At dawn on 22 March 1882, two nameless revolutionaries were hanged within the walls of the Odessa prison. They had been convicted the previous day in a hastily arranged closed trial of the assassination on 18 March of Major General Strel'nikov, the police official given broad powers to combat revolutionary activity in the whole southern region of the Russian Empire. (The form of trial—military court, and the sentence—"to be carried out within twenty-four hours of conviction," had been specified in advance in an order by Tsar Alexander III himself, conveyed to local officials in Odessa by telegram on 19 March.) In their haste to punish a crime of such extreme gravity, the authorities did not delay even long enough to determine the identities of the assassins, who had refused under questioning to reveal their true names. As was subsequently determined, the two young men were Nikolai Zhelvakov, of upper-class background and a one-time auditor in the science faculty at St. Petersburg University, and Stepan Khalturin, recently a St. Petersburg worker. They had acted on the orders of the Executive Committee of the People's Will (Narodnaia Volia) Party in striking at the government figure who seemed to pose the main obstacle to the revolutionary movement in the South and

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whose arbitrary arrests and sadistic treatment of prisoners had roused local radicals to fury.

At first glance, the deed appears almost emblematic of the People's Will, so closely associated with the use of terror tactics in its fight against the tsarist autocracy. Yet, how did Khalturin, who had previously distinguished himself as a talented labor organizer, come to participate in this violent act? As we shall see, Khalturin was not the only worker who became a narodovol'sets, an adherent of the People's Will Party. The trail through the source material on the revolutionary movement of the 1880s (and into the 1890s) is studded with the names of workers—some well-known, others long forgotten—who, like Khalturin, were heavily involved in propaganda and organizing activity among workers, and at the same time were ready to fight in the most literal sense for the dual goal of the People's Will: the overthrow of the tsarist regime and the construction of a socialist society. The People's Will, like the revolutionary movement as a whole until the turn of the century, drew its support primarily from members of the upper classes. The fascinating story of People's Will activists from the working class has yet to be told. In this article, I wish to look more closely at worker narodovol'stsy as a distinctive contingent in the revolutionary movement of the 1880s and attempt to bring into relief their experiences and their role in the Russian revolutionary and workers' movements.

In examining the lives of these workers, we are drawn into a workers' revolutionary culture that began to develop in the 1870s, when the revolutionary movement first took root among workers in Russia's major cities. This political culture involved such elements as participation in workers' circles, reading and distributing propaganda literature, elements of conspiracy and illegality, contact with members of the revolutionary intelligentsia, and comradeship with other revolutionary workers. It manifested itself in new vocabulary and new ideas on topics ranging from the political system to factory exploitation. It often changed workers' relations with other workers and frequently, their appearance and behavior as well. (Observers often commented that "conscious" workers dressed like members of the intelligentsia; they gave up drinking, fistfights, and other pastimes of the lower classes.) Relations with family members, especially wives and mothers, were sometimes strained, as newly radicalized workers (overwhelmingly men in the 1870s and 1880s) renounced or ignored traditional religious beliefs and practices.3 The political culture of revolutionary workers overlapped with that of the revolutionary intelligentsia but was not identical to it. Among the factors separating the two

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