

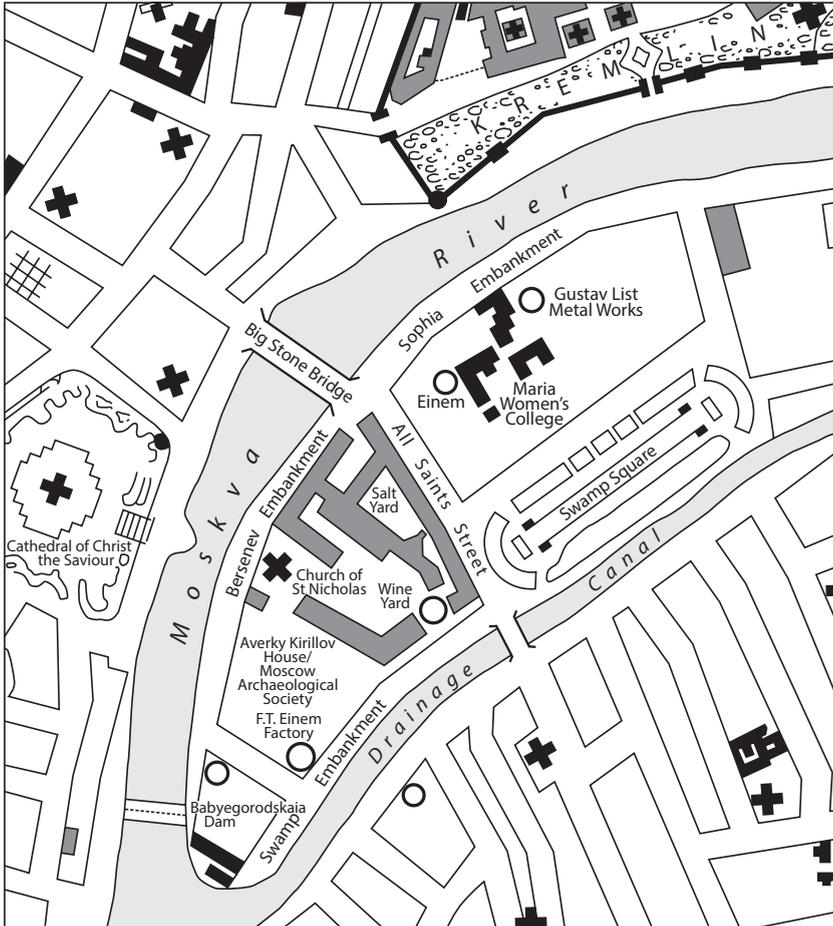
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THE SWAMP

Moscow was founded on the high left bank of the river it was named after. The wide-open and frequently invaded “Trans-Moskva” fields on the right side gradually filled up with quarters of coopers, weavers, shearers, carters, soldiers, blacksmiths, interpreters, and tribute-collectors, but the floodplain just opposite the Kremlin remained a chain of swamps and marshy meadows. In 1495, Ivan III decreed that all buildings along the right bank of the river be torn down and replaced by Royal Gardens. The gardens were planted and, under Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich, neatly landscaped, but the mud kept creeping in. The Middle Garden was bounded on the west by the Boloto (“swamp” in Russian); on the east by the Balchug (“swamp” in Turkic); and on the south by nameless puddles and lakes. The construction of the All Saints Stone Bridge in 1693 transformed the old southern crossing into a causeway lined with shops, taverns, and warehouses (including the Royal Wool Yard and Royal Wine and Salt Yard). After the fire of 1701, the gardens were abandoned, and one part of the swamp began to be used as a market square and a place for recreational fistfighting, fireworks displays, and public executions.¹

After the spring flood of 1783, the Vodootvodnyi (or “Drainage”) Canal was built along the southern edge of the Moskva floodplain. The embankments were reinforced; the perpendicular ditches became alleys; and the former Royal Gardens were transformed into a crescent-shaped, densely populated island. The fire of 1812, which smoked Napoleon out of Moscow, destroyed most of the buildings and drove away most of the residents. The new structures—including inns, schools, factories, and merchant mansions—were largely built of stone. The Babyegorodskaia Dam at the western tip of the island made the canal navigable and floods less frequent. Next to the dam, on the Kremlin side, arose the Cathedral of Christ the Savior, consecrated in 1883 and dedicated “to the eternal memory of the unrivaled diligence, loyalty, and love of Faith and Fatherland, with which, in those difficult times, the Russian people acquitted themselves, and in commemoration of Our gratitude to the Divine Providence that saved Russia from the calamity that threatened to befall it.”²

On the eve of World War I, the western section of the island (“the Swamp”) was dominated and partially owned by the F. T. Einem Chocolate, Candy, and Cookie Factory, famous for its Dutch cocoa, bridal baskets, colorful marzipan figures, and “Fall in Love with Me” chocolate cakes.



The Swamp

Founded in 1867 by two German entrepreneurs who made their fortune selling syrups and jams to the Russian army, the factory had several steam engines, brand new hydraulic presses, and the title of official supplier of the Imperial Court. Its director, Oskar Heuss (the son of one of the co-founders), lived nearby in a large, two-story house with bathrooms on both floors, a greenhouse, and a big stable. On the opposite side of the courtyard were apartments for the factory's engineers (mostly Germans), doctors' assistants, married and unmarried employees, housekeepers, and coachmen, as well as a library, laundry, and several dormitories and cafeterias for the workers. The factory was known for its high wages, good working conditions, amateur theater, and active police-sponsored mutual aid fund. Sunday lunches included a shot of vodka or half bottle of beer; boarders under sixteen received free clothing, sang in a choir, worked in



View of the Swamp from the Kremlin.
The Cathedral of Christ the Savior is on the far right.



View of the Einem Factory from the Cathedral of Christ the Savior

the store (for about eleven hours a day), and had an 8:00 p.m. curfew. About half the workers had been there for more than fifteen years; the hardest work was done by day laborers, mostly women.³

To the west of the chocolate factory were army barracks, a collection of shops, and, on the island's "Arrowhead," the Moscow Sailing Club. To the east was the seventeenth-century residence of the Duma clerk Averky Kirillov, which contained the Moscow Archaeological Society, and the Church of St. Nicholas the Miracle Worker, which contained the remains of Averky Kirillov. The deacons, sextons, psalm-readers, holy bread bakers, and priests (Father Orlov and Father Dmitriev) all lived in the churchyard, alongside dozens of lodgers and the wards of St. Nicholas Almshouse.⁴

According to Nikolai Bukharin, who grew up a short walk away on Bolshaia Ordynka Street, the Trans-Moskva churches were usually full.



Sailing Club



Averky Kirillov Residence

In the front stood the merchants' wives, rustling their silk skirts and blouses and crossing themselves with plump, rosy fingers, while, beside them, their husbands prayed gravely and fervently. Farther back one could see household dependents and poor relations: old women in black, God-fearing gossips, matchmakers, keepers of the family hearth, aunts with nieces still hoping for bridegrooms and swooning from fat and longing, confidantes, and housemaids. The government officials and their wives stood nearby looking fashionable. And at the back, pressing together as they stood or knelt, were exhausted laborers, waiting for consolation and salvation from the all-merciful God, our Savior. But the Savior remained silent as he looked sadly down at the hunched bodies and bent backs. . . . Joking and laughing a little nervously, young boys and girls spat on their fingertips and tried to put each other's candles out. As the candles sputtered, they would snicker, then stifle their laughter under the stern gaze of the grown-ups. Here and there, lovers could be seen exchanging glances. The porch was full of wall-eyed beggars in pitiful rags, with turned-up eyelids and stumps instead of hands and feet; the blind, lame, and holy fools for Christ's sake.⁵

Most of them lived close by. Next to the church, along the Drainage Canal (also known as the Ditch), and all around the chocolate factory were courtyards filled with wooden or stone buildings with assorted annexes, mezzanines, wings, porches, basements, and lofts. Inside were apartments, rooms, "small chambers," and "corners with cots" inhabited by a motley mix of people who might or might not attend the Mass celebrated by Father Orlov and Father Dmitriev. A sixteen-year-old factory apprentice, Semen Kanatchikov, who lived in the neighborhood in the second half of the 1890s and went to Mass regularly before converting to socialism, described his building as a "huge stone house with a courtyard that looked like a large stone well. Wet linens dangled from taut clotheslines all along



Church of St. Nicholas the Miracle Worker



View of Bersenev Embankment from the dam



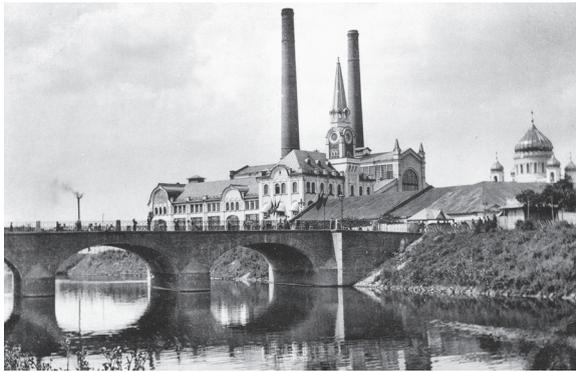
View of Trans-Moskva from the Ditch

the upper stories. The courtyard had an acrid stench of carbolic acid. Throughout the courtyard were dirty puddles of water and discarded vegetables. In the apartments and all around the courtyard people were crowding, making noise, cursing.” Kanatchikov lived in one of those apartments with about fifteen other men from his native region, who shared the rent. “Some were bachelors, others had wives who lived in the villages and ran their households.”⁶

Next to the church of St. Nicholas was the Ivan Smirnov and Sons’ Vodka Factory, owned by Ivan’s grandson, Sergei Sergeevich Smirnov, and famous for its brightly labeled bottles of cheap alcohol—made, as one government commission charged, from low-quality moonshine distilled by Tula Province peasants. At the end of the block, between the Smirnov Factory and All Saints Street, was the former Wine and Salt Yard, which



Entrance to the Wine and Salt Yard



The power station



House next to the power station

housed the Moscow Assembly of Justices of the Peace, the office and residence of the city's sewage administrator, a water-supply office, several stone warehouses (including three for apples and one for eggs), and the Main Electric Tram Power Station, crowned by two chimneys and a little tower with a spire.⁷

The All Saints Bridge, commonly known as the Big Stone Bridge (even though it had been mostly metal since 1858), was a gathering place for pilgrims, vagrants, and beggars—except for the first week of Lent, when the surrounding area became the city's largest mushroom market. According to newspaper reports, mushrooms—dried and pickled—predominated, but there were also “mountains of bagels and white radishes,” “lots of honey, preserves, cheap sweets, and sacks of dried fruit,” and “long rows of stalls with crockery, cheap furniture, and all sorts of plain household utensils.” One could hear “the shouting, laughter, whistling, and not-so-Lenten joking of thousands of people, many of them still hungover from the Shrovetide feast.” “People waded through muddy slush, but no



Big Stone Bridge



Mushroom market by the Big Stone Bridge

one seems to notice. Pranksters stomp on puddles, in order to splash the women with dirt. There are quite a few pickpockets, who try to start stampedes.”⁸

Across the road from the Wine and Salt Yard and next to the Birliukovskaia Hermitage, stood the Chapel of St. Nicholas the Miracle Worker, with two small wings that housed the monks’ rooms, a drapery, and a vegetable stall. Next to the chapel were several pubs, a cheap bathhouse doubling as a brothel, and several former Wool Yard buildings filled with crowded apartments and shops occupied by various tradesmen, including a dyer, hairdresser, tinsmith, cobbler, seamstress, embroiderer, dressmaker, and “phonographer.”⁹

Farther along the embankment, facing the Kremlin but partially hidden from view by tall trees in the front yard, was the three-story Maria Women’s College, dedicated to “using the students’ talents not only for the education of the mind, but also for the education of the heart and character.” Most of the heart’s education took place in the music rooms on the first floor between the administration office and the dining hall. From 1894 to 1906, one of the instructors at the college was Sergei Rachmaninoff, who did not like teaching but needed the exemption from military service that came with it. According to one of his students, upon entering the classroom, Rachmaninoff, who was twenty-three at the time, “would sit down at his desk, pull out his handkerchief, wipe his face with it for a long time, rest his head on his fingers, and, usually without looking up, call on a pupil and ask her to recite her lesson.” One morning he walked out of the class because his students had not done their homework. He wrote to the principal to apologize: “I am generally a bad teacher, but today I was also unpardonably ill-tempered. If I had known that my pupils would have to pay for my behavior, I would not have allowed myself to act in such a way.” Perhaps as penance, Rachmaninoff composed his Six Choruses for Women’s or Children’s Voices, op. 15, and also played at several school performances.¹⁰



Maria Women's College



Sergei Rachmaninoff in 1904

Behind the school was the sprawling Gustav List Metal Works, which employed more than a thousand workers and produced steam engines, fire hydrants, and water pipes, among other things. Gustav List himself lived above the factory office in a large apartment with a winter garden. He had arrived from Germany in 1856, worked as a mechanic at the Voronezh Sugar Mill, started his Moscow factory in 1863, and turned it into a joint-stock company in 1897.¹¹

The factory's shops, warehouses, and dormitories took up the rest of the block. Semen Kanatchikov worked in the "aristocratic" pattern workshop. "Most of the pattern-makers were urban types—they dressed neatly, wore their trousers over their boots, wore their shirts 'fantasia' style, tucked into their trousers, fastened their collars with a colored lace instead of a necktie, and on holidays some of them even wore bowler hats. . . . They used foul language only when they lost their tempers and in extreme situations, or on paydays, when they got drunk, and not even all of them at that."¹²

In the foundry, where the finished patterns ended up, "dirty, dark-colored people, whose blackened, soot-covered faces revealed only the whites of their eyes, rummaged like moles in the earth and dust of the earthen floor." To the roar of the "enormous lifting cranes and turning gears," the "heavy fire-red stream of molten pig iron spewed forth large blazing sparks and illuminated the dark faces of the smelters standing by. . . . The heat near the pots and the furnaces was unbearable and the clothes of the smelters would repeatedly catch fire and have to be doused with water."¹³

When Kanatchikov first arrived at the plant, the workday was eleven and a half hours, not counting overtime night shifts during the busy fall and winter seasons, but after the St. Petersburg weavers' strike of 1896, List introduced the ten-hour day. Most workers, both the "urban types" and the "peasants" (who "wore high boots, traditional cotton-print blouses girdled with a sash, had their hair cut 'under a pot,' and wore beards that



Gustav List Metal Works

were rarely touched by a barber's hand"), lived in and around the Swamp. When they were not working, they drank Smirnov vodka; brawled at weddings; told funny stories about priests; fished in the Moskva and the Ditch; consorted with local prostitutes; courted stocking-knitters, milliners, and cooks in the Alexander Garden next to the Kremlin; read crime chronicles, serialized novels, and Christian and socialist tracts; attended church services and various conspiratorial meetings; staged bloody fistfights on the frozen river by the dam (usually with the Butikov textile workers from across the river); and visited the nearby Tretyakov Gallery of Russian Art, Imperial Museum of Russian History, and Rumiantsev Museum (of just about everything). On Sundays, museum admission was free, but the most popular "free spectacles," according to Kanatchikov, were Moscow fires, which, "no matter how tired," the workers "would run at breakneck speed to see."¹⁴

Twice a month, on Saturday paydays, most of Kanatchikov's housemates "indulged in wild carousing. Some, as soon as they had collected their pay, would go directly from the factory to beer halls, taverns, or to some grassy spot, whereas others—the somewhat more dandified types—first went back to the apartment to change their clothes." On the following Mondays, the "sufferers . . . with swollen red faces and glazed eyes" would treat their hangovers with shots of alcohol-based varnish kept in a special tin can. "After lunch half the shop would be drunk. Some would loaf on other people's workbenches; others would sit it out in the lavatory. Those whose morning-after drinking had gone too far went to sleep in the drying room or in the shop shed."¹⁵

East of the Gustav List Metal Works was the "Renaissance" mansion of the sugar millionaire, Kharitonenko, with Gothic interiors by Fedor Schechtel and a large gallery of Russian art. Between Gustav List and the Ditch was the Swamp proper: a large square filled with long sheds, filled with small shops, filled with all kinds of things, mostly edible. In late summer and early fall, the space between the sheds became Moscow's largest farmers' market. Every night, the dealers would gather in Afanasyev's tea room to agree on prices. At about two in the morning, they would come out to greet the arriving peasants, and, according to one newspaper report, each would "walk unhurriedly along the line of carts, glancing indifferently at the mountains of berries. Having made a choice, he would name a price and, if the peasant began to object, would shrug and walk away, lighting up a cigarette." In the ensuing haggling, "various numbers, promises, oaths, and jokes would be jumbled together, passed on, and spread around the square." At sunrise, the peasants would leave, the selling of berries to the public would begin, and, "as if by magic, everything would come alive and turn bright and cheerful. . . . There was so much of everything that one could not help wondering about the size and appetite of Moscow's belly, which, day after day, devoured these gifts of the Swamp quite casually—a mere tasty morsel or idle amusement."¹⁶



Swamp Square, view from the Kremlin



Swamp market

Later in the day, the berries would be replaced by mushrooms, vegetables, and, on holidays, promenaders and tavern regulars. The inhabitants of “the hovels where naked children crawled amidst soiled rags and which smelled of untreated leather, sauerkraut, the outhouse, and dank mold” would, in Nikolai Bukharin’s words, “spill out onto the streets or suffocate in the fumes of taverns and bars with red and blue signs that read ‘Beer-hall with Garden’ or, in fancy script, ‘The “Meeting of Friends” Inn.’ Waiters, in jackets that were white in name only, would scurry around through the smoke while in the background, a ‘music machine’ played, glasses clinked, an accordion wailed, and a voice sang mournful, heart-rending songs. And this motley, mixed-up world was full of moaning, brawling, drinking, screaming, hugging, fighting, kissing, and crying.”¹⁷

■ ■ ■

The state, through a variety of offices and officials, did its best to regulate and sanitize the life of the Swamp and the rest of the city. It inspected the goods sold at the markets and the products manufactured at the Einem, Smirnov, and List factories; repaired the streets, sidewalks, and embank-

ments (the Bersenev and Sophia ones were among the best maintained in the city); fished the bodies of drunks and suicides out of the Ditch; counted every door, window, and tenant for taxation and surveillance purposes; supplied running water, gas, and electricity, along with detailed sign-up and use regulations; installed Gustav List fire hydrants every one hundred meters and put out fires (increasingly using telephones rather than fire towers for signaling the alarm); created a sewage system and, in 1914, made its use compulsory for property owners (who were to collect reports of any “foul odor emanating from water closets and pissoirs”); drained water out of flooded areas and transported solid trash to special dumps; carved, stored, and sorted meat at municipal slaughterhouses; issued numbered badges for cab drivers and enforced parking and traffic regulations; administered the growing streetcar network, powered by electricity that was generated on the site of the former Wine and Salt Yard (using Baku oil brought by rail and water to a special tank by the Simonov Monastery and pumped to the Swamp through an underground pipeline); delivered letters, parcels, and telegrams; replaced kerosene street lamps with gas burners and, in front of Christ the Savior Cathedral and along tram lines, with electric lighting; obligated landlords to cart off their dirty snow beyond the city limits and hire janitors and night guards (who doubled as police agents); planted trees and kept up city parks complete with gazebos, pavilions, and concert stages; built, funded, and staffed most of the schools; paid for about one half of the city’s hospital beds; supervised and censored performances and publications; ran foundling homes, almshouses, workhouses, and poor relief offices; and required that all duly classified imperial subjects be registered at their place of residence and that all births, deaths, and marriages be recorded by the appropriate religious authorities. (In order to be allowed to marry his cousin, Rachmaninoff had to procure a written certificate confirming that he had been to confession, find a priest who was willing to risk the displeasure of the Holy Synod, and receive special permission from the tsar.)¹⁸

The modern state, more or less by definition, does too much or not enough; its many services are both intrusions and entitlements. Early-twentieth-century Russia was not a modern state because its services could not keep up with its industrializing efforts (Moscow was one of the fastest-growing cities in the world, with new immigrants, mostly peasant men like Kanatchikov, making up about 70 percent of the population) and because most bureaucratic rules were seen as optional or negotiable by both citizens and bureaucrats (Sergei Rachmaninoff took care of his incest problem by obtaining his confession certificate without ever going to confession, celebrating his wedding in the barracks chapel of the Sixth Grenadier Regiment, and receiving a note from the tsar that said: “whatever God has bound together, may no man tear asunder”). But mostly, late imperial Russia was not a modern state because it never quite recognized that its services were fulfillments of inalienable rights or that its subjects were

responsible citizens (that is, individuals actively complicit in their own nationalization). It never tried to claim, with any degree of conviction, that Russians had a part in building up their state, a stake in its continued growth, and a self-generated desire, however ambivalent, to keep asking for more institutional intrusions.¹⁹

Instead, the imperial state continued to create more unacknowledged rights while disciplining as many potential usurpers as possible. On the eve of World War I, Moscow was the most policed city in Europe (with about 278 residents per policeman compared with 325 in Berlin, 336 in Paris, and 442 in Vienna). The Yakimanka Police Station, which included the Swamp, kept records of all resident foreigners, Jews, students, cabmen, workers, and unemployed, among others, as well as “commercial, inn-keeping, factory, and artisanal establishments.” In addition to routine reporting and recording, police agents were to describe the “mood” of particular groups of people (especially those likely to “have a bad effect on their coworkers”); encourage residents to put out flags on public holidays; and “keep a close watch” on all “persons placed under open or secret police surveillance.” Under “characteristic traits” in the police registration books, some of these persons were described as “quick-tempered”; others, as “talkative”; and still others—the majority—as “contemplative.” The harder the police worked, the more quick-tempered, talkative, and contemplative their wards became.²⁰

In September 1905, the Gustav List workers were among the first in Moscow to go on strike and to demand civil liberties and “personal inviolability” along with improved working conditions. After a rally on the Sophia Embankment, approximately three hundred of them walked over to the Einem Chocolate Factory and forced it to shut down. In November 1905, the Einem mechanical shop was turned into a weapons stockpile as workers made knives and daggers in the expectation of a “St. Bartholomew’s Night” (which, according to an early Soviet oral historian, they understood as “a general slaughter”). There was sporadic shooting and barricade building in December 1905; more strikes in 1906 and 1913; a disastrous flood in April 1908 that made most of the basements uninhabitable; and massive anti-German riots in 1915 that involved a pogrom at the Einem factory and the destruction of six of its candy stores in the city. The Swamp and the rest of Russia were becoming quick-tempered, talkative, and contemplative to the exclusion of all other dispositions. The state’s expectations and classifications (the “peasant” Kanatchikov, the “nobleman” Rachmaninoff) had little to do with what most people actually did or imagined; church truths (from the divinity of autocracy to the efficacy of confession) were routinely questioned and ridiculed; the new institutions that organized economic life (including the large foreign-owned factories such as List and Einem) had trouble attaching themselves to any existing representation of virtuous living; the new system of railway lines with its center in northern Moscow (along with the new industrial and commercial

districts gravitating toward it) clashed with the old street diagram radiating from the Kremlin; and high literature (increasingly remote from the mass-produced kind) had mostly forsaken its job of providing meaningful connections between “once upon a time” and “happily ever after.” Russia was not the only casualty of industrialization’s encounter with the fin-de-siècle, but the ancien régime’s rigidity made its plight seem universal and revelatory. The empire was crawling with prophets, soothsayers, and itinerant preachers. Everyone seemed to believe that the world was sick and would not last much longer.²¹

In addition to the orthodox Orthodox, who tended to read more devotional literature, go on more pilgrimages, and report more miraculous healings and apparitions than they had half a century earlier, there were the newly literate proletarian writers, who wrote about the “chains of suffering” and the coming deliverance; the Ioannites, who venerated Father John of Kronstadt as the herald of the coming apocalypse; the Brethren, who preached personal redemption through temperance, sobriety, and charismatic spiritualism; the Tolstoyans, who foresaw a universal moral transformation through vegetarianism and nonviolence; the Dukhobors, who resisted the growing demands for conscription and civil registration by emigrating to Canada with the help of the Tolstoyans (and their brethren, the Quakers); the Baptists, who proselytized vigorously and successfully in behalf of the priesthood of all believers; the Socialist Revolutionaries, who believed in the Russian peasant as both the instrument and principal beneficiary of universal emancipation; the Social Democrats (divided into the Bolsheviks, Mensheviks, and a variety of short-lived subsets, including the God-builders), who believed in the redemptive mission of the urban working class; the Anarchists, who expected free individuals to create a world without coercion; the Decadents, who had “the sense, both oppressive and exalting, of being the last of a series”; and the Symbolists, who approached “every object and phenomenon,” including their own lives, “from the point of view of its ultimate state, or in the light of the future world” (as Vladimir Solovyov put it).²²

In and around the Swamp, everyone was a Symbolist. Nikolai Bukharin’s favorite book, as a ten-year-old, was the Book of Revelation—“its solemn and obscure mood, cosmic cataclysms, the archangels’ trumpets, the resurrection of the dead, the Beast, the last days, the Whore of Babylon, the magic vials.” After reading Solovyov’s “The Tale of the Antichrist,” he felt “shivers run down his spine” and rushed off to find his mother to ask if she was a harlot. Aleksandr Voronsky, a Tambov priest’s son who lived in an attic above a Trans-Moskva holy bread bakery and taught Marxism to leather workers in a basement next to the church gate, “kept repeating” the verses he had memorized as an adolescent—about the divine gift of an “undivided heart” and the kind of “inspiring hatred” that engenders “the powerful, ferocious, and monstrous hymns of vengeance and retribution”: “They will plunder your wealth and loot your merchandise; they will break

down your walls and demolish your fine houses and throw your stones, timber and rubble into the sea. I will put an end to your noisy songs, and the music of your harps will be heard no more.”²³

Nikolai Fedorov, who worked as a librarian in the Rumiantsev Museum, proposed a practical plan to resurrect the dead and institute the reign of “complete and perfect kinship”; Semen Kanatchikov, who went to the Rumiantsev Museum “to look at pictures,” discovered that soon “everything would become the common property of the toilers”; Alexander Scriabin (Rachmaninoff’s classmate at the Moscow Conservatory) set out to write a work of art to end all life as well as all art; and Rachmaninoff himself based his First Symphony (composed and performed when he was a teacher at the Maria Women’s College) on “Dies irae,” a thirteenth-century Latin hymn about the Last Judgment. César Cui probably did not know how right he was when he began his review of the first performance with the words: “If there were a conservatory in Hell, and if one of its gifted students received the assignment to write a programmatic symphony on ‘the seven plagues of Egypt’ . . .”²⁴

The conservatory (a short walk from the Sophia Embankment across the Big Stone Bridge and past the Rumiantsev Museum) was not the only doomed institution in Moscow, and the symphony about the coming plagues was not Rachmaninoff’s only endeavor. While he was working on the First Symphony about the last days (op. 13) and the Six Choruses for his Maria College students (op. 15), he also wrote a song (op. 14, no. 11) that soon became “a symbol of social awakening” and a popular anthem of hope and redemption. The lyrics, originally written around 1829, were by Fedor Tyutchev, one of the Symbolists’ favorite poets.²⁵

The fields are still white with snow,
But the streams are astir with the clamor of spring.
They flow and awaken the somnolent shores
They flow and sparkle and proclaim . . .

They proclaim to the four corners of the world:
“Spring is on its way, spring is on its way!
We are the young spring’s messengers,
She has sent us on ahead!

Spring is on its way, spring is on its way,
And, crowding merrily behind her,
Is the red-cheeked, bright dancing circle
Of the quiet, warm days of May.”

On May 12, 1904, the police intercepted a letter from a certain “Y” in Nizhnii Novgorod to S. P. Mironycheva, a resident of the “Dormitory for Female Students” on the Sophia Embankment. Referring as much to Rach-



Spring flooding in the Swamp (1908)

maninoff's song as to Nikolai Dobroliubov's 1860 essay, "When Will the Real Day Finally Come?," the author urges his correspondent not to give in to despair: "Let this be a momentary concession to a time of uncertainty, oppression, and doubt. Surely, even now, the coming renewal is capable of lifting up the best people of our time toward energy and faith. The real day is coming, after all. It is coming—noisy and tempestuous, sweeping away everything weak, feeble, and old. . . . The dawn, which sheds its fantastic, enchanting, and transparent light over everything and everyone, is near."²⁶

It is not clear whether the police agent who read the letter knew that "Y" was Yakov Sverdlov, a nineteen-year-old gymnasium dropout, pharmacist's apprentice, and "professional revolutionary."



Spring flooding in the Swamp