WILLIAM C. FULLER, JR.

THE FOE WITHIN

FANTASIES OF TREASON AND THE END OF IMPERIAL RUSSIA

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To Richard and Irene Pipes

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Maps

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Note on Dates and Names

The Julian calendar used in Imperial Russia lagged twelve days behind the Gregorian calendar used in western Europe in the nineteenth century and thirteen days in the twentieth. It is for this reason that Russia's February Revolution of 1917 actually took place in March, according to Western reckoning. I have provided dates according to the Julian calendar but have also supplied the Gregorian date for events that occurred outside Russia, and for correspondence between Russia and the West.

The stress in Russian Christian names is irregular, although it often falls on the penultimate syllable. This is the case with two of the names that we will frequently encounter in the book: Miasoedov, pronounced Myas-o-YED-ov, and Sukhomlinov, pronounced Sukh-om-LEEN-ov.

Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in the text and footnotes.

op.	catalog
f.	collection
d.	file
l.	sheet
CI	counterintelligence
N. A.	Nachrichten Abteilung (Intelligence Section, German General Staff)
BE	*Entsiklopedicheskii slovar'*. 84 vols. Izdateli Brokgauza i Efrona. St. Petersburg, 1881–1907.
AVPRI	Arkhiv Vneshnoi Politiki Rossiiskoi Imperii Archive of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Empire, Moscow
GARF	Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii State Archive of the Russian Federation, Moscow
RGVIA	Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Voenno-Istoricheskii Arkhiv Russian State Archive of Military History, Moscow
PRO	Public Record Office, London

The Foe Within

Introduction

A Hanging in Warsaw

On March 18, 1915, at 10:35 in the morning a special field court-martial came to order within the Citadel of Warsaw. The room chosen for the proceedings was large, unheated, and unfurnished save for some chairs and a green felt-covered table, behind which sat the presiding judge, Colonel Lukirskii, and his four colleagues. In the dock was Lieutenant Colonel Sergei Nicholaevich Miasoedov, age forty-nine, an interpreter attached to the staff of the Russian Tenth Army. He stood accused of espionage on behalf of Germany and was on trial for his life.

Miasoedev was stunned by the suddenness of his arrest and arraignment. He had managed to send a message to his mother begging her to petition General N. V. Ruzskii, commander of the Northwest front, for his release. "I am unconditionally not guilty either in deed or intention," he wrote, "and I don't know what I am accused of."[1] As far as Miasoedov was concerned, he was the victim of some insane misunderstanding: the trial was a mistake, and he was certain that everything would quickly be cleared up and his innocence established. But as the hours went by, as witnesses marched forward to testify and as the depositions of the absent were read into the record, Miasoedov's confidence began to falter. When he was told that he would not be permitted any defense, he finally recognized that he was truly in mortal danger. At 6:15 p.m. the court adjourned to consider the evidence. Less than two hours later, the judges reconvened to deliver the verdict. Miasoedov was declared guilty of points 1a, 2, and 3 of the indictment. The punishment was to be death by hanging.

1. O. G. Freinat, *Pravda o dele Miasoedova i dr. Po offitsial'nym dokumentam i lichnym vospominaniiam* (Vilna, 1918), pp. 36–37.

2 The sentence having been pronounced, the chairman of the court then turned to the prisoner and asked him if he had anything to say.

At first Miasoedov was silent. Suddenly he shouted that he wanted to send a telegram to the emperor, that he wanted a chance to say farewell to his mother; overcome by emotion, he crumpled to the floor in a swoon.[2] Guards quickly revived him and led him away to a holding cell on the third floor of the Citadel's military prison.

For the next several hours Miasoedov was sustained by the hope of clemency. He scribbled telegrams to his daughter, Musa, and his mother urging them to entreat for clemency on his behalf. "I have been condemned by a field court," he wrote his daughter, "I swear that I am innocent. Implore the Sukhomlinovs [the minister of war and his wife] to save me. Beg the emperor to spare my life."[3] As more and more time passed, however, the colonel's febrile optimism gave way to blackest despair.

At midnight an Orthodox priest, Father V. V. Kristaner, visited Miasoedov in his cell. As Kristaner was leaving, Miasoedov called out for permission to visit the toilet. Captain D. M. Eremev unlocked the cell and escorted the condemned man to the water closet in the corridor. Miasoedov closed and latched the door behind him. After a few minutes, he was suddenly heard to cry out: "Now! Now!" Eremev screamed to the guards to break down the door. Miasoedov was discovered leaning against the wall with blood trickling down the front of his shirt; he had removed his pince-nez, smashed the lenses into fragments, and had slashed himself three times in the throat. Only Eremev's intervention had prevented him from severing the carotid artery.

Back in his cell, Miasoedov was given first aid by the army doctor M. D. Voitsekhovskii. When his wounds had been dressed, Miasoeodov appealed to see the priest one more time. Father Kristaner heard Miasoedov's final confession and administered communion. Almost as soon as this ritual had concluded, a party of guards seized Miasoedov, dragged him into the corridor and thence to the scaffold located on the glacis outside the inner citadel.[4] At 3:13 a.m. the noose was tightened around his neck.[5] As the gallows was merely a twelve-foot-high crossbar with no drop, it is said that Miasoedov strangled for fifteen minutes at the end of the rope before he died.[6] When the body stopped twitching, it was cut down, wrapped in a coarse tarpaulin, and loaded into a military truck. The corpse was driven outside the city and consigned to an unmarked grave.

In the aftermath of this barbaric execution, "spy mania" swept the Russian Empire. The tsarist police detained scores of people, searched hundreds of apartments,

2. B. B-ago [B. Buchinskii], "Sud nad Miasoedovym," *Arkhiv russkoi revoliutsii,* vol. 14 (Berlin, 1924), p. 145.

3. Rossiisski Gosudarstvennyi Voenno-Istoricheskii Arkhiv (hereafter RGVIA), f. 962, op. 2, d. 104, ll. 69–70.

4. Testimony of Eremev and Kristaner, Protocol of March 26, 1915, RGVIA, f. 962, op. 2, d. 104, ll. 89–93, 96–97; Stefan Król, *Cytadela Warszawska* (Warsaw, 1978), p. 217.

5. Miasoedov was executed at 3:50 Petrograd time. Warsaw time was twenty-seven minutes behind.

6. Lieutenant A. Bauermeister, *Spies Break Through: Memoirs of a German Secret Service Officer,* trans. Hector Bywater (New York, 1934), p. 6.

The Konstantine Gates, Warsaw Citadel. The Citadel was the site of Miaosedov's trial and execution.

and confiscated thousands of pages of documents. Among those picked up in the first wave of arrests were Miasoedov's estranged wife, his brother-in-law, his mistress, his business partners, even some casual acquaintances, including a liquor store owner, a man who had once lent him a typewriter, and another who owned a railway buffet where he had occasionally bought snacks.[7] By the third week in April, thirty people had been indicted in the case; dozens of other arrests would ensue.[8]

Later in the spring of 1915 German and Austro-Hungarian forces broke through the Russian lines between Gorlice and Tarnow and drove the Russian army back some three hundred miles. By the time the front restabilized at the end of the year one hundred and fifty thousand Russian soldiers were dead, another seven hundred thousand were wounded, and over three hundred thousand more had been taken prisoner.[9] The Germans' advance, which took them to the gates of Riga in the north and the outskirts of Tarnopol' in the south, produced an exodus of almost two million civilian refugees. All of Russian Poland and virtually all of Lithuania were now under German military occupation. The outcry to do something about the "traitors" responsible for the "Great Retreat" touched off the second wave of arrests in connection with the Miasoedov affair in late 1915 and early 1916. And this time the reverberations of the colonel's case reached the highest political levels of the Russian Empire. On April 20, 1916, General V. A. Sukhomlinov, who had served as minister of war from 1909 to the spring of 1915, was summarily taken into custody and packed off to the fortress of SS. Peter and Paul. He was charged with nonfeasance, malfeasance, and high treason. Among his purported "crimes" was his personal relationship with Miasoedov. Released to house arrest by order of Nicholas II in October 1916, Sukhomlinov was jailed again after the February Revolution of 1917. Tried by the Provisional Government, he was convicted in September 1917 and condemned to life imprisonment at hard labor.

At the time, in certain military circles—and not just liberal ones—the Miasoedov affair, with its purported revelations about elaborate networks of spies organized by Germany long prior to 1914, was taken as the principal explanation for the reverses and catastrophes that Russia had endured since the beginning of the world war. Many

7. Letter of P. K. Karpova, April 26, 1915, RGVIA, f. 801, op. 28, d. 170, l. 30.
8. List of persons arrested, April 24, 1915, RGVIA, f. 2003, op. 2, d. 1073, l. 87.
9. Cyril Falls, *The Great War, 1914–1918* (New York, 1959), p. 124.

years later, there were those who remained convinced that Miasoedov's treacherous communications with the enemy had been the root cause of every Russian military disaster from the annihilating defeat at Tannenberg in August 1914 to the destruction of the XX corps in February 1915.[10] In memoirs published in 1956, M. D. Bonch-Bruevich, a tsarist officer who subsequently became a Soviet general, was still loudly trumpeting Miasoedov's guilt and boasting of his personal role in cracking the case.[11] On the opposite side of the political fence, Anton Denikin, one of the most important White generals to fight against the Bolsheviks during the Civil War, never wavered in his belief that Miasoedov had been a spy.[12]

In contemporary civil society, it became an article of faith among both the liberal and moderate right opposition that Miasoedov had been guilty of treason and espionage as charged. There was considerable public demand that severe punishment be meted out to anyone even remotely implicated in his treachery. M. V. Rodzianko, the president of the Russian parliament, the Duma, was quoted as saying, "Even those who cleaned Miasoedov's boots ought to be hanged."[13] As for Sukhomlinov, although there were doubts about whether he was a "conscious" German agent, there was broad agreement that his "light-mindedness," negligence, and taste for shady company had gravely compromised Russia's national security.[14]

Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that many of the allied diplomats and journalists accredited to Russia came around to the view that German spies had sabotaged Russia's military performance. France's ambassador to Petrograd, Maurice Paleologue, wrote in his diary for March 1915 that "the precise and continuous information" that Miasoedov had transmitted to the Germans had been instrumental "in that series of defeats which had recently obliged the Russians to evacuate East Prussia."[15] Robert Wilton, who served as the correspondent of the *Times* of London in Petrograd during the war, later opined that the Germans' great military success of the

10. General-Lieutenant Khol'msen, *Mirovaia voina. Nashi operatsii na Vostochno-Prusskom fronte zimoiu 1915 g.* (Paris, 1935), pp. 278–279; M. V. Rodzianko, *Krushenie imperii. Gosudarstvennaia duma i fev. 1917 revoliutsiia* (Valley College, N.Y., 1986), p. 114.

11. M. D. Bonch-Bruevich, *Vsia vlast' sovetam* (Moscow, 195), pp. 65–66. Two other figures who were active in investigating the Miasoedov case also maintained to the end of their lives that the lieutenant colonel had indeed been a traitor. See General'nogo Shtaba Gen.-Maior Batiushin, *Tainaia voennia razvedka i bor'ba s nei* (Moscow, 2002), pp. 138–139; Vladimir Orloff, *The Secret Dossier: My Memoirs of Russia's Political Underworld,* trans. Mona Heath (London, 1932), pp. 62–73. Batiushin's defense of the "evidence" against Miasoedov is, however, unconvincing, while Orlov's narrative about the case is fraught with so many errors of fact that it impeaches itself.

12. Anton Denikin, *The Career of a Tsarist Officer: Memoirs, 1872–1916,* trans. Margaret Patoski (Minneapolis, 1975), pp. 201–202; A. I. Denikin, *Ocherki russkoi smuti. Krushenie vlasti i armii. Fevral'-sentiabr' 1917 g.* (Paris, n.d.; repr., Moscow, 1991), p. 11.

13. Freinat, *Pravda o dele,* p. 121.

14. V. I. Gurko, *Features and Figures of the Past: Government and Opinion in the Reign of Nicholas II,* trans. Laura Matveev (Palo Alto, 1939), pp. 551–554; Count V. N. Kokovtsov, *Iz moego proshlogo. Vospominaniia, 1903–1919,* vol. 2 (Paris, 1933), pp. 61–62; A. N. Naumov, *Iz utselevshikh vospominanii, 1868–1917* (New York, 1955), pp. 317–319.

15. Maurice Paléologue, *La Russie des Tsars pendant La Grande Guerre. 20 Juillet 1914–2 Juin 1915* (Paris, 1921), p. 319.

late winter of 1915, in which they had "nearly crumpled up the whole of the Nieman front" was due to the aid of "Colonel Miasojedov [*sic*], their secret agent on the Staff of General Siever's corps."[16]

Since many of the earliest histories of the Russian Revolution were written by liberal émigrés, or by English, French, and American writers with personal connections to the liberal or liberal-right milieu, certitude about Miasoedov's treason became a standard feature of the historiography of Russia. Frequently, accounts of the case were embellished with misinformation and rumors that were credulously served up as unalloyed truth. In *The Fall of the Russian Monarchy,* for example, the British authority on Russia Bernard Pares reported that Miasoedov had confessed to being a German agent on the eve of his execution, and had justified his treason by explaining that "only the triumph of Germany could save the autocracy in Russia."[17] In his three-volume French-language history of Russia (1932), the distinguished historian and Kadet politician Paul Miliukov insisted that the conviction of Miasoedov "corroborated the rumor, which had raged through the whole country, that treason had penetrated into the very heart of the army."[18] Richard Wilmer Rowan, a specialist on espionage, published a book in 1929 that depicted wartime Russia as honeycombed with traitors and enemy agents but nonetheless touted the exposure and conviction of Miasoedov and Sukhomlinov as brilliant triumphs of Russian counterintelligence work.[19] And Victor Kaledin, nephew of the famous Cossack general, in his two volumes of purported "memoirs" about the prerevolutionary secret service, also devoted considerable attention to the affair. Actually these were not memoirs at all but melodramatic fictions that owed a great deal to Saxe Romer's Fu Manchu series. According to Kaledin, Miasoedov and Sukhomlinov were both spies, as was their protectress, Alexandra, empress of Russia. In Kaledin's version, Miasoedov finally confessed his treason to Princess G., "a young, voluptuous, utterly depraved Lesbian of the extremist type," during a sexual encounter arranged by the Russian secret service in his death cell.[20]

Of course, Kaledin's racy trash took in only the hopelessly naive, but it is nonetheless possible to argue that the difference between his distortion of the record and that to be found between the covers of real works of history and authentic volumes of reminiscences was only a matter of degree. In addition to the works already cited, a host of memoirs devoted to the last days of the ancien régime by army officers, bureaucrats, and civilian politicians all pushed the view that Miasoedov had been guilty as charged. More often than not their narratives contained garbled facts,

16. Robert Wilton, *Russia's Agony* (London, 1918), p. 224.

17. Bernard Pares, *The Fall of the Russian Monarchy* (New York, 1939), p. 221.

18. Paul Miliukov et al., *History of Russia: Reforms, Reaction, Revolutions,* trans. Charles Lam Markmann, vol. 3 (New York, 1969), p. 325.

19. Richard Wilmer Rowan, *Spy and Counterspy: The Development of Modern Espionage* (New York, 1929), pp. 162–169.

20. Viktor K. Kaledin, *14–O.M. 66. K: Adventures of a Double Spy* (New York, 1932); *F.L.A.S.H. D 13* (New York, 1930), pp. 42, 263–268 (quote on p. 266).

 outright mistakes, and glaring improbabilities.[21] Perhaps as a result of the "anti-Miasoedov" strain in the literature, even more recent accounts have perpetuated some of the mythology about the affair.[22]

But the notion that Miasoedov (and Sukhomlinov too, for that matter) were traitors, although widespread, was not universal. As early as the fall of 1915, it was being whispered at general headquarters that Miasoedov had been framed.[23] Many reactionaries and ultra-monarchists soon arrived at the conclusion that the Miasoedov and Sukhomlinov cases had been cooked up, either to deflect public scrutiny from the incompetence of the high command or as part of a sinister left-wing plot to discredit the monarchy.[24] As General A. I. Spiridovich wrote, Miasoedov was "the expiatory sacrifice for the military failure of Stavka [Russian General Headquarters] in East Prussia."[25] Such charges acquired still more credibility after the publication of O. G. Freinat's pamphlet about the case in 1918.[26] Freinat, a bureaucrat in the Ministry of the Interior who had personally been a defendant in one of the trials that followed Miasoedov's execution, used a battery of legal documents that had somehow fallen into his hands to argue forcefully that Miasoedov had not been guilty. In 1967 historian George Katkov, relying heavily on Freinat, highlighted the case, which he construed as a politically motivated miscarriage of justice, as one of the most important events in the prehistory of the February Revolution.[27] In the same year the famous Soviet scholar K. F. Shatsillo published an article based on some (but by no means all) of the relevant archival materials in which he too exonerated Miasoedov.[28] Finally, in 1969 there appeared émigré historian Aleksandr Tarsaidze's *Chetyre mifa* (*Four Myths*), a book that scrutinized the published evidence against Miasoedov and Sukhomlinov and proclaimed the innocence of both.[29]

21. For example, P. P. Isheev, *Oskokli proshlogo. Vospominaniia 1889–1959* (New York, n.d.), p. 100, represents Miasoedov as having married into the family of the German industrialists, the Til'mans; Vladimir Korostovets, *Seed and Harvest,* trans. Dorothy Lumby (London, 1931), p. 247, falsely claims to have studied the entire dossier.

22. Popular historian Ward Rutherford's 1972 book on the Russian army in the First World War (reprinted in 1992) contains a factual error in virtually every sentence it devotes to the case. Ward Rutherford, *The Tsar's War 1914–1917* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 27–28, 155, 278. Rutherford tells us, inter alia, that Miasoedov was arrested, tried, and acquitted of treason in 1912, that he was the lover of Ekaterina Sukhomlinova, that Sukhomlinov emigrated to Switzerland after the Revolution, that he dedicated his memoirs to the kaiser, etc. Every one of these statements is false. Error has even crept into works of serious scholarship See W. Bruce Lincoln, *Passage Through Armageddon: The Russians in War and Revolution, 1914–1918* (New York, 1986), p. 112. There are mistakes even in this excellent book. Lincoln writes incorrectly that Miasoedov "had been dismissed from the army in 1907 and again in 1912 because his superiors had strongly suspected him of being in the pay of Germany."

23. Mikh. Lemke, *250 dnei v tsarskoi stavke (25 sent. 1915–2 iulia 1916)* (Peterburg, 1920), p. 190.

24. P. G. Kurlov, *Gibel' imperatorskoi Rossii* (repr., Moscow, 1992), p. 187.

25. General A. I. Spiridovich, *Velikaia voina i fevral'skaia revoliutsiia*, vol. 1 (New York, 1960), p. 110.

26. See Freinat, *Pravda o dele.*

27. George Katkov, *Russia 1917: The February Revolution* (London, 1967), pp. 121,125,127.

28. K. F. Shatsillo, " 'Delo' Polkovnika Miasoedova," *Voprosy istorii* 42, no. 4 (1967): 103–116.

29. Aleksandr Tarsaidze, *Chetyre mifa* (New York, 1969).

Today, owing to the research of Katkov, Shatsillo, and, to a lesser extent Tarsaidze, the dominant interpretation holds that Miasoedov was never convincingly proved to be a German spy.[30] Still further, in recent years a series of monographs on the Russian army have presented V. A. Sukhomlinov's tenure as war minister in a neutral or even favorable light and have thus, either implicitly or explicitly, raised serious questions about the circumstances surrounding his arrest and trial.[31]

Although the broad outlines (if not all of the scabrous details) of the Miasoedov affair have long been known to specialists, the declassification of Russian archives in the 1990s provides an opportunity for reassessment. The complete story of these interlocking cases and the spy mania that gripped Imperial Russia during the World War has never before been fully revealed. It is an astonishing story, full of vivid incident, populated by a cast of characters from all levels of European society. Among those directly or indirectly involved in the affair were the emperors of both Russia and Germany, Baltic noblemen, high-ranking generals, courtesans, armament profiteers, simple peasants, the leaders of several political parties, Jewish businessmen, tsarist ministers, political police agents, German spymasters, and Grigorii Efimovich Rasputin. But the Miasoedov/Sukhomlinov affair commands attention for reasons other than its dramatis personae or the twists and turns of its "plot." In the first place, the affair is intrinsically important in the political and military history of Russia, but second, an investigation of the case[32] can contribute to social and cultural history as well, for it serves as a window into a Russian society already in the throes of decomposition.

From the standpoint of politics, the most obvious significance of the case is that it helped lay the groundwork for the February Revolution. It did so by cheapening and debasing the authority and prestige of the dynasty. If Miasoedov had been a spy, it was widely assumed that the protection of V. A. Sukhomlinov had been instrumental to the success of his felonious activities. But if that were so, perhaps Sukhom-

30. Hugh Seton-Watson, *The Russian Empire, 1801–1917* (London, 1967), pp. 710–711. A recent historiographical backlash against the theory of Miasoedov's innocence is worth noting. In the past few years, several Russian-language publications have appeared that endeavor to burnish the reputations of the intelligence and counterintelligence services of both Soviet and tsarist Russia. An example is Batiushin, *Tainaia voennaia razvedka.* Batiushin was an investigator closely involved in the case, and in this intelligence manual he makes occasional reference to it. The book also contains a sympathetic biography of Batiushin that largely adopts his version of events. See also I. I. Vasil'ev and A. A. Zdanovich, "General N. S. Batiushin. Portret v inter'ere russkoi razvedki i kontrrazvedki," pp. 190–257. This strand of interpretation has been echoed in at least one work of recent Western scholarship: Alex Marshall, "Russian Military Intelligence, 1905–1917: The Untold Story behind Tsarist Russia in the First World War," *War in History* 11, no. 4 (2004): 393–423. Marshall writes: "Given Miasoedov's dubious past . . . perhaps Russian intelligence in 1915 got the right man, albeit by dishonourable means" (p. 412).

31. See, for example, Norman Stone, *The Eastern Front, 1914–1917* (New York, 1975), pp. 24–34, 197–199; Allan K. Wildman, *The End of the Russian Imperial Army: The Old Army and the Soldiers' Revolt (March–April 1917)* (Princeton, 1980), pp. 65–68,92–93; William C. Fuller, Jr. *Civil-Military Conflict in Imperial Russia 1881–1914* (Princeton, 1985), pp. 237–244; Bruce W. Menning, *Bayonets before Bullets. The Imperial Russian Army, 1861–1914* (Bloomington, 1992), pp. 221–234.

32. I shall henceforth refer to the Miasoedov and Sukhomlinov cases together as "the case."

linov was himself a traitor. And, since Nicholas II had personally chosen Sukhomlinov to head the Ministry of War, since he had trusted him and confided in him, what did this imply about the former's judgment and qualifications to rule? Still further, how many hundreds of thousands of lives had been unnecessarily sacrificed at the front because of treachery either obtusely ignored or guilefully abetted by some of the highest officials in the regime? Reasoning like this became quite common in 1915 and 1916 both in civil society and in the frontline trenches.[33] Indeed the Miasoedov/Sukhomlinov cases may have been even more damaging to the monarchy than the lurid scandals associated with Rasputin. The very names Miasoedov and Sukhomlinov became synonyms for "traitor," much as the name Quisling would forty years later. After the Bolsheviks seized power, the prominent historian Iu. V. Got'e confided to his diary: "The more you think about it the clearer it becomes that the society that gave birth to Nicholas II with his Rasputins, Miasoedovs and Sukhomlinovs should have ended as it has ended."[34] In other words, Got'e (who was far from being a radical) was arguing that wartime treason had proved that the tsarist system was rotten to the core and that the putrescence of that system to an extent justified its elimination by sanguinary revolution. As we shall see, the affair gave birth to a peculiar grammar of treason, in which the traditional monarchism that had held the empire together for generations was equated not with loyalty but with its exact opposite.

The case is no less revealing about party politics and political culture in Russia, both prior to 1914 and during the war itself. The origins of political parties in Russia, the rancorous relations between successive tsarist governments and Dumas, the rigidification of political attitudes during the war, the eventual emergence of the "Progressive Bloc"—all have served as subjects for monographs in many languages. But what the Miasoedov/Sukhomlinov case brings home is the unsavory realization that much of Russian politics in the era of the so-called constitutional experiment was actually an utterly ruthless and completely unprincipled struggle for power. Narrative histories of the last years of Russia's ancien régime often call attention to the unscrupulousness of the Bolsheviks ("tactical flexibility" to their admirers), to the venality of the ministers, to the decadence of high society, and to the ineptitude of Nicholas II. But the conduct of some of the liberal and conservative politicians (as well as that of some of the generals) who took part in the Miasoedov/Sukhomlinov affair was so morally depraved that it takes one's breath away.[35] It is a vile deed to sacrifice the life of an innocent man for political expediency. But it is viler still to compound the crime by destroying his family, besmirching his honor, and spattering his very name with excrement. Those involved may have salved their consciences by emphasizing their good intentions or the imperatives of national emergency, but in the

33. Tsuyoshi Haskegawa, *The February Revolution: Petrograd 1917* (Seattle, 1981), p. 574.

34. Iurii Vladirimovich Got'e, *Time of Troubles: The Diary of Iurii Vladimirovich Got'e,* trans. Terence Emmons (Princeton, 1988), p. 271.

35. Haskegawa, *February Revolution,* pp. 28–29, rightly denounces the liberals for their part in the M/S affair. As we shall see, however, it was not only the liberals whose deeds were censurable.

end what they did was not only evil but dangerous. The fetid atmosphere of hate and paranoia that they helped create and encourage could not be dispelled after tsarism collapsed. The malignant influence of that atmosphere continued to undermine the war effort while contributing to the erosion of the claim to rule made by tsarism's successor, the Provisional Government.

This brings us to the issue of popular attitudes and mentalities. One of the most interesting puzzles connected with the case is that extremely flimsy evidence was received with such mass credulity. Of course, the experience of World War I inspired popular hysteria on the home front in many belligerent countries.[36] The belief that traitorous conspirators were responsible for the bulk of Russia's misfortunes obviously satisfied some deep psychological needs. But the particular form that spy mania assumed in Russia during the war years was conditioned by a profound ambivalence about capitalism, by both overt and latent anti-Semitism, and by certain cultural stereotypes about women.

Finally, there are features of the Miasoedov/Sukhomlinov cases that eerily foreshadow and anticipate the legal practices that would become common in Stalin's Soviet Union. The comparison to be drawn obviously does not concern the severity of the repression. It would be obscene to equate the abuses perpetrated in the Miasoedov case, bad as they were, with the terror and mass murder unleashed by Stalin in the 1930s. But what is similar about the judicial and police procedures of 1915 and 1937 is the general concept of presumptive guilt. In the Miasoedov case, as later in the era of high Stalinism, everyone who fell under suspicion was considered a potential traitor. This meant that no effort had to be made to establish a motive, no resources had to be expended searching for eyewitnesses, and no time had to be wasted weighing the evidence. Opportunity (that is, the physical possibility that the defendant could have committed the crime) and association (that is, contacts with other allegedly suspicious persons) were considered sufficient to establish culpability.

36. Sir Samuel Hoare, who served in Russia at the time of the affair, and who was one of the few foreigners to have strong reservations about what was going on, made an explicit analogy between the case "and the spy mania that swept England in the first year of the war." See his book *The Fourth Seal: The End of a Russian Chapter* (London, 1930), p. 54.

1

Verzhbolovo

Miaso" is the Russian word for "meat," and in literal translation the name Miasoedov means "clan of the meat eaters" or "clan of the carnivores." Because meat was scarcely the regular fare of the common people in medieval eastern Europe, the name by itself implied a rather high status. The Miasoedovs were indeed an ancient gentry family and could trace their origins back to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. In 1464 one Iakov Miasoed arrived in Muscovy from Lithuania and swore his allegiance to Grand Prince Ivan III Vasilievich. The descendants of the line he founded appear episodically in the records of the Muscovite period, occupying posts in the armed forces, the court, and the bureaucracy. On several occasions they were granted estates in usufruct (*pomest'ia*) as rewards for their services.[1] Although eventually the family split into different branches, the one with which we are concerned was concentrated in the northwestern borderlands of the Russian Empire.[2]

Sergei Nikolaevich Miasoedov was born in Vilna, the old capital of Lithuania, on July 5, 1865. His father, Nikolai, was a landholder who owned an estate in the White Russian province of Smolensk, to the east. Although not particularly affluent, Sergei Nikolaevich's parents were relatively well connected. Various relatives and friends of the Miasoedovs were prominent in St. Petersburg society and the government bureaucracy, and Nikolai himself was distinguished enough to become for a time the marshal of the Smolensk nobility. Nonetheless, the Miasoedovs' shortage of ready

1. Aleksandr Bobrinskii, *Dvorianskie rody. Vnesennye v obshchii gerbovnik Vserossiiskoi Imperii,* pt. 1 (St. Petersburg, 1890), p. 552.

2. On other branches of the family see "Miasoedovy," *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar'*, vol. 20, pub. F. A. Brokgauz and I. A. Efron (St. Petersburg, 1897), p. 386 (hereafter *BE*).

money destined Sergei from the earliest age for a military career, both because an education was virtually free for children of the gentry in the special military schools maintained by the tsarist state and because the salary he would draw upon graduation would enable him to support himself.

Sergei accordingly matriculated at the Fourth Moscow Kadet Corps (which provided a general secondary education) and then moved on to the prestigious Alexander Infantry College for two years of advanced instruction in military arts and sciences. In the spring of 1885, several months shy of his twentieth birthday, he was commissioned a second lieutenant and joined the 105th Orenburg Infantry Regiment. Except for the two years he completed as adjutant to the commander of the 17th Army Corps (1888 and 1891), Sergei Nikolaevich spent all of his active-duty service with the Orenburg Infantry, where he was apparently popular and well regarded.[3]

Even as a young adult, Miasoedov made a considerable impression on his contemporaries. He was urbane, witty, and possessed a gift for languages, particularly German, which he spoke, read, and wrote fluently. Moreover, he was tall, handsome, imposing, and physically powerful. An acquaintance later recalled that Miasoedov sometimes demonstrated his strength by snapping copper coins in two with his fingers.[4] He did, however, have a pair of bodily flaws: first, a tendency to corpulence (which became more pronounced as he aged), and second, extremely weak vision (for which military authorities authorized him to wear spectacles).

In the fall of 1892 Miasoedov changed careers. Retiring from the army, he enrolled in the Separate Corps of Gendarmes—a militarized police force under the direct control of the Russian Ministry of the Interior.[5] The gendarmes had been created during the reign of Nicholas I as the overt arm of Russia's political police. By the late nineteenth century, the corps of gendarmes, which mustered slightly less than a thousand officers and slightly more than one hundred thousand enlisted men, was the only truly national police organization Russia had. There were gendarme administrations located in every province, in many of the principal towns, and in the more important fortresses. Special gendarme divisions patrolled the streets of Petersburg, Moscow, and Warsaw, while separate gendarme commands were attached to each railroad line. In addition, gendarme officers staffed the urban *okhrannye otdeleniia,* the secret political police organs that were collectively and colloquially known as the Okhrana.[6] As this might suggest, although the gendarmes had many collateral duties, including the inspection of passports and the maintenance of public order during fairs, parades, and outdoor assemblies, the corps' main purpose was the detection and investigation of political crime.

3. General A. I. Spiridovich, *Velikaia voina i fevral'skaia revoliustiia*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1960), p. 108.

4. P. P. Isheev, *Oskolki proshlogo. Vospominaniia 1889–1959* (New York, n.d.), p. 106.

5. This move was by no means unusual: by the early 1890s steep reductions by the government in military spending had resulted in a situation in which bureaucrats and officials in other ministries and services of the tsarist state were better compensated than army officers of equivalent rank. See William C. Fuller, Jr., *Civil-Military Conflict in Imperial Russia, 1881–1914* (Princeton, 1985), pp. 14–15.

6. "Zhendarmy," *BE,* vol. 22 (St. Petersburg, 1894), pp. 718–719.

Lieutenant Colonel Sergei Miasoedov

Miasoedov's transition into the separate corps of gendarmes appears to have been a smooth one. Although there were important differences between the gendarmes and the tsarist armed forces in terms of institutional and organizational culture, all of the corps' officers were men who, like Miasoedov, were veterans of service in the regular army. By law, no one could become a gendarme officer who had not completed three years of duty as an army officer.[7] To be sure, the uniform of the gendarme officers was distinctive, but they bore military ranks identical to those used in the line cavalry. Indeed, in the event of war, the corps immediately came under the jurisdiction of military authorities. Even in peacetime, the gendarmes were officially listed on registers of army manpower.

Miasoedov's first assignment was with the gendarme administration in Olonets, a province northeast of Petersburg that abutted the Finnish border. In less than a year he was transferred to the Minsk gendarmes; four months later he was relocated again, this time to Verzhbolovo, a small town located in Suvalki province on the frontier of East Prussia. On January 17, 1894, Sergei Nikolaevich Miasoedov took up his post as deputy head of the Verzhbolovo gendarmes, or, to give its title in full, the Verzhbolovo section of the St. Petersburg-Warsaw police administration of railroads.[8] Verzhbolovo, also known by the German name of Wirballen and the Lithuanian one of Virbalis, would be Miasoedov's home base for the next sixteen years.

By all accounts, Verzhbolovo was a most unattractive spot, chiefly memorable, as one English traveler put it, for "its sordid surroundings and high wavy trees."[9] Here a small stream (spanned by a crude plank bridge) and some stands of barbed wire delimited the extent of Russia's sovereignty and separated the Russian from the German empire. There was no industry to speak of in the town, and such shops as it boasted catered to the needs of the agricultural villages in the hinterland. Perhaps its only claim to fame (before the Miasoedov treason trial made it notorious) was the fact that Russia's great landscape painter Isaac Levitan (1860–1900), the son of a railway employee, had been born in the nearby hamlet of Kibarty.

As assistant to Colonel Shpeier, head of the Verzhbolovo gendarmes, Miasoedov had responsibility for the security of a prescribed section of the Warsaw-Petersburg railway line. He was also supposed to assist the frontier guard and the customs department in the never-ending struggle against smuggling.[10] He was expected to be especially vigilant in preventing the import of subversive propaganda or weapons. The majority of his time was, however, filled with activities far more routine and pedestrian: the registration of people and the inspection of passports. It was his task to validate the documents of all travelers who sought to enter or exit Russia through the Verzhbolovo checkpoint. After he was promoted to head of the Verzhbolovo gen-

7. Mikhail Alekseev, *Voennaia razvedka Rossii ot Riurika do Nikolaia II*, vol. 1 (Moscow, 1998), p. 122.

8. See Miasoedov's service record, February 6, 1915, RGVIA, f. 801, op. 28, d. 163, l. 44.

9. Bernard Pares, *My Russian Memoirs* (London, 1931), p. 56.

10. See E. K. Sukhova, "Pogranichnaia strazha i kontrabanda v Rossii nachala XX veka," *Voprosy istorii*, no. 7–8 (1991): 234–237.

 darmes in May 1901, he was empowered to issue passes to Russian subjects for temporary trips abroad on his own authority.

It might at first glance seem that this gloomy backwater was a less-than-ideal billet for a worldly and presumably ambitious man like Miasoedov. Yet far from expressing dissatisfaction with his assignment, the young lieutenant of gendarmes soon built a comfortable life for himself, developing a large network of friends in Verzhbolovo, across the border in the German town of Eydtkuhnen, in the Polish province of Suvalki, and in the Lithuanian provinces of Kovno, Kurland, and Vilna. Miasoedov clearly owed many of these social contacts to his skill with rifle and shotgun. An enthusiastic hunter, he became a valued guest at the numerous shooting parties organized by local landholders. It was a common passion for hunting that brought him together with the Til'mans, a wealthy Russo-German family of industrialists with interests in steel, copper, iron, zinc, and machine tools, who owned factories in both empires. It was hunting that also led to his acquaintance with the agriculturist Edward Fuchs and the importer Eduard Valentini, both German subjects long resident in Russia. Finally, it was this sport that led to Miasoedov's marriage.

Samuil Gol'dshtein had come to Russia as a nearly indigent German-Jewish émigré decades before. Through hard work and business acumen he was by the 1890s the proprietor of a substantial tannery in the city of Vilna, the empire's most important center for the hide trade. The value of the Gol'dshtein firm—approximately 400,000 rubles—made it a solid fixture in the economic life of the city and surrounding province. As was the case with many other successful entrepreneurs before and since, Samuil was determined to give his family those luxuries and advantages he had been denied in his youth. He accordingly bought the country estate Novyi Dvor (New Court) as a vacation residence. His sons Pavel and Albert frequently arranged hunting weekends on the grounds of the property, to which local army and gendarme officers were invited. It was apparently at one of these affairs that Miasoedov met Klara Samuilovna, one of the two Gol'dshtein daughters, whom he courted and married in 1895.[11]

Miasoedov's marriage brought him Klara's dowry of 115,000 gold rubles, a substantial sum of money in those days. At the same time, it not only linked him to the Gol'dshtein family but also connected him in complex ways with all their clients and kinfolk. The number of persons to whom he could apply for advice and aid increased, as did the number of people who had reciprocal claims on him. One such party was Frantz Rigert, the husband of Klara's sister Maria. In 1905 Rigert imposed on Miasoedov to serve as his partner and front man in a land-purchasing deal. Working together, Rigert and Miasoedov acquired a large estate of 932 *desiatiny* (2,500 acres) in Sventsiansk *uezd,* Vilna province. Although Rigert advanced the entire down payment and was the real owner of "Sorokpol," the only name on the deed was Miasoedov's. The reason was simple: as a nobleman Miasoedov was able to take

11. Three children were born to the couple: Maria (November 29, 1896), Sergei (March 2, 1898), and Nikolai (October 31, 1901). Order on retirement of Miasoedov, 1912, RGVIA, f. 801, op. 28, d. 164, l. 258.