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**FORGOTTEN LIVES:
THE ROLE OF ANNA, OL'GA AND MARIIA
UL'IANOVA IN THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION,
1864-1937**

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ABSTRACT

Anna, Ol'ga and Mariia Ul'ianova hold a place in history as Lenin's sisters, his supporters and helpers, but they played a far greater role in the Russian revolution and the Soviet regime as revolutionaries and Bolsheviks in their own right. However, this aspect of their lives has been consistently overlooked by English-language historians for decades. This thesis aims to redress this imbalanced portrayal of the Ul'ianov women. Although not solely biographical in nature, it traces Anna, Ol'ga and Mariia's lives from their childhood and education, through their work in the underground revolutionary movement to their careers in the Soviet regime. It also investigates the personality cults that arose around the Ul'ianov women and their portrayal in history since their deaths to the present day. The thesis uses extensive unpublished primary documents from the RGASPI and GARF archives in Moscow and contemporary publications such as *Pravda* and *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia* to build a picture of Anna, Ol'ga and Mariia's lives and to interrogate secondary sources about the sisters.

The thesis draws various conclusions about the Ul'ianov women. Ol'ga died when she was twenty, so she features only in two chapters of the thesis. Nonetheless it is clear that like Anna and Mariia she was an intelligent and well-educated young woman, who devoted herself to the study of revolutionary ideas. Anna and Mariia joined the underground movement in the early 1890s and, alongside Lenin, established themselves as competent, dedicated social democrats. Although the sisters have been portrayed as little more than Lenin's helpers, this thesis shows that Anna and Mariia had independent revolutionary careers before 1917, acting as party correspondents, newspaper workers and agitators. It is also apparent that during the underground years the Ul'ianov family as a whole acted as a mutual support network, exchanging political information, advice and instructions.

After the revolution, this thesis shows that Anna and Mariia pursued political careers which reflected their long-held political beliefs. Anna headed the Department for the Protection of Children, while Mariia spent ten years leading the Rabsel'kor movement. Both women had to negotiate the changing

political times after their brother Lenin's death. While Anna retreated into work for Istpart, Mariia participated in the power struggles between party fractions, first supporting Stalin and Bukharin against the oppositionists and then attempting to defend Bukharin against Stalin's attacks. This thesis investigates Anna and Mariia's prolific biographical works on Lenin, finding them to be a means both of protecting the sisters from Stalin by raising their public profile and of educating Soviet citizens. Finally this thesis shows how Anna and Mariia's portrayal while they were alive and after their deaths shifted and changed according to the political situation, the development of the cult of personality around Lenin and even the current Soviet model of the ideal woman.

Although focussed on the sisters' lives, this thesis also sheds light on the revolutionary underground, showing how issues that were of crucial importance to the party's leadership in Europe often appeared insignificant or at odds with the situation in Russia. The thesis also provides an insight into the working of the Soviet government and how political relationships from before 1917 had a great impact on the interactions between government departments and individuals. Above all, however, this thesis gives Anna, Ol'ga and Mariia their due place in Bolshevik and revolutionary history.

To reclaim our past and insist that it become a part of human history is the task that lies before us, for the future requires that women as well as men shape the world's destiny.

Judy Chicago, US Artist, 1939 – ¹

¹ Judy Chicago, quoted in *The Little Book of Great Women*, (Oxford: New Internationalist Publications Ltd, 2000), p. 90.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED IN BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

A.I.	Anna Il'inichna Ul'ianova-Elizarova (To avoid confusion I will always refer to Aleksandr Il'ich by his full name.)
D.I.	Dmitrii Il'ich Ul'ianov
GARF	State Archive for the Russian Federation (Archival references without GARF are from the Russian State Archive of Social and Political History, RGASPI)
M.I.	Mariia Il'inichna Ul'ianova
M.A.	Mariia Aleksandrovna Ul'ianova
N.K.	Nadezhda Konstantinovna Krupskaiia
O.I.	Ol'ga Il'inichna Ul'ianova
V.I.	Vladimir Il'ich Ul'ianov (Lenin)

CLARIFICATION OF DATES

Until the Bolsheviks changed the Russian calendar on 14 February 1918, Russia followed the Julian (old style) calendar rather than the Gregorian (new style) calendar, which was used in the rest of Europe. The Julian calendar was twelve days behind the Gregorian calendar in the 19th century and thirteen days behind it in the 20th century. I have used the Julian calendar for dates before 14 February 1918.

INTRODUCTION

FORGOTTEN LIVES

Writing in 1932, the historian, D.S. Mirsky, judged that Anna and Mariia Ul'ianova, Lenin's sisters were "more or less prominent members of the Social Democratic, and afterwards, of the Communist Party", but qualified his statement with the comment that "their revolutionary importance is both enhanced and eclipsed by the immense figure of Vladimir Il'ich".¹

This is a problem faced by all historians of women who write about the wife or sister or lover of a famous man. The achievements of a woman who was accomplished in her own right frequently appear insignificant or overshadowed by the fact that her husband, brother or lover was prime minister, president, explorer or inventor.² How does the historian give a fair appraisal of a woman who was known to the public and known in history mainly because she was connected to a 'great' man, but who in fact played her own distinct role in politics, culture or society? Lenin lived his life surrounded by women, including his wife, Krupskaja, and lover, Armand, his mother and mother-in-law, and his three sisters, Anna, Ol'ga and Mariia, as well as fellow revolutionaries like Kollontai and his large staff of secretaries. They are all given passing mentions in biographies of Lenin as "worshipful, subservient women" who were temporarily important to him or to his work.³ In Anna, Ol'ga and Mariia's case, the fact that they were 'only' Lenin's sisters, connected to him by chance and not his choice, has ensured that they are given even less historical attention than the women Lenin met in his lifetime. Biographies of Lenin tend to refer to his sisters only during his childhood and the early revolutionary period, and then during his illness, when Mariia, in particular, cared for him.⁴ Between those years, readers

¹ D.S. Mirsky, *Lenin*, (London: The Holme Press, 1932), pp. 3-4.

² Marilyn Yalom, 'Biography as Autobiography: Adèle Hugo, Witness of Her Husband's Life', in *Revealing Lives: Autobiography, Biography and Gender*, ed. by Susan Groag Bell and Marilyn Yalom, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), p. 53.

³ Larissa Vasilieva, *Kremlin Wives*, ed. and trans. by Cathy Porter, (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1994), p. 9.

⁴ See, for example, Ronald W. Clark, *Lenin: The Man Behind the Mask*, (London: Faber & Faber, 1988), Louis Fischer, *The Life of Lenin*, (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1964) or even the very recent Robert Service, *Lenin: A Biography*, (London: Macmillan, 2000). Service does refer to the sisters more than most, but as I shall show in this thesis, these references are problematic.

are left to assume that Lenin had no meaningful contact with his sisters and that they played no role in his life at all.

This is a pattern that is repeated in historical narrative generally. It has of course been recognised that historians have neglected women and their experiences and concerted attempts have been made to rectify this situation. The strategies employed can be divided into two broad categories: books that deal with women's history only⁵ or more 'general' works of history that contain a single chapter on, or sporadic references to, women.⁶ Obviously these have their place in the rebalancing of our concept of history, however, these solutions often serve only to continue the misconception that women and men somehow experience history separately. By only writing women's histories about women's issues or about specific events where a group of women worked together to notable effect, the misconception is perpetuated that women are only sporadic participants in history, and for the rest of the time they exist outside of history's processes. Stites' book, *The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia*, is a case in point. Stites claims that in the revolutionary year of 1917, women acted only as the initiators of the February Revolution and as the defenders of the Provisional Government in October.⁷ He argues that women do not appear in histories of the interim period because at that time they did not walk the corridors of power and were not therefore involved in the important decisions that changed the course of history. Therefore, he continues, "there is no sense in trying to magnify the role played by the female half of the population during [1917]".⁸

However, though women may not have been equally involved in making political decisions, they were there, in the buildings, all around the politicians and were involved in all sorts of activities. There are sources that place Lenin's sisters, Anna and Mariia, and Trotsky's wife in the Bolshevik headquarters

⁵ See, for example, Barbara Evans Clements, *Bolshevik Women*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) or Jane McDermid and Anna Hillyar, *Midwives of the Revolution: Female Bolsheviks and Women Workers in 1917*, (London: UCL Press, 1999).

⁶ See, for example, Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution, 1917-1932*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982) and Geoffrey Hosking, *The First Socialist Society: A History of the Soviet Union from Within*, 2nd edn., (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1992).

⁷ Richard Stites, *The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia: Feminism, Nihilism, and Bolshevism, 1860-1930*, (Princeton, Guildford: Princeton University Press, 1978), p. 289.

⁸ Stites, *Feminism, Nihilism, and Bolshevism*, p. 289.

during the October days.⁹ No doubt other women were there too, even if their presence was not noted, or even noticed. References to women at these times are few and far between because contemporaries did not see them as important, yet from today's perspective women are absent from histories of key moments because of this attitude. Men and women work, eat, live, holiday together, and make and experience history together. They may perform different roles, but these are equally valid and worthy of study. Of course writing what I call an 'integrated history' or what others have termed a "synthesis", which deals with men and women simultaneously in any historical situation, be it of social, political or economic significance, is not a simple matter.¹⁰ As Reynolds admits: "It is still a great deal easier to get at the subject [of women in history] by concentrating on it than by providing the kind of synthesis that is needed."¹¹ Particularly in the case of the Ul'ianov women, whose lives have been so consistently over-shadowed by their brother, there is an argument for studying their lives with as little reference to Lenin as possible.

This thesis will attempt to redress the imbalance in English-language Russian and Soviet history, which has overlooked the lives of Lenin's sisters, their role in the revolution and in Soviet Russia. Generally, what would be recognised as major contributions to Soviet politics and society in other revolutionaries, of either sex, have been ignored in Ol'ga, Mariia and Anna because of the focus on their famous Ul'ianov sibling. The sisters' achievements are no match for Lenin's, (few revolutionaries' achievements are), but they have a rightful place in history nonetheless.¹² The young lives of Anna, Mariia and Ol'ga, despite the latter's early death, are key to this discussion in that their brother was one among many underground activists then, and less influential in 'enhancing' or 'eclipsing' their importance to contemporaries. Equally, since Mariia and Anna both outlived Lenin by over ten years, their lives after 1924 also deserve considerable attention. Therefore, this thesis will argue that Anna, Ol'ga and Mariia should be studied not just as the sisters of Lenin, but as

⁹ P. Kudelli, 'Svetloi pamiati Anny Il'inichny Elizarovoi-Ul'ianovoi', in *Krasnaia letopis'*, No. 1, 1936, p. 204 and Leon Trotsky, *My Life: An Attempt at an Autobiography*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1975), p. 340.

¹⁰ Sian Reynolds, 'Introduction', in *Women, State and Revolution: Essays on Power and Gender in Europe Since 1789*, ed. by Sian Reynolds. (Sussex: Wheatsheaf Books, 1986), p. xiv.

¹¹ Reynolds, in *Women, State and Revolution*, p. xiv.

¹² Clements, *Bolshevik Women*, p. 109.

students, revolutionaries, politicians and editors as well, who played their own part in revolutionary and Soviet history. This approach should also shed light on the ways in which gendered expectations have affected previous historical accounts of the women's' lives.¹³

In adopting an integrated approach to the study of Anna, Ol'ga and Mariia, this thesis attempts to avoid being categorised as either 'compensatory' or essentialist. The former type of history focuses on "exceptional women" who "exercised male power" and were successful in terms of criteria that can be interpreted as essentially masculine.¹⁴ These criteria value only political activity and public recognition.¹⁵ The latter form tries to describe and evaluate women's position in history in terms of an entirely new set of criteria, different to the 'male' set of values. This type of history tends to address women's lives and relationships, their contribution to historical developments and events and the impact they have on women as a group separate from men.¹⁶ Instead my integrated approach will address various aspects of Anna, Ol'ga and Mariia's lives, from the educational and political to the domestic and familial, as Anna and Mariia themselves argued should be done when studying historical figures.¹⁷ Their lives are entirely suited to this broad type of investigation, not least because, as members of a political family, many of their important interactions and relationships were played out in the home. Indeed, a key example of the male-female cooperation so important to an integrated history takes the form of Anna, Ol'ga and Mariia's relationship with their brother Lenin.

It is impossible and undesirable to investigate Anna, Ol'ga and Mariia's lives without reference to Lenin. Anna and Mariia occupied a unique position in the underground movement and in the Communist Party due to their connection to Lenin. They had a multi-layered relationship with their brother, acting in turns as his fellow revolutionaries, his political colleagues and his carers. Their close

¹³ Ann-Louise Shapiro, 'Introduction: History and Feminist Theory, or Talking Back to the Beadle', in *History and Feminist Theory*, ed. by Ann-Louise Shapiro, (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1992), p. 5.

¹⁴ Judith P. Zinsser, *History and Feminism: A Glass Half Full*, (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1993), p. 37.

¹⁵ Zinsser, p. 37.

¹⁶ Shapiro, in *History and Feminist Theory*, p. 5.

¹⁷ M.I., 'Predislovie k sborniku "Pis'ma k rodnym", izdaniia 1930 goda', in *V.I. Lenin: Polnoe sobranie sochinenii: Pis'ma k rodnym, 1893-1922*, (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1965), Volume 55, p. xii.

family ties coloured all their lives, affecting Anna and Mariia long after Lenin had died. Indeed it gave them a prominence (and security) in Soviet life which was denied to so many other, equally competent and experienced, revolutionary women and men, and it ensured that they had a personal and political relationship with Stalin also. In fact I will argue that the Ul'ianov family functioned as a mini-network of revolutionaries throughout the underground period and even during Lenin's years in power, in which there was an exchange of support and advice and a high level of political cooperation. This in itself puts Anna and Mariia at the heart of the Bolshevik party and its history and demands that any investigation into this aspect of their lives takes an integrated approach.

Yet Anna and Mariia did not only work with their brother. The RSDRP was a party that, particularly before 1917, prided itself on close cooperation between its male and female members and even depended on it for its survival.¹⁸ Thus, besides regularly co-operating with Lenin, Anna and Mariia also worked closely with a great many other leading members of the RSDRP, including N.I. Bukharin, A.V. Lunacharskii, the Krzhizhanovskiis, M.S. Ol'minskii, E.D. Stasova, and Elena Rozmirovich. Interestingly, although Anna and Mariia worked for the revolution throughout their lives, they were rarely involved in the Bolsheviks' campaigns directed at women and it is perhaps at least partly due to this that their lives have not captured the imagination of feminist historians such as Barbara Clements, despite their being as accomplished revolutionary activists as Nadezhda Krupskaiia or Inessa Armand. Rather, Anna and Mariia participated in a variety of campaigns and types of work, operating mainly as activists, but also leading efforts to improve the welfare of children and workers. Their experiences are examples of the way in which women and men worked together in the underground years and the Soviet regime, and contributed simultaneously to the history of the revolutionary movement.

Although it concentrates on interaction between men and women, an integrated history does not mean that gender issues are not addressed. On the contrary, gender issues remain a crucial part of the historical narrative and ideally are considered in relation to both sexes. In this specific case, Anna, Ol'ga and Mariia's lives give an insight into how, and to what extent, social democratic

¹⁸ Clements, *Bolshevik Women*, p. 56.

theory about gender equality, which was propounded by Lenin himself, affected women's lives. Indeed, throughout their lives, the Ul'ianov women had to negotiate gender issues in their education, the underground movement, the politics of the Soviet Union and in their domestic life.

Issues of gender also heavily influence both how Anna, Ol'ga and Mariia were portrayed during their lifetimes as personality cults developed around them, and how they have been depicted in history. Of the images of the sisters, amongst the most commonly used are Lenin's helpers, both domestically and politically,¹⁹ guardians of the people,²⁰ Krupskaja's jealous tormentors,²¹ the "crabby spinster", in Mariia's case,²² and in Anna's, the hen-pecking wife.²³ Many of these images are indicative of attitudes and beliefs held about women at the time when, and in the place where, they were written, as well as of deeply rooted traditional views about women's characters, looks and capabilities.

METHODOLOGY

Given the pervasive nature of the personality cults surrounding Anna and Mariia, which ultimately define them as satellites of Lenin, it is important to discuss the nature of the sources used in this research and my approach to them. Above all, this thesis is based on primary, archival research, with the majority of the material drawn from the sisters' personal fonds in RGASPI, The Russian State Archive of Social and Political History, in Moscow.

I experienced no difficulties in accessing any documents in Mariia and Anna's personal fonds, which contained a wealth of materials, including drafts of memoirs, official and personal correspondence, police reports on the sisters' underground activities and reminiscences about the sisters by others. There was no evidence of censorship by archivists in the documents themselves: the

¹⁹ Nikolai Valentinov (N.V. Volski), *The Early Years of Lenin*, trans. and ed. by Rolf H. W. Thoen, introduction by Bertram D. Wolfe, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1969), pp. 151-152.

²⁰ 'Vospominanie V.A. Levitskogo ob A.I. Ul'ianovoi i vsei ee sem'e', 15 April 1964, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 389, l. 2.

²¹ Robert H. McNeal, *Bride of the Revolution: Krupskaja and Lenin*, (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1973), p. 229.

²² L.D. Trotsky, *Trotsky's Diary in Exile, 1935*, trans. by Elena Zaridnaia, (London: Harvard University Press, 1976), p. 33.

²³ Service, p. 447.

documents were complete and items relating to the sisters' various clashes with the Soviet authorities and Stalin were present. On the other hand, it was clear in the sisters' correspondence and even their draft memoirs that in general they exercised careful self-censorship. Letters rarely commented on current events and the draft reminiscences in the main matched the final published versions. It is this self-censorship, rather than state censorship, that causes the most difficulties for the historian researching the sisters' lives. Their writings provide only an "opaque window" onto their lives and experiences, thoughts and beliefs.²⁴ It was necessary, therefore, when interpreting the contents of the sisters' writing to bear in mind the reasons for this opacity and to adopt a suitable methodological approach in response.

Of particular use in interpreting these documents was recent scholarship on reading autobiographies in terms of subjectivity and self-representation. This work argues that in order to fully understand the content of autobiographies, particularly those written by women, it is important to go beyond assessing the author's "reliability, agenda and sense of purpose".²⁵ The author's subjectivity or "sense of themselves", as well as her self-representation must also be taken into account. These are influenced by a variety of factors, including gender, nationality, historical period and class.

I took several of these factors into account in the sisters' case. The first was that of gender. When writing autobiographies or referring to themselves in other types of text, women tend not to assert themselves, their actions or achievements. Indeed, they are often "culturally enjoined not to promote themselves" and instead employ a variety of tactics to deflect attention from their role in events.²⁶ Women use the passive voice or the collective pronoun, they assert "good fortune or the generosity of others" as the reasons for their successes, and they highlight the fact that they were part of a group which shared the same experiences.²⁷ It is not uncommon for women to claim they wrote their

²⁴ Clements, *Bolshevik Women*, p. 298.

²⁵ Pauline Polkey, 'Reading History through Autobiography: Politically Active Women of Late Nineteenth-Century Britain and their Personal Narratives', in *Women's History Review*, 2000, Volume 9, No. 3, p. 495.

²⁶ Angela Woollacott, 'The Fragmentary Subject: Feminist History, Official Records, and Self-representation', in *Women's Studies International Forum*, 1998, Volume 21, No. 4, p. 330.

²⁷ Woollacott, in *Women's Studies International Forum*, 1998, Volume 21, No. 4, p. 331; Selma Leydesdorff, Luisa Passerini and Paul Thompson, 'Introduction', in *Gender and Memory*, ed. by

autobiographies only because they were entreated to do so by another or because their experiences might help others.²⁸ These strategies have been employed by women of various nationalities, at different historical periods, including Russian women, and some can be observed in the sisters' writing.²⁹

It was also important to take into account mitigating factors of history, culture and nationality, which affect gender expectations and the rigidity with which they are upheld, as well as the form of women's writing. In late nineteenth century Russia, as Anna and Mariia were growing up, it was increasingly acceptable for women to write fiction and autobiographical works, especially if they took the form of reminiscences of family life, childhood and school days, in other words, if they were set in women's traditional domestic sphere.³⁰ A growing number of women also chose to write about their working life and, like their male counterparts, they emphasised their service to society and the greater good.³¹ Yet, despite this rise in the number of women writers, it is still possible to identify in their texts "an anxiety about women's writing that stemmed from pervasive prejudices against the woman author".³²

Even more influential on Anna and Mariia's writing was the fact that they became Bolsheviks. Amongst Bolsheviks, it was acceptable and encouraged that women participate fully in public life and revolutionary activities and that they write about their work. However, Bolshevism also reinforced the idea that women should not promote themselves in their writing, for Bolsheviks believed that revolutionaries (of both genders) "should portray themselves as dutiful, modest, faithful servants of the cause".³³ Asserting individual achievement was not compatible with the Communists' ideology of collective endeavour and in autobiographies the individual's identity was to be "a continuation of the collective".³⁴ This meant that no importance should be given to one's private

Selma Leydessdorff, Luisa Passerini and Paul Thompson, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 2; Clements, *Bolshevik Women*, p. 303.

²⁸ Polkey, in *Women's History Review*, 2000, Volume 9, No. 3, p. 488 and p. 486.

²⁹ Barbara Heldt, *Terrible Perfection: Women and Russian Literature*, (Bloomington: Indiana Press, 1987), p. 65.

³⁰ *Russia Through Women's Eyes: Autobiographies from Tsarist Russia*, ed. by Toby W. Clyman and Judith Vowles, (London: Yale University Press, 1996), pp. 29-35.

³¹ *Russia Through Women's Eyes*, pp. 36-37.

³² *Russia Through Women's Eyes*, p. 7.

³³ Clements, *Bolshevik Women*, p. 298.

³⁴ Marianne Liljeström, 'The Remarkable Revolutionary Woman: Rituality and Performativity in Soviet Women's Autobiographical Texts from the 1970s', in *Models of Self: Russian Women's*

life. As Clements puts it: “[Bolsheviks] were to say very little about their families or their own personalities, for to do so would be an unseemly assertions of the importance of the individual.”³⁵ Thus, although the sisters wrote about their brother Lenin a great deal, they rarely if ever shed light on their other personal relationships.

Lastly, living and writing in the Soviet Union, particularly during the 30s, meant that one also had to uphold the increasingly dominant Lenin cult, as well as follow the regime’s official history. Many events were completely taboo and others had to be interpreted according to the Party’s line.³⁶ Ideas about the ideal Soviet woman also shifted during these years, with more traditional expectations about a woman’s role in the family becoming prominent alongside the promotion of women’s full participation in the building of socialism. This affected how women were portrayed and how they represented themselves in literature and autobiographies. These various restraints had a clear impact on the sisters’ writing, making it difficult for the historian to gain a detailed insight into Anna and Mariia’s views on the course of the Revolution and even into their own activities.

In interpreting these ‘opaque’ autobiographical works, one strategy is to view them as the site of a complex relationship between the author’s need to comply with cultural expectations about appropriate behaviour in society, as a woman and as an author, and her need for self-representation. Even in an apparently ‘conventional’ autobiography, it is possible and important to identify “internal clues”, which indicate the author’s sense of herself and which point to ways in which the author offers subtle resistance to the restraints on acceptable content.³⁷ For example, where Bolshevik women’s writing is concerned it is necessary to look beyond their “modest tones” in order to fully appreciate their achievements.³⁸ In the sisters’ case they fulfilled expectations about a woman’s role in Soviet society and avoided mention of controversial aspects of Bolshevik history by writing a great deal about how they helped Lenin during the underground movement. In writing about this role, the sisters could portray

Autobiographical Texts, ed. by Marianne Liljeström, Arja Rosenholm and Irina Savkina, (Helsinki: Kikimova Publications, 2000), p. 82.

³⁵ Clements, *Bolshevik Women*, p. 298.

³⁶ Clements, *Bolshevik Women*, p. 304.

³⁷ Woollacott, in *Women’s Studies International Forum*, 1998, Volume 21, No. 4, p. 333.

themselves as devoted and hard-working Bolsheviks, as well as highlight their very acceptable work as party correspondents and secretaries. By asserting that they helped Lenin, Anna and Mariia were able to imply that they themselves were competent revolutionaries, who were part of Lenin's 'inner circle'. Historians who have not taken subjectivity and self-representation into account, however, have used the sisters' emphasis on their role as Lenin's helpers as evidence for overly simplistic representations of them as passive, devoted satellites of their great brother, even in their childhood.

When interpreting the sisters' writing using the concepts of subjectivity and self-representation, material gleaned had to be checked against other sources wherever possible. Of crucial importance to this process were articles written by the sisters for newspapers both before the Revolution and between 1917 and 1924, that is before the Lenin cult had developed. Also of value were the published collections of official, secret RSDRP correspondence, in which the sisters were far more open about their activities and views.

Other sources also required careful handling, for very few, including reminiscences of the sisters by others, in RGASPI and in published works, escape the influence of the Lenin cult and the sisters' cults. Reminiscences tend to be deeply affected by the author's relationship with Anna and Mariia, as well as with Lenin. Those written by friends of Anna and Mariia helped to generate, or at least reflect, the personality cults that developed around the sisters. Liljeström has identified certain qualities of the "revolutionary hero" that are regularly stressed in Soviet testimonials.³⁹ As she puts it, the revolutionary "[is] extremely hard working and does not necessarily need to eat,...does not care about [her] looks or dress,...hardly sleeps...[and]...is very brave".⁴⁰ Testimonials about the sisters often adhere to this pattern. On one level the historian must look beyond their formulaic content to identify factual elements; on another, the wording of the memoir must be taken into account to understand Anna and Mariia's status in Soviet Russia.

Other memoirs, by individuals who had a reason to dislike the Ul'ianov family, often because they were opponents of Lenin, tend to portray Anna and

³⁸ Clements, *Bolshevik Women*, p. 301.

³⁹ Liljeström, in *Models of Self*, p. 90.

⁴⁰ Liljeström, in *Models of Self*, p. 90.

Mariia in a negative light. Though reminiscences that are critical of Lenin and the sisters, and therefore defy the personality cults, are more credible in some respects, two of the most problematic I have used are by N. Valentinov and A.G. Solomon. In interpreting these two texts it was necessary to bear in mind how gender affects men's autobiography, with common features of such texts including a focus on professional achievements, conflict resolution and personal development.⁴¹ It was also important to note that both men had friendships with Lenin that ended in disagreement and acrimony, and that while their criticisms of Lenin are based on his character and political views, they both lapse into judgements of the women around Lenin based on gender, rather than their politics. For example, Valentinov rarely refers to the sisters as being anything but blindly devoted to Lenin, while Solomon makes a point of noting that Anna was ugly.⁴² The reactions of the two authors to Lenin's sisters also highlight the negative or at least dismissive attitude towards women Bolsheviks which many male party members felt, despite the official party line in favour of emancipation.⁴³ This is often expressed, as Moira Donald has pointed out, quantitatively and qualitatively, that is, both in the lack of references to women revolutionaries, even prominent ones, and in the use of negative, gendered language on the few occasions when they are described.⁴⁴ It is vital in building up a balanced, historical account, that both positive and negative portrayals of the sisters are considered, yet every source must be used with care and always corroborated with other primary material.

There is a wealth of secondary material in Russian about the sisters and the Ul'ianov family. Older texts, published in the Khrushchev and Brezhnev period are useful for establishing the basic chronology of Anna, Mariia and Ol'ga's lives, as well as for identifying primary source material, however they are heavily influenced by the cult surrounding the Ul'ianov family members and tend to be Lenin-centric in approach. More recently, Russian historians have begun to research the sisters as independent women revolutionaries and Old

⁴¹ Woollacott, in *Women's Studies International Forum*, 1998, Volume 21, No. 4, p. 334.

⁴² Valentinov, *Early Years*, p. 140; Solomon, A.G., *Lenin i ego sem'ia Ul'ianovy*, (Paris: [s.n.], 1931), p. 8.

⁴³ Clements, *Bolshevik Women*, p. 241 and p. 257.

⁴⁴ Moira Donald, 'What did you do in the Revolution, Mother?': Image, Myth and Prejudice in the Russian Revolution', in *Gender and History*, 1995, Volume 7, No. 1, p. 87.

Bolsheviks, and there is a new body of literature that recognises the sisters as important figures in the Soviet regime.⁴⁵

There are no English-language studies of Anna, Ol'ga and Mariia Ul'ianova; instead, they get passing mentions in biographies of Lenin and on occasion appear in texts on Russian women's history. Obviously studies that do not intend to discuss the Ul'ianov women cannot be expected to give them in-depth treatment, nonetheless, given the wealth of published and unpublished material about the sisters which is now available, there is no reason for historians to continue uncritically repeating the Lenin-centric and gendered descriptions of them to be found in much of the older Russian-language literature.

One of the aims of this thesis is to interrogate the portrayals of the sisters that have undermined them and relegated them to "a single index reference, or the odd page" in English-language histories, as well as to disentangle Anna, Ol'ga and Mariia's lived reality from such images.⁴⁶ In pursuit of this aim, the thesis takes an holistic approach in writing about Anna, Mariia and Ol'ga, which values both their home life and their work and which puts their relationship with Lenin in a familial, political and professional context. The picture that emerges as a result of this is of three independent, hard working revolutionaries, with strongly held political views and a deep desire to campaign for their ideals.

In view of these aims, it is essential to differentiate between the various types of relationships and interactions that occurred between the sisters and Lenin, and the ways in which these were perceived. Thus I will use the name Vladimir when referring to Anna, Ol'ga and Mariia's day-to-day relationship with their brother, both during the underground years and after the revolution, the relationship which was unaffected by the cult of personality, which operated on a familial and political level. Indeed, the sisters always called Vladimir by his first name or a diminutive of it. Anna once wrote: "Lenin was the pseudonym of my brother, Vladimir Il'ich. [We] his sisters and brothers did not call him that."⁴⁷ When I use the name Lenin, it indicates the sisters' relationship with the leader

⁴⁵ See, for example, M.G. Shtein, *Ul'ianovy i Leniny: tainy rodoslovnoi i psevdonima*, (St Petersburg: VIRI, 1997) and R.M. Savitskaia, 'A.I. Ul'ianova-Elizarova – istorik leninskoi partii', in *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, 1987, No. 8, pp. 99-112.

⁴⁶ Reynolds, in *Women, State and Revolution*, p. xiii. Here Reynolds is referring to the plight of women in history generally, but her comment is particularly applicable to the treatment of the Ul'ianov women by English-language historians of the Russian revolution.

⁴⁷ Letter, A.I. to Mikhail Aleksandrovich, 13 October 1923, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 265, l. 6.

of the Soviet Union as perceived by those outside the family, the one mythologised by subsequent writers. The Vladimir/Lenin distinction is also important when considering how Anna and Mariia portrayed their brother in their reminiscences, as they tended to use a similar rule of distinction, using Lenin when describing the political figure, and Vladimir Il'ich when discussing his private life and personality.

Referring to Anna, Ol'ga and Mariia as the sisters, as I regularly do, may seem to be a lapse into a Lenin-centric approach, which undermines my own aim of viewing them as revolutionaries in their own right. However, besides using the term for practical and stylistic reasons, I use the term to highlight experiences and characteristics shared by Anna, Ol'ga and Mariia. In these cases, they are sisters of each other, as well as of Vladimir.

In addition to being a study in its own right, this thesis is a first contribution to a truly integrated history of the entire Ul'ianov family. Investigating the lives and work of Il'ia Nikolaevich and Dmitrii, as well as devoting more attention to Aleksandr and Mariia Aleksandrovna was beyond the scope of this thesis. However, my focus on the sisters at the expense of other family members is justified in view of the central concerns of this thesis. One of my main interests is the misrepresentation of Anna, Ol'ga and Mariia as nothing more than Lenin's helpers and there are far fewer, if any, such images of the other family members. In the future I would be keen to research a history that would address the full role of the whole Ul'ianov family in the Russian Revolution. In the meantime, however, the type of enhancement that will appear in this thesis, which puts the historical spotlight on the Ul'ianov sisters, is crucial, in that it enables Anna, Ol'ga and Mariia to emerge from behind the "immense figure" of their brother Lenin.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Mirsky, pp. 3-4.

CHAPTER ONE

THE SOLAR SYSTEM MYTH

My study begins with Anna, Ol'ga and Mariia's early years. Besides the obvious chronological reason for this, it is a time of their lives that is notable for the amount written about it. Indeed, their childhood and youth probably receives the most attention from historians of all the periods of their lives. Generally this is not because researchers find the sisters' early years interesting in their own right, but because they witnessed the formative years of Lenin. Lenin's childhood years have been the focus of much historical study, usually with the aim of discovering the roots and causes of his later achievements.¹ However, this understandable focus on Lenin has had a consequence for the other family members: it has created an image of the Ul'ianov family life as one which revolved around the young boy, Vladimir. All the members of the family, but most particularly the women, are portrayed as worshipful devotees of their brother (or son), who sacrificed their own needs and ambitions in their quest to serve him. This is the greatest myth that has been created about the sisters and it influences and informs references to Anna, Ol'ga and Mariia's actions and characters at all stages of their lives. Inspired by Valentinov's description of the family, I call it the solar system myth. Valentinov, a revolutionary who first met Vladimir in 1904 (and soon after that disagreed violently with him over politics and philosophy), wrote that Vladimir was like "the sun in the planetary system of the Ul'ianovs", whom Mariia "almost idolised" and Anna saw as "an oracle".²

Examples of subscription to this solar system myth are numerous and to be found in Western texts and Soviet/Russian sources alike. Service writes of the early years of the family:

[Vladimir] had not been 'spoiled' in the sense of being showered with presents or allowed to behave regularly in an ill-disciplined manner. But...he had been surrounded by what might be called an aura of warmly expectant encouragement. His mother was

¹ L.D. Trotsky, *The Young Lenin*, ed. by Maurice Friedberg, trans. by Max Eastman, (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1972), p. 84.

endlessly attentive and sisters Anna, Ol'ga and – later – Mariia gave him whatever assistance he required. Vladimir learned how to make use of this emotional interplay in his family. It was to give him a general presumption that others should indulge his wishes. Thus he appeared a 'natural leader'. But it also limited his awareness of the difficulties he caused. He was so used to getting his way that, if balked in any fashion, he was altogether too likely to throw a fit of anger. He absolutely hated being thwarted. As a young man he belatedly became a sort of a spoiled child nurtured by four women.³

Tumarkin develops the solar system myth still further arguing that after Aleksandr's execution:

Vladimir Il'ich became the head of the Ul'ianov family...The reverence in which Sasha [Aleksandr] had been held by Mariia Aleksandrovna and her daughters when he was alive and the subsequent transfer of similar feelings to Vladimir, the next oldest boy, hints at a tendency of the family's women to imbue one of its male members with the status of a 'star'. Vladimir assumed that role after Sasha's death and never lost it.⁴

Though Service refutes Tumarkin's argument convincingly by pointing out that at this point Vladimir was too young to take over the running of the household, he supports her assertion that there was a 'transfer of feelings'.⁵ He writes that "Mariia...transferred her affection from her late father to the eldest surviving Ul'ianov male [Vladimir]" and that Anna "transferred her sisterly affection from Aleksandr to Vladimir after Aleksandr's execution".⁶

In fact, Anna and Mariia do not seem to have automatically transferred their love from one male relative to another. In Anna's case, she remained

² Valentinov, *Early Years*, p. 151.

³ Service, p. 84.

⁴ Nina Tumarkin, *Lenin Lives!*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1983), p. 34.

⁵ Service, p. 49.

devoted to the memory of her beloved brother. One witness described Anna's reaction when asked about Aleksandr in the 1920s, writing: "With strong emotion Anna began to talk about him. I understood that with my question about Aleksandr Il'ich I had unwittingly touched a deep mental wound and stirred up heavy memories."⁷ Anna stated in her reminiscences about Aleksandr: "my brother had such an exceptional place in my life that for many long years recording my reminiscences was too much like reopening old wounds and therefore impossible for me."⁸ Anna clearly had not transferred or lost any of her love for Aleksandr. Even if Anna were to transfer her affection to anyone, her precocious younger brother Vladimir would probably not have received it. The two had a turbulent relationship throughout their lives, but in childhood, Anna disliked "his great tendency to mockery, his impertinence and his arrogance".⁹

In contrast, Mariia suggested that she may have transferred her love, writing in one reminiscence:

It's possible that my affection for Vladimir Il'ich increased because I transferred to him my love for my father, who died when I was almost eight. Father really loved...to run and play with us, the children. He spent a lot of time with me, as the youngest. Vladimir had a similar attitude towards children as father did.¹⁰

However, Mariia admitted elsewhere: "I experienced little of my father's influence, for he died when I was not yet eight years old. Nor could I relate fully consciously to the reasons for the death of my older brother."¹¹ From this statement it would seem that Vladimir was the first male Ul'ianov with whom she had any kind of lasting close relationship.

⁶ Service, p. 77 and p. 265.

⁷ A. Medvedeva, 'Moi vstrechi s Ul'ianovymi', October 1949, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 18, l. 7.

⁸ 'Vospominaniia ob Aleksandre Il'iche Ul'ianove', in *A.I. Ul'ianova-Elizarova: O V.I. Lenine i sem'e Ul'ianovykh. Vospominaniia, ocherki, pis'ma, stat'i*, ed. by A.M. Sovokin, (Moskva: Izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1988), p. 24.

⁹ 'Vospominaniia ob Aleksandre', in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 78.

¹⁰ M.I., 'Iz vospominanii', in *Vospominaniia o V.I. Lenine*, ed. by G.N. Golikov, G.D. Obichkin, M.Ia. Pankratova *et al*, (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1979), Volume 1, p. 129.

¹¹ M.I., 'Moi put' v revoliutsiiu (Avtobiografiia)', in *Mariia Il'inichna Ul'ianova*, ed. by Z.D. Bliskovskii, V.A. Sitov and S.I. Sokolov, (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo "Pravdy", 1978), p. 7.

When discussing the head of the household, historians often overlook the fact that if the family revolved round anyone it was Mariia Aleksandrovna, their mother. Solomon, who was acquainted with the family in the 1890s through the underground movement, argued that there was a “cult of motherhood” in the Ul’ianov family.¹² This insight is supported by other contemporaries of the Ul’ianov family, who also put Mariia Aleksandrovna at the “head of the family”.¹³ Her centrality to the family was due to Mariia Aleksandrovna’s important role as the children’s educator, but also because she spent far more time with her children than Il’ia, their father, did. Il’ia had always been absent from home for long periods of time due to his work as a schools inspector and his early death meant that Mariia Aleksandrovna became the sole parent (and only source of income¹⁴). Later she defended her children to the police authorities, accompanied them into exile and supported their revolutionary activities. Even the sisters’ fellow conspirators noted Mariia Aleksandrovna’s presence when reminiscing about their meetings with the Ul’ianovs.¹⁵

It is interesting to note that though Anna did not like her father’s absences, had a problematic relationship with him and recognised the strong influence of her mother on all the Ul’ianov children, she would not accept criticism of her father’s parenting.¹⁶ In a very early example of how the Ul’ianovs often corrected others’ biographies of their late siblings and parents, and celebrated their memories in their own works about them, Anna wrote to the *Simbirsk guberniia gazette* in 1894 to refute an article that had argued that Il’ia “did not know what the family was doing, nor what his children were working on”.¹⁷ Anna maintained that Il’ia played an active role in the children’s upbringing, recounting as evidence various anecdotes about family life, including

¹² Solomon, *Lenin*, p. 26.

¹³ ‘Vospominanie V.A. Levitskogo’, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 389, l. 1.

¹⁴ Mariia Aleksandrovna received a pension after her husband’s death (V. Alekseev and A. Shver, *Sem’ia Ul’ianovykh v Simbirske, 1869-1887*, ed. by A.I. Ul’ianova, (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel’stvo, 1925), p. 24).

¹⁵ S.V. Borisov, ‘Vospominaniia o M.I. Ul’ianovoi v periode Vologodskoi ssylki (1912-1914 g.)’, 20 October 1960, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 286, l. 1; Z.P. Nevzorova-Krzhizhanovskaia, quoted in I.D. Remezovskii, *Ul’ianovy v Kieve: 1903-1904 gg.*, (Kiev: Izdatel’stvo pri kievskom gosudarstvennom universitete, 1979), p. 24.

¹⁶ A.I., ‘K stat’i G. V. Nazar’eva “Iz vesennikh vospominanii chlena simbirskogo uezdnoho uchilishchnogo soveta”’, in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 258; A.I., ‘Vospominaniia ob Aleksandre Il’iche Ul’ianove’, in *Aleksandr Il’ich Ul’ianov i delo 1 marta 1887 g.*, ed. by A.I. Ul’ianova, (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel’stvo, 1927), p. 42.

¹⁷ ‘K stat’i G. V. Nazar’eva’, in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 257.

ones about Il'ia explaining maths and physics to the children and spending time with them during the holidays.¹⁸

Nonetheless, there was a strong matriarchal tendency in the Ul'ianov family. After her mother's death, and as the "oldest of the revolutionary Ul'ianov[s]", Anna is often portrayed as the head figure of the family.¹⁹ The daughter of one of Anna's comrades and Anna's biographer, E. Drabkina, wrote:

[Anna] lived the longest life of all her brothers and sisters [though Mariia and Dmitrii survived her – KT]...Before her eyes they grew up, became teenagers, young people, mature revolutionary fighters. She saw how their characters and convictions formed.²⁰

Even when her mother was alive, Anna took on a responsible role where her younger siblings were involved. Anna took an interest in deciding Vladimir's future, agreeing that he ought to go to university and Solomon wrote that in Mariia Aleksandrovna's absence, Anna "reigned" over the family.²¹ When Mariia Aleksandrovna was ill, Anna tended to take charge of her care, even if she could not personally look after her. For example, in one letter, written while Anna was travelling to Helsinki, she clearly mothered her own mother:

For now I feel well, I'm only worried about you, dearest. How is your health? Look after yourself, please, my dear!...Now, of course, Mania [Mariia] is with you otherwise I would never have decided [to go] on such an escapade [escapade in English – KT]...Here it's windy. What's it like with you? It's better not to go out while it's so windy, and if you do, dress warmly.²²

¹⁸ 'K stat' i G. V. Nazar'eva', in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, pp. 258-259.

¹⁹ Kudelli, in *Krasnaia letopis'*, No. 1, 1936, p. 201.

²⁰ Elizaveta Drabkina, 'A.I. Ul'ianova-Elizarova', in *Sem'ia Ul'ianovykh*, ed. by N.S. Gudkova, 2nd edn., (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1985), p. 141.

²¹ Letter, A.I. to N.A. D'iakonova, 20 April 1888, in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 304; Solomon, *Lenin*, p. 16.

²² Letter, A.I. to M.A., 12 May, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 127, l. 14. The year is not recorded on the letter, but it must have been written after 1911 because Anna referred to her adopted son Gora.

Indeed, Anna was almost a grandmother figure in the Ul'ianov family by the 1920s, taking on the care of Dmitrii's son, Viktor, and her husband Mark Elizarov's niece, A.A. Pushkova.²³ This highlights an interesting contrast between how the sexes gained centrality within the Ul'ianov family. Men became the central figure in the family by receiving care and being the focus of attention, while women achieved centrality by giving care.

Even if Mariia Aleksandrovna was a strong influence over her children, like most families, the Ul'ianov family had a fluid and dynamic structure, in which different relationships and tensions disrupted a solar system pattern. In terms of relations between the siblings, the children divided naturally into boy-girl pairs, with a 4-year gap between the first and second pair, and a 3-year gap between the second and third pair.²⁴ The siblings of the closest age became playmates. There also existed a hierarchy within the family based on age. In her reminiscences of Aleksandr, Anna regularly used the term "the eldest" to describe herself and Aleksandr (and sometimes Vladimir and Ol'ga too), writing for example: "The younger children were always under the influence of the eldest."²⁵ This suggests that authority could be asserted within the family based on age and not always on gender. It was the two eldest siblings who were in charge of the production of the family's newspaper, *Subbotnik*.²⁶ Their father would take the eldest out for drives along the Volga, but not the younger children.²⁷ Anna referred to "joyous" evenings spent together by their parents and "the four eldest [children]".²⁸

As is clear from the above, the difference in ages also had a large impact on how much the siblings were able to socialise with each other. Anna and Aleksandr left for university at the same time, and then Ol'ga and Vladimir also departed, Vladimir to Kazan University and Ol'ga to music school. Ol'ga's friend recalled that while she and Ol'ga played with Vladimir and Dmitrii:

²³ Letter, A.I. to M.I., 22 May 1923, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 131, l. 40; 'Vospominaniia vnuchatoi plemiannitsy M.T. Elizarova A.A. Pushkovoï ob A.I. Elizarovoï-Ul'ianovoï (1922 g.), s upominaniem V.I. Lenina', 8 May 1979, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 457, l. 1.

²⁴ In fact the age gap is widened if you look at Anna, Vladimir and Mariia only. There were 6 years between Anna and Vladimir, and 8 between Vladimir and Mariia (see the family tree in Appendix One).

²⁵ A.I. in *Delo 1 marta*, p. 37 and p. 62.

²⁶ A.I. in *Delo 1 marta*, p. 52.

²⁷ 'K stat'ii G. V. Nazar'eva', in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 259.

²⁸ 'Vospominaniia ob Aleksandre', in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 43.

The eldest children, Aleksandr and Anna had already finished secondary school and had then gone to Petrograd (sic) to continue studying. Of course, we, small fry, rarely saw them; however, I remember that neither of them stayed serious in the summer, though Aleksandr was somewhat morose.²⁹

The age differences physically separated them in the home too. When the family lived in Alakaevka “the eldest had small separate rooms, while the youngest – Maniasha and Mitia [Mariia and Dmitrii] – lived in the nursery with Ol’ga, who was older than Mariia by 7 years.”³⁰ Dmitrii remembered that often the younger children, Vladimir, Ol’ga and himself, would deliberately exclude the elder children from their games, keeping their activities secret from them.³¹

The importance of this hierarchy or the awareness of it amongst the siblings is also revealed in a small anecdote, which Anna told. When she was at university she had to learn Latin, but found this exceedingly difficult, so she had to turn to Vladimir for help. She wrote: “I experienced, of course, feelings of awkwardness, that I didn’t know how to overcome my problem independently, but had to run for help to my younger brother, who could do his own work by himself without problems.”³²

Solomon suggested that the age difference caused much greater difficulties between the siblings than others admit. He asserted that Anna always treated Mariia with “affectionate contempt”, and he claimed that Vladimir once told him that Mariia and Dmitrii were both fools.³³ There is little evidence to support such claims, though the Ul’ianov family, like any other, had its ups and downs.

One reason for disputes between the siblings was the fact that they were divided by temperament as well as by age. Aleksandr and Anna had similar

²⁹ B.N. Karamzina, ‘Vospominaniia o sem’e Ul’ianovykh’, 8 February 1924, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 361, l. 6.

³⁰ L. Kunetskaia and K. Mashtakova, *Mariia Ul’ianova*, (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1979), p. 6.

³¹ R.A. Kovnator, *Ol’ga Ul’ianova*, (Moscow: Politizdat, 1971), p. 7.

³² ‘Vospominaniia ob Il’iche’, in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 114.

³³ Solomon, *Lenin*, p. 29.

characters; both were quiet, reserved and even “melancholy”.³⁴ Neither particularly got on with the “choleric” and mischievous Vladimir, whose playmate was the “sanguine” Ol’ga, who was so energetic, she hated having to go to bed.³⁵ Mariia was a “frail girl, who was often ill” and who did not like the regime of early mornings and long hours of study her mother asked of her.³⁶

Despite disagreements, each sibling seems to have had a favourite. Anna’s favourite was Aleksandr, while his was Ol’ga.³⁷ She and Vladimir, as the middle pair of siblings, had a very close relationship, though Vladimir also had a soft spot for his youngest sister Mariia, who in her turn adored him.³⁸

Anna’s reminiscences about Aleksandr in *Aleksandr Il’ich Ul’ianov i delo 1 marta 1887 g.* are exceptionally candid about her strong love for him, admitting, for example, that she was initially jealous when he developed a crush on one of his female cousins and that, even though she was older than him, she looked up to him as a model of maturity, thoughtfulness and confidence.³⁹ Valentinov denigrates Anna’s love for Aleksandr as “hysterical”, and this appraisal of Anna’s feelings has no doubt fueled the theories of historians such as Tumarkin about the propensity of the Ul’ianov women to give their male relatives special status.⁴⁰

Anna’s reminiscences do not provide evidence of such a tendency. Anna obviously loved her brother deeply while he was alive, but when writing about her brother in the 1920s, her feelings about him were clearly complicated and intensified by her grief at his death and even guilt felt retrospectively about her own behaviour around him. This is suggested by numerous anecdotes that she related in her reminiscences. For example, she expressed regret for turning down her father’s offer to take her and Aleksandr to Moscow, since his life turned out to be “so short and so lacking in joy!”⁴¹ In her reminiscences, the pains she went to in order to avoid giving any negative impression of her brother also

³⁴ A.I., in *Delo 1 marta*, p. 42. The characteristics “melancholy”, “choleric” and “sanguine” were Il’ia Nikolaevich’s.

³⁵ A.I., in *Delo 1 marta*, p. 42; ‘Vospominaniia ob Aleksandre’, in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 43.

³⁶ Kunetskaia, pp. 10-11.

³⁷ ‘Pervaia podrugа Vladimira Il’icha’, in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 251.

³⁸ ‘My zhili druzhno’, in *M.I. Ul’ianova: O V.I. Lenine i sem’e Ul’ianovykh*, ed. by D. Sh. Kislik, S.U. Manbekova and O.D. Ul’ianova, 2nd edn., (Moscow: Politizdat, 1989), p. 42.

³⁹ ‘Vospominaniia ob Aleksandre’, in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 52.

⁴⁰ Valentinov, *Early Years*, p. 121.

⁴¹ ‘Vospominaniia ob Aleksandre’, in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 49.

reveal to what extent, with hindsight, Aleksandr took on the form of perfection. For example, Anna confessed that when her parents employed a young and inexperienced tutor to teach her and her brother, “capricious” as she was, she took advantage of this to misbehave.⁴² When she noted that the tutor did not refer to this behaviour in his reminiscences, but only to the exceptional diligence of the children, Anna concluded that “it is possible of course that he mainly had Sasha in mind, who from childhood was very conscientious and serious about his duties”.⁴³ This is typical of Anna’s self-deprecating approach in writing her memoirs.

The other evidence historians use to support their argument about the extreme nature of Anna’s love is a letter she wrote to Aleksandr while they two were in prison. She wrote to him: “There is no one better on earth or more kindly than you. It’s not just me who’ll say this, as a sister, everyone who knew you will say this, my beloved little sun!”⁴⁴

In this case it was the situation in which Anna wrote this letter that was extreme, rather than the emotion she expressed. Her brother was facing execution and Anna had been unable to obtain permission to see him.⁴⁵ Naturally she wished to comfort Aleksandr and rally his spirits. Indeed she said herself that her letter was a “a cry of the soul” that was meant both to help the writer and the receiver of the letter.⁴⁶ Aleksandr’s letter to Anna from the same period showed a similar awareness that these would be his last words to her. He wrote: “...from all of my soul I wish you every happiness. Farewell, my dear, with lots of love.”⁴⁷

The male members of the family were also devoted to Aleksandr. Dmitrii, who as the youngest brother saw little of Aleksandr, “remembered with deep feeling” a few brief moments when he felt that Aleksandr was giving him attention.⁴⁸ As a boy Vladimir adored Aleksandr and “usually did everything ‘like Sasha’”.⁴⁹ Indeed, Anna wrote: “...in our family we were all...under the

⁴² ‘Vospominaniia ob Aleksandre’, in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 27 and p. 31.

⁴³ ‘Vospominaniia ob Aleksandre’, in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 31.

⁴⁴ Footnote 1, in *Lenin-Krupskaia-Ul’ianovy, Perepiska 1883-1900*, ed. by Iu.A. Akhapiin and K.F. Bogdanova, (Moscow: “Mysl”, 1981), p. 39.

⁴⁵ Footnote 1, in *Lenin-Krupskaia-Ul’ianovy*, pp. 39-40.

⁴⁶ Footnote 1, in *Lenin-Krupskaia-Ul’ianovy*, p. 39.

⁴⁷ Letter, Aleksandr Il’ich to A.I., 26 April 1887, in *Lenin-Krupskaia-Ul’ianovy*, p. 40.

⁴⁸ ‘Vospominaniia ob Aleksandre’, in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 52.

⁴⁹ M.I., ‘Starshii brat’, in *Vospominaniia o V.I. Lenine*, Volume 1, p. 129.

utter exceptional influence of Sasha, although he himself showed the least attempt to influence others.”⁵⁰

If Anna’s feelings were more intense than theirs, even before Aleksandr’s arrest and execution then this can be explained by her lack of self-confidence and low self-esteem. Indeed, throughout her reminiscences about Aleksandr, it is striking how often Anna compares her young self to Aleksandr and finds only flaws. For example, she admits to calling her father “nasty” and receiving a rebuke from Aleksandr for it.⁵¹ She also compares her intellectual abilities with Aleksandr’s throughout, referring to being “astonished and embarrassed” when Aleksandr complained that he could not work for more than sixteen hours a day because, she implies, her own work hours paled in comparison.⁵² She also mentions realising “with horror” that she did not read anything like the minimum fifty pages a day Pisarev, the author, recommended if one was to become a well-read person.⁵³

Anna was not totally over-awed by her brother however and was prepared to argue with him. They had passionate arguments over literature: in one instance, Aleksandr defended the character Dolokhov in *War and Peace*, against Anna’s criticisms that he was a malicious bully.⁵⁴ As might be expected, in her reminiscences, Anna took the blame for this argument.⁵⁵

Vladimir and Ol’ga were also close companions, who were “inseparable” as children, playing boisterously together as children and later studying together as school pupils.⁵⁶ Indeed, Anna points out that it was Ol’ga’s good example as a conscientious student that inspired Vladimir to work hard during his last years at school.⁵⁷ As Anna grieved for Aleksandr, Vladimir would mourn for Ol’ga. It was he who witnessed the last days of her illness in St Petersburg in 1891, and his first act on arriving back in Russia after his long European exile was to visit Ol’ga’s grave.⁵⁸

⁵⁰ A.I., in *Delo 1 marta*, p. 62.

⁵¹ ‘Vospominaniia ob Aleksandre’, in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 33.

⁵² ‘Vospominaniia ob Aleksandre’, in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 65.

⁵³ ‘Vospominaniia ob Aleksandre’, in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 48.

⁵⁴ ‘Vospominaniia ob Aleksandre’, in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 47.

⁵⁵ ‘Vospominaniia ob Aleksandre’, in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 47 and p. 27.

⁵⁶ ‘Pervaia podrug’, in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 250.

⁵⁷ ‘Vospominaniia ob Il’iche’, in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 18.

⁵⁸ Clark, p. 221.

Vladimir and Mariia also had a special relationship, and it is interesting to note the phrasing Mariia uses to describe it:

I had a sort of absolutely special feeling towards Vladimir Il'ich: warm love together with a form of worship...He never showed any strictness to me, even the other way round, he spoiled me, as the youngest of the family.⁵⁹

As in Anna's case, Mariia's feelings towards Vladimir were not caused by an automatic devotion to male members of the family, but rather by an entirely natural love for a kindly big brother who indulged and protected her as the littlest.⁶⁰ When Mariia wrote that Vladimir "had a very great influence over me throughout my life" it is perhaps not surprising given that the two siblings lived together for most of their adult life.⁶¹ Like Anna's reminiscences of Aleksandr, Mariia's are affected by the fact that Vladimir had passed away when she wrote them.

The sisters' relationships were affected by the age differences between them, which prevented them from being close confidantes in their early years. The age gap between the sisters is illustrated clearly in a letter from Mariia to Ol'ga, who was at university. There was little in common between Mariia's stories of school life and homework and Ol'ga's adult experiences of university.⁶² Anna and Mariia's relationship suffered tensions after Aleksandr's execution. Anna grieved terribly at the loss of her brother, and while helping Mariia with her schoolwork her stress often erupted in "outbursts that brought torment to both of [them]".⁶³ Nonetheless, the sisters always corresponded affectionately with each other. While living away from home and attending music school, Ol'ga admitted to her school friend, A.F. Shcherbo: "I'm depressed...I'm not used to living without Mama and my sisters."⁶⁴ Anna and Mariia's relationship improved as the two women grew older and once both were involved in the revolutionary movement.

⁵⁹ M.I., 'Iz vospominanii', in *Vospominaniia o V.I. Lenine*, Volume 1, p. 129.

⁶⁰ 'My zhili druzhno', *M.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 42.

⁶¹ M.I., 'Moi put' v revoliutsiiu', in *Mariia Il'ichna Ul'ianova*, p. 8.

⁶² Letter, M.I. to O.I., November 1890, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 226, l. 1.

⁶³ M.I., quoted in Service, p. 63.

Far from revolving around Vladimir, or indeed any family member, the Ul'ianov family was a closely-knit unit, within which different relationships flourished. Similarly, Vladimir was not the only one to be given “warm, expectant encouragement” as Service puts it. All the Ul'ianov siblings were encouraged by their parents and by their brothers and sisters, and the family members were endlessly helpful to each other, particularly when it came to school work. It was a pattern the Ul'ianov siblings would follow throughout their lives; their network of support and assistance proved invaluable in the underground years and after the Revolution. The deaths of Il'ia, Aleksandr and Ol'ga brought the remaining family even more closely together. Although still young, Mariia remembered that Aleksandr's execution caused “almost all old links to be broken”.⁶⁵ Even old friends shunned the Ul'ianovs, so that they had no one but themselves to rely on.⁶⁶

THE LEARNING CURVE

One of the key ways that Il'ia Nikolaevich and Mariia Aleksandrovna showed their support and affection for their children was through the educational opportunities they offered them. Despite the fact that Il'ia and Mariia played traditional gender roles, with Il'ia working and Mariia running the household and raising the children, their liberal-progressive attitude to education meant that they rarely differentiated by gender in their treatment of their offspring. All the children were given the opportunity to take piano lessons, regardless of gender, even though, as Dmitrii wrote, “in those days piano playing was considered rather an unsuitable occupation for boys”.⁶⁷ Il'ia taught all his children how to play chess and helped them all with maths and physics.⁶⁸ Mariia Aleksandrovna taught the boys and girls alike to read, and helped all the children to learn foreign languages.

⁶⁴ Letter, O.I. to A.F. Shcherbo, 4 January 1888, in f. 11, o. 4, ed. khr. 207, l. 6.

⁶⁵ M.I., ‘Moi put' v revoliutsiiu’ in *Mariia Il'inichna Ul'ianova*, p. 7.

⁶⁶ M.I., ‘Moi put' v revoliutsiiu’ in *Mariia Il'inichna Ul'ianova*, p. 7; N.K. Krupskaiia, *Reminiscences of Lenin*, (Moscow: Foreign Publishing House, 1959), pp. 13-14.

⁶⁷ D.I., ‘Liubov' k muzyke’, in *Vospominaniia o V.I. Lenine*, Volume 1, p. 108.

⁶⁸ Kovnator, p. 29; ‘K stat'i G. V. Nazar'eva’, in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 258.

Anna, Ol'ga and Mariia also received exactly the same educational opportunities as their brothers. All three went to the girls' gimnazia and excelled at school. Anna finished school a year and a half early and still graduated with a gold medal. Ol'ga was also a first class, gold medal pupil, and passed her school exams despite the fact that Aleksandr had only recently been executed. Mariia was successful enough to secure a place at university.

The reaction of those around the Ul'ianov daughters to their dedication to and impressive record in education is revealing of societal views of women's education at the time. Education for girls was not common in those days: Drabkina highlights this by pointing out how unusual it is that in a photograph of Anna and Aleksandr taken in the 1870s, Anna is holding an open book.⁶⁹ A friend of the family expressed similar sentiments of Anna: he noted that she was the only woman in her secondary school class to go on to higher education and was impressed that her enthusiasm for education matched Aleksandr's.⁷⁰ Similarly, a family friend, V.V. Vodovozov, was "amazed" by Ol'ga's "serious and extremely productive reading".⁷¹

Of course the education system itself had an inbuilt gender bias at this time. In contrast to the boys' gimnazia, the girls' school did not teach logic or the ancient languages (hence Anna had to turn to Vladimir for help with Latin).⁷² Instead, Anna, Ol'ga and Mariia received pedagogy and didactics lessons.⁷³ These two classes meant that on graduating from secondary school the girls were qualified to teach at home and in state schools.⁷⁴ Girls also received sewing lessons.⁷⁵ For no clear reason the marking system was different for the girls: boys were marked out of five, girls out of twelve.⁷⁶

Although Il'ia and Mariia Aleksandrovna were happy to send their girls to university, the system itself meant that the opportunities open to Anna, Ol'ga and Mariia were limited. They could only attend the Bestuzhev Women's Courses at separate institutions to the main university and the courses taught were limited to

⁶⁹ E. Ia. Drabkina, *A.I. Ul'ianova-Elizarova*, (Moscow: Politizdat, 1979), p. 8.

⁷⁰ A.I., in *Delo 1 marta*, p. 73.

⁷¹ 'Pervaia podruga', in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 252.

⁷² Kovnator, p. 19.

⁷³ Kovnator, p. 19.

⁷⁴ Kovnator, p. 20.

⁷⁵ Kovnator, p. 19.

⁷⁶ Kovnator, p. 17.

certain subjects. Nonetheless, all three girls enrolled at university and although none completed their studies, this was not due to parental pressure or academic failure. Anna was expelled after her brother's attempt to assassinate the Tsar, Ol'ga died at the end of her first year and Mariia's study was disrupted by her revolutionary activities and by those of her family. Indeed she was refused entry to the St Petersburg Higher Women's Courses probably on political grounds and had to enrol on a two-year science course in Moscow instead.⁷⁷ Mariia continued to study sporadically for many years, enrolling at Brussels University and at the Sorbonne in Paris.

The girls' attitude to education gives a real insight into their characters. Anna found secondary education very traumatic and desperately wanted to learn at home.⁷⁸ She felt that she could not turn to her father on this matter, for he would interpret her request as a manifestation of "laziness".⁷⁹ Anna also asserted that her father's approach to education, which entailed giving minimal praise for academic achievement, was not suitable for all the children of the family, particularly the girls. She wrote:

Now, when I look back at our childhood, I think it would have been better if [father's] generally correct pedagogical approach had not been followed so undeviatingly. It was only fully suitable for my brother Vladimir, for it represented a useful corrective to his great self-confidence and his brilliance at school...For all of us – especially for the girls, who suffered from a certain lack of belief in our strengths – a little dose of praise would have been useful.⁸⁰

This lack of confidence is again apparent when one assesses Anna and Mariia's experience of higher education. Anna waited for two years after finishing school before she enrolled at university so that she could go to St Petersburg with Aleksandr. She also described how unsure she felt when she first arrived at the Higher Women's courses. While Aleksandr seemed to establish a study routine very quickly and appeared to know what books and

⁷⁷ O.D. Ul'ianova, 'Mariia Il'inichna Ul'ianova', in *M.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 18.

⁷⁸ 'Vospominaniia ob Aleksandre', in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 39.

⁷⁹ 'Vospominaniia ob Aleksandre', in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 39.

articles to read, and where to find them, Anna struggled to adapt to the new university life.⁸¹ She felt that she “rushed about and searched [for things]...and wasted time in vain”.⁸² Also Anna held only vague ambitions about her future career, dreaming of perhaps becoming a writer.⁸³ Similarly, when Mariia, having left the Moscow science course, considered going abroad to continue her studies, her confidence seems to have wobbled. Vladimir wrote to his mother: “Maniasha, I think, is wrong to hesitate. It would be useful for her to live and study abroad in one of the capitals, and studying in Belgium is especially convenient.”⁸⁴

However, the lack of confidence felt by Anna and Mariia cannot be entirely blamed on their upbringing because Ol’ga, in contrast, was far more confident in her attitude towards education, especially at university level. She saw education as a means of fulfilling her deep desire to do socially useful work and her tenacity in pursuing her dream shows perhaps how similar her character was to Vladimir’s. What is interesting is that in her case the only barriers to achieving her aims appear to have been related to politics and practicalities, not to societal obstacles relating to her sex. Ol’ga was thwarted in her aim to become a teacher, one of the few professions specifically open to women and in her view “one of the most useful and highest occupations”, because of her family’s reputation of being politically unreliable.⁸⁵ For a time she pursued her education at music school, mainly to please her mother, but an injury to her hand meant that Ol’ga could never become a professional piano player and had to leave the school.⁸⁶ However, Ol’ga wrote to Shcherbo: “I am absolutely not as grieved by the fact that it is impossible for me to play as everyone thinks; now my head is full of dreams about going to Helsinki [to study medicine].”⁸⁷ This for Ol’ga was the next great, societal profession after teaching. Here it appears that Ol’ga was deeply impressed by the role model of her aunt Anna Ivanovna

⁸⁰ A.I., in *Delo I marta*, p. 49.

⁸¹ A.I., in *Delo I marta*, p. 69.

⁸² A.I., in *Delo I marta*, p. 69.

⁸³ ‘Vospominaniia ob Aleksandre’, in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 51.

⁸⁴ Letter, V.I. to M.A., 16 August 1898, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 55, p. 98.

⁸⁵ Letter, O.I. to A.F. Shcherbo, 22 August 1888, in f.14, o. 1, ed. khr. 207, l. 9; M.I., ‘Sestra Ol’ga Il’inichna’, in f. 14. o. 1, ed. khr. 208, l. 9.

⁸⁶ Letter, O.I. to A.F. Shcherbo, 24 March 1889, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 207, l. 16; ‘Pervaia podrug’, in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 251.

⁸⁷ Letter, O.I. to A.F. Shcherbo, 6 April 1889, in f. 14. o. 1, ed. khr. 207, l. 20.

Veretennikova who was herself a doctor and with whom Ol'ga stayed in 1887-1888 while attending music school.⁸⁸

Ol'ga was again prevented from embarking on this because on top of English and Swedish which she had taught herself, she would also have to learn Finnish. Loathe to waste another year, she enrolled at the Women's Courses in St Petersburg instead.⁸⁹ Vladimir had been refused entry in St Petersburg because he was seen as politically unreliable, but Ol'ga was granted permission to attend for the police could find no evidence that she shared her brother's tendency.⁹⁰ Even in the short time Ol'ga attended university, she proved herself to be a brilliant scholar.⁹¹

Despite the sisters' emancipated upbringing, only Ol'ga seems to have taken an active interest in the women question while at university. There is no mention of it in references to Mariia's university career and only one reference to Anna discussing the issue informally with her cousins.⁹² In contrast, Ol'ga participated in what she described as "lively" debates on the "women's question" with her fellow students at their formal discussion circle.⁹³

Interestingly, while at university, both Anna and Ol'ga expressed similar, fairly conservative views about women's dress. Near the start of her university career in St Petersburg, Anna observed groups of female nihilist students who, she described, dressed in red, with short hair and who behaved in a way that Anna felt was aggressive and rude.⁹⁴ Aleksandr also saw these women and very definitely disapproved of their actions. Later when Aleksandr, Anna and some others were discussing the women, to provoke her brother, Anna asked him how women should dress. Aleksandr replied "like mother!" which was, as Anna went on to explain, "neatly, and above all modestly".⁹⁵ Ever loyal in her reminiscences, Anna defended Aleksandr's words by arguing that her brother

⁸⁸ Kovnator, p. 106.

⁸⁹ 'Pervaia podrug', in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 252.

⁹⁰ Letter, Samara Gubernator to Police Department, 18 April 1890, in f. 11, o. 4, ed. khr. 9, l. 2; P. Durnii, of the Police Department, to Samara Gubernator, 19 April 1890, in f. 11, o. 4, ed. khr. 9, l. 3.

⁹¹ Z.P. Krzhizhanovskaia, quoted in M.I., 'Sestra Ol'ga Il'inichna', in f. 14, o. 1. ed. khr. 208, l. 10.

⁹² A.I., in *Delo 1 marta*, p. 69.

⁹³ A.I., in *Delo 1 marta*, p. 69; Letter, O.I. to A.I., 5 March 1891, in *Lenin-Krupskaia-Ul'ianovy*, p. 64.

⁹⁴ A.I., in *Delo 1 marta*, p. 68.

⁹⁵ A.I., in *Delo 1 marta*, p. 69.

was in favour of women's emancipation and adds that his comments only point to his respect for his mother, and the influence she had in the family.⁹⁶ It is not clear what Anna's view of the nihilists' appearance was, but it seems that she did not believe that clothes should occupy the mind of an intelligent woman. For example, Anna wrote approvingly of her mother:

As she took no interest in clothes, gossip or scandal which at that time were the only topics of discussion in female society, Mariia Aleksandrovna confined herself to the family circle, devoting all her sensitivity and earnestness to the education of her children.⁹⁷

Ol'ga too had an experience of the nihilists. Although it is not clear what her opinion of them was (she did not confide in Shcherbo about them, for example), it is interesting that her biographer felt it necessary to reassure the reader that Ol'ga was not a nihilist because "she was pretty, not short-haired, and she did not wear glasses".⁹⁸ Ol'ga on another occasion expressed the same kind of attitude towards a woman's dress that Aleksandr did, writing to her mother that she did not wear a particular dress because it was "too showy".⁹⁹ Looks seem to have played on Ol'ga's mind. In one letter to Shcherbo she wrote the following about her friend Shtral':

Even if we assume she is stupid – [the cause of it is] difficult to determine: is she stupid because her head is so full of ideas about her beauty that there is no room for serious ideas, or, the other way round, as a result of her stupidity she is absorbed with ideas about her allegedly unequalled beauty... Yet all the same she really isn't an idiot.¹⁰⁰

Ol'ga died before she could fully become involved in social democracy, but both Anna and Mariia, once familiar with its theoretical ideas about women's

⁹⁶ A.I., in *Delo 1 marta*, p. 69.

⁹⁷ A.I., 'Vospominaniia ob Il'iche', in *Vospominaniia o V.I. Lenine*, Volume 1, p. 17.

⁹⁸ Kovnator, p. 117.

⁹⁹ Letter, O.I. to M.A., 21 February 1891, in *Lenin-Krupskaia-Ul'ianovy*, p. 59.

¹⁰⁰ Letter, O.I. to A.F. Shcherbo, 2 September 1888, in f. 11, o. 4, ed. khr. 207, l. 10.

role in society embraced the concept that women should be relieved from their traditional duties at home so that they might participate equally with men in the building of socialism. Yet neither fully escaped their upbringing and the model of their parents' traditional division of labour affected their adult family lives.

Their parents' example did not define the sisters' whole outlook however, and of course, after Il'ia's death, Mariia Aleksandrovna's role in the family (and the role model she represented) had changed, from teacher and carer to the head of the household, with the main income. Anna, Ol'ga and Mariia were intelligent, well-read young women who were embarking on university educations. At this early stage they did not expect to be revolutionaries and instead were planning to pursue independent careers. They were used to relying on the help, encouragement and support of their siblings and parents, and to giving the same in return. The close relationships between Anna and Aleksandr, Ol'ga and Vladimir, and Vladimir and Mariia would colour all their lives, but Anna's budding friendship with little Mariia would also be important. The loss of Il'ia and Ol'ga, and Aleksandr's execution changed the Ul'ianov family forever, but as the remaining siblings each found their way into the revolution, their close network of familial ties would be fundamental to their work in the underground years.

CHAPTER TWO

BECOMING REVOLUTIONARIES

By the time of Aleksandr's arrest, Anna had already begun to come into contact with revolutionary ideas in St Petersburg, while the other Ul'ianov children were still young and at home, and unaware of their elder siblings' illegal activities. This situation, in itself, points to the fact that Anna, Ol'ga and Mariia would become revolutionaries at different times and in different ways. However, the portrayal in histories of the sisters' development as revolutionaries suggests a much more homogenous experience, mainly because it is influenced by the solar system myth and Soviet historiography. The solar system myth ensures that Lenin's authority over and guidance of his sisters is unquestioned. He taught them about Marxism and led them into the revolution. In Soviet historiography Lenin was the founder and leader of a new form of Marxist/social democratic thought, who was galvanised into action by the execution of his brother, but who rejected Aleksandr's ideology and methods, in favour of a new path.¹

The influence of these two narratives is clear in various quotations from the sisters' biographies. Drabkina put it thus: "Aleksandr made Anna Il'inichna a revolutionary, Vladimir made her a Marxist."² P. Kudelli, a revolutionary comrade of Anna's, concurred, writing: "Under the influence of reading and conversations with Vladimir Il'ich, a Marxist outlook began to take shape in Anna Il'inichna."³ Similar assertions are made regarding Mariia. The author and biographer of Mariia, V. Diagilev asserted: "Doubtless, [Mariia] followed [Vladimir's] advice, especially that regarding education, reading, choice of books and articles."⁴ Even Ol'ga, who is rarely described as a revolutionary, is portrayed as one led entirely by Vladimir's guidance: "It is doubtless that Ol'ga was introduced to Marxist literature with her brother's help."⁵ This image has

¹ Mariia played a key role in the creation of this myth, which I will discuss in Chapter 7.

² Drabkina, p. 54. Elizaveta Drabkina was herself a Bolshevikka, though younger than Anna. Born to Fedosiia Drabkina and Sergei Gusev. Gusev was a friend of the Ul'ianovs and both were members of the RSDRP. Elizaveta remained in the Party after the Revolution and fought for the Bolsheviks during the Civil War, but was arrested with her mother during the Purges (*Bolshevik Women*, p. 89, p. 90, p. 176, p. 184 and p. 281).

³ Kudelli, in *Krasnaia letopis'*, No. 1, 1936, p. 202.

⁴ Vladimir Diagilev, *M.I. Ul'ianova*, (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1980), p. 13.

⁵ Kovnator, p. 78.

been taken up by Western historians as well. Service wrote: “[Vladimir], the golden boy at home and in the gimnazia retained this status into adulthood... The version of Marxism favoured by Anna, Dmitrii and Mariia was a reflection of his.”⁶

However, the processes by which Anna, Ol’ga and Mariia became familiar with revolutionary ideas and, in Anna and Mariia’s case, became active in revolutionary life were very different to those described by the above historians and more importantly took a different form to their brother’s. Each sister followed her own unique path into the revolution, influenced by her age, her character and her life experiences. The exchange of literature and ideas between the Ul’ianov siblings played a key role in this development. Vladimir was an important figure, but not necessarily the dominant one, and certainly not the only influence the Ul’ianov women came into contact with.

THE ELDEST

Anna’s experience of becoming a revolutionary was unique amongst the Ul’ianov family in that she was part of the same radical community as Aleksandr and the only one who, after March 1887, could describe it to her siblings, who were desperate to understand why their brother had attempted to assassinate the Tsar. Anna attended university at a time when revolutionary thought was in flux. Amongst students there was no unifying plan or leadership guiding political action.⁷ Most students became acquainted with revolutionary ideas through *zemliachestva*, which were groups of people from the same region or town who banded together while living or working away from home to provide support and friendship to each other.⁸ Often *zemliachestva*, particularly those with student memberships, became discussion groups and forums for revolutionary ideas and as a result they were banned. Nonetheless, students still found ways of gathering in these groups, often using the guise of an engagement party or a family evening.⁹ From these were formed small study groups, which debated various

⁶ Service, p. 160.

⁷ V.V. Bartenev, ‘Vospominaniia peterburzhtsa o vtoroi polovine 80-kh godov’, in *Delo 1 marta*, p. 18.

⁸ E.G. Salita, *Stasov v Peterburge – Petrograde*, (Leningrad: Lenizdat, 1982), p. 240.

⁹ A.I., in *Delo 1 marta*, p. 81.

current questions and read texts on history and political economy, including banned books from abroad, and occasionally worked for the Red Cross, an organisation which gave support to political prisoners and exiles.¹⁰ Adherents to the ideas of the terrorist organisation, the People's Will, could still be found, but the first group dedicated to social democracy had also been established in St Petersburg, though its members were workers, rather than students.¹¹ Others combined their support for terrorism as a legitimate form of political activity with a knowledge of political economy gleaned from writers such as Mill, Spencer and Chernyshevskii.¹² Aleksandr believed in terrorism, but in his attitude towards the economy, he took a distinctly Marxist view that the road to socialism was through the development of capitalism, not through the peasant commune.¹³ New tactics of propaganda and agitation were also emerging, with certain study groups running education circles of workers and reproducing and distributing illegal literature.¹⁴

In her autobiography, Anna did not acknowledge her time at university as one where she developed her revolutionary views or even participated in revolutionary activities. Just as Anna admired Aleksandr's rapid adjustment to academic life and despaired at her own attempts to study, she also felt at a disadvantage in relation to revolutionary ideas. She wrote:

[Amongst the students] there was in general a revolutionary mood, like almost all the youth of that time, but I did not succeed in defining my own political position, as I was arrested on 1st March 1887 in my final year in connection with my brother Aleksandr's case – the attempted assassination of Aleksandr III.¹⁵

Anna's feeling that she did not define her political views at university is typical of her self-deprecating autobiographical style, yet there were incidents

¹⁰ Bartenev, in *Delo 1 marta*, p. 18.

¹¹ Bartenev, in *Delo 1 marta*, p. 19.

¹² Bartenev, in *Delo 1 marta*, p. 18.

¹³ 'Vospominaniia ob Aleksandre', in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 80; I.N. Chebotarev, 'Vospominaniia ob Aleksandre Il'iche Ul'ianove i peterburgskom studenchestve 1883-1887 gg.', in *Delo 1 marta*, p. 244.

¹⁴ Bartenev, in *Delo 1 marta*, p. 18.

¹⁵ A.I., 'Avtobiografiia', in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 1, l. 3.

which discouraged Anna from involving herself in radical circles. Once, when Anna asked Aleksandr what her greatest flaw was, he replied immediately that it was her lack of social convictions.¹⁶ Indeed, this was one of the reasons Aleksandr deliberately shielded Anna from his more risky activities.¹⁷

At a study group meeting, Anna presented her research into the issue of the economic situation of the peasantry.¹⁸ Other members of the circle criticised her for not having carried out sufficient reading in order to contribute to the debate. Anna remembered later: “I despairingly defended myself saying that though I had made extracts from all the assigned texts I was not guilty if there were no references to the question in them.”¹⁹ Aleksandr defended Anna, but only towards the end of the argument.²⁰ After that, though she was “captivated” by what she heard about the economics circle that her brother and his friends all discussed avidly, she decided not to attend. She felt she had not read enough about political economy, to go “to such an intellectual circle”.²¹

Despite these discouraging moments and the fact that Anna felt that she did not find her political voice, her autobiography does not reflect the wealth of experiences she had of student radicalism during her university years, which, incidentally, she describes in more detail in her reminiscences about Aleksandr. Anna became familiar with revolutionary ideas, participated in illegal meetings and a political demonstration, worked for the Red Cross and gained some understanding of conspiratorial methods.

Anna and Aleksandr were drawn into radical activities when they joined their *zemliachestvo*, the Simbirsk student society. Invited to join by their old friend from home, I.N. Chebotarev, initially neither Ul’ianov was particularly keen to take up the invitation, especially Anna, who was the only young woman from Simbirsk to pursue higher education that year. However, both overcame their reservations and became members.²² The two soon became friends with Mark Timofeevich Elizarov, a fellow student from a Samaran peasant family. Anna and Mark often posed as fiances when attending the ‘family gatherings’

¹⁶ A.I., in *Delo 1 marta*, p. 93.

¹⁷ ‘Vospominaniia ob Aleksandre’, in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 76.

¹⁸ ‘Vospominaniia ob Aleksandre’, in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 69.

¹⁹ A.I. in *Delo 1 marta*, p. 80.

²⁰ A.I., in *Delo 1 marta*, p. 80.

²¹ A.I., in *Delo 1 marta*, p. 93.

²² ‘Vospominaniia ob Aleksandre’, in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 63.

which were arranged as a cover for student discussion meetings and here Anna participated fully.²³

Alongside Aleksandr, Anna attended lectures by V.I. Semevskii, a historian of the Russian peasantry, whose course was withdrawn from the university curriculum in 1884 as part of the Minister of Public Education's reactionary measures.²⁴ After Semevskii was banned from speaking at the university, he continued to give very popular lectures at his flat, to which Anna and Aleksandr often went. Once Aleksandr missed a lecture and Semevskii allowed Anna to take some illegal literature to him.²⁵ Because Aleksandr lived close to Semevskii's flat, she carried the pamphlets in her arms.²⁶ When she arrived at the flat, he was horrified (and a little amused) that she so openly and brazenly brought illegal literature to him.²⁷ Anna's retort was that his flat was so nearby no one would have had a chance to read the titles of what she was carrying.²⁸

Anna first read Marx when Aleksandr turned to her for help translating an article by Marx about religion in *Deutsch-französische Jahrbücher*.²⁹ Anna joked in reminiscences that though she enthusiastically corrected the text, she herself was not familiar with Marx at that time.³⁰ In fact almost no study groups at this time tackled Marx because it was so difficult, but individuals like Aleksandr did.³¹ Aleksandr read *Das Kapital* in the summer of 1886.³² And although Anna did not attend Aleksandr's economics study group, she heard all about it from her brother, Mark and Chebotarev.³³

Anna also involved herself in student activities independently of Aleksandr. She participated in a history group, presenting a paper at it and also

²³ P.P. Elizarov, 'Pervoe politicheskoe delo A.I. Ul'ianovoi-Elizarovoi', 5 July 1964, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 465, l. 3.

²⁴ Letter, A.I. Ul'ianov to I.N. Ul'ianov, 6 October 1884, in *Perepiska sem'i Ul'ianovykh, 1883-1917*, ed. by N.N. Simagin and A.G. Vinogradova, (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1969), pp. 16-17.

²⁵ A.I., in *Delo 1 marta*, p. 81.

²⁶ A.I., in *Delo 1 marta*, p. 81.

²⁷ A.I., in *Delo 1 marta*, p. 81.

²⁸ A.I., in *Delo 1 marta*, p. 81.

²⁹ A.I., in *Delo 1 marta*, p. 107.

³⁰ A.I., in *Delo 1 marta*, p. 107.

³¹ Bartenev, in *Delo 1 marta*, p. 18.

³² 'Vospominaniia ob Aleksandre', in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 80.

³³ A.I., in *Delo 1 marta*, p. 93.

wrote short stories and poetry about societal and revolutionary themes.³⁴ In one poem Anna likened the growing revolutionary mood of the people to a storm on the Vol'ga and in a short story, *Iz zhizni devochek* (From the Life of Girls), Anna drew on her observations of the people of St Petersburg to highlight social problems.³⁵ This story was published in *Rabotnitsa* in 1914.³⁶

When Aleksandr and his friend Orlovskii suggested organising a student deputation to the writer M.E. Saltykov-Shchedrin, a satirical journalist and social commentator, whose radical journal *Otechestvennie zapiski* (Notes of the Fatherland) had been shut down, Anna took it upon herself to write an address to Shchedrin from her class at the Bestuzhev Courses.³⁷ It was presented to him at a student meeting at his flat, which Aleksandr did not attend.³⁸ The following day N.V. Stasova, one of the course leaders and a prominent campaigner for the extension of women's education, privately passed on a message from Shchedrin that of all the letters he had received, Anna's had given him the most pleasure.³⁹ Aleksandr was surprised to learn from Anna that she had written the address.⁴⁰

On 17 November 1886 Anna participated in her first political demonstration in celebration of the 25th anniversary of the death of N.A. Dobroliubov, a writer who used literary criticism to "propagate...the ideas of a revolutionary democratic transformation of society" and who was a close colleague of Chernyshevskii.⁴¹ Anna remembered being with Aleksandr throughout the demonstration, which meant that when he urged the demonstration to go right up to the mounted police posted at the Neva, she was right beside him.⁴² Despite the fact that many of the demonstrators were

³⁴ 'Vospominaniia ob Aleksandre', in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 76.

³⁵ 'Vospominaniia ob Aleksandre', in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 64.

³⁶ 'Vospominaniia ob Aleksandre', in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 64.

³⁷ 'Vospominaniia ob Aleksandre', in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 67; I.P. Foote, Introduction to *Saltykov-Shchedrin's The Golovlyovs: A Critical Companion*, ed. by I.P. Foote, (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1997), p. i. Shchedrin was M.E. Saltykov's pen-name. He was commonly known as Saltykov-Shchedrin or, as Anna referred to him, as Shchedrin.

³⁸ 'Vospominaniia ob Aleksandre', in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 67.

³⁹ 'Vospominaniia ob Aleksandre', in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 67; *Bolshevik Women*, p. 22. Nadezhda Stasova was also the paternal aunt of E.D. Stasova, a member of the RSDRP, a Bolshevik and a member of the government after 1917 (*Bolshevik Women*, p. 22, p. 81 and p. 138).

⁴⁰ 'Vospominaniia ob Aleksandre', in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 67.

⁴¹ 'Vospominaniia ob Aleksandre', in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 89; N.A. Dobroliubov, *Selected Philosophical Essays*, trans. by J. Fineberg, (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1948), p. xii.

⁴² A.I. in *Delo 1 marta*, p. 102.

arrested, Anna recalled the “happy, celebratory and brotherly” mood amongst those who congregated at Aleksandr’s flat afterwards.⁴³ The Ul’ianovs’ friend, Mark, captured the feeling when he exclaimed at one point: “We have such a united soul, gentlemen!”⁴⁴

Anna believed that the demonstration and its clash with the police, was one of the factors which led Aleksandr to turn to terrorist activities.⁴⁵ For her part, Anna became more involved in the activities of Aleksandr’s friends from the economic study group. Anna helped in the distribution of a leaflet about the demonstration, agreeing to post the letters. Although she was warned not to put bundles of the envelopes in individual post-boxes to avoid arousing suspicion, Anna was so exhausted on the day that she posted them all into one!⁴⁶ Anna had yet to learn the conspiratorial tricks of the underground movement.

Anna also began fund-raising for the Red Cross, which provided support to political prisoners and exiles. However, she was warned off this activity by N.K. Vinberg, the father of one of her class-mates. As Anna found out later, Vinberg had had links with revolutionaries during the period just after Aleksandr II’s assassination and had suffered the political consequences for it.⁴⁷ In February 1887, when Anna showed him a Red Cross leaflet and asked for money, he warned her never to use it when asking people for money, for the leaflet would only lead to her “downfall”.⁴⁸ Although Anna did not destroy the leaflet as Vinberg advised, she stopped approaching people with it.⁴⁹

Anna was also to learn the hard way the importance of the meticulous protection of secret information when it was sent in the post. Aleksandr used Anna’s ‘clean’ address to receive a telegram from one of his co-conspirators. On the night of the attempt on the Tsar’s life, Anna was arrested at Aleksandr’s flat, where she was looking for her brother, and when his flat was searched, the telegram was found.⁵⁰ Although Anna had had no idea about Aleksandr’s plan to assassinate the Tsar, she was imprisoned and exiled for five years under police

⁴³ ‘Vospominaniia ob Aleksandre’, in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 87.

⁴⁴ ‘Vospominaniia ob Aleksandre’, in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 87.

⁴⁵ ‘Vospominaniia ob Aleksandre’, in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 88.

⁴⁶ A.I., in *Delo 1 marta*, pp. 106-107.

⁴⁷ ‘Vospominaniia ob Aleksandre’, in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 97.

⁴⁸ A.I., in *Delo 1 marta*, p. 116.

⁴⁹ A.I., in *Delo 1 marta*, p. 116.

⁵⁰ ‘Vospominaniia ob Aleksandre’, in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 93 and p. 102.

surveillance.⁵¹ Initially she was to be sent to Siberia, but the husband of one of Mariia Aleksandrovna's cousins, M.L. Peskovskii, intervened on her behalf and Anna was allowed to serve her exile at the family's estate, Kokushkino.⁵² Aleksandr was executed on 8 May 1887.

THE NEXT GENERATION

The shock of Aleksandr's arrest and execution was very great for the whole Ul'ianov family and represented the end of the happy and carefree childhood of the other siblings. Former friends shunned the family members, Mariia Aleksandrovna almost lost her pension and the family had to move to Kazan.⁵³ The loss of Aleksandr changed Ol'ga's personality. No longer sanguine, she wrote to her friend Shcherbo:

And happiness? Where is it? Where are happy people? No, I absolutely do not believe in happiness, but believe only that it is possible to forget about unhappiness, one's own and other's (and that only partly), by fulfilling one's duty.⁵⁴

Above all though, the greatest consequence of Aleksandr's execution was that it spurred the younger siblings, Vladimir and Ol'ga into revolutionary activities. Anna wrote: "The arrest and execution of their brother strongly revolutionised them both. This was especially noticeable in Ol'ga – she was more effusive."⁵⁵ Indeed, on hearing the news of her brother's execution, Ol'ga apparently vowed through her tears that she would kill the Tsar herself.⁵⁶

The Ul'ianov siblings faced the problem that they had no idea why Aleksandr had tried to assassinate the Tsar. Even Anna did not know any details about the terrorist plot. Nor was there a "socio-political movement" in Simbirsk

⁵¹ Letter, Gubernator of Kazan to G. Laishevskii, Uezd Chief of Police, 26 May 1887, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 13, l. 3.

⁵² 'Vospominaniia ob Aleksandre', in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 103. Peskovskii was the husband of Mariia Aleksandrovna's cousin, E.I. Veretennikova.

⁵³ M.I., 'Moi put' v revoliutsiiu' in *Mariia Il'inichna Ul'ianova*, p. 7.

⁵⁴ Letter, O.I. to A.F. Shcherbo, 4 January 1888, in f. 11, o. 4, ed. khr. 207, l. 5.

⁵⁵ Alekseev, p. 64.

⁵⁶ Kovnator, p. 41.

that Vladimir and Ol'ga could join.⁵⁷ So they began to try to retrace Aleksandr's last steps. Anna still had links with her brother's friends and Ol'ga would visit some in St Petersburg when she attended university.⁵⁸ Others, like Chebotarev and Mark, came to see Anna and added their own information about Aleksandr, his activities, his views and his trial.⁵⁹

Anna was able to shed some light on the ideas with which she and Aleksandr had come into contact and the types of activities they had been involved in together. Vladimir and Ol'ga often spoke to Anna about Aleksandr and heard from their mother about her meetings with Aleksandr in prison.⁶⁰ It is not difficult to see how Aleksandr could have become a posthumous centre of the family at least while all their attention was devoted to investigating his last months.

Aside from specific details about Aleksandr, Anna was also able to share her experiences of conspiratorial techniques and to offer advice to Vladimir, who was exiled to Kokushkino for participating in a student demonstration at Kazan university in December 1887. When Anna found him writing letters to his friends in Kazan asking about student unrest there, she was quick to point out that despite his attempts to use epithets for more sensitive issues he was endangering himself and his friends with such letters.⁶¹ Although it was often difficult to change Vladimir's mind, in this case he took Anna's advice and destroyed the letters.⁶² Now that Anna and Vladimir were both in exile, coping with police surveillance was a daily task, to which the Ul'ianov siblings quickly became accustomed.⁶³

The time at Kokushkino was an important formative period for Anna and Vladimir, during which they worked together to learn about the revolution. Indeed in the winter of 1887-88 "Anna Il'ichna was with her brother [Vladimir] all the time".⁶⁴ In her popular *Reminiscences of Il'ich* (1934), Anna

⁵⁷ Alekseev, p. 64.

⁵⁸ Letter, O.I. to A.I., 26 September 1890, in *Lenin-Krupskaia-Ulianovy*, p. 41.

⁵⁹ Anatolii Ivanovich Ivanskii, *Molodie gody V.I. Lenina po vospominaniiam sovremennikov i dokumentam*, (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo TsK VLKSM "Molodaia gvardiia", 1958), p. 236.

⁶⁰ Trotsky, *Young Lenin*, p. 118.

⁶¹ 'Vospominaniia ob Il'iche', in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 119.

⁶² 'Vospominaniia ob Il'iche', in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 119.

⁶³ A.I., 'Primechaniia k stat'e A. Tabeiko "Iz proshlogo tov. Lenina"', in *A.I. O V.I. Lenine*, p. 294.

⁶⁴ Drabkina, p. 47.

portrayed her relationship to Vladimir as that of pupil of a revolutionary teacher and gave very few details about her own research, writing, for example: “I read a lot, chatted with V.I. and took shape as a Marxist”.⁶⁵ However, it is also possible to detect information in her reminiscences that shows that the two worked together in Kokushkino. She wrote:

We joined Kazan library [by post], and subscribed to newspapers. I remember what events they were for us when they arrived from the town and how impatiently we opened the...[parcel], which contained books, newspapers and letters.⁶⁶

Vladimir returned to Kazan and the other Ul'ianovs in the autumn of 1888; Anna stayed with the family briefly over the winter, due to illness.⁶⁷ By this time, Vladimir was reading Volume 1 of Marx's *Das Kapital* and making contact with local revolutionaries, joining, for example, a Marxist revolutionary circle in Kazan run by the intellectual N.E. Fedoseev.⁶⁸ It seems from Anna's reminiscences that she did not go with him, but she does not say why not.⁶⁹ It was perhaps due to the fact that her period of exile was already five years and while under police surveillance she did not want to make matters worse. However, though Anna could not attend, she remembers “long walks and conversations” with her brother about his ideas and his reading and about his meetings.⁷⁰ She wrote: “Volodia told me about essays which were read at his group; he talked about several meetings with great gusto.”⁷¹

While keeping Anna and Vladimir under surveillance, the police also kept a close eye on the other members of the Ul'ianov family. Their reports show that they expected Mariia Aleksandrovna and the other children to be influenced by their siblings and “the evil influence...of their extremely harmful relation – Mark Timofeevich (now Anna's husband)”.⁷² When Ol'ga applied to enrol at

⁶⁵ A.I., ‘Avtobiografiia’, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 1, l. 3.

⁶⁶ ‘Vospominaniia ob Il'iche’, in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 119.

⁶⁷ Letter, Kazan Gubernator to Department of Police, 18 September 1888, in GARF, f. 1764, o. 1, no. 20, l. 35.

⁶⁸ ‘Vospominaniia ob Il'iche’, in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 120 and p. 122.

⁶⁹ ‘Vospominaniia ob Il'iche’, in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 122.

⁷⁰ ‘Vospominaniia ob Il'iche’, in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 120.

⁷¹ ‘Vospominaniia ob Il'iche’, in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 120.

⁷² Kovnator, p. 84.

university, P. Durnii of the Samara police department admitted: “[regarding Ol’ga] nothing reprehensible or politically unreliable has been noted, even though she lives with her sister Anna Elizarova...and her brother Vladimir Ul’ianov, who [are both] under police surveillance...”⁷³ It is important to note that the police looked for dangerous influences equally in both brother and sister.

Biographers of Ol’ga, like the police of the time, overlook her revolutionary inclinations. Many stress, like Anna, that had Ol’ga not died so tragically when she was twenty it is “doubtless that [she] would have been an ardent revolutionary”.⁷⁴ Shcherbo even asserted that Ol’ga ran an ‘underground newspaper’ at school and used this as evidence of her conspiratorial instincts.⁷⁵ The irony of this type of endeavour is that it totally overlooks the fact that Ol’ga did become involved in the revolutionary movement. She was familiar with revolutionary ideas and knew various underground activists even before she enrolled at university.

Although Ol’ga did not live with Anna and Vladimir during the winter of 1887-88 and therefore did not study alongside them, she did begin to learn English and read a lot in French.⁷⁶ Knowledge of these languages would enable her to read much illegal foreign literature. Ol’ga was not able to immerse herself in revolutionary literature while at music school, but she did come into contact with other radical students. While the rest of the family moved to Kokushkino, Ol’ga remained in Kazan and lived with her aunt Anna Aleksandrovna Veretennikova.⁷⁷ At this “noisy, happy, youthful” house, as one biographer of Ol’ga put it, “there were several students, [and] discussions constantly took place on political and scientific themes. Young Ol’ga listened to them attentively”.⁷⁸ Her aunt wrote poems about current affairs and was sympathetic to the student radicalism of the time.⁷⁹

⁷³ Letter, Samara Gubernator to Police Department, 18 April 1890, in f. 11, o. 4, ed. khr. 9, l. 2; P. Durnii, of the Police Department, to Samara Gubernator, 19 April 1890, in f. 11, o. 4, ed. khr. 9, l. 3.

⁷⁴ ‘Pervaia podrug’, in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 252.

⁷⁵ Kovnator, p. 32.

⁷⁶ Kovnator, p. 49.

⁷⁷ Kovnator, p. 57.

⁷⁸ Kovnator, p. 57.

⁷⁹ Kovnator, p. 57.

It was from this house that Ol'ga wrote to Shcherbo about the demonstrations at Kazan university, in which Vladimir participated.⁸⁰ She highlighted society's compassion for the students and described how they had donated money, fur coats and scarves for those arrested and sent into exile in Siberia.⁸¹ In her next letter though she wrote that she "was trying not to be too open" about the student unrest, revealing that already she was aware of the need for caution when writing about politically sensitive issues in letters.⁸²

In March 1889, Ol'ga left the music school and began to prepare at home for enrolling at university. She wrote optimistically to Shcherbo:

The aspiration towards truth and to the ideal is in people's souls...One must always believe in people, in the possibility of something better on earth, despite personal disappointment...If one doesn't believe in people, doesn't love them, then what is one living for?⁸³

In May the whole family moved to Samara (again, Mariia Aleksandrovna's intervention ensured that Anna could move with them).⁸⁴ During that summer, Ol'ga and Vladimir spent their time together, reading. Although Kovnator insists that it was due to Vladimir's influence that Ol'ga read Guizot's *A History of France* and *A History of Civilisation in England* by Buckle, long before she had left Kazan Ol'ga had written to Shcherbo that she no longer wanted to read novels, but rather "serious books".⁸⁵ Together, Ol'ga and Vladimir read Marx's *The Poverty of Philosophy*.⁸⁶ Ol'ga also knew Vladimir's circle of friends, including Anna Abramovna Katsnel'son, a dentist whose flat was used by revolutionaries for meetings.⁸⁷

When Ol'ga enrolled in the Bestuzhev courses in St Petersburg in autumn 1890, her efforts to study revolutionary thought for herself, as well as to retrace

⁸⁰ Letter, O.I. to A.F. Shcherbo, 25 September 1887, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 207, l. 3.

⁸¹ Letter, O.I. to A.F. Shcherbo, 25 September 1887, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 207, l. 3.

⁸² Letter, O.I. to A.F. Shcherbo, 4 January 1888, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 207, l. 5.

⁸³ Letter, O.I. to A.F. Shcherbo, 6 April 1889, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 207, l. 20.

⁸⁴ Letter, M.A. to Police Chief, 11 November 1889, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 15, l. 30.

⁸⁵ Kovnator, p. 78; Letter, O.I. to A.F. Shcherbo, 4 January 1888, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 207, l. 5.

⁸⁶ Kovnator, p. 127. Rakhil Kovnator joined the RSDRP in 1917 and worked for the Zhenotdel (Women's Department) from 1921 (*Bolshevik Women*, p. 211).

⁸⁷ Kovnator, p. 83.

her dead brother's steps increased. Her mother unwittingly encouraged Ol'ga in the latter enterprise by asking her to track down any photographs she could of Aleksandr.⁸⁸ It seems to have been an easy task to find Aleksandr's (and Anna's) friends, for in one letter to her mother, Ol'ga wrote: "I have made friends with many people, though I have had hardly been going anywhere".⁸⁹ For example, she met Anna and Mark's friend V.V. Vodovozov; the Ul'ianov siblings made regular use of his extensive library.⁹⁰ She also became acquainted with N.V. Stasova, the coordinator of the women's courses whom Anna had known, the banned lecturer V.I. Semevskii, and Bartenev, whom Aleksandr had known through his membership of the same economics circle.⁹¹

Examination of Ol'ga and Lenin's letters in 1890-91, and of the notebooks in which Ol'ga kept a record of all they had read, reveals that they were reading everything that Aleksandr had, and tracing his ideological development. The two were reading, amongst others, S.M. Solov'ev's *History of Russia*, and *David Ricardo and Karl Marx* by the economist N.I. Ziber.⁹² Many of these books would appear in Lenin's *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*.⁹³ Ol'ga was familiar with Engels' *The Situation of the Working Class in England*, as well as with Semevskii's *The Peasant Question in Russia in the 18th and first half of the 19th Centuries*.⁹⁴ Ol'ga also tackled Marx's *Capital*.⁹⁵

The exchange of letters between the Ul'ianov siblings also shows that they continued to discuss their ideas whenever possible. Ol'ga often asked Anna if she had "read anything interesting".⁹⁶ To Vladimir, Ol'ga wrote: "It would be interesting to talk about every 'question', but somehow it doesn't come across well in a letter. I will try again another time, but then, by the end of April maybe you'll be here."⁹⁷ She does seem to have managed a debate with Mark in her correspondence, writing at one point: "Tell Mark that if the regulations of

⁸⁸ Letter, O.I. to M.A., 15 February 1891, in *Lenin-Krupskaia-Ulianovy*, p. 58.

⁸⁹ Letter, O.I. to A.I., 26 September 1890, in *Lenin-Krupskaia-Ulianovy*, p. 41.

⁹⁰ Letter, O.I. to A.I., 23 January 1891, in *Lenin-Krupskaia-Ulianovy*, p. 55.

⁹¹ Letter, O.I. to A.I., 26 October 1890, in *Perepiska, 1883-1917*, p. 39.

⁹² Letter, O.I. to V.I., written in the second half of December 1890, in *Lenin-Krupskaia-Ulianovy*, p. 49; Letter, O.I. to V.I., 20 January 1891, in *Lenin-Krupskaia-Ulianovy*, p. 54.

⁹³ Letter, O.I. to V.I., written in the second half of December 1890, in *Lenin-Krupskaia-Ulianovy*, p. 49

⁹⁴ Kovnator, p. 123 and p. 127.

⁹⁵ 'Sestra Ol'ga Il'inichna', in M.I., *O V.I. Lenine*, p. 264.

⁹⁶ Letter, O.I. to A.I., written between 5 and 16 March, in *Lenin-Krupskaia-Ulianovy*, p. 64.

⁹⁷ Letter, O.I. to V.I., 20 January 1891, in *Lenin-Krupskaia-Ulianovy*, p. 53.

society for giving help to immigrants remind one of hospital or workhouse regulations, *this is not the fault of society*. It would be interesting to have a *discussion* about this.”⁹⁸

Ol’ga also pursued her own path into the revolution through the friends and contacts she made at the Higher Women’s courses. Indeed it is interesting to consider how Ol’ga’s experiences differed from Anna’s, since Ol’ga did not attend university with a protective brother at her side. Ol’ga met A.A. Iakubova and Z.P. Nevzorova, who remembered Ol’ga as “a most outstanding girl, the...centre of their course”.⁹⁹ These two revolutionaries, the latter of whom would marry G.M. Krzhizhanovskii, were members, along with N.K. Krupskaia, of a revolutionary circle of their own. Their work began in small workingmen’s education circles of the Smolenskaia Sunday School, which were increasingly used for political agitation. Many of the members of this group would join the RSDRP.¹⁰⁰

Ol’ga consistently shunned women on her course who did not read and engage with the radical ideas of the time. She wrote to Anna that her cousin was a “very sweet girl, but terribly naïve and utterly unsophisticated”, adding “she studies drawing here and says that there is such a lot to do, there is no time to read”.¹⁰¹ Ol’ga did not like visiting Anna’s old friends the Vinbergs because their conversation was “sluggish and not always interesting”.¹⁰² She much preferred O.K. Grigorevaia’s company, of whom she wrote: “she is a good person, who has read a lot and thought a lot, so it is interesting to talk with her. We read journals or articles together...”¹⁰³ Later, between 1905 and 1907, Grigorevaia would allow Bolsheviks to meet in her flat.¹⁰⁴

In the evenings Ol’ga would meet her like-minded friends at a discussion group.¹⁰⁵ With the support of the St Petersburg town дума, Ol’ga and her friends held an evening in aid of needy students and established a reading

⁹⁸ Letter, O.I. to V.I., written in the second half of December, 1890, in *Lenin-Krupskaia-Ulianovy*, p. 49. Ol’ga’s emphasis.

⁹⁹ ‘Vospominaniia ob Il’iche’, in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 129.

¹⁰⁰ Stites, *Feminism, Nihilism, and Bolshevism*, p. 273.

¹⁰¹ Letter, O.I. to A.I., 26 September 1890, in *Lenin-Krupskaia-Ulianovy*, p. 41.

¹⁰² Letter, O.I. to A.I., 26 September 1890, in *Lenin-Krupskaia-Ulianovy*, p. 41.

¹⁰³ Kovnator, p. 117.

¹⁰⁴ Letter, O.I. to M.A., 21 February 1891, in *Lenin-Krupskaia-Ulianovy*, p. 60.

¹⁰⁵ Footnote 11, in *Lenin-Krupskaia-Ulianovy*, p. 44; Kovnator, p. 117.

room.¹⁰⁶ On one occasion the group read about modern French youth in a periodical called *Russkaia mysl'* (Russian Thought) and there was such a long and heated discussion afterwards that the meeting lasted far longer than usual.¹⁰⁷ It was here that Ol'ga discussed the woman question, though unfortunately her letters give no insight into her views on the issue.¹⁰⁸

Just as Anna and fellow students had sent an address to Shchedrin, Ol'ga joined her contemporaries in celebrating N.V. Shelgunov's works. He was a literary critic and had written about Engels and the development of capitalism in Russia.¹⁰⁹ Ol'ga's name was one of the first signed on a greeting to him from the students of the Bestuzhev courses.¹¹⁰ Interestingly, Krupskaja's name also appears on the greeting though she was as yet unknown to the Ul'ianov family.¹¹¹

Ol'ga's university and revolutionary career was cut short prematurely when she died of typhoid fever on 8 May 1891, the anniversary of Aleksandr's execution. A letter published in *Pravda* in 1977, which was written by one of Ol'ga's classmates, Vera Emel'ianova, to her brother just after Ol'ga's death, reveals what an outstanding character she was:

O, Arsenii, if only you knew what sort of person Ul'ianova was. How much hope was placed in her! It is safe to say, that in Ul'ianova Russia has lost an honest, tireless activist...She was a person of brilliant mind, intellectual maturity, education, talent...She read the best works on political economy and sociology.¹¹²

This woman had known Ol'ga for only a year.¹¹³ Ol'ga was an exceptional young woman who touched people's lives in the same way as Aleksandr did. It is important to note however that in this letter there was the type of glorification that was given to Vladimir and Aleksandr by their siblings,

¹⁰⁶ Letter, O.I. to A.I., 26 October 1890, in *Lenin-Krupskaja-Ulianovy*, pp. 43-44.

¹⁰⁷ Letter, O.I. to A.I., 21 February 1891, in *Lenin-Krupskaja-Ulianovy*, p. 60.

¹⁰⁸ Letter, O.I. to A.I., written between 5 and 16 March 1891, in *Perepiska, 1883-1917*, p. 61.

¹⁰⁹ Kunetskaia, p. 20.

¹¹⁰ Kunetskaia, p. 20.

¹¹¹ Kunetskaia, p. 20.

¹¹² Kunetskaia, p. 16.

¹¹³ Kunetskaia, p. 16.

to Il'ia Nikolaevich by Anna in 1894 and to Lenin by the Russian people, after their deaths. In the above case, calling Ol'ga's death a national loss was a means by which the writer could express her grief, rather than (necessarily) a statement of fact. That there was no political reason for Ol'ga's friend to write her letter to Arsenii highlights the fact that it is a Russian cultural phenomenon to speak well of, if not glorify, the dead.¹¹⁴

Ol'ga's revolutionary contacts were not lost, however. When Vladimir moved to St Petersburg in 1893, he began to follow up both Ol'ga's acquaintances and Aleksandr's, and it was through these people that he joined the underground movement in the capital. For example, Vladimir visited S.F. Ol'denburg, who had known Ol'ga and who had been member of a student scientific-literary circle with Aleksandr.¹¹⁵ He also joined the *stariki* group, which had formed out of the remainder of the Brusnev group. Amongst the members of this circle were Krzhizhanovskii and his wife Z.P. Nevzorova, whom Ol'ga had known.¹¹⁶ This highlights the continuity between Anna and Aleksandr's revolutionary experiences and Ol'ga and Vladimir's, as well as Ol'ga's central role in ensuring that the Ul'ianovs' connections with the revolutionary community in St Petersburg were not lost.

THE LAST RECRUIT

Mariia's political consciousness was not awakened when Aleksandr was executed. Unlike her elder siblings, Mariia felt detached from his death and did not fully understand the reasons for it, being only nine years old.¹¹⁷ She was deeply aware however of the consequences of his death on the "mood of the family" and that their connections with others were all "broken".¹¹⁸ Aleksandr's execution also had an impact on Mariia's home life, because when Anna first went to Kokushkino to begin her exile Mariia was sent there to keep her company until the rest of the family joined them in the spring. In Kokushkino, as Mariia put it: "It befell me, for the first time, to come into contact with the

¹¹⁴ Catherine Merridale, *Night of Stone: Death and Memory in Russia*, (London: Granta Books, 2000), p. 53.

¹¹⁵ Kovnator, p. 133.

¹¹⁶ Notes, in *Vospominaniia o V.I. Lenine*, Volume 4, p. 462

¹¹⁷ M.I., 'Moi put' v revoliutsiiu', in *Mariia Il'inichna Ul'ianova*, p. 7.

police in the form of the district police officer who had been assigned to follow my sister as she was under surveillance. With this aim he often ‘visited’ us.”¹¹⁹

While Mariia was still at the gimnazia, she was not involved in her siblings’ revolutionary research or activities. By 1892, however, once the family had moved to Samara, Mariia began to observe Anna, Mark and Vladimir’s activities more closely. Now freed from police supervision, the elder Ul’ianovs were able to hold study sessions and discussion groups in the house with local revolutionaries.¹²⁰ Amongst the visitors to the Ul’ianov house, Mariia remembered A.P. Skliarenko, I.Kh. Lalaianovs, V.V. Vodovozov, M.I. Lebedeva, M.P. Golubeva, V.A. Ionov and A.I. Eramasov.¹²¹ Eramasov wrote the following about his first visit to the Ul’ianovs:

I remember, we came round in the evening...just in time for tea. The whole family was already gathered at the table. I was introduced to Mariia Aleksandrovna, Anna Il’ichna, Mariia Il’ichna and Vladimir Il’ich....The conversation turned to the usual themes of that time: narodism, the destiny of capitalism, V.V. [Vorontsov] and Nikolai [N.F. Daniel’son] [both liberal-populist ideologists of the 80s and 90s]...After tea we moved to Vladimir Il’ich’s room, where we continued the conversation...Mark Timofeevich shared his...observations of peasant life in Samara guberniia. I remember that Anna Il’ichna also took part in the conversation.¹²²

Mariia’s own description of her revolutionary training reveals Vladimir’s role, but also the importance of Anna’s contacts. It reminds us too how young she was when Aleksandr was killed. She wrote:

Vladimir Il’ich spent a great deal of time with me as the youngest of the family, later he worked with me, gave me instructions about

¹¹⁸ M.I., ‘Moi put’ v revoliutsiiu’, in *Mariia Il’ichna Ul’ianova*, p. 7.

¹¹⁹ M.I., ‘Moi put’ v revoliutsiiu’, in *Mariia Il’ichna Ul’ianova*, p. 8.

¹²⁰ ‘Iz samarskogo (alakaevskogo) perioda (1889-1893 gg.)’, in M.I., *O V.I. Lenine*, p. 57.

¹²¹ ‘Iz samarskogo’, in M.I., *O V.I. Lenine*, p. 57.

¹²² Eramasov, quoted in ‘Iz samarskogo’, in M.I., *O V.I. Lenine*, p. 57.

what to read, chatted with me on various themes. Apart from him, our new acquaintances also had a great influence on me. After leaving Simbirsk these were mainly the friends of my older brother and sister, and also of M.T. Elizarov – Anna Il'inichna's husband; they represented the vanguard of the revolutionary intelligentsia of that time.¹²³

Mariia's revolutionary training continued once Vladimir had moved to St Petersburg and the rest of the family to Moscow. Vladimir often asked in letters what Mariia was reading and suggested books to her.¹²⁴ Mariia kept in touch with some of the participants of her siblings' Samara circle. For example, Vladimir wrote to Mariia in 1894: "What are you reading. Have you seen M.I. Lebedeva? Did she receive my letter?"¹²⁵ In this letter too we see the emergence of the Ul'ianov communication network, which would function to keep Vladimir and the other Ul'ianov siblings informed of underground activities and which would enable them to give each other instructions about revolutionary work.

When Vladimir was arrested in 1895, Mariia was still studying at school and was aged only seventeen. However, she had met social-democrats and had read illegal literature.¹²⁶ During this period, Mariia learned from Vladimir and Anna, as one biographer put it, "how to conspire, [as well as] endurance, resourcefulness and the ability to subordinate all interests to the revolutionary struggle".¹²⁷

It is difficult to ascertain precisely what the sisters' political views were at this point. However, one incident can shed some light on their attitudes. In 1892 the Samara region experienced a famine and a cholera outbreak, and though Anna went out to help the people "with medicine and instructions", Vladimir would not participate.¹²⁸ He argued that the famine was a product of the old

¹²³ M.I., 'Moi put' v revoliutsiiu', in *Mariia Il'inichna Ul'ianova*, p. 8.

¹²⁴ R. Lavrov, 'Stranitsy zhizni (Kratkaia biografiia)', in *Mariia Il'inichna Ul'ianova*, p. 26.

¹²⁵ Letter, V.I. to M.I., 13 December 1894, in *Lenin-Krupskaia-Ul'ianovy*, p. 75; Letter, V.I. to M.I., 24 December 1894, in *Lenin-Krupskaia-Ul'ianovy*, p. 77.

¹²⁶ M.I., 'Moi put' v revoliutsiiu', in *Mariia Il'inichna Ul'ianova*, p. 8.

¹²⁷ D.A. Ershov, *Mariia Il'inichna Ul'ianova*, (Ul'ianovsk: Ul'ianovskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1963), p. 9.

¹²⁸ M.I., 'Iz samarskogo (Alakaevskogo) perioda (1889-1893 gg.)', in *Vospominaniia o Vladimire Il'iche Lenine*, (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1989), Volume 1, p. 208 and p. 192.

regime and should be allowed to continue, for this would weaken the state.¹²⁹ Anna was shocked by this. Mariia also seems to have disagreed with Vladimir's "cold detachment" in this situation, noting later: "It seems to me that [Vladimir Il'ich] had a different nature from Aleksandr Il'ich...Vladimir Il'ich did not have the quality of self-sacrifice even though he devoted his whole life entirely to the cause of the working class."¹³⁰

ADDITIONS TO THE FAMILY

The years 1886 to 1898 saw major changes to the Ul'ianov family. Il'ia Nikolaevich died in 1886, Aleksandr was executed on 8 May 1887 and Ol'ga died on 8 May 1891. The family also gained two members when Anna married Mark Timofeevich Elizarov in 1889 and Vladimir married Nadezhda Konstantinovna Krupskaiia in 1898. Although historians often ignore Anna and Mariia's revolutionary and political careers, their private lives receive more attention. Interrogating the portrayal of the sisters' relationships and home life is important if a full picture of their lives is to be painted.

Two aspects of the sisters' lives are frequently discussed by historians: their love lives and, even more so, their alleged hostility towards Nadezhda. These discussions are closely related to the solar system myth. For example, Anna's treatment of her husband has been compared unfavourably to her treatment of Vladimir. It is also assumed that because the sisters devoted their lives to caring for and supporting their brother, they were inevitably suspicious and jealous of any other who might replace them.

Anna married her fellow student, Mark Elizarov, her friend from the Simbirsk *zemliachestvo*.¹³¹ Anna's arrest and exile delayed their marriage, but when the family moved to Alakaevka, near Samara, she and Mark were wed.¹³² Mark's nephew later described it as "a natural event for both sides".¹³³ Anna

¹²⁹ 'Iz samarskogo (Alakaevskogo) perioda (1889-1893 gg.)', in *Vospominaniia o Vladimire*, Volume 1, p. 208 and p. 192.

¹³⁰ M.I., 'Iz vospominanii', in *Vospominaniia o Vladimire*, Volume 1, p. 192.

¹³¹ A.I., in *Delo 1 marta*, p. 82.

¹³² N. Arnol'd, *Sem'ia Ul'ianovykh v Samare*, (Kuibyshev: Kuibyshevskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1979), p. 27.

¹³³ P.P. Elizarov, 'Vykhod Anny Il'inichny zamuzh', 5 July 1964, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 465, l. 10.

even broke the conditions of her exile to visit her new mother-in-law, for which she was fined 20 roubles.¹³⁴

Anna and Mark seem to have had a marriage that followed a different model than Anna's parents' relationship. Whereas the Ul'ianov household had been divided down entirely traditional lines, with Il'ia working and Mariia Aleksandrovna running the household and raising the children, Anna and Mark both worked. Mark's career often took him away from home for months on end; Anna operated as an underground revolutionary and worked as a free-lance translator.¹³⁵ Anna and Mark had no children of their own and instead adopted a child, Georgii Iakovlevich Lozgachev, or Gora, in 1913.¹³⁶ The boy was a young prodigy and his impoverished parents agreed to allow Anna and Mark to raise and educate him.¹³⁷ Although Anna took responsibility for the boy's care, she also on occasion sent him to stay with friends if her current revolutionary activities were putting him at more risk than usual.¹³⁸

There is some evidence of disputes between the couple. Mark was a member of the underground RSDRP, but not at the heart of the movement in the same way as Anna. He was often insulted if Anna, usually for conspiratorial purposes, spoke in French with others, for he did not know that or any other foreign language.¹³⁹ Anna seems to have despaired at Mark's lack of social graces. His peasant family background made him less genteel than the bourgeois Ul'ianovs and Anna was not afraid to tell him so.¹⁴⁰ Yet Anna also delighted in his joie de vivre, sense of humour and his even-temper.¹⁴¹ The two corresponded affectionately when apart, with Gora remembering the "countless" letters and postcards which Mark sent to Anna while on his travels.¹⁴² Anna rarely wrote about her relationship with her husband; when *Pravda* marked the anniversary

¹³⁴ P.P. Elizarov, 'Vykhod Anny Il'inichny zamuzh', in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 465, l. 10.

¹³⁵ Remezovskii, pp. 25-26.

¹³⁶ 'Stenogramma vospominanii Georgiia Iakovlevicha Lozgacheva-Elizarova', 26 December 1955, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 17, l. 1.

¹³⁷ 'Vospominanii Lozgacheva-Elizarova', in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 17, l. 1.

¹³⁸ 'Vospominanii Lozgacheva-Elizarova', in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 17, l. 17. During the July Days of 1917, Anna and Mark sent Gora to live with their old friend Chebotarev.

¹³⁹ 'Vospominanii Lozgacheva-Elizarova', in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 17, l. 6.

¹⁴⁰ 'Vospominanii Lozgacheva-Elizarova', in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 17, l. 6; Georgii Iakovlevich Lozgachev-Elizarov, *Nezabyvaemoe*, (Leningrad: Lenizdat, 1970), p. 107.

¹⁴¹ 'Vospominanii ob Aleksandre', in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 70 and pp. 85-86; Lozgachev-Elizarov, *Nezabyvaemoe*, p. 107.

¹⁴² 'Vospominanii Lozgacheva-Elizarova', in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 17, l. 9; for letters, see, for example, A.I. to M.T., 4 April 1913, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 227, l. 12 and M.T. to A.I., 10 May

of Mark's death, Anna did not contribute an article.¹⁴³ She was an intensely private person in this respect. However, after Mark's death in 1919, Anna had a memorial erected in his honour in Volkovo Cemetery in St Petersburg.¹⁴⁴

Anna believed strongly in marriage for love. In letters she wrote to Mark's niece, N.I. Golubiatnikova, in 1916, Anna asserted categorically that Golubiatnikova should marry only for love and should not desert her education for a marriage of convenience.¹⁴⁵ Perhaps this belief sprang from bourgeois romanticism, but it could also have been influenced by the arguments of some socialist campaigners that love should be the only reason for a man and a woman to marry (if they married at all).¹⁴⁶

Commentators however tell a different story of Anna and Mark's relationship. Solomon in particular attacked Anna quite forcefully in his descriptions of her home life. He criticised her for rebuking her husband and ordering him about.¹⁴⁷ Solomon also related a conversation he had with Vladimir in which Anna's brother dismissed Mark as an "old duffer" whom Anna should never have married.¹⁴⁸ Both men were disgusted that Mark was apparently "under the thumb".¹⁴⁹ This image of Mark as the hen-pecked husband has been repeated by other historians, including Service who jokes about Mark often feeling "the lash of his wife's tongue".¹⁵⁰ In a nod to the solar system myth Service adds that Vladimir was treated differently by Anna: "Lenin could be forgiven everything. He was the family's darling; he could be gently reproved, very gently; but no one was allowed to thwart him."¹⁵¹ As I will show throughout this thesis, Anna was not afraid to rebuke her younger brother, even if he was Lenin.

1901, in *Perepiska, 1883-1917*, p. 128.

¹⁴³ 'Pamiati M.T. Elizarova', in *Pravda*, 10 March 1929, p. 3. This feature contained to articles: V. Nevskii, 'Mark Timofeevich Elizarov (22 marta 1862 – 10 marta 1919 g.)' and S. Chernov, 'Revoliutsioner-obshchestvennik'.

¹⁴⁴ 'Pamiati M.T. Elizarova', in *Pravda*, 10 March 1929, p. 3; Letter, M.I. to A.I., 10 July 1924, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 225, l. 40.

¹⁴⁵ See, letter, A.I. to N.I. Golubiatnikova, 26 October 1916, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 374, l. 1 and letter, A.I. to N.I. Golubiatnikova, 23 November 1916, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 375, l. 1.

¹⁴⁶ Elwood, R.C., *Inessa Armand: Revolutionary and Feminist*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 146.

¹⁴⁷ Solomon, *Lenin*, p. 17 and p. 28.

¹⁴⁸ Solomon, *Lenin*, p. 27.

¹⁴⁹ Solomon, *Lenin*, p. 27.

¹⁵⁰ Service, p. 265.

¹⁵¹ Service, p. 265.

Mariia never married. Perhaps she made a conscious decision, as some revolutionaries did, not to become romantically involved with anyone. As Ol'ga Liubatovich, a revolutionary of the time, put it: "Yes, it's a sin for revolutionaries to start a family. Men and women both must stand alone, like soldiers under a hail of bullets."¹⁵² Of course, this was not always easy to do, as Liubatovich admitted.¹⁵³ McDermid states that Mariia had an affair with a married man.¹⁵⁴ This may indicate that Mariia agreed with Kollontai and Armand's ideas about free love, that under socialism, women and men could be serial monogamists, without being tied down by the constraints of marriage.¹⁵⁵ However, historians tend to connect bad temper on Mariia's part to the fact that she did not marry, without considering that Mariia may not have wanted to marry or that she may have enjoyed loving relationships out of wedlock throughout her life. Trotsky described Mariia as "an old maid, reserved and stubborn, who concentrated all the strength of her unspent love on her brother Vladimir".¹⁵⁶ And this view is repeated without qualm by Service who describes Mariia as "a crabby spinster".¹⁵⁷

More generally, Solomon and Trotsky's criticisms of Anna and Mariia must be treated with caution, for besides being based on gender stereotypes, they may also be covert attacks on the sisters' politics. As Clements puts it:

It was a time-honoured strategy [amongst Bolsheviks] to strike at a woman by pointing out transgressions or shortcomings in her sexuality. By contrast, criticisms of male oppositionists went to

¹⁵² Ol'ga Liubatovich, quoted in Barbara Engel, *Women, Gender and Political Choice in the Revolutionary Movement of the 1870s*, (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, The Marjorie Mayrock Center for Soviet and East European Research, 1988), p. 9.

¹⁵³ Ol'ga Liubatovich, quoted in Engel, p. 9.

¹⁵⁴ McDermid, p. 63. McDermid does not cite a source for this assertion, however, I have found at least one letter that suggests that Mariia had feelings for Krzhizhanovskii, who was married. In 1903, Mariia wrote to the *Iskra* editorial board (that is Nadezhda and Vladimir): "For God's sake, don't talk about Br[ut]'s [Krzhizhanovskii] absence, I have a knife turning in my heart." (M.I. to *Iskra* editorial board, 18 August 1903, in *Perepiska V.I. Lenina i redaktsii gazety "Iskra" s sotsial-demokraticeskimi organizatsiiami v Rossii*, ed. by O.P. Bochkova, 3 vols., (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo "Mysl'", 1969), Volume 3, p.471).

¹⁵⁵ Barbara Evans Clements, *Daughters of Revolution: A History of Women in the USSR*, (Arlington Heights, Illinois: Harlan Davidson Inc., 1994), pp. 38-39.

¹⁵⁶ Trotsky, *Diary*, p. 33.

¹⁵⁷ Service, p. 447.

the wrongheadedness of their ideas and their political mistakes in the past, [rather than their] sexual prowess, or lack thereof.¹⁵⁸

Solomon had an antagonistic relationship with Lenin, and by association his family, while Trotsky had political reasons to attack Mariia herself, as I will discuss in Chapter Five.

Like his colleagues, Vladimir himself displayed an ambivalent attitude towards women. Although Vladimir publicly supported women's emancipation, in private he expressed a mixture of disdain and gallantry towards women. On one occasion, an acquaintance of Vladimir's was particularly "sharp" with Clara Zetkin during a debate. Vladimir advised him to visit her the following day, which happened to be her birthday, and give her a bunch of roses to make amends.¹⁵⁹ Yet he also wrote to Inessa Armand: "my *unconditional* friendship, *absolute* respect and trust are dedicated to only two or three women".¹⁶⁰ Another revealing comment about Vladimir's view of relationships between men and women can be found in a letter to Inessa, in which he wrote: "What sort of person is Usievich's wife? An energetic woman, I believe? Will he make a Bolshevik of her or she make a neither-this-nor-that of him?"¹⁶¹ Indeed, the view that women who were not full members of the revolutionary movement and therefore still 'backward' might hold men back from developing as Social-Democrats was common amongst Bolsheviks before and after the Revolution.¹⁶²

Vladimir's marriage to Nadezhda took place in 1898. Anna and Nadezhda's relationship got off to a bad start, as Nadezhda's letters to the family show. In 1898 she wrote to Mariia: "Kiss A.I. and tell her it is not nice of her to give such accounts of me everywhere: to Volodia she wrote about me looking like a herring, to Bulochka she complained of my slyness."¹⁶³ Anna regularly scolded Nadezhda for not writing often enough.¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁸ Clements, *Bolshevik Women*, p. 241.

¹⁵⁹ Fritz Heckert, 'My Meetings With V.I. Lenin', in *We Have Met Lenin*, ed. by Klara Zetkin, (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1939), p. 23.

¹⁶⁰ Letter, V.I. to Inessa Armand, start of July 1914, quoted in Boris Sokolov, *Armand i Krupskaja. Zhenshchiny vozhdia*, (Smolensk: "Rusich", 1999), p. 173.

¹⁶¹ Letter, V.I. to Inessa Armand, 17 December 1916, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 49, p. 339.

¹⁶² Wood, p. 22, p. 38 and p. 101.

¹⁶³ Letter, N.K. to M.I., 15 February 1898, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 55, p. 388.

¹⁶⁴ Letter, N.K. to M.I., 15 February 1898, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 55, p. 388 and

Anna's behaviour at this point clearly was not pleasant, yet without her letters to Nadezhda it is difficult to fully understand the motives for her attitude.¹⁶⁵ Anna scolded all her relatives for not writing often enough.¹⁶⁶ Like her brother Vladimir, Anna also had a temper and could be sharp with people. Aleksandr had said that one of Anna's character flaws was her "unevenness of character", and Anna called herself "capricious".¹⁶⁷ Nadezhda's letters to Anna and Mariia were generally gentle in tone; she once wrote in reply to Anna's "reproaches": "well, I admit I am guilty but am deserving of leniency."¹⁶⁸ However, Nadezhda had a temper too and admitted in one letter that she did not know "how to be amiable".¹⁶⁹ She also admitted to Mariia that she was "a faithless creature, promising to write and then not a word".¹⁷⁰ Although Nadezhda planned to "discuss everything" and presumably resolve matters with Anna when she visited with Mariia Aleksandrovna in 1900, Nadezhda felt that she "lost her head" and got distracted by the other guests who were visiting at the time.¹⁷¹ As a result she did not manage to have her talk with Anna.¹⁷²

Historians, including McNeal, put Anna's behaviour down to jealousy of Nadezhda's relationship with Vladimir, rather than to a clash of personalities or simply an initial misunderstanding of each other.¹⁷³ Service claims that "rivalry for [Vladimir's] attention...often [arose] among Lenin's women".¹⁷⁴ Yet the evidence often used to support this could be interpreted in another way. For example, the following letter from Nadezhda is often cited:

p. 407.

¹⁶⁵ These letters of Anna's are not held in her personal fond and, due to time constraints, I was not able to check Nadezhda's file for them. Interestingly though, when Anna first edited and published Vladimir and Nadezhda's letters from exile to the Ul'ianov family, she did not remove her critical comments of Nadezhda or try to explain them. Only of one passage, in which Nadezhda referred to Anna's "reproaches", did Anna write in a footnote: "I do not understand what this means." (A.I., 'Vladimir Il'ich v ssylke (1898 g.)', in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1929, No. 4, p. 177). Perhaps Anna did not see her comments as serious or perhaps she simply felt they were no longer important.

¹⁶⁶ See, for example, Letters, O.I. to A.I., 26 October 1890, A.I. to M.I., 8 March 1899 and A.I. to D.I., 25 August 1902, in *Perepiska, 1883-1917*, p. 89, p. 97 and p. 141.

¹⁶⁷ 'Vospominaniia ob Aleksandre', in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 77 and p. 27.

¹⁶⁸ Letter, N.K. to A.I., 9 August 1898, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 55, p. 392.

¹⁶⁹ N. Valentinov (N.V. Volskii), *Encounters with Lenin*, trans. by Paul Rosta and Brian Pearce, foreword by Leonard Schapiro, (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 89; Letter, N.K. to M.A., 26 July 1900, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 55, p. 418.

¹⁷⁰ Letter, N.K. to M.I., 24 January 1899, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 55, p. 388 and p. 407.

¹⁷¹ Letter, N.K. to M.I., 26 July 1900, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 55, p. 419.

¹⁷² Letter, N.K. to M.I., 26 July 1900, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 55, p. 419.

¹⁷³ McNeal, p. 69.

[Anna] is indignant that I give my letters to Volodia to ‘edit’, but in most cases I describe our Shushenskoe life in humorous terms and Volodia comes in for a lot of ribbing in them; I would not write such letters if I did not give them to him to read [before I send them].¹⁷⁵

Perhaps Anna was jealous that she did not hear all the news about Vladimir from Nadezhda, yet it is also possible that Anna, who was not afraid to speak her mind to her husband, felt that her sister-in-law was being too deferential to Vladimir.

It is also important to point out that Anna’s relationship with Nadezhda seems to have improved; it was not the consistently negative relationship that historians have portrayed. Anna took an interest in Vladimir and Nadezhda’s wedding plans, asking when the date would be set and who would be invited.¹⁷⁶ In the summer of 1898, Anna sent Nadezhda a gift of a book *The Agitator*, inscribed with “For Nadia” (Nadezhda confessed to Mariia in September that so far she had “done nothing but intend” to write and thank Anna).¹⁷⁷ In 1900, Nadezhda asked Mariia Aleksandrovna for Anna’s new address because she did not know where Anna had moved to and wanted to keep up their correspondence.¹⁷⁸ In 1901, Nadezhda wrote to her mother-in-law:

In a week or so Volodia and I intend going to Switzerland for a short time to see Aniuta [Anna]. I am very glad that Aniuta did not go to Rügen, as she originally intended, but to Lake Thun...I am looking forward to the journey with great pleasure – firstly, because I want to see Aniuta, and secondly, because I want to have a look at the mountains.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁴ Service, p. 276.

¹⁷⁵ Letter, N.K. to M.A., 10 January 1899, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 55, p. 406.

¹⁷⁶ Letter, V.I. to M.A., 7 February 1898, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 55, p. 73.

¹⁷⁷ Letter, N.K. to M.I., 11 September 1898, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 55, p. 396.

¹⁷⁸ Letter, N.K. to M.A., 22 December 1900, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 55, p. 427.

¹⁷⁹ Letter, N.K. to M.A., 2 August 1901, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 55, p. 434.

In contrast to her sister's relationship with Nadezhda, Mariia seems to have befriended her sister-in-law immediately. The two shared similar traits, with Nadezhda confiding in Mariia: "It is true I have lost my shyness...it used to be a real misfortune. That is why I understand you so well when you write about your being shy."¹⁸⁰ Nadezhda also confided in Mariia about her feelings about those around her, including, for example, her sorrow at a break down in her relations with an old friend, Lirochka.¹⁸¹ Nadezhda also seems to have confided in Mariia about her difficulties with Anna.¹⁸² There is absolutely no suggestion in Nadezhda's letters to Mariia that Mariia was jealous of her sister-in-law or that their relationship was problematic.

It is important to point out that the type of relationship Mariia and Anna had with their sister-in-law, while interesting and often discussed by historians, was not the central pre-occupation of the Ul'ianov women themselves. Anna and Mariia rarely if ever discussed their relationship with Nadezhda with each other in their correspondence. It should not be focused on to the extent it eclipses investigation into other aspects of their lives. The years 1883 to 1893 were a crucial formative period for Anna, Ol'ga and Mariia, during which they embarked on their university education and first came into contact with revolutionary ideas and activities. The sisters became familiar with the works of key political thinkers such as Shchedrin, Dobroliubov, Chernyshevskii and Marx, and began to learn the skills and tactics of revolutionary conspirators. The three also experienced first hand the painful consequences of underground activities if one was caught by the regime, yet this did not deter them from involving themselves more deeply in the revolutionary movement in the years to come. Had Ol'ga lived, she would no doubt have joined Anna and Mariia as they embarked on revolutionary careers that would span the next four decades.

¹⁸⁰ Letter, N.K. to M.I., 2 December 1900, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 55, p. 426.

¹⁸¹ Letter, N.K. to M.I., 28 March 1900, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 55, p. 416.

¹⁸² Letter, N.K. to M.I., 26 July 1900, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 55, p. 419.

CHAPTER THREE

THE UNDERGROUND YEARS

The Ul'ianovs' revolutionary activities began in earnest when the family left Kazan and moved to Moscow in 1893. Anna's period of exile had ended, although the police had added a further year's ban on her entering university towns like St Petersburg, as well as Nizhnii Novgorod and Tver.¹ Dmitrii was to begin his studies in medicine, Mark had found a job at the management of the Kursk railway, Anna planned to earn money by doing translation work and Mariia was to finish her schooling at the Elizavetinskaia gimnazia.² Mariia Alexandrovna accompanied them to Moscow, but Vladimir did not, and went instead to St Petersburg.³

It was from 1893 that Anna and Mariia consistently involved themselves in the underground, illegal revolutionary movement and, as a result, they became two of the longest serving and most experienced members of the RSDRP. Like many revolutionaries, Anna and Mariia lived nomadic lives during the underground years, travelling extensively around Russia and Europe, often to carry out party duties, but also to escape arrest and sometimes to serve terms of exile. Even when they were already in danger of arrest or under police surveillance, and also when they were in prison, Anna and Mariia rarely missed an opportunity to participate in revolutionary activities, and to maintain and strengthen the RSDRP at home and abroad. Well-known to the police as members of the underground movement, Anna and Mariia specialised in the production and distribution of newspapers and illegal literature, correspondence work, and technical support, which included arranging travel for revolutionaries, organising congresses and fund-raising. They also agitated amongst workers, soldiers and prisoners.

Newspapers were crucial to the Social-Democratic movement, enabling the circulation of news and ideas between members of the party and acting as one of the few threads that could hold the disparate and geographically far-flung

¹ Police report, April 1892, in f. 13, o. 1 kopii, ed. khr. 12, l. 4.

² S.I. Mitskevich, *Revoliutsionnaia Moskva, 1888-1905*, (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1940), p. 146; R.S. Poliakova, *Sestry Il'icha*, (Saratov: Privolzhskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1972), p. 24; Kunetskaia, p. 20.

revolutionary groups together. Newspapers were also used to coordinate correspondence: for example, changes of addresses were published in them.⁴ They were also a key resource used in the agitation campaign amongst the wider public.

Despite their importance, it was difficult to recruit revolutionaries to run underground newspapers. This was partly because such work was fraught with perils and obstacles but also because it was seen as “boring” and less glamorous than other underground activities.⁵ On an intra-party level coordinating editorial boards at home and abroad was very hard, partly because of communication problems, including delays in articles being sent from abroad, but also sometimes because of ideological differences.⁶ In terms of external problems, editors in Russia had to ensure that the editions they finally issued held to the party’s political line but also took into account their readership’s needs. If the paper was legal then the rules of the censors had to be met; if it was illegal, there was the constant threat of police raids or infiltration. Undeterred by this, Anna and Mariia had a hand in the publication of all the major newspapers of the underground period, from *Iskra* to *Pravda*, including the newspapers *Nasha Mysl’*, *Vpered*, *Rabotnitsa* and *Prosveshchenie*.⁷

Besides being used for reaching the masses, newspapers could also be used to convey information to party members. The only other means of communication between activists was correspondence. Telephones were used occasionally for local communication, but almost never for long distance.⁸ Correspondence between party members in Russia and the leading centres abroad enabled activists to operate from Siberia to Moscow to Paris in a fairly coherent and consistent way. It allowed an exchange of information about the situation on

³ Letter, V.I. to M.A., 5 October 1893, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 55, pp. 1-2.

⁴ Letter, A.I. to V.I. and N.K., after 26 August 1905, in *Perepiska V.I. Lenina i rukovodimykh im uchrezhdenii RSDRP s partiinymi organizatsiiami, 1905-1907 gg.*, ed. by D.I. Antonuk and others, 5 vols., (Moscow: “Mysl’”, 1982), Volume 4, p. 142.

⁵ Drabkina, p75; Ia.R. Volin, *Vtoroi s’ezd RSDRP i mestnie partiinie organizatsii Rossii*, (Perm: Permskoe knizhnoe izdatel’stvo, 1973), p. 29.

⁶ See, for example, letter. E.F. Rozmirovich to TsK RSDRP, earlier than 21 January 1914, in *Dokumenty Instituta Marksizma-Leninizma pri TsK KPSS, ‘Deiatel’nost’ TsK RSDRP po rukovodstvu gazety “Pravdy” (1912-1914 gg.)*, in *Istoricheskii arkhiv*, 1959, No. 4, p. 47).

⁷ ‘Bol’shevistskie izdatel’skie dela v 1905-1907 gg. (Zhurnal i tipografiia “Nasha mysl’” i Tsentral’nii knizhnii sklad, magazin i knigoizdatel’stvo “Vpered”), in *Krasnaia letopis’*, 1931, No. 3, p. 43; B. Danskii, ‘“Pravda” i rabochaia strakhovaia kompaniia (Stranichka iz istorii rabochei pechati, 1911-1914 gg.)’, in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1930, No. 7-8, pp. 173-5; Drabkina, in *Sem’ia Ul’ianovykh*, p. 176.

the ground and instructions about how to proceed. Conversely, a breakdown in communication meant that control over a local committee's actions was lost.

Like newspaper work, conducting underground correspondence was not an easy task. The postal system on which correspondence generally depended was sometimes unreliable and always slow.⁹ Writing coded or chemical letters was "laborious and thankless work", and letters were easily intercepted by the police.¹⁰ Even if the letters' codes could not be deciphered by the police, a letter confiscated meant that a revolutionary group somewhere did not receive news and instructions. Where possible, letters for the central committee abroad were sent with revolutionaries travelling there, but the opportunities for this were rare. When letters got through, there was no guarantee that their contents would be understood, for using chemical ink and codes was difficult. All too often the correspondence system broke down, if a local group's correspondent was arrested or if the writer was not fully competent at correspondence work. Vladimir wrote to Shliapnikov in 1914, highlighting these issues: "[Correspondence] is a difficult job that requires an experienced person who knows at least one foreign language. It *cannot* be left to just 'anybody'."¹¹

Anna and Mariia were both experts in party correspondence, both in terms of establishing new channels of communication with other revolutionary committees and regarding the technicalities of writing conspiratorial letters. They were highly educated and fluent in several languages and had a great deal of experience, having begun using coded and chemical letters in the early 1890s.¹² Their nomadic lifestyle meant that they brought their correspondence expertise to various local revolutionary groups. The fact that they were in constant contact with Lenin meant that they could link these groups to the

⁸ Salita, p. 340.

⁹ See, for example, letter, N.K. to A.I., 30 January 1905, in *Perepiska, 1905-1907*, Volume 1.1, p. 229.

¹⁰ 'Po povodu posylki "Credo" Vladimiru Il'ichu v Sibir' ', in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 171; Remezovskii, p. 59; A.I., 'Avtobiografiia', in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 1, l. 4; Police report, 18 August 1897, in f. 13, o. 1 kopii, ed. khr. 12, l. 148.

¹¹ Letter, V.I. to A.G. Shliapnikov, 25 November 1914, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 49, p. 35.

¹² Anna knew 4 languages including Italian and German (Letter, M.I. to L.A. Fotieva, after 23 March 1905, in *Perepiska, 1905-1907*, Volume 2.1, p. 55). Mariia knew French and German (Kunetskaia, p. 11 and p. 87). Drabkina, pp. 65-66; Police report, 1 March 1900, in f. 13, o. 1 kopii, ed. khr. 12, l. 162.

Bolshevik centre, thus opening channels through which instructions and illegal literature could be sent and received.

Today the underground newspapers and letters that are preserved are invaluable sources for historians, yet those who produced the newspapers and wrote the letters, including Anna and Mariia, are less well known figures than the theorists and ideologues of the movement. Perhaps like the revolutionaries of the time, historians see such aspects of the underground movement as less interesting than the development of the party's ideology and the debates between the 'thinkers' of the time. Yet the party could not have survived without newspapers and correspondence, and there can be no understanding of the movement without a knowledge of the reality of the daily life of party activists. As Diagilev put it, during the underground years "there were no trivial and no great deeds, when the great work depended on the trivialities, when a careless step could lead to the collapse of the organisation, when everything might crash down because of a trifling [matter]".¹³ Sometimes it was only correspondence links and the occasional arrival of revolutionary newspapers that kept a local underground group functioning. Investigating the day-to-day activities of Russian underground groups also reveals that often revolutionary work at grass-roots level was influenced more by local contingents and issues of practicality than by ideological and theoretical disputes between revolutionaries in exile abroad.

Perhaps another reason for the lack of attention paid by historians to Anna and Mariia's careers is the misconception that they had no political views of their own and were simply blind followers of Vladimir. Although Anna and Mariia did not tend to write theoretical works nor formally enter into ideological debates, they expressed their views in their actions, including how they edited newspapers and where they chose to work, in their pamphlet-writing and translation work, and in their letters. Indeed throughout the underground years, Anna and Mariia pursued their own path as revolutionaries, one that was both defined by and an expression of their own political views.

¹³ Vladimir Diagilev, 'M.I. Ul'ianova', in *Sem'ia Ul'ianovykh*, p. 357.

JOINING UP

When Anna arrived in Moscow in 1893, she immediately linked up with the Social-Democratic movement. At this time, the movement was not centred round a unified body, but rather took the form of a network of study groups, usually led by one dominant circle.¹⁴ If this group were shut down, a new study group would take up the leadership.¹⁵ When a Social-Democrat and acquaintance of Vladimir's, S. Mitskevich, arrived in the city, he contacted Anna and "immediately became close to the dear [Ul'ianov] family".¹⁶ While he worked in Moscow, Anna gave him "a great deal of material assistance and passed on...a number of contacts".¹⁷ She also joined the workers' circle that he established, which devoted its time to studying works by Marx, Engels, N.E. Fedoseev and K. Kautsky, amongst others.¹⁸ As part of this group Anna translated *Die Weber* by Hauptmann, which was "published on a hectograph and read amongst the workers of Moscow and nearby provinces".¹⁹ According to Mitskevich it "was a great success".²⁰

Due to the growth in strength and support for the Social-Democrats after a successful 1 May campaign in 1894, the various study groups in St Petersburg joined together to form the Moscow Workers' Union. In 1895, it led another successful propaganda campaign to celebrate the 1st May, in which Anna was heavily involved.²¹ The group issued pamphlets and held meetings with workers in the days leading up to the 1st and on the day itself.²² High numbers of workers participated in the political meetings and the Union began to work towards linking up with other revolutionary groups in towns across Russia, including Kiev, Saratov and Ekaterinoslav.²³

¹⁴ A.I., quoted in Kudelli, in *Krasnaia letopis'*, No. 1, 1936, p. 202.

¹⁵ A.I., quoted in Kudelli, in *Krasnaia letopis'*, No. 1, 1936, p. 202.

¹⁶ Mitskevich, *Revoliutsionnaia Moskva*, p. 144.

¹⁷ Mitskevich, *Revoliutsionnaia Moskva*, p. 144.

¹⁸ Poliakova, pp. 24-5. Fedoseev was one of the first promoters of Marxism in Russia, while Kautsky was a theorist in the German Social Democratic Party.

¹⁹ A.I., quoted in Kudelli, in *Krasnaia letopis'*, No. 1, 1936, p. 202. *Die Weber*, by G. Hauptmann, was a play based on the rising of the Silesian weavers in 1844.

²⁰ Mitskevich, *Revoliutsionnaia Moskva*, p. 146.

²¹ Poliakova, p. 25; S. Mitskevich, 'Na zare rabochago dvizheniia v Moskve', in *Tekushchii moment*, (Moscow: Tipografiia A.P. Poplavskii, 1906), p. 15.

²² Mitskevich, in *Tekushchii moment*, p. 15.

²³ Mitskevich, in *Tekushchii moment*, p. 15.

Anna established links with revolutionaries in St Petersburg, including Vladimir's group, known as the 'elders', who included S. Radchenko, G. Krzhizhanovskii, Ol'ga's university friends Z. Nevzorova and A. Iakubova, and an underground printing press group.²⁴ Mark, who travelled regularly between Moscow and St Petersburg on business, collected illegal literature, which Anna then distributed to workers' organisations.²⁵ Anna also went to St Petersburg, with the police noting her visits to Radchenko and other revolutionaries who were known to the authorities or under police surveillance.²⁶

Anna's other duties included fund-raising, arranging secret signals for underground meetings, finding clean addresses to which illegal literature could be sent, producing propaganda and conducting correspondence.²⁷ Due to her technical knowledge, when the Petersburg group was "utterly defeated" by the police, Anna was able to send an experienced agitator, Kolokol'nikov, there from Moscow to help revive it.²⁸ She was able to provide him with the secret signal required to meet with other members of the group.²⁹

Indeed, Anna consistently worked to support Social-Democrats and the Workers' Union in Moscow and to help them overcome the difficulties caused by regular police interference and arrests. In late 1896, when M.F. Vladimirkii (the current leader of the union) was arrested, Anna began working with I.F. Dubrovinskii to keep Social-Democratic agitation alive.³⁰ When, in December 1897, he in turn was arrested, Anna played a "prominent role...in the revival of party links", helping to re-organise work and participating in a series of Social-Democratic campaigns.³¹ Mitskevich recorded that Anna "played a prominent role in the Moscow party organisation" in the years 1895-1898, acting as "the centre of communication in the organisation".³²

²⁴ Poliakova, p. 26.

²⁵ Poliakova, p. 26.

²⁶ Police report, 27 December 1896, in f. 13, o. 1 kopii, ed. khr. 12, l. 134. The others included: Aleksandr Nikolaevich Potresov, a Marxist who would work for *Iskra* and *Zaria*, Radchenko's wife Liubov' Nikolaevaia and Kalmykova, who ran a shop in St Petersburg and was a good source of information about the local Social-Democratic movement.

²⁷ A.I., 'Avtobiografiia', in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 1, l. 3.

²⁸ A. Il'in-Zhenevskii, 'Kak gotovilsia pervii s'ezd RS-DRP', in *Krasnaia letopis'*, 1928, No. 1, p. 16.

²⁹ Il'in-Zhenevskii, in *Krasnaia letopis'*, 1928, No. 1, p. 16.

³⁰ A.M. Pankratova, L.M. Ivanov and V.D. Mochalov, eds., *Istoriia Moskvy*, (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo akademii nauk S.S.S.R, 1955), Volume 5, p. 74.

³¹ *Istoriia Moskvy*, Volume 5, p. 74.

³² Mitskevich, *Revoliutsionnaia Moskva*, p. 146.

When Vladimir was arrested in December 1895 in St Petersburg, Anna and the rest of the family moved to a dacha on the outskirts of the city to be nearer to him. As they only stayed there for six months or so, this did not end Anna's Moscow activities.³³ However, while in St Petersburg, she established herself as a key figure amongst revolutionaries there. Of this work, Anna wrote:

In 1896 I led almost everything in Petersburg, where Vladimir Il'ich was then imprisoned, rewriting from invisible ink his writings from prison ([including] the programme of the party and explanatory notes for it). At that time I established a link with Moscow, supplying it, where possible, with literature.³⁴

Returning to Moscow, Anna made use of her experience of conducting conspiratorial discussions during prison visits to Vladimir and began to link up with and visit prisoners in Butryka prison, including Fedoseev. She ran errands for him and even gave him advice about preparations for going to Siberian exile.³⁵

Anna met two other key figures of the Social-Democratic movement when she stayed in Switzerland between May and September 1897. There she made contact with G.V. Plekhanov and P.B. Axelrod, and their Emancipation of Labour group, as well as collected illegal literature to take back to Russia.³⁶ Indeed, Anna continued to correspond with Axelrod, and Vladimir mimicked her conspiratorial system in order to communicate with the émigré himself. He wrote to Axelrod in 1897: "It would be satisfactory if you would write occasionally [to me in Siberia] by the method which you use with your 'old friend' [Anna]."³⁷

³³ Kunetskaia, p. 20.

³⁴ A.I., 'Avtobiografiia', in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 1, l. 4.

³⁵ A.I., 'Odn iz pervykh lastochek rabocheho dvizheniia v Rossii (Nikolai Evgrafovich Fedoseev)', in *Fedoseev, Nikolai Evgrafovich: Odn iz pionerov revoliutsionnogo marksizma v Rossii (Sbornik vospominanii)*, ed. by A.I., (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo, 1923), p. 20.

³⁶ Drabkina, pp. 68-69.

³⁷ Letter, V.I. to P.B. Axelrod, 16 August 1897, in *Collected Works*, Volume 37, p. 41.

In 1898, shortly after the party's first congress, Anna helped found the first Moscow committee of the RSDRP.³⁸ This is noted in *Istoriia Moskvvy* as follows:

In the Autumn of 1898 several senior figures of the Moscow organisation – A.I. Ul'ianova-Elizarova, M.F. Vladimirskii together with junior ones – P.V. and A.V. Lunacharskii and others – formed the first Moscow committee of the RSDRP. The Moscow committee issued a number of proclamations and prepared an appeal for 1 May 1899.³⁹

Anna's activities were monitored closely by the police and were reported to include corresponding with revolutionaries abroad, as well as helping others organise Social-Democratic circles and protecting illegal printing presses.⁴⁰ Interestingly Anna calls this period her “party probation” despite her leading role and her already considerable experience as an underground activist, not to mention the fact that she was now well-known to the police as a Social-Democrat.⁴¹

Anna escaped what she thought was her imminent arrest in 1900 by going abroad for two years. During this time Anna gained a rich experience of the European revolutionary movement as she travelled between France and Germany, “joined local Social-Democratic groups..., visited workers' meetings, lectures and speeches by German and French Socialists, and often visited Lenin in Geneva and Munich”.⁴² She also worked for Plekhanov's “theoretical and philosophical magazine” *Zaria* and “participated in a Social-Democratic conference in Paris”.⁴³ This was probably the Paris Conference of the International, which called for the “mobilisation of a common struggle against militarism and colonialism”.⁴⁴

³⁸ *Istoriia Moskvvy*, Volume 5, p. 75.

³⁹ *Istoriia Moskvvy*, Volume 5, p. 78.

⁴⁰ Police report, 1 July 1898 – 1 January 1899, in f. 13, o. 1 kopii, ed. khr. 12, l. 182.

⁴¹ A.I., ‘Avtobiografiia’, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 1, l. 4.

⁴² Kudelli, in *Krasnaia letopis'*, No. 1, 1936, p. 203.

⁴³ Samuel H. Baron, *Plekhanov: The Father of Russian Marxism*, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1963), p. 214; Police report, 1 July 1903, in f. 13, o. 1 kopii, ed. khr. 12, l. 172; Police report, 1 January 1901, in f. 13, o. 1 kopii, ed. khr. 12, l. 174.

⁴⁴ Baron, p. 317.

Even in 1900, Anna was so well-known to the police that when she went abroad she was kept under surveillance by a Russian police agent based abroad who worked in co-operation with the German police. She was followed from Berlin to Prague, back to Berlin and to Rügen, and her correspondence was intercepted.⁴⁵ Anna, who was already an experienced conspirator, realised this and concluded that the local post-office manager had been bribed, nor was she convinced when her “Social-Democrat Berlin friends assured her that that was impossible”.⁴⁶ When Anna returned to Russia in August 1902, the police wrote:

[Elizarova] is a person of extremely harmful tendencies. Using her foreign contacts she gives assistance to the introduction of illegal literature to the limits of the Empire, communicates information about events in Russia to foreign revolutionary activists and underground publications, and gives support and services to revolutionary organisations... While in Berlin... she joined the local group of the revolutionary organisation of *Iskra* and took an active part in its activities... In view of Elizarova's serious significance, the Department of Police... asks that she be put under police surveillance, without her knowledge.⁴⁷

Mariia's path into the Moscow underground movement differed slightly from Anna's. When the Ul'ianovs moved to the city in 1893 she was only fifteen and still finishing her secondary education, so Mariia did not immediately join the Workers' Union. Mitskevich does not, for example, mention meeting Mariia when he was first introduced to the family, which points to Mariia's non-involvement in the movement at that time.⁴⁸ However, she was still very young when she did join. Having enrolled on the Moscow Bestuzhev courses Mariia became involved in Marxist student circles and then in the Workers' Union.⁴⁹ In 1894 she and Dmitrii began to work as propagandists representing the Workers' Union in the Allied Council of United Student Societies (*Soiuznii sovet*

⁴⁵ A.I., 'Avtobiografiia', in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 1, l. 4.

⁴⁶ A.I., 'Avtobiografiia', in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 1, l. 4.

⁴⁷ Letter, Police Chief to Chief of Tomsk Guberniia Police, 2 September 1902, in GARF, f. 1764, o. 1, no. 42, l. 3.

⁴⁸ Mitskevich, *Revoliutsionnaia Moskva*, p. 146.

ob"edinennykh zemliachestv).⁵⁰ Soon the two groups were working closely together to agitate amongst students in Moscow.⁵¹ Mariia also became involved in worker education circles and in smuggling illegal literature.⁵²

She moved with the rest of the family to St Petersburg when Vladimir was arrested and visited him on occasion. Going to Moscow in 1898, she joined the RSDRP, but her work for the party stopped when she enrolled at Brussels University. Returning to the family home in Podol'sk in the summer of 1899, Mariia took up her underground activities again, going to Moscow every day to work for the RSDRP committee.⁵³ There, the police noted, Mariia had "dealings with politically unreliable individuals", was involved in fund-raising evenings and was storing an illegal printing press.⁵⁴

In similar, modest tones to Anna, Mariia described her activities at this point as "minor".⁵⁵ However, they were enough to lead to the confiscation of her international passport, and her arrest and exile to Nizhnii Novgorod in October 1899. After a brief spell there, Mariia returned to Moscow and continued working for the RSDRP. Arrested again in 1901, this time Mariia was exiled for three years to Samara.

By now the Ul'ianov family had quite a reputation with the police. Each member was seen as equally radical and dangerous. For example, in one report, the police described Mariia as follows:

Mariia Il'inichna undoubtedly upholds the revolutionary tradition of her family, who are distinguished by an extremely harmful tendency. Her brother, Aleksandr, was executed in 1887 for his participation in a terrorist conspiracy, Vladimir has been sent to Siberia for treason, and Dmitrii was recently put under police surveillance for the propagation of Social-Democratic ideas. Sister

⁴⁹ *Istoriia Moskvy*, Volume 5, p. 75.

⁵⁰ Poliakova, p. 26.

⁵¹ Poliakova, p. 26.

⁵² Police report, quoted in Kunetskaia, p. 34.

⁵³ Kunetskaia, p. 33.

⁵⁴ Police report, quoted in Kunetskaia, p. 34.

⁵⁵ M.I., 'Moi put' v revoliutsiiu', in *Mariia Il'inichna Ul'ianova*, p. 8.

Anna is in constant contact with foreign agents and is, like her husband Mark Timofeevich Elizarov, under police surveillance.⁵⁶

THE SPARK

At the turn of the century, the Social Democratic group in St Petersburg, now known as the Union of Struggle for the Liberation of the Working Class, was engaged in a key debate over membership and tactics which would have an impact on the whole revolutionary movement. The newest members of the group, the ‘youngsters’, argued that prominent workers, who were leaders of strike campaigns and worker unrest, should be allowed to join, while the ‘elders’ argued that only intellectuals should be members. The latter group assumed that only intellectuals, with their knowledge of revolutionary theory, could provide leadership to the working class. They argued that it was the revolutionary’s duty to educate workers in political ideas using propaganda. However, the youngsters believed that the workers themselves should initiate and sustain the revolutionary movement, while the intellectual’s role was to assist these efforts. This group was also particularly in favour of agitation as a campaign method, that is printing leaflets for wide distribution amongst workers, as well as arranging mass meetings and strikes.

Anna’s response to this debate was complex. She supported the elders’ view on the issue of membership, yet on the issue of tactics, she tended to favour the use of agitation over propaganda and throughout her career defended the use of popular, accessible material over the theoretical. In the 1890s, the Moscow group to which Anna belonged embraced the new tactics promoted by the ‘youngsters’, and moved from conducting “narrow propaganda circles” to “mass agitation amongst workers, establishing practical links between Marxist organisations and the masses of Moscow workers”.⁵⁷ Anna herself contributed to the production of agitational material, composing “a short leaflet about

⁵⁶ Police report, quoted in Diagilev, p. 25. Since Vladimir is said to be in exile, the date of this document can be estimated to be between 1897 and 1900.

⁵⁷ *Istoriia Moskvy*, Volume 5, pp. 78-79.

Dement'ev's book *Fabrika*".⁵⁸ Like Anna's translation of *Die Weber*, this was read widely by workers.⁵⁹

Mariia too held a belief in the need for workers to be able to express their experience of the struggle for the establishment of socialism, developing this view most clearly after the Revolution as leader of the Rabkor movement. Yet during the underground movement and after, Mariia refused to sacrifice the theoretical foundations of the Social-Democrats' programme when campaigning amongst workers.⁶⁰ When in Geneva in 1904, for example, Mariia was perturbed by how little knowledge of Marxist theory party members had, especially since it was they who were conducting educational propaganda circles amongst workers.⁶¹ She argued that it could only damage the "party's prestige" if its propagandists were discovered to be ignorant of Social-Democratic theory.⁶² In general, where Anna was always pragmatic in deciding on a course of action, Mariia tended to follow party doctrine more closely. Thus, in this instance, as well as supporting the use of propaganda, she also favoured a strict membership code.

The debate between propaganda and agitation developed into a campaign against Economism, the name given (by their opponents) to those in favour of agitation. The Economists' critics argued that by allowing the workers to set their own agenda, their aims would only ever be related to economic demands and not political ones. Anna inadvertently gave Vladimir, who was a critic of the Economists, a weapon to use against them, when she sent him a document which discussed the Social-Democratic movement in Russia. It was written by E.D. Kuskova and S.N. Prokopovich, who were not active revolutionaries, but had "some influence amongst the 'youngsters'", and who argued that it was easier for Russian workers to begin their struggle against autocracy with economic, rather than political demands.⁶³ For brevity while writing a chemical letter to Vladimir, Anna called it the credo of the 'youngsters'.⁶⁴ Although she did not intend to give the impression that the younger Social-Democrats saw it as their programme

⁵⁸ A.I., quoted in Kudelli, in *Krasnaia letopis'*, No. 1, 1936, p. 202.

⁵⁹ A.I., quoted in Kudelli, in *Krasnaia letopis'*, No. 1, 1936, p. 202.

⁶⁰ I. Mordkovich, 'Zhenevskie vpechatleniia', in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1931, No. 2-3, p. 113.

⁶¹ Mordkovich, in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1931, No. 2-3, p. 113.

⁶² Mordkovich, in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1931, No. 2-3, p. 113.

⁶³ 'Po povodu posylki "Credo"', in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 171.

⁶⁴ 'Po povodu posylki "Credo"', in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 171.

(indeed, Kuskova herself was indignant that the document had been given such a name), Vladimir seized on it as such and wrote a formal protest against it.⁶⁵ This incident highlights how those in exile and at a distance from the movement could misinterpret the situation on the ground or view as important situations or documents that were less significant in the lively context of daily underground life. While exiles and émigrés regularly embroiled themselves in theoretical debates, activists concerned themselves with the practical aspects of local revolutionary work and were often less affected by ideological issues that seemed important in Paris, Geneva or Siberia. Time and time again, Anna's pragmatic decisions, which were made on the basis of local contingencies and ignored the finer points of Social-Democratic theory, put her at odds with Vladimir. In the case of the credo, her relaxed attitude towards different opinions about the path towards Social-Democratic revolution contrasted sharply with her brother's refusal to consider alternative view points, like those of the 'youngsters'.

The anti-Economism campaign was taken up by the RSDRP's first newspaper, *Iskra*, the publication of which represented the party's first attempt to unite its members around a single political programme.⁶⁶ *Iskra* was to be the channel through which Social-Democrats abroad could gain an understanding of the situation in Russia and through which local activists could campaign for support.⁶⁷ As Volin lists comprehensively, on a practical level the network of *Iskra* groups was to see to "...the collection of funds, the sending of all kinds of correspondence and materials relating to the workers' movement..., participation in the transportation of *Iskra* literature, [and] the starting of links with various corners of Russia".⁶⁸ Finally, *Iskra* became the vehicle through which Vladimir campaigned for a Second Party Congress.

Anna and Mariia both played a prominent role in *Iskra* work. Anna helped found the newspaper while abroad between 1900 and 1902, working for two *Iskra* organisations, first in Paris and then Berlin.⁶⁹ She also wrote articles

⁶⁵ 'Po povodu posylki "Credo"', in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 171.

⁶⁶ O. Varentsova, 'Vozniknovenie "Iskry" i ee rabota', in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1926, No. 1, p. 36; Volin, p. 333 and p. 33.

⁶⁷ Volin, p. 30.

⁶⁸ Volin, p. 30.

⁶⁹ Police report, 1 July 1902, in f. 13, o. 1 kopii, ed. khr. 12, l. 172; Drabkina, p. 75.

for the newspaper.⁷⁰ On arriving in Tomsk in 1902, Anna met two *Iskrovtsy* whom she had known in Berlin and formed an *Iskra* group with them and other local supporters.⁷¹ They named themselves “The Siberian Group of Revolutionary Social-Democrats”.⁷²

Mariia began working for *Iskra* in Moscow, receiving the newspaper hidden in the covers of books sent from abroad and then propagating its message.⁷³ Mariia continued this work once in exile in Samara; her letters to the *Iskra* editorial board are full of arrangements for the sending of the newspaper to clean addresses.⁷⁴ The *Iskra* group there was so successful that when G.M. Krzhizhanovskii and his wife Zinaida were assigned to form the Bureau of the Russian Organisation of *Iskra*, they were sent to Samara.⁷⁵ The town was also chosen to host the first All-Russia *Iskra* Conference in 1902, which Mariia attended as secretary to the *Iskra* Bureau.⁷⁶

Mariia helped revive revolutionary activity in Samara in general, establishing correspondence links with committees in Ufa and St Petersburg and arranging for the issuing of revolutionary literature.⁷⁷ She contributed to the campaign against Economism by helping to compose “a leaflet, which wittily and conclusively ridiculed and exposed...Economists” and called for a “decisive...struggle” against them.⁷⁸ Mariia also proved her worth as an organiser at this time, for when Krzhizhanovskii was called to Kiev, she was asked to remain in Samara because they needed “reliable people” there.⁷⁹

In 1902, Vladimir published *What Is To Be Done?*, which criticised Economism and argued persuasively that the RSDRP must be a party of disciplined, professional revolutionaries if it was to be successful. Anna and Mariia never explicitly stated their opinion of *What Is To Be Done?*, but it is

⁷⁰ Drabkina, p. 75.

⁷¹ Letter, A.I. to the *Iskra* editorial board, 15 November 1902, in *Perepiska V.I. Lenina i redaktsii gazety "Iskra" s sotsial-demokraticheskimi organizatsiiami v Rossii*, ed. by O. P. Bochkova, 3 vols, (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo "Mysl", 1969), Volume 2, p. 470.

⁷² Footnote 154, in *Perepiska V.I. Lenina*, Volume 2, p. 574.

⁷³ Arnol'd, p. 62.

⁷⁴ Letters, M.I. to *Iskra* editorial board, 29 November 1902 and 9 February 1903, in *Perepiska V.I. Lenina*, Volume 2, p.509 and Volume 3, p. 162.

⁷⁵ Volin, pp. 332-333.

⁷⁶ Diagilev, p. 39.

⁷⁷ Letter, M.I. to *Iskra* editorial board, 9 February 1903, in *Perepiska V.I. Lenina*, Volume 3, p. 162; Diagilev, in *Sem'ia Ul'ianovykh*, p. 361; Letter, M.I. to *Iskra* editorial board, 29 November 1902, in *Perepiska V.I. Lenina*, Volume 2, p. 509.

⁷⁸ Diagilev, pp. 33-34.

clear from their letters and their actions that they supported Vladimir's vision for the party. For example, Anna wrote to the editorial board of *Iskra* from Tomsk requesting editions of the newspaper, as well as *What Is To Be Done?*, which the local revolutionaries "had not seen".⁸⁰ She added: "The latter is especially needed...It will be necessary to struggle with various primitive enterprises."⁸¹ Anna's use of the word "primitive" was probably influenced by Vladimir's use of the term in *What Is To Be Done?*, where he defined it as:

Lack of practical training, of ability to carry on organisational work..., a narrow scope of revolutionary work generally, failure to understand that a good organisation of revolutionaries cannot be built on the basis of such narrow activity, and lastly – and this is the main thing – attempts to justify this narrowness and to elevate it to a special 'theory'.⁸²

Vladimir argued that Economism was particularly vulnerable to 'narrow work', by which he meant that they devoted themselves to agitating amongst the workers using economic questions, rather than leading a political struggle.⁸³ It seems that at this time Anna was swayed by Vladimir's argument and therefore was critical of the unsophisticated nature of underground, revolutionary activities in Tomsk, and by extension of Economism. However, it must be remembered that few members of the RSDRP called themselves Economists; most thought that their approach was based on political campaigning rather than economic.⁸⁴ Though Anna derided the state of revolutionary activities in Tomsk and agreed with the arguments of *What Is To Be Done?*, in practice she herself always favoured an agitational approach in campaign work and as result she too faced criticism from Vladimir.

Nonetheless, Anna's Tomsk activities were highly successful. Social-Democrats in Siberia had united to form an umbrella organisation to coordinate

⁷⁹ Diagilev, p. 39.

⁸⁰ Letter, A.I. to *Iskra* editorial board, 29 October 1902, in *Perepiska V.I. Lenina*, Volume 2, p. 422.

⁸¹ Letter, A.I. to *Iskra* editorial board, 29 October 1902, in *Perepiska V.I. Lenina*, Volume 2, p. 422.

⁸² 'Chto delat'?', in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 6, pp. 104-105.

⁸³ 'Chto delat'?', in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 6, pp. 104-105.

revolutionary work in the region, however, it operated independently of the RSDRP, and because its headquarters were in Irkutsk, many of Tomsk's activists had moved there.⁸⁵ Anna realised that the Siberian Social-Democratic Union's activities were "collapsing" for they were not issuing any material and wrote that the Tomsk Committee, as a result of the lack of "people and funds", was very weak.⁸⁶ As discussed above, she judged the ideological stance of the Tomsk committee to be "primitive".⁸⁷ Anna's efforts in Tomsk ensured that the Siberian Group of Social Democrats was established as an alternative organisation to the Tomsk Committee of the Union and that it recognised and was directly linked to the RSDRP.⁸⁸ It also seems that the Siberian Group of Social Democrats was influential at the first conference of Siberian social-democrats, which was held in July 1903.⁸⁹ When the Tomsk committee's representatives announced their group's plan to form a "Fighting Organisation", the conference "condemned [the proposal] as a breach of the centralism proposed in V.I. Lenin's *What Is To Be Done?*".⁹⁰ One can only assume that the conference's objections were voiced or at least influenced by Anna's Siberian Group of Social Democrats.

The Second Party Congress convened in the summer of 1903 and was soon divided over various issues, including how to define a party member, the nature of the party's leadership and the level of discipline required. From these disputes emerged the fractions of Bolsheviks and Mensheviks, with the former supporting a party of strong central leadership, with disciplined members who followed party directives unquestioningly and the latter favouring a slightly more relaxed party, which any worker could claim loyalty to and in which initiative was fostered. Biographers of the sisters stress that from the moment of the split the sisters were staunch Bolsheviks.⁹¹ This assertion is influenced by the fact that the biographers were writing during the Soviet regime, in which being a loyal Bolshevik from 1903 was essential for it had taken on the meaning of being

⁸⁴ 'Chto delat'?', in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 6, p. 83.

⁸⁵ Footnote 153, in *Perepiska V.I. Lenina*, Volume 2, p. 573.

⁸⁶ Letter, A.I. to *Iskra* editorial board, 29 October 1902, in *Perepiska V.I. Lenina*, Volume 2, p. 422.

⁸⁷ Letter, A.I. to *Iskra* editorial board, 29 October 1902, in *Perepiska V.I. Lenina*, Volume 2, p. 422.

⁸⁸ Footnote 154, in *Perepiska V.I. Lenina*, Volume 2, p. 574.

⁸⁹ Footnote 10, in *Perepiska V.I. Lenina*, Volume 3, p. 604.

⁹⁰ Footnote 10, in *Perepiska V.I. Lenina*, Volume 3, p. 604.

⁹¹ Drabkina, p. 4; Diagilev, in *Sem'ia Ul'ianovykh*, p. 362.

a loyal Leninist. However, though Soviet historiography maintained that the split of 1903 was decisive and permanent, during the underground years the split was not clear cut, nor even synonymous with being a supporter of Lenin. It was a fluid distinction, there were attempts at reconciliations and its importance depended on the current situation and local circumstances. It was often of far less importance in Russia than amongst the exiles in Europe. Indeed, in 1903, the reaction of most RSDRP groups in Russia to the split was of incomprehension and opposition.⁹²

The Bolsheviks emerged victorious from the Congress. Despite having been defeated over the issue of the definition of a party member, they won the debate on every other issue, including how the party was to be structured. However, in the aftermath of the congress, it was the Menshevik group that grew in strength and began to dominate *Iskra* and the RSDRP.⁹³ Vladimir remained a member of the Central Committee but spent the next two years trying to shore up support for his point of view.

Meanwhile, in Russia, in 1903, Kiev was designated the site of the Russian Central Committee of the RSDRP. Krzhizhanovskii was recalled from Samara and sent there, and he soon advised Mariia to join the Kiev group as well.⁹⁴ Anna arrived shortly after her sister. This influx of Ul'ianovs did not go unnoticed by the police and reports were filed which even included details about the amount of luggage they had brought.⁹⁵ Anna and Mariia joined the newly formed and understaffed Technical Bureau, which coordinated the flow of illegal literature, party correspondence and arranged the deployment of revolutionary activists around Russia.⁹⁶ Mariia's main task was to send party news to local Russian committees and it seems from her letters that she was amongst those who were perturbed by the split at the Second Congress. In November 1903, she looked forward to "a new era of party relations" which would lead to "calmer, more friendly work in the name of the best interests of the party".⁹⁷

⁹² See, for example, N.K., *Reminiscences*, p. 95.

⁹³ See, for example, letter, N.K. to members of the Bureau of the Committees of the Majority, St Petersburg, 14 January 1905, in *Perepiska, 1905-1907*, Volume 1.1, p. 62.

⁹⁴ Remezovskii, p. 41.

⁹⁵ Remezovskii, p. 20.

⁹⁶ Remezovskii, p. 44.

⁹⁷ Letter, M.I. to F. Regner, 29 November 1903, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 30, l. 4; Letter, M.I. to Iu.V. Gromova, 27 November 1903, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 30, l. 3.

This letter was in fact intercepted by the police, who reported that the writer “must be the well-known social-democrat Mariia Il’ichna Ul’ianova”.⁹⁸ On the night of 1 January 1904 the police took action against the Kiev committee and the scale of this crackdown reveals how strong the RSDRP had become in the area. Over two hundred searches were made and fifty people, including Anna and Mariia, were arrested and imprisoned.⁹⁹ Despite this campaign, the police could find little evidence linking the Ul’ianovs to RSDRP activities in Kiev.¹⁰⁰ Instead the police attempted to compile a case against each of the sisters, which covered all their activities throughout Russia, by contacting departments across the country for information on the Ul’ianovs.¹⁰¹

Meanwhile, Anna made positive use of her time in prison, agitating amongst the prisoners and protesting about conditions in the jail.¹⁰² Dmitrii’s wife Antonina Ivanovna Neshcheretova described Anna’s activities as follows:

Anna Il’ichna’s working day in prison usually started and finished with concern for [her] comrades’ welfare...Anna Il’ichna continued the work of establishing and strengthening links between comrades who were at liberty, informing them about the status of [revolutionary] work, often burdening her mother with prison errands, which she fulfilled with exceptional accuracy and speed.¹⁰³

Anna was released in July, a month after her sister. Both went to Sablino, a small town near St Petersburg, and while Anna joined the Bolshevik St Petersburg Committee, Mariia made preparations to go abroad.¹⁰⁴ She arrived in Geneva in the autumn and began living with Vladimir and Nadezhda.

Despite Mariia’s hopes for a new period of harmonious Bolshevik-Menshevik relations, the situation remained as divided as ever. Indeed, this was a time of the consolidation of the Bolshevik fraction, in opposition to the

⁹⁸ Police report, January 1904, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 30, l. 24.

⁹⁹ Remezovskii, p. 110.

¹⁰⁰ Drabkina, p. 84.

¹⁰¹ Police reports, referred to in Remezovskii, p. 121; Letter, to Kiev Guberniia Police Department, 4 March 1904, in GARF, f. 1764, o. 1, no. 42, l. 6.

¹⁰² Remezovskii, p. 120.

¹⁰³ Drabkina, pp. 84-85.

Menshevik dominated Central Committee. In the summer, Vladimir had resigned from the Central Committee and he and his group of twenty-two Bolsheviks defied RSDRP policy and called for a Third Congress.¹⁰⁵ Mariia arrived in time to help form the Bureau of Committees of the Majority, a rival Central Committee, which would coordinate attempts to win support for the Bolsheviks and their campaign for a Third Congress.¹⁰⁶ Mariia's duties in the Bureau were to coordinate correspondence with revolutionary groups that were sympathetic to the Bolsheviks as well as organise the distribution of the new Bolshevik organ, *Vpered* (Forward).¹⁰⁷

L.A. Fotieva, a fellow underground revolutionary and after 1917 one of Lenin's secretaries, recalled that Mariia became the key link between Geneva, the international Bolshevik centre, and Paris, writing:

She informed us about all party news...[writing] long letters. She communicated information, which had been received from Russia, and about what was being done in Geneva. She sent literature, including pamphlets, which were published by the Geneva-based Bolshevik publishers, and the newspaper *Vpered* for the Parisian groups and for sending to Russia...¹⁰⁸

Meanwhile, Anna supported the technical side of revolutionary activities in the St Petersburg committee, overseeing the group's finances, arranging for the receipt of *Vpered* from abroad and producing revolutionary material for use in study circles and for publication. Anna translated K. Liebknecht's *The 1848 Revolution in Germany* and A. Pannekoek's *The Division of Spoils* and contributed to *Nasha mysl'* (Our Idea), writing, for example, biographical notes about Marx.¹⁰⁹ She also joined the legal Bolshevik publishing house *Priboi*, which produced, for example, a popular journal called *Voprosy strakhovaniia*

¹⁰⁴ Letter, V.I. to M.A., 28 August 1904, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 55, p. 237.

¹⁰⁵ N.K., *Reminiscences*, p. 105.

¹⁰⁶ Valentinov, *Encounters*, p. 236.

¹⁰⁷ See, for example, Letter, N.K. to Moscow Committee, 12 February 1905, in *Perepiska, 1905-1907*, Volume 1.1, p. 330.

¹⁰⁸ L.A. Fotieva, *Vstrechi s V.I. Leninym v Zheneve i Parizhe*, (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1978), p. 26.

¹⁰⁹ Drabkina, p. 92; 'Bol'shevistskie izdatel'skie dela', in *Krasnaia letopis'*, 1931, No. 3, p. 49.

(Questions of Insurance).¹¹⁰ Anna was also central to the flow of correspondence. In one letter alone, she passed on to the Bolsheviks abroad the contents of letters she had received from Warsaw, Riga, Moscow, Nizhnii Novgorod, Kharkhov and L'vov.¹¹¹

Like Mariia, Anna was not convinced about the efficacy of the split in the RSDRP and when in January 1905, she witnessed the people's demonstration, led by Gapon, and the ensuing Revolution, she saw it as an opportunity to reunite the St Petersburg party.¹¹²

“THE REVOLUTION IS BEGINNING”¹¹³

Writing to Vladimir and Nadezhda just after Gapon's demonstration, Anna told her brother that the Revolution was beginning.¹¹⁴ She wrote that there had been spontaneous public meetings, followed by attempts to gather weapons, the setting up of first-aid posts and moves to agitate amongst soldiers to win them over to the people's cause.¹¹⁵ Like “many others”, Anna initially thought Gapon was a *zubatovets*, a provocateur under the leadership of the Petersburg police chief Zubatov.¹¹⁶ However, having seen the Revolution, Anna told Vladimir and Nadezhda:

[Gapon] is apparently not, after all, a suspicious character. The wave of accumulated public indignation took this semi-literate person, half naïve in his belief in the Tsar and half not entirely sane, to its crest, and he knew how to master the crowd.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁰ Danskii, in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1930, No. 7-8, pp. 173-175.

¹¹¹ Letter, A.I. to *Vpered* editorial board, 5 February 1905, in *Perepiska, 1905-1907*, Volume 1.1, p. 284.

¹¹² Letter, A.I. to V.I. and N.K., after 9 January 1905, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 22, kopets pis'ma, l. 1.

¹¹³ Letter, A.I. to V.I. and N.K., after 9 January 1905, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 22, kopets pis'ma, l. 1.

¹¹⁴ Letter, A.I. to V.I. and N.K., after 9 January 1905, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 22, kopets pis'ma, l. 1.

¹¹⁵ Letter, A.I. to V.I. and N.K., after 9 January 1905, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 22, kopets pis'ma, l. 1.

¹¹⁶ Letter, A.I. to V.I. and N.K., after 9 January 1905, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 22, kopets pis'ma, l. 1.

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Although Anna did not completely trust Gapon, she saw a revolutionary leader in him and the potential to use the situation to further the RSDRP's cause, particularly because now Gapon subscribed to "all the Social-Democrats' demands".¹¹⁸ Indeed, she was amongst those Bolsheviks and Mensheviks in St Petersburg who tried to work together to exploit the crisis. She wrote to Vladimir and Nadezhda: "It's very good that the [Bolshevik] P[etersburg] C[ommittee] and the [Menshevik] C[entral] C[ommittee] group have united. Now they can start to issue leaflets under a common name."¹¹⁹ The alliance led to the establishment of a provisional Executive Committee, the pooling of funds and the joint publication of leaflets.¹²⁰ Anna was closely involved in the production of leaflets; the Ul'ianovs' maid remembered Anna teaching her how to print leaflets by hand and then making 300 copies.¹²¹ Mark then took them for distributing.¹²²

However, while Anna and her colleagues were moving towards an agreement with the Mensheviks in St Petersburg, Vladimir and his group abroad were increasingly hostile to their old comrades. Nadezhda wrote the following to Anna in early 1905 and it highlights how much the split was a European affair, somewhat detached from the events in Russia:

The foreign squabbles are less worrying. Relations with the Mensheviks are [another] matter. Last year, they were still close friends with whom a split was terribly hard; this year, one looks at them as strangers and all their tricks fill us with contempt towards them. They lie and play the swindler at every step. You are surprised no doubt by the epithet with which we decorate them, but how can one not abuse them as swine, with all their tricks.¹²³

¹¹⁷ Letter, A.I. to V.I. and N.K., after 9 January 1905, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 22, kopets pis'ma, l.

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¹¹⁸ Letter, A.I. to V.I. and N.K., after 9 January 1905, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 22, kopets pis'ma, l.

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¹¹⁹ Letter, A.I. to V.I. and N.K., after 9 January 1905, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 22, kopets pis'ma, l.

1. Despite Anna's optimism the agreement did not last long.

¹²⁰ Footnote 6, in *Perepiska, 1905-1907*, Volume 1.1, pp. 62-63.

¹²¹ A.I. Volodina, quoted in P.P. Elizarov, *Mark Elizarov i sem'ia Ul'ianovykh*, (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1967), p. 76.

¹²² A.I. Volodina, quoted in P.P. Elizarov, *Mark Elizarov*, p. 76.

¹²³ Letter, N.K. to A.I., 30 January 1905, in *Perepiska, 1905-1907*, Volume 1.1, p. 230.

Regardless of the varying attitudes to the Mensheviks, 1905 was a year of feverish activities. In Geneva, Mariia was “overloaded with all sorts of work” and her letters from this time provide a rich insight into her activities, her political views and her centrality to work in Geneva.¹²⁴ On 23 April 1905, for example, Mariia sent conspiratorial letters to four Russian towns, including Moscow and St Petersburg, containing information about the sending of *Vpered* to them, up-dates on the Bolshevik position and requests for news about the local situation.¹²⁵ Writing these letters would have been time-consuming, repetitive work, but communicating these instructions, requests and up-dates was clearly crucial to the smooth-running of the Bolshevik campaign for the convocation of a Third Party Congress. Yet there were very few who were able to do it. It is clear in these letters that Mariia’s expertise in conducting chemical correspondence was not matched by all revolutionaries. She wrote to V.I. Nevskii: “We received your letter. It was written so badly, that at least a third of the letter remains illegible, and it’s the same with most of your letters. Please do a [chemical] test every time, before writing, otherwise it’s a real nuisance.”¹²⁶

Mariia’s letters show that she believed strongly in the need for a congress, branding the Menshevik dominated Central Committee’s prevarication over whether to agree to attend it “ugly and hypocritical”.¹²⁷ She was also well aware of the ambivalence towards the split amongst Russian committees, referring regularly to “swampy” (*bolotistie*) committees who had yet to officially decide whether their loyalty lay with the Bolsheviks or the Mensheviks.¹²⁸ As the Third Congress convened in London, Mariia wrote to Anna in St Petersburg with new optimism, noting that even Vladimir seemed willing to compromise. She wrote: “Work is going well, harmoniously, there is no scheming, there will probably be no ‘incidents’. Shkurka [Vladimir] defeated everyone with his own

¹²⁴ Letter, N.K. to A.I., 30 January 1905, in *Perepiska, 1905-1907*, Volume 1.1, p. 230.

¹²⁵ Letters, M.I. to Ekaterinoslav Committee of the Majority of the RSDRP, V.I. Nevskii, M.I. to A.I. and M.I. to V.M. Knunianets, 23 April 1905, in *Perepiska, 1905-1907*, Volume 2.1, pp. 220-221.

¹²⁶ Letter, M.I. to V.I. Nevskii, 23 April 1905, in *Perepiska, 1905-1907*, Volume 2.1, p. 221.

¹²⁷ Letter, M.I. to A.A. Preobrazhenskii, 11 April 1905, in *Perepiska, 1905-1907*, Volume 2.1, p. 171.

¹²⁸ See, for example, letter, M.I. to A.A. Preobrazhenskii, 11 April 1905, in *Perepiska, 1905-1907*, Volume 2.1, p. 171.

‘swampishness’, good naturedly with a patient mood. They’ve all fallen in love with us.”¹²⁹

Mariia had high hopes for the Third Congress, writing optimistically to Preobrazhenskii that now there was a chance that “more time [could] be given to positive work, and not to squabbles”.¹³⁰ This comment suggests that Mariia was frustrated by the constant in-fighting of the RSDRP that she was surrounded by while in Geneva. Nadezhda noted that Mariia was “indifferent to foreign emigration life” and it is possible that Mariia’s decision to return to Russia was influenced by her desire to do more ‘positive work’ at the grassroots level and escape the disputes which looked set to continue to convulse the émigré community.¹³¹ Intra-party relations were not improved by the Third Congress; the Mensheviks walked out of it and held their own conference in Geneva instead.

Mariia arrived in St Petersburg in the summer of 1905 and joined Anna in the hectic work of the Bolshevik Committee there. One of their letters to Vladimir and Nadezhda reveals that as usual the two sisters had taken responsibility for the technical aspects of party activities, but also highlights the difficulties they faced in maintaining communications and receiving newspapers. Anna described how Mariia was “running around like one possessed, leaving...early in the morning and returning late at night” and was already showing signs of “edginess and overwork”.¹³² Mariia’s party responsibilities were considerable. She had become the secretary first of the Vasilevskii Island Committee and then of the Petersburg Committee itself.¹³³ She was also

¹²⁹ Letter, M.I. to A.I., 23 April 1905, in *Perepiska, 1905-1907*, Volume 2.1, p. 221. The term “swampish” was Bolshevik slang for any kind of ambivalent or conciliatory views. Vladimir was particular good at thinking up slang words to define points of views or types of behaviour. Valentinov wrote that Vladimir often used slang to stigmatise others and had the ability “to hypnotise the people around him by hurling certain words at them”. He continues: “One little word, instead of long explanations, was used in order to produce ‘conditioned reflexes’ – just as in Pavlov’s experiments. In 1903 and in the first half of 1904, ‘Akimovism’ was the key word; in later years it was: ‘liquidator’, ‘Otzovist’, ‘Machist’, ‘social-patriot’, etc. Only by getting away from Lenin and breaking off all contact with him could one escape the hypnosis of these set expressions.” (Valentinov, *Encounters*, pp. 124-125). This hypnotic effect might partly explain the way in which Mariia’s attitude to Mensheviks hardened while she spent time with Vladimir and Nadezhda in exile and relaxed once she returned to Russia.

¹³⁰ Letter, M.I. to A.A. Preobrazhenskii, 11 April 1905, in *Perepiska, 1905-1907*, Volume 2.1, p. 171.

¹³¹ Letter, N.K. to A.I., 30 January 1905, in *Perepiska V.I. Lenina*, Volume 1.1, p. 229.

¹³² Letter, M.I. and A.I. to V.I. and N.K., after 26 August 1905, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 23, l. 1.

¹³³ Diagilev, p. 56; Letter, L.A. Fotieva to N.K., 7 August 1905, in *Perepiska, 1905-1907*, Volume 3.2, p. 195.

gathering and editing worker correspondence for one of the Bolsheviks' newspapers, *Novaia zhizn'* (New life), an activity which foreshadowed her later work for the Rabkor movement.¹³⁴ When the *Novaia zhizn'* printing press was confiscated by the police, Mariia established a new one, teaching both Bolshevik and Menshevik activists in St Petersburg how to sustain an underground press.¹³⁵ It is indicative of the difference in attitude towards the split of the émigrés and grass-roots workers that on returning to Russia Mariia immediately began to work with Mensheviks, despite her loyal Bolshevik stance in Geneva.

Meanwhile, Anna was increasingly frustrated by the fact that *Proletarii* (The Proletarian), as *Vpered* had been renamed, was not reaching the capital, which meant that although changes to correspondence addresses were being published, she did not know about them and therefore could not send letters.¹³⁶ Nor could she read about the Bolsheviks' policy on the Duma, the constitutional assembly that had been established by Nicholas II as part of his concessions after the uprisings of that year. Mariia admitted that the Petersburg Committee had only found out about the Central Committee's proposals for the RSDRP's reaction to the Duma through "oral accounts by representatives of the CC" and they were causing "heated debates".¹³⁷ Many, she wrote, were strongly opposed to the Central Committee's planned uprising on the day of the convocation of the Duma for it would cause "the violent disruption" of its work.¹³⁸

The issue of participation in the Duma was causing debates abroad as well. In the end, the RSDRP boycotted the first Duma, but quickly realised it would be a useful forum to publicise their campaign. Once more the participation debate convulsed the Bolshevik and Menshevik fractions and it continued to do so until the Revolution. While many Bolsheviks called for a continuation of the boycott of the Duma, others, including Lenin, argued that the RSDRP should sponsor its own candidates in the elections. It seems from Anna and Mariia's doubts about the efficacy of disrupting the Duma's work with an uprising that they too were in favour of RSDRP participation in the assembly.

¹³⁴ Kunetskaia, pp. 72-73.

¹³⁵ Letter, M.I. to *Proletarii* editorial board, after 7 August 1905, in *Perepiska, 1905-1907*, Volume 3.2, p. 197; M. Kireeva, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 257, l. 1-2. Kireeva was one of the Bolshevik activists Mariia trained.

¹³⁶ Letter, M.I. and A.I. to V.I. and N.K., after 26 August 1905, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 23, l. 1.

¹³⁷ Letter, M.I. and A.I. to V.I. and N.K., after 26 August 1905, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 23, l. 1.

¹³⁸ Letter, M.I. and A.I. to V.I. and N.K., after 26 August 1905, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 23, l. 1.

Martov and the Mensheviks took revolutionary involvement in the Duma even further, proposing that all oppositionist candidates should unite to form a bloc in the assembly. Lenin could not agree to this and was determined to “demonstrate the vulgarity of this plan”, arguing that the RSDRP representatives should remain independent of other parties.¹³⁹

Although the Fourth Party Congress, held in Stockholm in April 1906, was intended to unite the Bolshevik and Menshevik fractions so that they could exploit the revolutionary situation more effectively, in fact, little was resolved. The Bolshevik centre, with its organ *Vpered*, continued to operate, and the issue of the Duma continued to split the Social-Democrats.

Anna spent the years 1906-1909 travelling all over Russia, carrying out party work. Although Mark had been exiled to Syzran for three years, Anna did not join him, preferring to keep St Petersburg as her base, where she would remain at the heart of the revolutionary movement. She visited her husband regularly, using one such trip, in December 1906 to obtain illegal literature on the second Duma, including information about the first set of Social-Democratic candidates.¹⁴⁰ She also translated some propaganda material, including Otto Bauer’s *The National Question and Social Democracy*.¹⁴¹ In October 1907, Anna travelled to Geneva to retrieve some archival party documents. Then, having moved to Moscow in 1908, she devoted her time to correcting and arranging for the publication of Vladimir’s book *Materialism and Empiriocriticism*.¹⁴²

Anna also pursued her long-standing interest in children’s welfare, which had first started when she became a teaching assistant at a primary school, before she enrolled at university.¹⁴³ As an old family friend, Levitskii, remembered: “Children in general and children’s literature always attracted [Anna]: she not only translated, but also wrote children’s stories.”¹⁴⁴ While caring for her mother in the mountains near Alupka in the Crimea in 1909, Anna wrote a series of

¹³⁹ Letter, N.K. to M.I., 14 August 1905, in *Perepiska, 1905-1907*, Volume 3.1, p. 240.

¹⁴⁰ P.P. Elizarov, *Mark Elizarov*, p. 87.

¹⁴¹ Letter, M.I. to A.I., 14 October 1907, in *Perepiska, 1883-1917*, p. 171.

¹⁴² Letter, M.I. to A.I., 15 October 1907, in *Perepiska, 1883-1917*, p. 172.

¹⁴³ A.I., ‘Avtobiografiia’, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 1, l. 3.

¹⁴⁴ ‘Vospominanie V.A. Levitskogo’, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 389, l. 2.

articles about the lot of children in capitalist society.¹⁴⁵ These protested against the use of child labour by capitalist countries and by Russia, and highlighted the problem of suicide amongst children of the working classes.¹⁴⁶

Mariia, who continued to operate in St Petersburg until 1908, also took on literary work for the party. Despite the fact that the Tsarist government was increasingly encroaching on the reforms of 1905 and “[narrowing] the scope for work”, Mariia translated Marx’s letters to Kugelmann and to Sorge.¹⁴⁷ This was an important contribution to the stock of revolutionary literature translated into Russia, for within the contents of these letters could be found justifications for the use of armed insurrection to bring about the revolution.¹⁴⁸

In 1908, Mariia travelled to Geneva, and once more found herself in the thick of party intrigues over the party’s Duma tactics and Vladimir’s personal dispute with A. Bogdanov. The Fifth Party Congress in May and the follow-up meeting in July of 1907 brought the RSDRP’s disagreements to a head. Bogdanov, Vladimir’s erstwhile ally, and the Bolsheviki argued for a boycott of the Third Duma, while the Mensheviki pushed for participation in the assembly and co-operation with other parties. Lenin disagreed with both sides and proposed that the RSDRP sponsor candidates in the Duma, but that they must remain independent from any other party. His view prevailed, but soon certain members of the Bolshevik fraction, the Ultimatumists, began calling for tighter control over the party’s representatives in the Duma while others, the Recallists, demanded the withdrawal of the RSDRP’s delegates from the Duma.¹⁴⁹ Lenin and Plekhanov started preparing for a campaign against these groups as well as against the Liquidators, those who, they claimed, argued in favour of dissolving the illegal party and conducting the political struggle legitimately. Vladimir wrote to Anna in May 1909: “Things are bad here – there will probably be a

¹⁴⁵ N.D. Parfenenko, *Ul'ianovy na Ukraine: revoliutsionnaia i obshchestvenno-politicheskaia deiatelnost' Ul'ianovykh na Ukraine i v Krymu (1902-1921 gody)*, (Kiev: Izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury Ukrainy, 1989), p. 102.

¹⁴⁶ Parfenenko, p. 102. These were published in *Svobodnoe vospitanie* in 1909 and 1910, No. 8 and No. 9 respectively.

¹⁴⁷ N.K., ‘Sestra Vladimira Il'icha’, in *Mariia Il'inichna Ul'ianova*, p. 20; Letter, M.I. to A.I., 2 January 1907, in *Perepiska, 1883-1917*, p. 165.

¹⁴⁸ Diagilev, in *Sem'ia Ul'ianovykh*, p. 367.

¹⁴⁹ Leonard Schapiro, *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, 2nd edn., (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1978), p. 110.

split. I hope that in a month or six weeks I shall be able to give you exact information. So far I can do no more than guess.”¹⁵⁰

Mariia also predicted a split, writing to Anna in February that “war [had] started against A.A. [Bogdanov] and Nik-cha [L.V. Krasin]”.¹⁵¹ In June 1909, Mariia reported the “very interesting fact” that Plekhanov had left the editorial board of the Menshevik organ, *Golos sotsial-demokrata* (Voice of the Social-Democrat).¹⁵² Mariia continued in her letter:

The main reason [for Plekhanov’s departure] is his lack of sympathy for “liquidatorism”, which the [*Golos*] editorial board is obviously over-indulgent towards, but [he is] not a little influenced by Il’in’s [Vladimir’s]¹⁵³ work [*Materialism and empiriocriticism*]. So we are on the eve of great events and new stratifications.¹⁵⁴

Although Mariia recognised the significance of such shifts in allegiances, she found that splits made the “atmosphere very heavy” and described the details of the more unpleasant disputes as “filth”.¹⁵⁵ Mariia was also prepared to defend revolutionaries who did not adhere to the new RSDRP rules forbidding co-operation with candidates from other parties. In 1909 E. Adamovich, who worked for the Vasilevskii Island Bolsheviks, faced censure from her comrades for arguing that during the reactionary period when underground groups were under intense pressure, it was not improper to ally even with Kadets “in technical [or] material dealings” as long as matters of principle were not at stake.¹⁵⁶ Adamovich had worked with Anna in 1898-1899 and Mariia in 1905-1906 in underground groups and therefore felt able to turn to Mariia for help.¹⁵⁷ Mariia

¹⁵⁰ Letter, V.I. to A.I., 26 May 1909, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 55, p. 292. The word “split” is given in the German, Spaltung.

¹⁵¹ Letter, M.I. to A.I., 26 February 1909, in *Perepiska, 1883-1917*, p. 192.

¹⁵² Letter, M.I. to A.I., 24 June 1909, in *Perepiska, 1883-1917*, p. 206. Plekhanov had in fact left the Editorial Board in December 1908. That Mariia was only in a position to write to Anna about this in June gives some indication of the time delay in the sharing of news that plagued the underground movement.

¹⁵³ Il’in was one of Vladimir’s pseudonyms.

¹⁵⁴ Letter, M.I. to A.I., 24 June 1909, in *Perepiska, 1883-1917*, p. 206.

¹⁵⁵ Letters, M.I. to A.I., 24 June 1909, and M.I. to A.I., 26 February 1909, in *Perepiska, 1883-1917*, p. 206 and p. 192.

¹⁵⁶ Evgeniia Adamovich, ‘Legal’nie vozmozhnosti i partiinaia rabota v Peterburge v 1908-09 gg.’, in *Krasnaia letopis’*, 1930, No. 4, p. 51.

¹⁵⁷ Adamovich, in *Krasnaia letopis’*, 1930, No. 4, p. 51.

immediately dispatched a letter defending Adamovich's character and dedication as a revolutionary. That her letter caused Adamovich's accusers to retreat instantly is evidence of Mariia's high standing in the party at this time.¹⁵⁸

In January 1910 a plenum of the Central Committee was held in Paris with the aim of ending the factionalism of the RSDRP. It was agreed that the Bolshevik centre and *Proletarii* would cease to operate, as would the Menshevik organ, *Golos sotsial-demokrata*. Vladimir wrote to Anna in February:

We have been having very 'stormy' times lately, but they have ended with an attempt at peace with the Mensheviks – yes, yes, strange as it may seem; we have closed down the factional newspaper and are trying harder to promote *unity*. We shall see whether it can be done.¹⁵⁹

Vladimir's good intentions were soon forgotten as both sides failed to shut down their fractional operations and once again the party entered into a "period of intense squabbling".¹⁶⁰

FROM SARATOV TO FEBRUARY

Despite the "squabbling" abroad, the period 1909-1912 was one of the most productive and successful periods of Ul'ianov revolutionary work in Russia. Anna, Mark and Mariia joined forces in the town of Saratov to revive an RSDRP group on the brink of collapse and transformed it into one of the strongest Bolshevik committees in Russia.

According to a police report written in 1912, "the last liquidation of the Saratov organisation of the RSDRP [of October 1909]...put an end to party activities of local Social-Democrats for almost one and a half years".¹⁶¹ Anna and Mark had moved to the town in August 1909 and so must have been aware of this police action. Despite the claim in the police report above, the presence

¹⁵⁸ Adamovich, in *Krasnaia letopis'*, 1930, No. 4, p. 55.

¹⁵⁹ Letter, V.I. to A.I., 1 February 1910, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 55, p. 306. Vladimir's emphasis.

¹⁶⁰ Letter, V.I. to A.I., 2 May 1910, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 55, p. 312.

¹⁶¹ Police report No. 41651, 11 March 1912, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 216, l. 15.

of the Elizarovs meant that some political activities continued despite the police clampdown. From their arrival in Saratov, the police placed the Elizarovs under surveillance and noted that they were in contact with “several prominent local revolutionary activists”.¹⁶² The two also began to work for a local, legal newspaper in Saratov called *Privolzhskaia gazeta* (The Volga Region Gazette).¹⁶³ The police were well aware of its Social-Democratic “tendency”, but could not find the “necessary material” in the newspaper to make arrests or to shut it down.¹⁶⁴ Despite initial financial problems and a lack of interest in the newspaper, *Privolzhskaia gazeta* did become more popular, particularly once the editor had received permission from the local authorities to publish the newspaper twice daily. They began to produce over 3000 copies a day.¹⁶⁵

Mariia arrived in Saratov in late 1910 and revolutionary activities in the town truly began to revive.¹⁶⁶ She began working for *Privolzhskaia gazeta*, translating agitational short stories for publication, including *Father and Son* by Ernst Prestsang, *The Picture* by Oskar Viner and *A Page from the Life of an Outcast* by Robert Shveikhel.¹⁶⁷

Privolzhskaia gazeta survived for a year, but the arrest of two successive editors and a lack of funding eventually made it impossible to continue publishing the newspaper.¹⁶⁸ However, the newspaper was not the only vehicle through which revolutionary ideas were propagated in Saratov. By establishing correspondence links with other Social-Democratic groups in Russia, the Ul’ianovs were able to ensure that they received the illegal newspaper *Zvezda*.¹⁶⁹ Simultaneously, the correspondence with Vladimir and Nadezhda which Anna and Mariia conducted intensified, for illegal literature could also be obtained

¹⁶² Police report, quoted in P.P. Elizarov, *Mark Elizarov*, p. 91.

¹⁶³ Diagilev, p.66; Police report No. 6406, 15 October 1911, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 216, l. 8; A.I., ‘Avtobiografiia’, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 1, l. 5.

¹⁶⁴ Police report No. 40219, 9 January 1912, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 216, l. 10.

¹⁶⁵ Police report No. 6406, 15 October 1911, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 216, l. 8.

¹⁶⁶ A. Simonov, ‘Iz proshlogo partii – saratovskaia organizatsiia RSDRP (bol’shevikov) 1910-1912 gg.’, written after 1917, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 216, l. 80.

¹⁶⁷ Kovnator, in Stishova, pp. 33-34. E. Prestsang was a leader of the German Printers’ Union, while R. Shveikhel was a German novelist, who had participated in the Revolution of 1848-49 in Germany (Kovnator, ‘Drug i pomoshchnitsa Il’icha (M.I. Ul’ianova)’, in L. Stishova, *Zhenshchiny russkoi revoliutsii*, (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1982), pp. 33-34).

¹⁶⁸ Police report No. 41651, 11 March 1912, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 216, l. 22.

¹⁶⁹ Police report, 10 May 1912, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 33, l. 54; Diagilev, p. 65; Letter, Saratov Krai Committee to M.I., 26 February 1934, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 216, l. 3.

from abroad.¹⁷⁰ Vladimir wrote to his mother in January 1911: “Nadia has written twice to Maniasha [in invisible ink] and will write today for the third time. Has Maniasha received the letters?”¹⁷¹ The police noted in May 1912 that the Ul’ianovs were receiving letters from the “Leninist centre abroad”.¹⁷²

Mariia helped the underground group start up circles in factories and agitate amongst the working classes, and she founded study groups to investigate political economy, history and literature.¹⁷³ Anna helped Mariia in her endeavours, visiting Vladimir and Nadezhda in Paris in the summer of 1911, with the aim, it seems of procuring agitational materials.¹⁷⁴ In what I think is a coded message about the sending of such material from Paris, Anna wrote to Mariia:

Regarding those pedagogical books [agitational materials? – KT], about which you asked Nadia, she asks me to tell you that nothing interesting has appeared on the literary horizon and that she is expecting a new bibliographical directory [new materials? – KT] in a few days. She hopes that then she will be able to give you instructions. How are your lessons [study groups? – KT] going? Obviously the Saratov public will have to postpone their rehearsals (*repetirovanie*) until the exams – that is more advantageous [It would be better to wait for instructions before you launch the next campaign? – KT].¹⁷⁵

Mariia was particularly keen to organise a series of demonstrations and mass meetings.¹⁷⁶ Amongst her successes was the calling of a number of strikes, including one protesting about the Lena massacre.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁰ P.P. Elizarov, *Mark Elizarov*, pp. 93-94.

¹⁷¹ Letter, V.I. to M.A., 19 January 1911, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 55, p. 319.

¹⁷² Police report, No. 43139, 10 May 1912, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 33, l. 54.

¹⁷³ Letter, Saratov Police Chief to Saratov Gubernator, 9 November 1912, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 33, l. 10; Drabkina, p. 97; Police decree, later than 26 July 1912, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 4; Drabkina, p. 97; Diagilev, p. 66.

¹⁷⁴ P.P. Elizarov, *Mark Elizarov*, p. 96.

¹⁷⁵ Letter, A.I. to M.I., 22 October 1911, in *Perepiska, 1883-1917*, p. 251.

¹⁷⁶ Police surveillance report, relating to a meeting of 29 April 1912, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 33, l. 33.

¹⁷⁷ Police decree, later than 26 July 1912, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 4; Drabkina, p. 97; Diagilev, p. 66.

It is important to note that by 1911, the Ul'ianovs' revolutionary group, which included the Krzhizhanovskiis, had taken on a distinctly Bolshevik character.¹⁷⁸ Despite the fact that a resolution was made in January 1910 to unite the RSDRP for once and for all, factional activities did not cease, and Vladimir began to aim at organising a Sixth Party Conference, at which there would be a Bolshevik majority. It was convoked in January 1912. Under Mariia's influence the Saratov Bolsheviks chose to support this Leninist conference and sent their own delegate to Prague, while also launching an intense Bolshevik propaganda campaign in Saratov in preparation for the celebration of 1st May.¹⁷⁹

That the police labelled the Saratov Bolshevik group "insignificant" in comparison to the main Menshevik organisation in the area highlights just how fragile the Bolsheviks' position in the underground movement was.¹⁸⁰ Indeed, it was this "insignificant group" in Saratov that in retrospect was seen as one of the "strongest and most active" in Russia at that time.¹⁸¹ Mariia's leadership of the group was absolutely crucial in achieving this status and the police recognised her role.¹⁸² Of her activities in Saratov in the spring of 1912, the police reported the following:

The central figure of the group is Mariia Il'inichna, who is living in Saratov with her sister Anna, Mark Timofeevich Elizarov's wife, and who has participated actively in *Privolzhskaia gazeta* since it was published. Her sister Elizarova and the latter's husband, who have worked actively in revolutionary organisations of both capitals since 1905, also joined in the founding of the group, the publishing of the afore-mentioned newspaper and, doubtlessly, are the closest helpers of Ul'ianova in the latter's attempts to form a permanent illegal organisation of the RSDRP in Saratov.¹⁸³

¹⁷⁸ Police report, No. 43139, 10 May 1912, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 33, l. 54.

¹⁷⁹ Police report, No. 43139, 10 May 1912, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 33, l. 54.

¹⁸⁰ Police report, No. 41651, 11 March 1912, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 216, l. 23

¹⁸¹ Police report, No. 41651, 11 March 1912, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 216, l. 23; Diagilev, p. 71.

¹⁸² Police report, No. 41651, 11 March 1912, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 216, l. 22.

¹⁸³ Police report, No. 41651, 11 March 1912, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 216, l. 21.

It is interesting to note that just as in 1900, the police viewed the Ul'ianovs as a revolutionary family and were well aware of the close co-operation between its members. Thus both Anna and Mariia were taken when the police made a series of arrests in Saratov on 7 May 1912 (Mark only escaped arrest because he was away travelling on business). Anna was released fairly soon afterwards, but Mariia was exiled to Vologda.

Once settled in Vologda and despite being under police surveillance, Mariia immediately began working to reinvigorate its RSDRP group. One of Mariia's fellow Bolshevik exiles, S.V. Borisov, remembered how Mariia quickly became "the centre of the community of exiles and not only amongst Bolsheviks, but also other exiles" and put her effect on the group down to her personality, which "immediately enlivened and cheered up" the exiles.¹⁸⁴ More importantly she was up-to-date with all "current affairs and with political life" and was able to offer help and advice to local activists in their revolutionary work.¹⁸⁵ Borisov described how Mariia's "advice and observations really helped" him in his political activities with railway workers in the Vologda area.¹⁸⁶ Indeed some claim that it was Mariia who founded and led the railwaymen's circle.¹⁸⁷ Her flat became a centre for Bolshevik comrades and Mariia wielded great influence on their activities in Vologda. Borisov added: "If we conducted any kind of work, for example, propaganda [or] agitation amongst local workers and white-collar workers, then we always made use of [Mariia's] advice and instructions."¹⁸⁸ The variety and number of illegal newspapers which were found by the police during a search of Mariia's flat in Vologda in August 1914 reveal how useful Mariia would have been to revolutionaries in the area as a source of information and literature suitable for agitational use. Mariia was found to be in possession of issues of *Nasha Zaria* (Our Dawn), *Prosveshchenie* (Enlightenment), *Rabotnitsa* and *Pravda*, in its various guises of *Za Pravdu* (For Truth), *Pravda Truda* (The Truth of Work), *Put' Pravdy* (The Path of Truth) and others.¹⁸⁹ She was described by the police as the "central figure" of the Vologda Bolsheviks and

¹⁸⁴ 'Vospominaniia Borisova, S.V., o M.I. Ul'ianovoi v period Vologodskoi ssylki (1912-1914g.)', 20 October 1960, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 286, l. 1.

¹⁸⁵ 'Vospominaniia Borisova', in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 286, l. 1.

¹⁸⁶ 'Vospominaniia Borisova', in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 286, l. 2.

¹⁸⁷ Kovnator, in Stishova, p. 35; Bystrova, 'V Petrograde', in S.B. Sutotskii, *M.I. Ul'ianova sekretar' "Pravdy"*, (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo "Pravdy", 1965), p. 123.

¹⁸⁸ 'Vospominaniia Borisova', in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 286, l. 2.

was so well known by this point that she was followed back to Moscow on her release from exile in 1914, and her arrival in the city was noted.¹⁹⁰

Shortly after her release from prison in Saratov, Anna moved to St Petersburg, where she lived until 1918. Here Anna proved her worth as an editor and writer for various illegal Bolshevik newspapers and journals. The best example of Anna's newspaper work is her work for *Rabotnitsa*, the Bolsheviks' first attempt to reach women workers in Russia and gain their support. Anna's work for *Rabotnitsa* makes a useful case study because it highlights the difficulties and the benefits of newspaper work, and also gives an insight into Anna's approach to revolutionary activity and her political beliefs.¹⁹¹

Working from abroad, it was Inessa Armand who led the efforts to establish *Rabotnitsa*, while Anna was chosen to help found the newspaper in Russia and to join the editorial board there.¹⁹² Only one woman on the board, Kudelli, had played a prominent role in agitating for women's rights until this point.¹⁹³ Like the three other editors, Konkordiia Samoilova, Elena Rozmirovich, and Liudmila Menzhinskaia, Anna was probably recruited because of her skills and experience as a professional revolutionary and a newspaper worker.¹⁹⁴ This view is supported by the fact that most of Anna's work as the editor of *Rabotnitsa* involved coordinating the practical aspects of its publication. Anna raised funds, which were desperately short, found a printing press, corresponded with the editorial board abroad, edited and contributed to the newspaper's contents and distributed the editions.¹⁹⁵

Anna was not entirely inexperienced in agitating amongst women. For example, A.N. Grigor'eva-Alekseeva remembered fondly "endlessly running to Anna Il'inichna Elizarova" for help in preparing a speech on 'Women's Work in Industry' for International Women's Day in 1913, before *Rabotnitsa* had been

¹⁸⁹ Police report, No. 4963, 13 August 1914, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 36, l. 22.

¹⁹⁰ Diagilev, p. 79.

¹⁹¹ 'Proekt vozzvaniia o vykhode zhurnala "Rabotnitsa", napisanii Inessoi Armand', start of January 1914, in 'K istorii izdaniia zhurnala "Rabotnitsa": Dokumenty Instituta Marksa-Engel'sa-Lenina-Stalina pri TsK KPSS', in *Istoricheskii arkhiv*, 1955, No. 4, p. 31.

¹⁹² 'K istorii', in *Istoricheskii arkhiv*, 1955, No. 4, pp. 31-33.

¹⁹³ Stites, *Feminism, Nihilism, and Bolshevism*, p. 252 and p. 256.

¹⁹⁴ Stites, *Feminism, Nihilism, and Bolshevism*, p.256; E.F. Rozmirovich was one of Anna's colleagues at *Pravda* and *Prosveshchenie* ('Deiatel'nost' TsK RSDRP', in *Istoricheskii arkhiv*, 1959, No. 4, p. 47).

¹⁹⁵ A.I., 'Zhurnal "Rabotnitsa" 1914 g.', in M.S. Ol'minskii, *Iz epokha "Zvezdy" i "Pravdy", 1911-14*, (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo, 1921). pp. 64-65.

established.¹⁹⁶ However, initially she was rather ambivalent towards the project of founding a separate women's newspaper. Ever the pragmatist and influenced by the "opinion of the majority of her male comrades" who felt that there was little enough money for *Pravda*, Anna worried that running *Rabotnitsa* was simply not feasible.¹⁹⁷ She argued that it would be better if *Pravda* included a weekly supplement for women workers.¹⁹⁸

Despite Anna's concerns, the production of *Rabotnitsa* went ahead with the first edition to be issued on International Women's Day, 1914. However, when the police raided the last editorial meeting, despite having given permission for it to go ahead, they arrested the entire editorial board. Only Anna escaped arrest: she had been late for the meeting.¹⁹⁹

This interference by the authorities before *Rabotnitsa* had even been published meant that many of the first practical arrangements Anna had made were destroyed and had to be reorganised. Faced with having to issue the newspaper single-handedly, Anna in later years admitted that she did not hold out much hope for *Rabotnitsa* ever to succeed. She wrote: "Apart from all the difficulties which in themselves seemed insurmountable...there was further the fact that at first I was perhaps less animated by this work than the rest of the editorial board."²⁰⁰

Yet, Anna worked conscientiously as the editor of *Rabotnitsa*. Luckily most of the articles were already lodged with the printing press and with the help of another journal with whom she had connections, Anna managed to get 12,000 copies of *Rabotnitsa* printed and distributed.²⁰¹ Regardless of the pressure from the authorities, including the censors, problematic correspondence with the editorial board abroad and the fact that the Russian editors were in exile and could only give her sporadic help to her, Anna was able to get seven issues printed between 23 February and 26 June, though some were confiscated by the

¹⁹⁶ A.N. Grigor'eva-Alekseeva, 'Zhenskoe utro', in *Zhenshchiny goroda Lenina*, ed. by A.P. Konstantinov and E.P. Serebrovskaia, (Leningrad: Lenizdat, 1963), p. 66.

¹⁹⁷ A.I., in *Iz epokhi*, Volume 3, p. 66.

¹⁹⁸ Letter, N.K. to A.I., 29 January 1914, in 'K istorii', in *Istoricheskii arkhiv*, 1955, No. 4, p. 36.

¹⁹⁹ Interestingly, though the Soviet source celebrated Anna's lateness as "a lucky coincidence" (Drabkina, p. 102), Stites in his account of it, takes a different view, calling Anna "unBolshevik" for being late (Stites, *Feminism, Nihilism, and Bolshevism*, p. 257).

²⁰⁰ A.I., in *Iz epokhi*, Volume 3, p. 66.

²⁰¹ Elwood, p. 120.

police.²⁰² They were issued fortnightly (except for the last edition), were sixteen pages long and were either given away in factories or sold for four, rising to five, kopecks.²⁰³ The contents of the journal had a similar pattern in each edition: one or perhaps two theoretical articles, then another two or so of a more agitational nature relating to women's working conditions and lives, followed by poems and stories by and about women, and finally a large correspondence section featuring letters and writing by *Rabotnitsa*'s readership.²⁰⁴

In later years Anna recalled feeling a "drastic" change of heart about the journal as she received a flood of positive responses from the newspaper's readers.²⁰⁵ Anna was overwhelmed by "the genuine and cheerful tone" of the letters, the "simple, naïve lines" which were filled with "such touching joy, such indestructible belief in the success of our work, such preparedness for sacrifice".²⁰⁶ Drabkina remembered as a twelve year old girl delivering a letter from her mother, who was imprisoned, to Anna. Written on behalf of all the political prisoners in the women's prison in St Petersburg, it said: "[The prisoners] send warm greetings to our journal *Rabotnitsa*, which expresses our needs".²⁰⁷ Anna was thrilled to receive it: Drabkina remembered how Anna "rejoiced,...smiled, kissed her on both cheeks" and brought her "tea with jam" to drink.²⁰⁸

This awareness of an enthusiastic and expectant readership, as well as sensitivity to its needs, informed Anna's approach to editing the journal. As she put it:

The whole of the second edition..., with the exception of the article by Stal' [on 'The Women's Socialist Movement in Western Europe'], was popular and agitational in character. Partly lessons from *Pravda*, partly women's responses to the first edition, which consistently emphasised that the fiction item by comrade Kudelli

²⁰² A.I., in *Iz epokhi*, Volume 3, p. 74.

²⁰³ Elwood, p120; A.I., in *Iz epokhi*, Volume 3, p. 65 and p. 69.

²⁰⁴ Anna gives a comprehensive contents list of each journal edition, apart from the 7th in A.I., in *Iz epokhi*, Volume 3, pp. 63-78.

²⁰⁵ A.I., in *Iz epokhi*, Volume 3, p. 66; A.I. on *Rabotnitsa*, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 249, l. 14.

²⁰⁶ A.I., in *Iz epokhi*, Volume 3, p. 66.

²⁰⁷ Letter, women political prisoners in St Petersburg to *Rabotnitsa*, 1914 (published in the 4th edition of *Rabotnitsa*), quoted in Drabkina, p. 103.

²⁰⁸ Drabkina, p. 103.

enjoyed the biggest success, induced us to pursue the line of a more popular organ for the masses.²⁰⁹

Anna's aim of reaching even the "least conscious women" meant that she regularly sacrificed highly theoretical and abstract articles sent by Armand, L.N. Stal' and Krupskaja, for poetry, short stories and correspondence from women workers.²¹⁰ However, this approach often put Anna and the Russian editorial board at odds with the editors abroad, who wanted "a more serious organ of more propagandist character".²¹¹ Still defiant about her decision in 1923, Anna wrote:

It is my belief that [the editorial board abroad] were wrong: and their isolation from Russia was to blame. They were surrounded by a proletariat of a more cultured background and it was impossible for them to feel the pulse of life that beat with such exceptional strength in this extremely interesting period of the awakening of the mass movement in Russia. Women workers wanted their own mass organ, their own *Pravda*. And the responses from those with whom I met were unanimous: they liked the second edition more than the first, as it was more lively and understandable. This consideration compelled us to retain the fiction section, against which the editorial board abroad also objected.²¹²

Anna's approach reaped rewards. Readers' responses were positive and Anna was able to establish herself, briefly, as a women's activist. Indeed, she was invited to join the Committee set up to organise the Social-Democratic International Women's Conference planned for August 1914.²¹³ Anna could not join the group, and in the end the outbreak of the war prevented the conference from going ahead.²¹⁴ Yet Anna could still look back proudly on her work for

²⁰⁹ A.I., in *Iz epokhi*, Volume 3, p. 69.

²¹⁰ A.I. on *Rabotnitsa*, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 249, l. 14; Elwood, pp. 120-121.

²¹¹ A.I., in *Iz epokhi*, Volume 3, p. 69.

²¹² A.I., in *Iz epokhi*, Volume 3, pp. 69-70.

²¹³ Letter, A.I. to N.K., 3 April 1914, in *Perepiska, 1883-1917*, p. 320.

²¹⁴ Letter, A.I. to N.K., 3 April 1914, in *Perepiska, 1883-1917*, p. 320.

Rabotnitsa and how influential the newspaper had been in raising the political consciousness and initiative of women.²¹⁵

Anna's work for *Rabotnitsa* was controversial with the émigré editorial board for her emphasis on agitational material at the expense of more theoretical articles. Her willingness to co-operate with Mensheviks was also frowned upon. Her colleague Kudelli was also happy to work with Mensheviks and wanted Kollontai to contribute to the newspaper.²¹⁶ Samoilova in contrast was opposed to this and Armand asserted that there were "conciliators or worse" on the Russian editorial board.²¹⁷ That the newspaper was shut down after seven issues prevented this dispute escalating.

However, the collapse of *Rabotnitsa* did not prevent Anna from continuing her work in the now named Petrograd and contributing to "a great and excellent [Bolshevik] victory" over the Mensheviks, in which the Bolsheviks successfully brought about a boycott of the War-Industry Committee.²¹⁸ This was a Petrograd group dedicated to improving links between industrial owners and workers during the war effort.²¹⁹ Worker representatives to the committee were elected in September 1916, but a campaign by the Bolsheviks ensured that the majority of those chosen declared themselves in favour of a boycott and refused to join.²²⁰ The Bolsheviks were also successful in calling a strike at the Putilov factory, in which more than 21,000 workers participated.²²¹

Anna took up new revolutionary literary work by helping to re-establish the journal, *Prosveshchenie*. Remembering her work there in later years, she wrote:

Prosveshchenie was issued in the lively and feverish time of the 'epoch of *Zvezda* and *Pravda*', as their close ideological comrades-in-arms. We succeeded in propagating Il'ich's views in his articles and articles by his followers...We [also] gained more and more

²¹⁵ A.I. on *Rabotnitsa*, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 249, l. 14.

²¹⁶ Letter, E.F. Rozmirovich to N.K., 19 January 1914, and letter, K.N. Samoilova to N.K., 25 January 1914, in 'K istorii', in *Istoricheskii arkhiv*, 1955, No. 4, pp. 32-33 and p. 35.

²¹⁷ Letter, K.N. Samoilova to N.K., 25 January 1914, and letter, I. Armand to N.K., between 16 March and 1 April 1914, in 'K istorii', in *Istoricheskii arkhiv*, 1955, No. 4, p. 35 and pp. 40-41.

²¹⁸ Letter, A.I. to V.I., 30 September 1915, in *Perepiska, 1883-1917*, pp. 377-378.

²¹⁹ Letter, A.I. to V.I., 30 September 1915, in *Perepiska, 1883-1917*, p. 379.

²²⁰ Letter, A.I. to V.I., 30 September 1915, in *Perepiska, 1883-1917*, pp. 377-378.

²²¹ Letter, A.I. to V.I., 25 March 1916, in *Perepiska, 1883-1917*, pp. 411-412.

interest and sympathy from comrade workers, who, like our comrades in exiles, sent articles, poetry and stories to us. All of this left an impression of this time, in the memory of every member of the editorial board, as a most joyful, bright and delightful springtime.²²²

It is clear from the above that although *Prosveshchenie* was intended as a vehicle for the propagation of Leninist theory, under Anna's editorship the content, like that of *Rabotnitsa's*, soon included creative works and contributions from workers and that Anna delighted in this achievement.

By 1916, due to arrests, Anna and K.M. Shvedchikov were the last remaining members of the Russian Bureau of the Central Committee in the now named Petrograd. Anna described how they had to make all the decisions of the Bureau at that time, adding that the other duties of "correspondence, fundraising, arranging transport, relations with the P[etrograd] C[ommittee] and, if possible, with Moscow and various provincial towns" were also their responsibility.²²³

Anna did what she could to keep the Bureau active. When the prominent Bolshevik E.D. Stasova made contact with Anna on her arrival in Petrograd, Anna immediately assigned her the task of trying to increase the Bureau's influence in the provinces by improving links with other Bolsheviks, particularly in industrial areas.²²⁴ Anna also repeatedly requested that illegal literature be sent to the Bureau from abroad, since this would enable agitation amongst workers to continue, but also generate income for the group if newspapers could be sold. However, very little was being sent to Petrograd from abroad.²²⁵ Often the Russian Central Committee received only one copy of a journal, which prevented them from distributing or selling it. The lack of materials also made it impossible to conduct the Bolshevik campaign against the war, which Anna was particularly keen to do.²²⁶

²²² Drabkina, in *Sem'ia Ul'ianovykh*, p. 177.

²²³ A.I., 'Iz perezpiski russkogo biuro TsK s zagranitsej v gody voiny (1915-1916 gg.)', in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1930, No. 7-8, p. 180.

²²⁴ Salita, pp. 340-341.

²²⁵ See for example, Letter, A.I. to V.I., 7 June 1916 in A.I., in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1930, No. 7-8, p. 194.

²²⁶ A.I., in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1930, No. 7-8, p. 181.

Once again, Anna took a pragmatic approach to the situation and decided to distribute *Kommunist* despite the fact that Vladimir had broken relations with the newspaper's editorial board, of which Bukharin, Evgeniia Bogdanova Bosh and Georgi Leonidovich Piatakov were members. Although Anna received a "scolding" from Vladimir for this, she was adamant that her decision had been the correct one.²²⁷ She argued it was worth distributing the journal because it "strongly lifted the mood and helped to raise money".²²⁸ The extreme conditions of the war were making revolutionaries take desperate measures to keep the movement alive.

Mariia soon faced the same challenges as her sister. Released from exile in Vologda, she moved to Moscow and joined the Committee there. Police pressure meant that there were very few revolutionaries to operate for the RSDRP and they were well aware that Mariia was meeting "local Social-Democrats" as well as "acquaint[ing] them with Lenin's latest theses".²²⁹ Indeed, it became clear that Mariia was too well known a figure to successfully conduct revolutionary activities in Moscow, so she decided to become a nurse at the front to escape increasingly intense police surveillance.²³⁰ However, Mariia did not use this time as a break from her revolutionary activities; she immediately met up with Krzhizhanovskii and began agitating amongst the troops.²³¹

Mariia returned to Moscow in June 1915 to find the Bolshevik committee decimated by arrests.²³² The group's printing press had also been confiscated and Mariia and her few colleagues were reduced to re-typing in multiple copies illegal literature received from abroad so as to be able to distribute it.²³³ In a letter to Vladimir, Mariia outlined the aims of the Moscow committee, which

²²⁷ A.I., in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1930, No. 7-8, p. 181.

²²⁸ Letter, A.I. to V.I., 7 June 1916, in A.I., in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1930, No. 7-8, p. 194.

²²⁹ Police report, quoted in Kunetskaia, p. 149.

²³⁰ *Bol'sheviki: Dokumenty po istorii bol'shevizma s 1903 po 1916 god byvshego Moskovskogo Okhrannogo Otdeleniia*, ed. by I.E. Gorelova, (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1990), p. 43; Diagilev, p. 81. Lavrov argues that Mariia becomes a nurse because of financial pressures (R. Lavrov, 'Stranitsy zhizni (Kratkaia biografiia)', in *Mariia Il'inichna Ul'ianova*, p. 29). There is no reason why it could not be both.

²³¹ Parfenenko, p. 99, p. 126 and p. 140. Indeed, perhaps Mariia went to the front to be with Krzhizhanovskii, with whom, it seems, she had an affair. The letter I cited in Chapter 2 as evidence for this liaison was from 1903. It is possible, therefore, that Mariia's relationship with Krzhizhanovskii lasted for thirteen years.

²³² Kunetskaia, p. 161.

²³³ Kunetskaia, pp. 161-162.

included to provide political leadership to the various groups of factory workers who were on strike in the city, especially since, as Mariia noted, the strikers were not using any “political slogans”.²³⁴ The group also wanted to establish a full-scale, properly elected Moscow committee, which would be able to draw up an official political platform.²³⁵ These aims had not yet been achieved, for too many revolutionaries had been arrested.²³⁶ Nonetheless, the Committee did issue a proclamation against the war.²³⁷

In the summer of 1916, despite her central role in the Committee’s operations, Mariia left Moscow for Petrograd to see her mother, who was dying.²³⁸ Reunited with Anna and Mark, Mariia joined them in their revolutionary work in the capital. As Anna and Mariia sent off their last letters to Vladimir and received his last to them before the new year, there was no expectation that February 1917 would change Russia forever.²³⁹

Yet, there is something fateful in the fact that the Ul’ianov sisters were living together once more in the capital as 1917 approached. They had spent the last fourteen years travelling across Russia and Europe, sometimes voluntarily, at others to escape arrest or to serve time in exile. They had both spent time in prison and had been under almost constant surveillance when free. After her two year visit to Europe between 1900-1902, Anna had devoted herself to revolutionary activities in Russia. Her numerous contacts and broad knowledge of the movement made her invaluable to the émigrés as a correspondent and she also proved her worth as an editor and organiser of such underground publications as *Rabotnitsa* and *Prosveshchenie*. Although Anna supported the Bolsheviks in so far as she believed in a party of professional revolutionaries, she did not shun her Menshevik colleagues. Indeed, like so many Bolsheviks on the ground she recognised that it was impractical to do so and was always prepared to sacrifice the finer points of Bolshevik theory in order to reach the masses in the most effective way possible.

²³⁴ Letter, M.I. to V.I. and N.K., 27 October 1915, in *Perepiska, 1883-1917*, pp. 388-389.

²³⁵ Letter, M.I. to V.I. and N.K., 27 October 1915, in *Perepiska, 1883-1917*, pp. 388-389.

²³⁶ Letter, M.I. to V.I. and N.K., 27 October 1915, in *Perepiska, 1883-1917*, pp. 388-389.

²³⁷ Letter, M.I. to V.I. and N.K., 27 October 1915, in *Perepiska, 1883-1917*, pp. 388-389.

²³⁸ Kunetskaia, p. 167. Mariia Alexandrovna died on 12 July 1916 (Kunetskaia, p. 168).

²³⁹ Letter, A.I. to V.I., 13 November 1916, in *Perepiska, 1883-1917*, p427; Letter, V.I. to M.I., 26 November 1916, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 55, pp. 366-367.

Mariia pursued a different path to her sister. Without the family ties that kept Anna from more risky underground activities, Mariia endured numerous periods of exile as a result of her intense involvement in the movement. Yet it was often in her town of exile that Mariia did her best work. Under Mariia's influence Samara became an *Iskra* centre and the Vologda Social-Democratic community revived. Unlike Anna, Mariia travelled abroad frequently and twice operated at the heart of the Bolshevik émigré fraction. These periods put Mariia at the centre of Bolshevik communications and hardened her attitude to the Mensheviks, yet she did not involve herself in the theoretical debates of the émigré community. Like Anna, Mariia was always concerned with the daily practical matters of running the underground movement and when operating in Russia, pragmatism ensured that Mariia worked with Mensheviks once more.

Although it is clear that Vladimir was an influential figure in both sisters' lives and careers, it is equally apparent that for the majority of their underground careers, Anna and Mariia pursued their own path, relied on their own judgement and experience and acted on their own initiative. Indeed, like so many revolutionaries working at the grassroots level in Russia, Anna and Mariia faced the daily practical issues and dangers of running an underground movement and had to deal with situations where the émigré debates about Social Democratic theory and ideology were less relevant. Their underground careers would stand them in good stead to cope with the upheavals of 1917, as well as with the building of the new socialist regime after October.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE UL'IANOV NETWORK

When Lenin arrived at Finland Station in Petrograd on 3 April 1917, he was accompanied by his sisters, who had joined the train at Beloostrov. It was the first time that Anna and Mariia had seen Vladimir since 1911 and 1910 respectively. Throughout the underground years the Ul'ianovs had rarely operated in the same town and frequently not even the same country. Indeed, the previous chapter showed clearly that from the 1890s to 1917, Anna and Mariia operated as revolutionaries independently of Lenin. Instead they used their own political beliefs and judgement, as well their experience and skill as revolutionaries to determine their actions, taking into account the requirements of the RSDRP movement as a whole, as well as the situation on the ground. This new perspective on Anna and Mariia's revolutionary careers has major implications for the way in which the sisters' relationship with Vladimir during the underground has been interpreted.

English-language historians have tended to depict the sisters as nothing but the devoted helpers of Lenin, who acted only on their brother's instructions and whose whole lives were spent fulfilling tasks set by him. Valentinov, whose portrayal of the Ul'ianov family as a solar system revolving around Vladimir I discussed earlier, writes of the underground years:

Service in every possible way became the absolutely first worry and care of the Ul'ianov family. They served [Vladimir] with special zeal in subsequent years, at the time of his stay in St Petersburg, during his illness, at the time of his imprisonment, his exile, and his emigration. The attention of the family was so steadfastly fixed on Vladimir Il'ich that the later life of the Ul'ianovs...produces a strange impression. All of them...no longer had a life of their own and no longer led an independent existence. On the contrary, they lived only by the light reflected from Ul'ianov-Lenin, by their thoughts about him, strictly carrying

out the countless orders, requests, and errands which filled Lenin's letters to his family.¹

Possony argued much the same in 1964, though his clear attempt to praise the sisters for their work is somewhat undermined because he refers to them as Lenin's women:

Throughout his life, Lenin relied upon the help of the women of his family. These women – his mother and his two sisters, and later his wife...were devoted admirers, eager to advance his career. Lenin composed endless things 'to be done', and in following his instructions his women often made considerable sacrifices while assuming great risks.²

In making these assertions, Valentinov and Possony overlook the fact that for the majority of the underground years the Ul'ianov siblings lived apart and had to rely on correspondence to keep in contact. The postal system had numerous inherent problems, which only worsened in times of social upheaval, and in the Ul'ianovs' case, their letters were also vulnerable to police interference. These factors meant that despite the fact that Anna, Mariia and Vladimir wrote and sent letters frequently, their communication was often irregular and always slow. It is also clear from the correspondence that at times letter writing was not the first priority for any of the Ul'ianovs, especially Vladimir.

Mariia noted in a letter to Anna in April 1905 that she had had "no news" from her elder sister "for a long time".³ In 1914, Anna complained to Vladimir: "I am writing to you...for the second time. Apart from that, I sent a letter...for Christmas. Why have you not answered? Have you really not received it? You don't write to me at all, but claim that I don't write enough."⁴ In April of the same year, Anna wrote to Vladimir: "Karl Karlovich [Mariia] is distressed that you haven't written for ages, and even, apparently, haven't sent regards. He

¹ Valentinov, *Early Years*, pp. 151-152.

² Stefan T. Possony, *Lenin: The Compulsive Revolutionary*, (London: W.H. Allen, 1964), p. 7.

³ Letter, M.I. to A.I., 23 April 1905, in *Perepiska, 1905-1907*, Volume 2.1, p. 221.

[she] is fretting because of this.”⁵ Vladimir complained to Mariia in one letter: “It is very difficult in our...situation to carry on the correspondence one would like.”⁶

Descriptions of Anna and Mariia’s lives before 1917 are dominated by information about the books they sent Vladimir and the notes they made for him to help his research, the messages they carried for him and the errands they did for him. However, consideration of the practicalities of time and distance apart, as well as of correspondence, makes this image of the sisters lives unrealistic. Anna and Mariia did not (and could not) rely on a constant stream of instructions about how to campaign for the RSDRP, but rather used their own initiative, experience and political judgement to lead and carry out revolutionary activities. The evidence presented in the previous chapter pointed clearly to the sisters pursuing their own individual careers in the underground and earning their own reputations as dangerous and prominent revolutionaries. They always worked for the cause of the revolution, but their views on how best to achieve it did not always match their brother’s. Furthermore, the sisters’ relationship with Vladimir was far more complex than simply helpers to a leader, and Anna’s relationship with Vladimir differed from Mariia’s.

Following a thematic, rather than chronological approach, this chapter will be devoted to exploring the Ul’ianov family network during the underground years, in which Vladimir’s letters to Anna and Mariia were two channels of correspondence in a multi-way exchange of letters between family members. This intricate communication system reflected the nature of the Ul’ianovs’ relationships more generally, which were complex and multi-layered, with the familial and political connections by turns causing quarrels, reinforcing loyalty and generating mutual support. In this context, Anna and Mariia were free to define their own political beliefs, which were more than simply a “reflection of [Vladimir’s]”.⁷ Nonetheless, despite its dynamic and sometimes volatile nature, the existence of the Ul’ianov network had profound implications for the RSDRP as well as the success of Anna, Mariia and Vladimir’s careers.

⁴ Letter, A.I. to V.I., 21 January 1914, in *Perepiska, 1883-1917*, p. 307.

⁵ Letter, A.I. to V.I., 2 April 1914, in *Perepiska, 1883-1917*, p. 317.

⁶ Letter, V.I. to M.I., 22 April 1914, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 55, p. 354.

WORKING TOGETHER

Volume 55 of Lenin's *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (Collected Works), which contains Vladimir's personal letters to his family, shows only one aspect of the Ul'ianov correspondence network, but it does highlight that the Ul'ianov siblings' familial relationships remained as important in the underground years as they had been in their youth. Indeed, having a close-knit and supportive family to rely on was a great asset for a revolutionary for it helped protect him or her from succumbing to the harsh conditions of imprisonment and exile, as well as the daily strains of underground life. Many revolutionaries suffered from physical illness in the harsh conditions of prison and exile, while others went mad or committed suicide.⁸

The distance between the Ul'ianov siblings during the underground years did not undermine their close, loving relationships, nor their memories of their late siblings.⁹ When apart, they were always attentive to each other's health, emotional well being and material comfort, and when together, they enjoyed each other's company and shared support and care. So much so, that in 1907, Mariia was loathe to end her stay with Vladimir and Nadezhda in Finland and move to Moscow on her own, writing to Anna: "V[ladimir]...is a dear darling – how lonely I will be without him. And without everyone."¹⁰ Indeed, Vladimir and Mariia's special relationship intensified in the fraught days of the underground, particularly in 1909 when Mariia fell ill while living with her brother. After her recovery, Mariia wrote to Anna that she would be lonely on her return Russia, though she knew she would "adjust somehow".¹¹ She added:

More than anything it's a pity to part with Volodia. I always loved him, but now we have somehow become especially close. He took incredibly good care of me during my illness – I could never have

⁷ Service, p. 160.

⁸ Letter, M.I. to A.I., 21 January 1913, in *Zhdem vestei iz Vologdy: perepiska sem'i Ul'ianovykh v period vologdskoi ssylki M.I. Ul'ianovoi, noiabr' 1912 g. - sentiabr' 1914 g.*, ed. by Iu. Ia. Makhina, (Arkhangel'sk: Severo-zapadnoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1978), p. 34; 'Vospominaniia ob Il'iche', in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 153.

⁹ If visiting St Petersburg, Vladimir, Mariia and Anna would go to Ol'ga's grave.

¹⁰ Letter, M.I. to A.I., 14 October 1907, in *Perepiska, 1883-1917*, p. 171.

¹¹ Letter, M.I. to A.I., 19 August, 1909, in *Perepiska, 1883-1917*, p. 210.

imagined that he was capable of this. Even now he is still very attentive. He's a terribly nice brother-dear..."¹²

Mariia's friendship with Nadezhda remained close during the underground years, though it was not without its ups and downs. For example, Mariia wrote to Anna in 1909 from Paris: "As for me, life is going generally well for me, everyone (that is E.V. [N.K.'s mother] and Nadia), really looks after me, even though I cause them quite a lot of bother with having lunch at different time, if my lectures start early."¹³

Although Anna and Nadezhda rarely saw each other during the underground years, on a personal level their relationship seems to have been civil and sometimes affectionate. Nadezhda regularly sent letters to Anna thanking her for all the food and gift parcels she sent, which made their lives in European exile "so luxurious".¹⁴ Anna clearly showed her concern for Nadezhda's well being when she wrote to Vladimir suggesting that Mariia be recruited to assist Nadezhda at the Bolsheviks' central operations abroad. She wrote:

Bear cub's [Mariia's] work has still not finished. Where he will be is for now unknown. Wouldn't he be useful to you? I heard that little Fish [*Rybochka*; Nadezhda] is absolutely emaciated and tired, while in these last years [Mariia] has become good at this work, so he could really help.¹⁵

Anna and Mariia's relationship as sisters also developed over the course of the underground years. Anna often joked about being Mariia's elder sister, but their age difference was becoming far less important.¹⁶ They began to confide in each other, and both offered support and help whenever they could.¹⁷ This close relationship provided an excellent basis for their political co-operation.

¹² Letter, M.I. to A.I., 19 August, 1909, in *Perepiska, 1883-1917*, p. 210.

¹³ Letter, M.I. to A.I., 23 February 1909, in *Perepiska, 1883-1917*, p. 193.

¹⁴ Letter, N.K. to A.I., 24 February 1913, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 55, p. 444.

¹⁵ Letter, A.I. to V.I., 26 June 1903, in *Perepiska V.I. Lenina*, Volume 3, p. 421. Nadezhda's code name was in fact Fish (Ryba). Anna's use of the diminutive here suggests that she is expressing affection for her sister-in-law.

¹⁶ Letter, A.I. to M.I., 7 November 1915, in *Perepiska, 1883-1917*, p. 390.

The family particularly pulled together when one of their own was in prison or exile. Anna visited Vladimir regularly while he was in prison in St Petersburg in 1896 and fulfilled his personal requests as well as his political ones. She also looked after Mariia when she was exiled in 1912, sending on books, clothes and food that she needed.¹⁸ Vladimir offered his support to his imprisoned siblings as well. In 1901, he sent a detailed letter to Mariia, advising her on how to cope with solitary confinement by doing gymnastics daily, varying her work by switching between reading, translating and writing, and reading fiction in the evening for relaxation.¹⁹ Mark played his part too, regularly going to the authorities on Anna's behalf to plead for a shortening of her sentence or even her release.²⁰ It is important to note the gendered distinction between the support offered by the brothers and by the sisters. While both sexes offered emotional support and help in getting books, only the women saw to the provision of food, clothes and personal items for the sibling who was imprisoned.

The siblings visited each other as often as possible, especially if they were in exile. The family moved to Kazan to be near Anna in her first exile in Kokushkino, Anna visited Mariia in Vologda. Anna also went to visit Vladimir when he arrived at his first self-imposed exile in Europe in 1900. Interestingly McNeal interprets this as an underhand attempt on Anna's part "to establish herself as Lenin's personal assistant before Krupskaja could appear on the scene".²¹ Aside from being clearly influenced by the solar system myth that an Ul'ianov woman's only ambition in life was to serve Vladimir, McNeal also overlooks the possibility, suggested by Drabkina, that Anna was motivated by a desire to give her brother support in the first days of his lonely exile.²² Drabkina's view is supported by the fact that for a time it was not clear which sister would be going abroad and that in the end it was the fear that Anna would be arrested that finally decided she would leave Russia.²³

¹⁷ Letter, M.I. to A.I., 14 October 1907, in *Perepiska, 1883-1917*, p. 171.

¹⁸ See, for example, letter, M.A. to M.I., 25 February 1913, in *Zhdem vestei*, p. 43.

¹⁹ Letter, V.I. to M.I., 19 May 1901, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 55, pp. 208-209.

²⁰ P.P. Elizarov, *Mark Elizarov*, p. 14 and p. 115.

²¹ McNeal, p. 96.

²² Drabkina, in *Sem'ia Ul'ianovykh*, p. 166.

²³ Letter, V.I. to M.A., 17 October 1899, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 55, p. 179.

The Ul'ianov siblings gave each other support in their legitimate work too. Mariia used her numerous contacts to search for books suitable for translation for Anna, writing to Fotieva, for example:

One more thing: if you see G.D. Leiteisen, pass on to him my sister's request to recommend something for translation. She knows four new languages and has translated a lot. Let him then write to me or tell you. Maybe someone else could grant this request.²⁴

Nadezhda offered Anna advice about how to get her work published and Vladimir edited Mariia's translations when he could.²⁵ Anna brought her literary expertise to editing Vladimir's writing, often advising him on how he could change his phrasing to avoid censorship. Her letters show a clear understanding of Vladimir's political ideas, but also of his approach to political campaigning and how to persuade him against inadvisable courses of action. She wrote to him in November 1908 about his book *Materialism and Empiriocriticism*:

I am reading your book (I've read almost half). The further [I get], the more interesting it is. In accordance with your instruction, I have changed "religious superstition" to "fideism"...In my opinion, it is necessary to reject more thoroughly all such [phrases], so that the book will not be censored...Then it is necessary to omit or soften some of the abuse. Really and truly, Volodek, you have too much of it, particularly in the "Victory of the Kadets" [section]....Sometimes it is very accurate and powerful...There are many attacks on the philosophers, their gibberish, etc....They are extremely harsh..., but from your point of view they are consistent and understandable. But...*il ne font* (sic) *rien outrer* [there is no need to exaggerate anything] (I'm

²⁴ Letter, M.I. to L.A. Fotieva, 23 March 1905, in *Perepiska, 1905-1907*, Volume 2.1, p. 54. G.D. Leiteisen was a social-democrat who contributed to *Vpered, Proletarii* and other Bolshevik publications (*Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 55, p. 575).

²⁵ Letter, N.K. to A.I., 31 January 1914, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 55, p. 447; Letter, M.I. to A.I., 2 January 1907, in *Perepiska, 1883-1917*, p. 165.

using one of your favourite sayings here), because such exaggerations only weaken [your argument], – I assure you...Then, on page 514...“sermons of platonic love by those haggard people” (*istaskannymi*)...ugh, even to write this down is unpleasant...You know, it is a direct, indecent phrase, – directly offensive to literature,...[and] to...your critique, which, without that phrase, is *so* strong and witty...Don’t spoil your book.²⁶

Vladimir acquiesced to some of Anna’s demands, but not others.²⁷ Despite the fact that Anna did not approve of her brother’s phrasing, overall she agreed with his arguments and helped to distribute the book, arranging with Vladimir that she would take fifty copies to give to acquaintances in Moscow.²⁸

Investigating Anna’s editing of Vladimir’s book highlights the difficulties she faced juggling her revolutionary and her domestic commitments, for she combined this work with caring for Mariia Aleksandrovna. Vladimir was considerate about this writing:

Regarding the proofs, I earnestly ask you to rid yourself of them: it is absolutely inhuman to land them on you at such a time...Hire some student...and please don’t waste your attention on the correcting of proofs. Even without that it’s hard for you at the moment...²⁹

It is interesting to note that Vladimir did not suggest that Anna hire a nurse to help her care for Mariia Aleksandrovna. Indeed this was one area in which the Ul’ianov support network broke down, for Anna was often left to care for her mother without help from her siblings. Vladimir was abroad and obviously unable to help much, but Dmitrii, who lived in Russia and was trained as a doctor, only received Mariia Aleksandrovna for visits and Mariia rarely nursed her. Indeed, in 1915, Anna felt it necessary to remind Mariia: “Think of

²⁶ Letter, A.I. to V.I., 15 November 1908, in *Perepiska, 1883-1917*, pp. 184-185. Anna’s emphasis.

²⁷ Letter, V.I. to A.I., 19 December 1908, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 55, p. 264.

²⁸ Letter, M.I. to A.I., 11 March 1909, and footnote 3, in *Perepiska, 1883-1917*, p. 196 and p. 197.

mother every time there is going to be something risky.”³⁰ Certainly Anna’s responsibilities for her mother meant that she regularly gave up more dangerous revolutionary activities so as to avoid being arrested and leaving her mother to live alone. She wrote in her autobiography:

From 1904 to 1906 I lived near Peter[sburg]...I participated in the finance committee of the C[entral] C[ommittee], conducted correspondence...[and] organised addresses for *Vpered*...[But] I could not work entirely illegally because of my mother, [since] for the most part I was the only one of her children who [stayed] with her.³¹

Anna also described how nursing her mother in 1908 prevented her from fully engaging in revolutionary activities in Moscow. She perhaps deliberately undertook to edit and arrange the publication of Vladimir’s book, *Materialism and Empiriocriticism* at this time in order to maintain at least one link with the revolutionary movement.³² An old friend of the Ul’ianovs, V. Ishcherskii, remembered Mark Elizarov complaining that, in the last two years of her life, Mariia Aleksandrovna had become a burden on the family.³³

After 1913, Anna also had to consider the safety of her adopted son, Gora. It was perhaps this that kept Anna from fully involving herself in activities in Saratov, where the police described her as Mariia’s helper. Sometimes, to avoid a conflict of interest and to protect Gora, Anna was willing to send him to stay with friends.³⁴ At others, Anna conducted less risky work and continued to care for Gora, but looking after him meant that on occasion she fell behind in her correspondence work.³⁵

On top of these factors, Mark’s regular absences meant that Anna had to look after the household alone. On one occasion she wrote to her sister: “I haven’t written to you lately because I’ve been so caught up with a lot of

²⁹ Letter, V.I. to A.I., 16 or 17 February 1909, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 55, p. 268.

³⁰ Letter, A.I. to M.I., 11 April 1915, in *Perepiska, 1883-1917*, pp. 356-357.

³¹ A.I., ‘Avtobiografiia’, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 1, l. 5.

³² A.I., ‘Avtobiografiia’, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 1, l. 5.

³³ V. Ishcherskii, ‘Iz vospominanii o sem’e Ul’ianovykh’, 7 April 1934, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 176, l. 5 and l. 2.

³⁴ ‘Vospominanii Lozgageva-Elizarova’, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 17, l. 17.

domestic nonsense.”³⁶ On another, as she began preparations to move house, Anna complained to Mariia: “I’ve started a furniture sale, – ‘opened a small shop’, as Mark, who is never averse to laying such matters on me, advised.”³⁷

Mariia may not have had Anna’s domestic responsibilities, (though she did share the housework with her sister-in-law when living with Nadezhda and Vladimir), but she too sometimes found herself falling behind in her revolutionary work. In August 1909 Mariia wrote to Anna that now she, Vladimir and Nadezhda were on holiday in Bombon, France, she was finally finding the time to read the protocols of the Fifth Party Congress, which had been published that year, as well as Vladimir’s *Materialism and Empiriocriticism*.³⁸ One wonders if her daily secretarial tasks of encoding and decoding conspiratorial letters reduced her time for studying party ideology.

Despite these sporadic difficulties, as McDermid puts it, neither Anna nor Mariia let “the persistent division of labour between the sexes” prevent them from involving themselves in revolutionary activities.³⁹ Indeed, although Valentinov asserts that the support Anna and Mariia showed their siblings was so time-consuming and all-important to them that they “no longer had a life of their own”, I would argue that in general the familial, personal and domestic support was given automatically and instinctively, and was such an ingrained habit in the Ul’ianov family that it did not absorb the sisters’ attentions completely.⁴⁰ Indeed, although the Ul’ianov network was a supportive, familial one, it was also an alliance of dedicated revolutionaries fighting for a cause and often this concern took precedence over personal matters.

THE POLITICS OF EXCHANGE

In 1930, Anna wrote an article for *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, which discussed a series of recently discovered letters she had sent to Vladimir in 1916, in which she described the political situation and defended the suitability for

³⁵ Letter, A.I. to V.I., 28 May 1914, in *Perepiska, 1883-1917*, p. 329.

³⁶ Letter, A.I. to M.I., 25 December 1912, in *Zhdem vestei*, p. 27.

³⁷ Letter, A.I. to M.I., 26 February 1913, in *Zhdem vestei*, pp. 44-45.

³⁸ Letter, M.I. to A.I., 19 August 1909, in *Perepiska, 1883-1917*, p. 210.

³⁹ McDermid, p. 58.

⁴⁰ Valentinov, *Early Years*, pp. 151-152.

publication of *Kommunist*.⁴¹ The letters had never before been published because they had been mistakenly identified as written by A. Shliapnikov, one of Vladimir's main contacts with revolutionaries in Russia during the war.⁴² Although Anna did not suggest a reason for this error in her article, one wonders if the political content and business-like tone of the letters had led the classifiers to assume they were written by a male colleague of Vladimir's, rather than by a female sibling.

In fact, in general, the political content or significance of Anna and Mariia's letters has been overlooked because they were carefully disguised as descriptions of mundane tasks and activities. Indeed, one of the key benefits of corresponding with a family member was that informal and unarranged codes could be used, but still understood. For example, in one letter to her husband, Anna gave what appears to be a long description of musical events in St Petersburg writing: "There have been no concerts here, and, in general, the troupes are still quite small in number and disorganised after the summer... This year will probably be less musical than last. For now only the violins are being tuned."⁴³ As Drabkina deciphers, Anna's meaning was more likely to be:

There have been no large-scale, open public demonstrations, and, in general, the organisations are quite small in number and disorganised after the summer's arrests... This year will probably be less successful for our work than last. Work is only beginning to be developed.⁴⁴

Anna's description of her prison visits to Vladimir in the 1890s also show how the siblings could relate information covertly without a pre-arranged set of code-words. Anna wrote:

⁴¹ A.I., in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1930, No. 7-8, p. 177.

⁴² A.I., in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1930, No. 7-8, p. 177; N.K., *Reminiscences*, p. 289. The coded letters had been decoded and written out by Krupskaiia at the time, as was the practice. As a result the author of the letters could not be identified by the hand-writing when they were later (mis)filed in the Central Committee archive held in Geneva (A.I., in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1930, No. 7-8, p. 177).

⁴³ Letter, A.I. to M.T., October 1896, quoted in Drabkina, in *Sem'ia Ul'ianovykh*, p. 161.

⁴⁴ Drabkina, in *Sem'ia Ul'ianovykh*, p. 161.

We spoke in allusions, using foreign words for such awkward ones as 'strike' or 'leaflet'. I would come loaded with news and try my best to pass it on, while he in turn exerted himself to pass on his news to me, and to ask me questions. And how we laughed when we managed to understand or get the gist of something complicated. Altogether our meetings appeared to pass in carefree animated chatter, but in reality our minds were working intensely: to understand and make understood, and not to forget anything. I remember once we were carried away and overdid the foreign words with the result that the warder behind Vladimir Il'ich said sternly, 'Only Russian can be spoken; it is forbidden to speak foreign languages.'

'Forbidden,' queried Vladimir Il'ich, turning to the warder, 'very well, then I'll speak Russian. So, tell this golden man...' - and he went on with our conversation.

I laughed, nodding: 'golden man' stood for Goldman [another party member]; foreign words being forbidden, Volodia translated from German into Russian to conceal from the warders the name of the person to whom he was referring.⁴⁵

It is important to note various features of these visits to Vladimir: that the conversations seemed "carefree...chatter" but were in fact intense political conversations and that sister and brother *exchanged* information, with Anna able to inform Vladimir about the state of the underground movement 'outside' and Vladimir able to ask Anna to do things for him.

Much is made of the books Anna delivered to Vladimir, as part of the errands she ran for him.⁴⁶ Certainly Vladimir used his time in prison to begin to do research, but it should also be pointed out that some of the requests for books were not genuine. In these cases Vladimir did not particularly need the books,

⁴⁵ A.I., 'Reminiscences of Il'ich', in Institute of Marxism-Leninism of the CC, CPSU, *Reminiscences of Lenin by his Relatives*, (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1956), p. 64.

rather they were used as vehicles for messages about revolutionary activities. Thus while Vladimir was in prison and exile, Anna “sent books twice a week, on Wednesdays and Saturdays”, some of which she chose simply (and quickly) for the thickness of their paper, which would help hide the chemical writing.⁴⁷ She remembered in her reminiscences: “In each package of books was one with an enciphered letter – with dots or dashes in pencil inside individual letters of the alphabet.”⁴⁸ Anna also recalled sending Vladimir letters written in “‘Weiss auf weiss’ (white on white, that is milk or ‘chemical’ on paper), on pages of catalogues, books that were not needed, [and] the last pages of journals” about people she had met in St Petersburg and the revolutionary situation in Russia.⁴⁹ And, she added: “Not once in all three years of Il’ich’s exile did any one of these letters draw attention to itself.”⁵⁰

Indeed, the familial relationships and the constant stream of personal letters provided the perfect cover for conspiratorial messages. For example, besides using books, a means of disguising chemical or coded letters was to put them inside family photo albums. Similarly, under the auspices of visiting family members abroad or in other parts of Russia, the Ul’ianovs were able to meet, pass on information and plan future action. As Drabkina points out, in the 1890s it was the family connection between Anna and Vladimir which provided the cover for the letters sent between their respective revolutionary groups in Moscow and St Petersburg and Vladimir’s numerous visits to Moscow.⁵¹ Mark’s work involved a great deal of travel, but he often stopped in on his relatives on his journey, making him an excellent courier for revolutionary messages. In 1909, he stayed in Paris with Nadezhda, Vladimir and Mariia. Before he left, Mariia filled him in on the details of recent events to pass on to Anna.⁵²

The use of couriers like Mark and of chemical letters means that many of the political messages sent between the Ul’ianovs have been lost.⁵³ However, the

⁴⁶ Valentinov, *Early Years*, p. 152.

⁴⁷ A.I., quoted in Robert C. Williams, *The Other Bolsheviks: Lenin and His Critics*, (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1986), p. 13; A.I., in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1930, No. 7-8, p. 176.

⁴⁸ A.I., quoted in R. Williams, p. 13.

⁴⁹ A.I., ‘Vladimir Il’ich v ssylke (1897 g.)’, in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1929, No. 2-3, p. 202.

⁵⁰ A.I., in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1929, No. 2-3, p. 202.

⁵¹ Drabkina, p. 60; Mitskevich, *Revoliutsionnaia Moskva*, pp. 145-146.

⁵² Letters, M.I. to A.I., 26 February 1909, and M.I. to A.I., 12 September 1909, in *Perepiska, 1883-1917*, p. 192 and p. 213.

⁵³ A.I., in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1930, No. 7-8, p. 177.

letters that have been preserved in sources like *Perepiska V.I. Lenina i rukovodimykh im uchrezhdenii RSDRP, 1905-1907* (The correspondence of Lenin and of the departments of the RSDRP under his leadership, 1905-1907), *Perepiska V.I. Lenina i redaktsii gazeta "Iskra" s sotsial demokraticheskimi organizatsiiami v Rossii, 1900-1903* (The correspondence of Lenin and the Editorial Board of *Iskra* with Social-Democratic Organisations in Russia, 1900-1903) and *Perepiska sem'i Ul'ianovykh, 1883-1917* (The Ul'ianov Family's Correspondence, 1883-1917), show that there was a constant exchange of political information between all members of the Ul'ianov family.

Anna and Mariia wrote regularly to Vladimir, but they also corresponded between themselves. Indeed, as their relationship as sisters developed, so did their political partnership. This was especially effective while Mariia was abroad and Anna in Russia, for while Anna kept Mariia informed of local social-democratic activities, Mariia told Anna about the current ideological disputes amongst the European exiles. For example, in 1909, Mariia wrote to Anna about the disagreement between Vladimir and Bogdanov.⁵⁴ Anna, in her turn, sent the most recent editions of *Privolzhskaia gazeta* and posted *Rabotnitsa* to Mariia when she was in exile in Vologda.⁵⁵ They also worked closely together in 1916, when Mariia was based in Moscow and Anna in St Petersburg.⁵⁶ The sisters exchanged letters with Nadezhda as well. Aside from sending her own personal and political letters, she also wrote letters on Vladimir's behalf, for he was very poor at writing personal letters and was happy to delegate the writing of political ones to her.⁵⁷

The Ul'ianov network did not serve only as a means of exchanging information, it also enabled instructions to be sent. Generally these were from Vladimir to his sisters, for he always operated on a strategic, ideological level, removed from the daily activities of the underground movement. And generally Anna and Mariia were willing to fulfil his requests, and help him where they could. In February 1903, Mariia wrote to Vladimir requesting that he advise her

⁵⁴ Letter, M.I. to A.I., 26 February 1909, in *Perepiska, 1883-1917*, p. 192.

⁵⁵ Letter, M.I. to A.I., 22 May 1911, in *Perepiska, 1883-1917*, p. 239; Letter, A.I. to M.I., 16 March 1914, in *Zhdem vestei*, p. 78.

⁵⁶ Letter, A.I. to V.I., 27 April and 2 May 1916, in *Perepiska, 1883-1917*, p. 417.

⁵⁷ Letters, N.K. to M.I., 11 September 1898, N.K. to M.A., 14 October 1898, and V.I. to M.A., 28 August 1904, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 55, pp. 395-398, pp. 400-402 and p. 237.

on where to move so that she could be of most use to the movement. For conspiratorial purposes she referred to herself in the third person:

Bear [Mariia] asks [me] to pass on that he would like to migrate somewhere where he could be of use. He earnestly asks you to give him instructions regarding this. You know what kind of creature he is and, consequently, can judge where he will be best placed. He would not be averse to calling in on you for a while, if he knew that he could be useful there...Or, perhaps, you [could] arrange somewhere for him in Akulina. Bear would be very grateful if Old Man [Vladimir] would tell [him] his opinion regarding this.⁵⁸

Interestingly, in this case, Vladimir declined to advise Mariia, arguing that he knew too little about the situation 'on the ground' to make a decision. He wrote:

Regarding Bear [Mariia] it is very difficult for Old Man [Vladimir] to answer: Kler [Krzhizhanovskii] is probably better able to answer...I repeat, that I think it only sensible...to tell...Kler your decision, who knows everything first-hand and will be able to give the best advice.⁵⁹

This would not be the only time Vladimir felt completely isolated from events in Russia. However, on other occasions he would be grateful to be able to deploy Mariia to carry his message to revolutionary committees. For example, in June 1907, she took the campaign for Vladimir's line on the Third Duma to Samara.⁶⁰

Anna could also be instructed to carry out tasks of importance for the Leninist camp abroad. In 1905, Nadezhda warned the members of the Bureau of

⁵⁸ Letter, M.I. to *Iskra* editorial board, 9 February 1903, in *Perepiska V.I. Lenina*, Volume 3, p. 162.

⁵⁹ Letter, V.I. and N.K. to M.I. and G.M. Krzhizhanovskii, 2 March 1903, in *Perepiska V.I. Lenina*, Volume 3, p. 219.

⁶⁰ Letter, V.I. to M.I., end June 1907, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 55, p. 239.

Committees of the Majority in St Petersburg, of which Anna was a member, that the Mensheviks had “taken aim on Moscow and Nizhnii Novgorod”.⁶¹ She also wrote specifically to Anna requesting that she establish links between the Bolsheviks abroad and Nizhnii Novgorod, presumably in an attempt to counter the Mensheviks’ influence.⁶²

During World War I, Vladimir relied on Anna’s help to revive the journal, *Prosveshchenie*, as an official organ of the Bolsheviks. As early as November 1914, Vladimir wrote to Anna asking: “Answer me as quickly as possible about how matters stand with the journal [*Prosveshchenie*]. Is there any possibility of starting it? If so, when?”⁶³ Although Anna admitted to Mariia in 1915 that she and her comrades had not yet turned their attention to it, she was obviously aware of the urgency of the matter, adding: “Volodia simply thirsts for a journal and a newspaper of our own.”⁶⁴ In 1916 *Prosveshchenie* was duly launched.

In determining what his instructions were to be, Vladimir depended on the first-hand local knowledge Anna and Mariia were able to supply him. While Vladimir was often a geographically and ideologically isolated member of the RSDRP, Anna and Mariia were usually integrated members of the movement. They operated at the grass-roots level in Russia with Social-Democrats and workers, came into contact and even co-operated with revolutionaries of varying political views, and observed the growing revolutionary mood in Russia. Anna witnessed all the major revolutions in the capital itself. This contrasts directly with Vladimir’s experience. His geographical isolation meant that he tended to “[return] to Russia only for revolutions that had already broken out”.⁶⁵ Thus, it was not until November 1905 that Vladimir arrived in Russia.⁶⁶ And in 1917 Vladimir returned to St Petersburg in April, six weeks after the February revolution, then had to flee the capital in July because he feared arrest and only returned in October.

Over the course of his two exiles in Europe, Vladimir regularly complained about not knowing what was going on in Russia. In 1903, Vladimir

⁶¹ Letter, N.K. to Members of the Bureau of Committees of the Majority, 14 January 1905, in *Perepiska, 1905-1907*, Volume 1.1, p. 62.

⁶² Letter, N.K. to A.I., 30 January 1905, in *Perepiska, 1905-1907*, Volume 1.1, p. 229.

⁶³ Letter, V.I. to A.I., 14 November 1914, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 55, p. 356.

⁶⁴ Letter, A.I. to M.I., 23 April 1914, in *Perepiska, 1883-1917*, p. 360.

⁶⁵ McDermid, p. 58.

⁶⁶ Service, p. 175.

was exasperated that he was not receiving a weekly letter from the Russian Bureau in Kiev informing him of the state of affairs.⁶⁷ In 1905 he complained in a letter that his “enemies” in Geneva were “receiving news more quickly” than he was and that he was in the dark about activities in the “eastern region”.⁶⁸ He was well aware that from his exile in Europe he often could “do little” to influence the situation.⁶⁹ Indeed, on occasion even when he did try to exert his authority, his tactics for attempting to do so were not well suited to the conditions on the ground. For example, in April 1915, Vladimir wanted to make clear the Bolsheviks’ opposition to the war (and their differences with the Mensheviks) by printing this message through a legal publishing house. However, Anna warned Vladimir:

Part of the fraction must not come out under the banner: ‘declaration of the underground’, for it is impossible in the current conditions to declare openly that a legal organisation has links to an illegal one (to fulfil illegal work is possible and must be done, but to make announcements about this everywhere is very naïve).⁷⁰

Aside from being physically distant from Russia, Vladimir was often ideologically isolated from RSDRP colleagues who otherwise could have kept him at the heart of the movement. Vladimir regularly disagreed and even broke off relations with leading figures in the movement, including Plekhanov, Martov, Krzhizhanovskii, Bogdanov and others.⁷¹ He was central to the split between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks, which was so unpopular in Russia, but was just as likely to antagonise the Bolsheviks, voting against them in 1907, for example, in favour of operating legally in the Russian Duma. During the war he alienated

⁶⁷ Remezovskii, p. 59.

⁶⁸ Letter, V.I. to S.I. Gusev, 3 March 1905, in *Perepiska V.I. Lenina*, Volume 1.2, p. 126.

⁶⁹ Letter, V.I. to S.I. Gusev, 3 March 1905, in *Perepiska V.I. Lenina*, Volume 1.2, p. 126.

⁷⁰ Letter, A.I. to V.I., 23 and 28 April 1915, in *Perepiska, 1883-1917*, p. 362.

⁷¹ See, for example, V.I., ‘Kak chut’ ne potukhla “Iskra”?’ in *V.I. Lenin: Polnoe sobranie sochinenii, 1898 – April 1901*, K.A. Ostroukhova and B.Ia. Zevin, eds., (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel’stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1959), Volume 4, p. 343; Letter, V.I. to Bureau of CC in Russia, 17 December 1903, in *Leninskii Sbornik, Iz epokhi raskola R.S.-D.R.P., 1903-1904 gg.*, N.I. Bukharin, V.M. Molotov and M.A. Savel’eva, eds., (Nendeln, Liechtenstein: Kraus Reprint Ltd, 1966), Volume 10, pp. 115-117; Letter, L.E. Gal’perin, on behalf of the CC of the RSDRP, to V.I. and F.V. Lengnik, 16 February 1904, in *Leninskii sbornik*, Volume 10, pp. 352-353; Letter, M.I. to A.I., 26 February 1909, in *Perepiska, 1883-1917*, p. 192.

many with his attitude to the conflict and his policy of turning it into a civil war. Anna wrote to Vladimir in March 1916: “Did you receive the letter, in which we asked you to write a popular article about the ‘civil war’ slogan, which is incomprehensible to many? Even writers like Boris Avilov contest the feasibility of putting forward such a slogan.”⁷² That Anna was careful not to express her own view suggests perhaps that she agreed with the writers, but did not want to cause a conflict with her brother, who, during the war, was vitriolic against any who disagreed with him, including Anna.⁷³ Indeed, at these times of ideological dispute, Anna and Mariia were crucial as informants because their familial connection meant that they were never cut off from Vladimir, even if they disagreed with his views.

The extent of Vladimir’s dependence on his sisters to inform him of events was clear in 1905, when Anna was one of the only people from whom he initially received first-hand information about the Revolution.⁷⁴ Nadezhda wrote gratefully to Anna: “The communications sent by you are really needed; they fill in the gaps, and there are very many useful revelations in them. Continue to send them.”⁷⁵ Anna’s letters were so useful that they were published in an article by Vladimir called ‘Revolutionary Days’ in *Vpered*.⁷⁶ It was perhaps the fact that Anna was able to assure Vladimir that Gapon was not a *zubatovets* that encouraged Vladimir to meet the priest.⁷⁷

Vladimir’s frantic response to Anna’s arrest in 1916 in St Petersburg again highlights how much he depended on her correspondence:

The removal of James [Anna] makes the situation critical (and I earnestly ask you not to say one word about this removal to a *single* person abroad; you cannot imagine how dangerous in *all* respects is gossip abroad about these subjects and *in connection* with such events)...the elimination of James makes the situation critical and poses again a series of questions about the general

⁷² Letter, A.I. to V.I., 25 March 1916, in *Perepiska, 1883-1917*, p. 411.

⁷³ Letter, A.I. to V.I., 23 April 1915, in *Perepiska, 1883-1917*, p. 362.

⁷⁴ Letter, N.K. to Members of the Bureau of Committees of the Majority in Petersburg, in *Perepiska V.I. Lenina*, Volume 1.1, p. 62.

⁷⁵ Letter, N.K. to A.I., 30 January 1905, in *Perepiska, 1905-1907*, Volume 1.1, p. 229.

⁷⁶ Footnote 2, in *Perepiska, 1905-1907*, Volume 1.1, p. 90.

work plan...The most pressing question now is the weakness of links between us and the leaders of the workers in Russia!! There is no correspondence!! There is no one apart from James, and now he's gone!! We cannot go on like that. We *cannot* organise either the publication of leaflets or transport, either agreement about manifestos or sending over their drafts etc. etc. without *regular* secret correspondence. That is the crux of the matter!⁷⁸

Aside from being a useful informer on current events, Anna's wide knowledge of local activists was also invaluable and Vladimir often relied on this to ascertain the trustworthiness of individuals. In 1901, Vladimir had doubts about the reliability of a man he referred to as Finn, whom he wanted to meet.⁷⁹ He wrote to P.B. Axelrod: "To get to the bottom of all this, I shall write at once to my sister [Anna], who knew Finn before his arrest and met him in Moscow."⁸⁰ In July 1916 he turned to Anna to find out if P. Riabovskii was an agent provocateur before he would agree to submit an article to his journal.⁸¹

Anna and Mariia did not limit the content of their letters to information about the movement; they also, on occasion, included instructions and recommendations about how best to proceed. For example, in 1903, Mariia told Vladimir that she could recommend a suitable person to replace an operative called Sil'vin and in 1915, Anna wrote to Vladimir suggesting B.V. Avilov as the new chairman of the Russian Central Committee to replace Kamenev who had recently been arrested.⁸² She made this urgent request for she knew a new permanent chairman was needed to help ease relations between the Petersburg Committee and other regional organisations.⁸³

Anna and Mariia's extensive revolutionary contacts, their expertise in the field, their grass-roots activities and their high-standing in the underground

⁷⁷ Letter, A.I. to V.I. and N.K., after 9 January 1905, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 22, kopets pis'ma, l. 1; N.K., *Reminiscences*, p. 111.

⁷⁸ Letter, V.I., to A. Shliapnikov, after 3 October 1916, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 49, p. 298 and p. 235.

⁷⁹ Finn, or Aleksandr Iulievich Finn-Enotaevskii, was a Social-Democrat, economist and writer (*Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 46, pp. 637-638).

⁸⁰ Letter, V.I. to P.B. Axelrod, 4 August 1901, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 46, p. 143.

⁸¹ Letter, V.I. to G.Y. Zinoviev, after 23 July 1916, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 49, p. 265. Riabovskii was an agent provocateur (*Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 49, p.534).

⁸² Letter, M.I. to *Iskra* Editorial Board, 7 July 1903, in *Perepiska V.I. Lenina*, Volume 3, p. 436.

⁸³ A.I., in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1930, No. 7-8, p. 178.

movement in Russia were also invaluable when Vladimir was in Russia. He knew he could send new acquaintances to his sisters and that they would be able to involve them in the RSDRP's work. For example, when Vladimir first met Mitskevich in Nizhnii Novgorod, in August 1893, Vladimir recommended that he get in touch with Anna so as to make contact with the revolutionary movement in Moscow where Anna was a leading member.⁸⁴ When Vladimir, who was based in St Petersburg in the early 1890s, visited Moscow, it was Anna's flat that was "the central attraction of the Moscow revolutionary underground" and it was she who introduced Vladimir to V.D. Bonch-Bruevich, who would become a close ally in the ensuing years.⁸⁵ Interestingly, she did not immediately admit that the Peterburzhets was her brother.⁸⁶

In 1905 when Vladimir returned to Russia, it was impossible for him to live legally in St Petersburg. As the Petersburg Committee's secretary, Mariia set up a number of secret meetings of the Central and Petersburg Committees so that Vladimir could meet various underground activists and be updated with their current operations. Mariia arranged for these meetings to be held in the flat of a local dentist, to which the revolutionaries came pretending to need dental treatment.⁸⁷ Within a year of arriving in St Petersburg, Vladimir had to abandon the capital and move to Finland to escape the police. He overcame his isolation by relying on Mariia to liaise with revolutionaries on his behalf.⁸⁸

The sisters' independent RSDRP careers also meant that though they generally co-operated with their brother, they did not always see eye to eye with him on political matters. Mariia, as discussed in the previous chapter, for example, was more lax in her attitude towards co-operation between RSDRP and Kadet representatives in the Duma than her brother. Admittedly though, this was a rare occasion. Anna, on the other hand, regularly disagreed with Vladimir over his tactics and not only made her views known to him, but also acted according to her own beliefs, rather than his instructions.

A particularly fierce disagreement arose between brother and sister over Vladimir's policy that the RSDRP candidates for the Third and Fourth Duma

⁸⁴ Mitskevich, *Revoliutsionnaia Moskva*, p. 144.

⁸⁵ Drabkina, p. 61; V.D. Bonch-Bruevich, *Vospominaniia o Lenine*, (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo "Nauka", 1965), p. 10.

⁸⁶ Bonch-Bruevich, p. 15.

⁸⁷ Diagilev, in *Sem'ia Ul'ianovykh*, p. 365.

should split into separate, independent Bolshevik and Menshevik factions, thus allowing the Bolshevik representatives to distance themselves from the Liquidationists' call to end underground operations in favour of work within the bounds of legality.⁸⁹ Although the split was made official before the Third Duma, it was resisted by both Menshevik and Bolshevik candidates, as well as worker voters, in Russia.⁹⁰ In practice the split was made only during the Fourth Duma.⁹¹ Anna's opposition to this policy infuriated Vladimir and he wrote a vehement letter to Shliapnikov criticising his sister:

As regards James [Anna], he never understood politics and was always against the split. James is a wonderful person, but *on these subjects* his judgements are profoundly wrong...In Russia (and now in the new International too) the question of a split is *fundamental*. Any compromise *here* would be a crime. I know well how many good people (James [Anna], Galiorka [M.S. Ol'minskii], the Petrograd friends among the intellectuals) were *against* the split in the Duma fraction. All of them were 1000 times wrong. The split was essential. And the split with *Chkheidze and Co.* [the Menshevik deputies in the Fourth Duma] now, too, is *absolutely* essential. All who waver on this subject are *enemies* of the proletariat, and we must be *uncompromising* with them.⁹²

It is interesting to note that although Vladimir was prepared to admit that Anna was a "wonderful person", this was the only indication that they had a personal relationship. Otherwise he clearly saw her as a fellow revolutionary, and one with whom he was prepared to be "uncompromising". It is also obvious from the letter that Anna had made her objections to the split clear to Vladimir: like her brother she was not prepared to let her family connection influence her political judgement. What is important is that though the two disagreed

⁸⁸ Diaghilev, p. 58.

⁸⁹ Schapiro, pp. 135-136.

⁹⁰ Schapiro, p. 135.

⁹¹ Schapiro, p. 136.

politically, their co-operation and correspondence did not cease, and it was this that made the Ul'ianov network so strong. Indeed, despite another major disagreement over whether the journal *Kommunist* should be distributed by the Bolshevik Central Committee in Petrograd, for example, and the fact that Vladimir continued to grumble about 'James' the "conciliator", he still required her help for contacts in Russia.⁹³

Anna and Nadezhda had a similar relationship: their friendship did not prevent them from disagreeing over political and work matters. As the Russian-based editor and the 'abroad' editor respectively they disagreed over how best to proceed with the *Rabotnitsa* project. Anna's tendency to favour agitational material over the theoretical caused general difficulties, which were discussed in Chapter Three. More specifically, it was Nadezhda who forwarded the international editorials board's criticisms of the newspaper to Anna. In her reply, Anna defended herself against their "severe" complaints, but still wished Nadezhda "health and more health" in closing.⁹⁴

The Ul'ianov network remained unbroken throughout the underground years, in spite of the distance between its members and their various disagreements, and, in retrospect, its existence had important consequences for Vladimir, for Anna and Mariia, and for the RSDRP as a whole.⁹⁵ Indeed it has been argued that the Ul'ianov network "strengthened the country's party organisations, gathering them most closely around V.I. Lenin".⁹⁶

In the build up to the Second Party Congress, having Mariia and Anna working in *Iskra* organisations meant that Vladimir could ask them to promote his call for a new congress, as well as exert some influence over the delegates chosen from those groups to attend it.⁹⁷ In December 1902, Vladimir passed on addresses for the Omsk and Irkutsk committees to Anna so that she could carry out the "very important" task of sending the Second Party Congress mandate to them.⁹⁸

⁹² Letter, V.I. to A. Shliapnikov, after 11 March 1916, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 49, pp. 192-193. Vladimir's emphasis.

⁹³ Letter, V.I. to G.Y. Zinoviev, 4 April 1916, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 49, p. 212.

⁹⁴ Letter, A.I. to N.K., 2 April 1914, in *Perepiska, 1883-1917*, pp. 318-319.

⁹⁵ Kudelli, in *Krasnaia letopis'*, No. 1, 1936, p. 203.

⁹⁶ Remezovskii, p. 67.

⁹⁷ O.D. Ul'ianova, in *M.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 22.

⁹⁸ Letter, V.I. to A.I., 20 December 1902, in *Perepiska V.I. Lenina*, Volume 3, p. 16.

Anna and Mariia's support was even more important after the Congress and the split, when all Bolsheviki had to work together in order to consolidate and demonstrate their fraction's strength and capability. Nadezhda wrote urgently to Mariia in Samara and Krzhizhanovskii in Kiev:

Please, take care of the even distribution [of literature], the obtaining of correspondence and so on. This is a terribly important moment. It smells of a split. If our old friends don't exert their strength, in order to demonstrate the [Russian] Central Committee's efficiency, all our work will have been wasted.⁹⁹

That Anna and Mariia moved to Kiev to work for the Central Committee in its daily activities had a huge impact on Vladimir's influence in the party. Anna and Mariia's regular correspondence with RSDRP and Bolshevik Committees throughout Russia and abroad promoted Vladimir's political line and shored up support for him in preparation for his next campaign for a new Party Congress. It established a tight network of loyal Bolshevik groups who were happy to be led by Vladimir.¹⁰⁰

This pattern of the Ul'ianov sisters working closely with Bolshevik conference representatives who supported Vladimir's leadership and viewpoint repeated itself throughout the underground years. In 1909, for example, Vladimir held a meeting with the editorial board of *Proletarii* and representatives of his few supporters in Russia to condemn Ultimatumism and Recallism, the names given to Bolsheviks demanding the withdrawal of the RSDRP representatives from the Duma.¹⁰¹ Vladimir ensured that the meeting expelled Bogdanov, his former ally, from the Bolshevik fraction, officially for his philosophical views, but also, privately, because of a disagreement over party funds.¹⁰² At the meeting were Russian representatives from St Petersburg, Moscow and the Urals.¹⁰³ It is probably no accident that shortly after these

⁹⁹ Letter, N.K. to M.I., I.F. Lengnik and G.M. Krzhizhanovskii, 13 August 1903, in *Perepiska V.I. Lenina*, Volume 3, p. 464.

¹⁰⁰ Remezovskii, p. 67.

¹⁰¹ Footnote 275, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 55, p. 506.

¹⁰² Schapiro, p. 112.

¹⁰³ Footnote 275, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 55, p. 506.

proceedings, Anna travelled to the Urals.¹⁰⁴ The trip was officially made so that Mark could convalesce after a recent illness, but it is likely that Anna met with Bolsheviks in the area at the same time.¹⁰⁵ In 1912, the sisters sent a Bolshevik representative from Saratov to Vladimir's Bolshevik conference in Prague.¹⁰⁶ By this time even the police were aware of how the Ul'ianov family network ensured that Vladimir gained support within the party. Discussing the fact that Mariia sent a Bolshevik representative to the Prague conference, the police noted that "the organiser of the conference was Lenin – her brother".¹⁰⁷

The advantages that this Ul'ianov network brought to Vladimir are clear and have been noted by various historians, including Remezovskii and Service, though many underestimate the complexity of Ul'ianovs' relationships.¹⁰⁸ However, what Anna and Mariia gained from being part of this network is rarely, if ever, mentioned. Yet there were advantages to being closely connected with Lenin the leader, even if he was often uncompromising in his views and harsh with even his close family and friends.

On a political level, Anna and Mariia had a regular supply of information about the ideological and strategic battles being fought in the émigrés community. Many RSDRP activists were not so lucky and rarely as up to date with the current state of affairs abroad. For example, in 1905, Mariia received a letter from A.A. Preobrazhenskii in Samara, who informed her of the current situation of the local Social-Democrat group in Syzran.¹⁰⁹ He reported that it was only in spring 1905 that the Social-Democrats had fully broken co-operation with their erstwhile local allies, the Social Revolutionaries, and that it was only in May that news of the split between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks at the Second Congress became known.¹¹⁰

Anna and Mariia's up-to-date and wide ranging knowledge of the movement gave them a certain amount of power and prestige amongst their colleagues in the underground. Their arrival in a new town immediately brought

¹⁰⁴ Letter, A.I. to M.I., 13 August 1909, in *Perepiska, 1883-1917*, pp. 208-209.

¹⁰⁵ Letter, A.I. to M.I., 13 August 1909, in *Perepiska, 1883-1917*, pp. 208-209.

¹⁰⁶ Police report, No. 43139, 10 May 1912, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 33, l. 54.

¹⁰⁷ Police report, No. 41651, 11 March 1912, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 216, l. 23.

¹⁰⁸ Remezovskii, p. 67; Service, p. 160.

¹⁰⁹ Letter, A.A. Preobrazhenskii to M.I., after 29 May 1905, in *Perepiska, 1905-1907*, Volume 2.2, pp. 85-87.

¹¹⁰ Letter, A.A. Preobrazhenskii to M.I., after 29 May 1905, in *Perepiska, 1905-1907*, Volume 2.2, pp. 85-87.

new vigour to the local revolutionaries for they would gain an understanding of their role in the wider movement. The sisters also had the latest codes and campaign methods, as well as copies of the latest revolutionary publications.

That the sisters had a direct link to the increasingly (in)famous Lenin also gave them political standing. When Mariia arrived in Vologda in 1912, the fact that she represented a direct link to Lenin gave her a certain status amongst the exiles.¹¹¹ During the dispute between Vladimir and the *Kommunist* publishers, Shliapnikov asked Anna to intervene on his behalf to try to persuade Vladimir to reconcile with the editorial board, presumably hoping that Anna's close relationship with Lenin would enable her to persuade him.¹¹² Their close connection to Vladimir would also have a great impact on their lives and careers after the revolution of October 1917.

A REVOLUTIONARY YEAR

On 23 February, International Women's Day, 1917, riots broke out in Petrograd. The unrest quickly developed into a full-scale revolution and by the beginning of March the Tsar was overthrown. Anna felt the effects of the Revolution almost immediately, for she was arrested by the Tsarist authorities during the first days of the unrest as a dangerous element best kept off the streets in such a time of turmoil.¹¹³ Indeed in September 1916, she had been named as the second most active Bolshevik in Petrograd and was described as "playing a distinguished role amongst the Leninists".¹¹⁴ As always, Anna did not cease her revolutionary activities while in prison and began agitating amongst her fellow prisoners to boost morale. A Ukrainian woman recalled tapping a long conversation with Anna between their cells and Anna encouraging her to sing songs from her homeland to prove to their "enemies" that they were "cheerful and sure of a victory soon".¹¹⁵ Anna's imprisonment was not long however, and shortly after the outbreak of the Revolution she arrived back at the front door of

¹¹¹ 'Vospominaniia Borisova', f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 286, l. 1.

¹¹² A.I., in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1930, No. 7-8, pp. 181-182; Letter, Shliapnikov to V.I., 11 March 1916, quoted in A.I., in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1930, No. 7-8, p. 181.

¹¹³ 'Vospominaniia Lozgacheva-Elizarova', in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 17, l. 17

¹¹⁴ Police report, quoted in P.P. Elizarov, *Mark Elizarov*, p. 112.

¹¹⁵ M.G. Savchenko, 'Doloi voinu!', in *Zhenshchiny goroda Lenina*, ed. by A.P. Konstantinov and E.P. Serebrovskaia, (Leningrad: Lenizdat, 1963), p. 76.

her flat, laughing as she told Gora, Mark and Mariia that she had been freed by the people.¹¹⁶

Both sisters acted quickly to help the Bolsheviks exploit the revolutionary situation. Mariia acquired a typewriter and began writing slogans for distribution around Petrograd. Both sisters began to work for the re-established *Rabotnitsa*, and on 8 March they were co-opted into the Russian Bureau of the RSDRP's Central Committee.¹¹⁷ Their skills as correspondents would be invaluable, for the Bureau had resolved that its main aims were to improve its links with party organisations, to coordinate its work with the Central Committee abroad, as well as with leftist groups in the international socialist movement, and finally, to increase the Bureau's links with the provinces.¹¹⁸ On the 18 March the Bureau changed the first clause of its regulations. This was the clause that defined a member of the RSDRP, which had caused such disputes at the Second Party Congress. The Bureau changed its wording from Martov's to Lenin's, that is from a member being someone who "participated" in the party to someone who "recognised" the party.¹¹⁹ This was a significant change, which made clear the Bureau's support for Lenin, and one suspects it was made with the agreement, if not under the influence, of Mariia and Anna. On 22 March the Bureau made its position on the revolutionary situation clear, resolving, amongst other things, that the Provisional Government was incapable of serving the Revolution and that the Committee should concentrate on strengthening the Soviets, which were the "embryos of the new power".¹²⁰ These resolutions brought the Bureau's position very close to the programme Lenin would announce in April.¹²¹

Anna and Mariia also joined *Pravda* and contributed a long article about the events of February to the first edition.¹²² They wrote:

How quickly everything has come to pass! Like a story, like a fantasy – beautiful and solemn. In one day more has been lived

¹¹⁶ 'Vospominaniia Lozgacheva-Elizarova', in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 17, l. 17.

¹¹⁷ 'Vospominanii Lozgacheva-Elizarova', in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 17, l. 17; Kunetskaia, p. 171; *Dokumenty velikogo oktiabria*, (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1977), p. 62.

¹¹⁸ *Dokumenty velikogo oktiabria*, p. 63.

¹¹⁹ *Dokumenty velikogo oktiabria*, p. 64.

¹²⁰ D.A. Longley, 'Divisions in the Bolshevik Party in March 1917', in *Soviet Studies*, 1972, Volume 24, No. 1, pp. 68-69.

¹²¹ Longley, in *Soviet Studies*, 1972, Volume 24, No. 1, p. 69.

¹²² A.I. and M.I., 'Khod sobytii', in *Pravda*, 5 March 1917, p. 3.

through, than at any other time would be experienced in a year, and in a few days the masses have rid us of the past.¹²³

What followed was a detailed description of the events in all parts of St Petersburg, from International Women's Day to 5 March. On 13 March, Mariia's role in the editorial board was formalised, alongside Ol'minskii, Stalin, M.I. Kalinin and K.S. Eremeev.¹²⁴ At this meeting, the editorial board agreed that there were a variety of problems with the content of *Pravda*. There was a lack of theoretical articles and the information printed was often inaccurate. Overall the newspaper was too agitational in character and did not provide enough political leadership as befitted the "central organ of the party".¹²⁵ The new members of the editorial board decided it was their duty to "uphold" the party's programme in the newspaper, as well as eliminate the "light tone" of its content.¹²⁶

Mariia contributed to this effort to raise the political consciousness of *Pravda*'s readership. On 25 March she wrote an article outlining and supporting the content of a pamphlet written by Borisov and Kozlovskii called *The Russian Revolution and War*. In it they discussed the war in an international context, criticised the imperialist and capitalist reasons for the conflict and defended the party against the Provisional Government's accusations that its calls for the end of the war amounted to a betrayal of Russia. Indeed, she pointed out that Borisov and Kozlovskii called for the army, which would be democratised, to be "kept at full battle readiness" in order to defend Russia's new freedoms from "any reactionary force" both inside and outside the country. Mariia concluded her article supporting their vision that the Russian revolution would lead to "a new, strong push in the struggle...for universal peace and socialism".¹²⁷

Her other articles were devoted to highlighting the workers' efforts to exploit the new freedom of speech and freedom of the press and express their views of the revolution. She wrote about the organ of the Iaroslavl Soviet of Workers' Deputies, *Trud i bor'ba* (Work and Struggle), and about the workers'

¹²³ A.I. and M.I., in *Pravda*, 5 March 1917, p. 3.

¹²⁴ *Dokumenty velikogo oktiabria*, p. 66.

¹²⁵ *Dokumenty velikogo oktiabria*, p. 66.

¹²⁶ *Dokumenty velikogo oktiabria*, p. 66.

¹²⁷ M.I., 'Rossiiskaia revoliutsiia i voina', in *Pravda*, 25 March 1917, pp. 2-3.

press in the provinces.¹²⁸ However, Mariia's attentions were soon diverted from writing articles for the newspaper to secretarial work, in particular conducting meetings with the many soldiers and workers who came to *Pravda's* offices.¹²⁹ With Anna's help, she gathered and edited for publication letters sent from the front and from factories in other towns.¹³⁰

After her article on 5 March, Anna contributed only one other to *Pravda*. It was a short piece in memory of A.P. Skliarenko who had died in 1916 and who had been one of the "first Russian social democrats", as well as one of the Ul'ianovs' first allies in the movement.¹³¹

Anna and Mariia's cooperation with *Pravda* is difficult to reconcile with their close involvement with the Bureau of the Central Committee, for the two organisations held very different opinions about how the party should deal with the revolutionary situation. *Pravda* had taken a conciliatory approach towards the Provisional Government and had supported the continuation of the war effort in order to defend Russia.¹³² It had also refused to publish four out of five of Lenin's *Letters from Afar* in which he laid out his view of the situation in Russia. Although Anna and Mariia had written little for the newspaper and even less that expressed their views on the war, their work for *Pravda* may have made them seem complicit in what Lenin saw as the newspaper's betrayal of the Bolshevik's opposition to the war. Mariia had endorsed the pamphlet *The Russian Revolution and War*, which advocated continuing a defencist war if Russia (and the freedoms gained by the Revolution) were threatened and Anna had expressed her doubts about Vladimir's civil war policy as early as 1916.

If indeed, their membership of *Pravda* and not of the Bureau was the truest reflection of their views, they were not the only Bolsheviks to disagree with Lenin. Many viewed his argument as being the result of his long absence from Russia and his lack of understanding of the situation in the country.¹³³ However, it seems from Anna's letters to Vladimir from 1916 that at that time she was most loyal to the Bureau and had no sympathies for the Petersburg

¹²⁸ M.I., "'Trud i bor'ba'", in *Pravda*, 30 March 1917, p. 3; M.I., 'Provintsial'naia rabochaia pechat' o voine', in *Pravda*, 31 March 1917, p. 2.

¹²⁹ Kunetskaia, p. 173.

¹³⁰ Kunetskaia, p. 173.

¹³¹ A.I., 'Pamiat' tovarishcha Aleksei Pavlovicha Skliarenko', in *Pravda*, 17 July 1917, p. 2.

¹³² Leon Trostky, *Stalin: An Appraisal of the Man and his Influence*, ed. and trans. by Charles Malamuth, (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1968), p. 194 and p. 197.

Committee, some of whose members would form the *Pravda* group of 1917 and whose policies already diverged from Lenin's.¹³⁴ Nonetheless, the weak state of the Bureau meant that Anna was prepared to strengthen links with the Petersburg Committee for practical purposes.¹³⁵ Anna and Mariia's cooperation with *Pravda* in 1917 can also be put down to practicalities. Both were always keen to reach the masses, and *Pravda* was the most effective means for Bolsheviks to do that in 1917. For her part, Anna was always keen to avoid splits and even to improve cooperation between party organisations and groups; perhaps being a member of various groups was her way of trying to bridge the gap between them.¹³⁶

On 2 April, Anna and Mariia received Vladimir's telegram, which said: "Arriving Monday 11pm. Inform *Pravda*."¹³⁷ Mariia passed on the message and both sisters travelled to Beloostrov station outside Petrograd to join him on the train.¹³⁸ This provided the Ul'ianovs with a brief opportunity to bring each other up-to-date with their news and to discuss Vladimir's itinerary once he arrived in the capital. After Vladimir had been officially greeted and had given his speech at Matyl'da Krzesinska's mansion, the sisters took him and Nadezhda to the building's white marble room so that they could have supper and continue to catch up.¹³⁹ Family concerns and political issues may well have intertwined as the family ate and chatted.

Amongst the issues discussed may well have been Vladimir's disgust at *Pravda*'s recent political line and perhaps his disapproval of Anna and Mariia's ambivalent stance on his civil war slogan. However, as always, Ul'ianov political disagreements did not lead to a breakdown of their familial closeness and Vladimir and Nadezhda took up residence in the Ul'ianovs' flat. Lenin soon won party support for his ideas at the Seventh RSDRP Conference, which was held in

¹³³ Trotsky, *Stalin*, p. 198.

¹³⁴ Letter, A.I. to V.I., 7 June 1916, in A.I., in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1930, No. 7-8, p. 192.

¹³⁵ Letter, A.I. to V.I., 7 June 1916, in A.I., in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1930, No. 7-8, p. 192.

¹³⁶ A.I., in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1930, No. 7-8, p. 178.

¹³⁷ Telegram, V.I. to A.I. and M.I., 2 April 1917, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 49, p. 434.

¹³⁸ Kunetskaia, p. 174.

¹³⁹ N.N. Sukhanov, *The Russian Revolution, 1917: A Personal Record*, ed., abridged and trans. by Joel Carmichael, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 275; N.I. Podvoiskii, 'Dnevnik/vospominaniia: V.I. Lenin v 1917 godu', in *Istoricheskii arkhiv*, 1956, No. 6, p. 117.

April. He also became the editor of *Pravda* and soon ensured that its line was Leninist.

Vladimir could only stay with Anna, Mark and Mariia for three months, for once the Provisional Government began to clamp down on Bolsheviks, the sisters' reputations meant that they were subject to regular searches. In contrast, though Lenin's name was well known, his face was not, and during one raid on the Ul'ianovs' flat, the police arrested Mark, thinking he was Lenin.¹⁴⁰ Mariia was so accustomed to police searches that on this occasion she offered the officers Lenin's latest writings to read and rebuked them when they interrogated Nadezhda about where Vladimir was, saying: "Even under the old Tsarist laws a wife was not obliged to betray her husband."¹⁴¹

In the end, Vladimir moved to the other side of the city and only visited occasionally.¹⁴² When the Provisional Government announced that it planned to try Vladimir for being a German spy, Mariia was amongst those who persuaded him to move to Finland to avoid arrest.¹⁴³ Her long experience of revolutionary activities and police repression in Russia itself put her in a good position to advise her brother. She also began to act as his representative at *Pravda*, passing on his articles and messages, now that Vladimir could no longer visit the offices regularly in case of arrest.¹⁴⁴

Mariia also attended the Sixth Party Congress in Petrograd, which ran from the 26 July to the 6 August. As Diagilev wrote:

In those days Mariia's authority was high. This is confirmed by the fact that the Central Committee of the party unanimously recommended Mariia Il'inichna [as a candidate] from the Petrograd Bolshevik organisation for the elections to the Constituent Assembly.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁰ 'Podpol'e v "svobodnoi" Rossii: poiski Il'icha v pervie dni iulia 1917 goda', in *M.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 166.

¹⁴¹ 'Podpol'e v "svobodnoi" Rossii', in *M.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 166.

¹⁴² 'Vospominanii Lozgacheva-Elizarova', in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 17, l. 21.

¹⁴³ N.K., *Reminiscences*, p. 366.

¹⁴⁴ Kunetskaia, p. 175.

¹⁴⁵ Diagilev, p. 95.

Indeed Vladimir became seriously concerned about the amount of work Mariia was taking on, writing to her: “I want to give you some advice – you absolutely must go away for medical treatment. There is nothing much going on at the present time, troubled though it is, and you must use it to get your legs and your nerves treated.”¹⁴⁶ That Vladimir added in his next letter the reassurance that when she returned to Petrograd it would be “*easy* to arrange a job for [her]” highlights how dedicated Mariia was to her revolutionary work and how much she detested not being able to contribute to the Bolsheviks’ campaign.¹⁴⁷ Indeed, Mariia was already planning new literary work in the form of an article about the British working-class movement and another about Party Congresses.¹⁴⁸

Neither Anna nor Mariia wrote about their work during or experiences of October 1917, and there is little if any mention of them in other reminiscences and histories. It is possible that they, like Nadezhda, were not involved in the final meetings of conspirators before the Revolution. Yet it is hard to imagine that such long-serving revolutionaries and prominent Petrograd activists did not have a role to play in the final preparations for the coup, and that the Ul’ianov network was not exploited to the full at a time when absolute secrecy and loyalty was crucial. Indeed, the network had proved invaluable during the underground years in providing each member of the family with information on the revolutionary situation in Russia and abroad, links with other underground groups, illegal literature and money, as well as political and personal support in the difficult times of imprisonment, exile and the daily stresses of revolutionary activity. Being able to rely on the Ul’ianov network was a key factor in Vladimir’s rise to power, but it also ensured prominence for Anna and Mariia. Their knowledge of the social-democratic movement and competence in conspiratorial work was impressive in itself, but it was enhanced through their participation in the Ul’ianov network, for through it they gained access to privileged information and were always in contact with one of the leading figures of the movement (however controversial he was). Of course, having the ear of the leader of the Soviet regime after the Revolution was also a great advantage,

¹⁴⁶ Letter, V.I. to M.I., August 1917, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 55, p. 370.

¹⁴⁷ Letter, V.I. to M.I., end of August 1917, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 55, p. 371. Vladimir’s emphasis.

¹⁴⁸ Letter, V.I. to M.I., end of August 1917, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 55, p371; Footnote 346, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 55, p. 518.

but as ever the *exchange* of support between the Ul'ianovs within the Bolshevik government strengthened each sibling's position.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE REVOLUTION REALISED

In describing Anna and Mariia's role in the October days, Trotsky remembered only that Mariia brought pillows to him and Vladimir on their first night in the Winter Palace and that the next day, as the Congress of Soviets started its session, she "came running" to call him, saying: "Dan is speaking. They are asking for you."¹ Trotsky's wife recalled reminding Mariia that Vladimir needed a new collar before he went to make a speech.² Of Anna's role in the Revolution, Kudelli mentioned only that in the early days after the coup, Anna was on hand to bring Vladimir hot meals since Anna "knew that without it he would forget to have lunch, with his head full of great matters".³

Lenin claimed in November 1918 at the First All-Russian Congress of Working Women that "the experience of all liberation movements has shown that the success of a revolution depends on how much women take part in it".⁴ If Anna and Mariia's part was only a domestic one, despite the fact that these women had campaigned for over twenty years for the Revolution that was taking place, it was a disappointing beginning to their lives under the new regime.

Unfortunately, even the sisters themselves are silent on their movements during the Revolution. Anna refused a request to write about her time with textile workers in St Petersburg just after the October Revolution, saying that she was too ill and too busy to do so (and even this might not have shed light on her activities during the coup itself).⁵ Mariia also wrote nothing of this time. Her reasons were probably a combination of the practical and political, which will be discussed fully in Chapter Seven.

Despite the apparently low-key nature of Anna and Mariia's role in the October Revolution, both women's careers were about to take off and between

¹ Trotsky, *My Life*, p. 340. Fedor Ivanovich Dan (Gurvich) was an émigré leader of Menshevik tendencies and a member of both the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet and of the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee (*Collected Works*, Volume 44, p. 571).

² Trotsky, *Diary*, p. 351.

³ Kudelli, in *Krasnaia letopis'*, No. 1, 1936, p. 204.

⁴ Lenin, quoted in Barbara Raney, *From Baba to Tovarishch: The Bolshevik Revolution and Soviet Women's Struggle for Liberation*, (Marxist-Leninist books, 1994), p. xi.

⁵ Letter, V. Perasich to A. Efroimson at *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 21 January 1936, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 19, l. 1.

1917 and 1924 they enjoyed what was arguably the zenith of their careers. Both occupied high-level posts, worked closely with their brother in the building of the Bolshevik regime and were known to the public as members of the new administration. Anna helped found and became the head of the Department of the Protection of Childhood (*Otdel' Okhrany Detstva*), while Mariia became the executive secretary of *Pravda* and the leader of the Rabsel'kor movement. The sisters also enjoyed a certain amount of privilege and power as a result of their connection to Lenin.

Historians who refer to the sisters' post-revolutionary careers do so with a great deal of scepticism. Solomon asserts that Mariia's position at *Pravda* was a hollow one, entirely created by her brother. He wrote:

In the Bolshevik time, M.I. Ul'ianova was given the post of secretary of *Pravda* through no less than the initiative of the great Lenin. However, in that post, she was a person without purpose, but all the same, as his sister, she was encircled by a halo of fame. Thus, the name of M.I. Ul'ianova was sheltered.⁶

He also alleged that Anna and Vladimir worked together to persuade Mark to take up the job of People's Commissar for Railways (*Narkom putei soobshcheniia*).⁷

Referring to Anna and Nadezhda working at Narkompros, Fitzpatrick writes that they only got their jobs because Lunacharskii, the Commissar, "could never believe that Narkompros could be the worse for gaining a man of good will, or the wife of a comrade".⁸ Ulam damns the sisters with faint praise, writing:

One can hardly accuse Lenin of nepotism. His relatives' jobs were minor, and in view of their revolutionary past and their

⁶ Solomon, *Lenin*, p. 29.

⁷ A.G. Solomon, *Sredi krasnykh vozhdai: lichno perezhitoe i vidennoe na sovetskoi sluzhbe*, (Paris: Izdatel'stvo "Mishen", 1965), p. 18.

⁸ Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Commissariat of Enlightenment: Soviet Organisations of Education and the Arts under Lunacharsky, October 1917-1921*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 19.

professional qualifications the Ul'ianovs perhaps would have reached them even without their powerful connection.⁹

However, it is important to remember that after the Revolution, most government and Party jobs were assigned on an informal and ad hoc basis. For example, Trotsky became the Commissar for Foreign Affairs after a brief discussion between Central Committee members.¹⁰ Even years after the Revolution, those already in top posts, including Anna and Mariia, recruited their own staff personally and directly, without the use of a formal selection process.¹¹ Thus, for example, it would have been entirely natural for Anna to go to Vladimir to secure a post for Mark. Yet, Rigby tells another version of events in which Anna was not the one to recommend Mark, though he does put Mark's "visibility" down to the fact that he was "Lenin's brother-in-law".¹² Instead, he writes that on 13 November 1917, "in the course of a Central Committee meeting, I.A. Teodorovich passed a note to Lenin suggesting [Mark] Elizarov be made acting People's Commissar for Railways".¹³ Vladimir wrote "agreed Lenin" on the note.¹⁴

Rigby does point out that Mark's "main Party function seems to have been supporting the Ul'ianov family, while working as an insurance agent", but also admits that he did have some "technical and administrative expertise".¹⁵ Mark remained the acting Commissar for Railways until January 1918 when he became, more appropriately, the People's Commissar for Insurance.¹⁶

Often necessity dictated this ad hoc approach to appointments since there was a shortage of qualified personnel who were loyal to the regime. This meant

⁹ Adam B. Ulam, *The Bolsheviks: The Intellectual and Political History of the Triumph of Communism in Russia*, (London: Collier-Macmillan Co., 1965), p. 526.

¹⁰ Lenin initially suggested that Trotsky become the Commissar for the Interior, but Trotsky declined, pointing out various practical problems with this appointment. Then Sverdlov proposed that Trotsky become the Commissar for Foreign Affairs instead (Dmitri Volkogonov, *The Eternal Revolutionary*, trans. by Harold Shukman, (London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 1996), p. 102).

¹¹ Bystrova, 'V Petrograde', in *Sekretar' "Pravdy"*, p. 123. Bystrova had known Mariia since 1912 when they were both living in exile in Vologda. In 1917, Mariia invited her to come and work at *Pravda*. See also letter, M.A. Mustova to Marx-Engels Institute, 20 August 1956, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 20, l. 1.

¹² T.H. Rigby, *Lenin's Government: Sovnarkom, 1917-1922*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 125.

¹³ Rigby, *Lenin's Government*, p. 125.

¹⁴ Rigby, *Lenin's Government*, p. 125.

¹⁵ Rigby, *Lenin's Government*, p. 125.

¹⁶ Rigby, *Lenin's Government*, p. 125.

that all reliable, experienced social democrats were needed to fill government and Party posts.¹⁷ When Krupskaja was assigned her post, she wrote to her friend I.I. Gorbunov-Posadov: “It has come about that I am the directing commissar for adult education. I do not like centralist work very much, but personal taste cannot be one’s guide today, and it was impossible to decline this work.”¹⁸

Most revolutionaries were accustomed to turning their hands to whatever job needed doing in the underground days. The difference in the post-revolutionary days was that there was some element of choice for all the Bolsheviks as to what responsibilities they would take on, according to their interest and specialism. Although Nadezhda said that her centralist post was not to her taste, she was at least assigned a job in her specialist field of education.

Unlike Nadezhda, Mariia was not assigned to her job, nor was it created by Lenin, as Solomon suggests. Rather her new title of Executive Secretary of *Pravda* merely formalised the work she had begun in March 1917, before Vladimir returned from abroad. In 1922, a colleague of Mariia’s named A. Sol’ts gave a very frank account of how Mariia came to hold her job, writing that after the Revolution most of the best writers for *Pravda* left and devoted themselves to the founding the new regime, while other workers for the newspaper were so “overloaded with all kinds of Party and Soviet work, that they could only give their time to the newspaper in fits and starts”.¹⁹ What was needed was “a secretary who would take on the weight of organising all the work [of the newspaper]” and, Sol’ts concluded: “such a secretary was Mariia Il’inicha”.²⁰

“A GREAT FRIEND OF THE RABSEL’KORS”²¹

If Mariia’s job title of Executive Secretary was a little vague it probably reflected the wealth of activities Mariia had done for the newspaper in the underground years and now it gave her the freedom to be involved in any facet of the newspaper she wanted. Indeed, it seems that Mariia’s role developed and

¹⁷ McNeal, p. 191.

¹⁸ Letter, N.K. to I.I. Gorbunov-Posadov, quoted in McNeal, p.191.

¹⁹ A. Sol’ts, ‘Sekretar’ “Pravdy”, in *Pravda*, 5 May 1922, p. 4.

²⁰ Sol’ts, in *Pravda*, 5 May 1922, p. 4.

expanded during her years at *Pravda*, since while early accounts of her work describe her role as organisational only, later sources highlight many more aspects to her job.²²

Writing in 1922, Sol'ts called Mariia's work "small (*melkaia*) and imperceptible" in the sense that Mariia's work was the daily organisational, background work that often went unnoticed.²³ In general, his article praises Mariia's work as noble, all the more so because it was crucial, but unappreciated. However, it is interesting to note that when this article was republished in a collection of reminiscences about Mariia, *M.I. Ul'ianova sekretar' Pravdy*, the above quotation was cut.²⁴ This was probably partly because this anthology was meant to celebrate Mariia's work, so comments which might undermine her were unacceptable, but it is also perhaps partly related to the fact that Mariia's work and status grew in her own time after 1922, particularly after she became the organiser of the Rabkors.

The latter explanation is suggested by the fact that *Pravda* colleagues writing later about Mariia's work give her a wide variety of roles. N. Rabinovich detailed Mariia's all encompassing job description as follows: "Not only was she the *de facto* leader of the editors of the newspaper, not only the paper's executive secretary, leader of the department of 'Workers' Life', but also...the manager of supplies."²⁵ Another widened Mariia's remit further, saying:

She was the executive secretary and member of the editorial board of *Pravda*, she edited important articles, received visitors, and also comrades,...she spoke at meetings, participated in Central Committee conferences, and was a delegate to Party congresses and conferences.²⁶

²¹ This is the title of a book by D. Ershov, *Bol'shoi drug rabsel'korov*, (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1959).

²² Mariia's popularity is reflected in the fact that in 1923 she was named an honorary printer by a general meeting of printers (*Pravda*, 5 May 1923, p. 5.). She also gained influence and power as the Rabkor movement grew, leading Rabkor congresses that were reported at length in *Pravda*.

²³ Sol'ts, in *Pravda*, 5 May 1922, p. 4.

²⁴ A. Sol'ts, 'Sekretar' "Pravdy", in *Sekretar' "Pravdy"*, p. 293.

²⁵ N. Rabinovich, "'Publika govorit...'", in *Sekretar' "Pravdy"*, p. 277.

²⁶ S. Krylova, "'Pravda" v Moskve', in *Sekretar' "Pravdy"*, p. 129.

This description points clearly to Mariia's political role in the Bolshevik regime, which went far beyond her job as Executive Secretary of *Pravda*. When the government was transferred to Moscow in March 1918, Mariia went with it, moving into the new Tverskaia offices of *Pravda* and into a Kremlin flat with Vladimir and Nadezhda.

Mariia wrote occasionally for *Pravda*, but it is clear from her choice of topics that this activity was not one she saw as a priority. She wrote a summary of regional newspapers, reviewed the opening of a Jewish theatre and composed an obituary for a Party member, who had also worked for the underground movement, called Ol'ga Ivanovna Chachina.²⁷ Two slightly more political articles can be found: she wrote a short piece calling for a proper review of the agitational work carried out in the countryside by the Soviet authorities and a longer article in which she supported the introduction of harsh punishments for speculators.²⁸ Even in the latter article, most of the text was devoted to outlining regional Soviet resolutions on the subject, rather than asserting her own viewpoint.²⁹ It was only with the launch of the Rabkor movement that Mariia truly found her political voice in the new regime.

The Worker Correspondent Movement, which grew into the Worker-Peasant Correspondent (Rabsel'kor) Movement, began spontaneously in the first years following the Revolution when workers from towns across Russia began to form into circles and to write to *Pravda*.³⁰ However, worker correspondence had a longer heritage than October 1917: it was something the RSDRP had always encouraged as a means of gauging the mood of the working classes. In 1904 Vladimir had written to colleagues in all Russian organisations of the RSDRP through *Vpered*:

We ask that all correspond, but especially workers. Give the widest opportunity to workers to write in our newspaper, to write

²⁷ M.I., "Trud i bor'ba", in *Pravda*, 30 March 1917, p. 3. This is a summary of the first three editions of *Trud i bor'ba*, the organ of the Iaroslavl Soviet of Workers' Deputies; M.I., 'Teatr i muzyka', in *Pravda*, 20 December 1922, p. 5; M.I., 'Pamiati starogo druga', in *Pravda*, 27 April 1919, p. 2.

²⁸ M.I., 'O rabote v derevne', in *Pravda*, 15 October 1918, p. 1 and M.I., 'Bor'ba s spekulatsiei', in *Pravda*, 12 February 1918, p. 1.

²⁹ M.I., in *Pravda*, 12 February 1918, p. 1.

³⁰ Bystrova, in *Sekretar' "Pravdy"*, p. 123.

about everything resolutely, to write as much as possible about the everyday [aspects] of their lives, their interests and work.³¹

This correspondence was to keep the editorial board informed of important meetings and events, but also of the “mood” and “the daily, ‘uninteresting’, usual, routine side of the [workers’] movement”.³² During the war, letters from the front had often been published in the illegal *Pravda*.³³

Gradually, as the movement grew after the Revolution, the Rabkors were given official guidance by *Pravda*. An editorial board and a bureau of Rabkors were established to oversee the movement, with organisers being sent out to the regions and assigned to a number of factories.³⁴ Organisers would visit their factories as often as possible, finding out about the work done there and what life was like for the workers.³⁵ They were to introduce the workers to *Pravda* and encourage and help them to become worker-correspondents.³⁶ The Rabkor movement was also to be a political organisation through which the Party could agitate and mobilise workers to support its various campaigns.³⁷

The First All-Union Conference of Rabkors of *Pravda* was held in November 1923 to formalise the movement. Although it was small, with only forty-two delegates, it was here that the principles and structure of the movement were established.³⁸ The Conference defined the Rabkor movement as the “independent voice of the working masses”.³⁹ Regarding the worker correspondent’s role, the Conference resolved: “Not only does the Rabkor illuminate life in industry and link the newspaper with the masses, but he is also an active organiser of societal life.”⁴⁰ Before long the Rabkors had their own journal, initially entitled *Rabochii korrespondent*. By 1925 there were 74,000

³¹ M.I., ‘Partiia i rabkor’, in *Krasnaia pechat*, 1924, No. 16-17, pp. 6-7, quoted in full in *Sekretar’ “Pravdy”*, p. 64.

³² M.I., ‘Partiia i rabkor’, in *Sekretar’ “Pravdy”*, p. 64.

³³ ‘Rabkorovskoe dvizhenie posle revoliutsii’, in *Spravochnaia kniga rabkora*, (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo “Moskovskii rabochii”, 1926), quoted in full in *Sekretar’ “Pravdy”*, p. 41.

³⁴ ‘Rabkorovskoe dvizhenie’, in *Sekretar’ “Pravdy”*, p. 49.

³⁵ ‘Rabkorovskoe dvizhenie’, in *Sekretar’ “Pravdy”*, p. 49.

³⁶ ‘Rabkorovskoe dvizhenie’, in *Sekretar’ “Pravdy”*, p. 49.

³⁷ ‘Rabkorovskoe dvizhenie’, in *Sekretar’ “Pravdy”*, p. 49.

³⁸ Edward Hallett Carr, *Socialism in One Country, 1924-1926*, 4 vols., (London: Macmillan & Co Ltd, 1958), Volume 1, p. 196.

³⁹ ‘Rabkorovskoe dvizhenie’, in *Sekretar’ “Pravdy”*, pp. 50-51.

⁴⁰ ‘Rabkorovskoe dvizhenie’, in *Sekretar’ “Pravdy”*, pp. 50-51.

Rabkors and 115,000 Sel'kors, and by 1926 the movement could boast that the newspaper walls, which it had introduced, numbered more than 40,000.⁴¹

The importance of the Rabkor movement as a means of linking the population with the Party and the state was recognised by the Communist Party, as is shown by the fact that the movement was regularly discussed at Party conferences and congresses. In December 1923 the Central Committee and the Central Control Committee resolved that the Rabkor movement must be "protected...from red tape and bureaucracy".⁴² At the Thirteenth Party Congress it was resolved that it was "essential" that there was "wide involvement by the working masses in Rabkor work" and that the Party must give "help and leadership to the Rabkor movement".⁴³ In 1925, the Central Committee of the Party officially stated that it recognised the Rabkor journal, now called the *Raboche-krest'ianskii korrespondent*, as the "leading journal of the Rabsel'kor".⁴⁴

Mariia organised the Rabkor movement from the earliest stages. She was an obvious choice since she had long been a figure known to workers and soldiers, and the job drew on many of the skills she had gained during the underground years. During the months between the February and October Revolutions, workers and soldiers regularly visited the *Pravda* offices and met with Mariia.⁴⁵ She would spend time with them talking about their lives and collect any writing they had done about their lives, worker meetings and strikes for publication in the newspaper.⁴⁶ Already the editor of the Working Life page of *Pravda*, which was devoted to readers' letters and the lives of the working class, it was Mariia who made the first attempt to give guidance to the Rabkor movement by writing a pamphlet entitled "How to write and what to write about".⁴⁷

⁴¹ 'Rabkorovskoe dvizhenie', in *Sekretar' "Pravdy"*, p. 51; Carr, *Socialism in One Country*, Volume 1, p. 198; M.I., 'Rabochii i sel'skii korrespondent', from a lecture given on 15 May 1926 to the State Institute of Journalists and published in *Zhurnalist*, 1926, No. 6-7, pp. 33-35, quoted in *Sekretar' "Pravdy"*, pp. 70-74.

⁴² 'Rabkorovskoe dvizhenie', in *Sekretar' "Pravdy"*, p. 53.

⁴³ 'Rabkorovskoe dvizhenie', in *Sekretar' "Pravdy"*, p. 53.

⁴⁴ M.I., 'Novii etap', in *Raboche-krest'ianskii korrespondent*, 1925, No. 6, pp. 3-4, quoted in full in *Sekretar' "Pravdy"*, pp. 66-67.

⁴⁵ N. Bogdanov, 'Kazhdyi ukhodil s khoroshim chuvstvom', in *Sekretar' "Pravdy"*, p. 118.

⁴⁶ Bogdanov, in *Sekretar' "Pravdy"*, p. 118.

⁴⁷ M.I., 'Poriadok dnia: kak pisat' i o chem pisat'', advert, in *Pravda*, 30 January 1921, p. 4.

Mariia's role as leader of the Rabkor was well publicised. An article, with a sketch of Mariia, was published in *Pravda*, identifying her as the organiser of the Rabkor movement.⁴⁸ And a Rabkor club was founded in her name, called The M.I. Ul'ianova Club of Red Directors and Worker Correspondents.⁴⁹ One of the aims of the Rabkor movement was to bring the workers and the Party together and the club was used, amongst other things, to achieve this. Mariia organised regular speeches at the club by high-level Party members, with visitors including the secretary of the Central Committee, S.V. Kosior, Narkompros workers N.A. Semashko, A.I. Mikoian and A.V. Lunacharskii, as well as by writers like A. Serafimovich, M. Kol'tsov, A. Zorich and Henri Barbusse.⁵⁰

From 1924 to 1929, Mariia led and shaped the Rabkor movement, using the organisation's congresses in 1924, 1926 and 1928 to set out her vision for Rabsel'kors' future. Above all, Mariia saw the Rabkor movement as a bridge between the masses and the party, enabling each to understand the other. While the party would gain a clear guide to workers' views and needs from the Rabkors' writing, working as Rabkors would turn workers into "conscious Leninists and active party members".⁵¹ Mariia wrote:

We must strive towards the aim that *every worker becomes a Rabkor*, taking some kind of part in informing newspapers about his factory and his work, fulfilling the crucial social role of bringing the Party closer to the masses and vice versa.⁵²

Mariia stressed that the Rabkor movement had to be democratic and egalitarian, and open to any worker or peasant to join, even if they were not a member of the Party.⁵³ She wrote:

Any worker or peasant, who takes it upon himself to write to the newspaper, can join it. He does not need to observe any formality

⁴⁸ I. Lomskii, 'Chelovek, kotorii organizoval rabochikh korrespondentov', in *Pravda*, 5 May 1923, p. 5.

⁴⁹ D. Kossov and I. Verkhovstev, 'Zhizn' dlia narod', in *Sekretar' "Pravdy"*, p. 238.

⁵⁰ D. Ershov, 'Plamennaia revoliutsionerka', in *Sekretar' "Pravdy"*, p. 192.

⁵¹ M.I., 'Partiia i rabkor', in *Sekretar' Pravdy*, p. 64.

⁵² M.I., 'Partiia i rabkor', in *Sekretar' "Pravdy"*, p. 65. M.I.'s emphasis.

⁵³ 'Rech' tov. M.I. Ul'ianovoi', in *Pravda*, 26 May 1926.

whatsoever, no type of probation is demanded: only an interest in the newspaper is needed.⁵⁴

Although the movement was open to all, Mariia did expect the Rabkors to gain education and training once members. She made it clear at the Second All-Union Conference of Rabkors in 1924 that the movement should educate its correspondents in political ideology and affairs so that they could write accurately (or more probably, within the bounds of political acceptability) about the increasingly complex political and economic issues of the day.⁵⁵ Mariia also viewed Rabkor work as a training for societal work more generally and the first step towards active involvement in the Party itself.⁵⁶ Increasingly, Mariia viewed the Rabkor movement as having international significance as an organisation that could foster links between workers in the USSR and abroad.⁵⁷

Mariia's work for the Rabkor movement peaked in 1928, a year in which she wrote prolifically about the movement,⁵⁸ gave a speech at the All-Union Conference of Editors in October and led the Fourth All-Union Conference of the Rabsel'kors.⁵⁹ However, people admired her work throughout the 1920s. In July 1924, Anna wrote to Mariia about how she "rejoiced" when she read about her work with the Rabkor movement and praising how she had "knocked off" a recent speech.⁶⁰ Anna finished her letter: "Oh yes Manechek! How well your work has developed and worldwide [too]!"⁶¹ S. Nearing, reporting his own

⁵⁴ M.I., 'Rabochii i sel'skii korrespondent', in *Sekretar' "Pravdy"*, p. 70.

⁵⁵ 'Vstupitel'noe slovo M.I. Ul'ianovoi', in *Pravda*, 6 December 1924, p. 8.

⁵⁶ M.I., 'Rabochii i sel'skii korrespondent', in *Sekretar' Pravdy*, p. 71; 'Doklad tov. M.I. Ul'ianovoi', in *Pravda*, 2 October 1928, p. 3; M.I., 'Itogi i perspektivy', in *Pravda*, 7 December 1928, p. 3.

⁵⁷ 'Doklad tov. M.I. Ul'ianovoi', in *Pravda*, 2 October 1928, p. 3.

⁵⁸ Mariia's works on the Rabkor that year included: 'Den' pechati i nashi zadachi', in *Raboche-krest'ianskii korrespondent*, 1928, No. 8, pp. 3-6; 'Obraztsovaia stengazeta', in *Raboche-krest'ianskii korrespondent*, 1928, No. 14, pp. 8-9; *Rabkorovskoe dvizhenie za granitsei i mezhdunarodnaia sviaz*, (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo "Pravda" i "Bednota", 1928); 'V chem nuzhdaetsia rabsel'korovskoe dvizhenie', *Zhurnalist*, 1928, No. 11, pp. 15-24; *Voprosy rukovodstva rabsel'korovskim dvizheniem. Tezisy doklada M.I. Ul'ianovoi na Vsesoiuznom soveshchanii redaktorov*, (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo "Pravda", 1928).

⁵⁹ 'Doklad tov. M.I. Ul'ianovoi na IV vsesoiuznom soveshchanii redaktorov', in *Pravda*, 2 October 1928, p. 3. *Pravda* reported on the Fourth All-Union Conference of the Rabsel'kors between 28 November and 7 December 1928.

⁶⁰ Letter, A.I. to M.I., 29 July 1924, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 131, l. 94.

⁶¹ Letter, A.I. to M.I., 29 July 1924, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 131, l. 94.

observations at the time, wrote: “As a means of mass culture (sic) expression, this development [of the Rabkor movement] is quite unparalleled.”⁶²

Pravda and the Rabkor movement were not simply designed to be a means of cultural expression however. They were also to be vehicles for political campaigns, used by the Party both to struggle with various ‘enemies of the people’ and to promote its policies. Those reminiscing about working at the newspaper saw it as one of the key vehicles for the struggle against the “bourgeois, Mensheviks, SRs and other populists” but also as a positive champion of the “new” ways.⁶³ Throughout the 1920s Mariia was to be found at the head of these campaigns, commissioning articles and instructing authors on what their contributions’ content should be, as well as writing for the newspaper herself.⁶⁴

In terms of attacking ‘enemies of the people’, one of the first examples of this was during the debates surrounding the Brest-Litovsk peace negotiations, when the Left Communists and Trotsky were criticised by *Pravda* for their opposition to the conclusion of peace.⁶⁵ An old acquaintance and *Pravda* colleague, L. Bystrova, remembered Mariia bringing in Lenin’s article, ‘About the itch’ (*O chesotke*), for publication, in which he defended the necessity of signing the peace with Germany.⁶⁶ Although Lenin and Trotsky’s disagreement over policy led to Trotsky resigning as Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Lenin soon reappointed Trotsky to government and the attacks on him in *Pravda* were short-lived.⁶⁷ The incident foreshadowed future *Pravda* campaigns against him however, and may well have signalled the start of sour relations between Mariia and Trotsky.

To be fair, it is very difficult to know what Mariia’s views were on the matter since she did not contribute articles of her own to *Pravda* during this time. My sources here are reminiscences, written long after Trotsky was established as the main enemy of the Soviet Union, so one would expect Mariia’s position to be portrayed as correct. However, in later years Mariia was a prominent member of

⁶² Scott Nearing, *Education in Soviet Russia*, (London: The Plebs League, 1926), p. 155.

⁶³ Krylova, in *Sekretar’ “Pravdy”*, p. 129.

⁶⁴ Letter, M.I. to M.N. Pokrovskii, 22 April 1922, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 41, l. 6.

⁶⁵ Bystrova, in *Sekretar’ “Pravdy”*, pp. 124-125.

⁶⁶ Bystrova, in *Sekretar’ “Pravdy”*, pp. 124-125. ‘O chesotke’ was published in *Pravda* on 22 February 1918 and is printed in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 35, pp. 361-364.

⁶⁷ Volkogonov, p. 116 and p. 119.

the anti-Trotsky camp. In the run up to the Fourteenth Party Congress, in 1925, there was “daily communication between *Pravda*, the Central Committee, the Moscow Committee and the regions” to coordinate the campaign against the Trotskyist opposition.⁶⁸ Delegations of *Pravda*’s editorial staff were sent out to factories and clubs to reinforce the Central Committee’s line.⁶⁹ One *Pravda* worker, S. Evgenov, recalled that the newspaper was “at the centre of the struggle with the opposition”.⁷⁰ Presumably with Mariia’s involvement, Rabkors were also rallied to the cause and before long were “stigmatising Trotskyists and supporting *Pravda*”.⁷¹

Evgenov also remembered an incident in 1926, at the Third All-Union Conference of the Rabsel’kors, when Trotsky turned up unexpectedly before an evening session.⁷² Trotsky approached Mariia and a photographer for *Pravda* and *Prozhektor* took several pictures, knowing, Evgenov claimed, that it would be “sensational”.⁷³ Well aware that the photographs would cause a “scandal”, Mariia later asked Evgenov and his colleague to get the negatives from the photographer to ensure that they would never be printed.⁷⁴ This was done successfully.⁷⁵ Writing in 1962, when Mariia’s name was being rehabilitated, but Trotsky’s remained as blackened as ever, it is possible that Evgenov invented this incident to emphasise that Mariia took the correct line against the enemy of the state Trotsky. However, he did claim that N. Chemodanov, a colleague from the Institute of Marxism-Leninism, had also heard the story.⁷⁶

Mariia also led more positive campaigns through the Rabkor movement and *Pravda*, and in these instances her personal view is easy to establish. Mariia led various campaigns for the improvement of workers’ lives and working conditions. At the end of 1922, Mariia helped organise a competition to find the best and worst factory directors, with workers encouraged to write in and name

⁶⁸ S. Evgenov, ‘Dvadtsatie gody’, in *Sekretar’ “Pravdy”*, p. 186. In an earlier version of these reminiscences, written in 1962, Evgenov calls it the Trotsky-Zinoviev opposition (S.V. Evgenov, ‘Svetloi Obraz: Vospominaniia o M.I. Ul’ianovoi’, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 319, l. 11).

⁶⁹ Evgenov, in *Sekretar’ “Pravdy”*, p. 186.

⁷⁰ Evgenov, ‘Svetloi Obraz’, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 319, l. 12.

⁷¹ M. Amshinskii, ‘Poslanets redaktsii’, in *Sekretar’ “Pravdy”*, p. 139.

⁷² Evgenov, ‘Svetloi Obraz’, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 319, l. 17.

⁷³ Evgenov, ‘Svetloi Obraz’, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 319, l. 18.

⁷⁴ Evgenov, ‘Svetloi Obraz’, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 319, l. 17.

⁷⁵ Evgenov, ‘Svetloi Obraz’, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 319, l. 17.

⁷⁶ Evgenov, ‘Svetloi Obraz’, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 319, l. 74.

and shame, or name and praise, their bosses.⁷⁷ There were even prizes for the best writers, including winter coats, year long subscriptions to *Pravda*, watches, hats and books.⁷⁸ The competition had a serious side to it also, with the jury being composed of representatives of the Central Committee and the Moscow Committee of the Party, as well as editors of *Pravda* and Rabkors. The main aim of the contest was to promote examples of the best socialist factories and to spur on those with poorer records.

Mariia became a champion of the rights of the Rabkors themselves. In August 1922, a Rabkor named Spiridonov was murdered by two workers whom he had exposed as corrupt in an article.⁷⁹ Besides attending the unveiling of a memorial to Spiridonov, Mariia wrote an article called 'There should be a review. (On the case of Comrade Spiridonov's murder)', which outlined the Rabkor's story, but also demanded that the case be reviewed since the defendants had only been sentenced to five years imprisonment.⁸⁰ She argued that murdering a Rabkor was a crime of "social-political significance" and that the perpetrators must be treated without "leniency [or] mercy".⁸¹ She followed this up with another article in October, 'On the case of Comrade Spiridonov. In defence of the worker press.', in which she argued that the workers' press was one of the Communist Party's "strongest tools (*orudie*)" and that anyone who persecuted worker correspondents should have legal proceedings brought against them.⁸²

Because they were often highly critical of factory bosses, working conditions and corruption, there were many cases of Rabsel'kors being attacked.⁸³ Mariia set up the Iron Fund to help Rabsel'kors who had been the victims of persecution. Nadezhda Krupskaiia, A.B. Kalatov, A.A. Sol'ts and

⁷⁷ N. Astakhova (Pilatskaia), 'U nee my uchilis'', in *Sekretar' "Pravdy"*, p. 145.

⁷⁸ Astakhova, in *Sekretar' "Pravdy"*, p. 145.

⁷⁹ M.I., 'Nado peresmotret (K delu ob ubiistve tov. Spiridonova)', in *Sekretar' "Pravdy"*, p. 54.

⁸⁰ Photograph, by N. Peterson, in *Prozhektor*, 1926, No. 15, p. 10; M.I., 'Nado peresmotret'', in *Sekretar' "Pravdy"*, p. 55.

⁸¹ M.I., 'Nado peresmotret'', in *Sekretar' "Pravdy"*, p. 55.

⁸² M.I., 'K delu tov. Spiridonova. V zashchitu rabochei pechati', in *Pravda*, 27 October 1922, p. 4.

⁸³ A. Bezymenskii, 'Dorogoi vsem chelovek', in *Sekretar' "Pravdy"*, p. 155. Another case of Sel'kor persecution, the Malinovskii affair, caused a national scandal, but Mariia did not contribute any articles to *Pravda* about it (Carr, *Socialism in One Country*, Volume 1, p. 196).

others contributed to the fund alongside Mariia by having the royalties from their writing donated to it.⁸⁴

Mariia also defended the Rabsel'kors' right to anonymity as a further measure to protect them from persecution, even though others had begun pushing for the election of worker correspondents. She refused to accept A.I. Iakovlev and S.B. Uritskii's argument, put forward in the journal *Zhurnal'ist* (Journalist) that Rabkors should be selected from general meetings of workers. N. Astakhova, one of Mariia's colleagues, was shocked by the harshness of Mariia's article in defence of the openness of the movement in which she accused Iakovlev and Uritskii of totally misunderstanding "the essence of the [Rabkor's] work" and of taking a "bureaucratic approach".⁸⁵ Mariia argued that above all the Rabsel'kors' identities must always be protected so that they might write the truth, and that the honesty of the Rabsel'kors was guaranteed by the fact that they answered to the editorial boards of *Pravda* and of the Rabkor journal for the accuracy of their articles.⁸⁶

Whereas Mariia rarely involved herself in the women's question during the underground years, she regularly took up the cause of women's participation in the Rabkor movement. In her closing words at the Second All-Union Conference of Rabkors, Mariia referred to the small number of Zhenkors (women correspondents) in the movement and argued that they must not restrict their contributions to women's journals, but must also contribute to the general work of the Rabkor movement.⁸⁷ In 1925, Mariia took up this issue again, asserting that it was unacceptable that women accounted for only 5% of the correspondents.⁸⁸ In an article published in *Raboche-krest'ianskii korrespondent*, Mariia argued that women did not participate in the movement partly because of their economic position and their standing in the family, and partly because, as a result of their life roles, "they represent[ed]...a more backward and dark element [of society]".⁸⁹ This explanation was regularly used

⁸⁴ Evgenov, in *Sekretar' "Pravdy"*, p. 189.

⁸⁵ Astakhova, in *Sekretar' "Pravdy"*, p. 141.

⁸⁶ M.I., 'O metodakh privilecheniia rabkorov', in *Rabochii korrespondent*, 1924, No. 1, pp. 18-21, quoted in full in *Sekretar' "Pravdy"*, p. 58.

⁸⁷ 'Zakliuchitel'noe slovo tov. M.I. Ul'ianovoi', in *Pravda*, 10 December 1924, p. 4.

⁸⁸ M.I., 'Vovlechenie zhenshchin v rabsel'korovskuiu rabotu', in *Raboche-krest'ianskii korrespondent*, 1925, No. 8, pp. 1-4, quoted in *Sekretar' "Pravdy"*, p. 68.

⁸⁹ M.I., 'Vovlechenie zhenshchin', in *Sekretar' "Pravdy"*, p. 68.

by Bolsheviks to justify the lack of female participation in Soviet politics.⁹⁰ However, Mariia also blamed the Rabkor movement itself for not taking “sufficiently energetic measures” to encourage women to join the newspaper work.⁹¹ She argued that the Rabkors and the Zhenotdel had to put the attraction of women to the movement at the top of their agenda.⁹² At the Third All-Union Conference in 1926, Mariia again argued that women’s participation in the movement was inadequate and must be increased.⁹³

Mariia also used her position to help individual Rabkors. One Rabkor, D. Zaslavskii, wrote about an occasion when Mariia defended him. He had written an article which criticised a high level director for persecuting a worker.⁹⁴ One day he was called to Mariia’s office where she was talking to two officials, who were querying Zaslavskii’s work.⁹⁵ The men began shouting at Zaslavskii as soon as he walked in, but Mariia stopped them and sent them from her office, saying that at *Pravda* they dealt with mistakes by journalists without interference from others.⁹⁶

This was not the only time Mariia would invoke her status as the leader of the Rabkor movement to protect worker correspondents. On another occasion, when two brothers were arrested, after the elder brother, Vladimir Makar’ev criticised the work of railway foremen, Mariia responded to a local Rabkor’s plea for her help.⁹⁷ Although the Guberniia Procurator had warned the Rabkor not to interfere in the matter, Mariia immediately sent a telegram of protest to the Procurator.⁹⁸ Unfortunately, it is not known what Mariia wrote, but the charge against the two men was dropped.⁹⁹

Mariia also used her position as the secretary of *Pravda* to help members of the public. In 1925, a student at the Moscow State Institute of Journalists, P. Guzanov, was advised by a features writer for *Pravda*, A. Zorich, to go to Mariia for help tracing his sister, whom he had lost in the evacuations carried out during

⁹⁰ Clements, *Bolshevik Women*, p. 218.

⁹¹ M.I., ‘Vovlechenie zhenshchin’, in *Sekretar’ “Pravdy”*, p. 68.

⁹² M.I., ‘Vovlechenie zhenshchin’, in *Sekretar’ “Pravdy”*, p. 68.

⁹³ ‘Rech’ tov. M.I. Ul’ianovoi’, in *Pravda*, 26 May 1926, p. 3.

⁹⁴ D. Zaslavskii, ‘Glavnaia shkola sovetskogo fel’etona’, in *Sekretar’ “Pravdy”*, pp. 207-208.

⁹⁵ Zaslavskii is not more specific about them, saying only that it was as if around them “shone an invisible halo of greatness and authority” (Zaslavskii, in *Sekretar’ “Pravdy”*, p. 208).

⁹⁶ Zaslavskii, in *Sekretar’ “Pravdy”*, p. 208.

⁹⁷ K. Altaiskii, ‘Svet leninskikh idei’, in *Sekretar’ “Pravdy”*, p. 135.

⁹⁸ Altaiskii, in *Sekretar’ “Pravdy”*, p. 136.

the famine of 1921. Mariia arranged for Guzanov to have his advert asking for information about his sister published in *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*.¹⁰⁰ Indeed, Mariia quickly gained a reputation as a person who gave help where she could to those who asked for it. As O. Toom put it: “Even in the 20s, [Mariia’s] name was widely known to people who needed help to restore their infringed rights.”¹⁰¹ Soon it was not unusual for Rabkors to come to *Pravda*’s Moscow offices even from the provinces to speak to Mariia and ask for her help.¹⁰² Nor was it unusual for Mariia to take them under her wing, find them work in *Pravda* and sometimes accommodation, and even to feed them and give them new clothes.¹⁰³

Clearly Mariia was well known to readers of *Pravda* and the Rabkor journal, particularly in the Moscow area, but how had this come about and how was she portrayed to the public? As mentioned earlier, she was named on 5 May 1923 as the organiser of the Rabkor movement.¹⁰⁴ However, it was the anniversary of *Pravda*, the year before that had put Mariia into the limelight. In 1922, *Pravda* celebrated its fifth and tenth anniversaries: it was ten years since *Pravda* was founded and five years since it had begun publishing legally after the February Revolution of 1917. A whole article was dedicated to Mariia as the secretary of *Pravda*, which celebrated her work as the devoted secretary, the “organisational soul of *Pravda*” and as a “soldier of the Revolution”.¹⁰⁵ A letter, written to Mariia, and published in the newspaper, said:

Dear comrade...We, the worker-correspondents, send greetings to you...Led by you, we will, as before, carry the old battle standard of the workers’ newspaper *Pravda* firmly and strongly in all the upheavals of the [next] five year struggle for a better future for the working class.¹⁰⁶

⁹⁹ Altaiskii, in *Sekretar’ “Pravdy”*, p. 136.

¹⁰⁰ P. Guzanov, ‘Gazetnoe ob’iavlenie’, in *Sekretar’ “Pravdy”*, p. 177.

¹⁰¹ O. Toom, in *Sekretar’ “Pravdy”*, p. 304.

¹⁰² A. Ashmarina, ‘Takoi zapomnilas’ ona’, in *Sekretar’ “Pravdy”*, pp. 146-149.

¹⁰³ Ashmarina, in *Sekretar’ “Pravdy”*, pp. 146-149.

¹⁰⁴ Lomskii, in *Pravda*, 5 May 1923, p. 5.

¹⁰⁵ Sol’ts, in *Pravda*, 5 May 1922, p. 4.

¹⁰⁶ Letter, Worker Correspondents to Mariia Il’ichna, in *Pravda*, 5 May 1922, p. 8.

Clearly Mariia was seen (or the writers of the letter wanted her to be seen) as a leader of the workers and champion of their welfare.

Even though Mariia's name was celebrated in the newspapers, it was rare, before 1924, that any reference was made to her connection to Lenin. Neither the article on Mariia as the organiser of the Rabkor nor the piece celebrating her work as the organiser of *Pravda* referred to her as Lenin's sister, even though Lenin was mentioned in the latter article.¹⁰⁷ Many people working closely with her did not even realise, at first, that she was related to Lenin, particularly if they had come to Moscow from the provinces. (Indeed, in 1918, there were still people who did not even recognise Lenin's face.¹⁰⁸) When A. Ashmarina arrived in Moscow from Kineshma, she had no idea that Mariia was Lenin's sister, and even asked Mariia in all innocence if she had heard Lenin speaking in public.¹⁰⁹

Of course, others, who worked with Mariia were well aware of her connection to Lenin, even though Mariia did not tend to emphasise it. In fact, Mariia and Vladimir worked closely together on *Pravda* and this was known throughout the office. The best description of this is the following:

We knew that Mariia told Lenin a lot about *Pravda*, so that Vladimir Il'ich was up to date with editorial matters. Every day after lunch at home, Mariia would go around handing out tasks. Often these assignments came directly from Lenin or the idea for them had arisen from talks with him. When handing out the assignments though, Mariia always said 'the people say that'...¹¹⁰

Vladimir was, for example, directly responsible for the introduction of a Peasant Life section in *Pravda*. Mariia told Gurov, a man recruited to work on the section: "Not a day goes by when Lenin doesn't take an interest in the

¹⁰⁷ Lomskii, in *Pravda*, 5 May 1923, p. 5.

¹⁰⁸ K. Piskunova-Alekseeva, 'Zapiska predsedatelia Sovnarkoma', in *Sekretar' "Pravdy"*, p. 273. Piskunova-Alekseeva came face to face with Lenin in the corridors of *Pravda* but did not realise who he was.

¹⁰⁹ Ashmarina, in *Sekretar' "Pravdy"*, p. 148.

¹¹⁰ Rabinovich, in *Sekretar' "Pravdy"*, p. 279.

country department – how work is going, how many articles there are and on what theme, what letters have been received.”¹¹¹

The *Pravda* offices in fact had a direct line to Vladimir’s Kremlin office and his flat.¹¹² Various *Pravda* workers remembered Mariia contacting Vladimir and asking for his help. For example, on one occasion, Lunacharskii was scheduled to speak at the Rabkor club, but suddenly cancelled because he had to attend a Sovnarkom meeting.¹¹³ Mariia simply went to Vladimir and asked him to rearrange Lunacharskii’s report to Sovnarkom so that he could come to the club as arranged.¹¹⁴ Mariia also commissioned articles from Vladimir. In 1921 she asked him to write an article entitled “Tactics and strategies” for a collection of works to mark the fourth anniversary of the Revolution.¹¹⁵

Mariia sometimes enlisted Vladimir’s help in resolving personal problems faced by *Pravda* or Rabkor workers. For example, one young woman remembered that on her arrival at *Pravda* Mariia took her under her wing, introduced her to Vladimir and Nadezhda, fed her and clothed her and in a small gesture, helped her to visit an ill relative in a small town just outside of Moscow.¹¹⁶ She recalled how Vladimir hand wrote the travel pass for her and Mariia put the *Pravda* stamp on it.¹¹⁷ When a penniless young writer arrived at *Pravda* in the autumn of 1919, Mariia turned to Vladimir, who wrote to L.B. Kamenev, A.S. Ehlukidze and E.D. Stasova: “I beseech you to arrange help, clothing, a flat, food, for Comrade Peter Okhrimenko. If it is difficult in any way to provide help, I beseech you to ring me.”¹¹⁸

Mariia’s connections in high places did not end there though and she often telephoned people like Lunacharskii, at Narkompros, or G.V. Chicherin, at the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs, to check details and consult with them.¹¹⁹ Like

¹¹¹ Professor P. Gurov, ‘Otdel “derevnia”’, in *Sekretar’ “Pravdy”*, p. 179. Gurov had been working for the monthly illustrated journal *Novaia derevnia* when in February 1922 he was sent by the central committee of the party to join the editorial board of *Pravda* and help organise the Derevenskii otdel.

¹¹² Bor. Efimov, ‘Vospominaniia khudozhnika’, in *Sekretar’ “Pravdy”*, p. 197.

¹¹³ N. Chemodanov, ‘Zametki organizatora rabkorov’, in *Sekretar’ “Pravdy”*, p. 315.

¹¹⁴ Chemodanov, in *Sekretar’ “Pravdy”*, p. 315.

¹¹⁵ Letter, M.I. to V.I., 19 September 1921, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 41, l. 4. The article, which in the end was entitled ‘K chetyrekhletnei godovshchine oktiabr’skoi revoliutsii’, was published in *Pravda* on 18 October 1921.

¹¹⁶ Piskunova-Alekseeva, in *Sekretar’ “Pravdy”*, p. 274.

¹¹⁷ Piskunova-Alekseeva, in *Sekretar’ “Pravdy”*, p. 274.

¹¹⁸ Rabinovich, in *Sekretar’ “Pravdy”*, p. 279.

¹¹⁹ A. Zuev, “‘Delat’ khorosho”’, in *Sekretar’ “Pravdy”*, p. 221.

so many of Mariia's government colleagues, these men were comrades from the underground years. The informal system of recruitment that operated in the Bolshevik government in the early days meant that there were stronger bonds between officials than simply professional ties.

Of course, occasionally, being Lenin's sister, and being well-connected with members of the government, made no difference at all to Mariia's life or work. Mariia suffered with the other *Pravda* workers when there was no fuel to be had during the 1920 winter of the civil war and at one point resources were so scarce she could not even get a pair of scissors for the office.¹²⁰ A. Altaev remembered that Mariia, as a last resort, took a pair from the finance department while one of the women workers was absent. When the woman returned, "she began an argument, showing that the finance department was more important for the government than any newspaper".¹²¹ Note that the finance worker did not hesitate to argue with Lenin's sister to defend her pair of scissors and to suggest that Mariia's job was inferior to hers.

Nonetheless, Mariia had gained power and prestige since 1917 as the executive secretary of *Pravda* and the organiser of the Rabkor. Rarely involved in the political debates of the time, she did campaign vigorously on behalf of the Rabkor movement and even took up individual cases of injustice. Although she was discreet about her link to Lenin, she had a close working relationship with him and could rely on him to help her if needed.

THE CHILDREN OF THE REVOLUTION

Anna's role in the new regime differed from her sister's, though, once again, it was not one defined by Vladimir.¹²² Far from automatically receiving a post in the new government, she did not join the administration until months after the Revolution. In October 1917, Anna left her post at *Pravda*, turning down an offer of a permanent job there from "Pr. Fr." and Bystrianskii because she did not want to work with the "elementary madam [Pr. Fr.]".¹²³ Instead, Anna went to

¹²⁰ Z. Boiarskaia, 'G.M. Dimitrov v "Pravde"', in *Sekretar' "Pravdy"*, p. 159. During the cold winter of 1920, there was only old newspapers to burn for warmth, and Mariia shared the stove in her office with her colleagues.

¹²¹ Al. Altaev (M.V. Altaeva-Iamshchikova), 'Smolnii, 1917 god', in *Sekretar' "Pravdy"*, p. 121.

work for the newly formed Union of Textile Workers in St Petersburg, editing their newspaper *Tkach*.¹²⁴ It was here that she chose to remain until the spring of 1918.

There also seem to have been practical reasons for not moving to Moscow. Mark thought his work would keep him in St Petersburg and Anna did not think it was worth moving to Moscow if she did not have a job there.¹²⁵ Even once Mark had started looking into moving to Moscow it was by no means guaranteed that they would be able to find accommodation.¹²⁶ In the end, it was only when the journal *Tkach* collapsed, despite Anna's defence of it, that she agreed to leave Petrograd.¹²⁷

However, while the new government was in another city, Anna was by no means isolated from events in Moscow. Although she seems not to have been in contact with Vladimir at this time, Anna corresponded regularly with Mariia and her letters give an insight into her impressions of the early days of the Soviet government.¹²⁸ Anna's interest in the continuing work of the government in Moscow is clear in a letter she wrote to Mariia in March 1918 in which she complained: "You write so little, though everything is new around you... Write more openly to me, my dear."¹²⁹

In the same letter, Anna also showed her opinions about the new regime and the standards that it would uphold. She commented on Kollontai's elopement with P.E. Dybenko, asking if he had "finally been dismissed", and

¹²² Dmitrii too found his own role after the Revolution. In 1918 he was involved in the Civil War, as well as with a local edition of *Pravda* in Sevastapol. He remained only sporadically in contact with the rest of the family. See letter, A.I. to M.I., 16 March 1918, in f. 13, o.1, ed. khr. 131, l. 1 and letter, A.I. to M.I., 24 April 1918, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 131, l. 11 in which Anna expressed deep concern about Dmitrii's welfare and the lack of letters from him.

¹²³ Letter, A.I. to M.I., 2 May 1918, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 131, l. 13. It is likely that Pr. Fr. is Praskovia Frantsevna Kudelli, though it is not clear what Anna means by "elementary madam" (*elementarnaia madam*).

¹²⁴ Letter, A.I. to M.I., 2 May 1918, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 131, l. 13; Letter, V. Perasich to A. Efroimson at *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 21 January 1936, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 19, l. 1.

¹²⁵ Letter, A.I. to M.I., 21 March 1918, in f. 13, o. 1 ed. khr. 131, l. 3.

¹²⁶ Letter, A.I. to M.I., 2 May 1918, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 131, l. 14. Anna was not the only one to be left behind due to practical considerations. Stasova, who had taken over Krupskaja's role as secretary to Vladimir and had been invaluable to him, would not leave her ailing parents, and gave up the offer of a prominent government position in Moscow (Salita, p. 353).

¹²⁷ Letter, V. Perasich to A. Efroimson at *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 21 January 1936, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 19, l. 1.

¹²⁸ There are no letters from Vladimir to Anna at this time presumably because he was so busy, but also perhaps because now he had access to a telephone.

¹²⁹ Letter, A.I. to M.I., 16 March 1918, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 131, l. 1.

said that although Lunacharskii was “dear, he was not businesslike”.¹³⁰ Anna’s excitement about the new regime is apparent in the way she signed off these letters, passing on greetings to all the comrades in Moscow, asking for more news, expressing the hope that Mariia was not being over-loaded with work and telling her sister to “be happy”.¹³¹ In another letter she asked Mariia “what sort of people [were] around her” and if she was seeing Vladimir and Nadezhda.¹³²

No longer fearing that the police might intercept her letters, Anna wrote openly about the political situation. Indeed her letters blended the domestic, the familial and the political constantly.¹³³ Anna’s letters to Mariia are full of concern about living conditions in Moscow and regular offers to make or buy clothes to send to Mariia. Throughout these first years of the new regime, Anna often voiced her worries about Mariia over-working. She warned her in one letter: “Please don’t over work, *don’t go to Pravda at night!* Eat more and sleep!”¹³⁴

While still in St Petersburg, Anna maintained her links with Vladimir through Mariia, writing, for example, in 1918:

How is Vol[odia]’s health? Say hello to him and Nadia. *Please do ask* Volodia to turn his attention to V.G. Korolenko! According to today’s newspaper he has been taken hostage in Poltava! He’s already an old man you know, and ill, moreover. He is our best artist, the most sensitive soul after Tolstoy in Russia. He’s my favourite writer. Do, do ask [Volodia] to see to his freedom quickly. I am sick with worry about him...It is simply Volodia’s place [to get involved].¹³⁵

¹³⁰ Letter, A.I. to M.I., 16 March 1918, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 131, l. 2.

¹³¹ Letter, A.I. to M.I., 16 March 1918, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 131, l. 2; Letter, A.I. to M.I., 21 March 1918, in f. 13, o. 1 ed. khr. 131, l. 3.

¹³² Letter, A.I. to M.I., 21 March 1918, in f. 13, o. 1 ed. khr. 131, l. 4. In another letter she pointed out to Mariia how “risky” it was for Dmitrii to be in the Crimea “with his name”. In fact she wanted Mariia to ask Vladimir to recall Dmitrii to Moscow. See letter, A.I. to M.I., 9 May 1918, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 131, l. 17.

¹³³ Letter, A.I. to M.I., 21 March 1918, in f. 13, o. 1 ed. khr. 131, l. 3.

¹³⁴ Letter, A.I. to M.I., 24 April 1918, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 131, l. 12. Anna’s emphasis.

¹³⁵ Letter, A.I. to M.I., 2 April 1918, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 131, l. 6. Anna’s emphasis.

It is interesting to note the variety of national, cultural and personal arguments that Anna deployed to try to get Mariia and Vladimir to agree with her and act. Her next letter showed a similar mix of the domestic and political: “How are you without boots? How do you like your new flat? I send you a big hug. Please talk with Vol[odia] about Korolenko! And write with news.”¹³⁶

According to his own diary, Korolenko was not arrested in Poltava in 1918, though he did visit prisoners in the city.¹³⁷ Indeed, even if he had been arrested, it is not clear that Vladimir would have intervened. A letter written a year later by Vladimir to Gorky about the writer suggests that Vladimir did not share Anna’s admiration for the man. He wrote:

I recently read [his] pamphlet *War, the Fatherland and Mankind*, which he wrote in 1917. Mind you, Korolenko is the best of the near Kadets, almost a Menshevik. But what a disgusting, base, vile defence of an imperialist war, concealed behind honeyed phrases! He is a wretched philistine in thrall to bourgeois prejudices! For such gentlemen 10,000,000 killed in an imperialist war is a deed worthy of support (by *deeds*, accompanied by honeyed phrases “against” war), but the death of hundreds of thousands in a *just* civil war against the landowners and capitalists evokes ahs and ohs, sighs and hysterics. No there is no harm in such “talents” being made to spend some weeks or so in prison.¹³⁸

The Korolenko incident was not the only one to trouble Anna, as can be seen in this letter to Mariia. She wrote:

¹³⁶ Letter, A.I. to M.I., no date, after 2 April 1918 and before 20 April 1918, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 131, l. 7.

¹³⁷ Entry for 28 March 1918, in Vladimir Korolenko, *Dnevnik, 1917-1921*, ed. by A.K. Kozhedub, (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel’, 2001), p. 95. Anna’s mistake can presumably be put down to disrupted communications as a result of the upheavals of the Revolution and civil war.

¹³⁸ Letter, V.I. to Maxim Gorky, 5 September 1919, in *Collected Works*, Volume 44, p. 284. Vladimir’s emphasis. Anna’s pleas may have fallen on deaf ears in 1918, but in 1920, the Soviet government posted a special guard to protect Korolenko during the civil war (E. Balabanovich, *V.G. Korolenko, 1853-1921*, ed. by V. Bonch-Bruевич, (Moscow: Gosudarstvennii literaturnii muzei, 1947), p. 155).

Did you go with Shkurka [Vladimir]? Did Shkurka speak? Is it true that there has been a big protest amongst his people about his new line? What's this about Sverdlov calling the Red Guards to drag Martov from the rostrum?!! What's this about him detaining the ugly mug?! How could Volodia allow this?!!¹³⁹

Here Anna was referring to an incident in May 1918, when Martov, who was well known for his ferocious criticism of Bolshevik policies in the Central Executive Committee, attacked the Bolsheviks on the issue of “sending workers’ food detachments to villages”.¹⁴⁰ He accused the Bolsheviks of using this policy to remove from Moscow and St Petersburg workers who were discontent and likely to start voicing their protests.¹⁴¹ The chairman of the Committee, Sverdlov, tried to regain order in the meeting by threatening to exclude Martov for three sessions.¹⁴² When this had no effect, the militia were called in.¹⁴³ According to one witness Martov walked out, though Anna seems to have heard that he was dragged out.¹⁴⁴ Obviously Anna was uneasy about the use of force to remove a speaker from a Central Executive Committee meeting, even if it was the “ugly mug” Martov.

Anna also kept up with government issues through her husband. In the early days after the Revolution, while Mark and Anna were still in Petrograd and the government in Moscow, Mark’s work provided a link with events in the new capital, which he visited regularly.¹⁴⁵ Anna also attended meetings of the Petrograd Central Committee.¹⁴⁶ Once the two had moved to Moscow, Mark attended The Council of People’s Commissars (Sovnarkom) meetings “almost

¹³⁹ Letter, A.I. to M.I., 2 May 1918, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 131, l.15.

¹⁴⁰ Konstantin Paustovsky’s eye-witness account, quoted at length in Israel Getzler, *Martov: A Political Biography of a Russian Social Democrat*, (Melbourne: Carlton, 1967), p. 180.

¹⁴¹ Getzler, p. 180.

¹⁴² Getzler, p. 180.

¹⁴³ Getzler, p. 180.

¹⁴⁴ Getzler, p. 180.

¹⁴⁵ Letter, A.I. to M.I., 16 March 1918, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 131, l. 1.

¹⁴⁶ Letter, A.I. to M.I., 2 April 1918, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 131, l. 6. In this letter she remarked that there had been an “exchange of fire between the Bolsheviks and the anarchists” at one meeting over allegations of bribery and sabotage (she does not say what the accusations related to). Anna concluded that it would be “disgraceful” if bribes were being made (Letter, A.I. to M.I., 2 April 1918, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 131, l. 6).

constantly” during his time as People’s Commissar for Communications and then of Insurance and he “told [Anna] about what went on there”.¹⁴⁷

When Anna did finally join the revolutionary government, it was as the head of the newly formed Department for the Protection of Childhood (DPC), a post that reflected her long interest in children’s welfare. Anna had kept up her interest in children’s welfare throughout the regime change, on top of her work at *Tkach*. In April 1918 she wrote to Mariia that she was going to visit a factory in St Petersburg regarding a children’s colony.¹⁴⁸ In fact, Anna was so caught up in another children’s colony project at Tsarskoe Selo with Lunacharskii, that she cited it as one of her reasons for not moving to Moscow.¹⁴⁹

Anna’s remit at the DPC was to coordinate and regulate the provision of children’s homes, colonies and clinics.¹⁵⁰ From the outset, she faced huge problems, ones that would not, in fact, be resolved until the 1930s. The upheavals of the Revolution and the Civil War left thousands of children orphaned, but also decimated the state’s resources to deal with the problem.¹⁵¹ These issues, including food shortages and the lack of suitable accommodation for children, were highlighted in 1919 at the All-Russian Congress for the Protection of Childhood, which Anna helped to organise and participated in as a member of the Presidium. Three hundred delegates met in Moscow to discuss practical issues and to “formulate an overall policy on *besprizorniki* [or homeless/abandoned children]”.¹⁵²

Although no stenographic record of the Congress was kept, the minutes contain extracts from the delegates’ speeches.¹⁵³ Unusually, Anna took an idealistic stance at the Congress on the socialist state’s approach to childcare, arguing: “There must be no wretched children who do not belong to anyone. All children are children of the state.”¹⁵⁴ To ensure this, she envisaged a network of childcare institutions with a family or community ethos and structure.¹⁵⁵

¹⁴⁷ A.I., in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1929, No. 11, p. 87.

¹⁴⁸ Letter, A.I. to M.I., 24 April 1918, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 131, l. 11.

¹⁴⁹ Letter, A.I. to M.I., 2 May 1918, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 131, l. 14.

¹⁵⁰ Drabkina, in *Sem’ia Ul’ianovykh*, p. 180.

¹⁵¹ Wendy Z. Goldman, *Women, the State and Revolution*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 61.

¹⁵² Goldman, p. 62.

¹⁵³ Goldman explains this in her chapter on *besprizornost’*, in Footnote 10, Goldman, p. 63.

¹⁵⁴ Goldman, p. 62.

¹⁵⁵ Goldman, p. 62.

Children would “establish and maintain order”, with a minimum of help from a limited number of specialist staff.¹⁵⁶ Just as Mariia thought that workers should be free to leave the Rabkor movement, so Anna argued that children should be free to leave the care homes if they wished.¹⁵⁷

Juvenile crime had also become a major difficulty, with gangs of *besprizorniki* roaming the country stealing and even prostituting themselves in order to survive.¹⁵⁸ On this issue, Anna was amongst those who argued that children should not be punished for their crimes, but rehabilitated in educational centres.¹⁵⁹ Her practical suggestion on how to begin to establish this support network was that houses of the old nobility should be requisitioned and converted into children’s homes.¹⁶⁰

However, introducing these policies was not easy. The Congress heard how the properties of the nobility were often in a state of total disrepair and were completely unsuitable for use as children’s homes.¹⁶¹ Yet the limited number of existing homes and trained staff simply could not keep up with the demand for places.¹⁶² Starving children were regularly being evacuated from areas of famine to areas, which though not suffering from food shortages, lacked the resources to cope with the influx of youngsters.¹⁶³ Indeed, in 1918 Anna had to take special measures to help provide for children being evacuated, writing to the Board of Properties of Moscow’s People’s Palaces to request “pillows, blankets and bed-linen needed for the orphanages being evacuated from Moscow to the grain-growing provinces because of the famine”.¹⁶⁴ Vladimir had endorsed the letter.¹⁶⁵

Indeed during this time, Anna worked closely with Vladimir at the Soviet of People’s Commissars (Sovnarkom) both informally and officially. In terms of

¹⁵⁶ Goldman, p. 62.

¹⁵⁷ Goldman, p. 62.

¹⁵⁸ Goldman, p. 59.

¹⁵⁹ A.I., in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1929, No. 11, p. 88.

¹⁶⁰ A.I., ‘Deti i zhilishchnie uslovia’, in *Pravda*, 23 July 1919, p. 1.

¹⁶¹ Goldman, p. 63.

¹⁶² Goldman, p. 63.

¹⁶³ Goldman, p. 63.

¹⁶⁴ Letter, V.I. to The Board of Properties of Moscow’s People’s Palaces, 1 November 1918, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 50, p. 201; Footnote 207, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 50, p. 452.

¹⁶⁵ Letter, V.I. to The Board of Properties of Moscow’s People’s Palaces, 1 November 1918, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 50, p. 201; Footnote 207, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 50, p. 452.

her informal work with her brother, Anna described how Vladimir, while in the middle of Sovnarkom meetings, would write little notes to comrades elsewhere asking about other issues, and that these comrades would then join the Sovnarkom meeting in order to see Vladimir and reply to him. Anna was often aware of the contents of such notes. She wrote: “I sometimes discussed these notes [with Vladimir]. I remember times when Il’ich himself said to me: ‘Would you remind me about this at Sovnarkom’ or: ‘I will find out at Sovnarkom and tell you’.”¹⁶⁶ Anna also worked with Vladimir officially. He signed two Sovnarkom decrees prepared by Anna on measures to be taken to protect children from malnutrition-related illnesses.¹⁶⁷ Despite opposition from Dzerzhinskii and the Cheka, Anna also pushed through a Sovnarkom decree that children to the age of eighteen could not be prosecuted for their crimes and that juvenile prisons would be replaced with educational institutions.¹⁶⁸ Anna argued that besides the fact that children should not be classified as criminals, the conditions in juvenile prisons were totally unacceptable.¹⁶⁹

There were numerous other occasions when Vladimir supported the cause of children’s welfare. If Anna was not directly named as working with him in these matters, it is not unlikely that she was involved in some way, even if only to direct her brother’s attention to the issues.¹⁷⁰ Indeed children’s welfare was an issue that all the Ul’ianovs took seriously and involved themselves in when they could.

Anna backed up her practical work with agitational articles in *Pravda*. On 23 July 1919, Anna wrote an article entitled ‘Children and living conditions’, in which she outlined the poor living conditions of many worker families and attacked the regional and central housing departments for not providing enough buildings for children’s homes. She wrote:

All the measures [being taken for]...the protection of children – [including] the struggle with begging, prostitution, and speculation by children, – remain measures on paper because it is impossible to

¹⁶⁶ A.I., in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1929, No. 11, pp. 89-90.

¹⁶⁷ Drabkina, in *Sem’ia Ul’ianovykh*, pp. 180-181.

¹⁶⁸ A.I., in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1929, No. 11, p. 88.

¹⁶⁹ A.I., in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1929, No. 11, p. 88.

organise corresponding institutions for distribution, reception etc...because of the lack of free accommodation.¹⁷¹

She criticised the regime for allowing Soviet leaders to requisition “the richest furniture, soft sofas, arm chairs, bronze chandeliers and pianos” for their offices, while children had to sleep two or three to a bed in terrible living conditions.¹⁷² She concluded her article arguing that the best buildings being requisitioned, those with “bright spacious flats with gardens” must be allocated as children’s homes and appealed to “comrade communists” to “squeeze up in their offices” and to remember that huge numbers of children were still living “in damp cellars”.¹⁷³

Anna also campaigned for the improvement of children’s homes from ones that resembled “army barracks”, to ones situated on the outskirts of cities, where children could work, play and learn surrounded by fresh air, and grow and develop into independent, courageous and free individuals, “for the new [socialist] society need[ed] a new kind of people”.¹⁷⁴ In 1920 Anna wrote articles to promote the Week of the Child and courses to train women workers to be teachers in children’s homes.¹⁷⁵

Interestingly, as in Mariia’s case, many new arrivals to the capital did not realise that Anna was related to Lenin. Indeed, people had even less reason to suspect it: Anna always used her married name when writing in *Pravda* as the head of the DPC and she was almost never seen in public with Lenin.¹⁷⁶ A student at the Department for the Protection of Motherhood and Infancy courses, M.A. Mustova, remembered being called to have a meeting with Anna at the DPC but admitted that she did not know “she was Vladimir Il’ich’s sister”.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁰ See letter, V.I. to A.D. Tsiurupa, 14 January 1919, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 50, p. 244; Footnote 270, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 50, p. 467.

¹⁷¹ A.I., in *Pravda*, 23 July 1919, p. 1.

¹⁷² A.I. in *Pravda*, 23 July 1919, p. 1.

¹⁷³ A.I. in *Pravda*, 23 July 1919, p. 1.

¹⁷⁴ A.I., ‘Bednost’, da bednost’, da nesovershenstvo nashei zhizni’, in *Pravda*, 24 July 1919, p. 1; A.I., ‘Rabotnitsa i sotsial’noe vospitanie’, in *Pravda*, 6 June 1920, p. 2.

¹⁷⁵ A.I., ‘Nedelia rebenka’, in *Pravda*, 21 November 1920, p. 4; A.I., ‘Kursy vospitatel’nits dlia rabotnits’, in *Pravda*, 15 May 1920, p. 2.

¹⁷⁶ I have seen only one photograph of Anna appearing in public at a state occasion, and that was at Lenin’s funeral.

¹⁷⁷ Letter, M.A. Mustova to Marx-Engels Institute, 20 August 1956, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 20, l. 1.

In terms of the achievements of the DPC, Anna quoted various sets of figures in articles in *Pravda*. In one article, written in November 1920, Anna asserted that by January 1919, the DPC had opened 1,279 children's homes in Russia, housing 75,574 children, and that by July 1920, these numbers had risen to 3,140 and 210,405 respectively.¹⁷⁸ She announced in a later article that in July 1918, there were 50,000 places for children in homes, and by January 1920, this had increased to 150,000 places.¹⁷⁹ It is difficult to ascertain the accuracy of these figures.¹⁸⁰ Goldman quotes figures, which suggest that higher numbers of children were in homes: 125,000 in 1919 and 400,000 in 1920.¹⁸¹

The work of the DPC was disrupted in 1920, when it was proposed that the DPC be transferred from the Commissariat of Social Welfare (Narkomsobes), to the Commissariat of Enlightenment (Narkompros). This was a common aspect of the early days of Soviet government; as Anna described, there were many power struggles between departments as each tried to take on "the widest sphere of work, unable to divide, to share".¹⁸² Anna and her colleagues opposed the transfer of the DPC to Narkompros, arguing that Narkompros had "enough tasks, with the teaching of all youngsters,...from kindergarten [through] to university, and with the training of teaching personnel for all these institutions" without taking on the DPC.¹⁸³ Despite these objections, Sovnarkom decreed that the transfer would go ahead.

Anna wrote later that besides her general objections, she had faced a personal dilemma whether or not to move with the DPC from Narkomsobes to Narkompros. She had had, as she put it, "a difference of opinion" with Narkompros.¹⁸⁴ A Narkompros worker was appointed as Anna's deputy, without prior consultation with her.¹⁸⁵ Deeply unhappy about the appointment, Anna

¹⁷⁸ A.I., 'Okhrana detstva v Sovetskoï Rossii i uchastie v nei rabotnits', in *Pravda*, 7 November 1920, p. 5.

¹⁷⁹ A.I., in *Pravda*, 6 June 1920, p. 2.

¹⁸⁰ Official statistics on *besprizorniki* and children in the care of the state were often "incomplete [and] inaccurate" (Footnote 17, Goldman, p. 65).

¹⁸¹ Goldman, p. 65.

¹⁸² A.I., in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1929, No. 11, p. 88.

¹⁸³ A.I., in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1929, No. 11, p. 87.

¹⁸⁴ A.I., in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1929, No. 11, p. 90.

¹⁸⁵ A.I., in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1929, No. 11, p. 90.

turned to Vladimir, who at first advised her try to work with her new deputy and then supported her demand for the person to be removed.¹⁸⁶

Drabkina also suggests that Anna may have caused friction between herself and Nadezhda, who worked at Narkompros, because of her views on pedagogical literature.¹⁸⁷ While Nadezhda increasingly pushed for centralised and ideological control over education and those entrusted to teaching children, Anna maintained in at least one article that trained experts could not replace those “priceless” individuals who were naturally predisposed towards, and had practical experience in, looking after children.¹⁸⁸ She also believed in the value of people’s reminiscences about their childhoods as sources of information about how children learn. From these she believed pedagogues and psychologists could learn far more about how to teach children than from “long theoretical discussions”.¹⁸⁹

Drabkina seems to be over-stating the case for a disagreement between Anna and Nadezhda somewhat, since in other writing, Anna made a strong case for children to be raised by working women trained as children’s home governesses, both because the children of working mothers needed to be looked after properly while their mothers were at work, but also because every child would be “a citizen and builder [of society] in the future and must be suitably raised for that”.¹⁹⁰ The two arguments can be reconciled: Anna believed that a socialist upbringing by specialists was the only way to raise children, but felt that the training for such specialists had to be led by those who had experience of raising children. Indeed, this blend of the theoretical and pragmatic is consistent with Anna’s approach to a variety of issues, both before and after the Revolution.

I have seen no evidence of any dispute between Anna and Nadezhda over this issue. Perhaps the fact that Anna left the DPC soon after its transfer prevented their disagreement from becoming more than a difference of opinions. Certainly it was not this that caused Anna to leave. Rather it was a series of events that culminated in Anna being officially reprimanded by the Board of Narkompros and by the Orgburo of the Party for indiscipline and being

¹⁸⁶ A.I., in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1929, No. 11, p. 90.

¹⁸⁷ Drabkina, p. 122.

¹⁸⁸ McNeal, pp. 194-195; A.I., quoted in Drabkina, pp. 121-122. Unfortunately, Drabkina gives no reference for this article and I have not been able to locate it.

¹⁸⁹ A.I., quoted in Drabkina, p. 122.

threatened with expulsion from the Party if she was ever deemed to breach Party discipline again.¹⁹¹

The reason for Anna's reprimand was the fact that she had taken over the fourth floor of her department's building, the former Nikolai Institute, which had been earmarked by E.A. Litkens for Glavpolitprosvet (the Adult Education section or the Main Committee of Narkompros, led by Krupskaja).¹⁹² Anna and her department had great plans for their building, which was to be a model institution for children's homes and staff training centres across Russia.¹⁹³ The fourth floor of the Institute was to be home to the Labour School (*Trudovaia shkola*) from the Ekaterinskii Institute.¹⁹⁴ Litkens dismissed Anna's protests about the decision and ignored Nadezhda's objections to being moved to this location.¹⁹⁵ Indeed, Anna in fact telephoned Nadezhda directly to discuss the matter and ensure her support.¹⁹⁶ She then took matters into her own hands, and relying on the fact that the original Narkompros decree assigning her the whole building had not been revoked, moved the Labour School and its 200 children and staff into the fourth floor.¹⁹⁷ Anna was immediately issued a rebuke from the Board of Narkompros and the Orgburo of the Party, Litkens and Lunacharskii voted to prevent her giving a report of the DPC's work to the forthcoming Party conference, and the Orgburo threatened the DPC with disbandment.¹⁹⁸

In her written protest Anna argued that she had not breached Party discipline, pointing out that she had been a member of the Party "since its founding" and was "accustomed to discipline".¹⁹⁹ She accused the Orgburo of having no evidence of her ever having failed to fulfil a directive from the Board of Narkompros or from the Sector of Social Upbringing (*Sotsial'noe*

¹⁹⁰ A.I., in *Pravda*, 6 June 1920, p. 2; A.I., in *Pravda*, 7 November 1920, p. 5.

¹⁹¹ 'V organizatsionnoe Biuro TsK Partii: Protest A.I. Elizarovoi po povodu obvineniia ee Kollegiei Narkomprosa', in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 8, l. 3.

¹⁹² E.A. Litkens was a party official who had been assigned to Narkompros to improve its administration (McNeal, p. 196).

¹⁹³ 'Protest A.I. Elizarovoi', in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 8, l. 2.

¹⁹⁴ 'Protest A.I. Elizarovoi', in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 8, l. 1.

¹⁹⁵ 'Protest A.I. Elizarovoi', in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 8, l. 2.

¹⁹⁶ 'Protest A.I. Elizarovoi', in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 8, l. 2.

¹⁹⁷ 'Protest A.I. Elizarovoi', in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 8, l. 2. In fact Lunacharskii had fought long and hard to ensure that Sovnarkom assigned the building to the DPC and not to the VTsSPS. The decree confirming this was issued on 20 November 1920.

¹⁹⁸ 'Protest A.I. Elizarovoi', in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 8, l. 2-3.

¹⁹⁹ 'Protest A.I. Elizarovoi', in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 8, l. 1.

vospitanie).²⁰⁰ In defence of the DPC she argued that disbanding a department because of the failing of one worker was unjustified and suggested that she should simply be transferred from the department.²⁰¹

Anna was clearly given no special treatment as Lenin's sister in this case and as far as I can tell she did not turn to Vladimir for help in this matter. Instead, Anna cited in her defence not her family connection but her long-standing Party membership. She openly criticised Litkens and Lunacharskii, accusing the latter in particular of his own breaches of discipline, and "demand[ed]" that the Orgburo both withdraw its reprimand and turn its attention to the failings of Narkompros.²⁰²

Unfortunately, it is not clear if Anna left the DPC of her own accord or if she was dismissed. However, leaving the DPC did not end Anna's interest in children's welfare. In 1925, she worked with Mariia to campaign for children's welfare, helping to run a *Pravda* appeal for *besprizorniki*. Anna wrote a supportive article in *Pravda*, in which she pledged to donate the royalties from her *Reminiscences of Il'ich* to the fund and appealed to K.E. Voroshilov, F.E. Dzerzhinskii, M.S. Ol'minskii, Dmitrii Il'ich, V.D. Bonch-Bruевич and D.A. Furmanov, amongst others, to give money as well.²⁰³

In 1929, Anna wrote that she had been vindicated in her view that too many departments were put under Narkompros' jurisdiction since "after a couple of years, many of the institutions transferred to Narkompros from various departments began to return to them again" and regretted that as a result of the transfers "the organisation of children's homes was to a large extent destroyed".²⁰⁴

Anna, like her sister, enjoyed a powerful position during the early years of the Soviet regime. Heading a government department, Anna was able to do work in which she had had a long interest, children's welfare. She also had a reliable ally in Lenin and the two co-operated to great effect in introducing measures to protect children. This period was not without its controversies though, with Anna involving herself in the power struggles between departments, facing

²⁰⁰ 'Protest A.I. Elizarovoi', in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 8, l. 3.

²⁰¹ 'Protest A.I. Elizarovoi', in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 8, l. 3.

²⁰² 'Protest A.I. Elizarovoi', in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 8, l. 3.

²⁰³ A.I., 'Na bor'bu s besprizornost'iu. Organizuem dom-koloniiu besprizornykh.', in *Pravda*, 9 December 1925, p. 4.

reprimands from Narkompros and the Orgburo, and expressing views that diverged from the government's line. But then Anna had always tended to follow her own viewpoint, even if it was different to that of the central authority. Despite the controversy surrounding Anna's last months at the DPC, Anna was able to find herself a new post within the government.

A NEW HISTORY

In April 1921 Anna accepted M.S. Ol'minskii's invitation to work at the History of the Party Department (Istpart), which had been founded in 1920.²⁰⁵ This is another example of the way informal recruitment of colleagues to departments remained an accepted part of government operations years after the Revolution. Anna and Ol'minskii were old friends and Bolshevik comrades from the underground years: indeed, Gora wrote that during the underground years Mikhail Stepanovich was Anna's "closest acquaintance", adding that "until [her] last days she was very, very friendly with him".²⁰⁶ For Anna, who was already fifty-seven and suffering from regular bouts of illness, working at Istpart represented a less stressful way to contribute to the new government's work. For example, Anna had no qualms about extending her rest trips while she was employed by Istpart even if they would "scold" her for it.²⁰⁷ Drabkina explains Anna's involvement in Istpart in a slightly different way. She wrote:

The Party called to the creation of its history all those who were gifted to work in this field. Naturally, Anna Il'inichna was to be found among the workers of Istpart and was a member of the editorial board of its journal *Proletarskaia Revoliutsiia*.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁴ A.I., in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1929, No. 11, p. 87.

²⁰⁵ Savitskaia, in *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, 1987, No. 8, p. 99.

²⁰⁶ 'Vospominanii Lozgacheva-Elizarova', in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 17, l. 10-11.

²⁰⁷ Letter, A.I. to M.I., 21 June 1923, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 131, l. 45.

²⁰⁸ Drabkina, p. 127.

Anna may have written reminiscences about the pre-revolutionary era by 1921, but she had no formal training as a historian, as she freely admitted.²⁰⁹ However, Istpart was not to be staffed with historians, but rather with Party members who could be relied on to write suitably ideological histories of the revolutionary movement. The work of Istpart was to be far more than simply recording the facts of the history of the Revolution. Savitskaia in her article on Istpart work highlights that the department's aim was to "create" (*tvorit'*) the history of the Party and to solve "many of the problems of historico-party study".²¹⁰ Istpart aimed to craft the Party's history into a form that was consistent with Bolshevik ideology, and to give the Bolsheviks' rise to power an inevitability and a legitimacy, now that they were leading the Soviet Union.²¹¹

Anna often expressed her desire to write the truth, but at the same time, as a capable propagandist, she was able to help 'create' the history of the Party.²¹² The various writing by Anna for Istpart and *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, Istpart's official journal which Anna helped edit, shows her to be capable of both toeing the official Party history line and of writing much more honest accounts of the pre-revolutionary time. Indeed, the fact that she produced acceptable histories perhaps freed her to pursue her own projects unhindered.

Amongst Anna's 'correct' work was her unfavourable critique of Bukharin's *Economics of the Transition Period*, published in 1921, as well as her popular *Short Notes on Il'ich*.²¹³ These publications, like many Istpart texts, were used in broader political campaigns. Anna's review of Bukharin's work was part of an attempt by Istpart, led by Ol'minskii and most probably with Lenin's support, to discredit the theorist and his ideas about how the country would move from capitalism to socialism.²¹⁴ Using the experience of the early impact of the NEP as evidence, Anna disagreed with Bukharin's assertion that during the transition period such concepts as "cost, money [and] wages" and

²⁰⁹ 'Vospominaniia A.I. Ul'ianovoi (Elizarovoi)', in *Pravda*, 2 October 1918, p. 3; A.I., 'Retrospektivnii vzgliad na Istpart i na zhurnal "Proletarskaia revoliutsiia"', in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1930, No. 5 (100), p. 156.

²¹⁰ Savitskaia, in *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, 1987, No. 8, p. 99.

²¹¹ N.S. Komarov, 'Sozdanie i deiatel'nost' Istparta, 1920-1928 gg.', in *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, No. 5, 1958, p. 160.

²¹² This is clear, particularly where biographies of Vladimir were concerned (see Chapter 7).

²¹³ Savitskaia, in *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, 1987, No. 8, p. 102.

²¹⁴ Savitskaia, in *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, 1987, No. 8, p. 102; E.B. Genkina, 'V.I. Lenin i perekhod k novoi ekonomicheskoi politike', in *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, 1964, No. 5, p. 24.

political-economy would be useless, and denied that force would be the main method needed for building communism.²¹⁵ Anna also argued that the study of Marx, especially *Das Kapital*, remained as important as ever.²¹⁶ Anna's *Short Notes on Il'ich* would later be used to undermine Nadezhda's *Reminiscences of Lenin* (see Chapter Six).

Anna also wrote a six point guideline, which, she thought, represented best practice in writing biographies of Lenin.²¹⁷ Although she insisted that every detail of his life must be correct, Anna side-stepped the issue of how Lenin's political work was to be interpreted.²¹⁸ Anna recommended that Lenin's various speeches and writings should be recorded, giving a summary of their content and quotations from the most important parts. However, she gave biographers licence to choose for themselves the most important and representative quotations from Lenin's works.²¹⁹ These quotations would increasingly be chosen to match the historical narrative the Party was propagating at the time.

Besides this, Anna agreed to edit a series of children's books about the 'Old Bolsheviks'.²²⁰ There were seventy books in the series, and many were highly successful, running to three or four editions.²²¹ This was a typical Istpart series, since during the 1920s the split of 1903 became increasingly important to the Party's history. Mensheviks had been attacked as enemies of the state since 1918, so it was crucial to define who had been a loyal Bolshevik (and therefore loyal to Lenin) since 1903, and who had not, even though such divisions had been ill-defined, fluid and changeable at the time (especially to Anna, as discussed in earlier chapters).²²² That Anna's contribution to Istpart was

²¹⁵ Savitskaia, in *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, 1987, No. 8, p102; Stephen F. Coen, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution: A Political Biography, 1888-1938*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 93-94.

²¹⁶ Savitskaia, in *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, 1987, No. 8, p102

²¹⁷ Savitskaia, in *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, 1987, No. 8, pp. 110-111.

²¹⁸ Savitskaia, in *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, 1987, No. 8, pp. 110-111.

²¹⁹ Savitskaia, in *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, 1987, No. 8, pp. 110-111.

²²⁰ P. Posvianskii, 'Anna Il'inichna Ul'ianova-Elizarova (Vospominaniia byvshego komsomol'tsa), in *Slavnie bol'shevichki*, ed. by V. Ignat'eva, (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1958), pp. 19-22.

²²¹ Posvianskii, in *Slavnie bol'shevichki*, pp. 19-22.

²²² Getzler, p. 180; Trotsky, *The Stalin School of Falsification*, trans. by John G. Wright, introduced by George Saunders, 3rd edn., (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1979), p. xxxiii.

recognised in 1930 in the celebratory 100th edition of *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, suggested her continued acceptability to the regime and to Ispart.²²³

However, Anna also wrote histories and compiled collections that did not contribute to the Ispart-defined history of the Party. This was possible for numerous reasons, besides the fact that she did follow the official line on occasion. The time period Anna worked for Ispart, 1921-1926, was an important factor. This was a period during which there was some ideological manipulation of the past, but still a great deal of openness about it too.²²⁴ At that time, for example, Martov was allowed to contribute information to the footnotes of the first collection of Lenin's works.²²⁵ Anna's own series on 'Old Bolsheviks' was still acceptable. After Anna left Ispart in 1926, the Party's history "underwent reconstruction" twice.²²⁶ From 1926, there was a drive to "demote" certain members of the old guard Bolsheviks from the Party's history, that is those of the left deviation, and from 1929, after Stalin had defeated the rightists as well, the whole concept of 'Old Bolsheviks' became unacceptable.²²⁷

Anna's collection about Aleksandr, *Delo 1 marta*, which was published in 1927 was slightly affected by this change in approach to Party history. Anna could only hint at the relationship between Aleksandr's political ideology and Lenin's, since by 1927, Lenin's initial steps into revolutionary activity were defined by Mariia's assertion that Vladimir had rejected Aleksandr's tactics and ideas in favour of a new type of revolutionary struggle and by the idea that Lenin began his revolutionary struggle by defeating narodism. Yet, because Aleksandr's life was not of key concern to Ispart, Anna was also able to give a more open account of his political views and the real ideological situation then. The collection made clear that there was a transition period between the collapse of the People's Will and the emergence of social democracy in which the boundaries between the two movements were blurred. Kudelli too recognised

²²³ M. Savel'ev, 'Ob izuchenii istorii partii (k vypusku sotogo nomera "Proletarskaia revoliutsiia")', in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1930, No. 5, p. 7.

²²⁴ Lenin's *Materialism and Empiriocriticism* was republished in order to undermine Aleksandr Bogdanov and the Proletkult (James D. White, *Lenin: The Practice and Theory of Revolution*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), p. 184).

²²⁵ See, for example, footnote 6, in N. Lenin (V. Ul'ianov), *Sobranie sochinenii, Tom 1, Pervie shagi rabochego s.-d. dvizheniia, 1893-1900 g.g.*, ed. by L.B. Kamenev, (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo, 1920), p. 644.

²²⁶ Trotsky, *Stalin School*, p. xxxiv.

²²⁷ Trotsky, *Stalin School*, pp. xxxiii-xxxiv.

and pointed out the difference between Anna's writing about Aleksandr, which was a "serious contribution to historical-revolutionary literature" and her "popular" work on Lenin.²²⁸

In the early days of Istpart though, Lenin's support also gave Anna more scope for her writing. He backed two of Anna's first projects at Istpart: editing collections of reminiscences of A.P. Skliarenko and of N.E. Fedoseev.²²⁹ That these topics were not part of the main Party history project might have meant Anna was relatively free to pursue them, but her connection to Lenin would have ensured this. Anna edited a collection of reminiscences about A.P. Skliarenko, who was one of Vladimir's first converts to his view of Marxism.²³⁰ Although Skliarenko was not a major figure in the Revolution, his life and meetings with Lenin are of interest to historians for they give an insight into Vladimir's early years as a revolutionary and the formation of the first Marxist circle in Samara.²³¹

Fedoseev was one of the first Marxists in Russia, whom Vladimir respected, but did not always agree with.²³² Anna edited the collection of reminiscences about N.E. Fedoseev, contributed her own article and ensured that Lenin himself contributed to this collection.²³³ This in itself makes the book almost unique, for Vladimir rarely wrote reminiscences. Anna proof-read his article, chastising him at one point for being "too vague".²³⁴ Unusually, Lenin had "no objections" to the changes.²³⁵ Anna's own article gave a good insight into the early workings of the social-democrats.²³⁶

Anna also used her connection with Vladimir to ensure that Istpart was transferred from the jurisdiction of Narkompros to that of the Central Committee, despite the objections of others, such as Ol'minskii.²³⁷ Anna wrote later that she

²²⁸ Kudelli, in *Krasnaia letopis'*, No. 1, 1936, p. 205.

²²⁹ *Starii tovarishch Aleksei Pavlovich Skliarenko (1870-1916 gg.)*, ed. by A.I., (Moscow: Gosizdat, 1922) and *Fedoseev Nikolai Evgrafovich. Odin iz pionirov revoliutsionnogo marksizma v Rossi (Sbornik vospominanii)*, ed. by A.I., (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo, 1923).

²³⁰ V. Nevskii, *Ocherki po istorii Rossiiskoi Kommunisticheskoi Partii*, 2nd edn., (Leningrad: Rabochee izdatel'stvo "Priboi", 1925), p. 314.

²³¹ Savitskaia, *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, 1987, No. 8, p. 100.

²³² A.I., in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1930, No. 5, p. 156; Savitskaia, in *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, 1987, No. 8, p. 100.

²³³ Letter, A.I. to V.I., 8 December 1922, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 43, l. 2.

²³⁴ Letter, A.I. to V.I., 8 December 1922, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 43, l. 2.

²³⁵ Letter, A.I. to V.I., 8 December 1922, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 43, l. 2.

²³⁶ A.I., in *Fedoseev, Nikolai Evgrafovich*, p. 20.

²³⁷ M.S. Ol'minskii, 'Vozniknovenie istparta i zhurnala "Proletarskaia Revoliutsiia"', in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1930, No. 5, p. 155.

had found it “strange” that Istpart was under Narkompros’ authority, since it clearly had no time to give proper leadership to the department.²³⁸ It was also totally unacceptable to Anna that the department’s accommodation was limited to one room.²³⁹ So she “led the agitation” for the transfer of Istpart from Narkompros to the Central Committee.²⁴⁰

Ol’minskii opposed this, arguing that the poor working conditions of Istpart colleagues ensured that people only entered this type of work from “principled considerations” and as a result Istpart was protected from “careerists”.²⁴¹ Practically-minded as ever, Anna argued that this was too “idealistic” and countered that it was entirely due to the poor working conditions that Istpart was not attracting the type of “qualified workers” they needed to work there.²⁴² Anna then discovered the real, or certainly the main reason, why Ol’minskii and others were against the transfer: Lenin had spoken out against it.²⁴³

On hearing this, Anna went to Vladimir to discuss the matter. Although Vladimir continued to believe that Istpart should not move because he did not want the Central Committee to “swell with various institutions”, he agreed to let Anna try to persuade the Orgburo to transfer the department, since as a member of Istpart, the situation was “clearer” to her.²⁴⁴ Anna duly passed on Vladimir’s comments to her colleagues and this swung the Istpart workers in favour of a transfer, which was quickly carried out.²⁴⁵

After Lenin’s death, Anna was very protective of her work, and did her utmost to prevent interference from editors. As a result she was still able, to some extent, to deviate from the historical line defined by Istpart. A sense of her independence from the organisation is clear in the following incident. When

²³⁸ A.I., in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1930, No. 5, p. 157.

²³⁹ A.I., in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1930, No. 5, p. 156.

²⁴⁰ A.I., in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1930, No. 5, p. 157.

²⁴¹ A.I., in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1930, No. 5, pp. 157-158.

²⁴² A.I., in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1930, No. 5, p. 158.

²⁴³ A.I., in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1930, No. 5, p. 158.

²⁴⁴ A.I., in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1930, No. 5, p. 158.

²⁴⁵ In the article, Anna adds that when Ol’minskii went to see Stalin on the matter of the transfer, he had apparently exclaimed: “But of course Istpart must be under the CC, where else would it be?” (A.I., in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1930, No. 5, p. 158). Ol’minskii does not mention this in his description of the transfer in the same journal, but he does accuse Kamenev of blocking the union between Istpart and the Lenin Institute (Ol’minskii, in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1930, No. 5, p. 155). These details show clearly the way in which Istpart articles highlighted or perhaps even added certain events to promote or attack certain political figures of the time.

Anna complained about how her article on the founding of Istpart for *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia* had been edited she asserted her long career in journalism in her defence. She wrote:

If some youth, considering herself an executive' editor, doesn't understand that I was editing when she was knee-high to a grasshopper, then I suggest that an elder must instil this in her before giving her 'responsibility'. I demand that my article must go in as it was handed over by me, *without a single correction or not at all*. In the future I will refuse to hand over any kind of material to such an 'editor'.²⁴⁶

Although Anna opted for a quieter life in her transfer to Istpart, her work remained politically charged, of use in the political campaigns of the day but also in the early construction of what would become the official history of the Bolshevik Party and the Soviet Union, as well as the official biography of Lenin. Yet, as ever, Anna did not adhere to the Party line strictly. Indeed she worked at Istpart at a time when there was still some freedom to pursue historical, rather than 'historico-Party', research, and the material she produced is of great value today. While Lenin was still alive, brother and sister continued to enjoy a good working relationship in which Anna supported Vladimir's campaign against Bukharin and Lenin supported Anna in her efforts to increase the attention paid by the Party to Istpart's work. Although Anna's career at Istpart was not long lasting, her belief in the importance and relevance of historical research in Soviet society remained.

KREMLIN LIFE

The early years of the Soviet regime were ones of the closest political co-operation between Anna, Mariia and Vladimir. Holding high-level government posts and being able to turn to Lenin the leader on any matter was certainly a privileged and powerful position to be in, and Anna and Mariia regularly used it

²⁴⁶ Letter, A.I. to Maksim Blek, 7 June 1930, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 254, l. 1. Anna's emphasis.

to further their work and to help others. But what of their personal lives? One of the key aims of this thesis is to gain an understanding of the workings of the Ul'ianov family, and in this period it is crucial to investigate how family life was affected by the Revolution. The family's living standards, domestic arrangements and personal relationships are all of interest here. For example, it would have been relatively easy for the 'First Family' of the Soviet Union to live a life of luxury, had they so wished, after 1917. And, with the changes to the family law and attempts to transform women's position in society, Anna and Mariia might have made efforts to adopt the new, Bolshevik model of domestic life. Above all it is important to assess the impact which being related to Lenin had on the sisters' daily lives.

Over and above their own high-level government posts, which guaranteed a certain living standard, Anna and Mariia's link to Vladimir brought privileges and security with it. Mariia lived in a Kremlin flat with her brother and Nadezhda, while Anna's flat on Manezhnii Prospect was, in her own words, "a treasure".²⁴⁷ The Ul'ianovs also still had the trappings of their relatively well-off existence before the Revolution. However, family life was not as luxurious as the above might suggest.

Firstly, no one was exempt from the hardships of the civil war years, and Anna and Mariia suffered the fuel, food and other shortages like everyone else.²⁴⁸ Secondly, the Ul'ianov family did not hoard their wealth nor maintain a luxurious lifestyle. Mariia's Kremlin flat had originally been a servant's quarters and still had no heating in the second winter after the Revolution.²⁴⁹ In terms of salaries, Vladimir was determined that government officials would keep their wages on a par with the wages of skilled workers.²⁵⁰ Anna donated the family silver to the famine appeal of 1921 and pledged the royalties from her short biography of Vladimir to the appeal to help *besprizorniki*.²⁵¹ S.B. Brichkina, a

²⁴⁷ Tony Cliff, *Revolution Besieged: Lenin, 1917-1923*, (London: Bookmarks, 1987), p. 91; Letter, A.I. to M.I., 6 July 1927, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 132, l. 7.

²⁴⁸ Boiarskaia, in *Sekretar' "Pravdy"*, p.159.

²⁴⁹ Cliff, *Revolution Besieged*, p. 91.

²⁵⁰ Cliff, *Revolution Besieged*, p. 91.

²⁵¹ Vospominaniia Lozgacheva-Elizarova, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 17, l. 32; Kossov and Verkhovtsev, in *Sekretar' "Pravdy"*, p. 242; Fischer, p. 554.

colleague of the Ul'ianovs, remembered that "often the Ul'ianov family had none of the basic, essential food-stuffs for the table".²⁵²

On certain occasions though, the Ul'ianovs used their position for their own gain. Trotsky recorded one incident when Mariia benefited from her connection with Vladimir. Ulam summarises the incident as follows:

On April 9, 1921, Lenin wrote to the Deputy Commissar of War informing him that Maria, accompanied by Bukharin and his wife and some other friends, was travelling to the Crimea in a special railway carriage, and asked that the car be attached to a military train so it would be sure to get there faster.²⁵³

Ulam calls this a "far from world-shaking item", but it was not the only one. Anna was always able to go to rest homes, where she was well cared for.²⁵⁴ The Ul'ianovs also seem to have looked after friends and family. For example, Mariia recalls in one of her memoirs a man called A.I. Eramasov, who was a friend of Mark Elizarov and who had often visited the Ul'ianovs in Samara. He was a member of the Party after the Revolution, but due to illness had to leave, and could not find work. Though he did not approach Mariia, she wrote: "In the end we found him ourselves and managed to get a pension for him."²⁵⁵ Of course, even though the privileges the Ul'ianovs enjoyed in the early years of the regime were minor in comparison to the luxury enjoyed by Soviet officials in later years, they were still greater than most of the population could expect. They were enough, for example, to attract bandits: Vladimir and Mariia were held at gunpoint by a gang in 1919.²⁵⁶

In terms of the running of the household, little changed, except perhaps that each woman had less time than before for chores due to her government post. As soon as possible Mariia and Nadezhda hired a housekeeper, but they

²⁵² S.B. Brichkina, 'Maloe o velikom', in *Vospominaniia o V.I. Lenine*, Volume 3, p. 406; Clara Zetkin, 'My Recollections of Lenin', in *They Knew Lenin*, ed. by S.F. Bezveselnii and D.Y. Grinberg, trans. by David Myshne, (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1968), p. 12.

²⁵³ Adam B. Ulam, *The Bolsheviks: The Intellectual and Political History of the Triumph of Communism in Russia*, (London: Collier-Macmillan Co., 1965), p. 526.

²⁵⁴ Ulam, *The Bolsheviks*, p. 526; Letter, A.I. to M.I., 9 July 1927, f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 132, l. 102.

²⁵⁵ M.I., 'Reminiscences of Lenin', in *Reminiscences of Lenin*, pp. 106-107.

²⁵⁶ M.I., 'O napadenii na V.I. Lenina banditov (Otryvki iz vospominanii)', in *Pravda*, 21 January 1930, p. 4.

often still took responsibility for bringing Vladimir his lunch.²⁵⁷ Sometimes even Anna took a turn at this.²⁵⁸ Service claims that housekeeping caused such disagreement between Mariia and Nadezhda even when the two women were at work, that Nadezhda gave up her initial role as member of the Central Committee Secretariat to devote herself to educational and Party work in the Vyborg area.²⁵⁹ The two women did have very different approaches to running the household. Mariia was a good cook, while Nadezhda had sometimes relied on help from her mother and advice from her sisters-in-law about recipes.²⁶⁰ Nadezhda admitted in her memoirs: “I was not much of a housekeeper; Il’ich was of a different mind, but people who were accustomed to seeing a house run properly were extremely critical of my facile approach.”²⁶¹ These ‘people’ could have included Mariia. In later years, Mariia put much of Vladimir’s ill health down to the poor diet he had abroad.²⁶² This may well have been a swipe at Nadezhda (though it would also seem to be entirely natural to try to find some long term cause of Vladimir’s illness).

However, these anecdotes are less significant in themselves than what they imply. They suggest that women revolutionaries were still expected (by women, as well as men) to be skilled in domestic work, even though Bolshevik policy, particularly in the 1920s, aimed to emancipate women from the kitchen. That historians repeat these anecdotes, often at the expense of details of the women’s political careers, shows that they believe this information is important in judging a woman’s historical significance. In the case of Nadezhda’s transfer to the Vyborg district, there were two far more important factors in determining her move. Firstly, she felt she had been demoted when she joined the Secretariat, from Lenin’s right-hand woman, to just one of a larger department with few official duties of her own.²⁶³ Secondly, she was elected to the Vyborg district

²⁵⁷ Brichkina, *Vospominaniia o V.I. Lenine*, Volume 3, p406; Krupskaia, p. 412-413.

²⁵⁸ Kudelli, in *Krasnaia letopis’*, No. 1, 1936, p. 204.

²⁵⁹ Service, p. 276.

²⁶⁰ See, for example, N.K., *Reminiscences of Lenin*, p. 36; Letter, N.K. to M.A. and A.I., 24 February 1913, and letter, N.K. to M.I., 26 July 1900, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 55, p. 444 and pp. 417-418.

²⁶¹ N.K., *Reminiscences of Lenin*, p. 192.

²⁶² M. I., ‘O Vladimire Il’iche’, in *M.I.: O V. I. Lenine*, p70

²⁶³ N.K., *Reminiscences of Lenin*, p. 351.

council and was delighted, after so many years abroad, to be able to gain some experience as a local activist first-hand.²⁶⁴

In fact, despite the depiction of an antagonistic relationship between Mariia and Nadezhda, their family life with Vladimir seems to have continued as before. Although they had less time together due to their own busy schedules, whenever possible they would take drives into the countryside together to relax and one year the three spent Christmas together in Finland.²⁶⁵ Anna also remained in close contact with her brother and sister, talking to Vladimir every day on the telephone and popping in to the *Pravda* offices to see Mariia.²⁶⁶

Anna was widowed in 1919, but her domestic responsibilities increased. She continued to ‘mother’ her family, helping to look after Dmitrii’s five year old son, Viktor, and Mark’s teenage great-niece, Pushkova, as well as continuing to care for Gora.²⁶⁷ Pushkova remembered a strict household in which Anna tried to train her wards in cultured and polite behaviour.²⁶⁸ Anna’s efforts were not immediately successful, and privately she used to call Pushkova the “*enfant terrible*”.²⁶⁹ Indeed, it seems that Anna was irritated by Pushkova’s provincial ways in the same way as she had been exasperated by her husband’s blunt manner.²⁷⁰ Nonetheless, Anna “pulled strings” so that her difficult ward received a good job in Moscow, at a time, as Pushkova admits, when many were unemployed.²⁷¹

In 1922, as a result of Lenin’s illness, the Ul’ianov family was granted its greatest luxury: use of the country estate of Gorki. The next two years were to be ones of great distress to the whole Ul’ianov family and heralded the end of the secure and stable political careers of Anna and Mariia. Over a thirty year period the Ul’ianov family had supported one another through family tragedy, underground revolutionary struggle and the building of the Soviet regime. The family network had been influential in Lenin’s rise to power as the leader of the Bolsheviks and had continued to be a powerful political alliance within the

²⁶⁴ N.K., *Reminiscences of Lenin*, p. 360.

²⁶⁵ Possony, p. 305; N.K., *Reminiscences of Lenin*, p. 424.

²⁶⁶ Rabinovich, in *Sekretar’ “Pravdy”*, p279; ‘Vospominaniia Pushkovoi’, in f.13, o. 1, ed. khr. 457, l. 2.

²⁶⁷ See, for example, letter, A.I. to M.I., 14 June 1923, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 131, l. 53.

²⁶⁸ ‘Vospominaniia Pushkovoi’, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 457, l. 1.

²⁶⁹ ‘Vospominaniia Pushkovoi’, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 457, l. 1.

²⁷⁰ ‘Vospominaniia Pushkovoi’, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 457, l. 1.

²⁷¹ ‘Vospominaniia Pushkovoi’, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 457, l. 1.

government after 1917. Anna and Mariia had also made their own significant contributions to the transforming of Russian society. Anna had helped to establish a system for caring for homeless and orphaned children, which in the face of catastrophic social upheaval helped thousands of youngsters to find respite and care, while Mariia had pioneered the Rabkor movement, which gave the increasingly literate worker and peasant population a means of expression. Although they had not relied on Vladimir to get their positions as head of the DPC and executive secretary of *Pravda*, Anna and Mariia's link to Lenin had enabled them to exploit the system for political purposes and to help individuals who turned to them. Lenin's illness, incapacitation and finally his death meant that the Ul'ianov family was shaken by the loss of yet another member and that the support network was weakened politically. In the coming years of political turmoil, Anna and Mariia would now, more than ever, have to negotiate their paths in the political arena independently.

CHAPTER SIX

THE NEW ORDER

Lenin's illness shook the Ul'ianov family. The new regime had not been without problems or dangers, but the first years after the Revolution had been relative stable for the Ul'ianovs. On a personal level the family had been reunited, there was no more threat of arrest and exile and the Ul'ianovs' position guaranteed a comfortable, if not privileged lifestyle. Anna and Mariia both held jobs that fulfilled their ambitions of working towards the creation of a socialist state and both women were accustomed to turning to the leader of the Soviet Union to further their work and to resolve problems. Vladimir's illness changed everything. It upset the relationships within the Ul'ianov family, but more worryingly heralded a new instability within the Bolshevik government as factions formed to take advantage of the shifts and changes in the distribution of power.

Of the two sisters, it was Mariia who most felt the impact of Vladimir's collapse. It was she who cared for him during his illness and she who dealt with the political consequences of Vladimir's incapacitation and death. Anna regularly visited Vladimir at Gorki, yet she was not involved in nursing her brother on a daily basis and while Stalin's rise to power after Vladimir's death affected Anna's career, it did not threaten it.¹ By 1922 Anna was old, exhausted and often ill herself, and although she continued to work at Istpart, she no longer had a prominent political role and therefore was not drawn into the power struggles of the later 1920s.

McNeal suggests that Anna was deliberately kept away from Gorki, the country estate where Vladimir spent his last days, referring to a letter in which Nadezhda wrote to a friend: "Things aren't that bad with us [herself and Vladimir]...They have definitely called off the sister."² McNeal explains it as follows:

The terse comment [by Krupskaiia] on the 'sister' is interesting. It could not refer to Mariia, who was still with the household

¹ Letter, A.I. to Evgeniia Apollonovna Shukht, 29 August 1922, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 297, l. 1.

according to other witnesses. But sister Anna came to visit at about this time, and it seems likely that she wanted to stay on and help nurse her brother. Krupskaiia never did get along with Anna, and the wording of her comment suggests that there had been a short scuffle in the family, which ended when 'they' (the doctors) were persuaded probably by Krupskaiia, that Lenin's nerves could not stand Anna.³

Stites dismisses the above quotation, writing: "[McNeal] seems to forget that the word *sestra* means nurse as well as sister in Russian and gets himself into an unreal problem because of this."⁴ Letters to Anna from Mariia around this time do occasionally tell Anna not to hurry to Gorki, but the reason they give is that Anna needs to concentrate on looking after her own health and conserving her strength.⁵

Unlike Anna, Mariia was closely involved in caring for Vladimir throughout this time. Living in the Kremlin with Vladimir, Mariia and Nadezhda were well placed to observe Vladimir's declining health. It was they who first asked Stasova to "put through a resolution of the Central Committee by telephone ordering Lenin to take a vacation".⁶ Vladimir told a doctor in 1919 that Mariia always tried to make sure he rested.⁷ When Vladimir fell seriously ill in 1922, Mariia cut back her work at *Pravda* in order to help look after him at Gorki.

Biographies of Lenin tend to include references to Mariia during this period, even though she barely features in descriptions of the earlier years of Lenin's leadership. There are rarely any hints to the political relationship Mariia and Vladimir enjoyed while he was in good health and often the political aspects of Mariia's life while she cared for her brother are overlooked too. What is of interest to historians is Mariia's apparent rivalry with Nadezhda. It is a remarkable change in the portrayal of the relationships of the Ul'ianov family.

² Letter, N.K. to Varvara Armand, 13 September 1923, in McNeal, p. 229.

³ McNeal, p. 229.

⁴ Richard Stites, 'Kollontai, Inessa and Krupskaiia: A Review of Recent Literature', in *Canadian-American Slavic Studies*, Volume 9, No. 1, p. 91.

⁵ Letter, M.I. to A.I., 20 June 1923, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 225, l. 24.

⁶ Fischer, p. 321.

⁷ V. Rozanov, 'Vospominaniia o Vladimire Il'iche' in *Krasnaia nov'*, 1924, No. 6, p. 157.

During the underground, historians assert that it was Anna who was Nadezhda's rival and there is little suggestion that Mariia and Nadezhda had a poor relationship.⁸ Indeed, it is clear in their correspondence that Mariia had a very different relationship with Nadezhda than Anna; they genuinely seem to have had a friendship.⁹ While caring for Vladimir and after his death, however, the same historians tell us that the two were rivals.¹⁰

Service describes numerous arguments between the two women and interprets them in the following way:

Nadia and Mariia...were fighting for possession of Lenin. Each whispered in his ear about the shortcomings of the other. It would seem that he did not want to take sides openly and definitively. He had always used the interplay of emotions among his relatives to his advantage. The problem in mid-1922 was that he was no longer in a dominant position because of ill health. What he most needed was that Nadia and Mariia calm down and find a *modus vivendi*. In subsequent months they composed themselves; but they continued to take opposite approaches to his convalescence.¹¹

Certainly there are witnesses to Mariia and Nadia's disagreements.¹² This is hardly unusual behaviour when caring for an ailing loved one, yet most commentators do not take into account, as Beryl Williams does, the intense strain that this causes, both because of the distress of witnessing the loved one's decline, but also because of the disruption and isolation it creates in the carer's life.¹³ In August 1922, while Vladimir was recovering, slowly, from his first stroke, Mariia wrote to Anna apologising that her letters were so "boring"; she had nothing to write about because she had "little variety" in her life at Gorki.¹⁴ The two women were also under considerable pressure because no one, including

⁸ See, for example, McNeal, p. 69 and Service, p. 187.

⁹ See Chapter 2.

¹⁰ McNeal, p. 255 and Service, p. 276. Service puts the start of poor relations between Mariia and Nadezhda as occurring just after the Revolution, when Mariia made fun of Nadezhda's cooking (Service, p. 276. See Chapter 5.).

¹¹ Service, pp. 448-449.

¹² For example, Lenin's bodyguard, P. Pakaln left eye-witness accounts of life at Gorki (Service, p448).

¹³ Beryl Williams, *Lenin*, (Harlow, U.K.: Pearson Ed. Ltd., 2000), p. 196.

the doctors, could agree on how best to look after Vladimir and they themselves had different ideas about the most suitable way to care for him. While Nadezhda was happy to allow Vladimir some access to newspapers and to meet colleagues, Mariia wanted to keep her brother's access to political news and the number of visitors he received to a minimum.¹⁵

What is problematic with the portrayal of the two women's disputes is the interpretation that they were 'fighting for possession of Lenin', which is entirely influenced by the solar system myth. Perhaps the two were not fighting *over* Vladimir, but rather were simply fighting with each other. Either way, a personal dispute does not merit historical attention to the exclusion of all other parts of Mariia's life, nor does it make her any less of a significant political figure at the time. Indeed, the key problem with this focus on Mariia's relationship with Nadezhda, is that historians tend to overlook the political aspects of her life during this time. Amongst the reasons for Mariia and Nadezhda's strained relations may well have been the fact that they found themselves on opposite sides in political intrigues.

From 1922, politics were increasingly conducted around Vladimir rather than with him, and Stalin was emerging as the key figure directing and controlling the manoeuvring. During these years, Mariia's working relationship with her brother broke down, as she increasingly took Stalin's side over the best way to deal with issues relating to her brother's illness and leadership. Mariia supported the view that Vladimir should be kept out of politics as much as possible so as not to distress or exhaust him. Similarly Stalin was working to ensure that Lenin be as little involved in the politics of the time as possible and tried to have news of current affairs withheld from him.¹⁶ However, Vladimir was intensely frustrated by this sheltering and Nadezhda supported him in his insistence that he must be allowed to work. She read newspapers to him and told him about political goings on.¹⁷ Things came to a head when Stalin discovered that Nadezhda had been sharing information with Vladimir.¹⁸ He telephoned her

¹⁴ Letter, M.I. to A.I., 14 August 1922, in *M.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 332.

¹⁵ McNeal, p. 218; 'Vospominaniia Lozgacheva-Elizarova', in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 17, l. 37; Robert Payne, *The Life and Death of Lenin*, (London: W.H. Allen, 1964), p. 585; A.V. Bel'mas, 'Vospominaniia o V.I. Lenine', in *Istoricheskii arkhiv*, 1958, No. 2, p. 161.

¹⁶ M.I. 'Ob otnoshenii V.I. Lenina k I.V. Stalinu', undated, in *Izvestiia CC KPSS*, 1989, No. 12, p. 198.

¹⁷ M.I., in *Izvestiia CC KPSS*, 1989, No. 12, p. 198.

¹⁸ M.I., in *Izvestiia CC KPSS*, 1989, No. 12, p. 198.

and berated her for her actions.¹⁹ When Vladimir found out about what had happened he threatened to break off personal relations with Stalin and amended his last testimony to criticise the General Secretary for his rudeness.²⁰

Despite being aware of Nadezhda and Vladimir's distress at the incident, Mariia took Stalin's side. When, shortly after his row with Nadezhda, Stalin called Mariia to his office and asked her to pass on his love and apologies to Lenin, Mariia believed this to be a genuine attempt at reconciliation.²¹ And despite, what she described as Lenin's "sneers" at Stalin's message, Mariia "felt sorry" for Stalin.²²

Another occasion late in Lenin's life reveals again Mariia's obliviousness to the threat that Stalin might pose. During one of Lenin's relatively healthy periods, he insisted on being driven to Moscow. Once in his Kremlin office he searched for something, and when he could not find it suffered convulsions.²³ As Valentinov describes:

Mariia told the doctor about it when she arrived [home]...Krupskaia called the doctor afterward and said: 'V.I. is ill. He may have a somewhat distorted view of things...I don't want the rumour to get around that letters, manuscripts or documents have been stolen from him. A rumour of that sort can only cause great unpleasantness and create absolutely unnecessary talk and suspicion. Please forget everything that Mariia Il'inichna said to you. She joins me in this request and therefore there is no need to discuss this with her again.'²⁴

¹⁹ M.I., in *Izvestiia CC KPSS*, 1989, No. 12, p. 198.

²⁰ Letter, V.I. to I.V. Stalin, 5 March 1923, in *Izvestiia CC KPSS*, 1989, No. 12, p. 193.

²¹ Yuri Buranov, *Lenin's Will: Falsified and Forbidden*, (New York: Prometheus Books, 1994) p. 56.

²² M.I., in *Izvestiia CC KPSS*, 1989, No. 12, p. 198. Having passed on Stalin's message to Vladimir, Mariia asked her brother in a somewhat incongruous post-script: "But Volodia...Stalin is a clever man isn't he?", to which Lenin replied: "[Stalin] is not at all clever." (M.I., in *Izvestiia CC KPSS*, 1989, No. 12, p. 198). This line is very ambiguous. It seems unlikely that at this stage Mariia was trying to warn Lenin about the threat that Stalin posed. Perhaps she was trying to remind Lenin of a characteristic in Stalin that Lenin would respect and therefore relent and re-establish personal relations with him. Or perhaps she was seeking reassurance that Stalin would be a suitable successor to Lenin.

²³ Edvard Radzinsky, *Stalin*, trans. by H.T. Willetts, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1996), p. 201.

²⁴ N. Valentinov (Vol'ski), *Novaia ekonomicheskaiia politika i krizis partii posle smerti Lenina. Gody raboty v VSNKh vo vremia NEP. Vospominaniia.*, ed. by J. Bunyan and V. Butenko, introduction by Bertram Wolfe, (Stanford, California: Hoover Institution Press, 1971), p. 63.

It has been argued that Nadezhda had realised that Stalin had stolen a document from Lenin's office, in which Vladimir had written "unpleasant" things about him.²⁵ However, after her first clash with him over telling Vladimir about political matters, Nadezhda was now too afraid of Stalin to protest.²⁶ Radzinsky argues that Mariia was also familiar with the content of this document.²⁷ Perhaps, latterly, she was. However, at this stage, it is clear that Nadezhda was increasingly aware of the precariousness of her position, while Mariia had no such fears.

In fact, Mariia took an opposite view to Nadezhda and Vladimir on Stalin and actively supported him in the political arena during Lenin's illness and in the years afterwards. This began about a year before Vladimir's death over the issue of the papers he dictated from his sickbed. The first was an article on the Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate in which there was a brief attack on Stalin. Although Mariia delivered it to *Pravda* for publication on 23 January 1923, Bukharin, with Stalin's agreement, would not allow the article to be published because it contained an attack on Stalin, and Mariia accepted his decision.²⁸ In the end the article was printed two days later, for they knew that Lenin could not be deceived about whether or not it had been published, but the line criticising Stalin was omitted.²⁹

The second instance involved Lenin's letter to the Twelfth Party Congress about the nationalities question, in which he accused Stalin of being spiteful and hasty.³⁰ In April, on the eve of the Congress, a four way correspondence occurred between Stalin, Kamenev, Fotieva, who was one of Lenin's secretaries but who also appears to have been in close contact with Stalin throughout this time, and Mariia.³¹ Stalin was hoping to keep Lenin's letter secret, and when Kamenev approached Fotieva on this matter, she expressed doubts about what Lenin's intentions had been for the letter. Although she made it clear that Lenin was "making preparations to speak about it at the Party Congress", she was

²⁵ Valentinov, *NEP*, p. 64.

²⁶ Valentinov, *NEP*, p. 64.

²⁷ Radzinsky, p. 203.

²⁸ Buranov, p. 207. Krupskaja asked Trotsky to intervene and have the article published, but there is no reference to Mariia supporting her in this (Buranov, p. 36).

²⁹ Buranov, pp. 207-208.

³⁰ V.I. Lenin, 'The question of nationalities or 'autonomisation'', quoted in Buranov, p. 227.

³¹ Buranov, p. 67.

unsure if it was ready for publication.³² Fotieva then approached Mariia and reported to Stalin that Mariia had answered that: “if there was no direct order from V.I. to publish this article, it should not be published...[but]... members of the Congress should be informed about it.”³³

And so it was resolved. It was decided that Lenin’s letter should be made known to the Council of Elders, that the Presidium members would pass on this information to Congress delegates and finally that Lenin’s letter would not be published.³⁴ Later, at a meeting in 1925, Stalin defended himself and the Politburo against accusations by Max Eastman of foul play in not publishing Lenin’s article on the national question by citing Mariia’s advice on the matter. He argued: “The CC could not help but take into account that Lenin’s sister, Mariia Ul’ianova, who had Lenin’s article, did not deem its publication necessary.”³⁵ In both these matters, Mariia’s indirect and direct contribution enabled Stalin to fulfill his goal of the suppression of Lenin’s various articles that attacked him. And this pattern of Mariia supporting Stalin over Nadezhda was to continue throughout the 1920s.

When Vladimir died, Anna and Mariia’s position became both powerful and precarious in the political sphere, their connection to Lenin a double-edged sword. While Lenin was alive, Anna and Mariia had only been able to use their link with him to further their political agenda when Vladimir agreed with them. Now they could use their knowledge of Lenin to support their causes freely, interpreting his views according to their need. Anna used Lenin’s name to support her argument for publishing his Jewish roots; Mariia cited Lenin’s writings to support her arguments in her Rabkor speeches.³⁶ More broadly, the various political factions struggling for dominance over the Party did not fail to see that the Ul’ianov women would be powerful allies in their own campaigns, if they would lend their support. Anna was detached from the political scene by now and did not participate in high politics, but during the 1920s, Mariia allied with Stalin and Bukharin, with her support culminating in the attacks against the

³² Letter, Fotieva to Kamenev and Trotsky, 16 April 1923, quoted in Buranov, p. 64.

³³ Letter, Fotieva to Stalin, 16 April 1923, quoted in Buranov, p. 67.

³⁴ Minutes No. 2 of a meeting of the Presidium of Twelfth RCP(b) Congress, 18 April 1923, quoted in Buranov, p. 71.

³⁵ Memo, Stalin to special meeting of the Politburo on 18 June 1925, quoted in Buranov, p. 115.

³⁶ M.I., ‘Partiia i rabkor’, in *Sekretar’ “Pravdy”*, p. 64.

Zinoviev-Kamenev-Krupskaia opposition group at the Fourteenth Party Congress of December 1925.

Two factors though made Anna and Mariia's position precarious. Firstly, if they were a weapon for one group, they were a threat to another, and therefore vulnerable to attack. Secondly, their link to Lenin was only powerful when others valued it. The Ul'ianov women were to learn this almost immediately after Vladimir's death, when their objections to Lenin being embalmed were ignored.³⁷ Indeed the Party could even use the sisters' family connection as a weapon against them: it has been argued that both women were at times deliberately assigned to the task of researching their family's history and writing Lenin's biography in order to remove them from the political arena.³⁸

The sisters were political figures throughout the 1920s and, in Mariia's case, in the 1930s. Bereaved of their brother, they were now more than any other time independent actors in the regime and Party. Yet this is a period of Anna's life that is consistently ignored by Western historians. Mariia's post-1924 receives more attention, but discussions are dominated by a pre-occupation with Mariia's relationship with Nadezhda and a failure to see Mariia as anything other than a puppet of the Stalinist regime. This chapter will disentangle from the myths what was arguably the most fraught period of the sisters' lives, but also the period of their lives in which the sisters' individual experiences differed the most.

THE EYE OF THE STORM

After Lenin's death, Mariia continued to work closely with Stalin. Indeed, the two began to work together on *Pravda* matters in a way reminiscent of Mariia's relationship with Vladimir. In the same way that Vladimir had, Stalin informally gave Mariia instructions as to what the content of *Pravda* should be.

³⁷ Anna, Mariia, Dmitrii and Nadezhda were all opposed to Lenin being embalmed (Bonch-Bruевич, p. 435). The decision to embalm Lenin was made at a secret unrecorded meeting of Trotsky, Bukharin, Kamenev, Kalinin, Stalin and Rykov. Trotsky, Bukharin and Kamenev were against the embalming, but were over-ruled (Il'ia Zbarsky and Samuel Hutchinson, *Lenin's Embalmers*, trans. by Barbara Bray, (London: The Harvill Press, 1998), p. 11). Given the fact that Trotsky and Nadezhda were closely associated at this time, while Bukharin and Mariia were working together, one wonders if the two men put forward the women's case.

³⁸ Barbara Evans Clements, 'Mariia Il'inichna Ul'ianova', in *The Modern Encyclopedia of Russian and Soviet History*, ed. by Joseph L. Wiczyński, (Gulf Breeze: Academic International

Around 1924, Stalin requested that she “place in *Pravda* an article by Comrade Ksenofontov” adding “he is a young, former Sverdlovets (not a red ‘professor’) and the ‘professors’ at yours [at *Pravda*] might pass over him. Therefore I turn to you”.³⁹ And it seems that this relationship was mutual: Mariia could turn to Stalin for help in *Pravda* matters. On one occasion she sent a letter to him asking for his help in resolving a conflict within the newspaper about a member of staff.⁴⁰

The two co-operated on other matters too, with Mariia able to question Stalin’s orders. When Stalin requested that A.G. Pankov, an employee at Gorki, be recalled from the estate, to be an instructor to the Central Committee on work in the countryside, Mariia intervened and telegraphed Stalin to delay the implementation of this decision until she had spoken to him personally.⁴¹ She wanted Pankov to stay at Gorki and fulfill Lenin’s wish that “this corner, which he [had] so loved, be developed and improved”.⁴² Bukharin supported her and also wrote to Stalin that it was “essential that Pankov [was] left at Gorki”.⁴³ It is not clear whether Mariia actually succeeded in over-ruling Stalin on this point, but it is revealing of their good relationship at the time that she was able to have a dialogue with him. It must be remembered that, like so many of Mariia’s other colleagues, Stalin had been one of Mariia’s underground comrades and the two had a personal relationship. Indeed, Vladimir had even joked in 1921 that the two should marry.⁴⁴ Like others in the government in the mid 1920s, Mariia had very little reason to fear Stalin, other than Lenin’s warnings in the Testament. Between 1924 and 1929, Mariia was regularly to be found at the eye of the

Press, 1976-1993).

³⁹ Letter, Stalin to M.I., no date, in f. 558, o. 11, d. 819, l. 25. Judging by the letter’s position in the file, it seems likely that it was written around 1924. By ‘Sverdlovets’ Stalin probably meant a graduate from the Sverdlov University, which was established in the early twenties to train “higher Party workers” (Carr, *Socialism in One Country*, 1959, Volume 2, p. 187). ‘Red professors’ were graduates from the Institute of Red Professors, which had been established to train “workers for teaching posts in higher educational institutions”, including posts at the Sverdlov University (Carr, *Socialism in One Country*, Volume 2, pp. 188-189). From 1924, Bukharin wielded a great deal of influence over the Institute (Carr, *Socialism in One Country*, Volume 2, pp. 188-189).

⁴⁰ Letter, M.I. to Stalin, no date, in f. 558, o. 11, d. 819, l. 28. Judging by the letter’s position in the file it is likely to be from around 1924 or 1925.

⁴¹ Telegramme, Stalin to Bukharin, 1924, in f. 558, o. 11, ed. khr. 708, l. 25; Telegramme, M.I. to Iaroslavskii (who forwarded it to Stalin), undated, in f. 558, o. 11, ed. khr. 708, l. 31.

⁴² Letter, M.I. to A.G. Pankov, 1924, in f. 558, o. 11, ed. khr. 708, l. 29.

⁴³ Telegram, Bukharin to Stalin, undated, in f. 558, o. 11, ed. khr. 708, l. 33.

⁴⁴ Radzinsky, p. 167.

political storm over the economic policies and the future leadership of the Party, supporting Stalin and Bukharin.

Mariia first made her support of the Stalin-Bukharin camp public at the Fourteenth Party Congress in December 1925. Amongst the key issues on the political agenda that year was the New Economic Policy, with the Party divided over whether to continue with a gradual approach to collectivisation and industrialisation or whether to push forward more rapidly with the transition to communist economic policies, especially by using more forceful attacks on the kulaks. The opposition was led by Kamenev, G.E. Zinoviev, Krupskaya and G.Ia. Sokolnikov.⁴⁵ When Nadezhda opened the opposition's speeches, it was clearly part of a deliberate tactic to highlight that even Lenin's closest comrade, who knew the most about his political views, had doubts about the Party's line. Although Krupskaya argued against anyone trying to use Leninism to defend their views, she invoked his name to defend opposition groups within the Party.⁴⁶ She compared the current situation to the Stockholm Congress of 1906, when the "majority was not correct" and implied that Bukharin's 'soft' approach to kulaks was similar to the 'soft' policies of the Mensheviks.⁴⁷

Mariia took the podium later in the Congress as a delegate supporting Bukharin and Stalin. She opened her speech by denying that she was addressing the congress as Lenin's sister and continued:

I do not therefore pretend to have a better understanding and interpretation of Leninism than other members of the Party. I think that such a monopoly on the best understanding and interpretation of Leninism by his relatives does not exist and must not exist.⁴⁸

Although she voiced her support for Stalin's assertion that "the personnel in our Party are cultivating an ideological attitude [of their own]", she proceeded to argue that the Party had lost an irreplaceable leader in Lenin, "a true leader of the proletariat,...a leader who would appear only once for many hundreds of

⁴⁵ McNeal, p. 253.

⁴⁶ N.K.'s speech, at meeting four, 20 December 1925, in *XIV S"ezd Vsesoiuznoi Kommunisticheskoi Partii (b), 18-31 dekabria 1925 g. Stenograficheskii otchet.*, 2 vols., (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo, 1926), Volume 1, p. 166.

⁴⁷ N.K., in *XIV S"ezd*, Volume 1, p. 165 and McNeal, p. 253.

⁴⁸ M.I.'s speech, at meeting seven, 21 December 1925, in *XIV S"ezd*, Volume 1, p. 299.

years". She added, "we do not have another person in whom we can boundlessly believe" and argued that the Party must act collectively to decide the Party's policies. Mariia reminded the Congress how much Lenin disliked dispute within the Party, admitted that even Lenin would sanction "splits" if the question was related to "deep principles", but argued that there were no such principles at stake at this Congress. A comparison with the Stockholm Congress was "harmful, dangerous" since the Fourteenth Party Congress was facing only a "comparatively small disagreement". She called for the opposition to submit to the Party's decision and to end all factionalism.⁴⁹

The following year, at the 1926 Plenum of the Central Committee and the Central Control Committee, the issue of Lenin's testament was raised and Mariia continued to support Stalin. At the Plenum, as a means of attacking Stalin, Zinoviev brought up the matter of Stalin's row with Krupskaja, over which Lenin had threatened to break off relations with the General Secretary. In response Mariia sent a letter to the Presidium in which she actively defended Stalin against the accusations that Lenin had made in his will about Stalin's rudeness and answered the suggestion that the two had broken off relations in the last days of Lenin's life. She wrote that Lenin had "valued Stalin highly" and had seen him as "a trusted person,...a true revolutionary [and] as a close friend".⁵⁰ In her letter, Mariia wrote that Lenin's threatened break with Stalin was "of a strictly personal nature and had nothing to do with politics" and reprimanded Zinoviev for mentioning it.⁵¹ She gave a neutral account of the incident in which Stalin's rebuke was made to the whole Ul'ianov family and not only to Krupskaja. Mariia gave no indication of the severity of Stalin's reprimand and argued that Vladimir had over-reacted in response to the incident due to his "very grave condition".⁵² She pointed out that Stalin had apologised and asserted that the matter had been resolved. In fact Vladimir never saw Stalin's (hardly penitent) letter of apology.⁵³

In December 1927, Mariia attended the Fifteenth Party Congress, and although she did not give a speech at it, it was clear she still supported the

⁴⁹ M.I., in *XIV S"ezd*, Volume 1, pp. 299-300.

⁵⁰ Letter, M.I. to Prezidium ob"edinennogo plenuma TsK i TsKK RKP(b), 26 July 1926, in *Izvestiia TsK KPSS*, 1989, No. 12, p. 196.

⁵¹ Letter, M.I. to Prezidium, in *Izvestiia TsK KPSS*, 1989, No. 12, p. 196.

⁵² Letter, M.I. to Prezidium, in *Izvestiia TsK KPSS*, 1989, No. 12, pp. 195-196.

⁵³ Letter, Stalin to V.I., after 5 March 1923, quoted in Radzinsky, p. 195.

Stalinist camp. At the first meeting she was the fifth person nominated to the editorial committee and her nomination was met with applause.⁵⁴ At the sixth meeting, Kamenev protested that he had completely relinquished his ties with the opposition and that he had presented the Central Committee with a declaration signed by 3000 people, who had also left the opposition.⁵⁵ At that moment, Mariia shouted, “remove half”, implying, presumably, that Kamenev’s claims were exaggerated.⁵⁶ During the eighth meeting, Mariia heckled I.P. Bakaev, who was amongst those to be excluded from the Central Committee and the Central Control Committee for “fractional activities”.⁵⁷ When Bakaev accused the Party and Bukharin of not presenting anything new regarding Party policy towards the peasantry and for not addressing the issue of the kulaks, Mariia interrupted, shouting “And the theses?”.⁵⁸ Here she was implying that if Bakaev read Molotov’s theses on work in the countryside, in which he proposed “a further strengthening of planned action on the peasant economy and a more decisive offensive against the kulak”, Bakaev would find the answers to his accusations.⁵⁹

Historians writing about these incidents, particularly the events of the Fourteenth Party Congress, have tended to follow Trotsky’s interpretation of events and view them as a personal battle between Mariia and Nadezhda, rather than a political one. Mariia’s actions have been seen as a manifestation of Mariia’s poor attitude to her sister-in-law and her motives are put down to the petty jealousies she harboured against Nadezhda over Vladimir. Trotsky wrote:

In taking care of V.I. [Mariia] vied with N.K. Krupskaja...Ul’ianova’s jealousy was strengthened by her narrowness and fanaticism, and also by her rivalry with Krupskaja, who consistently and firmly refused to act against her conscience.⁶⁰

⁵⁴ Minutes of meeting one, 2 December 1927, in *Piatnadtsatii s’ezd VKP(b). Dekabr’ 1927 goda. Stenograficheskii otchet.*, (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel’stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1962), Volume 1, p. 6.

⁵⁵ Minutes of meeting six, 5 December 1927, in *Piatnadtsatii s’ezd*, Volume 1, p. 284.

⁵⁶ Minutes of meeting six, in *Piatnadtsatii s’ezd*, Volume 1, p. 284.

⁵⁷ Minutes of meeting one, in *Piatnadtsatii s’ezd*, Volume 1, p. 7. Kamenev was also included in this group.

⁵⁸ Minutes of meeting eight, 6 December 1927, in *Piatnadtsatii s’ezd*, Volume 1, p. 373.

⁵⁹ Minutes of meeting eight, in *Piatnadtsatii s’ezd*, Volume 1, p. 373; E.H. Carr and R.W. Davies, *Foundations of a Planned Economy, 1926-1929*, 6 vols., (London: Macmillan, 1969), Volume 1, p. 34.

McNeal describes the opening of Mariia's speech to the Fourteenth Party Congress as an "obvious rebuff" to Nadezhda, and wonders how "the political tensions between Nadezhda and Mariia...reacted in their private lives".⁶¹ Kumanev wrote:

It is necessary to recognise that sometimes in these years [the 1920s] Mariia Il'inichna's attitude to Nadezhda Konstantinovna was not notable for its sufficient correctness (in contrast to Krupskaiia's attitude to her).⁶²

As evidence, Kumanev cites Mariia's account of Krupskaiia's row with Stalin, which she wrote, it seems, much later. Although unpublished, it is a source that is often referred to in descriptions of the incident.⁶³ Mariia's description of Nadezhda's behaviour is not flattering. She wrote of Nadezhda telling Vladimir about political events: "[Nadezhda] was so used to sharing everything with him, that sometimes she would blab [things] out, absolutely involuntarily."⁶⁴ On Nadezhda's reaction to Stalin's "fairly harsh" row, Mariia added: "Nadezhda was extremely agitated after this conversation: she was absolutely not herself, sobbed, rolled on the floor and so on."⁶⁵ Kumanev argues that this is "psychologically implausible", that Nadezhda would never have behaved in this manner, points to several other inaccuracies about the sequence of events and accuses Mariia of relying on "conjecture".⁶⁶

These historians' accusations misinterpret Mariia's motives for supporting Stalin and Bukharin. Mariia did not wage a personal campaign against Nadezhda. At the Fourteenth Party Congress, Mariia did not follow Nadezhda immediately to the podium as many secondary sources imply, but spoke a day

⁶⁰ Trotsky, *Diary*, p. 33.

⁶¹ McNeal, p. 255.

⁶² V.A. Kumanev and I.S. Kulikova, *Protivo-stoianie: Krupskaiia - Stalin*, (Moscow: Nauka, 1994), p. 18.

⁶³ This source, M.I., 'Ob otnoshenii V.I. Lenina k I.V. Staline', was first printed in *Izvestiia CPSU CC*, 1989, No. 12, p. 198. It is not known when it was written.

⁶⁴ M.I., in *Izvestiia*, 1989, No. 12, p. 198.

⁶⁵ M.I., in *Izvestiia*, 1989, No. 12, p. 198.

⁶⁶ Kumanev, p. 30. One wonders if Kumanev is influenced in this accusation by Trotsky's assertion that Mariia showed a lack of "psychological insight" into Vladimir's character (Trotsky, *Young Lenin*, p. 201).

later.⁶⁷ Her comment about not speaking as Lenin's sister may have been as much a defence of her own speech as an attack on Krupskaja, and in fact in her speech she made only one clear reference to Nadezhda, when she rebutted the Stockholm comparison. Even then she did not refer to her sister-in-law by name.⁶⁸ In fact, Mariia's speech was conciliatory in tone, playing down the differences between the two sides and calling for collective action.

Mariia's letter to the 1926 Plenum of the Central Committee and the Central Control Committee did give a different, more neutral version of the events surrounding Nadezhda's clash with Stalin than Krupskaja had given. This might have created the impression that Nadezhda had exaggerated the severity of the incident, but perhaps Mariia gave the neutral account to protect Nadezhda from an intrusion into the Ul'ianovs' privacy. Indeed, the main thrust of Mariia's attack was on Zinoviev for using the private incident for political purposes.

Errors in Mariia's later testimony can be put down to the passage of time, rather than the aim of maliciously undermining Nadezhda. It must also be remembered that this document was a private and personal record, and never published. As such, Nadezhda may never have seen it, and Mariia may have made conjectures, which, although implausible to Kumanev, seemed justified to Mariia (or were merely idle conclusions drawn in the safety of the knowledge that they would not be made public). Certainly Mariia's portrayal of Nadezhda 'blabbing out' information is not flattering, but that does not necessarily make it untrue. Valentinov observed that Krupskaja had a habit of innocently revealing personal information about Lenin that Vladimir did not wish to be known.⁶⁹ Similarly, though Mariia's description of Nadezhda sobbing seems a little extreme, she did make it clear that Nadezhda was not herself. Even Krupskaja admitted that her nerves were "strained to the utmost" at this time.⁷⁰ Nor was it unusual for Stalin to be rude and aggressive, and cause highly emotional responses in his victims: he reduced Mariia to tears on at least one occasion.⁷¹

⁶⁷ See for example, McNeal, p. 255; Adam B. Ulam, *Stalin: The Man and His Era*, (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1974), p. 252; Trotsky, *Diary*, p. 33. Nadezhda spoke on 20 December and Mariia on 21 December (*XIV S'ezd*, Volume 1, p. 165 and p. 299).

⁶⁸ M.I., in *XIV S'ezd*, Volume 1, p. 300.

⁶⁹ Valentinov, *Encounters*, p. 141.

⁷⁰ Letter, N.K. to L.B. Kamenev, quoted in McNeal, p. 221.

⁷¹ Pogodin, 'Shkola "Pravdy"', in *Sekretar' "Pravdy"*, p. 259.

In his book, McNeal concluded that “one can only guess” what relations were like between Nadezhda and Mariia during this period.⁷² Stalin may well have “wish[ed] to cause a quarrel between Nadezhda Konstantinovna and Vladimir Il’ich’s sisters”, as Kumanev suggests.⁷³ It probably would have suited Stalin if the two women had broken off relations; he often used the tactic of divide and conquer to undermine his political opponents.⁷⁴ While the women of the Ul’ianov family were in opposite camps in the Party, they cancelled each other out in terms of influence and power and there was no danger that they could create or head a united front against him.

Anna herself wondered if Mariia and Nadezhda were getting along when she wrote to her sister in 1926: “You have been silent [recently] and my heart is troubled...Are you and the others well? How are relations with Nadia? Knowing her, I hope you’re not taking anything too close to heart.”⁷⁵ Mariia replied, however: “At ours, relations with N[adezhda] are as they were, it’s no problem, for we almost never talk about political themes.”⁷⁶

A friend and colleague of Mariia’s from *Pravda*, Evgenov, observed this avoidance of political disputes in Mariia and Nadezhda’s relationship. He wrote the following:

They were friends, but there was a very obvious difference between their characters. Mariia Il’ichna was somehow more hardened...She was more in touch with reality and more experienced in worldly matters. To Nadezhda Konstantinovna she showed courtesy, but also an unobtrusive thoughtfulness; she gave her [sister-in-law] priority in conversation and listened to her attentively. Nadezhda Konstantinovna loved to chat. She didn’t hide the fact that she was out of touch on various practical issues and sometimes even teased herself for it.⁷⁷

⁷² McNeal, p. 255.

⁷³ Kumanev, p. 178.

⁷⁴ Roi A. Medvedev, *Let History Judge: The Origins and Consequences of Stalinism*, ed. and transl. by George Shriver, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), p. 405.

⁷⁵ Letter, A.I. to M.I., 6 September 1926, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 131, l. 178.

⁷⁶ Letter, M.I. to A.I., 11 September 1926, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 225, l. 36.

⁷⁷ Evgenov, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 319, l. 39.

Evgenov also wrote that Mariia often humoured Nadezhda's more naïve statements, without "getting into an argument" with her.⁷⁸ This portrayal of Mariia would suggest that she was acting out of political and practical considerations in choosing to support Bukharin and Stalin, rather than for personal reasons. Indeed, during the Fourteenth Party Congress and after, both women kept their disagreements political and not personal. The two continued to live together, and although they went on separate trips in 1926, Mariia was still in touch with Krupskaja, and by 1927 they were holidaying together once more.⁷⁹ They even co-operated in other political arenas. In May 1926, for example, Nadezhda spoke at the Third All-Union Congress of Rabkors.⁸⁰

Nonetheless, in August 1927, Mariia was pleased to note that she and Nadezhda were coming to agreement on political matters. She wrote to Anna: "Our meeting in Moscow is nearing an end. Nadia conducted herself very well, absolutely not like last year. In general I think that there will be some kind of 'agreement' again."⁸¹ Here Mariia is referring to the August Plenum of the Central Committee and the Central Control Committee at which Nadezhda criticised the opposition and all its key principles.⁸² She was applauded several times by Stalin's supporters.⁸³

Those who do not put Mariia's actions down to personal reasons alone still tend not to allow that she acted of her own volition and in accordance with her political views. Rather, they argue, she was manipulated into supporting Stalin by the male politicians around her. A typical example of this type of description is Trotsky's:

In [Lenin's] lifetime [Mariia] remained completely in the background: nobody spoke about her...After his death she emerged into the limelight, or rather she was forced to do so. Through the editorial offices of *Pravda*...Ul'ianova was closely connected with Bukharin. She fell under his influence and in his

⁷⁸ Evgenov, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 319, l. 39.

⁷⁹ Letter, M.I. to A.I., 2 September 1926 in *M.I.: O V. I. Lenine*, p. 348; Letter, A.I. to M.I., 20 July 1927, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 132, l. 15.

⁸⁰ 'Privetstvie tov. N.K. Krupskoi', in *Pravda*, 28 May 1926, p. 4.

⁸¹ Letter, M.I. to A.I., 5 August 1927, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 225, l. 48.

⁸² McNeal, p. 262.

⁸³ McNeal, p. 262.

wake was drawn into the struggle against the Opposition...At the beginning of 1926 Krupskaja...joined the Opposition...At that precise moment, the Stalin-Bukharin faction was trying every means of elevating M. Ul'ianova's standing and significance to counter balance Krupskaja.⁸⁴

Certain elements of Trotsky's explanation ring true: Mariia's close relationship with Bukharin and the fact that the Stalin-Bukharin faction would have been aware that Mariia was an effective foil to Nadezhda. Yet, this explanation does not recognise Mariia's political standing before Lenin's death, and more importantly, ignores the fact that Mariia had worked closely with Stalin and Bukharin from the time of Lenin's illness. It does not make clear that the events of 1926 were the culmination of this. Above all, in Trotsky's version of events, Mariia is allowed neither political views of her own nor the ability to act of her own volition. Kumanev explains Mariia's behaviour as a result of "usual female weakness".⁸⁵ By the mid-1920s, he argues, Mariia had "already begun to make her contribution to the mythologising of Stalin i.e. [she] had moved to a position of...reverence before him".⁸⁶

It is difficult to believe that Mariia, who had been at the centre of revolutionary politics for over thirty years by this time, joined the Stalin-Bukharin camp purely because she was weak and easily influenced. And it is interesting to note that Nadezhda is always portrayed as a political figure in this episode, while Mariia is not given the same treatment.⁸⁷ This may be related to the fact that Krupskaja was on the 'right' side, opposing Stalin. In contrast it seems to be inconceivable to historians that anyone, particularly a woman and more importantly Lenin's sister and Krupskaja's sister-in-law, might choose Stalin's side. Perhaps putting Mariia's decisions down to personal preferences and manipulation by stronger forces is a way of abrogating her responsibility.

To be fair it is difficult to prove why she did support Stalin and Bukharin, for Mariia did not write anything expressing her views on Stalin's leadership or Bukharin's economic policies. Of course, that does not mean she did not have a

⁸⁴ Trotsky, *Diary*, p. 33.

⁸⁵ Kumanev, p. 110.

⁸⁶ Kumanev, p. 53.

⁸⁷ See, for example, McNeal, Trotsky, *Diary*, and Kumanev.

considered opinion, and to find it, it is necessary to try to deduce what it was from her actions at the time and from what little she did write about this period.

In later years, Mariia wrote a short piece about her actions in the 1920s. It is credible for a variety of reasons. It remained unpublished in her lifetime, in it Mariia admitted she had not told “the whole truth” about Lenin’s attitude to Stalin and tried to redress this, and she admitted that her brother’s judgement was correct. Nonetheless, the document still gives only vague information about Mariia’s views of the time.

The text centres on a comparison of Lenin’s attitude towards Stalin and towards Trotsky. Mariia described how both Trotsky and Stalin were “extremely ambitious and intolerant” and that only “V.I.’s authority was a restraining factor for them”, adding:

V.I. valued Stalin as a practical worker, but thought it essential to find some means of restraining his idiosyncrasies and his oddities, on account of which he thought that Stalin should be removed from the post of Gensek. He said so specifically in his political testament.⁸⁸

Although Mariia listed numerous occasions when Vladimir was dissatisfied with Stalin, she asserted that it was only over time that she herself understood that Vladimir genuinely disliked Stalin during his last days. She wrote:

With the passage of time, in weighing [Vladimir’s reaction to Stalin’s row with Nadezhda] with a number of V.I.’s pronouncements, as well as with Stalin’s entire behaviour [and] his ‘political’ line after Lenin’s death, I began more and more to realise Il’ich’s real attitude to Stalin during the last period of his life.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ M.I., in *Izvestiia*, 1989, No. 12, p. 199.

⁸⁹ M.I., in *Izvestiia*, 1989, No. 12, p. 197.

This delay in truly appreciating Lenin's attitude to Stalin is perhaps understandable, given Mariia's own productive working relationship with Stalin during the 1920s. In contrast, Mariia always appreciated why Vladimir, according to her, felt "no liking" for Trotsky, who made "collective work with him extraordinarily difficult".⁹⁰ Whatever Vladimir felt for Trotsky, Mariia clearly felt 'no liking' for him or his politics and she seems to have had no qualms about participating in the *Pravda* campaign against him.

Mariia's motive seems, therefore, to be that by supporting Stalin, she was choosing the lesser of two evils. However, there seems to have been a second consideration, which informed Mariia's political decisions throughout the 1920s and long after Trotsky had been expelled from the Party: Mariia was opposed to factionalism and believed strongly in the need for Party unity and collective leadership. This theme is apparent in all her speeches and writing of this period. In her speech in 1925, Mariia spoke out against factionalism, pointing out how much Lenin had hated disputes in the Party, and she stressed the need for collective effort from the Party. In later writings about her letter to the Plenum of 1926 Mariia wrote that aside from wanting to defend Stalin from the opposition's attacks, she also believed that the "exclusively and primarily personal" incident of Stalin's row with Krupskaja was being wrongly used by the opposition "for political purposes - and for factional purposes".⁹¹ She criticised Trotsky for undermining collective work. Above all it should be remembered that at the Fourteenth Congress, Mariia stated clearly that no one person could replace Lenin. She seems not to have envisaged the fact that from the Stalin-Bukharin group, which represented to her the unified Party, Stalin would emerge the sole leader.

The third influence on Mariia's political views was her relationship with Bukharin. Bukharin and Mariia were in fact old friends from the underground years as well as political colleagues.⁹² They worked closely together at *Pravda* and in the Rabkor movement. Supporting Stalin probably would not have seemed at all problematic while Bukharin was also part of his camp. Indeed, Bukharin was involved in all the incidents where Mariia supported Stalin. It was

⁹⁰ M.I., in *Izvestiia*, 1989, No. 12, p. 197.

⁹¹ M.I., in *Izvestiia*, 1989, No. 12, pp. 196-197.

⁹² Stephen F. Cohen, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution: A Political Biography, 1888-1938*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 226.

on Bukharin's initiative that Lenin's article on the Peasants' Inspectorate was not published. At the Fourteenth Party Congress, the main issue at stake was Bukharin's stance on the NEP, with Stalin's leadership only referred to obliquely. That Mariia's support was mainly for Bukharin was shown by the fact that during this time photographs of her working with Bukharin at *Pravda* were "prominently circulated" (ie rather than photographs of her with Stalin).⁹³

When Mariia wrote her letter to the 1926 Plenum in defence of Stalin, it was "at the request of Bukharin and Stalin".⁹⁴ Buranov suspects that this means with "Stalin's pressure and Bukharin's 'assistance'" and implies that Mariia did not choose to write the letter for political reasons.⁹⁵ However, as shown above, Mariia herself had judged that Zinoviev's use of the private incident in political affairs was wrong, especially because it was being used for the factional behaviour she so opposed.

That Mariia's belief in the collective and her loyalty to Bukharin were stronger than her ties to Stalin is clear when the events of the late 1920s are taken into account. Mariia defended Bukharin long after Stalin had turned against him. Stalin had only allowed Bukharin's 'rightist' views to be defended in 1926 because it undermined Kamenev, Zinoviev, Krupskaja and Trotsky. Having expelled Kamenev, Trotsky and Zinoviev from the Politburo by October 1927, Stalin began to turn against Bukharin, and Mariia's position became precarious by association. In 1927, the tension growing between Stalin and Mariia is clear in letters he sent to her about *Pravda*. For example, in November 1927, Stalin and Molotov wrote the following to Mariia:

We absolutely protest against the intolerable muddle in the figures in today's edition of *Pravda*, in the section 'Results of the discussion of the decision of the Central Committee Plenum and of the Theses for the XY [Fifteenth] Congress'...We ask comrade Mariia Il'inichna to take severe measures against such carelessness

⁹³ Cohen, p. 226. That being photographed alongside a political figure implied support for him/her is suggested by Mariia's refusal to let photographs of her with Trotsky be made public.

⁹⁴ M.I., in *Izvestiia*, 1989. No. 12, p. 196.

⁹⁵ Buranov, p. 171.

by certain *Pravda* workers, in relation to the question of our Party discussion.⁹⁶

When Stalin wrote to Mariia asking her to feature a piece by Demian Bednii in *Pravda*, Bukharin's reminder to her that it was "politically advantageous" to agree and his warning not to "get angry" suggest that even if Mariia was no longer comfortable with Stalin's instructions, the situation was becoming too sensitive to disagree with him.⁹⁷

In 1928 the situation deteriorated further, even though Mariia was enjoying great successes as the leader of the Rabkor movement. Although the Fourth All-Union Conference of Rabsel'kors was organised carefully to avoid being seen as "rightist or of any other deviation", with Mariia asserting that the Rabkor movement must help in the fight for the Party line against class enemies, the controversy surrounding Bukharin was felt here too.⁹⁸ Now seen as a leader of the rightist opposition, alongside Rykov, Bukharin's speech was greeted with "scant" applause and those who did clap were noted.⁹⁹

When Stalin received a delegation of Rabkors on 4 December he refused to attend the Conference with them, saying:

The Central Committee has sent Bukharin to the Conference, whose line was our general line. Therefore for me to speak at the Conference with this line, to repeat comrade Bukharin's speech would not be of interest.¹⁰⁰

Radzinsky in his book refers to Stalin's use of 'in-depth language', that is apparently moderate or straightforward language which others would read into and decipher a more sinister message.¹⁰¹ Having heard Stalin's statement, many realised that Bukharin was no longer in favour and few workers wished to co-

⁹⁶ Letter, Stalin to M.I., 12 November 1927, in f. 558, o. 11, d. 819, l. 41.

⁹⁷ Letter, Stalin to M.I., 19 October 1927, in f. 558, o. 11, d. 819, l. 37; Letter, Bukharin to M.I., 19 October 1927, in f. 558, o. 11, d. 819, l. 38.

⁹⁸ 'Otkrytie IV vsesoiuznogo soveshchaniia rabsel'korov', in *Pravda*, 28 November 1928, p. 3; Evgenov, 'Svetloi obraz', in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 319, l. 61.

⁹⁹ Evgenov, 'Svetloi obraz', in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 319, l. 61.

¹⁰⁰ Evgenov, 'Svetloi obraz', in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 319, l. 62.

¹⁰¹ Radzinsky, p. 328.

operate with Bukharin at the Conference.¹⁰² He was not re-elected to the editorial board of *Raboche-krest'ianskii korrespondent*.¹⁰³

Mariia's association with Bukharin destroyed her relationship with Stalin and using 'in-depth language' once more, he launched a smear campaign against her. Krupskaja had long lost Stalin's esteem, but now Mariia's relationship with Stalin worsened too.¹⁰⁴ Khrushchev remembered that: "Stalin had very little respect for [Krupskaja] and [Mariia]. He used to say that he didn't think either of these women was making a positive contribution to the Party's struggle for victory."¹⁰⁵ Soon, as Khrushchev put it: "everyone was slinging mud at N.K. and M.I."¹⁰⁶ Unfortunately there is no documentary evidence of the type of attacks that were made on Mariia; by its very nature the smear campaign was conducted mainly by word of mouth and by the use of rumour.

In 1928, a poet called Filipchenko, who contributed to *Pravda* and conducted a long correspondence with Mariia, wrote to her: "I heard troubling rumours about you in Moscow...Are you shaken? Have you lived through a catastrophe? What has happened? I hope that it will all work out."¹⁰⁷ The smear campaign intensified over the next two years. Evgenov described the situation as follows:

The years 1929-1930 were very difficult for Mariia Il'inichna. She loved *Pravda* deeply, and she had to leave the newspaper...An oppressive atmosphere of suspicion and distrust was artificially created around Mariia Il'inichna. Such was one of the perfidious methods that were quite widespread in the period of the Stalin cult of personality. It was a reprisal, which, at times, was as injurious as the bringing of fictitious charges.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰² Evgenov, 'Svetloi obraz', in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 319, l. 62.

¹⁰³ Evgenov, 'Svetloi obraz', in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 319, l. 62. There is no mention of Bukharin's name in the list of those elected to the editorial board published in *Pravda*, 8 December 1928, p. 4.

¹⁰⁴ After the Fourteenth Party Congress, Stalin said to Molotov: "[Krupskaja] may use the same lavatory as Lenin, but that doesn't mean she knows anything about Leninism" and in 1926 he told Krupskaja, only half in jest: "if you carry on splitting the Party we'll find a different widow" (Radzinsky, pp. 214-215).

¹⁰⁵ *Khrushchev Remembers*, ed. by Strobe Talbott, introduction by E. Crankshaw, trans. by Strobe Talbott, (London: Sphere Books, 1971), p. 39.

¹⁰⁶ *Khrushchev Remembers*, p. 40.

¹⁰⁷ Letter, I. Filipchenko to M.I., 16 August 1928, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 272, l. 52.

¹⁰⁸ Evgenov, in *Sekretar' "Pravdy"*, p. 190.

Another *Pravda* colleague remembered that at the end of the 1920s, he found Mariia crying in her room. When he asked what was the matter, she “fell silent and tried to smile” and replied “I was talking with a certain person”.¹⁰⁹ He added: “With whom, I understood very well. We in the editorial board quietly said that Stalin would soon take our executive secretary from the editorial board.”¹¹⁰

This situation did not deter Mariia from supporting Bukharin. In 1929, Bukharin, A.I. Rykov and M.P. Tomskii were threatened with expulsion from the Politburo. Citing ill health, Mariia did not attend the Plenum meeting that discussed this, but sent a letter voicing her protest.¹¹¹ This document gives the clearest indication of Mariia’s views, written as it was at a key moment of her involvement in the political situation. In the letter Mariia argued that the question of the removal of three members of the Politburo was directly linked to Lenin’s testament. She wrote:

Before his death, Vladimir Il’ich worried about the fate of our revolution and in his testament, giving the characteristics of individual leaders, warned that not one of the personalities and only collective work could provide the correct leadership of the Party.¹¹²

Mariia argued that the discrediting and removal of Bukharin, Tomskii and Rykov could only damage the collective leadership and undermine its ability to address the key questions facing it. She described the “anxious letters” that had been received of late from the countryside, in which people complained about “the extreme measures, famine...and infringements of revolutionary legality”, and from the towns, in which the public were worried about the “food situation”.¹¹³ Perhaps most damningly, Mariia asserted that Bukharin, Rykov and Tomskii were the only members of the Politburo who were facing up to the

¹⁰⁹ Pogodin, in *Sekretar’ “Pravdy”*, p. 259.

¹¹⁰ Pogodin, in *Sekretar’ “Pravdy”*, p. 259.

¹¹¹ M.I., ‘O tak nazyvaemom “antisovetskom pravotrotskistskom bloke”’, in *Izvestiia TsK KPSS*, 1989, No. 1, pp. 122-131.

¹¹² M.I., in *Izvestiia TsK KPSS*, 1989, No. 1, p. 126.

¹¹³ M.I., in *Izvestiia TsK KPSS*, 1989, No. 1, p. 127.

regime's problems and warned against the developing culture of "hushing up or suppressing difficulties or dangers, and also taking excessive delight in achievements".¹¹⁴

These were controversial views and they did not go unpunished. In June 1929, as her colleagues had anticipated, Mariia's position of executive secretary at *Pravda* was abolished by the Politburo and an editorial collegium was established to oversee daily work at *Pravda*.¹¹⁵ Despite the Politburo's reassurances that Mariia would continue as a secretary of the editorial staff and a member of the editorial collegium, everyone knew that this was a means of ending her role in the leading of the newspaper.¹¹⁶ Mariia also stopped working for the Rabkor movement. Although Mariia had been re-elected to the editorial board at the 1928 congress (the year Bukharin was rejected) and although even in February 1929 she wrote an appeal to the Rabkors of the Donbass and surrounding area to "join in socialist emulation and contribute to its success", her career there was over too.¹¹⁷ Evgenov implies in his testimony that this was through choice and in support of Bukharin, but in view of the fact that Mariia was removed from *Pravda* (a fact which he glosses over), it seems likely that she was forced out of the Rabkor board too.¹¹⁸ There was also a witch-hunt of colleagues close to Mariia, with her co-workers being interrogated at Party organisation meetings about Mariia and about their political views.¹¹⁹

Mariia was transferred to the Lenin Institute to collect and edit Lenin's letters for publication. Mariia's political disgrace followed her here. In 1930, Mariia was called to face the Party organisation of the Lenin Institute. In her first appearance, she confessed that she had been "insufficiently decisive in leading the struggle with the right deviation".¹²⁰ However, this confession did not satisfy the group, and Mariia had to answer its objections in a further meeting, including its criticism of her refusal to put in print her opposition to the

¹¹⁴ M.I., in *Izvestiia TsK KPSS*, 1989, No. 1, p. 127.

¹¹⁵ *Stalin's Letters to Molotov, 1925-1936*, ed. by Lars T. Lih, Oleg V. Naumov and Oleg V. Khlevniuk, trans. by Catherine A. Fitzpatrick, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), p. 155.

¹¹⁶ *Stalin's Letters*, p. 159.

¹¹⁷ S. Volodin, 'Vyezd na zavod "Dinamo"', in *Sekretar' "Pravdy"*, p. 176.

¹¹⁸ Evgenov, 'Svetloi obraz', in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 319, l. 62.

¹¹⁹ Evgenov, 'Svetloi obraz', in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 319, l. 63.

¹²⁰ 'Vystuplenie tov. Ul'ianovoi' in *Materialy biuro iacheiki VKP(b) Instituta V.I. Lenina po obvineniiu M.I. Ul'ianovoi v nedostatochnoi bor'be s pravym uklonom v partii*, in f. 613, o. 3, ed. khr. 192, l. 1.

right deviation.¹²¹ In her reply she spoke at length asserting the correctness of the Party line and recognising that it was her “duty...to lead the struggle with any deviation from the general line of the Party and above all with the right deviation”.¹²² She also argued that it was the “duty” of the leader of the right deviation, Bukharin, to recant his “mistaken views”.¹²³ Even though this time Mariia promised to struggle with the rightists in every way she could, including using the printed word, the organisation was not convinced by Mariia’s “especially unsatisfactory speech” and resolved that:

By avoiding giving a direct answer to the question – are there rightist Kulak agents inside the Party? – and refusing to set out in print acknowledgements of her mistakes, and criticisms of the position of Bukharin, Rykov and others, Ul’ianova...remains in a position of compromise in relation to rightist views, which was recognised by the Congress as incompatible with remaining in the Party.¹²⁴

Although Mariia was not removed from the Party, her disgrace impinged on her work at the Lenin Institute. There is a letter to an M.A. at the Lenin Institute, in which Mariia complained about the constant changes in her room allocation (a room intended for herself and Krupskaja to use). She wrote: “Until now you have shown me [attention], and I am very grateful to you for it. What now has changed?”¹²⁵ By the end of the 1920s, having suffered the smear campaign against her and disciplinary action by the Lenin Institute, Mariia could no longer be in any doubt about Stalin’s power and true character. From then on she (and Nadezhda) were now generally deferential to him.

¹²¹ This issue was highlighted in the question and answer session held after her first appearance before the Party organisation (‘Question and answer session’, in f. 613, o. 3, ed. khr. 192, l. 2).

¹²² ‘V iacheiku VKP(b) pri Institute’, in Materialy biuro, in f. 613, o. 3, ed. khr. 192, l. 3.

¹²³ ‘V iacheiku’, in f. 613, o. 3, ed. khr. 192, l. 3.

¹²⁴ ‘Vyderzhki iz rezoliutsii ot 10/XI/30 g.’, in Materialy biuro, in f. 613, o. 3, ed. khr. 192, l. 4.

As far as I can tell, Mariia never wrote anything in print against the rightist opposition.

¹²⁵ Letter, M.I. to M.A., no date, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 61, l. 5. Mariia identified the person to whom she wrote this letter only by the initials M.A. Presumably s/he was a worker at the Lenin Institute. The letter is probably from the early 1930s. It is possible to date it roughly because of Mariia’s reference in the letter to completing her biography of her father. This was published in 1931.

In 1937 Stalin made the two women sit on the commission set up to decide Bukharin's and Rykov's fate.¹²⁶ Although most argued for the two men to be executed, Stalin suggested that they should be "expel[led]...from the Central Committee and the CPSU, but instead of committing them for trial pass the case to the NKVD for investigation".¹²⁷ Mariia and Nadezhda supported Stalin.¹²⁸ Stalin's proposal was the most moderate of the commission, and perhaps Mariia and Krupskaja were relieved to be able to support what appeared to be a less harsh option. However, this judgement still meant "certain death" in the end, and in fact only prolonged Bukharin's suffering.¹²⁹ Having experienced smear campaigns themselves and observed the worsening political situation, Mariia and Krupskaja may well have understood what Bukharin's fate was to be. Regardless of what the two women thought Stalin's suggestion meant, that they supported him is the significant part of this incident as it reveals that they could no longer openly disagree with him.

Anna Larina, Bukharin's wife, was told by the wife of another member of the commission that Mariia and Krupskaja had not "made an appearance at the special commission" since its "vote was recorded by name".¹³⁰ Larina continues: "I have no confirmation of this, but it seems more than likely. Both women could surmise very well – indeed, they knew for a fact – that it was impossible to change a decision made by Stalin."¹³¹

Larina is correct that by now the women were under Stalin's control and acting out of fear for their own lives. Nadezhda told a friend: "There are moments when I can see no-one of my close friends...For long years, Mania [Mariia] and I have sat here, locked away from each other."¹³² At the 1937 Plenum of the Central Committee, Ezhov accused Bukharin of lying when he claimed to have been with Lenin when he died. Bukharin turned to Krupskaja and by association to Mariia and asked if that was correct. Neither replied and Bukharin was branded a liar.¹³³

¹²⁶ Radzinsky, p. 356.

¹²⁷ Radzinsky, p. 356.

¹²⁸ Radzinsky, p. 356.

¹²⁹ Radzinsky, p. 356.

¹³⁰ Anna Larina, *This I Cannot Forget: The Memoirs of Nikolai Bukharin's Widow*, (London: Hutchinson, 1993), p. 341.

¹³¹ Larina, p. 341.

¹³² Letter, N.K. to A.I. Radchenko, quoted in Kumanev, p. 140.

¹³³ Radzinsky, p. 356.

Mariia spoke at that Plenum supporting the “general chorus” against the wreckers and oppositionists that Stalin had announced were to be found in all sections of Soviet politics and the workforce.¹³⁴ Nevertheless Bukharin told his wife that he had seen Mariia “wipe away her tears with her handkerchief” at the second session of the Plenum of the Central Committee, at which Bukharin was attacked by all.¹³⁵

Although Mariia was publicly deferential to Stalin’s decisions, she continued to use her direct access to Stalin to attempt privately to overturn them. In spite of the risk of personally defending enemies of the state, it seems that on two occasions Mariia approached Stalin to beg for the lives of her colleagues. This was one of the few ways in which people arrested could be saved in the Soviet Union and the practice of powerful individuals intervening on behalf of others was used from the earliest days after the Revolution.¹³⁶ For example, Victor Serge dubbed the writer Maxim Gorky the “great interceder” for his efforts to rescue people from the Cheka.¹³⁷

Larina, Bukharin’s wife, recounts a story told to her by a man called Makhanov, that Mariia and Nadezhda went to Stalin to beg for the life of Zinoviev and Kamenev, who were both on trial. Makhanov was waiting outside the door to see Stalin when the two women went into his office. As Larina retells it:

Makhanov...could not hear everything in the conversation that followed, but through the shouting and swearing one sentence reached them distinctly. Stalin screamed, ‘Who are you defending? You are defending murderers!’ Then Mariia Il’inichna and Nadezhda Krupskaja were conducted out of the office by two men who had to brace them by the arms. Pale and shaking with emotion, the women were unable to walk by themselves.¹³⁸

¹³⁴ Radzinsky, p. 358.

¹³⁵ Larina, p. 332.

¹³⁶ Victor Serge, *Memoirs of a Revolutionary, 1901-1941*, ed. and trans. by Peter Sedgewick, (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 82.

¹³⁷ Serge, p. 82.

¹³⁸ Larina, p. 286.

Larina wonders that the two women could not see that Stalin was at the root of these trials, writing:

To whom did the women turn for help in the battle against despotism? And before whom did they defend the honour of the Party and plead, as a bare minimum, for the lives of Zinoviev and Kamenev? The criminal dictator himself.¹³⁹

Mariia and Krupskaja may well have known that Stalin was responsible for the trials of Zinoviev and Kamenev, and they used the only weapon at their disposal in their campaign to save the two men, that, as old-guard Bolsheviks who were intimately linked to Lenin, they were allowed a private interview with Stalin. In the end, as they must have recognised, he was the only one who could and would decide the fate of the two men. Although Larina does not seem to have known it, Mariia and Nadezhda may also have gone to Stalin to plead for Bukharin's life. Once again, however, Mariia and Nadezhda were shouted out of his office and were unable to save their friend.¹⁴⁰

In fact, it is difficult to be sure that both incidents occurred. Descriptions of them are very similar, except that where Stalin called Zinoviev and Kamenev murderers, he branded Bukharin the "most wicked enemy of the people".¹⁴¹ The descriptions of both meetings are also based on word of mouth and second hand accounts, and perhaps what was one incident was adopted by different people and adapted to suit their own loyalties. If indeed Mariia and Nadezhda returned a second time to Stalin's office, they were brave to do so, given their reception on the first occasion.

THE EDGE OF THE STORM

In 1925, Anna wrote to Mariia:

The [Fourteenth Party] Conference was dull in my opinion (and not only in my opinion). Having heard Molotov and Rykov's speeches, I thought:

¹³⁹ Larina, p. 286.

¹⁴⁰ Kumanev, p. 215.

‘Without Il’ich our Party hesitates and stammers’. Dzerzh[inskii] spoke with enthusiasm, but I only managed to hear his concluding words. Zinoviev dragged on...The start wasn’t bad, but in general he spoke worse than ever.”¹⁴²

Clearly, like her sister, Anna worried that Lenin was irreplaceable. Yet Anna’s comments do not seem like the view of a sister being sentimental about a beloved brother, but rather a Party member evaluating the situation in a pragmatic manner and judging that no single Party figure seemed capable of taking over Lenin’s role. However, unlike Mariia, Anna was increasingly detached from the political scene after 1924 and did not participate in the Party struggles of the late twenties.

In 1926, Anna admitted to one comrade that due to her ill health she “had not managed to fulfill his request as quickly as she would have liked”, adding: “to all intents and purposes I do not work at Istpart [any more] and take no part in the composition of editions of the journal.”¹⁴³ She was getting old and suffering from increasingly serious bouts of illness, which meant that she often left Moscow to go to rest homes and to take cures. By 1931, Anna was admitting to her sister that she was allowing herself to fall behind with her work and in 1934 she wrote to a Communist Pioneer: “Tell me about your successes and I will be glad of them. To us old grandmothers, it only remains in life to be glad of the successes of children and grandchildren.”¹⁴⁴

Anna spent her last years in comfort, enjoying a relaxed lifestyle. Yet she was always aware of and concerned about her sister’s more stressful and work-dominated life. Anna wrote to Mariia in July 1927:

I do nothing. In the morning we stroll, after lunch sleep; then again stroll till dinner and see, now at ten, I write to you by the light of a candle end and it’s soon, again, to bed. Try a little of

¹⁴¹ Kumanev, p. 215.

¹⁴² Letter, A.I. to M.I., 1 May 1925, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 131, l. 116.

¹⁴³ Letter, A.I. to un-named ‘comrade’, 29 January 1926, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 265, l. 10.

¹⁴⁴ Letter, A.I. to M.I., 1 January 1931, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 132, l. 82; Letter, A.I. to a pioneer, 15 December 1934, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 265, l. 15.

such a regime my dear! Or your older sister will be ashamed to arrive in good health, while you are pale and exhausted.¹⁴⁵

Anna seems to have missed her old political life and despite often being far from Moscow, she did her best to keep up with politics. However, it was difficult to find out news from home about the political situation. Anna's frustration at this is clear when she complained to Mariia from her rest home in Latvia:

In general my life is so empty in contrast to yours that there is nothing of interest for you, there is nothing one can write. My life is often vegetative. The most boring thing is that there are no Russian newspapers! It is surprising that my acquaintance from the NKIND is so out of touch with things. He told me the newspaper seller would have them. Not only are there no newspapers, there are no newspaper sellers either. And it is forbidden to send for them.¹⁴⁶

Not to be beaten, she arranged for local acquaintances and Mariia to send her cuttings from *Izvestiia* and other newspapers, but it still took about a week to receive them and there were often times when none got through.¹⁴⁷ Anna also pestered Mariia to write more about herself and events, writing in July 1927: "I know about your life only in the most general terms" and again in August of that year she complained that Mariia did not write enough about herself, adding: "I was glad for even one phrase relating to the most interesting thing: the account about the speech [Nadezhda] gave."¹⁴⁸ Mariia, who was increasingly under pressure from Stalin and fully aware of the unsettling political events, was, perhaps, in her refusal to tell Anna about what was going on, trying to protect her

¹⁴⁵ Letter, A.I. to M.I., 13 July 1927, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 132, l. 30.

¹⁴⁶ Letter, A.I. to M.I., 3 August 1927, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 132, l. 4.

¹⁴⁷ Letter, A.I. to M.I., 3 August 1927, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 132, l. 3; Letter, A.I. to M.I., 28 July 1927, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 132, l. 21.

¹⁴⁸ Letter, A.I. to M.I., 24 July 1927, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 132, l. 119; Letter, A.I. to M.I., 9 August 1927, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 132, l. 28. This refers to Krupskaiia's speech at the 1927 Central Committee and Central Control Committee Plenum in which she, under pressure from Stalin, supported him and attacked the Zinoviev-Trotsky opposition (McNeal, p. 262).

and even prevent her from becoming involved.¹⁴⁹ Certainly very few of Anna and Mariia's letters from the mid-twenties and the thirties contain references to political events of any kind; a stark contrast to Anna's first letters after the Revolution.

Anna did however have some idea about the worsening political situation and expressed uneasiness about it. Interestingly though she often doubted the veracity of the reports rather than accept that such things could be happening at home. While in Latvia, in 1927, Anna wrote:

Is it possible that you and [Nadezhda] are still in town? This and all connected with it worries me. Here they print such information about the USSR in the newspapers that only the thought that it is nonsense calms.¹⁵⁰

She wrote on another occasion: "Lately, but with breaks, I've had some news of home. All in all it's not pleasant when one reads things in the local newspaper and does not know in what measure they are right."¹⁵¹ In 1931, she even doubted first hand news from acquaintances, writing to Mariia after seeing one such 'informer': "B. Sol. wanted to write to you. All his news is unpleasant. It seems to me that he exaggerates it."¹⁵²

Despite her refusal to believe everything she read or heard, Anna's letters to Mariia at the time were full of concern about her health and her nerves. On 6 August 1927 she complained that Mariia's contribution to the collective family letter she had just received was small and wrote that this pointed to Mariia being overworked and nervous. She continued: "Go to the hills and marvel at nature as [Vladimir] always did after nervous exhaustion and try not to take all matters too close to heart."¹⁵³

¹⁴⁹ Perhaps because of the doctor's advice not to inform Lenin of political events during his illness, the Ul'ianov family often protected each other from bad news when they were ill. For example, Anna's adopted son suggested that Mariia not tell Anna about her own illness while Anna was suffering from her nerves (Letter, G.I. Lozgachev (on A.I.'s behalf, with his own private additions) to M.I., 10 September 1928, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 318, l. 1).

¹⁵⁰ Letter, A.I. to M.I., 1 August 1927, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 132, l. 24.

¹⁵¹ Letter, A.I. to M.I., 1 July 1927, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 132, l. 21.

¹⁵² Letter, A.I. to M.I., 25 May 1931, in f. 13, o. 1 ed. khr. 132, l. 299. B. Sol.'s full name was Boris Solomonovich Veisbrod. A member of the Party from 1904, he was also one of the professor-surgeons who helped treat Lenin (Footnote 2, in *M.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 330).

¹⁵³ Letter, A.I. to M.I., 6 August 1927, in f. 13, o. 1 ed. khr. 132, l. 27.

Later that same year she told Mariia “to look more philosophically at things” and even attempted to be optimistic about the political situation writing: “Maybe it’s better that several valves will be opened, maybe the atmosphere won’t be so intense.”¹⁵⁴ In 1931, Anna gave Mariia more advice, writing: “It is necessary to retain inner calm. Don’t think so much about others.”¹⁵⁵

Despite being more detached from politics than her sister, Anna did not escape having to deal with Stalin completely. On several occasions, Anna confronted Stalin over the issue of Lenin’s biography. This began in 1921 when Anna disagreed with both Lenin and Stalin about how his biography should be written. Anna wrote to Ol’minskii in 1921 regarding the publication of Vladimir’s letters.¹⁵⁶ She told him that Vladimir had told her on the telephone that he did not think his letters should be published yet, and that Stalin had agreed with him.¹⁵⁷ To Anna’s reply that the letters must not be “removed from history” Vladimir agreed, but said that they should only be published in 10 years’ time.¹⁵⁸

In 1931, Anna became indirectly involved in Stalin’s smear campaign against Krupskaia, when her biography of Vladimir, *Short Notes on Lenin’s Life and Work*, was used by others to ‘show up’ Nadezhda’s reminiscences. Nadezhda’s book was criticised for not “reflect[ing] Stalin’s leading role in the creation of the Party,...its development and strengthening, and in the preparations for and the conducting of the Great October Socialist Revolution”.¹⁵⁹

Ol’minskii, when reviewing the first part of Nadezhda’s reminiscences, and Pospelov, when critiquing the next volumes, both used Anna’s *Short Notes* as the ideal model against which to measure Krupskaia’s reminiscences, despite the fact that the comparison was not really a valid one.¹⁶⁰ As Krupskaia pointed out in her replies to her critics, Anna’s book discussed a different, earlier part of Lenin’s life.¹⁶¹ Indeed, Anna’s biography side-steps the issues of “the ripening of [Lenin’s] theoretical views,...and his strategy and tactics in the 1917

¹⁵⁴ Letter, A.I. to M.I., 13 August 1927, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 132, l. 32.

¹⁵⁵ Letter, A.I. to M.I., 25 May 1931, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 132, l. 97.

¹⁵⁶ Letter, A.I. to M.S. Ol’minskii, 23 September 1921, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 393, l. 1-2.

¹⁵⁷ Letter, A.I. to M.S. Ol’minskii, 23 September 1921, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 393, l. 1-2.

¹⁵⁸ Letter, A.I. to M.S. Ol’minskii, 23 September 1921, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 393, l. 1-2.

¹⁵⁹ Kumanev, p. 177.

¹⁶⁰ Kumanev, p. 173 and p. 177.

¹⁶¹ Kumanev, p. 173 and p. 177.

Revolution and after the establishment of Soviet power”.¹⁶² Nonetheless, suggesting that another close relative of Lenin had written a better biography of him was an extremely effective way of invalidating Krupskaja’s more honest, controversial book.¹⁶³

In the early 1930s, Anna’s disagreements with Stalin over Lenin’s biography came to a head, when Anna clashed with him over how her discovery about Lenin’s Jewish roots should be used. Anna saw the potential for using this information to try to quell growing anti-semitism in the country. Anna had in fact had a long interest in Judaism and anti-semitism. It had first been suggested while she was at university that the Ul’ianovs might have Jewish roots and Anna had known about this for certain since 1924.¹⁶⁴ In later years, Anna (and others) became concerned about the rise in anti-semitism in the Soviet Union.¹⁶⁵ In 1932 she turned to Stalin for permission to publish the fact that Lenin had Jewish roots. Stalin refused it. He was in the midst of his campaign to remove all “dangerous” phrases from Lenin’s *Collected Works* and insisted that this information was kept secret.¹⁶⁶

Twice in one and a half years, Anna wrote to Stalin asking for his permission for this information to be released. In her first letter, Anna invoked her relationship with Lenin, arguing that he would support her view.¹⁶⁷ In her second she more forcefully expressed her view, writing: “In general, I do not know what the motives amongst us, communists, could be for the silencing of this fact.”¹⁶⁸ Once again she referred to Lenin’s opinion in support of her argument, pointing out that he had valued the important characteristics that Jews possessed which made them able revolutionaries.¹⁶⁹ Stalin was unmoved by

¹⁶² Georges Haupt and Jean Jacques Marie, *Makers of the Russian Revolution*, transl. by D.M. Bellos, (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1969), p. 17.

¹⁶³ In 1931 Anna requested that she be allowed to retire from her work at the Institute of Lenin (under whose name her *Short Notes* were published). Is it possible that one of her reasons for trying to retire, besides her ill health, was that she did not like her work being used as a political weapon? Perhaps she was disillusioned with the political control now being exerted over the content of publications about Lenin. Her request was refused. She reiterated it the following year, asking that at least she be allowed to do less demanding work (Letter, A.I. to Sekretariat of the TsK of the VKP(b), 11 October 1932, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 10, l. 1).

¹⁶⁴ Shtein, p. 56.

¹⁶⁵ Various articles appeared in *Pravda* drawing attention to the issue, including: M. Gorkii, ‘Ob antisemitizme’, 26 September 1929, p. 3.

¹⁶⁶ Shtein, pp. 57-58.

¹⁶⁷ Letter, A.I. to Stalin, 28 December 1932, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 471, l. 1-2.

¹⁶⁸ Letter, A.I. to Stalin, written in 1934, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 471, l. 5.

¹⁶⁹ Letter, A.I. to Stalin, written in 1934, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 471, l. 5.

Anna's arguments and once again forbade her from publishing it. Anna did not approach him again about this matter after 1934 and she did not disobey his order.

It is interesting to note Mariia's place in this incident. In answer to Anna's first letter, Stalin sent a verbal reply through Mariia that "this was not the moment" to publish and that Anna was to remain "absolutely silent about [Lenin's Jewish roots]".¹⁷⁰ In her second letter, Anna wrote that Mariia "considered it worthless to publish this fact now" and had argued "that it might [only] be made known sometime in 100 years".¹⁷¹ It is possible that Stalin conveyed his first answer through Mariia to test her loyalty. On the other hand, it is possible that Mariia agreed with Stalin on this matter; of the two sisters it was Mariia whose biographies of Lenin were most influenced by Party history and ideology. Either way, when Anna emphasised in her second letter that Mariia remained opposed to the publication she was probably protecting her sister from Stalin's anger since it was clear that Mariia had not persuaded Anna to forget the matter.

THE IL'ICH UNIVERSITY¹⁷²

Mariia's political career was never completely destroyed; like Kollontai, she remained loyal to the regime and was able to secure government posts until the end of her life. Despite the smear campaign against her, Mariia did not lose all her political allies, nor was her public standing damaged. Indeed, at the height of the attacks on her, when she was removed from *Pravda*, Mariia's colleagues and comrades defended her. Krupskaia and Bukharin, Rykov, N.A. Uglanov and others voiced their protests to the Central Committee.¹⁷³ That Nadezhda was involved in this campaign suggests that her relations with Mariia were good, at least at this point in time.

Rykov complained that "such old Party members and central organ workers as M. I. Ulianova have been removed from the leadership of the

¹⁷⁰ Letter, A.I. to Stalin, written in 1934, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 471, l. 5.

¹⁷¹ Letter, A.I. to Stalin, written in 1934, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 471, l. 5.

¹⁷² M.S. Shaginian, *Sem'ia Ul'ianovykh (tetralogiia): ocherki i stat'i o Lenine, 1935-1988*, (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1988), p. 682. This was the nickname Mariia gave to the Complaints Bureau which she began working for in 1932.

¹⁷³ *Stalin's Letters*, p. 155.

newspaper” while Bukharin protested that “M.I. Ul. [had] been virtually removed from the job, although she was a longtime employee of *Pravda* and initiated the worker correspondent movement”.¹⁷⁴ He also pointed out that “no preliminary discussion was held with her”.¹⁷⁵ The scale of protest which met this manoeuvre must have made it clear to Stalin that Mariia Ul’ianova was a popular figure whom it would be very difficult to remove entirely from the political scene.

It was also through her political connections that Mariia was able to re-establish her career after her dismissal from *Pravda*. In 1930 she wrote to her friend D.K. Goncharova with an urgent request to start work at the Soviet Control Commission at Sovnarkom.¹⁷⁶ In June and July of that year Mariia participated in the Sixteenth Party Congress.¹⁷⁷

Mariia had to write a more obsequious letter to the Central Committee, however, to receive a full-time post. She wrote:

In view of the fact that the period of my holiday is past, I ask that the question of my future work be clarified. Last year I worked on a biography of Vladimir Il’ich and on his personal documents at the Lenin Institute and would like to continue this work in the future. In particular, at the present time, I have a series of urgent matters to conclude there, which will take at least a month and a half. But it is difficult to unite this work with newspaper work, which is very stressful on the nerves. Since I have participated in newspaper work for more than ten years, I would like now to work in another field, one that, if possible, would give me immediate contact with the masses. In view of the above, I would ask if the CC considers it possible to free me from work at *Pravda* and to grant me any kind of other work.

¹⁷⁴ *Stalin’s Letters*, p. 157.

¹⁷⁵ *Stalin’s Letters*, p. 157.

¹⁷⁶ Letter, M.I. to D.K. Goncharova, undated (but since she began work there in 1930 we can assume that it was then that the letter was written), in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 288, archivist’s note before l. 1. I am relying here on the explanatory note of the contents of the letter, which is attached to the letter in the archive. The original letter is written in pencil and too faint to read.

¹⁷⁷ Kunetskaia, p. 269; *XVI S’ezda vsesoiuznoi kommunisticheskoi partii (b). Stenograficheskii otchet. 2-e stereotipnoe izdanie.*, (Moscow: Ogiz moskovskii rabochii, 1931), p. 779.

I should emphasise that making this request does not imply any kind of divergence from the general line of the Party. I will be better able to show through work that I do not diverge from the Party line.

If, for whatever reason, the CC finds it inexpedient to fulfill my request and decides that I should continue to work at *Pravda*, I will, of course, submit to its decision.¹⁷⁸

It is clear from this letter that Mariia knew to put a respectable gloss on the events that had led to her leaving *Pravda*, calling her absence a “holiday”. It seems too that her desire not to go back to the newspaper was genuine, presumably because of the stress it caused, especially now that she knew that she would have to participate in campaigns against her old comrades. However, she also made clear that she would submit to Party discipline, even if that meant going back to *Pravda*.

Molotov wrote on Mariia’s letter that Mariia had expressed “her unwillingness to fulfill the CC’s decision about [her] work at *Pravda*”.¹⁷⁹ He concluded: “It would follow to note this and *to free*, finally, comrade Ul’ianova from membership of the editorial board of *Pravda*.”¹⁸⁰ It is possible that the whole of the letter was written in the type of in-depth language Stalin used to make it appear that Mariia was leaving the newspaper voluntarily. This is suggested by the fact that both Mariia and Molotov used the same phrasing, with Molotov giving special emphasis on the words “to free” and referring to Mariia’s absence from the newspaper as an “endless ‘holiday’”.¹⁸¹ It is also indicated by the fact that Mariia cited as a reason not to return to *Pravda* the fact that she had worked there for ten years. This was the ‘acceptable’ reason Mariia gave for

¹⁷⁸ Letter, M.I. to Secretariat of the CC of the VKP(b), 6 October 1930, in f. 17, o. 163, ed. khr. 852, l. 135.

¹⁷⁹ Molotov’s note, on letter, M.I. to Secretariat in f. 17, o. 163, ed. khr. 852, l. 135.

¹⁸⁰ Molotov’s note, on letter, M.I. to Secretariat in f. 17, o. 163, ed. khr. 852, l. 135. Molotov’s emphasis. He wrote that Mariia’s letter expressed her “*nezhelanie vypolnit’ reshenie TsK o rabote v “Pravde” (bez konechnie “otpuska” dlia raboty v Len. Inst.). Sledovalo by eto otmetit’ i osvobodit’, nakonets, t. Ul’ianovu ot chlenstva v redaktsii “Pravdy”*”.

¹⁸¹ Molotov’s note, on letter, M.I. to Secretariat in f. 17, o. 163, ed. khr. 852, l. 135.

leaving *Pravda* when she was interviewed by the Party organisation of the Lenin Institute in 1930.¹⁸²

It is interesting that despite Mariia's own treatment at the hands of the Party, she was still determined to work for the Soviet government. Her desire to work "with the masses" was not diminished and perhaps was the one area in which she felt she could still do good.¹⁸³ Toom remembered: "We asked Mariia Il'ichna more than once, why she – with her failing health – went to the most difficult work at the Complaints Bureau. With a sort of guilty look she answered: 'I can't work without people'."¹⁸⁴

Mariia started work at the Complaints Bureau in 1932. It was a small-scale department when she joined, attached to the Central Control Committee and designed to deal with infringements of citizens' rights by the state. In 1932, the department processed 32,000 complaints.¹⁸⁵ Under Mariia's leadership, this number rose to 37,623.¹⁸⁶ The number of visitors to the Bureau also rose. In the first quarter of 1932 there were 1719; the following year the number was 6177.¹⁸⁷ Diagilev implies that the very association of Mariia's name to the Bureau caused the number of visitors and complaints to rise since they knew they would be listened to sympathetically.¹⁸⁸ Dedicated as she was to her new work, Mariia even recruited 'inspectors' informally, asking a friend, V.D. Kuznetsov, who was travelling to the Chusovskii region to inform her about any shortages and bureaucratic irregularities he came across while he was there, writing:

These days I work at the United Bureau of Complaints of the USSR and the RSFSR. [I'm sure] you understand how important it is, in the present situation, for any injustices to be eliminated, to enable the quickest and best completion of our domestic plan.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸² 'Question and answer session' in Materialy biuro, in f. 613, o. 3, ed. khr. 192, l. 2. Mariia also seems to have circulated an even more glossed version of how she got her job at the Complaints Bureau. Evgenov remembered Mariia telling him that she had met Stalin in the Kremlin courtyard and he had suggested that she work at the Complaints Bureau (Evgenov, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 319, l. 67).

¹⁸³ Letter, M.I. to Secretariat of the CC of the VKP(b), 6 October 1930, in f. 17, o. 163, ed. khr. 852, l. 135.

¹⁸⁴ O. Toom, in *Sekretar' "Pravdy"*, p. 303.

¹⁸⁵ Diagilev, p. 153.

¹⁸⁶ Diagilev, p. 153.

¹⁸⁷ Diagilev, p. 153.

¹⁸⁸ Diagilev, p. 154.

¹⁸⁹ Letter, M.I. to V.D. Kuznetsov, 11 November 1932, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 54, l. 1.

It is interesting to note that Mariia apparently called the Complaints Bureau the Il'ich University, as if the Bureau upheld the standards Lenin himself would have set for Soviet society.¹⁹⁰

Mariia began to return to a more political role. She gave a report about the Bureau's work at the Plenum of the Central Control Committee of the Party in May 1936.¹⁹¹ In this she highlighted her commitment to the Party, praising Stalin's leadership and the continual improvement in the lives of the working masses.¹⁹² She also returned to themes she had addressed in her work for the Rabkor movement, arguing for the need to "struggle against bureaucratism" and to "improve the work of the Soviet apparatus, bringing it closer to the masses".¹⁹³ She also emphasised her faith in the population, highlighting the fact that they came to the Complaints Bureau with "questions of great societal significance".¹⁹⁴ These included "scandals" in organs of finance, "breaches of legality in a series of regions", the "obstruction of kolkhoz work", "violations of Stalinist statutes" and "an inattentive attitude towards the daily needs of workers, including Stakhanovites".¹⁹⁵

Mariia occupied other posts too. Through the Complaints Bureau she became a member of the Commissariat of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate. At the Seventeenth Party Congress, Mariia was elected as a member of the Soviet Control Committee of Sovnarkom and in 1935 she was elected as a member of the TsIK of the USSR.¹⁹⁶ Mariia also continued to make public appearances. In 1933 alone she gave a speech to the All-Tartar Congress of Kol'khozniki and spoke at the All-Union Congress of the Bureau of Complaints.¹⁹⁷ She was also awarded the Order of Lenin.¹⁹⁸ In 1935, Mariia joined Nadezhda, Stasova and Kollontai on the presidium overseeing the celebration of International Women's Day in the Bolshoi Theatre.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁰ Shaginian, p. 682.

¹⁹¹ 'Vystupleniia M.I. Ul'ianovoi na plenum TsKK VKP(b) (May 1936) o rabote Biuro zhalob Komissii sovietskogo kontrolia', in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 401, l. 2.

¹⁹² 'Vystupleniia M.I.', in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 401, l. 2.

¹⁹³ 'Vystupleniia M.I.', in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 401, l. 2.

¹⁹⁴ 'Vystupleniia M.I.', in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 401, l. 3.

¹⁹⁵ 'Vystupleniia M.I.', in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 401, l. 3.

¹⁹⁶ Kunetskaia, p. 263.

¹⁹⁷ O. Toom, in *Sekretar' "Pravdy"*, p. 301; Diagilev, p. 156.

¹⁹⁸ Kunetskaia, p. 269.

¹⁹⁹ Photograph, in *Pravda*, 9 March 1935, p. 1.

Despite her success at the Complaints Bureau, Mariia was a changed woman. She worked even longer hours than before, often until 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning.²⁰⁰ Whereas during her days at *Pravda* Mariia had always been happy to stop her work and chat with her friends who visited her, when Krylova visited her at the Bureau of Complaints, she "could not tear [Mariia] from her work".²⁰¹ On another occasion, Kudelli wrote to Mariia: "You don't know when MI will go on leave, do you? Or is she so distracted by her work at [the Inspectorate]...that she has forgotten about rest. Dear Manechka, you *must* think of yourself."²⁰² Toom remembered how quickly Mariia aged after she moved to the Bureau.²⁰³

THE PEOPLE'S FRIENDS

A key aspect of the sisters' lives throughout the 1920s and 1930s was their efforts to help the Soviet people, both on an individual basis and on a larger scale. From the earliest days of the new regime they became known as guardian angel type characters to whom the people could turn for help. Anna and Mariia continued this work after Lenin's death, using their name, their political contacts and their own reputations to have the rules bent and special action taken.

In 1933, Mariia took up the cause of a group of collective farmers in the Volga region, and regardless of the smear campaign that had been pursued against her, she successfully secured state help for them. On the 9 October 1933, Mariia wrote to Vyacheslav Mikhalovich, of the Middle-Volga Krai Committee of the Party about the fate of a certain group of collective farmers.²⁰⁴ They were suffering greatly due to a famine in that area and were without seed or fodder. Mariia asked in her letter that they be given extra grain, which they could 'pay back' at the next harvest.²⁰⁵ Though Mariia gave a political reason for giving

²⁰⁰ N.K.'s obituary of M.I., quoted in Diagilev, p. 152; 'Vospominaniia M.N. Poiarkovoi (Shmelevoi) o sem'e Ul'ianovykh', in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 456, l. 4.

²⁰¹ Krylova, in *Sekretar' "Pravdy"*, p. 128 and p. 132.

²⁰² Letter, N. Kudelli to M.I., 28 August after 1932, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 268, l. 112. Kudelli's emphasis.

²⁰³ O. Toom, in *Sekretar' "Pravdy"*, p. 301.

²⁰⁴ Letter, M.I. to Vyacheslav Mikhalovich of the Middle-Volga Krai Committee of the VKP(b), 19 October 1933, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 234, l. 1. This letter may have been written by Mariia in her capacity at the Complaints Bureau; but in the correspondence she does not cite the authority of the Bureau and all the correspondence is written to her personally.

²⁰⁵ Letter, M.I. to Vyacheslav Mikhalovich of the Middle-Volga Krai Committee of the VKP(b),

this help, that it would create a model collective for others to follow in the South. she also referred to Lenin to support her case.²⁰⁶ She pointed out that the collective was situated close to the Ul'ianovs' old estate, Alakaevka, and where there now was a 'Lenin Corner', hence presumably one reason for the need for it to be a model farm.²⁰⁷ She also argued that since this collective had answered Lenin's call for bread for Moscow during the Civil War, these workers now deserved help in their turn.²⁰⁸ According to Anna, the peasants of Alakaevka had "in 1919, on their own initiative, sent two wagons of bread to the government".²⁰⁹

The letter sent immediately in response to Mariia's request promised that the local authorities would "take all measures so that the collective farm of 'Lenin's Corner', as one of the best collective farms of the Kinel region, is granted this help".²¹⁰ At the start of 1934, Mariia received a very positive follow up letter in which the committee reported on what measures had been taken and their impact on the lives of the collective farm workers.²¹¹ These measures included loans of grain and fodder as Mariia had suggested, a school had been built and an agri-circle founded. The letter concluded that: "The mood of the collective farm workers is cheerful; all the work connected with the preparation for the spring sowing is already finished."²¹² This letter perhaps paints a rosier picture than was actually the case, but it is clear that Mariia's intervention did improve the situation of the collective farm workers to some extent.

Anna also took an active interest in the Alakaevka collective farm, conducting a long correspondence with a collective farm worker there called Kniazev, procuring resources for the farm and visiting the area.²¹³ In particular, Anna complained to the Samara authorities about one of the collective's personnel, called Zhmurov, whom Anna judged to be a "swindler" and she supported Kniazev's belief that Alakaevka should not be rushed into a

19 October 1933, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 234, l. 1.

²⁰⁶ Letter, M.I. to Vyacheslav Mikhalovich, 19 October 1933, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 234, l. 1.

²⁰⁷ Letter, M.I. to Vyacheslav Mikhalovich, 19 October 1933, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 234, l. 1.

²⁰⁸ Letter, M.I. to Vyacheslav Mikhalovich, 19 October 1933, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 234, l. 1.

²⁰⁹ A.I., 'V.I. Lenin i samarskaia derevnia', in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 188.

²¹⁰ Letter, A. Gorkin, Secretary of the Middle-Volga Krai Committee of the VKP(b), to M.I., no date, f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 234, l. 2.

²¹¹ Letter, Shubrikov, Secretary of the Middle-Volga Krai Committee of the VKP(b), to M.I., 7 January 1934, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 234, l. 3.

²¹² Letter, Shubrikov to M.I., 7 January 1934, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 234, l. 3.

²¹³ See, A.I.'s letters to Kniazev, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 401, l. 1-11.

commune.²¹⁴ However, she also admitted that the best authorities to turn to for help would be the local ones, since she doubted that “workers from the capital” could be assigned to the collective farm.²¹⁵ She also took an interest in the work of women on the farm, especially the women teachers.²¹⁶ She arranged for a radio to be sent to the farm.²¹⁷

In fact this was not the first time she had taken an interest in Alakaevka. Several of the Ul’ianovs’ servants came from Alakaevka and had turned to Anna in 1921 when Alakaevka had a bad harvest. Anna went to Vladimir who wrote to E nukidze to help the farm, and 600 poods of bread and 500 poods of potatoes were sent to the farm.²¹⁸ Others remembered the Ul’ianovs regularly sending sweets to the peasants’ children.²¹⁹

Anna also helped people from Alakaevka on an individual basis. For example, in a letter to Anna, a young man from Alakaevka asked her to write a reference for him so that he could go on to further education.²²⁰ This would be the second time she had vouched for him, having already supported his application to enroll at technical school.²²¹ In fact the young man transcribed in full this first reference, and said that of all his personal papers, this was his “very best document”.²²² Anna did send the letter of reference (even though she was so ill she could not write for herself) and vouched for the young man as a “good Komsomol worker”.²²³ She also cited the fact that she had known his uncle A.A. Fedorovich who, according to her, had done a great deal for the Soviet Union.²²⁴

Mariia and Anna helped other individuals also. In 1930 Anna received a letter from V. Sokolovskaia asking her to help with regards to a colleague who had been arrested.²²⁵ Across the page is written “answered” and it seems that

²¹⁴ Letter, A.I. to Kniazev, 20 February 1930, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 401, l. 1.

²¹⁵ Letter, A.I. to Kniazev, 20 February 1930, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 401, l. 1.

²¹⁶ Letter, A.I. to Kniazev, 20 February 1930, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 401, l. 1.

²¹⁷ Letter, A.I. to Kniazev, 1 July 1931, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 401, l. 7.

²¹⁸ K.D. Frolov, ‘Vospominanie o 21 gode’, 25 February 1936, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 187, l. 5.

²¹⁹ Frolov, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 187, l. 5.

²²⁰ Letter, nephew of Petr Fedorovich Asanin to A.I., 18 May 1935, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 270, l.

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²²¹ Letter, nephew of Petr Fedorovich Asanin to A.I., 18 May 1935, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 270, l.

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²²² Letter, nephew of Petr Fedorovich Asanin to A.I., 18 May 1935, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 270, l.

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²²³ Letter, A.I. to Kuibyshevskii Industrial’nyi Institut, written after 1932, in f. 13., o. 1., ed. khr. 272, l. 6.

²²⁴ Letter, A.I. to Kuibyshevskii Industrial’nyi Institut, written after 1932, in f. 13., o. 1., ed. khr. 272, l. 6.

²²⁵ Letter, V. Sokolovskaia to A.I., 1 October 1930, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 336, l. 1.

this started a precedent, with Sokolovskaia writing to thank Anna for agreeing to help her again in 1932.²²⁶ In another letter, Anna vouched for an N.N. Bel'skii, whom she had not known personally, but whose 'clean' address she had used during the underground years.²²⁷

Anna also helped her colleagues. In 1924 she turned to Nadezhda for help, writing in one letter:

Do you know who still worries me? Kalinina... She writes that she feels absolutely awful. She would have gone on leave with her daughter, but it is more complicated with a child, and she wouldn't go without her. And she doesn't have anyone to plead on her behalf. Last year, she said, you arranged this for her. I'm ashamed to trouble you again. I wanted to write to M[oscow] C[ommittee], but I don't know whom I need there and who isn't on leave. Maybe you could ask Verochka to phone? If it's not convenient, don't do it.²²⁸

Mariia ensured that Anna's nurse got a room in a communal flat with her partner and bought them baby equipment when they had their first child.²²⁹ She also ensured "with great difficulty" that the nurse got a place in a rest home after Anna's death.²³⁰

Mariia and Anna's efforts to help others were a consistent feature of their lives after the Revolution. Although these efforts were often made on behalf of friends or relatives, the sisters also helped strangers and even communities. Operating both within and outside the system, Anna and Mariia both did what they could to offset the hardships experienced by others in the new Soviet society. They were by no means the only Party members to do this; Nadezhda also regularly answered requests for help, but it was an aspect of the sisters' lives for which they would be respected by the Soviet people, regardless of their connection to Lenin.²³¹

²²⁶ Letter, V. Sokolovskaia to A.I., 17 April 1932, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 336, l. 2.

²²⁷ Letter, A.I. to Kommissia VTsIK SSSR, no date, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 270, l. 1.

²²⁸ Letter, A.I. to N.K., 7 July 1924, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 44, l. 1.

²²⁹ M.N. Poiarkova, 'V sem'e Ul'ianovykh', 12 April 1979, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 456, l. 4.

²³⁰ Poiarkova, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 456, l. 4.

²³¹ McNeal, p. 287.

The year 1922 represented a turning point in the Ul'ianov sisters' lives, particularly Mariia's. For her it signalled both the start of her successful leadership of the Rabkor movement and the beginning of a fraught period of personal stress and political struggle. She witnessed Vladimir's decline and death, and watched the worker correspondent movement expand, develop and gain popularity, presiding over its ever larger annual conferences. After 1924, Mariia lent her political support to Bukharin and Stalin. This was not a vote for Stalin the leader, but rather an expression of Mariia's belief in the collective authority of the Party. Above all she wanted Party unity to be preserved, for with Lenin gone there was no single political figure who could, in her view, take over her late brother's role. Like her sister, Anna feared that the Party would stall without Vladimir to lead it, and though she was not involved in the political disputes of the 1920s, she watched them with consternation. In contrast to Mariia, Anna's career was nearing an end. She left the DPC and took up the less stressful work of recording Party history. During her short time at Istpart, Anna made valuable contributions to *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia* and to the canon of social-democratic history, which were not entirely influenced by Party ideology. Anna's campaign to publish Lenin's Jewish roots put her in direct conflict with Stalin and his grand plan for Lenin's biography, and ended in disappointment for Anna. Mariia's clash with Stalin over her defence of Bukharin ended in temporary disgrace, but did not finish her political career. Both sisters, to the end of their days, worked officially and unofficially to help the public and individuals.

Losing Vladimir was yet another family tragedy for the Ul'ianovs. Losing Lenin ended Anna and Mariia's beneficial relationship with the leader of the Soviet Union. However, their own political expertise, their reputation as revolutionaries and their dedication to building and improving Soviet society meant that they continued to be prominent Bolshevik Party members and government figures despite Stalin's rise to power and his efforts to reduce the influence of the Ul'ianov sisters. Indeed as Anna and Mariia became the keepers of Lenin's memory their standing in Soviet society rose and yet another chapter of their political lives began.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE SISTERS AND HISTORY

After Lenin's death in 1924, Stalin assigned Anna the task of researching her family's history. When Mariia was removed from *Pravda* in 1929, she was sent to the Lenin Institute¹ to prepare her brother's letters to his family for publication. Clements has interpreted this as a strategy for "relegating" the sisters and removing them from Soviet politics.² If so, it was an unnecessary action in relation to Anna and an unsuccessful one regarding Mariia. Anna had never involved herself in the high politics of the Soviet Union and was working on the periphery of the government at Istpart. In Mariia's case, after only three years away from *Pravda* she was allowed to return to a level of political work at the Bureau of Complaints. In fact both sisters had long combined their own careers with writing about Lenin and, far from dooming the sisters to obscurity, becoming the keepers of Lenin's memory, publishing popular biographies of him and critiquing others, as well as helping in the building of museums to him and touring them, raised the sisters' public profile even further. Whereas before Lenin's death, Anna and Mariia's connection to the leader had not been publicised, now their names were regularly linked to the increasingly eulogised name of Lenin. It was partly through this publicised connection that the sisters enjoyed popularity with the Soviet public and this in turn may well have been a factor which saved them from the more severe forms of repression the government employed against old Bolsheviks in the 1930s. However, if being the biographers of Lenin had few negative impacts on the sisters while they were alive, it did have consequences for Anna and Mariia's own place in history, or rather their disappearance from history.

¹ Istpart merged with the Lenin Institute in 1928, and in 1931, the Lenin Institute merged with the Marx-Engels Institute to form the Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute (Savitskaia, in *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, 1987, No. 8, pp. 110-111.

² Clements, *Encyclopedia*, p. 190.

WRITING LENIN

In the years after Vladimir's death, Anna and Mariia's help was in constant demand from the Lenin Institute and various other groups in their projects to set up museums and memorials to Lenin. It was, of course, a role very few people could play, for it involved donating personal materials relating to Vladimir's biography as well as providing information about his private life that could not be obtained elsewhere. This was especially the case when his biographers were trying to retrace Lenin's childhood and early years; Nadezhda could not always help on this subject and even Mariia, eight years younger than Vladimir, could not always remember details. As Valentinov points out, after their mother's death there were aspects of Vladimir's life that only Anna would have remembered.³

One letter to Mariia reveals just how crucial the sisters' contributions were in enabling the Lenin Institute to give a full picture of Lenin's life, and it is clear that it was personal documents and items that they most needed for Lenin Corners and museums:

Materials are being drawn from the Institute Museum for the creation of 'Lenin Corners'...But unfortunately the whole period of Vladimir Il'ich's life can in no way be represented in the museum, especially the years 1901, 1905, 1906, 1907, 1908, 1910 and 1916. The years 1909, 1910, 1912 and 1913 are represented only by Police Department Circulars...

In the Institute Archive there are manuscripts by Lenin for these years, but there are absolutely no photographs, objects or any other kind of reminiscences, which could supplement the documents of the Archive...

³ Valentinov, *Early Years*, p. 119.

Do you have materials for the stated period collected in your personal archive, which you would find possible to exhibit in copies in the Institute Museum?⁴

Anna and Mariia both donated large numbers of documents and photographs to the Lenin Institute and other groups. In 1927, the director of the Museum of the Revolution wrote to Anna to thank her for her “gift...of valuable material” to their collection and on another occasion Anna forwarded personal papers relating to her parents and Vladimir’s underground days to the Lenin Institute.⁵

The sisters were sometimes even involved in the production of Lenin museum souvenirs. In 1934, A.N. Grochiev wrote to Mariia:

I received your letter and am hurrying to answer it. It goes without saying that I will make all the improvements to the sketches of the house museum in accordance with your orders...Mariia Il’ichna, I am deeply grateful to you for agreeing to edit my album, and I would be very glad if you did not refuse my humble work as a gift.⁶

Besides helping state efforts to conserve Lenin’s memory, the sisters also produced an impressive list of biographical material about their brother and their family, from small commemorative articles to full biographies.⁷ Anna’s *V.I. Ul’ianov (N. Lenin). Short Notes about his Life and Work* was very popular. Mariia’s collected reminiscences includes over forty articles about Lenin, as well as biographies of her parents, eldest brother Aleksandr, and sister Ol’ga.⁸ Anna’s

⁴ Letter, Lenin Institute to A.I., 31 March 1924, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 58, l. 4.

⁵ Letter, Director of the Museum of the Revolution to A.I., 3 December 1927, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 301, l. 7. Letter, Lenin Institute to A.I., no date, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 301, l. 6. Given the letter’s place in the file, it is likely that it was written in the mid to late 1920s.

⁶ Letter, A.N. Grochiev to M.I., 25 March 1934, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 267, l. 31.

⁷ The majority of these articles are gathered in two collections: *M.I.: O V.I. Lenine i sem’e Ul’ianovykh*, (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1989) and *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine i sem’e Ul’ianovykh*, (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1988). These articles first appeared in *Pravda* and other Soviet newspapers and journals, or as part of collections of reminiscences of Lenin (often the introductions), or else are stenographic records of speeches made by the sisters.

⁸ *M.I.: O V.I. Lenine*.

includes over thirty articles about Lenin and her biography of Aleksandr.⁹ Both sisters wrote introductions to Volume 55 of Lenin's *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, which contains his letters to his relatives, and articles by them were featured in another major collection of reminiscences of Lenin, parts of which were translated into English.¹⁰

The sisters would also have been well known for their critiques of other people's biographies of Lenin. Both Anna and Mariia were outraged by what they considered to be the inaccuracies and distortions of Lenin's life which appeared in biographies of him and regularly wrote articles or open letters to editorial boards critiquing and correcting such writing as well as criticising editors for allowing such texts to be printed. As Tumarkin points out, these corrections tended to be related to mistakes about Lenin's private life or personality and less concerned with the portrayal of his political views and activities.¹¹ It seems that the sisters accepted that Lenin's biography would be used for political and ideological purposes, to legitimise Bolshevik/Soviet authority, for example, and were even prepared to collude in the propagation of such an image. However, they would not tolerate mistakes or manipulation of the facts in descriptions of Vladimir the man.

As early as June 1924, Mariia wrote an article in *Pravda* in which she severely criticised various reminiscences about Lenin.¹² Her corrections were of small inaccuracies, and not of political or ideological distortions. For example, she pointed out that contrary to the assertions in one article, Vladimir did not have photographs of his siblings on his desk.¹³ She refuted another story in a different biography that Vladimir came to be called Lenin after his mother, whose name, the author asserted, was Elena.¹⁴ This was the first of many such articles. Mariia became thoroughly disillusioned with other people's reminiscences of Lenin, warning M. Shaginian, who was planning to write about the Ul'ianov family, to believe "very few of the stories being published about

⁹ A.I.: *O V.I. Lenine*.

¹⁰ M.I., 'Predislovie k sborniku "Pis'ma k rodnym", izdaniia 1930 goda', and A.I., 'Po povodu pisem Vladimira Il'icha k rodnym', in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 55; *Vospominaniia o V.I. Lenine*, 4 vols., (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1979).

¹¹ Tumarkin, p. 129.

¹² M.I., 'O nekotorykh "vospominaniakh" ob Il'iche', in *Pravda*, 8 June 1924, p. 1.

¹³ M.I., in *Pravda*, 8 June 1924, p. 1.

¹⁴ M.I., in *Pravda*, 8 June 1924, p. 1.

Vladimir Il'ich and his family" even though they were written by contemporaries.¹⁵

Anna took a slightly more political angle in reviews of biographies of Lenin than her sister. She wrote a "scathing indictment" of a popular biography of Lenin for children by I.N. Chebotarev, published in 1922, in which she pointed out the numerous errors.¹⁶ As Tumarkin writes, Anna did see the funny side and "asked her readers to consider the assertion that 'V.I. Lenin...writes a great number of pamphlets and books (and books!) on every state undertaking'".¹⁷ She also criticised the fact that Lenin's life had not been sufficiently linked to "his work in the creation and leadership of the Party", that is, Chebotarev had not followed the Istpart version of Bolshevik history, in which Lenin was the undisputed and revered leader of the Party from its formation.¹⁸ Anna also wrote a critical review of K.M. Takhtarev's *V.I. Lenin i sotsial-demokraticeskoe dvizhenie* (V.I. Lenin and the Social-Democratic Movement), published in 1924.¹⁹ She accused him of allowing his former 'economist' tendencies to colour his judgement and argued that by not taking into account the fact that Lenin's view had triumphed and he had successfully led Russia into revolution, Takhtarev's negative assessment of Lenin's role in the formation and leadership of the RSDRP was inevitably flawed.²⁰ Once again, Anna upheld the official line on the history of the Bolshevik Party. She also made sure to highlight that even Takhtarev, with his critical view of Lenin, noted many fine qualities in Vladimir's character.²¹

Like her sister, Anna objected as strongly about factual errors regarding Vladimir the man as she did about the misrepresentation of Lenin the revolutionary. In an open letter to the editorial board of *Smena* (Change), Anna warned against the "numerous muddles, incongruities and at times even the direct hoaxes" in writing about Lenin, particularly in the provinces.²² She then proceeded to correct an article that had appeared in *Smena*, mainly refuting the author's claims to have met Lenin more than once and above all his assertion that

¹⁵ Letter, M.I. to Shaginian, 22 September 1936, quoted in Shaginian, pp. 682-683.

¹⁶ Tumarkin, p. 128.

¹⁷ Tumarkin, p. 128.

¹⁸ Savitskaia, in *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, 1987, No. 8, p. 108.

¹⁹ Savitskaia, in *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, 1987, No. 8, p. 107.

²⁰ A.I., 'Professor-opportunist o Lenine', in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1924, No. 11, p. 128

²¹ A.I., in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1924, No. 11, p. 131

he had lived with the family for a month in 1883.²³ Anna also critiqued an article by A. Tabeiko about Lenin, like her sister, focussing on incorrect details in it, including for example, the dates when Vladimir stayed at Kokushkino, as well as broader questions, for example, about her family's interactions with peasants.²⁴

Like her sister, Anna became disheartened with the constant struggle to correct other people's writing about Lenin and her family. She wrote to Mariia: "I'm correcting the unfortunate [book] *The Ul'ianov Family in Simbirsk*. Some of it is improving, but I'm afraid it will be issued in its unfortunate state all the same."²⁵ The book was published, with Anna's comments and corrections placed in footnotes. Anna pointed to exaggerations about her parents wealth, but more importantly refuted Alekseev's assertion that Vladimir and Ol'ga became revolutionaries immediately after Aleksandr's execution. As she put it: "Vladimir...was only just seventeen, while Ol'ga was only fifteen and a half...And there was no socio-political movement in Simbirsk at that time."²⁶

Another strategy the sisters employed to prevent distortions of Vladimir's life was to try and control who wrote about him. When Anna criticised *Novii Mir* (New World) for showing "contempt for [Aleksandr and Vladimir's] names and the events of their lives" by printing a story loosely based on their biographies which she said was plagiarised from her *Delo 1 marta*, her dispute with them developed into a debate about intellectual property rights under communism.²⁷ Unperturbed by the fact that they were replying to Lenin's sister, the journal answered defiantly that "in crying out to the whole world, that [*Novii mir*] had broken her right to ownership [of her brothers' memories], [Anna] had permitted disrespect to the memories of her brother-communists".²⁸ Anna countered:

²² 'Soobshcheniia Istparta', in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 296.

²³ 'Soobshcheniia Istparta', in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 296.

²⁴ 'Primechaniia k stat'e A. Tabeiko "Iz proshlogo tov. Lenina" ', in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, pp. 294-295.

²⁵ Letter, A.I. to M.I., 23 June 1924, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 131, l. 75.

²⁶ A.I., in V. Alekseev and A. Shver, *Sem'ia Ul'ianovykh v Simbirske, 1869-1887*, ed. by A.I., (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo, 1925), p. 37 and p. 64.

²⁷ 'Protiv plagiata, literaturnoi vyдумki i vran'ia', 1 March 1930, in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 288.

²⁸ 'Eshche raz protiv pereviraniia i peredelok chuzhikh proizvedenii', 1930, in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 289.

What is the *real truth* in this case? That the right of ownership of ideas, of products of literary works will be recognised in the communist regime, or that 'to the sister of the great communist' such rights to produce are disgraceful?²⁹

Anna was always protective of her right to write Lenin's biography. When she was asked to write about her brother for a series of books about Old Bolsheviks, she was strict about her conditions for doing this, wanting to proof read and correct her contribution herself.³⁰

Mariia also tried, on occasion, to control who could write about her brother. When a writer at *Pravda* called Zorin approached Mariia asking if he could write a biography of Lenin, she advised him against it, saying that was a task best left to those who had known him.³¹ She suggested instead that he collect workers' reactions to and reminiscences of seeing Lenin.³²

How the sisters themselves portrayed Lenin and contributed to the information and image we have of him today is a thesis in itself. But it is important to note here that despite the sisters' determined efforts to correct other people's distortions of Lenin's life, their own reminiscences of him were not without inaccuracies and even a tendency to mythologise him.

Of the two sisters, Anna's writings about her brother were in the main more balanced. She did produce the highly popular and Party sanctioned *Short Notes*, and she did play down the wealth of her parents in her own reminiscences.³³ On one or two occasions, Anna romanticised the way that Vladimir became a revolutionary, writing, for example: "Aleksandr died a hero, and his blood, glowing with revolutionary fire, lit up the way for his brother Vladimir to follow after him."³⁴

However, other writings by her avoided making Vladimir a man of destiny, and Anna certainly expressed her determination that her brother be portrayed accurately, even if she did not always achieve her aim. As we have seen she was keener than Vladimir to publish his letters and she disagreed with

²⁹ 'Eshche raz', in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, pp. 289-290. Anna's emphasis.

³⁰ Posvianskii, in *Slavnie bol'shevichki*, pp. 20-21.

³¹ Zorin, 'Ona umela postoiat' za cheloveka', in *Sekretar' "Pravdy"*, p. 212.

³² Zorin, in *Sekretar' "Pravdy"*, p. 212.

³³ Valentinov, *Early Years*, pp. 15-16.

Stalin about the suppression of Lenin's Jewish roots. Although she submitted to censorship in these matters, in others she stretched the boundaries of what was acceptable to write about Lenin. Anna related that Lenin had admitted to her in 1911 that he wondered if he would "manage to live to the next revolution" and instead of portraying him as the unquestioned leader of the Party from the beginning, Anna tended to write instead that he helped to build it.³⁵ In her introduction to Volume 55 of Lenin's *Collected Works*, Anna hinted at the turbulence and the shifting nature of revolutionary politics of the pre-1917 period when she described how Lenin's letters about "Party news" contained his "precise characterisations...of people and trends within the Party".³⁶ She also suggested that the development of Lenin's understanding of Marxism was a long drawn out process that he never completed; he was not the all knowing leader many portrayed him to be. She wrote:

In Vladimir Il'ich's letters to his relatives we note his comments on the struggle for the correct understanding of Marxism and for its correct application at the various stages of development of the proletarian movement, which he conducted throughout his life.³⁷

Anna pointed out where she had disagreed with her brother, over his attitude to the journal *Kommunist* and over Istpart for example.³⁸ She also highlighted one of his key errors, when he over-estimated the significance of the now (in)famous Credo.³⁹ She exposed some of his character flaws. In *Delo 1 marta*, one of her most candid articles, she made it clear that Aleksandr had disliked Lenin's arrogance (even if elsewhere she said that Vladimir was modest⁴⁰).⁴¹ She sometimes showed a lack of deference to his name that in the era of his personality cult may well have been shocking. In 1927 at a meeting to commemorate his death she spoke about how, in 1917, she was amazed to find

³⁴ A.I., 'Vospominaniia ob Il'iche', in *Vospominaniia o Lenine*, Volume 1, p. 21.

³⁵ A.I., in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 55, p. xlv and p. xxxv.

³⁶ A.I., in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 55, p. xxxv.

³⁷ A.I., in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 55, p. xlvii.

³⁸ A.I., in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1930, No. 7-8, pp. 177-195 and in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1930, No. 5, pp. 156-162.

³⁹ A.I., in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 55, p. xli..

⁴⁰ A.I., in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 55, p. 1.

⁴¹ A.I., in *Delo 1 marta*, p. 94.

Vladimir guiding Bolshevik policy over how to continue with the war since he had never studied it. She remembered thinking: “How will he manage to sort out these military matters?”⁴²

In contrast, Mariia tended to mythologise her brother, even when insisting on the need to know him as a man as well as a theorist and leader. She wrote in her introduction to Volume 55 of Lenin’s *Collected Works* that his letters to his relatives were important because: “Lenin the man, with his brilliant, all-round individuality, has...scarcely been described at all.”⁴³ Although she often wrote about his habits and preferences, including his love of animals and children, his feelings on music and his holidays, she almost always juxtaposed this with references to him as the pre-destined leader of the Revolution.⁴⁴ At the Fourteenth Party Congress as we have seen she said that he was irreplaceable.⁴⁵ In contrast to Anna’s introduction to Volume 55, Mariia wrote that Lenin “stood at the head of the Party, leading and nurturing it” and she did not dwell on the disputes of the underground years as Anna did.⁴⁶

Mariia regularly included images of the pre-destined leader in her reminiscences about her brother. For example, writing about the summer of 1886, Mariia described the following scene:

Once [Vladimir and Aleksandr] were sitting in that room (in Kokushkino), thinking hard over a chessboard which was lit up by a lamp. The window was wide open but protected by wire netting...A girl who was about twelve, ran up to the window and shouted: ‘Look, they’re sitting like convicts behind bars...’ The brothers swiftly turned to the window and stared gravely after the little tomboy as she ran away. They had had no experience of real iron bars, but they seemed to sense it already as something inescapable and absolutely inevitable at that time.⁴⁷

⁴² ‘Rech’ na vechere vospominanii’, in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 179.

⁴³ M.I., in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 55, p. xii.

⁴⁴ See for example, ‘Otdykh i okhota’, ‘Na otdyke’, ‘Lenin i muzyka’ and ‘Kharakternie cherty Vladimira Il’icha’, in *M.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 71, p. 108, p. 156 and p. 128.

⁴⁵ M.I., in *XIV S’esd*, Volume 1, p. 299.

⁴⁶ M.I., in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 55, p. xi.

⁴⁷ M.I., in *Reminiscences of Lenin*, pp. 116-117.

In her preface to Volume 55, Mariia wrote that exile was a “a cage” for Vladimir “that greatly restricted him, that did not permit him to branch out and could not satisfy him, the natural leader, the voice of the people”.⁴⁸ It was Mariia too who first claimed that on hearing of Aleksandr’s execution, Vladimir automatically rejected his older brother’s revolutionary tactics, saying: “No, we will not follow that path. That is not the path to take.”⁴⁹ Trotsky and others have dismissed it as a fabrication, for how could the young Vladimir understand what road to take when he did not really understand yet why Aleksandr had attempted to assassinate the Tsar?⁵⁰ However, at the time Mariia’s assertion was “canonised”, since it produced the impression of an epiphanous start to Lenin’s revolutionary career and could be used as evidence to support the Party’s ‘correct’ history in which Bolshevism was a clearly defined, new ideology which broke from the populism of previous revolutionary enterprises.⁵¹

Indeed, in general, while Trotsky upheld Anna as a generally reliable witness of Lenin’s life, (as might be expected) he attacked Mariia’s reminiscences harshly, accusing her of carelessness and asserting that “not one of Lenin’s intimates revealed such a lack of understanding as the sister [Mariia] who was so unreservedly devoted to him”.⁵² Trotsky cited as an example the fact that Mariia wrote that Vladimir was shy. He wrote:

Mariia Ul’ianova’s remark that Vladimir’s shyness was a family trait seems strange. This lack of psychological insight, which is apparent in much of the younger sister’s testimony, calls for caution, the more so since it was natural for her to try to find in Lenin as many ‘family’ traits as possible.⁵³

Firstly, it should be pointed out that Trotsky himself described Vladimir as shy, writing in his autobiography about Vladimir looking at him “softly...with

⁴⁸ M.I., in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 55, p. xxxi.

⁴⁹ ‘Rech’ na traurnom zasedanii Moskovskogo soveta, posviashchennom pamiati Vladimira Il’icha Ul’ianova (Lenina), 7 fevralia 1924 g.’, in *M.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 43; Trotsky, *Young Lenin*, p. 118.

⁵⁰ Trotsky, *Young Lenin*, p. 118. See also Valentinov, who called it “an ideological invention” (Valentinov, *Early Years*, p. 112).

⁵¹ Trotsky, *Young Lenin*, p. 118.

⁵² Trotsky, *Young Lenin*, p. 104 and p. 118. Trotsky, *Diary*, p. 33.

⁵³ Trotsky, *Young Lenin*, p. 201.

that sort of awkward shyness that with him indicate[d] intimacy”.⁵⁴ Secondly, Trotsky overlooked the possibility that Mariia, if not simply affected by the natural desire to emphasise what she viewed as the positive or endearing qualities of a sibling she loved, may well have assigned certain qualities to Vladimir deliberately, to set him up as an example to the public to follow. For example, she wrote: “the people need to know Lenin the man, not just the leader of the working class and of the world socialist revolution – it will help us better ourselves.”⁵⁵ In 1924, in a speech to commemorate Lenin, she said: “we must learn from Vladimir Il’ich’s attentiveness and sensitive attitude to comrades.”⁵⁶

Anna may well have been attempting a similar campaign when she wrote:

[In his letters] one notices the simplicity and the natural manner of Vladimir Il’ich...His tremendous industry, his natural restraint and his tenacity in carrying through what he had undertaken are also apparent here...[as is] Vladimir’s great modesty [and] his ability to be content with little.⁵⁷

Anna certainly hoped to use Lenin’s biography to educational effect when she tried to have information about his Jewish roots published in order to undermine the growing anti-semitism of Russia.

In his assessment of Krupskaja’s memoirs of Lenin, White argues that “one should not expect a wife to be impartial”.⁵⁸ The same applies to reminiscences by sisters. Cultural factors must also be taken into consideration when judging Anna and Mariia’s writing, since they were inevitably influenced by Russian and Soviet traditions relating to the mourning of the dead. Russians believe that it is improper to say anything that might blacken the reputation of the deceased.⁵⁹ Before the Revolution, laments would be composed for the dead by the women of the family, which were “rigidly formulaic”.⁶⁰ For example, dead

⁵⁴ Trotsky, *My Life*, p. 351.

⁵⁵ ‘V Simbirskoe’, in *M.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 38.

⁵⁶ M.I., ‘Rech’ tov. M.I. Ul’ianovoi’, to the Moscow Soviet Plenum, in *Pravda*, 8 February 1924, p. 3.

⁵⁷ A.I., in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 55, pp. xlviil-1.

⁵⁸ White, p. 188.

⁵⁹ Merridale, p. 53 and p. 182.

⁶⁰ Merridale, p. 53.

sons were always described as being “brave and handsome”.⁶¹ We saw this kind of ritual in Ol’ga’s classmate’s reaction to Ol’ga’s death and Anna’s defence of her late father, written in 1894.⁶² Amongst revolutionaries before 1917 and during Soviet times, new social-democratic rituals for the mourning of the dead developed, yet the use of formulaic praising of the deceased continued.⁶³ Revolutionaries were invariably described as being courageous and dedicated, kind to children and pitiless to the “Revolution’s enemies”.⁶⁴ Thus it is important not to assume that what Anna and Mariia wrote was simply the unconscious product of their love and admiration.

However, Anna and Mariia’s biographies of Lenin were not simply laments blending the Russian and Soviet models either. As experienced propagandists and devoted revolutionaries, they often consciously used their position as biographers of Lenin to make political points or to illustrate how people should conduct themselves. Indeed Soviet citizens were exhorted not to weep for the dead, but rather carry on the revolutionary struggle in their place.⁶⁵ Mariia and Anna may well have seen using their writing about Lenin to educate others as part of their continuing support for the building of socialism. In Mariia’s case, the work she produced during her years of disgrace at the Lenin Institute was also a means of demonstrating her return to the Party fold and her submission to Party discipline. If she was to re-establish her political career, her work on Lenin had to be absolutely ‘correct’.

Similarly, it should not be concluded that the sisters were devoted to their role as the keepers of Lenin’s biography to the exclusion of their own work. This part of their work has regularly been celebrated as if it were Anna and Mariia’s greatest achievement. In 1924 Anna’s biographical work on Lenin was said to have “huge historico-biographical value”, even though, at this stage, only her article ‘Vladimir in prison’ had been published.⁶⁶ Later biographers have gone further. Kunetskaia argued that Mariia and Anna did a “great service to the Soviet people” when they published Lenin’s letters to his relatives.⁶⁷

⁶¹ Merridale, p. 53.

⁶² Kunetskaia, p. 16; ‘K stat’e g. V. Nazar’eva’, in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 257.

⁶³ Merridale, p. 182.

⁶⁴ Merridale, p. 53 and p. 182.

⁶⁵ Merridale, p. 109.

⁶⁶ V. Kriazhin, ‘Literatura o Lenine’, in *Krasnaia nov’*, 1924, No. 3, p. 216.

⁶⁷ Kunetskaia, p. 29.

Certainly they were enthusiastic about the creation of Lenin house museums and were often willing to spend time with biographers of Lenin (and to correct them).⁶⁸ However, with their own political agendas and heavy workloads, Anna and Mariia did not always make Lenin's biography their priority, to the surprise of others around them. For example, in his diary entry for 22 September 1928, Ol'minskii wrote:

Yesterday morning I handed my...general conclusions about the volumes of [Lenin's *Collected Works*] to M.I. and N.K. Krupskaia. M.I. answered that she still hadn't read through [the volumes], but N.K. was reading them; but today on the telephone N.K. said that she also hadn't read them. They're both very busy with current questions and obviously too little interested in questions about the publication of Lenin's works.⁶⁹

THE SISTERS' STORY

When Lenin died, *Pravda* publicised for the first time that Anna and Mariia were related to him.⁷⁰ This had a huge impact on the image of the sisters during the remainder of their lives, but also on their legacy and how they have come to be seen in history. Although the sisters' individual legacies differ in certain respects, and have changed over time, they share one key feature: the centrality of Lenin in the portrayal of their lives. This is as much the result of the sisters' writing as that of others. It is understandable that commentators and historians would focus on Lenin the Soviet leader in their work, but it is frustrating that the sisters' own published writing rarely if ever offers an alternative perspective. Of course, there were mitigating factors that made this Lenin-centric approach necessary. By writing about Lenin and acting as the keepers of the Ul'ianov family history, Anna and Mariia were able to raise their personal public profile and perhaps even protect themselves from repressions by Stalin. However, by placing Lenin at the centre of their reminiscences and

⁶⁸ Shaginian, p. 682; Medvedeva, 'Moi vstrechi s Ul'ianovymi', in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 18, l. 1-9.

⁶⁹ Ol'minskii's diary, entry for 22 September 1928, in f. 91, o. 1, ed. khr. 12, l. 33.

⁷⁰ Mikhail Kol'tsov, 'Zhena. Sestra.', and Anon., 'Pokhorony V.I. Lenina', in *Pravda*, 30

highlighting the help and support they gave to their brother, while under-playing and even ignoring completely their own activities, the sisters wrote themselves out of history, or at least wrote a history in which their lives were assumed to have revolved round their famous brother's.

Mariia's link to Lenin was first published in *Pravda* on 26 January 1924, when letters from Rabkors, condoling Mariia on the loss of her brother, and an article by Mikhail Kol'tsov, entitled 'Wife. Sister.', were published in the newspaper.⁷¹ Various features of Kol'tsov's article foreshadowed how the sisters would be portrayed by other commentators and historians, although in this piece he made no reference at all to Anna. In his article Kol'tsov described how Mariia was never more than five paces from Lenin during his leadership, supporting him.⁷² He also emphasised that the Ul'ianov household, meaning Lenin, Krupskaja and Mariia, was an ideal family: "Vladimir Il'ich came to us from the future...His family – his wife, his sister – is also a family from the future communist world."⁷³

At this stage the ideal family, as promoted by the Soviet state, was still one in which the personal was less important than the public role and duty of building socialism. Kol'tsov stressed that, as good communists, Mariia and Nadezhda continued to work throughout Vladimir's illness, leaving him to go to work any time he seemed to be feeling a little better.⁷⁴ In 1924, Kol'tsov was also able to write about the women's own political careers, before and after the Revolution, summing them up as follows: "Nadezhda Konstantinovna taught Russia, an illiterate country of workers and peasants, to read. Mariia Il'ichna taught the working class to write."⁷⁵

During the mid to late 1920s Mariia's political image was widely reported and celebrated (as it had been before 1924), but now her similarities to Lenin or her devotion to him and his ideas were also stressed. On 5 May 1927 *Pravda* workers wrote a piece about Mariia praising her.⁷⁶ Because Mariia had refused

January 1924, p. 3.

⁷¹ Letter, Section of Red Directors at the journal *Predpriiatie to Pravda*, in *Pravda*, 26 January 1924, p. 3 and Kol'tsov, in *Pravda*, 30 January 1924, p. 2.

⁷² Kol'tsov, in *Pravda*, 30 January 1924, p. 2.

⁷³ Kol'tsov, in *Pravda*, 30 January 1924, p. 2.

⁷⁴ Kol'tsov, in *Pravda*, 30 January 1924, p. 2.

⁷⁵ Kol'tsov, in *Pravda*, 30 January 1924, p. 2.

⁷⁶ 'Letter', N. Bukharin and 42 others (many of whom wrote in *Sekretar' "Pravdy"*) to M.I., in *Pravda*, 5 May 1927, p. 3.

any individual celebration of her work, the letter said, the authors had had to resort to this 'letter' to the editorial board to highlight Mariia's work for the newspaper.⁷⁷ Still moderate in how it portrayed Mariia's work for *Pravda*, the letter described Mariia as a "cog" in the machine of the newspaper, who had worked for ten years on all "day-to-day editorial work".⁷⁸ More effusive was the praise for her Rabkor work:

As the first organiser and one of the most distinguished leaders of this renowned movement, Mariia Il'inichna always leads a tireless struggle for the protection of the health of its revolutionary, Leninist principles, and against unhealthy deviations in it...Remembering Mariia Il'inichna's services to the Party and the working class, to the million-strong mass of *Pravda* readers, we send to our dear friend and comrade warm greetings and the confident wish of many, many years of such brilliant, fruitful work.⁷⁹

Two factors changed Mariia's official image during the 1930s and for the rest of Stalin's leadership: firstly, and most importantly, Mariia fell from political grace and was removed from *Pravda*. Although Mariia continued to work for the Soviet government, references to her earlier roles lessened. It was however safe and desirable to write about Mariia as Lenin's closest helper and staunchest supporter and increasingly reminiscences and biographical works about Mariia focussed on this aspect of her life. Secondly, the Soviet concept of the ideal family had shifted back to some extent to a more traditional model, in which women were to be carers and nurturers once more, and this served to reinforce the desirability of portraying Mariia as Lenin's assistant.⁸⁰

Thereafter, Mariia was written about less as a political actor; if there was a reference to her political career, it was brief and neutral and rarely related to her pre-revolutionary work. In the page devoted to the 5 May, *Den' Pechati*

⁷⁷ 'Letter', in *Pravda*, 5 May 1927, p. 3.

⁷⁸ 'Letter', in *Pravda*, 5 May 1927, p. 3.

⁷⁹ 'Letter', in *Pravda*, 5 May 1927, p. 3.

⁸⁰ Lynne Attwood, 'Rationality versus Romanticism: Representations of Women in the Stalinist Press', in *Gender in Russian History and Culture*, ed. by Linda Edmondson, (Basingstoke:

(Day of the Press), in *Pravda* no mention of Mariia was made in 1928, though her career had been celebrated regularly on that day since the first one in 1923.⁸¹ Nor was she mentioned on 5 May 1930 in an article about the Rabsel'kor movement.⁸² In an article about M. Kol'tsov's ten years of work at *Pravda*, his working relationship with Mariia was not referred to, even though he had celebrated her work in 1924.⁸³ M.S. Shaginian's "warmly written" book about the Ul'ianov family, which, unusually, was approved by Mariia and Nadezhda, was banned during Mariia's lifetime.⁸⁴

Mariia's own writing reinforced this trend. She no longer contributed articles on political subjects to *Pravda*; these had always been rare, but now they ceased altogether.⁸⁵ Mariia's reminiscences of Lenin were still published in the newspaper, but even the appearance of these decreased. In the years 1935-1937, she wrote no reminiscences of Lenin for the anniversary of his death on 21 January, which was a national day of mourning, nor for the celebrations of the revolutions, another two occasions when articles by Mariia had often appeared in the past.⁸⁶

Mariia's literary works were in the main devoted to biographies of her parents and siblings, and to speeches and articles (for Russian publications other than *Pravda*) about Lenin, rather than to autobiographical works.⁸⁷ In her

Palgrave, 2001), p. 160.

⁸¹ Mariia was celebrated in *Pravda* on Den' pechati in 1923-1927. See I. Lomskii, 'Chelovek kotorii organizoval rabochikh korrespondentov', in *Pravda*, 5 May 1923, p. 5; Letter, Rabochie-korrespondenty "Pravdy" to M.I., 'Nash privet', in *Pravda*, 4 May 1924, p. 3; 'Rabkory "Pravdy" – Marii Il'ichne', in *Pravda*, 5 May 1925, p. 6; Mariia's speech at the Third Rabkor conference, 'Zadachi rabsel'korovskogo dvizheniia' was printed in *Pravda*, 5 May 1926, p. 6; Letter, *Pravda* workers to M.I., in *Pravda*, 5 May 1927, p. 3; in *Pravda* on 5 May 1928, p. 4, there was one reference to Mariia in an article by M. Savel'ev, 'Oktiabr'skaia "Pravda"', but no reference at all to Mariia in an article, on the same page, which was entitled 'Rabsel'kory "Pravdy"'.
3.

⁸² B. Gorelik, 'Rabsel'korovskogo dvizhenie pered XVI parts'ezdom', in *Pravda*, 5 May 1930, p. 3.

⁸³ I. Ran, 'Desiat' let raboty v "Pravde" tov. M.E. Kol'tsova', in *Pravda*, 12 August 1930, p. 5.

⁸⁴ Evgenov, 'Svetloi obraz', in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 319, l. 71.

⁸⁵ Articles by Mariia on political subjects (as opposed to reminiscences of Lenin) can be found in *Pravda* throughout the years 1917-1929, but after that none appear until 1933, when Mariia began writing about the Bureau of Complaints.

⁸⁶ See, for example, M.I., 'Pervoe pokushenie na V.I. Lenina', in *Pravda*, 14 January 1925, p. 1; M.I., 'Poiski Il'icha v pervie dni iuliia 1917 goda (Otryvki iz vospominanii)', in *Pravda*, 21 January 1927, p. 5; M.I., 'O napadenii na V.I. Lenina banditov (Otryvki iz vospominanii)', in *Pravda*, 21 January 1930, p. 4.

⁸⁷ See, for example, M.I., *Otets Vladimira Il'icha Lenina Il'ia Nikolaevich Ul'ianov (1831-1886)*, (Moscow: Sotsekgiz, 1931). Mariia also wrote introductions to *Pis'ma k rodnym*, a collection of Lenin's letters to his family, published in 1934 and to Anna's *Vospominaniia ob Il'iche*, also published in 1934.

writings about Lenin, Mariia rarely referred to herself at all. When she did appear, it was almost never in a political role and more usually as a devoted and loving sister, who helped Vladimir in a familial context. She often wrote about her childhood memories of Vladimir, emphasising how he helped her with her studies, how much authority he had over her and how much she loved him, more than her other siblings.⁸⁸ In *My zhili druzhno* (We Lived [together] Harmoniously) she wrote: “Vladimir Il’ich was always my defender...His authority over me was very great.”⁸⁹

She almost never mentioned her political views, writing in her introduction to Volume 55 of Lenin’s *Collected Works* only that:

Vladimir Il’ich was not only a blood relation but was related to us by his views and convictions. All the family...were at that time Social-Democrats, supported the revolutionary wing of the Party, took a greater or lesser part in revolutionary activities, were keenly interested in the life of the Party and were delighted by its successes and grieved by its failures.⁹⁰

Mariia emphasised the help she showed Vladimir in “getting his writings published” and she drew attention to the care and support she had given him, especially during the dangerous and traumatic incidents when attempts were on his life.⁹¹

Her minimal autobiographical writing does nothing to redress the imbalance caused by the focus on Lenin and the consistent glossing over of her career. Only one article written in 1925 might be seen as vaguely autobiographical, in which Mariia wrote about the work of *Pravda* after the February Revolution, but even in that she referred only briefly to her contribution.⁹²

⁸⁸ See, for example, M.I., ‘Rech’ na traurom zasedanii moskovskogo soveta, posviashchennom pamiati Vladimira Il’icha Ul’ianova (Lenina), 7 fevralia 1924’; ‘Akkuratnost’, punktual’nost’, chetkost’; and ‘Besedy s uchashchimisia 364-ii shkoly g. Moskvy 23 noiabria 1936 g. (stenogramma), in *M.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 43, p. 139 and p. 146 respectively.

⁸⁹ ‘My zhili druzhno’, in *M.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 42.

⁹⁰ M.I., in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 55, p. xiii.

⁹¹ M.I., in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 55, p. xxiii; M.I., in *Pravda*, 14 January 1925, p. 1; M.I., in *Pravda*, 21 January 1930, p. 4.

⁹² In 1925 Mariia wrote about the work of *Pravda* after the February Revolution and referred,

She wrote one short autobiography in 1935, but it was not published until 1968 (on the 90th anniversary of her birthday).⁹³ Even though it was a private document during Mariia's lifetime, it was only two pages long and gave only the barest facts of her revolutionary career. Neutral in its account, it gave neither insight into her political views nor any detail about her work. For example, of one of her most active periods, when Mariia worked for the Central Committee in Kiev and then for the Central Committee abroad in Geneva, she wrote only:

In Kiev I worked for the Russian organisation of *Iskra*. At the start of the winter of 1904, I was arrested in Kiev as a member of the Central Committee of the Party and, after my release at the end of 1904, went to Geneva, where Vladimir Il'ich was living. In the year of the first revolution I worked in Petersburg...⁹⁴

Mariia also stressed her devotion to Lenin in this work, writing: "From my childhood I loved Vladimir Il'ich more than all my other brothers and sisters, and his influence over me was very great throughout my life."⁹⁵ Mariia did write a short piece explaining her behaviour in certain incidents later in her career; this was also unpublished in her lifetime.⁹⁶ This is far more detailed, but does not represent a consistent attempt on Mariia's part to write a full record of her life.

That Mariia barely wrote any autobiographical material can only partly be put down to her fall from political grace, since she never wrote such material, even while Lenin was alive. Evgenov put Mariia's silence on her pre-revolutionary activities down to "modesty".⁹⁷ Certainly there is one letter in which Anna seems to be encouraging a modest Mariia, writing: "It's really good that you [and Dmitrii] are both writing memoirs! You should write more, and more boldly. You and Mitia have fresher memories and must write."⁹⁸

briefly, to her own contribution (M.I., 'Vozrozhdenie "Pravdy" posle fevralia 1917 goda', 5 May 1925, p. 1).

⁹³ M.I., 'Moi put' v revoliutsiiu', in *Pravda*, 18 February 1968, p. 3.

⁹⁴ M.I., in *Pravda*, 18 February 1968, p. 3.

⁹⁵ M.I., in *Pravda*, 18 February 1968, p. 3.

⁹⁶ M.I., in *Izvestiia CC KPSS*, 1989, No. 12, pp. 197-198

⁹⁷ Evgenov, 'Svetloi obraz', in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 319, l. 75. It is a common feature of women's memoirs that there is "an unwillingness or inability to assert an independent ego" (Carol Hanbery MacKay, 'Biography as Reflected Autobiography: The Self-Creation of Anne Thackeray Ritchie', in *Revealing Lives*, p. 65).

⁹⁸ Letter, A.I. to M.I., 29 August 1924, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 131, l. 101.

On a practical level, the factor of time probably played a role. Mariia worked consistently long hours at *Pravda* and the Rabkor movement and if reports are to be believed worked even harder at the Complaints Bureau. She was working on the day of her death, even though she was fifty-nine and very frail.⁹⁹ Considering too the volume of material she produced about Lenin, it is not surprising if she did not have time to write much about herself.

The total lack of autobiographical material about Mariia was noted by others, at the time and later. Mariia was approached on two occasions by the Saratov Krai Committee to write her reminiscences of her work in the Saratov underground between 1910-13 when she was one of the leading figures of the group. The committee warned that “despite the exceptional significance of this historico-party information, it is, in our time [1934], totally unknown and unpublished”.¹⁰⁰ Unfortunately Mariia’s replies have not been preserved, but she clearly turned down the request at least once, for it was repeated.¹⁰¹ Of the 1930s, Toom remembered: “In those years we of course knew little about Mariia Il’inichna’s young revolutionary activities. We didn’t ask her about anything like that, and she herself didn’t go into such reminiscences.”¹⁰²

Anna’s experience differed somewhat from Mariia’s. Always a less well known figure, less celebrated in *Pravda*, she was given a passing mention as Vladimir’s sister for the first time in an article describing Lenin’s funeral.¹⁰³ After his death, Anna’s connection to Lenin soon became well-known through her numerous articles and reminiscences about him, in which she tended to use her maiden name to write, rather than her married one, presumably to emphasise that she was related to the late leader.

Unlike her sister, Anna wrote a great deal of autobiographical material, which was often published. Two factors might account for this difference. Firstly, Anna was semi-retired for the last eleven years of her life and although ill, she would have had some time to write about herself. Even then though finding the time was difficult. She confessed to Mariia: “I still intend to write

⁹⁹ Diagilev, p. 59.

¹⁰⁰ Letter, Saratov Krai Committee to M.I., 26 February 1934, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 216, l. 3.

¹⁰¹ Letter, Saratov Krai Committee to M.I., 10 February 1934, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 216, l. 1.

Letter, Saratov Krai Committee to M.I., 26 February 1934, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 216, l. 3.

¹⁰² O. Toom, in *Sekretar’ “Pravdy”*, p. 301.

¹⁰³ Anon., ‘Pokhorony V.I. Lenina’, in *Pravda*, 30 January 1924, p. 3.

something of my memoirs, but I don't know when I'll get round to it."¹⁰⁴ Secondly, Anna was never as involved in politics as her sister, nor disgraced politically, and therefore more able to write about her work. However, Anna's autobiographical writing is also problematic and far from complete. Like Mariia she seems to have suffered from a lack of confidence or from modesty when writing. She wrote, for example, to Mariia that her first attempts at writing her memoirs seemed "so childish" that they did not seem "worth printing".¹⁰⁵

Thus, although Anna's works have been invaluable for this thesis, they fail to give a full insight into Anna's political views (with the exception of perhaps her article describing her work at *Rabotnitsa* before the Revolution) or into her personal life.¹⁰⁶ They also tend to portray Anna's life as revolving round Lenin, devoted as they are, in the main, to her relationship with her brother and events centring around him. For example, in Anna's article about her underground correspondence written from St Petersburg, she devotes most of the text to how she and Lenin disagreed, rather than to her own activities in the capital.¹⁰⁷

Anna did write an autobiography, and although it gives more details than her sister's, it is still a neutral, factual account of her life in only four pages, with no indication of her political beliefs or any real insight into her activities, both before and after the Revolution. For example, of one of her most active periods, in Saratov, Anna wrote only:

After 1910 I moved to Saratov, where I participated in the legal democratic newspaper *Privolzhskaia gazeta* and then the popular *Saratovskaia kopeika*. I also wrote pamphlets for the Saratov committee. On the 12 May I was arrested with my sister Mariia Il'ichna and several members of the Saratov committee. But we were in prison for only two weeks.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ Letter, A.I. to M.I., 23 June 1924, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 131, l. 75.

¹⁰⁵ Letter, A.I. to M.I., 29 July 1924, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 131, l. 94.

¹⁰⁶ A.I., in *Iz epokhi*, pp. 63-78.

¹⁰⁷ A.I., in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1930, No. 7-8, pp. 177-195. This is a common approach by female memoirists who are connected to "a great man", they "assess themselves, just as society [has] assessed them, as 'relative creatures'" (Yalom, in *Revealing Lives*, p. 53).

¹⁰⁸ 'Iz avtobiografii Anny Il'ichny Ul'ianovoi-Elizarovoi', first printed in *Proletarskaia*

Anna's *Delo I marta* gives more insight into her character, but her style is highly self-deprecating. Anna gives few details about her own independent university experiences and highlights instead her difficulties in coping with university, her lack of confidence in her intellectual ability and Aleksandr's criticisms of her lack of "social convictions".¹⁰⁹ Yet, as I discussed in Chapter Two, Anna did become involved in the radical student community and was familiar with revolutionary literature and ideas.

Anna's writing about Lenin differs slightly from Mariia's, in that Anna refers to herself much more often and in a political context. However, even in these political scenes, often Lenin plays an active role and Anna a passive one, with little indication given of Anna's own career. In her writing about the underground years, Anna tends to appear when she listened to her brother's views, interpretation of events and plans. For example, she wrote about how he spoke to her "with great ardour and fervour about the fundamentals of Marxist theory" and how he told her about his plans for a legal newspaper.¹¹⁰ She also described how she listened to his planned tactics for the revolutionary struggle shortly before his arrest in 1895.¹¹¹ However, Anna's letters to Vladimir during this period make it clear that the two exchanged political information and ideas.

Anna's articles for *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia* which cover her time at Istpart and the early work of Sovnarkom give slightly more information about Anna's political views, how she campaigned for children's welfare and about how she influenced the transfer of Istpart from Narkompros to the Central Committee. Yet even these place Lenin at the centre of events, as chair of Sovnarkom resolving Anna's difficulties, and leave out a detailed discussion of Anna's daily work as head of the DPC or as a member of Istpart.¹¹²

Anna gives little insight into her political views, describing in terms very similar to her sister that she was "close to Vladimir Il'ich not only by blood but also in [her] convictions".¹¹³ Also like Mariia, Anna highlighted the domestic help she gave to her brother. On more than one occasion she wrote about buying

revoliutsiia, 1935, No. 6, printed in full in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 189.

¹⁰⁹ A.I., in *Delo I marta*, p. 93.

¹¹⁰ 'Zhizn' v Kazani', in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 120; A.I., 'Iz vystupleniia o V.I. Lenine v godovshinu ego smerti', speech made in January 1925, in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 175.

¹¹¹ 'Bor'ba s "ekonomistami"', in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 136.

¹¹² A.I., in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1930, No. 5, pp. 156-162; A.I., in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1929, No. 11, pp. 87-91.

clothes for her brother¹¹⁴ and highlighted his dependence on his female relatives for help in this, writing:

Volodia was always highly unpractical in everyday life, he did not like buying things for himself and never learnt how to do so, and Mother or myself usually looked after these matters. In this respect he was exactly like Father, who relied wholly on Mother for choosing and ordering clothes for him and was superbly indifferent to what he wore. He got used to his clothes, and left to himself, would never have parted from them, it seemed. So in this too, Volodia was his father all over again.¹¹⁵

It is interesting that Anna too felt the need to emphasise the help, care and support she gave to her brother. Although this kind of emphasis in commentators' writing from the time can be explained by a partial return of Soviet notions of the ideal woman to a more traditional model, there is perhaps a more complex set of reasons for it to appear in Anna and Mariia's work. Certainly the images of the ideal woman being propagated by the Soviet regime might have made it desirable to the sisters to highlight the care they had shown Vladimir. However, perhaps Anna and Mariia were simply describing what, as we have seen, was a routine and automatic part of their lives. The emancipation of women promised by the Revolution may have been felt by the sisters in that they were able to hold government posts, but it had had little impact on their (indeed on many women's) home lives. What is problematic for historians is that the sisters do not give equal or more attention in their writing to what was arguably the aspect of their lives to which they devoted the most time, their revolutionary and political careers.¹¹⁶ In view of this it is perhaps a little more

¹¹³ A.I., in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Volume 55, p. xxxvi.

¹¹⁴ 'Nachalo revoliutsionnoi raboty Vladimira Il'icha Ul'ianova (N. Lenina)', and 'Iz predisloviia k "Pis'mam V.I. Lenina k rodnym (1910-1916)"', in *A.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 130. and p. 177 respectively.

¹¹⁵ A.I., in *Reminiscences of Lenin*, p. 44.

¹¹⁶ Male autobiographers rarely devote space to discussing their homelives. See, for example, Valentinov's *Encounters*, in which he often refers to "personal reasons" for his actions but gives no further details and moves on to what he sees as historically significant information. Nor is this only a Russian phenomenon; male autobiographers of various nationalities do the same thing (Barbara Heldt, *Terrible Perfection: Women and Russian Literature*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), p. 67).

understandable that the sisters have often been (mistakenly) judged as politically or historically insignificant when so much of their autobiographical and memoir work is devoted to simply describing what they did for Lenin.

Of course, Anna and Mariia may have consciously decided to write their memoirs in this way, with their potential readership very much in mind. Both had literary and journalistic experience. Anna's *Rabotnitsa* work and Mariia's leadership of the Rabkor movement had given them a clear insight into what interested the masses. Above all, their readership wished to know about Lenin. More specifically, just as the sisters clearly chose to portray Vladimir in a positive light, it is also possible that they revealed aspects of their lives that would gain the sympathy of their audience. It is an irony that the works that would write Anna and Mariia out of history made them popular with the Soviet public in their own time.

THE LEGACY

Despite Mariia's fall from grace and the fact that Anna had retired from political life, the two women continued to be celebrated by members of the public, partly because people remembered their earlier revolutionary and political careers, partly because of their work to help the people and finally because of their publicised relationship with Lenin. The two even began to be associated with the 'good old days' just after the Revolution, when hopes were high and hardship was thought to be temporary, before Lenin's death and Stalin's rise to power. Their deaths revealed just how strong public feeling was for them, and once the Stalinist regime had ended, there was renewed interest in these two women. Indeed, mini-personality cults were created around them, particularly around Mariia.

In her lifetime, Mariia continued to be publicly celebrated, despite her political fall from grace. Just as the smear campaign was starting against her in 1929, Mariia was invited to attend a conference of workers and servicemen at the Dzerzhinskii Factory No. 12.¹¹⁷ Although Mariia could not attend this event, she wrote back a long reply, which presumably reflected the content of the speech

¹¹⁷ Letter, M.I. to "the workers and servicemen of factory No. 12", 1929, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 233, l. 1. There is no date on the letter, but Mariia refers to the 12th year of the soviet regime.

she would have made, had she gone. While she noted that there were still problems within the USSR, Mariia highlighted its achievements and said finally that “there is not and cannot be...a path” other than the one “along which, in this time, our Party and the Soviet government is going, towards the full freedom of the workers”.¹¹⁸ By 1929, there was little else she could have said that would have been acceptable within the regime, yet the fact that Mariia had been invited suggests that it was her voice of encouragement the workers wanted to hear.

On another occasion, Mariia was asked to visit a factory school which had been founded and named after her in 1922, and which was celebrating its anniversary. In the letter of request, signed by fifty-eight people, Mariia’s name was referred to as “beloved”, despite the fact that it had been attacked by Stalin. In fact, the letter makes it clear that Mariia’s name had been a source of inspiration throughout, and regardless of, the period of her disgrace. The letter continues:

Over its years of existence, a thousand young warriors have passed through this school, each of them inspired by and rejoicing at the honoured name of Mariia Il’ichna Ul’ianova. Under this name the school has conquered, is conquering and will conquer in the struggle for qualified specialists...We deeply believe that your coming will still more inspire the hearts of the young warriors in the spirit of courage and determination in the struggle for the creation of a classless, socialist society.¹¹⁹

Mariia continued to be remembered fondly by colleagues from *Pravda* despite the fact that she was forced out of it. The Ershov family sent Mariia birthday wishes, and clearly saw her both as a friend and as a political figure. The Ershovs’ children wrote:

We congratulate you on your birthday and wish you many, many more years to prosper and to work for the benefit of the great

¹¹⁸ Letter, M.I. to “the workers and servicemen of factory No. 12”, 1929, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 233, l. 1

¹¹⁹ Letter, The Mariia Il’ichna Ul’ianova Kolomenskii factory school to M.I., 12 March 1934,

proletarian revolution. We study hard and are trying to attain even better success. We send you drawings and flowers.¹²⁰

Their parents also included a line or two, adding: “Congratulations on your birthday and we wish you not less than one hundred years of happy life.”¹²¹

Someone even wrote to Mariia wanting to name his child after her. He described his daughter as a “surprisingly lively, happy child” and implied that because she was so similar in character to Mariia, she deserved the same name.¹²² Other letters from this time show even greater deference to Mariia. E. Einarovicha wrote to her in 1936:

I...love you as the sister of V.I. Lenin, whom I adore...It seems to me that our beloved Vladimir Il'ich is near to us, amongst us, while you, Nadezhda Krupskaja and your brother [Dmitrii] are alive. You all are little parts of him. You are all dear of course! You see, you were his beloved “Mariasha”! You were with him when attempts were made on his life¹²³ and when he died. I would really like to see you, to see at least one of the Ul'ianovs.¹²⁴

Anna was less publicly acclaimed, which perhaps suggests that being a prominent biographer of Lenin was not enough to guarantee recognition, one needed also to have had a political prominence or involvement in mass movements, such as Mariia had enjoyed, to ensure it. Nonetheless, she was still recognised. During one of Anna's trips to the Volga in 1931, she involved herself in the preserving of a school and then was honoured with it being named after her father, who had been a school inspector.¹²⁵ When Anna visited the Lenin house museum in Ul'ianovsk she was feted. Although Anna simply stayed

in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 233, l. 2.

¹²⁰ Letter, Olia and Lena Ershov to M.I., undated, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 267, l. 108. There is no date, though the letter is amongst other letters from the 1930s.

¹²¹ Letter, Ershovs to M.I., undated, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 267, l. 108. There is no date, though the letter is amongst other letters from the 1930s.

¹²² Letter to M.I., undated, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 271, l. 39.

¹²³ Einarovicha would have known about this because of Mariia's article ‘O napadenii na V.I. Lenina banditov (Otryvki iz vospominanii)’, in *Pravda*, 21 January 1930, p. 4.

¹²⁴ Letter, E. Einarovicha to M.I., 19 May 1936, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 264, l. 1. She does not mention Anna Ul'ianova because she had died in 1935.

¹²⁵ Letter, A.I. to M.I., 2 June 1931, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 132, l. 102.

with an old family friend, she was given a huge send off when she left by steamboat.¹²⁶ Flowers were put in her cabin, and museum workers and pioneers gathered to see her off.¹²⁷

That Anna continued to be remembered by many was clear when she died in 1935. Mariia received numerous letters, which condoled her on her loss and which also revealed how people remembered Anna. For example, I. Gorbunov-Posadich wrote to Mariia after Anna's death praising her work in children's literature and arguing that a "full biography [of Anna] must be written".¹²⁸ There were others who remembered Anna's revolutionary activities before 1917. For example, a group of "stariki" (old men) as they called themselves wrote to Mariia to condole her on Anna's death because they had "worked with [Anna] and under her leadership" in 1905 and 1906.¹²⁹ Another woman wrote to condole Mariia on the death of Anna pointing out that she was "very much indebted to [Anna]".¹³⁰

It is also indicative of Anna's continuing status within the regime that she was given a state funeral. On 21 October Anna's ashes were displayed in a government meeting hall on Red Square which was open to the public between 10am and 10pm.¹³¹ The ashes were removed that night and taken by procession to October Station to be taken to Leningrad to be buried.¹³² *Pravda* wrote that tens of thousands attended the meeting of mourning held in Insurrection Square in Leningrad and Mariia estimated that 100,000 followed the funeral march.¹³³

Anna was also publicly commemorated in the pages of *Pravda* over several days. On 20 October 1935 Anna's death was announced in *Pravda*. Her photograph was published alongside an obituary and two reminiscences of her.¹³⁴ These articles reveal what was deemed acceptable to write about Lenin's elder sister, and in considering what was celebrated and what was neglected, the early

¹²⁶ Medvedeva, 'Moi vstrechi s Ul'ianovymi', in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 18, l. 6 and l. 9.

¹²⁷ Medvedeva, 'Moi vstrechi s Ul'ianovymi', in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 18, l. 6 and l. 9.

¹²⁸ Letter, I. Gorbunov-Posadich to M.I. and N.K., no date, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 245, l. 1. This letter was obviously written around the time of Anna's death in October 1935.

¹²⁹ Letter, S.S. Nazarov, A.I. Kam'kov, G.K. Beliaev and others to M.I., October 1935, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 245, l. 2.

¹³⁰ Letter, L.I. Kazakova to M.I., 13 December 1935, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 268, l. 32.

¹³¹ 'Ot komissii po organizatsii pokhoron A.I. Elizarovoi-Ul'ianovoi', in *Pravda*, 21 October 1935, p. 1.

¹³² 'Pokhorony A.I. Elizarovoi-Ul'ianovoi', in *Pravda*, 24 October 1935, p. 2; Letter, M.I. to D.I., 22 October 1935, in *M.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 369.

¹³³ 'Pokhorony A.I. Elizarovoi-Ul'ianovoi', in *Pravda*, 24 October 1935, p. 2; Letter, M.I. to D.I., 22 October 1935, in *M.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 369.

¹³⁴ 'Zhiznennii put' Anny Il'inichny'; M. Savel'ev, 'Pamiati stareishego chlena nashei partii';

roots of Anna's image in history can be found. That she was Vladimir's sister and a senior member of the Party was made clear. A detailed, but neutral chronology of her underground activities, including her correspondence and newspaper work was set out. Her post-1917 career was dealt with very vaguely with only the briefest references to her work at the DPC and Istpart. Her biographies of Aleksandr and Vladimir were also mentioned.¹³⁵ The obituary closed praising Anna as "a rock-hard Bolshevik, one of the warriors of the old guard, who, under the leadership of Lenin and Stalin, grew in the millions-strong army of world Bolshevism".¹³⁶ Bizarrely, the official obituary, which was reproduced in other newspapers, claimed that Anna had taken part in Aleksandr's conspiracy to assassinate the Tsar (even though Anna herself had denied this in her reminiscences in *Delo 1 marta*).¹³⁷

That the 'rules' of the official obituary were followed is shown in a letter from Stasova and others commemorating Anna, which was published on 21 October. In this letter, the authors use almost identical phrasing as the official obituary, including describing Anna as a "rock-hard Bolshevik".¹³⁸ Another wrote a similar description of Anna, adding that she was always "ready, it seemed, to take upon herself the most mundane work and any Party assignment, fulfilling them with exceptional conscientiousness".¹³⁹ A. Lezhava gave more details about Anna's contribution to the Saratov organisation between 1908 and 1910, but also stressed Anna's "exceptional affection for Vladimir Il'ich".¹⁴⁰

Further reminiscences about Anna were published the following day and these gave far more information about Anna's career than her official obituary.¹⁴¹ Anna's old comrade-in-arms, Mitskevich, wrote about Anna's early work in Moscow. Although he emphasised Lenin's involvement, he gave full details about Anna's translation and correspondence work, as well as of the fact that she

and A. Lezhava, 'Chutkii, otzyvchivii tovarishch', in *Pravda*, 20 October 1935, p. 3.

¹³⁵ 'Zhiznennii put' Anny Il'ichny', in *Pravda*, 20 October 1935, p. 3.

¹³⁶ 'Zhiznennii put' Anny Il'ichny', in *Pravda*, 20 October 1935, p. 3.

¹³⁷ 'Zhiznennii put' Anny Il'ichny', in *Pravda*, 20 October 1935, p. 3; 'Zhiznennii put' Anny Il'ichny', in *Stal'naiia magistr'al'* (*Organ politotdela Ekaterinskoi zheleznoi dorogi*), 21 October 1935, p. 1.

¹³⁸ Letter, Dimitrov, Manuil'skii, Kuusinen, Pik, Moskvina, Stasova, Kirsanova, Gopner, Tskhakaia and Anvel't to *Pravda*, 'Stoikii borets za kommunizm', in *Pravda*, 21 October 1935, p. 2.

¹³⁹ Savel'ev, in *Pravda*, 20 October 1935, p. 3.

¹⁴⁰ Lezhava, in *Pravda*, 20 October 1935, p. 3.

¹⁴¹ 'Proshchanie v Gorkhakh', S. Mitskevich, 'Pamiati stareishei bol'shevichki', and A.D.

had kept Mitskevich supplied with Marxist literature while in prison.¹⁴² An article by A.D. Kalinina, one of Anna's colleagues at the DPC, gave details about her work there, the various conferences she had organised and the children's homes she had inspected.¹⁴³ Just as Lenin was often held up as a teacher, Kalinina concluded: "Here was a genuine pedagogue, from whom we must learn how to work with children."¹⁴⁴

The following year, Kudelli, Anna's old comrade and colleague, wrote a long biography of Anna in *Krasnaia letopis'*. Although she dealt with Anna's political career, Kudelli also included the following:

It is also vital to mention the purely motherly care with which Anna Il'inichna surrounded Lenin on his arrival in Russia. Did he need a new coat? She bought a new one and hid the old one so that he did not wear it again.¹⁴⁵

It is interesting to note that Kudelli was the woman Anna called "an elementary madam" and refused to work with in 1918, yet her biography of Anna was very sympathetic and celebratory. Perhaps Anna's comments did not reflect their relationship and the two were good friends. However, if the two did have a poor relationship it demonstrates beautifully the way in which few people will speak ill of the dead. Anna was laid to rest, according to her wish, in Volkovo Cemetery in St Petersburg, where Ol'ga, her mother and her husband were all buried.¹⁴⁶

When Mariia died, a huge state funeral was arranged for her, suggesting that despite her earlier political disgrace, the Party had to recognise her popularity. By Stalin's own decision, Mariia was buried in the Kremlin wall, and the committee set up to arrange the funeral suggested that 35-40,000 workers should be organised to amass in Red Square and along the procession of Mariia's funeral.¹⁴⁷ This was also done.¹⁴⁸ Some efforts were also made however to try

Kalinina, 'Anna Il'inichna i deti', in *Pravda*, 21 October 1935, p. 2.

¹⁴² Mitskevich, in *Pravda*, 21 October 1935, l. 2.

¹⁴³ Kalinina, in *Pravda*, 21 October 1935, p. 2.

¹⁴⁴ Kalinina, in *Pravda*, 21 October 1935, p. 2.

¹⁴⁵ Kudelli, in *Krasnaia letopis'*, 1936, No. 1, p. 204.

¹⁴⁶ Letter M.I. to D.I., 22 October 1935, in *M.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 369.

¹⁴⁷ N. Antipov sent a request to Stalin and Molotov that they decide where Mariia was to be

to minimise coverage of her political career (even if they were not always successful). Initially, Mariia's ashes were to be displayed in a room in GUM, not the Columned Hall in the House of Unions as Nadezhda requested.¹⁴⁹ This decision was overturned, and the Columned Hall was used. It was opened to the public on the 14 June until 5pm and an "endless line of people" queued to pay their respects.¹⁵⁰ Mariia's urn was then carried, by Stalin and Molotov, amongst others, to Red Square, which had been closed off to the public from an hour before they were due to arrive.¹⁵¹

Although Mariia's death was announced on the radio with a short description of her life, no reference was made to her work at *Pravda* or the Rabkor, or to her pre-revolutionary career.¹⁵² Instead it named her as "a senior member of the Party and Lenin's closest helper" as well as mentioning her last role as a member of the Bureau of the Commission of Soviet Control.¹⁵³ When a longer biography of Mariia was broadcast on 14 June 1937, her work at *Pravda* was summed up in one line.¹⁵⁴

Krupskaia's obituary of Mariia was the most detailed account of her political career both before and after the Revolution and in some ways pushed the boundaries of acceptability. In a hint that Mariia had not been undermined by her political disgrace Nadezhda wrote that Mariia "knew many people, but she also knew the masses, she remembered the workers, amongst whom at one time she worked, she remembered the Rabkors".¹⁵⁵ Nadezhda stressed that from the split of the Party in 1903 Mariia was a staunch Bolshevik.¹⁵⁶ More than anyone Nadezhda stressed how close Mariia had been to Lenin, how much she

buried, in f. 14, o.1, ed. khr. 39, l.14; Memo, N. Antipov, chair of the committee for the organisation of M.I. Ul'ianova's funeral, to Stalin and Molotov, 13 June 1937, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 39, l. 34.

¹⁴⁸ Photograph of crowds of mourners in Red Square on 14 June 1937, in *Sekretar' "Pravdy"*, p. 289.

¹⁴⁹ Memo, N. Antipov to Stalin and Molotov, 12 June 1937, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 39, l. 14.

¹⁵⁰ 'Pokhorony M.I. Ul'ianovoi. Traurnii miting na Krasnoi ploshchadi', in *Pravda*, 15 June 1937, p. 1.

¹⁵¹ 'Ot komissii po organizatsii pokhorony chlena TsIK Soiuzna SSR, chlena Biuro Komissii Sovetskogo Kontroliia pri SNK SSSR, zaveduiushchei Biuro Zhalob komissii sovetskogo kontroliia tov. Ul'ianovoi M.I.', in *Pravda*, 14 June 1937, p. 1; 'Pokhorony M.I. Ul'ianovoi', in *Pravda*, 15 June 1937, p. 1.

¹⁵² 'Ot tsentral'nogo komiteta vse-soiuznoi kommunisticheskoi partii (bol'shevikov)', in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 39, l. 4.

¹⁵³ 'Ot tsentral'nogo komiteta', in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 39, l. 4.

¹⁵⁴ G. Chubaria, radio speech, biography of M.I., 14 June 1937, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 39, l. 44-48.

¹⁵⁵ N.K., 'Sestra Vladimira Il'icha', in *Pravda*, 13 June 1937, p. 5.

¹⁵⁶ N.K., in *Pravda*, 13 June 1937, p. 5.

had helped him and supported him throughout the underground years and during the difficult times of his leadership, when attempts were made on his life and when he was dying.¹⁵⁷ Nadezhda emphasised the domestic help Mariia had given Lenin and it was an image that captured the imagination of other biographers of Mariia. She wrote: “[Mariia] always surrounded Il’ich with special care: she took trouble over his clothes, nourishment, comfort, over anything so that he would not have to think about trivialities.”¹⁵⁸ Lastly, and perhaps to protect Mariia’s reputation, she concluded: “Mariia Il’ichna especially loved comrade Stalin, remembering the whole of his role in the work of realising Lenin’s testament.”¹⁵⁹ Others too seem to have tried to rehabilitate Mariia’s name in their commemorations of her. In a letter to *Pravda*, Dmitrii, Stasova, the Krzhizhanovskiis, Radchenko, Kudelli, Kalinina, Nadezhda and others wrote that Mariia was a “crystal pure Bolshevik”.¹⁶⁰

Telegrams from across Russia flooded to the Party to commemorate her life, but most of them also followed the formula defined by the Party’s first announcement of her death.¹⁶¹ R. Zemliachka, writing for the Commission of Soviet Control, mentioned Mariia’s first activities as an underground revolutionary but gave no more details of her career except for her post at the Commission and as head of the Bureau of Complaints.¹⁶² In a letter from another group of workers from the Bureau of Complaints Mariia is described as “our deeply loved leader, an old Bolshevik, [and] sister [and] closest helper of Il’ich”.¹⁶³ Mariia’s popularity in and around Moscow was made clear by a telegram, published in *Pravda*, from the Moscow Oblast and Town Committee of

¹⁵⁷ N.K., in *Pravda*, 13 June 1937, p. 5.

¹⁵⁸ N.K., in *Pravda*, 13 June 1937, p. 5.

¹⁵⁹ N.K., in *Pravda*, 13 June 1937, p. 5.

¹⁶⁰ Letter, D.I., N.K., Z.P. Krzhizhanovksaia, G.M. Krzhizhanovskii, E.D. Stasova, M.M. Zosen, I.I. Radchenko, L.A. Fotieva, R.S. Obratsova, P.F. Kudelli, A.D. Kalinina, and 10 others, ‘40 let na boevom postu’, to *Pravda*, in *Pravda*, 13 June 1937, p. 5.

¹⁶¹ The telegrams are collected in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 39, l. 67-102. They were sent from places such as Gorky, Kazan, Rostov, Ivanovskaia oblast’, Leningradskaia oblast’ and Leningrad, Piatigorsk, Voronezha oblast’, Dnepropetrovsk, Minsk, Kuibyshevskia oblast’, Novosibirsk, Tashkent, Sverdlovsk, Simferopol’, Kiev, Khar’khov, Ufa, Arkhangel’sk, Stalingrad, Cheliabinsk. Almost all stressed Mariia’s long service to the Party as well as the help she gave Lenin.

¹⁶² R. Zemliachka, on behalf of the Commission of Soviet Control, ‘Liubimomu drugu i tovarishchu po rabote’, in f. 14, o. 1, ed., khr. 39, l.21. A letter from a worker collective of the Commission of Soviet Control, signed by over 60 people followed a similar format (f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 39, l. 24-25).

¹⁶³ Letter, from Workers of the Bureau of Complaints, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 39, l. 27.

the Communist Party, referring to Mariia as a “devotee” of the Party and calling her death “a heavy loss”.¹⁶⁴

Mariia was consistently portrayed as Lenin’s helper in the various biographical articles that were published in *Pravda* on 13 June. One, which, unusually, praised Mariia’s *Pravda* and Rabkor work, was entitled ‘Lenin’s Faithful Helper’ and described how Lenin “always turned to Mariia” when he needed help while in emigration.¹⁶⁵ Another described Mariia as “Vladimir Il’ich Lenin’s closest friend, his devoted and faithful helper and secretary”.¹⁶⁶ Biographical articles also stressed the influence of Vladimir over Mariia. One described how Mariia joined the revolutionary movement “following her brother’s example”, while another wrote that “from her earliest childhood Mariia Il’inichna was influenced by her [intellectually] brilliant brother Vladimir Il’ich”.¹⁶⁷

At least one person argued that a full biography of Mariia should be published. On 14 June, an old Bolshevik, whom Mariia had helped, called I.M. Dineev, wrote to N. Antipov arguing that a detailed autobiography of Mariia, as well as a collection of reminiscences about her should be published. He closed his letter asserting that: “The memory of Mariia Il’inichna, as a person who worked for the good of the people, will live eternally in the hearts of millions.”¹⁶⁸ No such biography was published until after Stalin’s death. After Krupskiaia’s death and state funeral it was made clear that no more was to be written about her.¹⁶⁹ A similar, if not complete, process occurred regarding Mariia and Anna. In the years between Mariia’s death and Stalin’s, only four articles were published about Mariia.¹⁷⁰ In Anna’s case, no articles on her biography were

¹⁶⁴ Telegram, Moskovskii oblastnoi i Moskovskii gorodskoi komitety VKP(b) to *Pravda*, in *Pravda*, 13 June 1937, p. 4. Indeed, the Moscow committee stood by Mariia even during the smear campaign against her, electing her to the MKK in 1929 (‘Bolshevistskie organizatsii Moskvy i Leningrada – krepchaishaia opora tsentral’nogo komiteta VKP(b). Novii sostav rukovodiashchikh organov’, in *Pravda*, 7 March 1929, p. 4).

¹⁶⁵ ‘Vernii pomoshchnik Lenina’, in *Pravda*, 13 June 1937, p. 4.

¹⁶⁶ Letter, Komissii Sovetskogo Kontroliia pri SNK SSSR, to *Pravda*, ‘Drugii i tovarishchu po rabote’, in *Pravda*, 13 June 1937, p. 5.

¹⁶⁷ ‘Vernii pomoshchnik Lenina’, and ‘Zhiznennii put’ (Kratkaia biografiia), in *Pravda*, 13 June 1937, p. 4.

¹⁶⁸ Letter, I.M. Dineev to N. Antipov, 14 June 1937, in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 39, l. 53-54.

¹⁶⁹ McNeal, p. 295.

¹⁷⁰ N.K., ‘Sestra Il’icha’, in *Zhenshchina strany sotsializma*, ed. by N.K., (Moscow: Partizdat, 1938); M. Vsevolodov, ‘Vernii pomoshchnik Il’icha’, in *Ul’ianovskaia pravda*, 13 July 1948 (the 70th anniversary of Mariia’s birth); M. Krylova, ‘Blizhaishii soratnik V.I. Lenina’, in *Ul’ianovskaia pravda*, 8 March 1945; A. Kitsinskaia, ‘Nezabyvaemoe’, in *Uchitel’skaia gazeta*,

written. I.F. Popov's play about the Ul'ianovs, *The Family*, from 1953 was criticised heavily and was not mentioned in *The Great Soviet Encyclopaedia*, neither in the first publication, nor in subsequent supplements.¹⁷¹ Only the briefest of mentions, if any, were made of the sisters in articles about the underground years.¹⁷²

After Stalin's death in March 1953, and more importantly, after Khrushchev's secret speech in February 1956, however, the sisters' reputations were brought back into public view and even elevated still further, particularly Mariia's, as her political reputation was rehabilitated. After 1956, there was a flood of books about the sisters and references to them in general works.¹⁷³ The first (short) biography of Mariia was published in 1959.¹⁷⁴ Entitled *The Rabsel'kors' Great Friend*, it is a unique work on Mariia because it refers only to her career after 1924, thus preventing a Lenin-centric focus (although he is quoted regularly).¹⁷⁵ Aspects of the personality cult surrounding Mariia are clear and there is, as might be expected, no mention of her clash with Stalin, nor her ignominious removal from *Pravda* and the Rabkor, but this does not detract from the main point of the book, that Mariia was an influential political figure in the Soviet government.¹⁷⁶ The number of stenographic reminiscences about the sisters collected in their personal fonds also suggests a determined effort to preserve their memory.

22 January 1941.

¹⁷¹ Evgenov, 'Svetloi obraz', in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 319, l. 72.

¹⁷² See, for example, A. Piaskovskii, 'K 40-letiiu vykhoda v svet "Iskry"', in *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 1940, p. 7 and p. 13.

¹⁷³ Alongside Mariia, Anna was mentioned in I. Vasin, *Sotial-demokraticheskoe dvizhenie v Moskve*, (Moscow: "Moskovskii rabochii, 1955); Anna's article in *Molodie gody V.I. Lenina*, (Moscow: "Molodaia gvardiia", 1957) was reissued. Also published were: E. Stasova, 'Zhenshchiny sem'i Ul'ianovykh', in *Sovetskaia zhenshchina*, 1956, No. 4, pp. 4-6; G. Lozgachev-Elizarov, *Nezabyvaemoe*, (Saratov: Saratovskoe kn. iz-vo, 1957); G. Lozgachev, 'Nezabyvaemie vstrechi', in *Iunost'*, 1957, No. 1, pp. 84-91; 'Serdechnaia zabota o cheloveke: Pis'ma Anny Il'inichny Ul'ianovoi', in *Sovetskaia Rossiia*, 19 September 1956; Arenin, 'Dorogie nashemu serdtsu imena', in *Ul'ianovskaia pravda*, 30 September 1956; N. Nechvolodova and L. Reznichenko, *Iunost' Lenina*, (Povest' M.: "Molodaia gvardiia, 1957); L. Fotieva, *Iz zhizni Lenina*, (Moscow: 1956); V. Dridzo, 'Nadezhda Konstantinovna', in *Novii mir*, 1957, No. 2, pp. 162-176; S. Vinogradskaia, 'Pervie gody. Rasskazy', in *Novii mir*, 1957, No. 10, pp. 26-62; Iu.M. Gol'stman, *Anna Il'inichna Ul'ianova-Elizarova (Pamiatka chitateliu)*, (Ul'ianovsk: 1957); Iu.M. Gol'stman, *Mariia Il'inichna Ul'ianova (Pamiatka chitateliu)*, (Ul'ianovsk: 1958).

¹⁷⁴ Evgenov, 'Svetloi obraz', in f. 14, o. 1, ed. khr. 319, l. 76.

¹⁷⁵ D.A. Ershov, *Bol'shoi drug rabsel'korov*, (Moscow: Gospolitizdat, 1959).

¹⁷⁶ See, for example, Ershov, *Bol'shoi drug*, p. 19, p. 55, p. 78 and p. 89.

Although the sisters' political careers are dealt with in great detail in these various texts, with the exception of Ershov's *Great Friend*, they are undeniably influenced by the formula of the reminiscences about them which were published on their deaths, not least because the centrality of Lenin to the women's lives is still emphasised in all but the most recent ones.¹⁷⁷ Also, all the hallmarks of a personality cult, and one that is closely related to Lenin's own legacy dominate the texts and reminiscences. Descriptions of the two women follow a celebratory formula, with Anna and Mariia regularly assigned certain, positive characteristics (often ones similar to those Lenin was said to possess). People's feelings on meeting them are also consistently similar, with most expressing a keen awareness that Anna and Mariia were related to Lenin. Mariia is even assigned almost super-human qualities.

Anna and Mariia are ascribed similar traits, including their desire to help, their democratism and ability to treat everyone the same, their sense of humour, their strictness when it came to work and their ability to lead without being oppressive. Levitskii gave a detailed account of Anna's personality:

Anna Il'inichna charmed with her simplicity and sensitivity to another's unhappiness. It befell me to experience this myself more than once. There wasn't an occasion when a person, having turned to Anna Il'inichna for help, did not meet on her side a sympathetic echo; but still oftener, she, not waiting for a request, on her own initiative, showed her care where her sensitive soul suggested a need for that care. Simplicity and modesty were immutable qualities of Anna Il'inichna.¹⁷⁸

Descriptions of Mariia follow a similar pattern. Bystrova wrote: "From our first meeting, [Mariia] made a charming impression on me. I immediately felt so at ease with her, it was as if we were already old friends...Mariia Il'inichna was exceptionally attentive and sympathetic to every worker."¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁷ For example, R.M. Savitskaia, 'A.I. Ul'ianova-Elizarova – istorik leninskoi partii', in *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, 1987, No. 8, p. 99.

¹⁷⁸ 'Vospominaniia V.A. Levitskogo', in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 389, l. 2.

¹⁷⁹ Bystrova, in *Sekretar' "Pravdy"*, pp. 122-125.

Remembering meeting the sisters, people tend to describe feeling nervous about meeting relations of the great Lenin. In a collection of reminiscences about famous Bolshevik women Posvianskii described how lucky he had been to be able to work with Anna Ul'ianova, devoted as she was "to the great cause of the proletarian revolution" and to her role as "the keeper of her family tradition", but also how intimidated he had been when he first met her.¹⁸⁰ Medvedeva remembered meeting Anna for the first time and feeling a great deal of "agitation".¹⁸¹ She wrote: "The idea that I would see now V.I. Lenin's sister aroused in me a feeling of reverence and some kind of incomprehensible shyness."¹⁸² Similarly, people described being shy and awe-struck when they met Mariia for the first time. Rabinovich did not "know where to hide his trembling hands" and "incoherently...answered [Mariia's] questions".¹⁸³ He was simply over-whelmed by the fact that "in front of him was the old revolutionary, sister, closest friend and helper of Lenin".¹⁸⁴ Remembering meeting Mariia for the first time, B. Efimov wrote that he forgot why he had come to *Pravda's* editorial office.¹⁸⁵

Huge emphasis is placed on Anna and Mariia's relationship with Lenin, as sisters, helpers and supporters. Zaslavskii described Mariia as Lenin's "constant and irreplaceable helper" and Bonch-Bruevich called Mariia Lenin's "faithful aide-de-camp".¹⁸⁶ Even helping Mariia to help Lenin was seen as an honour in later years. For example, K. Piskunova-Alekseeva remembered proudly her time as a home help in the Ul'ianov house in the Kremlin, saying: "I am happy that I lived in Lenin's family, happy that I helped Mariia Il'inichna a little in her care over Vladimir Il'ich."¹⁸⁷ Anna receives similar treatment. Savitskaia described Anna as "Vladimir Il'ich's genuine helper", while Stishova wrote that she was Lenin's "like-minded friend and helper".¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁰ Posvianskii, in *Slavnie bol'shevichki*, p. 19 and p. 21.

¹⁸¹ Medvedeva, 'Moi vstrechi s Ul'ianovymi', in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 18, l. 6.

¹⁸² Medvedeva, 'Moi vstrechi s Ul'ianovymi', in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 18, l. 6.

¹⁸³ Rabinovich, in *Sekretar' "Pravdy"*, p. 277.

¹⁸⁴ Rabinovich, in *Sekretar' "Pravdy"*, p. 277.

¹⁸⁵ Efimov, in *Sekretar' "Pravdy"*, p. 196. He was an artist who had come from Kiev to show his caricatures to *Pravda*.

¹⁸⁶ Zaslavskii, in *Sekretar' "Pravdy"*, p. 207; Bonch-Bruevich, p. 372.

¹⁸⁷ Piskunova, *Sekretar' "Pravdy"*, p. 275.

¹⁸⁸ Savitskaia, in *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, 1987, No. 8, p. 98; Stishova, p. 29.

Related to this, and perhaps influenced by the Soviet model of the ideal woman, the sisters are often represented as mother figures. Anna in particular is portrayed as the ‘mother’ of the Ul’ianov family, with Stishova describing her as the “guardian of the wonderful Ul’ianov family tradition”.¹⁸⁹ Kalinina portrayed Anna as the mother of all the children the DPC helped. She wrote: “Anna Il’ichna’s huge, perfect memory allowed her to follow personally the children’s upbringing. She knew them, directed their growth and development. She devoted a lot time to this business.”¹⁹⁰ Kudelli asserted that “no-one loved children like [Anna] did”.¹⁹¹

Mariia was also depicted in this way, with the first example appearing in the mid-1920s, when an affectionate caricature of Mariia was featured in *Prozhektor*, a popular journal with light-hearted articles. She was drawn sitting on a pile of books, with a Rabkor on her knee. He is sucking a dummy.¹⁹² This motherly image is used again and again in the *Sekretar’ “Pravdy”* collection. Tonkov, who met Mariia through her work with homeless children, admitted that he would like to call her “my kind old friend, my mother, my sister”.¹⁹³ Kossov and Verkhovtsev wrote: “All, who were lucky enough to work with Mariia Il’ichna, remember her sensitivity and kindness. The kindness of a wise mother, for whom they were filled with respect and whom they feared to disappoint.”¹⁹⁴

Mariia was even ascribed a spiritual quality by some biographers. This in fact began in Mariia’s lifetime, with Kol’tsov’s article ‘Zheni. Sestra.’. He described how Mariia’s “strict eyes [would] watch over [the Soviet people]” noting when they behaved wrongly.¹⁹⁵ One colleague of Mariia wrote that “her eyes looked not only at you, but into you, as if peeping into your very soul”.¹⁹⁶ Pogodin developed this image further, writing: “Mariia Il’ichna was the soul

¹⁸⁹ Stishova, p. 29.

¹⁹⁰ Kalinina, in *Pravda*, 21 October 1935, p.2.

¹⁹¹ Kudelli, in *Krasnaia letopis’*, 1936, No. 1, p. 204.

¹⁹² Reproduced in *Sekretar’ “Pravdy”*, p. 200.

¹⁹³ Zorin, in *Sekretar’ “Pravdy”*, p.210; Prof. V. Tonkov, ‘Pamiatnaia vstrecha’, in *Sekretar’ “Pravdy”*, p. 296.

¹⁹⁴ Kossov, in *Sekretar’ “Pravdy”*, p. 238.

¹⁹⁵ Kol’tsov, in *Pravda*, 30 January 1924, p. 2.

¹⁹⁶ Zaslavskii, in *Sekretar’ “Pravdy”*, p. 207.

of the editorial staff, a soul, and not a despotic leader, more precisely, a superior, who alone knew everything and understood everything.”¹⁹⁷

Anna and Mariia also began to be associated with an earlier, (supposedly) happier part of the Soviet regime. Indeed, even during their lifetime, as Stalin intensified his repressive measures, they began to be associated with the better, brighter, more hopeful days of Lenin’s rule. When N. Slotishchev wrote to Anna in 1933, he remembered meeting her for the first time in the 1920s and added: “Much water has flowed since those times, but kind people are needed now, just the same.”¹⁹⁸ Riabova described in great detail the many visitors Mariia received at *Pravda*, from family members including Dmitrii and Anna, with Gora, to members of the government like Ia.M. Sverdlov, M.I. Kalinin, A.M. Kollontai, M.S. Ol’minskii, and E.M. Iaroslavskii.¹⁹⁹ In nostalgic terms that seem wistful for a happier time, Riabova wrote:

They found a friendly and warm environment when they came to the editorial office in the evening. In those days the walls were hung with friendly caricatures, cartoons, epigrams, skillfully executed by Dena, Mitnitskii and others. Difficulties and cares were forgotten. Laughter rang out, revolutionary and folk songs were sung. Mariia Il’inichna came to these evenings, sat amongst her colleagues, joked, laughed, requested her favourite songs to be sung and sang herself together with everyone.²⁰⁰

In the Soviet Union, therefore, with only a short break during the last two decades of Stalin’s regime, Anna and Mariia occupied a celebrated and respected place amongst the great revolutionary figures of the Party. In Soviet culture the fact that the sisters were individuals who combined their own political career, unwavering support of Lenin, a personal relationship with Vladimir and a genuine concern for the masses, particularly the helpless and the homeless, meant that their historical reputations were guaranteed. Their reputations were also mythologised, with increasing emphasis on the centrality of Lenin to their

¹⁹⁷ Pogodin, in *Sekretar’ “Pravdy”*, p. 258.

¹⁹⁸ Letter, N. Slotishchev to A.I., 25 December 1933, in f. 13, o. 1, ed. khr. 334, l. 1.

¹⁹⁹ N. Riabova, ‘Nezabyvaemoe vremia’, in *Sekretar’ “Pravdy”*, p. 290.

lives, yet the sisters' own political careers were never entirely overlooked. Indeed, recent investigations into their lives have concentrated on their political careers, particularly their relationship to Stalin.²⁰¹

The sisters have been treated very differently in English-language history, as I have shown throughout this thesis. Various factors have ensured this. Without access to archives, historians have relied mainly on the sisters' published memoirs and Volume 55 of Lenin's *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, his letters to his family. The emphasis the sisters placed on caring for Vladimir as well as their self-deprecating attitude when they do refer to their own careers, has been taken, by and large, at face value, without due consideration of the context in which the sisters were writing. Besides that, using sources such as the sisters' reminiscences requires "a careful, sympathetic reading", a reading between the lines, which women and feminist historians have only recently begun to develop.²⁰² Without using this approach historians have accepted unquestioningly the image of the sisters as devoted carers without political views of their own. This is perhaps because of their own stereotypical expectations of a woman's place in society or because historians have not felt the need to question what the sisters themselves claim. With the recent exception of McDermid, historians of women, who might legitimately be expected to read the sisters' reminiscences more sympathetically, have also overlooked the political lives of the sisters.²⁰³ Another possible explanation for this is the pervasive nature of the personality cults surrounding the sisters and Lenin, which have made historians sceptical about the majority of Soviet descriptions of the sisters' lives, characters and careers. While the image portrayed of the sisters in Soviet culture ensured their place in Russian-language history, it may have helped to doom Anna and Mariia to anonymity in English-language research.

²⁰⁰ Riabova, in *Sekretar' "Pravdy"*, p. 290.

²⁰¹ V.A. Kumanev and I.S. Kulikova, *Protivo-stoianie: Krupskaiia - Stalin*, (Moscow: Nayka, 1994); M.G. Shtein, *Ul'ianovy i Leniny: tainy rodoslovnoi i psevdonima*, (St Petersburg: VIRD, 1997).

²⁰² Yalom, in *Revealing Lives*, p. 61.

²⁰³ Jane McDermid and Anna Hillyar, *Midwives of the Revolution: Female Bolsheviks and women workers in 1917*, (London: University of the City of London Press, 1999)

CONCLUSION

When Mirsky wrote that Anna and Mariia's "revolutionary importance" was both "enhanced and eclipsed by the immense figure of Vladimir Il'ich", he correctly identified the effect that being related to Lenin had on the sisters' portrayal in history.¹ However, this thesis has shown that the distortion of Anna and Mariia's revolutionary importance was only one part of this process, and that the enhancing and eclipsing effect had an impact on all aspects of the three sisters' lives.

In Ol'ga's unique case, her childhood relationship with Vladimir and her early death was enhanced to the point that it eclipsed her genuine and independent experiences of the revolutionary student community in St Petersburg as well as her own efforts to acquaint herself with its ideas. In Anna and Mariia's cases, their relationship with Vladimir, the help they gave to him, their apparently unswerving support of his ideas and their alleged role as his unquestioning followers were enhanced in history. Enhanced too were the negative nature and the importance of Anna and Mariia's relationship with Nadezhda, their private life and their biographical work on Lenin. Conversely Anna and Mariia's independent roles as activists in the underground movement and their political inter-relationships with Lenin were eclipsed, as was their contribution to the Soviet government after 1917 and their part in the political upheavals during the Stalinist years. Finally the sisters' public reputation and devotion to helping the Soviet people were eclipsed.

The twin aims of this thesis were to investigate the process which so distorted the portrayal of Anna, Ol'ga and Mariia's lives, as well as to build a picture of these three women as historical figures in their own right that went beyond the 'enhanced' aspects of their lives, uncovered the eclipsed parts and presented a re-evaluation of the established view of the sisters. The results of the thesis have been to gain a full understanding of Anna, Ol'ga and Mariia's lives and experiences, as well as to add to the existing historical narrative of the RSDRP, Lenin's leadership and the Soviet regime. This study has also made a

¹ Mirsky, pp. 3-4.

contribution to the ever-growing history of Bolshevik women and provided a case study of how gender issues impacted on revolutionary women's lives.

Born to loving and progressive parents, Anna, Ol'ga and Mariia were given, and took advantage of, all the opportunities to gain as full an education as pre-Revolutionary Russian society allowed. Attending university at a time of political and societal ferment almost guaranteed that they would come into contact with revolutionary ideas, but it was Aleksandr's involvement in the conspiracy to assassinate the Tsar that ensured that the Ul'ianov sisters would devote the rest of their lives to revolutionary activity. All the Ul'ianov siblings began to study the theory of social democracy. When Ol'ga died she had already made and maintained contact with Aleksandr's fellow revolutionary students.

Anna and Mariia soon joined the social democratic movement proper and began careers as underground political activists and organisers. Motivated by their own distinct beliefs in social democracy which were expressed most clearly in concern for the welfare of the disadvantaged and exploited, Anna and Mariia each operated as members of the RSDRP in a variety of locations and situations, often as central figures, but always as correspondents and newspaper workers who forged and kept up links between Russian-based organisations, as well as with ones abroad. Particularly successful were their efforts to revive Bolshevik activity in Samara, Kiev and Saratov, and they proved themselves to be highly skilled in the production and distribution of such publications as *Pravda*, *Rabotnitsa* and *Iskra*. Indeed, despite the fact that both spent some time with the émigré RSDRP community in Europe, Anna and Mariia did not attempt to involve themselves in theoretical and Central Committee work, preferring instead to devote themselves to administrative and practical activity. The sisters' experiences on the ground reveal how often directives from the Party leaders in Europe, particularly those concerning the need for splits in the RSDRP, were unsuitable and impractical for the local situation where considerations of necessity were more important than issues of ideology.

After 1917, Anna and Mariia developed their political roles further and pursued careers in fields that were of specific interest to them. Anna led the Department for the Protection of Childhood, organising conferences and taking a personal interest in the running of children's homes. Anna found her political voice in this work, helping to formulate policy on how the Soviet regime should

best raise and care for its children. Mariia carved a wide remit for herself at *Pravda*, but found her true vocation in developing and leading the Rabkor movement. Mariia became a well-known political figure, seen as a dedicated builder of socialism and a defender of the Rabkors' rights. As such, her vision of the future Soviet society defined the role of the Rabkors as building bridges between the Party and the masses, as well as between the workers of all nations.

More broadly, investigating Anna and Mariia's roles in the Soviet government has shown how important the old networks established between revolutionaries during the underground continued to be after 1917. Jobs were assigned to comrades and friends as a matter of course and there was often co-operation and communication between departments as Old Bolsheviks helped one another in professional and personal matters.

Understanding the true nature of the sisters' revolutionary careers transforms the established picture of their relationship with Vladimir. They consistently supported him throughout his life, not as disciples, but as political comrades who shared the same fundamental beliefs. Their relationship was based on exchange and co-operation, even when Anna disagreed with her brother's views. Indeed, while abroad Vladimir relied on his sisters' regular reports on the situation in Russia as much as Anna and Mariia benefited from being in close contact with the central command of Party operations. As well as a support network, the Ul'ianov family functioned as a mini-network of communication within the underground movement, and after the Revolution. Before 1917, Anna and Mariia's letters helped to offset Vladimir's isolation from the movement in Russia; after the Revolution, the Ul'ianovs discussed policy round the kitchen table and in nightly telephone conversations. Indeed, during Lenin's leadership of the Soviet government, Anna and Mariia held a unique position in the regime, enjoying privileges and a security shared by few others.

Lenin's death in 1924 heralded a period of power struggle and political manoeuvring. It also meant that the security of position that Anna and Mariia had enjoyed was threatened, and both had to negotiate a place for themselves in the new order, as well as establish a relationship with the new leader of the Soviet regime. In Anna's case, moving to Istpart meant that she left governmental work behind, yet working as Lenin's biographer touched on sensitive political issues, including that of anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union.

Although this issue brought Anna into conflict with Stalin, her willingness to accept his ruling meant that she lived out her days in peace. Mariia's experience was far more complex. Initially, Mariia supported Stalin and Bukharin in the economic debates of the mid-1920s, risking her personal relationship with Nadezhda in the process. However, as Stalin turned against Bukharin in the final stages of the consolidation of his power, Mariia sacrificed her career to defend Bukharin against the Party's attacks. In both these decisions, as well as during her participation in the Party attacks on Trotsky, Mariia was motivated by her belief in the need for collective leadership of the Party and her conviction that, above all, Party unity should be maintained at all times. Although Mariia lost her job at *Pravda*, her belief in the Revolution remained unshaken and she demonstrated her resilience as a revolutionary when she re-established her political career in the early 1930s.

Despite the various difficulties that Anna and Mariia faced in the political arena, both were immensely popular amongst the Soviet public after 1917, partly because of their connection to Lenin, but also because of their concerted efforts to help others, from individuals around them to communities and whole sections of the population. Both sisters raised money for homeless children and both took an active interest in the peasants of Alakaevka. Mariia even made her role of guardian of the people official through her work at the head of the Complaints Bureau.

The second issue that has concerned this thesis has been the process by which the image of the sisters has been distorted over time. To understand this, it has been crucial to trace how Anna and Mariia were perceived by their contemporaries throughout their lives and in the aftermath of their deaths. Before 1917 Anna and Mariia were respected by their comrades as revolutionaries and activities, and seen by the police as a dangerous elements that had to be monitored and contained. Their relationship to Lenin was acknowledged by all, but only as one important aspect of the women's lives amongst many. This was also the case in the years 1917 to 1924, when Bolshevik women were expected above all to be dedicated to the building of the regime to the sacrifice of their personal lives. They were known to the masses as political figures and almost no references were made to their connection to Lenin.

After Lenin's death, Anna and Mariia's relationship to him became increasingly important and well known and the sisters gained status as members of the increasingly hallowed Ul'ianov family. The changes in Soviet policy towards women which partially returned them to a nurturing role and the changing political climate in which one 'correct' political history was promoted meant though their political careers were never forgotten, their support for Lenin and the sisterly help they showed him was increasingly emphasised. Mariia's political disgrace ensured that her previously celebrated *Pravda* and Rabkor work was always mentioned in the briefest possible way, if at all. As a result of a combination of modesty, censorship and lack of time, Mariia and Anna's autobiographical writing did little to redress the balance.

After Anna and Mariia's deaths, there was a determined, if unofficial campaign to stop any further mention of the sisters, which lasted until Khrushchev's secret speech after Stalin's death. When it was acceptable once more to write about the sisters, interest in their lives was more enthusiastic than ever. Celebratory articles and books were published about both women, which, while giving rich details about their careers, tended to make Lenin the central figure in their lives. They also showed signs of mini-personality cults evolving around the two women. Mariia in particular became an all-seeing, kind and generous model of a communist, with many Lenin-like qualities and characteristics. In various reminiscences of the sisters it is even possible to detect a nostalgia for the days before Stalin's rise to power, when the authors imply revolutionary society was full of laughter and promise, despite its hardships.

Analysis of English-language histories of the Revolution and biographies of Lenin has shown that the cult-dominated images of the sisters propagated in Soviet writing in the main have been accepted uncritically. Indeed, the portrayal of the sisters has been simplified further, with the focus on Anna and Mariia's apparent devotion to Lenin and the wealth of material relating to their own political careers (even if it is distorted by the Lenin cult) ignored.

This thesis has redressed this imbalance, interrogated the solar system myth and by taking an integrated approach, has both established Anna and Mariia as independent and important figures in their own right in the revolutionary period, as well as placed them in the context of the Ul'ianov

family, the underground movement and the Soviet regime. These women were activists and organisers, sisters and carers, politicians and social campaigners. They supported work on women's issues, but were also concerned with the overall purpose of the Revolution and with the building of all aspects of socialist society. They were at ease amongst the grass-roots workers of the underground movement and the Commissars of the Soviet Union, and while they enjoyed the privileges of their position, they also used their influence to improve the lives of others. Although their relationship with Lenin had an impact on their lives before and after the Revolution, it never prevented Anna and Mariia from acting according to their own beliefs or from pursuing their own paths in life.

In a letter of condolence to Dmitrii Ul'ianov on the death of Mariia, the Soviet historian, A.I. Iakovlev wrote: "It should console you that the figure of Mariia Il'inichna is indelibly engraved in the chronicle of the world revolution near her great brother."² This thesis has ensured that both Anna and Mariia have been given their rightful place in the English-language history of the Russian Revolution.

² O.D. Ul'ianova, in *M.I.: O V.I. Lenine*, p. 30

APPENDIX 2

CHRONOLOGY

1864

13 August: Anna is born.

1866

31 April: Aleksandr is born.

1870

10 April: Vladimir is born.

1871

4 November: Ol'ga is born.

1874

4 August: Dmitrii is born.

1878

6 February: Mariia is born.

1881

May: Anna finishes gimnazia and starts work as a teaching assistant at a local primary school.

1883

May: Aleksandr finishes gimnazia.

August: Aleksandr starts at university in St Petersburg

September: Anna arrives in St Petersburg and enrolls on the Bestuzhev Higher Women's Courses. Ol'ga begins gimnazia.

1886

- 12 January: Il'ia Nikolaevich dies.
17 November: Anna takes part in her first demonstration, with Aleksandr.

1887

- February: Anna begins fund-raising for the Red Cross, a fund set up to help political prisoners and exiles.
1 March: Aleksandr is arrested for his participation in an attempt to assassinate Tsar Aleksandr III. Anna is arrested for suspected involvement in the plot.
8 May: Aleksandr is executed.
11 May: Anna is sent into administrative exile to Kokushkino, the family estate, for five years.
End of May: Ol'ga finishes gimnazia.
June: Ul'ianov family moves to Kazan.
August: Vladimir enrolls at Kazan University.
November: Ol'ga begins to attend music school.
December: Vladimir is expelled from Kazan University and exiled to Kokushkino.

1888

- Autumn: Anna is allowed to spend one month in Kazan because of illness. Vladimir participates in Fedoseev's Social Democratic group.

1889

- March: Ol'ga quits music school and begins preparations to enrol at university.
May: Ul'ianov family moves to Alakaevka estate, near Samara.
June: Anna marries Mark Timofeevich Elizarov.
Autumn: Mariia starts at the gimnazia.

1890

- April: Ol'ga receives permission to attend university.

November: Ol'ga enrolls on the Bestuzhev Higher Women's Courses in St Petersburg.

1891

Spring: Vladimir joins Ol'ga in St Petersburg.

8 May: Ol'ga dies.

1892

May: Anna's term of exile ends, but she is placed under police surveillance for a further year.

1893

August: Mariia Aleksandrovna, Anna and Mark, Mariia and Dmitrii move to Moscow. Dmitrii enrolls at university. Vladimir moves to St Petersburg.

1894

Anna joins the first underground social-democratic circle in Moscow alongside Mitskevich. Vladimir joins a social-democratic group in St Petersburg, led by S. Radchenko.

1895

May: Vladimir goes to Switzerland and makes contact with Plekhanov's Liberation of Labour group.

8-9 December: Vladimir is arrested and imprisoned in St Petersburg.

1896

January: Anna and Mariia Aleksandrovna visit St Petersburg to see Vladimir in prison. Anna joins the underground movement there.

Summer: Anna, Mariia and Mariia Aleksandrovna spend the summer near St Petersburg. Family returns to Moscow. Mariia finishes school and enrolls on Higher Women's

Courses in Moscow. She also becomes involved in the underground movement.

1897

13 February: Vladimir is sentenced to three years in exile and is sent to Siberia.

May: Anna goes to Switzerland for four months, meeting Plekhanov and Axelrod during her stay.

1898

1-3 March: First Congress of the RSDRP.

10 July: Vladimir and Nadezhda marry.

Autumn: Anna helps found the first Moscow Committee of the RSDRP. Mariia joins the party before moving to Brussels to attend university there.

1899

Summer: Mariia returns to Moscow and begins revolutionary activities. Anna sends Vladimir the 'Credo'.

30 September: Mariia is arrested.

October: Mariia is exiled to Nizhnii Novgorod.

1900

January: Mariia returns from exile to Moscow, but has her international passport revoked.

February: Vladimir returns from exile to Moscow.

June: Vladimir goes to Ufa to visit Nadezhda with Mariia Aleksandrovna and Anna.

July: Vladimir moves to Zurich, then Munich.

September: Anna goes abroad and visits Vladimir before going to Paris, and then to Berlin.

October: Anna moves to Prague.

11 December: *Iskra* is published for the first time.

1901

- 1 March: Mark and Mariia are arrested in Moscow.
- May: Anna moves to Berlin.
- June: Anna goes to Rügen island.
- October: Mariia is exiled to Samara and joins the Bureau of the Russian Organisation of *Iskra*. She is joined by Mariia Aleksandrovna and Dmitrii. Mark is released and sent to exile in Syzran.

1902

- January: Mariia takes part in the First All-Russian *Iskra* Conference.
- May: Mark moves to Tomsk.
- June: Anna moves to Dresden.
- August: Anna and Mariia Aleksandrovna holiday with Vladimir in Brittany. Both return to Samara.
- Autumn: Anna goes to Tomsk and establishes an *Iskra* group there.

1903

- Spring: Vladimir moves to Geneva. Anna and Mark go to Port Arthur.
- 17 July: Second Congress of the RSDRP (lasts until 10 August).
- September: Mark goes to Japan, then round the world, via Paris and back to St Petersburg.
- 7 October: Mariia moves to Kiev.
- 12 October: Anna and Mariia Aleksandrovna arrive in Kiev.
- 19 October: Vladimir leaves *Iskra* editorial board.
- December: Mark settles in Sablino, near St Petersburg.

1904

- 1-2 January: Anna and Mariia are arrested and imprisoned, as is Dmitrii.
- June: Mariia is released and allowed to move to Sablino, near St Petersburg, where she joins the St Petersburg Committee.

- July: Anna is released from prison under police surveillance. She moves to Sablino and joins the RSDRP's work in St Petersburg.
- August: Vladimir holds the Conference of the 22 Bolsheviks in Geneva.
- October: Mariia moves to Geneva to live with Vladimir and Nadezhda.
- December: Mariia attends the meeting at which the new Bolshevik organ, *Vpered*, is launched (published until May 1905).

1905

- 9 January: Anna witnesses Bloody Sunday.
- 12 April: Third (Bolshevik) RSDRP Congress (lasts until 27 April).
- May: *Proletarii* is published (until November).
- August: Mariia returns to St Petersburg and begins working for the Vasilevskii Island RSDRP committee. Both Anna and Mariia work for *Proletarii*.
- October: Bolshevik newspaper, *Novaia zhizn'*, is published (until December).
- 8 November: Vladimir arrives in St Petersburg.
- 18 November: Nadezhda arrives in St Petersburg.
- December: Mark is arrested.
- 12 December: First Conference of the RSDRP (Bolsheviks) (until 17 December).

1906

- February: Mark is freed, but is exiled from St Petersburg for three years. He moves to Syzran. Anna stays in St Petersburg.
- 10 April: Fourth (Unity) Congress of RSDRP in Stockholm (lasts until 25 April).
- 27 April: First State Duma (until 8 July).
- August: Bolshevik *Proletarii* is published again (until November 1909).
- 20 August: Vladimir moves to Kuokkala, Finland.

December: Anna visits Mark in Syzran, using her trip to transport illegal literature.

1907

- 20 February: Second State Duma (until 2 June).
- 30 April: Fifth Congress of the RSDRP, in London (until 19 May).
- 2 May: Mariia is arrested, but released, so moves to Samara.
- June: Vladimir moves to Finland. Anna holidays with him there. Mariia spends the summer there. Third State Duma (until 1912).
- 21 July: Third Conference of the RSDRP, in Kotka, Finland (until 23 July).
- October: Mariia returns to St Petersburg. Anna goes to Geneva to retrieve certain party documents.
- 5 November: Fourth Conference of the RSDRP, in Kotka, Finland (until 12 November).
- December: Vladimir moves to Geneva (lives there until 1908).

1908

- February: Anna helps edit Vladimir's *Materialism and Empirio-criticism*.
- March: Mark moves to Eastern Siberia.
- May: *Materialism and Empirio-criticism* is published.
- Autumn: Mariia, Anna and Mariia Aleksandrovna move to Moscow.
- Mariia joins the Moscow party organisation. Mariia then moves to Geneva.
- December: Mariia moves with Vladimir and Nadezhda to Paris, and begins studying at the Sorbonne.
- 21 December: Fifth RSDRP Conference (until 27 December).

1909

- February: Mark visits Mariia in Paris.
- April: Anna and Mariia Aleksandrovna holiday in the Crimea.

- June: Mark returns to St Petersburg.
- 8 June: Vladimir holds meeting of *Proletarii* editorial board.
Vladimir has Bogdanov expelled from the Bolsheviks.
- August: Mariia goes to Bombon, France, with Vladimir. Anna goes to Ekaterinburg with Mark who is very ill. Both then move to Saratov and participate in revolutionary activities, including the publication of *Privolzhskaia gazeta*.
- Autumn: Mariia goes to Moscow and settles with Mariia Aleksandrovna.

1910

- January: Plenum of the RSDRP Central Committee, no reunification of party.
- Spring: Mariia arrested in Moscow, but allowed to move to Finland to be a teacher.
- August: Eighth Congress of the Second Internationale in Copenhagen. Mariia and Mariia Aleksandrovna visit Vladimir in Stockholm.
- December: Mariia and Mariia Aleksandrovna join Mark and Anna in Saratov. Mariia becomes a leading Bolshevik figure there.

1911

- May: Mariia goes to Finland via St Petersburg. Anna remains in Saratov.
- Summer: Anna and Mark go to Germany for cures.
- October: Anna goes to Paris to visit Vladimir and Nadezhda, and then returns to Saratov to Mark.

1912

- January: Prague Conference of Bolsheviks held in Prague.
- 7 May: Mariia and Anna are arrested in Saratov. Mark is away on business so escapes arrest.
- 9 June: Vladimir moves to Krakow.
- July: Anna is released and remains in Saratov.

October: Mariia is exiled to Vologda, where she participates in revolutionary activities.

15 November: Fourth State Duma (until February 1917).

1913

February: Mariia's exile is reduced to one year because of the amnesty granted in honour of the 300th anniversary of the Romanov dynasty.

June: Anna and Mariia Aleksandrovna visit Mariia in Vologda, after staying with Dmitrii.

Autumn: Anna returns to St Petersburg where she begins to work for *Prosveshchenie*.

1914

Spring: After a visit to Mariia in Vologda, the Elizarovs move to St Petersburg, where Anna becomes an editor of *Rabotnitsa* and a member of the Russian Bureau of the Central Committee.

August: Vladimir moves to Berne.

September: Mariia is arrested in Vologda and held in prison until the end of her term of exile.

October: Mariia is released and moves to Moscow.

1915

February: Mariia begins her training to become a Sister of Mercy at the front.

March: International Women's Conference. Anna is unable to attend.

May: Mariia is posted to the Western front and joins Krzhizhanovskii there.

June: Mariia returns to Moscow and rejoins the RSDRP.

1916

March: Mariia moves to Petrograd to help care for Mariia

Aleksandrovna who is ill.

- June: Anna distributes *Kommunist* in Petrograd.
- 12 July: Mariia Aleksandrovna dies. Anna is arrested one week later.
- October: Anna is released and is allowed to stay in Petrograd because of her ill-health.

1917

- February: Anna is arrested during the first days of the February Revolution, but is quickly freed by the people.
- 8 March: Anna and Mariia are coopted onto the Russian Bureau of the Central Committee and contribute to the first edition of *Pravda*.
- 13 March: Mariia is made an official member of the editorial board of *Pravda*.
- 3 April: Vladimir returns from abroad.
- June: Vladimir and Mariia holiday with Bonch-Bruевич.
- July: Mariia attends the Sixth RSDRP Congress in Petrograd.
- October: Bolshevik coup.
- November: Mariia attends the Constituent Assembly with Vladimir and Nadezhda.
- December: Mark begins a tour of the country, as Commissar for the Ways of Communication. Mariia becomes the Executive Secretary of *Pravda*. Anna works on *Tkach*.

1918

- January: Mark is released from his job due to ill-health, but becomes Commissar of Insurance.
- March: Mariia moves to Moscow with the Bolshevik government.
- April: Anna helps establish a children's colony at Tsarskoe Selo.
- May: Anna moves to Moscow to become the head of the Department for the Protection of Childhood.

1919

- January: 'Working Life' section of *Pravda* is established under Mariia.
- February: Mark dies in St Petersburg. Anna who nursed him through his last days is joined by Vladimir and Mariia at the funeral.
- Summer: Anna sits on the Presidium of the All-Russian Congress of the Protection of Childhood. Anna helps found the Council for the Protection of Children.

1920

- November: DPC is transferred from Narkomsobes to Narkompros. Anna is reprimanded for defying Narkompros orders about office space for the DPC.
- December: Vladimir, Nadezhda and Mariia holiday briefly in Finland.

1921

- April: Anna joins Istpart.

1922

- April: Anna joins the editorial staff of *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, Istpart's journal.
- May: *Pravda*'s fifth and tenth anniversary.
- July-Sept.: Anna in Riga.

1923

- May-June: Anna in Evpatoriia.
- November: Mariia leads the First All-Union Conference of Rabkors.

1924

- 21 January: Vladimir dies.
- April: Mariia in Mukhalatka (Ialta).
- June: Anna in Evpatoriia.
- October: Anna at Gorki, then Leningrad.

- November: Stalin assigns Anna to investigate the Ul'ianov family history.
- December: Mariia leads the Second All-Union Congress of Rabkors, Sel'kors, Voenkors and Iunkors.

1925

- May: Mariia in the Crimea.
- July: Anna in the Crimea. Mariia at Communist Party rest home in Kislovodsk until end of August.
- September: Mariia in Sebastopol.
- December: Fourteenth Party Congress. Nadezhda supports the opposition, protests against the NEP. Mariia supports Stalin and Bukharin. Mariia launches a fund-raising campaign for *besprizorniki*, which Anna supports.

1926

- May: Mariia leads the Third All-Union Congress of Rabsel'kors. Nadezhda gives a speech at it. Mariia goes to the Crimea.
- July: Joint Plenum of the Central Committee and the Central Control Committee. Mariia defends Stalin against the attacks made by Zinoviev.
- September: Anna in Kislovodsk.

1927

- March: Anna in Berlin taking cures.
- July: Anna in Latvia taking cures, then returns in Berlin.
- December: Mariia participates in the Fifteenth Party Congress.

1928

- August: Mariia and Nadezhda tour the Volga for a month.
- September: Mariia visits Ul'ianovsk and then goes to Kislovodsk.
- October: Mariia speaks at the All-Union Congress of Editors and leads the Fourth All-Union Conference of Rabsel'kors.

1929

- April: Mariia writes to Plenum to protest against the removal of Bukharin, Rykov and Tomskii from the Party.
- June: Mariia is removed from *Pravda* and sent to the Lenin Institute to prepare Lenin's letters for publication.
- July: Mariia in Zheleznovodsk. Anna in Ul'ianovsk.

1930

- January: Mariia in Rostov. Anna attends the TsIK meeting in Moscow.
- May: Mariia in the Crimea.
- June: Mariia participates in the Sixteenth Party Congress.
- October: Mariia writes to the Central Committee asking to leave *Pravda* permanently and begin a new project.
- December: Mariia in Makhachkala.

1931

- Anna's Short Notes on Lenin's Life and Work* used to attack Nadezhda's *Reminiscences of Il'ich*.
- April-June: Mariia in the Crimea. She falls seriously ill and spends the rest of the year recuperating.

1932

- February: Mariia joins the Complaints Bureau.
- October-Nov.: Mariia in the Crimea.
- December: Anna writes to Stalin requesting permission to publish information about Lenin's Jewish roots. Stalin refuses permission.

1933

- March: Mariia is awarded the Order of Lenin.

1934

- January: Anna writes to Stalin once more, asking for permission to

make Lenin's Jewish roots public. She is denied permission once more. Mariia participates in the Seventeenth Party Congress and is elected to the Soviet Control Committee.

1935

- March: Mariia joins Nadezhda, Stasova and Kollontai on the Presidium celebrating International Women's Day.
- September: Mariia in the Crimea.
- 20 October: Anna dies and after a commemorative service in Moscow, is buried in St Petersburg.

1936

- Spring: Mariia visits the Ul'ianov house museum in Ul'ianovsk.

1937

- February: Stalin recruits Mariia and Nadezhda to sit on the commission set up to decide Bukharin and Rykov's fate.
- 12 June: Mariia dies.

APPENDIX 3
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¹ I have alphabetised this bibliography by title, but continued to note Anna's name for each entry because the form Anna's name takes is important. Generally Anna published under her married

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