

Throughout the academic year 2020 – 2021, I have researched the utopian thinkers of the United States, while putting them in conversation with the Narodniks of the Russian Empire. I have spent my time mostly digging through books of Herzen, Chernyshevsky, Frances Wright and Robert Owen, while taking notes and trying to identify ways in which those two trends of thinking could relate to one another.

The desire to start this project stemmed mostly from the unprecedented coronavirus pandemic which has left open the possibilities for imagining new futures, and for thinking of more utopian ones. Faced with the prospect of not having adequate care for everyone or not everyone having equal access to services, I tried to go back to the 19th century to understand the way utopians were imagining a future world in which to live. By reading their writings, I was thrown into a universe that considered the historical conditions of its time, wanting to change it and render the world a better place for everyone involved.

To be a Narodnik and an Utopian were two different things, separated by landmass and ocean, yet closely-linked to a certain extent. The Narodniks were not afraid to fight the Tsarist Order, to put their lives at stake for bringing more equality into their communities, while the Utopians were ready to distance themselves from the world preoccupied only with materiality, and move into close-knit, self-reliant communities. While there has been very little interaction between the Narodniks and the Utopians, they have both followed the same prospect: understanding the historical and material conditions in which they were finding themselves, imagining a world where equality and equity are primal, and fight for its development. In *What is to Be Done?* by Chernyshevsky, we are faced with the question that will inspire many revolutionaries to come. In asking *What is to Be Done?*, Chernyshevsky set the Narodniks on path of being not only a theoretical, literary group, but also an action-oriented one, taking matters in their own hands.

I have spent my weekday evenings reading through those materials, and in the weekend, I have taken extensive notes on the material I have covered. While I am far from being a scholar of Narodnik or Utopian thinking, I am definitely a step closer to better understanding those current of thoughts and to understand how they have influenced and shaped the world. The research proved useful in understanding better the philosophical currents of the 20th century which I was utilizing in my writings for a long time. Additionally, it helped me better understand the origins and roots of certain communities which I have visited over the years.

In pursuing this project, I relied on books I was able to find online, and on articles that were available through the Bowdoin Library and on the resources to which we have access.

I was planning on doing a podcast for this project, something I am still working on, and plan to finish by the end of this summer. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, I have had to relocate a couple of times, definitely making it more difficult for me to finish everything I was planning. I do have the notes, I have the knowledge, and now the next step would be actually recording this podcast.