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## Nikolai Rubakin's Library for Revolutionaries

For almost forty years the private library of Nikolai Aleksandrovich Rubakin, located first in Baugy-sur-Clarens and subsequently in Lausanne, Switzerland, served as a major fund of Russian books in Western Europe, and it attracted many of the great figures of the Russian Revolution. Rubakin in turn welcomed every new reader; his motto, imprinted on his bookplates, declared: "Long live the book, a powerful weapon in the struggle for truth and justice." Upon his death in 1946 the Soviet Union inherited the collection, variously estimated at 80,000 to 100,000 volumes, and its departure represented a great blow to East European studies in the West.<sup>1</sup>

Rubakin actually collected two great libraries in his lifetime. His first, of over 100,000 volumes, he left behind when he emigrated from Russia in 1907; unfortunately the books were soon scattered and lost. Rubakin began his new collection in Switzerland in 1908 with a core of about 7,000 volumes. Through special arrangements with publishers and authors, and through trading and purchases, he added to it, and by 1920 the library included some 48,000 volumes.<sup>2</sup> Until the Bolshevik revolution Rubakin lived mainly from the royalties of his many publications, but in the early 1920s, deprived of this income, he even considered selling the library. In 1930 the Soviet government granted him a pension in return for which he willed his library to the USSR.

Rubakin's library was a part of a network of Russian libraries which developed in Switzerland before World War I. Many were modest local institutions such as the Russisches Leseverein in Zurich or the Bibliothèque Russe de Lausanne. The Leo Tolstoy library in Geneva, on the other hand, numbered some 18,000 volumes when it was turned over to the Bibliothèque Publique et Universitaire in 1918. The Bolsheviks, moreover, had their own

1. The books are now located in the Lenin Library in Moscow. Rubakin's archive, subsequently purchased by the Soviet government, is in the Manuscript Division of the same library, fond 358, and is referred to in this article as RA/carton no./unit no. See L. M. Ivanova, A. B. Sidorova, M. V. Charushnikova, "Arkiv N. A. Rubakina," *Zapiski Otdela rukopisei*, 26 (1963): 63-150. Rubakin has been the subject of three books in recent years: L. V. Razgon, *Pod shifrom "Rb"* (Moscow, 1966); A. N. Rubakin, *Rubakin: Lotsman knizhnogo moria* (Moscow, 1967); and K. G. Mavricheva, *N. A. Rubakin* (Moscow, 1972).

2. See E. P. Aref'eva, "N. A. Rubakin—kak knigosobiratel' i ego biblioteki v Sovetskom Soiuze," *Kniga: Issledovaniia i materialy*, 8 (1963): 377-400. For a criticism of Rubakin's methods in collecting books see K. M. Derunov, *Primernyi bibliotechnyi katalog* (St. Petersburg, 1908-11), pp. 153-58.

library in Geneva, founded at the turn of the century by G. A. Kuklin and subsequently run by V. A. Karpinsky, who on occasion sought Rubakin's advice on purchases and even exchanged duplicates. (After the Bolshevik revolution Karpinsky closed the library and returned to Russia.)

Because of his long-standing reputation as one of Russia's leading bibliographers, Rubakin held a unique place among these libraries, and his collection acquired added fame with the publication of his monumental work *Sredi knig* (*Among Books*), the first annotated Russian bibliography, in the years 1911–15.<sup>3</sup> In turn, the records of his library provide an interesting picture of the reading habits of the Russian émigrés of this period. The picture, of course, is incomplete in that it can offer nothing about the books which the readers bought or borrowed from other sources, but nevertheless a certain bibliographical profile of the emigration emerges.<sup>4</sup>

According to these records, no authors really dominated the tastes of Rubakin's visitors. An accurate count of the choices of the some 180 readers between 1913 and 1915 and about 240 from 1915 to 1917 is impossible, and in many cases the titles of the books borrowed cannot be determined. Nevertheless L. N. Tolstoy, I. S. Turgenev, and Émile Zola seem to have been the most popular novelists. (Those who chose Dostoevsky generally selected either *Idiot* or *Brat'ia Karamazovy*.) A. V. Amfiteatrov was probably the most popular current writer. V. O. Kliuchevsky's *Kurs russkoi istorii* was the most popular nonfiction work, but the works of the historian N. I. Kostomarov also enjoyed a significant readership. The most widely read economist was apparently Sergei Prokopovich. Journals in general demand included *Sovremennyi mir*, *Vestnik Evropy*, and *Russkaia mysl'*. The coming of war in 1914 was reflected in a heightened demand for Tolstoy's *Voina i mir* and also in a new, significant demand for P. N. Miliukov's study *Balkanskii krizis*.<sup>5</sup>

Among Rubakin's most frequent visitors was his close friend and neighbor Vera Figner, who had settled in Baugy after her release from Schlussemburg fortress. Figner displayed wide-ranging interests in her choice of reading material. Besides the intellectual journals such as *Vestnik Evropy*, *Sovremennyi mir*, *Byloe*, *Russkaia mysl'*, *Golos minuvshogo*, and *Prosveshchenie*,

3. *Sredi knig: Opyt obzora russkikh knizhnykh bogatstv v sviazi s istoriei nauchno-filosofskikh i literaturno-obshchestvennykh idei*, 2nd ed., 3 vols. (Moscow, 1911–15; reprinted Cambridge, 1973). The first edition was a list of books without "preliminary comments" in each section. See also M. V. Mashkova, *Istoriia russkoi bibliografii nachala XX veka (do oktiabria 1917 goda)* (Moscow, 1969), pp. 184–209.

4. RA/333/10–12.

5. Writing a decade later, Rubakin insisted that the increased demand for books on politics immediately after the outbreak of the war showed "to what degree the result of reading and of a book's influence depends not so much on the book being read as on the psychological and social characteristics of the readers." See "V. I. Lenin v Montre," MS, RA/157/13.

she borrowed works by persons of all political persuasions: *narodniki* and S.R.'s (Lavrov and Burtsev), anarchists (Kropotkin), and Social Democrats (Plekhanov, Bazarov, Bogdanov). Her choices in fiction included Przybyszewski, Dostoevsky, Chekhov, Strindberg, Ibsen, and the fairy tales of Andersen and the brothers Grimm.

G. V. Plekhanov made extensive use of the library in preparing his *Istoriia obshchestvennoi mysli v Rossii* (3 vols., Moscow, 1914–17). Although Rubakin usually refused to send his books out of the Montreux region, he made one of his several exceptions to this rule in Plekhanov's case, mailing books even to Italy. Plekhanov's borrowings included historical surveys (Tatishchev, Kostomarov, Kliuchevsky, Miliukov, Pokrovsky), various commentaries (Khomiakov, Pososhkov, Radishchev, Kotoshikhin, Olearius, Lomonosov, Kantemir), and numerous documentary publications.

Over the years a unique relationship developed between Rubakin and Plekhanov. Never really close friends, they worked together closely as Plekhanov edited certain sections of Rubakin's *Sredi knig*. Rubakin, once an S.R., now disclaimed any loyalty to a particular political ideology, and he was at times upset by Plekhanov's total devotion to Marxism. Nevertheless he respected Plekhanov's dedication: "One rarely meets people who can so love their work as Plekhanov did." Of Plekhanov's personality, he declared, "They said of Plekhanov that he could hate; yes, but hate principles and not people."<sup>6</sup> Plekhanov in turn displayed high regard for Rubakin. In 1912, on the occasion of Rubakin's twenty-fifth anniversary as a writer, he wrote, "I hasten to congratulate you, whom writing has certainly provided many happy minutes, and also to congratulate Russian literature (this latter, however, only mentally), which has, in your person, such a talented, honest and industrious worker." While working on his history of social thought, Plekhanov wrote to Rubakin, "I sometimes say to myself: I hope that Nikolai Aleksandrovich will approve of my work. In truth, your praise will be a fine reward for me." In 1915, upon receiving the first three copies of his second volume from the publisher, Plekhanov immediately sent one to Rubakin with his compliments.<sup>7</sup>

Qualifying as among the most widely read of the better-known revolutionaries frequenting the library would have to be D. Z. Manuilsky-Bezrabotny, Feliks Kon, and G. I. Brilliant-Sokolnikov. Brilliant, later a Soviet negotiator at Brest-Litovsk and a hero of the Bolshevik campaigns in Central Asia, did not borrow as many books as the other two, but his range of selec-

6. N. A. Rubakin, "Velikie figury russkoi revoliutsii," MS, RA/159/5. See also M. V. Mashkova, "G. V. Plekhanov i 'Sredi knig' N. A. Rubakina," *Sovetskaia bibliografiia*, 1963, no. 6, pp. 83–101.

7. See Plekhanov's letters to Rubakin, undated, RA/263/30; and undated and July 14, 1915, RA/263/31.

tions included Tarle on the continental blockade, a number of economic works (including Ricardo, Stillech, and Sieveking), books on theory of literacy and on child psychology, and also fiction by Oscar Wilde. Kon, who eventually became Rubakin's secretary in 1916–17, read Leskov, Kipling, Dickens, Strindberg, Aleksei Tolstoy, Amfiteatrov, Kostomarov, and Kareev, as well as the noted Menshevik study on social movements in nineteenth-century Russia. On March 26, 1917, just before his departure for Russia in Lenin's company, Kon borrowed one book each by Martov, Dan, and Lenin. Manuilsky had edited the Social Democratic newspapers *Golos* and *Nashe slovo* in Paris before coming to Switzerland in the summer of 1915. Curiously, when introducing himself to Rubakin, Manuilsky first used the name of G. A. Aleksinsky, a well-known Russian defensist, as a reference, but in Rubakin's records Manuilsky was listed as having been recommended by A. A. Troianovsky, a Bolshevik then living in Baugy.<sup>8</sup> Manuilsky borrowed a great many periodicals, Danilevsky's *Rossia i Evropa*, and works by Rubakin, Ivanov-Razumnik, Belinsky, Gradovsky, Bauer, Struve, Dostoevsky, Bakunin, Turgenev, Lemke, and Agafanov. Given a job by the Ukrainian Information Bureau in Lausanne, he also chose a number of works concerning the Ukraine. Other noteworthy selections charged to him included the publications of the International Socialist Commission in Bern, works on the history of religion, *Izvestiia* (a Menshevik newspaper published in Switzerland during the war), the defensist anthology *Samozashchita*, and the records of the Russian State Duma.

No visitor, no matter how famous, could escape Rubakin's rules on the treatment of books. When he was sent a complaint by Rubakin's secretary, Plekhanov protested that the book in question had been damaged before he had received it; nevertheless, in order to maintain his good standing at the library, he offered to pay the cost of repairing the book. A particularly unrepentant recidivist in marking up borrowed books was Anatole Lunacharsky, with whom Rubakin had more than one argument. Rubakin objected in particular to the Russian habit of licking a finger to turn a page.

Rubakin's records showed a remarkably strong representation of Bolsheviks among his readers. The local Bolshevik colony in Baugy borrowed books regularly, and they indicated a strong preference for belles-lettres. (Possibly they obtained their political literature through party channels.) Nikolai Krylenko, later Soviet chief of staff, borrowed Tolstoy's *Voina i mir* as well as books by Strindberg and Dumas. For history and politics he selected Kornilov, Jaurès, I. M. Kulisher, and L. B. Kafengauz. In the spring of 1915 he borrowed socialist literature: Bebel, Luxemburg, and Kautsky. Obviously inves-

8. On the relationship between Manuilsky and Aleksinsky see Alfred Erich Senn, "The Politics of *Golos* and *Nashe Slovo*," *International Review of Social History*, 17 (1972): 675–704.

tigating the national question, he also took works by Otto Bauer and Leon Wasilewski.

A. A. Troianovsky, later Soviet ambassador to the United States, seems to have read more than anyone else in the Bolshevik colony. His selections included *Voina i mir* and also Tolstoy's *Kreitserova sonata*, as well as works by Zola, Hugo, Schiller, Merezhkovsky, and Heine. His political and historical selections consisted of Miliukov, Dragomanov, Burtsev, Kornilov, Platonov, Marx, Kucharzewski, Plekhanov, Sukhanov, and Pokrovsky. He also borrowed several textbooks on algebra.

Elena Rozmirovich, who provided a great deal of money for the Bolshevik cause, displayed a more romantic streak, borrowing Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* (as well as some of his other works), Turgenev, Byron, Zola, Goethe, Chekhov, Homer, and Mark Twain. One of her last selections of record was Marx's *Critique of Political Economy*.

Lenin is known to have visited Rubakin's library,<sup>9</sup> but there is no record of his having borrowed books. In the winter of 1914–15, G. E. Zinoviev made requests from Bern, using two addresses—Distelweg 11 (Lenin's) and Freiestrasse 15. Zinoviev's requests were purely political: Miliukov on the Balkans, two works by Parvus, and an edition of letters by Marx and Engels. At the beginning of 1917, Krupskaja, who had known Rubakin since 1890, made a series of requests for books on pedagogy, obviously in connection with her own work.

Of the other Bolsheviks who spent all or part of the war years in Switzerland, Nikolai Bukharin chose mainly historical and economic studies, including the first volume of Marx's *Capital*, Pavlovich, Sieveking, Stillich, Nazarevsky, and Filipov. G. A. Usievich manifested a strong taste for French fiction, borrowing Prévost, Maupassant, and George Sand. His other selections included Gippius, Twain, Chekhov, and Tolstoy; for nonfiction he read Sukhanov's brochure *Nashe levye gruppy i voina*. A. V. Lunacharsky, the future People's Commissar of Enlightenment, proved a voracious reader. For fiction he chose Dostoevsky, Goethe, Turgenev, and Tolstoy's *Voina i mir*. His other selections included his own work, Montessori, Pogodin, and Pokrovsky. His range of subjects included books on philosophy, psychiatry, Polish literature, contemporary government, and a work entitled *Fazy ljubvi*. G. A. Aleksinsky, a renegade Bolshevik who became a leading defensist during the war, used the library to document his case against the German-backed Union for the Liberation of the Ukraine. His other selections included Miliukov, Nekrasov, Parvus, Vladimir Soloviev, and Danilevsky. In December 1914, while working on his

9. See A. N. Rubakin, *Nad rekoiu vremeni* (Moscow, 1966), pp. 60–62.

book *Russia and the War* (London, 1915), he borrowed an English-Russian dictionary.

No other political grouping rivaled the Bolsheviks' use of the library. The S.R.'s were represented only by veteran émigrés such as Figner and E. E. Lazarev. The only Menshevik of note among the visitors was S. Iu. Semkovsky, who selected his own work, Rubakin, Kliuchevsky, Marx, Kornilov, Miliukov, Kareev, Lermontov, Merezhkovsky, Chekhov, Pogodin, Bakunin, Piltz, Goethe, Tolstoy, Kant, and Freud.

Among Rubakin's other well-known guests were Sholom Aleichem, who borrowed a book on the press; Anatole France, who selected several works on the Russian revolutionary movement including Miliukov's *La crise russe*; and Igor Stravinsky, who chose books on Russian and German history one time and on Shakespeare another time.

In all, one is struck by the large amount of fiction, both Russian and foreign, which the émigrés read. In their nonfiction selections they chose a remarkably high proportion of works by nonsocialist authors. From our present-day vantage point, moreover, Lenin's works are noteworthy for their absence, especially since Lenin himself was in Switzerland from September 1914 until April 1917.

Rubakin welcomed readers of all sorts—academics, intellectuals, and even readers seeking only popular, sensational literature (the latter in the hope they would mature). He always displayed a remarkable aptitude for maintaining good relations with persons of the most contradictory and antipathetic views. In his preface to *Sredi knig* he explicitly enunciated his concern for what brought people together rather than what divided them. Although he even organized his own sort of political salon, meeting for literary and musical evenings, his library represented no distinct political orientation. Rubakin's efforts were directed toward meeting the needs of his readers, toward matching the book to the borrower.