

1. The revolutionist is a person doomed [obrechennyi, in older usage signifying also "consecrated"]. He has no personal interests, no business affairs, no emotions, no attachments, no property, and no name. Everything in him is wholly absorbed in the single thought and the single passion for revolution.

2. The revolutionist knows that in the very depths of his being, not only in words but also in deeds, he has broken all the bonds which tie him to the civil order [grazhdanskim poriadkom] and the civilized world with all its laws, moralities, and customs, and with all its generally accepted conventions. He is their implacable enemy, and if he continues to live with them it is only in order to destroy them more speedily.

3. The revolutionist despises all doctrines and refuses to accept the mundane sciences, leaving them for future generations. He knows only one science: the science of destruction. For this reason, but only for this reason, he will study mechanics, physics, chemistry, and perhaps medicine. But all day and all night he studies the vital science of human beings, their characteristics and circumstances, at every possible level of social existence. The object is perpetually the same: the surest and quickest way of destroying the whole filthy order.

4. The revolutionist despises public opinion. He despises and hates the existing social morality in all its manifestations. For him, morality is everything which contributes to the triumph of the revolution. Anything that stands in its way is immoral and criminal.

5. The revolutionist is a person obrechennyi [see first line]. He is merciless toward the state and toward the whole formal social structure of educated society [soslovno-obrazovannogo obshchestva]; and he can expect no mercy from them. Between him and them there exists, declared or concealed, a relentless and irreconcilable war to the death. He must accustom himself to torture.

6. Tyrannical toward himself, he must be tyrannical toward others. All the gentle and enervating sentiments of kinship, love, friendship, gratitude, and even honor, must be suppressed in him and give place to the cold and single-minded passion for revolution. For him, there exists only one pleasure, one consolation, one reward, one satisfaction — the success of the revolution. Night and day he must have but one thought, one aim — merciless destruction. Striving cold-bloodedly and indefatigably toward this end, he must be prepared to destroy himself and to destroy with his own hands everything that stands in the path of the revolution.

...

23. By a revolution, the society [tovarishchestvo] does not mean an orderly revolt according to the classic western model — a revolt which always stops short of attacking the rights of property and the traditional social systems of so-called civilization and morality. Until now, such a revolution has always limited itself to the overthrow of one political form in order to replace it by another, thereby attempting to bring about a so-called revolutionary state. The only form of revolution beneficial to the people is one which destroys the entire State to the roots and exterminates all the state traditions, institutions, and classes [klassy] in Russia.

24. With this end in view, the Society therefore refuses to impose any new organization from above. Any future organization will doubtless work its way through the movement and life of the people; but this is a matter for future generations to decide. Our task is terrible, total, universal, and merciless destruction.

25. Therefore, in drawing closer to the people, we must above all make common cause with those elements of the masses which, since the foundation of the state of Muscovy, have never ceased to protest, not only in words but in deeds, against everything directly or indirectly connected with the state: against nobility, against bureaucracy [chinovnichestva], against priests, against the merchant gild, and against the parasitic kulak [rich peasant]. We must unite with the world of adventurous robber bands, the only genuine revolutionists in Russia.

-Sergey Nechayev, "Catechism of a Revolutionist" (1869) excerpt.