreed by the Holy Synod.

As both Stundists and Tolstoyans, the sectarians of Pavlovki found themselves in an impossible situation, outlawed on two counts. The continual harassment of their daily lives was not without effect. Towards the end of the century it was observed that their numbers had begun to decline, with some returning to the Orthodox fold.<sup>42</sup> For those who remained firm in their convictions, however, life became unbearable. They were confined to Pavlovki, with no opportunity to work, and forbidden to receive or visit their fellow believers, and their position was likened to being in quarantine.<sup>43</sup> Any gathering of two or more was likely to be broken up by police and the participants subjected to a fine of twenty roubles.

In these circumstances the only hope seemed to be to follow the Dukhobors' example and emigrate. Thus in January 1899 thirty-eight

<sup>41</sup> 'The Russian Clergy', *Free Russia*, London, 1 October 1897, pp. 77-78 (77).

<sup>42</sup> Butkevich, *Tolstovstvo*, p. 823. To put a number to dissenters in Pavlovki is far from easy. Estimates differ greatly according to source. Thus Tikhomirov, following *Vera i razum*, gives a figure of 327 Tolstoyans in 1896 (see n. 40 above). This number doubtless reflects the broad official definition of Stundism/Tolstoyism and was disputed by Khilkov. He claimed no more than ten to fifteen like-minded followers (Tolstoyans) at the time of his exile in 1892 (see n. 24 above). The thirty-eight households (216 individuals) who applied for emigration in 1899 probably represent the core of committed dissenters. Bonch-Bruevich also gives a figure of around 200 (*Zhizn'*, p. 296). At the trial, taking account of the decline in numbers, witnesses gave figures of fifty and ninety-five households, perhaps between 250 and 500 individuals (*Delo pavlovskikh krest'ian*, pp. 13, 19).

<sup>43</sup> *Revoliutsionnaia Rossiia*, 3, 1902, p. 11.

families (some 216 individuals) petitioned the Governor of Khar'kov for permission to emigrate.

Professing a religion which according to the law of the Russian Empire is considered harmful, and suffering persecution and oppression in the service of God as we understand it, we beg your Excellency to apply on our behalf to the Minister of Internal Affairs for permission to emigrate.<sup>44</sup>

Hopes rose when permission was granted except for those eligible for conscription that year. Learning of their intention Khilkov advised them to put off their departure until the following spring (1900). Experience with the Dukhobors had clearly demonstrated the need for careful planning and preparation. In January 1900 he wrote to Kh. N. Abrikosov, asking him to assist the Pavlovtsy. Abrikosov consulted with Tolstoi, who was in fact opposed to emigration, believing that it was better for them as Christians to endure hardship than to flee from it. In an effort to dissuade them Tolstoi sent Abrikosov to Pavlovki with a letter. The Pavlovtsy, however, were not to be swayed and began their preparations, selling their land and possessions.<sup>45</sup>

Sadly, the involvement of the Tolstoyans was to prove counter-productive. In March 1900 Abrikosov, whose visit and correspondence with the Pavlovtsy was known to the authorities, was forbidden by the Vice-Governor of Khar'kov to assist them in any way. Shortly afterwards the conditions of their emigration were drastically altered. Only those not eligible at all for military service, i.e. the old men, women, and children, would be granted passports. The reasons for this reversal were perhaps twofold. First, the authorities feared a repetition of the Dukhobor affair, with its international exposure by the Tolstoyans of religious persecution in Russia; and secondly, it would serve as an object lesson to sectarians who thought to avoid their state obligations in the form of military service.<sup>46</sup> This action was, moreover, consistent with an evident tightening of Pobedonostsev's policy in the first years of the century. At a time of increasing social unrest, especially in those southern provinces where sectarianism was rife, the Over-Procurator was more than ever determined to combat dissent. Stundism, in all its manifestations, and Tolstoyism, remained the major threats.

During 1900 police and civil authorities were instructed to employ the full weight of the law against Stundists. They were to give particular attention to illegal Stundist prayer meetings and to ensuring that none escaped justice by claiming to be Baptists. 'There are and must be no Russian Baptists' declared the Over-Procurator. To this end police were ordered not to issue any legal documents identifying Stundists as

<sup>44</sup> A. Bodianskii, 'Pis'mo v redaktsiiu', *Svobodnaia mysl'*, 2, 1899, pp. 14-16 (15).

<sup>45</sup> Kh. N. Abrikosov, 'Dvenadtsat' let okolo Tolstogo' in *Letopisi Gosudarstvennogo literaturnogo muzeia*, XII, Moscow, 1948, pp. 377-463 (422).

<sup>46</sup> Gusev, *Pavlovtsy*, Pt. 1, p. 70.

such.<sup>47</sup> In the years that followed many Stundists were brought to trial. In the first half of 1901 alone Bonch-Bruevich recorded some thirty-six cases of sectarians tried for participating in illegal prayer meetings.<sup>48</sup>

Pobedonostsev's particular concern was the fact that radical and revolutionary literature from Tolstoyan and socialist groups abroad was successfully permeating the sects, particularly the Stundists. It was evident, he claimed, that some Stundists had forsaken religion and were reading anti-government literature and discussing social and political questions in their meetings. There was even evidence that Stundists in Kherson were participating in an illegal labour movement.<sup>49</sup>

No less disturbing was a wave of religious enthusiasm in Kiev province, where a former Baptist, Kondrat Malevannyi, proclaimed himself Messiah. So great was the popular excitement aroused by his preaching that in 1892 he had been arrested and confined in Kazan'. Combining elements of Stundism with ascetic practices derived from the Khlysty, Malevannyi proclaimed the imminence of the Last Day, when all authority would be overthrown and the Kingdom of God established. In some parts of Kiev whole communities of Stundists went over to the new teaching, among them the village of Iakhni (Vasil'kovskii district).<sup>50</sup>

Towards the end of 1900 a state of religious excitement was observed among the Malevantsy in and around Iakhni, where sectarians went from village to village proclaiming the coming Kingdom. In December of that year a number of Malevantsy seriously disrupted an Orthodox service in Iakhni.<sup>51</sup> Among them was Moisei Todosienko, who was to play a leading role in the events at Pavlovki. Such was his devotion to Malevannyi that he had earlier feigned madness to gain access to the asylum where his master was confined. Thus he succeeded in obtaining a letter from Malevannyi to his disciples. Demonstrating his sanity once again, Todosienko was released and, armed with the letter, began stirring up the faithful.

As for Tolstoi, 1901 saw the fulfilment of the long cherished desire of Pobedonostsev and conservative clergy to have the heretical Count excommunicated. Since 1896 there had been plans for this within the Synod and in 1899 Archbishop Amvrosii drafted a decree.<sup>52</sup> On

<sup>47</sup> John S. Curtiss, *Church and State in Russia: the Last Years of the Empire, 1900-1917*, New York, 1940 (hereafter Curtiss, *Church and State*), p. 168.

<sup>48</sup> *Presledovanie baptistov evangeliiskoi sekty*, ed. V. D. Bonch-Bruevich, Christchurch, 1902, pp. 79-83.

<sup>49</sup> Curtiss, *Church and State*, p. 167.

<sup>50</sup> On the Malevantsy, see A. I. Klibanov, *Istoriia religioznogo sektantstva v Rossii (60-e gody XIXv. - 1917 g.)*, Moscow, 1965, pp. 218-23; and P. I. Biriukov, *Malevantsy*, Moscow, 1907.

<sup>51</sup> *Delo pavalovskikh krest'ian: (ofitsial'nye dokumenty)*, ed. V. D. Bonch-Bruevich, London, 1902 (hereafter *Delo pavalovskikh krest'ian*), p. 49.

<sup>52</sup> S. Pozoiskii, *K istorii otlucheniia L'va Tolstogo ot tserkvi*, Moscow, 1979, p. 82.

22 February 1901 the Synod formally decreed the excommunication, provoking a huge public outcry in defence of Tolstoi, even from a large section of the clergy. In support of the Synod's action Amvrosii delivered a sermon in Khar'kov on 18 March, which was published in *Moskovskie vedomosti*. In it he declared that the chief enemies of the Tsar and Church were not the socialists but the Tolstoyans. As well as Tolstoi he named Chertkov, Tregubov, Khilkov, and Abrikosov as the chief propagandists of Tolstoi's teaching. The last of these, it seems, was named for his recent involvement with the Pavlovtsy.<sup>53</sup>

In Pavlovki life continued much the same for the disappointed sectarians. Then on 10 August 1901 two strangers arrived, a rare event at that time. One was Moisei Todosienko from Iakhni; the identity of the other is unknown. Over the next few days Todosienko preached in and around Pavlovki, confining himself to social rather than religious questions. The essence of his message was this. The land was soon to be taken from the landowners and distributed to the peasants. To continue working for the masters was sinful, for with the coming of the new year the new order would come in, when there would be no more masters and authorities. At that time also the House of Romanov would be deposed. Furthermore, he declared that the Church was not of God and must be destroyed, and that the sectarian faith would prevail.

All this he declared on the authority of the Tsar himself, who, he claimed, had been converted to the true faith and had sent out 400 emissaries to prepare the faithful.

I am sent by Tsar Nicholas to enlighten you and to prepare for the new laws; the Tsar has sent out many of us; your Khilkov has been sent to people of another land, and I to you.<sup>54</sup>

As a result of his preaching, a number of peasants, not only in Pavlovki, but on some of the neighbouring estates, gave up their work to follow the new prophet.

After some days Todosienko left, he said for St Petersburg. Two months later he returned. On 10 September 1901 about twenty sectarians gathered to hear him at the home of one of their number. The meeting was broken up by police and Todosienko confined overnight. Next day he was escorted first to Belopol'e and then to police headquarters in Sumy, accompanied by a number of sectarians. As the Tsar's representative he had claimed immunity from arrest. This was now apparently confirmed, to the astonishment and joy of his followers, by his prompt release from custody. Returning to Pavlovki, Todosienko left once more for St Petersburg.

<sup>53</sup> 'Rech' khar'kovskago arkhiepiskopa Amvrosiia o delateliakh na zhatve Bozhiei', *Moskovskie vedomosti*, 30 March 1901, p. 3.

<sup>54</sup> *Delo pavlovskikh krest'ian*, p. 45.

In his short time at Pavlovki he had won over a number of converts, led by Grigorii Pavlenko, a young man hitherto undistinguished in any way. Pavlenko now claimed to have assumed the prophet's mantle and began to proclaim the advent of the new order, exhorting his neighbours to follow him. Under his leadership a crowd of sectarians processed through Pavlovki proclaiming 'Truth is coming, Christ is risen'. Then on the evening of 15 September, after a day of fasting, the believers met to read the Gospel and pray. Pavlenko now revealed that he was God and that the following day he would take his throne in the Church of St Michael. Amid the general exaltation one sectarian collapsed and was 'raised from the dead' by Pavlenko.

Early next morning a crowd of about 300 sectarians processed once more through Pavlovki, singing and clapping. Approaching the church school, they were met by a police officer and a number of constables, alerted to the prospect of trouble, who called on them to disperse. Unheeding, the crowd advanced, forced an entry into the church school and ransacked the interior. Emerging triumphantly they pressed on to St Michael's. There they were again confronted by police, led by the district officer and by a crowd of Orthodox, who had gathered to protect their Church. An ugly scene ensued, in which police were assaulted, one sectarian was killed, and others were severely beaten. For days afterwards sectarians were sought out and beaten by Orthodox zealots.

Following the violence, Pavlovki was almost immediately sealed off under the provision of the 1881 *Polozhenie ob usilennoi okhrane* (Statute of Enforced Security).<sup>55</sup> This law, originally enacted as a temporary measure to combat revolutionary activity, enabled Governors effectively to isolate areas of unrest, and gave local police almost unlimited powers of search and arrest. Pavlovki now came under a strict police regime. It was clear that the Pavlovtsy were to be treated not as erring sectarians, but as dangerous rebels.

In January 1902 sixty-eight Pavlovtsy were put on trial in Sumy under tight security. Among them was Moisei Todosienko, arrested as an agitator, although he had not been in Pavlovki at the time. Entry to the court was restricted in the extreme. Relatives of the accused, lawyers, and even court officials were barred. The only persons admitted were four dignitaries: A. A. Cherniavskii, the President of the Court; V. M. Skvortsov, for the Holy Synod; I. G. Shcheglovitov, for the Ministry of Justice; and a Gendarme colonel: an array calculated to intimidate the defendants.<sup>56</sup> The closed nature of the proceedings astounded and

<sup>55</sup> 'V poiskakh veroterpimosti' in S. P. Melgunov, *Tserkov' i gosudarstvo v Rossii (k voprosu o svobode sovesti)*: *sbornik statei*, 1, Moscow, 1907, pp. 101-32 (103).

<sup>56</sup> V. A. Maklavov, *Iz vospominanii*, New York, 1954, p. 254; *PSZ*, 1, No. 350, 14 August 1881.

disturbed many, among them the writer V. G. Korolenko, who sought entry to the court but was refused.<sup>57</sup>

According to V. A. Maklakov, one of the defence lawyers, it was said that the Tsar wished to punish the offenders without a trial, but relented on the insistence of N. V. Murav'ev, the Minister of Justice. The Minister now used this to persuade the defence, with great misgivings, to comply with the proceedings. Better this trial than no trial. The principal charge against the defendants was under Article 210 of the Criminal Code, which pertained to acts of abuse and violence against the Church, its property, and its servants.<sup>58</sup>

The case for the defence rested on proving that the Pavlovtsy had acted in a 'state of delirium and frenzy', and were therefore not responsible for their actions. As for Todosienko, he already had a history of mental illness. The President of the Court, however, refused to permit further investigation into the mental state of the Pavlovtsy. Turning to Todosienko, he asked if he were insane, to which the latter replied in the negative.<sup>59</sup> The defence was thus robbed of its case. From the outset it was clear that the authorities were determined to punish the Pavlovtsy severely and without delay. The closed court, the lack of proper defence, and the rushed proceedings made it, in the eyes of Bonch-Bruevich and others, a real 'Shemiakin court', a sham.<sup>60</sup>

At the close of the trial more than forty-eight hours elapsed before the pronouncement of the verdict. During this time, it was said, the approval of the Minister of Justice and Pobedonostsev was sought.<sup>61</sup> Under the initial verdict eighteen were acquitted and the remaining fifty sentenced to penal servitude in Siberia. Following appeals by the defence and a report to the Ministry by Shcheglovitov this was modified. Thirty-five had their sentence commuted to deportation, of whom some fourteen women were subsequently released. Appeals on behalf of the remaining fifteen were rejected. These unfortunates were sent to the hard labour prisons of Nerchinsk and Sakhalin.

The violence and the trial dealt a shattering blow to the Pavlovtsy. In its wake the authorities sought to purge Pavlovki and its neighbourhood of sectarianism. Isolated from the outside world, with entry to Pavlovki strictly controlled, even for family visits, the Pavlovtsy that remained found themselves completely at the mercy of clergy and police. They were not, however, entirely forgotten. In the course of 1902 Bonch-Bruevich brought their case to the attention of the wider

<sup>57</sup> V. G. Korolenko, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 10 vols, Moscow, 1953-56, 10, p. 327.

<sup>58</sup> 'Ulozhenie o nakazaniakh ugovolnykh i ispravitel'nykh', *Svod zakonov Rossiiskoi imperii*, xv, ch. 1, St Petersburg, 1885.

<sup>59</sup> V. A. Maklakov, *Iz vospominanii*, New York, 1954, p. 254.

<sup>60</sup> V. D. Bonch-Bruevich, 'Sredi sektantov', *Zhizn'*, 2, 1902 (hereafter *Zhizn'*), pp. 280-307 (302).

<sup>61</sup> Korolenko, *op. cit.*, 9, p. 659.

world, first in May in the journal *Zhizn'*, and then in June in the pamphlet *Delo pavalovskikh krest'ian*. Then in October they somehow managed to make their plight known in an appeal to Tolstoi.<sup>62</sup>

For their part, the clergy began to press the Orthodox to expel the heretics from the community. Their efforts were unsuccessful, however, since their neighbours and in some cases relatives, in spite of the violence, were not without sympathy for the sectarians.<sup>63</sup> Indeed, it was noted that during the assault on the church school there were Orthodox present, who in no way discouraged the violence.<sup>64</sup> Here lay one of Pobedonostsev's chief concerns. The rise of Stundism in Khar'kov province was accompanied by a decline in devotion among the Orthodox. This was certainly the case in Pavlovki, where the priests reported that many of their flock were cold or indifferent towards them.<sup>65</sup>

By 1902, however, the Over-Procurator was approaching the end of his long career. He was tired and ill, and any satisfaction he felt over the excommunication of Tolstoi and the punishment of the troublesome Pavlovtsy was surely marred by dismay as, over the next three years, he witnessed the disintegration of all he held sacred. In these years the twin pillars of the Empire — autocracy and Orthodoxy — were severely shaken as revolutionary and terrorist activity was renewed and liberals pressed for a Constitution and civil rights, including religious liberty. Even the Orthodox Church was not exempt from upheaval. From 1902 there was mounting pressure from within and without for reform.

In April 1905 the Tsar yielded to liberal demands and issued a Decree on religious liberty.<sup>66</sup> Membership of a sect, save those regarded as fanatical, such as the Skoptsy, was no longer a criminal offence. Moreover, the decree of 1894 banning Stundist meetings was rescinded. Russians were now, for the first time, free to leave the Orthodox Church and adhere to another Christian denomination. The result was a tremendous release of energy and activity on the part of the dissenters.

<sup>62</sup> *Zhizn'*, see note 60; *Delo pavalovskikh krest'ian*, see note 51; *Osvobozhdenie*, 1 January 1903, p. 215.

<sup>63</sup> *Zhizn'*, p. 304.

<sup>64</sup> *Delo pavalovskikh krest'ian*, p. 17. Established as a means of promoting Orthodoxy in Pavlovki, the church school was naturally resented by sectarians. There was also resentment among the Orthodox. It was built at a time when land was scarce in Pavlovki, and the site was sold to the clergy on condition that the building was dedicated to the vendor's parents, Fedor and Glafira Ivanitskii, a couple known for their disreputable lives. This was an affront to many Orthodox, who were offended at the dedication to 'Saints' Fedor and Glafira. This was the reason given for the fact that some Orthodox did not discourage the violence. See 'Nachalo zhizni krest'ian', pp. 202–04.

<sup>65</sup> *Delo pavalovskikh krest'ian*, p. 11.

<sup>66</sup> *PSZ*, xxv, No. 26,125, 17 April 1905.

To discover the effects of this new found liberty, the newspaper *Russkie vedomosti* sent S. P. Melgunov to visit sectarian communities in the southern provinces.<sup>67</sup> In May 1905 Melgunov made two visits to Pavlovki. His arrival caused a sensation among the Pavlovtsy, who had seen no outsiders for almost four years. To his dismay, however, Melgunov found his investigations hindered at every turn by the police, who still controlled Pavlovki. In addition, he found that the dissenters had been kept in ignorance of the new decree. The authorities would not readily relax their grip, regardless of a change in the law. One month later the Tsar granted an amnesty to persons convicted of religious crimes. Its terms, however, did not extend to the unfortunate Pavlovtsy in exile. Still branded as rebels, they continued to languish in Siberia.<sup>68</sup>

Pobedonostsev and other conservatives in government and Church needed no persuading of the revolutionary potential of the sects. The affair of the Pavlovtsy served only to confirm this view. But how far was this justified, first in general terms, and secondly in relation to the Pavlovtsy? The question of the revolutionary potential of the sects had long been debated in revolutionary circles, from the time of Herzen onwards. From firsthand experience among the dissenters some concluded that they were fundamentally conservative in their outlook and unwilling to be drawn into opposition to the government. Others upheld the view that sectarians were a fruitful field for revolutionary propaganda and potential allies in the struggle against the regime. Among these was V. D. Bonch-Bruevich, who actively promoted this view in the ranks of the Social Democrats. Few of his fellow Marxists, however, with the notable exception of Lenin himself, shared his conviction.<sup>69</sup> At much the same time, of the Socialist Revolutionaries, D. A. Khilkov was one who promoted agitation among the sects.<sup>70</sup>

The debate on the sects came to a head in the period 1902-04. The chief protagonists at this time were Bonch-Bruevich, Khilkov, and Chertkov. In 1903 Chertkov, on behalf of the Tolstoyans, sent a questionnaire to sectarian leaders to ascertain the extent of their support for the revolutionaries. Some replies did indeed reveal sympathy for the radicals and Bonch-Bruevich in particular made much of this. They were, however, in a minority. This was later confirmed by the research of F. M. Putintsev among letters in the Tolstoi Museum, where he found little evidence of sectarian sympathy towards the

<sup>67</sup> 'V poiskakh veroterpimosti' (note 55 above), pp. 101-32 (101).

<sup>68</sup> *PSZ* xxv, No. 26,480, 25 June 1905. Eventually released into exile, in August 1907 they were reported to have settled in Irkutsk province. See D. P. Makovitskii, *U Tolstogo, 1904-1910: 'Iasnopolianskie zapiski' D. P. Makovitskogo (Literaturnoe nasledstvo, 90)*, 4 vols, Moscow, 1979, II, p. 475.

<sup>69</sup> Blane, *Relations*, chapter 4.

<sup>70</sup> See, for example, his *Sektanty i revoliutsiia*, Geneva, 1905.

radicals.<sup>71</sup> Nor did the 1905 revolution itself reveal any significant sectarian participation. In general, dissenters shunned the revolution, particularly any form of violence. Rather, the majority favoured change by peaceful reform. All the attempts of Bonch-Bruевич and others to draw them into the cause largely foundered on the cautious gradualism of the Evangelicals and Old Believers, and on the non-resistance of the Tolstoyans.

In the face of this evident lack of sectarian support and the urgent demands of the new political situation, the sectarian question faded from the revolutionary agenda after 1905. To this tacit recognition of the non-revolutionary inclination of dissenters was added an open declaration of support from an unexpected quarter. In March 1905, as part of discussions on religious liberty, Stundists and others were completely exonerated of any revolutionary intent by a leading churchman, Metropolitan Antonii of St Petersburg. Like many clergy at this time the Metropolitan welcomed moves for greater freedom within the Church and without, and the opportunity for the Church to disassociate itself from the repressive policies of the State. To this end he rejected the use of administrative and police measures in the struggle against the sects.<sup>72</sup>

But what of the Pavlovtsy? Their action would appear to justify Pobedonostsev's worst fears about the Tolstoyans and Stundists. Such acts were, however, isolated and exceptional among sectarians. To explain their extraordinary conduct and assess its revolutionary significance it is first necessary to examine more closely the source of its inspiration.

Pobedonostsev maintained that the violence was the direct result of Tolstoi's anarchic teaching. This was the substance of a letter to the Tsar, in which he lamented the effects of Khilkov's influence in Pavlovki and the failure of the authorities to deal with it earlier.<sup>73</sup> The fact that Tolstoi taught non-violence was quite overlooked. A report in *Vestnik Evropy* was prompt to point this out, refuting any involvement by Tolstoi or his followers in the events at Pavlovki, and noting that up to the time of Tudosienko's arrival the Pavlovtsy were peaceable.<sup>74</sup>

There is in fact good reason to doubt that those involved could in any sense have been Tolstoyans. Stirred by religious enthusiasm and anticipating a divine manifestation as promised by Pavlenko, they displayed a spirit quite alien to Tolstoyism, which was based on rationalism and rejected the supernatural. Moreover, an account given

<sup>71</sup> F. M. Putintsev, *Politicheskaia rol' i taktika sekt*, Moscow, 1935, p. 24.

<sup>72</sup> Gerhard Simon, *Church, State and Opposition in the USSR*, London, 1974, p. 11.

<sup>73</sup> K. P. Pobedonostsev, 'Pis'mo Nikolaiu II' in *Voprosy nauchnogo ateizma*, 24, 1979, p. 272.

<sup>74</sup> *Vestnik Evropy*, 1902, 2 March, p. 429.

in *Missionerskoe obozrenie* in 1897 indicates that even in official eyes the Pavlovki Tolstoyans were noted for their lack of religion.

Since at the heart of Tolstoyism in Pavlovki lie anarchic and socialistic aspirations, quite devoid of any religious character, the Pavlovki Tolstoyans are not religious sectarians: unlike the Stundists they do not have any religious meetings, hymn singing, or any form of divine service.<sup>75</sup>

By this token the protagonists in the Pavlovki events were quite clearly not Tolstoyans.

At their trial the Pavlovtsy were described both as Tolstoyans and Stundists. If not Tolstoyans, therefore, to what extent can they be considered Stundists? In a study of sectarianism and violence the sociologist Werner Stark cites the example of the Pavlovtsy. He writes:

Even if a sect is on the surface non-violent it often harbours, not too deep beneath the surface, a very different animus. To outward appearance, all Russian sectarians were non-violent . . . But while law-abiding behaviour was for most of them a necessity rather than a virtue, the Stundists regarded themselves as the Quakers of Russia, as men who truly believed that all violence, nay all assertion of power, is inherently evil.<sup>76</sup>

Stark draws his examples from Curtiss, who in turn is citing official documents, which characteristically describe the Pavlovtsy as Stundists.<sup>77</sup> As we have seen, Stundism embraced a diversity of ideas and beliefs, and the term itself was often used very loosely to cover many forms of dissent. It is only in this general sense that the Pavlovtsy may be considered Stundists. More narrowly they could be considered Neostundists, but Neostundism was itself broadly divided into a rational and a mystical wing. The action of the Pavlovtsy clearly does not represent rational Neostundism, which had much in common with Tolstoyism. Rather it is to the mystical element we must look and, more precisely, to the Malevantsy. There lies the source of that 'very different animus', which led to the extraordinary behaviour of the Pavlovtsy.

Among the Malevantsy of Kiev province there was a militant minority not averse to radical action. Such militants including, for example, Todosienko, were responsible for the disturbance in Iakhni, and some, it seems, were prepared to go even further and take their protest to St Petersburg.<sup>78</sup> It was this spirit that Todosienko passed on to his disciple Pavlenko, who made no secret of his antipathy to authority and his intention to march on the church.<sup>79</sup> Few at the time, with the notable exception of Bonch-Bruevich, appreciated the distinction between these

<sup>75</sup> Butkevich, *Tolstovstvo*, p. 813.

<sup>76</sup> Werner Stark, *A Sociology of Religion: a Study of Christendom*, 5 vols, London, 1966-72, 2, *Sectarian Religion*, p. 201.

<sup>77</sup> Curtiss, *Church and State*, p. 166.

<sup>78</sup> *Zhizn'*, p. 299.

<sup>79</sup> *Delo pavlovskikh krest'ian*, predislovie, p. vii.

militants and the great mass of Stundists. Hence the astonishment which greeted news of the violence. How could such things happen among peaceable sectarians? Cries of 'provocation' and 'rebellion' came from both right and left, for once curiously united in their interpretation if not in their apportionment of blame.

To many minds such exceptional and atypical conduct was explicable only as an act of deliberate provocation. Thus some official reports saw Todosienko as an agent of Khilkov sent to stir up the sectarians, while the left saw him as an agent of the authorities. Lenin, for example, writing in *Iskra*, cited a report that Todosienko was in fact sent by the missionary V. M. Skvortsov, one of Pobedonostsev's chief deputies.<sup>80</sup> A report in *Revoliutsionnaia Rossiia* also presented him as an *agent provocateur*, 'with whose help an opportunity to get rid of the undesirable element in Pavlovki was cunningly contrived'.<sup>81</sup>

Bonch-Bruevich, however, rejected the provocateur theory and regarded the affair as a sectarian uprising affirming his conviction about the revolutionary potential of the sects. In March 1902 major agrarian disturbances broke out in the provinces of Khar'kov and Poltava. These were directed primarily against landowners by peasants demanding land and sustenance. In many cases it appears that they were fired by the age-old rumour that the Tsar had decreed it. This, as we know, was an important factor in Todosienko's preaching in Pavlovki. Indeed, according to Bonch-Bruevich, the preaching of the Malevantsy lay behind many of the disturbances. In his opinion the Pavlovki uprising was a precursor to the unrest of the following March.<sup>82</sup> Later Soviet interpretations also follow this line. For example:

The act bore a strikingly pronounced revolutionary character, directed against the Church as the ideological instrument of the serf-owners' supremacy. This was how the authorities themselves, even the clergy, understood it.<sup>83</sup>

At the turn of the century there was a mood of expectancy among the peasantry at large. Long cherished hopes of land and liberty had not diminished. These were now fired by rumour, by radical literature and by messianic preaching. Among sectarians also there was a similar air of expectancy. Around Pavlovki this was noted as early as 1897. While

<sup>80</sup> 'Politseiskii provokator sredi sektantov', *Iskra*, 1 (14) January 1902, p. 2.

<sup>81</sup> *Revoliutsionnaia Rossiia*, 3, 1902, p. 211.

<sup>82</sup> *Zhizn'*, p. 299.

<sup>83</sup> 1905. *Istoriia revoliutsionnogo dvizheniia v otdel'nykh ocherkakh*, ed. M. N. Pokrovskii, 3 vols, Moscow, 1925-27, 1, p. 322. See also F. I. Fedorenko, *Sekty, ikh vera i dela*, Moscow, 1965, p. 124; and I. A. Kryvelev, *Istoriia religii*, 2nd ed., 2 vols, Moscow, 1988, 1, p. 324. Both writers emphasize the aspect of social protest, while Fedorenko in particular plays down the religious dimension. Only Putintsev, it seems, maintains that it was an act of provocation; see F. M. Putintsev, *Politicheskaia rol' i taktika sekt*, p. 74.

the authorities at this time expressed a guarded optimism regarding the success of their efforts against dissenters, they were careful not to underestimate the strength of sectarian feeling.

Local sectarians are now in a state of expectancy . . . Doubtless they are hoping and waiting for something. Indeed, if circumstances change or the vigilance of the civil authorities weakens, then Tolstoyism will once again raise its head. There is always calm before the storm.<sup>84</sup>

Similarly, following the violence, Innokentii, Bishop of Sumy, reported to Pobedonostsev,

It required only a suitable opportunity for their suppressed expectations to erupt into a number of wild acts. Todosienko was such an opportunity.<sup>85</sup>

Without doubt what happened in Pavlovki had its immediate cause in the preaching of Todosienko and Pavlenko. They brought a message of hope to a persecuted people, whose hopes of escape by emigration had so recently been crushed. It is, perhaps, not insignificant in this respect that Todosienko bore the name Moisei (Moses). Much of the debate on the affair naturally focused on the person and role of Todosienko. To Pobedonostsev he was, like all Malevantsy, a mad and dangerous anarchist.<sup>86</sup> Certainly he appears to have been a single-minded and devoted disciple, militant in both word and deed. There is much about him, however, which remains enigmatic and which lends support to the idea that he may have been used, albeit unwittingly, as a provocateur. For example, evidence emerged later that, while in St Petersburg between visits to Pavlovki, he had contact with an official of the Holy Synod, who may have suggested to him to go and preach on the need to 'liberate the Truth' hidden in the churches.<sup>87</sup> Accompanied by a mysterious companion, whose identity was never established and who did not figure in the trial, he proceeded to Pavlovki and began to stir up the sectarians.<sup>88</sup>

To some his message was not new, since the teaching of Malevannyi was known in Pavlovki from the early 1890s.<sup>89</sup> Todosienko now proceeded to stir the allegiance of those who had heard, and for those who were not already persuaded he backed his words with a claim of imperial authority. His message appealed powerfully to the deepest aspirations of his audience, promising liberty and the ultimate triumph of their faith. Yet not all responded to his preaching. Those of a more

<sup>84</sup> Butkevich, *Tolstovstvo*, pp. 824–25.

<sup>85</sup> 1905. *Istoriia revoliutsionnogo dvizheniia* . . . , ed. M. N. Pokrovskii, I, p. 323.

<sup>86</sup> K. P. Pobedonostsev, 'Pis'mo Nikolaiu II', p. 272.

<sup>87</sup> S. P. Melgunov, 'Staryi grekh', *Russkie vedomosti*, 18 February 1907, pp. 4–5.

<sup>88</sup> On 8 August 1907 Tolstoi himself met Todosienko and was favourably impressed. When Chertkov reminded him that Todosienko was directly responsible for inciting the Pavlovtsy, Tolstoi did not believe it. See Makovitskii, *U Tolstogo, 1904–1910*, p. 475.

<sup>89</sup> *Zhizn'*, p. 297.

'rational' inclination, no doubt a minority, stood aloof. Among them were the real Tolstoyans, who were particularly close to Khilkov. According to Bonch-Bruevich, they too were taken by surprise by the violence and, as we have seen, played no part in it.<sup>90</sup>

For the rest, however, it is clear that they were stirred not only by the message, but by the extraordinary circumstances that accompanied it. The inexplicable release of Todosienko by the police and the sudden, hitherto unknown liberty to congregate in large numbers, both conspired to convince them that they were indeed on the threshold of a new era. Inspired by Pavlenko and assured of triumph, they marched in eager anticipation of the Kingdom of God. The presence of women and small children among them indicates that there was little expectation of violent confrontation. At the end of the day, however, their hopes were brutally shattered as reality reasserted itself in the form of forceful police intervention.

*Agent provocateur* or inflammatory preacher of revolution? The truth of Todosienko's role may never be known. Certainly weight can be attached to the suggestion of provocation, not least in the fact that the authorities appear to have deliberately 'lifted the lid' on a situation which they recognized, as early as 1897, to be potentially explosive. As an act of revolution the Pavlovki affair was quite out of character, the fruit of a militant minority. For all the potential for rebellion that Bonch-Bruevich saw there, the prospect of harnessing it to the cause was quite unrealistic. In terms of violent revolution there was really no threat from the majority of sectarians, particularly the Stundists, and Tolstoyans. Even among the Malevantsy, the radical element had faded out by 1905 and the sect as a whole tended towards non-violence.<sup>91</sup>

Any revolutionary significance of the Pavlovtsy lies not in this one act, but in their contribution with others over a long period to a general undermining of respect for authority.<sup>92</sup> This was a trend in which no small part was played by the authorities themselves in antagonizing and alienating many and driving them to desperate measures. By the time of Todosienko's arrival the ground was well prepared for the reception of his message. An open spirit of enquiry and dissent, at the heart of which was a fundamental challenge to authority, together with

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., p. 301. Tolstoi's letter to Khilkov of 7 November 1901 also brought news from Chertkov confirming that none of Khilkov's friends, and only two Stundists, were involved in the violence. Tolstoi, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, LXXIII, p. 159.

<sup>91</sup> F. I. Fedorenko, *Sekty, ikh vera i dela*, p. 124.

<sup>92</sup> It appears that Khilkov, following his return to Orthodoxy, also concluded that provocation was not to blame, but the destructive influence of sectarianism, and he acknowledged his own guilt in this. See M. A. Novoselov's introduction to *Pis'ma kniazia Dmitriia Aleksandrovicha Khilkova*, Sergiev Posad, 1915, p. 5. Novoselov was himself a former Tolstoyan turned Orthodox priest and missionary.

long pent-up feelings of impotence and frustration, made for a very volatile situation, which required only a spark.

Whatever the truth of Todosienko's role, it was all the same to the authorities. What is certain is that he did provide a not unwelcome opportunity for those in power to deal severely with the Pavlovtsy. Moreover, the affair provided evidence to support Pobedonostsev's argument that dissenters, and in this case particularly the Tolstoyans (so-called), remained a threat to Church and State. For a season, as we have seen, the upheavals of 1905 gave some hope that this opinion would bow to more enlightened views of toleration. Unfortunately, once the tide of revolution subsided and the authorities regained control, so the promises of freedom and toleration succumbed to the rediscovered confidence of autocracy. In the years of reaction that followed 1905, conservative elements, among the clergy and in government, continued to press for action against dissenters and long after the events of 1901 the case of the Pavlovtsy was cited as clear evidence of the revolutionary potential of the sects.<sup>93</sup>

<sup>93</sup> F. M. Putintsev, *Politicheskaia rol' i taktika sekt*, p. 74.