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***WRITING RESISTANCE REVOLUTIONARY MEMOIRS OF SHLISSEL'BURG PRISON, 1881-1906***, By Ayse Dietrich\*, Published by UCLPress, Edited and Translated by Sarah Young, Year of Publishing: 2021. Subject Area: Memoirs, Prison life, Russian Revolutionaries. Book Type: Russian History. Total Number of Pages: 251. ISBN: 978-1787359925, paperback, \$25.00.

This book is about the memoirs of the members of one branch called *People's Will* (Narodnaya volya) of the *Populist Movement* (Narodnik Movement) that conducted terrorist activities, and were imprisoned in Shlissel'burg Fortress between 1884 and 1905. Young is the editor and the translator of these memoirs.

Who were the Populists? After the emancipation of the serfs in 1861 under Tsar Alexander II and the dissatisfaction with it, the Populist Movement, which was a spontaneous and purely national socialist revolutionary movement, evolved among Russian intellectuals. The Populists respected the peasant commune, and believed that teaching the values of socialism would lead to the awakening of the masses and the liberalization of the tsarist regime. The Populists had a firm belief in the Russian peasants' readiness for revolution, and believed that revolutionary ideas would be easily propagated among them. The Revolutionaries ignored their differences over theoretical details and were united by their belief in the peasants' readiness for revolution.

The movement could hardly be called a mass movement. It was rather a collection of people who were determined to serve the people and were convinced that behind them marched a million peasants. However, the peasantry was not ready for action, and were still loyal to their "Father", the tsar. Therefore, the Populists began to turn their attention to the discontented proletariat in the towns.

The Populists took their name from the Russian word *narod* (people). From the late 1860s, they developed a movement called *going to the people* (khozhdenie v narod). This group advocated that the peasantry would be the source of social revolution. In the Populists' movement intellectuals, doctors, teachers and students dressed in peasant clothes travelled to the countryside to spread their

ideology and to encourage the peasantry to rise at once, and to check their loyalty. But the peasants easily identified the strangers and called the police. The Populists were arrested and put on trial.

The book is comprised of the memoirs of three prisoners who were convicted of revolutionary activities and terrorism, and confined to the maximum security prison at Shlissel'burg Fortress: the memoirs of Liudmila Volkenshtein, the memoirs of Mikhail Ashenbrenner and the memoirs of Vasili Pankratov. These memoirs were translated into English for the first time by Young.

The book contains four chapters. The first chapter includes editor's introduction in which Young states that in 1884, 68 prisoners convicted of terrorism and revolutionary activities were transferred to Shlissel'burg Fortress, and 18 of these prisoners who served sentences averaging over 15 years, wrote about their own and their fellow inmates' experiences in prison, and illustrated the harsh prison conditions. Young expresses the importance of these memoirs not only for the Russian revolutionary mythology but also for the development of the tradition of prison writing.

Young examines three texts written by Liudmila Volkenshtein (1857–1906), Mikhail Ashenbrenner (1842–1926) and Vasili Pankratov (1864–1925), not translated into English. She states that these texts also reveal the communal values, group identity, how the survivors resisted the harsh prison authorities to improve living conditions and their severe mental and physical deterioration in isolation, from which over half of them died.

In the second chapter, Young examines the memoirs of the prisoner Liudmila Aleksandrovna Volkenshtein written on the way to Sakhalin and her experiences in Shlissel'burg Fortress for 13 years. The first edition was published in Great Britain, and the second edition appeared in Berlin.

The author states that at first Volkenshtein received a death sentence, but later her sentence was reduced to 15 years' hard labor in Shlissel'burg Fortress in 1884. In 1896, Volkenshtein was transferred to Sakhalin Island, then to the Peter and Paul Fortress till March 1897, and finally she was sent to Odessa.

During the Russo-Japanese War in 1905, Volkenshtein was involved in a number of protests and died in the shooting on demonstrators on 10 (23) January 1906.

In the third chapter, Young examines the writings of the prisoner Mikhail Iul'evich Ashenbrenner who met some members of the People's Will in the mid-1870s and joined the military. Because of their radical plans, Ashenbrenner and his friends were betrayed and arrested. Ashenbrenner was sent to the Peter and Paul Fortress and sentenced to death, but later his sentence was reduced to life at hard labor, and transferred to Shlissel'burg Fortress in 1884. After spending 20 years in the prison, he was exiled to Smolensk in 1904, but he continued his revolutionary activities by assisting the Socialist Revolutionaries. He spent his final years in Moscow and died in 1926.

In the fourth chapter, Young examines the writings of the prisoner, Vasili Semenovich Pankratov who joined the People's Will in 1883. He received a death sentence, but it was commuted to 20 years' hard labor, and he was transferred to Shlissel'burg Fortress. Due to the coronation amnesty of 1896, his sentence was reduced by one third, and in 1898, he was exiled to Viliuisk. In 1903, he joined the Socialist Revolutionary Party (SR), and in 1905, he escaped from exile to return to Moscow. He joined the Moscow Uprising of 1905, and in 1907 he was sent back to Iakutsk for five

years. In 1909, he played an active role in the SR Party's Central Committee, and returned to Petersburg in 1912. After Lenin dissolved the Constituent Assembly and closed all the parties, he joined the opponents. After the SRs ended their opposition to the Bolsheviks in 1919, Pankratov began to support Admiral Kolchak to continue fighting against the Bolsheviks. The SR Party expelled him, and when the Civil War ended, Pankratov returned to Petrograd and became a member of the Society for Former Political Prisoners. He died in Leningrad in 1925.

The memoirs of these inmates presented in this book were active political members of the Populist Movement who spent many years of their lives in Shlissel'burg Fortress, and boldly and openly illustrated their experiences, sufferings, and their struggle to survive prison life. Young has made a great contribution to prison literature with her translations, and her work would be of interest to academicians, researchers and students who are interested in carceral life of political prisoners during the Soviet Union.

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