



APPENDIX B:
AN INTERVIEW WITH ZAKHARII EFIMOVICH CHERNIAKOV
Moscow, June 1996

BY *Bruce Grant*

WORKING ON THE *Social Organization* manuscript in Moscow, in St. Petersburg, and on Sakhalin, it often seemed that answers to the more mysterious parts of the manuscript could be found only in archives. Great was my surprise in Moscow in June of 1996 when I found one of Shternberg's former students, then 96, and heard him talk of the first time he saw Lenin, of Shternberg's chain-smoking lectures, of Bogoraz' bad handwriting, and of the early years of Soviet ethnography. Like many of his academic contemporaries, Zakharii Cherniakov mixed war, revolution, and scholarship in his student life, founding the worker's faculty at the Herzen Institute in Petrograd and later moving over to Leningrad University to take classes with Shternberg, a professor who emerges here as someone who mastered the Machiavelian axiom that it is best to be loved and feared at the same time. Cherniakov brings to life the kind of academic/activist/administrator life that many Soviet ethnographers of the 1920s and 1930s led, not quite following Shternberg's "stationary field method," but living in regional centers such as Murmansk and making periodic visits to indigenous communities. He remained a loyal Communist in the post-Soviet era, lamenting the excesses of Stalinism, but, as he does here, explaining them with a careful logic that belied the fatal roulette game to which so many of his university friends fell victim. He died in November 1997.

FIRST SESSION, JUNE 10, 1996

GRANT: Can you tell me a bit about yourself?

CHERNIAKOV: I was born in May of 1900, in Belarus, in Slavgorod. Before it was called Propoisk. In fact, during the 1950s, I went back there. I can show you a photograph from the local newspaper, a Belarus newspaper.

I lived there with my grandmother, grandfather, and mother until I was 4. Then after my grandparents died, my mother and I went to Warsaw, and Lodz. It was 1905, and we lived there for a year. Then my father arrived. He became a representative for a Polish factory in St. Petersburg and that's where we stayed. In the summer I was always in Finland at my uncle's, that is, the husband of my mother's older sister.

[It was] probably around 10 summers, and it was enough to learn Finnish. So that was up to the First World War. Eventually my uncle sold his property and went abroad. I was finishing school at that time, in May of 1917. I immediately went to the Polytechnical Institute. But the Civil War started. I finished the first year and started in the second, but then changed my mind and became a volunteer in the Red Army to participate in the Civil War. I was on the front in Ukraine, on the Crimean Peninsula. After that, I was a correspondent for a while. I joined the office of the magazine *Krasnyi Kommandir* [*Red Commander*]. When I was discharged, I took part in the formation of the very first Pedogogical *Rabfak* [Worker's Faculty]. I founded the one at the Herzen Institute in Petrograd, and I was its head. But I myself hadn't finished my own university education, so I joined the ethnogeography department under Bogoraz, and eventually even worked as his personal secretary for a year and a half. From 1928 to 1937 I worked on the Kola Peninsula. I was the Secretary for the Committee for the New Alphabet there, and like Kreinovich, who worked on the Nivkh language, I created an alphabet for the Saami language and wrote their first literacy primer. [Sergei N.] Stebnitskii was working on a primer for the Koriaks; his wife was working on a primer for the Chukchi language, together with Bogoraz. Eventually I became director for the Institute of Northern Schools in Moscow. What else can I tell you?

Later, I arrived from Murmansk on a leave, to Moscow. And on the day I arrived, they announced the Second World War. Hitler had attacked us. Being a member of the reserve, I rejoined the army that same day, and I was assigned to work in the General Headquarters [*Genshtab*] in Moscow. I spent the whole war in Moscow. There was nothing going on at the university, since it had been evacuated. However, I oversaw a map-making unit connected with the university. We worked on Eastern Prussia, which was part of Kaliningradskaia Oblast', by the request of the government. A year later, they switched me over to India and I produced some more materials for them on the peoples of India.

After that, I went back frequently to the Kola Peninsula and returned to Saami studies. Even today, despite my age, I still plan on going back. What a sight I should be to them.

GRANT: Can you tell me why you became an ethnographer?

CHERNIKOV: When I was studying in high school, my father wanted me to become an engineer, and my mother wanted me to become a doctor. I liked history, and always thought ethnography was interesting. I joined the Polytechnical Institute to study engineering, but when the Civil War started, I realized that you couldn't waste time doing things that weren't important, so when I went back to study, I joined Bogoraz' department. When I had been in the Crimea, I met a lot of Crimean Tatars, and that's more or less how my ethnographic education began. Later I saw an announcement in the newspaper that a Geography Institute was being formed, with a Department of Ethnography that Shternberg was heading. I wrote the Polytechnical Institute from the Crimea and asked that they forward my documents there. When I arrived back to Petrograd, all of my documents were already there. At first, because I was still in the army, I was a "military auditor" [*voenno-slushatel'*]; later I became a full-time student. That's more or less how I got into it.

Later, the Institute became part of the University, and became its own Division within the Geographic Faculty, under Fertsman, Aleksandr Ivanovich, a geologist. Bogoraz first suggested that I study the Chukchi. I assented, but we were such a large group. There were 10 or 12 of us, including [Tikhon Z.] Semushkin, and others. I asked Bogoraz whether it was really worth it when I already knew Finnish and I could study Finno-Ugric languages. Everyone wanted to go to the Far East, and no one wanted to study the Saami. Bogoraz thought about it, and said, "Yes, that would be prudent." But then I thought, who would my advisor be? Bogoraz realized I had no one, so he said that he would help me.

GRANT: So you started to study with Bogoraz and Shternberg in 1923 or 1924?

CHERNIAKOV: Right, in 1924, and then by 1927, I had finished. Later I became a researcher at the Academy of Sciences at the Institute for the Study of Peoples where [Nikolai Ia. Marr]¹ was the head.

GRANT: Did you attend any of Shternberg's lectures?

CHERNIAKOV: Do you know his book, *Primitive Religion*?² It's a compendium of all his lectures, and I was at them.

GRANT: What was Shternberg like as a person?

CHERNIAKOV: Shternberg was a very complicated person, very. He was very serious. [pauses]

Shternberg was a very serious person. His pronouncements were never hurried, always grave. Bogoraz was quite different. He was such a jolly, animated character, with a huge range of interests, always asking after new ideas and new subjects. [Both men] were remarkably erudite, but with completely different styles. Shternberg was a very closed kind of person, while Bogoraz was very open. Bogoraz also used to write fiction, remember. And he was an active journalist. He was a master of paradoxes. He suffered for that in life, because he wrote critical essays in the newspapers all the time, and people got back at him for it. Being a Jew, he even had trouble visiting certain cities. So one day he announced himself a Lutheran, and that problem disappeared instantaneously. The authorities couldn't bear him.

GRANT: So you attended all of Shternberg's lectures on primitive religion?

CHERNIAKOV: I should say that as a lecturer he was very difficult. His lectures were always substantive and very deep, but he read very, very slowly. He would bring entire card catalogues with him to the lecture hall and read out long passages from various cards that he would take from his files. Bogoraz was different. He would just start talking, he would go off on tangents, get distracted, laugh, answer our questions.

¹ Nikolai Ia. Marr was a Georgian linguist who rose to prominence in the 1930s with an economically determined theory of the origin of languages. For more on Marr's influence on ethnography, see Roi Medvedev, "Stalin i iazykoznanie," *Nezavisimaia Gazeta* (April 4, 1997), 14; Yuri Slezkine, "N. Ia. Marr and the National Origins of Soviet Ethnogenetics," *Slavic Review* 55, no. 4 (1996), 826–862; N. Ia. Marr, "Avtobiografiia" (1927) in Nikolai Ia. Marr, *Izbrannye raboty*, 5 vols. (Leningrad, 1933); and Thomas Lawrence, *The Linguistic Works of N. Ia. Marr* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1957).

² L. Ia. Shternberg, *Pervobytnaia religiia v svete etnografii* (Leningrad: Institut Narodov Severa, 1936).

It was a completely different atmosphere. I remember traveling in a car once with Bogoraz and Stebnitskii when we were going to the offices of Pravda. The whole way in the car he urged us to become part-time writers, and told us all about how to write news articles, you know, the satirical kind [*fel'etony*]. I remember him saying so enthusiastically, "If you want to do it, then it's always simple." He was a very ebullient personality.

GRANT: Did Shternberg ever talk about Boas?

CHERNAKOV: Shternberg did, and Bogoraz especially. They both considered themselves to be students of Boas.

GRANT: Did you know Shternberg's wife?

CHERNAKOV: Sarra Arkadieвна? Yes, of course. She was also a complicated person. She was very well educated, very erudite. And she was extremely active in publishing [Shternberg's] archive. Koshkin was her deputy in this matter. He helped her a great deal. Everything that was later published is due to the two of them. As a person—what can I say?—she was very attentive to her husband's students. With Shternberg himself I often talked.

GRANT: Is there a way to explain Shternberg's slow pace for submitting the *Social Organization* manuscript? I wondered if he was occupied with other political matters.

CHERNAKOV: His slowness was just on the surface, because he always thought everything through very thoroughly. Every word he uttered—how should I describe it—was genuinely weighty [*vesomo*]. Bogoraz felt this and he submitted to Shternberg in almost all matters. I would say he was even a little afraid of him. We were all afraid of Shternberg in different ways. We loved him but feared him. He was occasionally quite severe with Bogoraz and [Shternberg] never forgot a criticism.

GRANT: Would you say that they were friends?

CHERNAKOV: Yes, they were very close friends. But it was an unusual friendship since, as I said, Shternberg was a rather sharp personality and Bogoraz had to accommodate this. Bogoraz was a far easier person to get along with.

You have to remember that I oversaw Bogoraz' correspondence when I worked as his personal secretary. He needed one because he had such atrocious handwriting. I got used to it, although with difficulty. He dictated letters to me all the time and in many languages. He knew a number of languages fluently. He had a wide correspondence, with Boas, Langevin, W. E. DuBois, Langston Hughes. With many different people. With his brothers as well—he had one in Rostov-on-the-Don, and another in Paris, a doctor.

GRANT: Which of Shternberg's works did you like the most?

CHERNAKOV: It's hard to say. I heard all his public lectures, on general ethnography, on the cause of Russian Jewry. They were all interesting.

GRANT: I was asking because I find I have different reactions to different works by him. Some I find brilliant; others, like parts of his work on kinship, I find sometimes difficult to work through.

CHERNAKOV: I understand you because, truly, kinship is very complicated. I think the word boring is even appropriate. But you know, I remember Shternberg's lectures

on kinship. They were difficult to follow. Maybe they were boring, but it's as if they were boring and interesting at the same time.

GRANT: You told me that you were friends with Iurii Abramovich Kreinovich, when you both studied under Shternberg together. Do you know why he chose to study Nivkhi?

CHERNIAKOV: I do. Each of us had a task before them, which was to get to know at least one people in depth. This was something Shternberg insisted on in our program. A profound knowledge of one people, and their language, with no less than a year and a half or 2 years of fieldwork. That was [Shternberg's] school, the "stationary school." He put this task before us. You had to know at least one group before you could go on to other work. Kreinovich was very close to Shternberg. He became one of his main students and chose Nivkhi out of loyalty to him. So he did what most of us did, which was to set out to Sakhalin and collect myths and the like.

GRANT: Did you have a sense of how Shternberg and Bogoraz felt about the Soviet government?

CHERNIAKOV: Quite loyally, really. Very positively, I would say. The most difficult time was after the death of Lenin when Stalin's tsarism began. It was very difficult. But in the early years we were all, in short, enthusiasts. Once I went to hear Lenin speak, at the Congress of the Communist International in 1920. I went with my commander, Vasiliï Ivanovich [—]. When we got to the auditorium he said, "Wait, soon you'll feel the full artillery of Marxism." And he was right. That day changed my life.

GRANT: When you read [Shternberg and Bogoraz'] memoirs, you get the impression that the enthusiasm was very genuine.

CHERNIAKOV: On top of that, it was the heyday of the Committee of the North.³ Bogoraz and Shternberg were members of the Committee, and Bogoraz even ran the Petrograd branch.

GRANT: Did Shternberg take much part in the Committee of the North? I always thought his membership was just a formality.

CHERNIAKOV: What are you saying? He was a very active participant.

GRANT: I think it's because I saw Shternberg's name far more rarely in the Committee archives.

CHERNIAKOV: You just need to take a look at the journal *Sovetskii Sever* [*Soviet North*].

GRANT: When I've read through articles by Bogoraz, I was always confused by his pseudonym "Tan." Do you know where it came from?

CHERNIAKOV: He used Tan from his original name, Natan, so his pseudonym originally was N. A. Tan. He signed all his popular writings that way. His scientific work was just "Bogoraz." Then with time, he started using both, Bogoraz-Tan.

³ The *Komitet sodeistviia narodnostiam severnykh Okrain pri Prezidiume VTsIK* (1924–1935) [Committee for the Assistance to Peoples of the Northern Borderlands] commonly known as the *Komitet Severa* or Committee of the North.

GRANT: Shternberg died in 1927. What kind of atmosphere was there at the time in the world of Petersburg ethnography?

CHERNIKOV: It was an open battle with supporters of Marr, since Marr's position was diametrically opposed to our position as ethnographers. It was a very sharp opposition. I can even tell you about the map I worked on for my dissertation. I was using the 1926 census to put together a map of languages of the USSR. When the Marrists found out, they wanted me to do it entirely along Marrist lines, I refused to continue and gave up my dissertation right then and there. On principle. The Marrists thought that Indo-Europeanism was an anachronism, and built up their own theory about the origin of all world languages. The Japhetic language family is a reality, one has to look into it, but when Marr got into ancient languages using the same theory, it was a fantasy. By the way, Stalin took part in this fantasy as well, if you see his *Marxism and Linguistics*.⁴ But that's what happens when you have people who aren't specialists.

GRANT: So Kreinovich went into the field in 1926. Did you also go off at the same time?

CHERNIKOV: I went off in 1928, and stayed until 1937. From 1928 to 1937, it was almost 10 years. The advantage was that I grew up knowing Finnish, so it was easy for me to learn the Saami language. I still understand it today.

GRANT: So did you ever see Kreinovich after Shternberg died?

CHERNIKOV: I saw him not long before he was sent away in 1937. The problem was that he got involved in local politics when he was on Sakhalin. I always stayed out of things like that when I was in Murmansk.⁵

GRANT: So what was Kreinovich's mistake?

CHERNIKOV: I wouldn't call it a mistake. I couldn't even call it a lack of caution because he was a very cautious person. He just got caught up in the local politics when he was supporting Nivkh interests. You know, on Sakhalin, they were drilling for oil and developing the fish industry. It was hardly as if the local oil barons were interested in ethnography, and Kreinovich protested that they were harming Nivkh communities. So they informed on him to the police.

Many people were surprised that I never got taken away, but the difference is that I never hid anything. I wrote about my grandfather and grandmother, who lived abroad. I wrote about my father who had left in 1922 to live in Palestine. I always told everyone and wrote it down on all my job applications so that I could say it was never a secret. People informed on me too, saying that I had an uncle in Paris and a father in Palestine, that they were anti-Soviet elements. But I could always say, "Well, of course, I've always been open about it." If I had hidden it there wouldn't have even been a conversation. They would have just taken me away.

⁴ Iosif Stalin, *Marksizm i voprosy iazykoznaniiia* (Berlin: Volk und Wissen Volkseigener Verlag, 1952); published in English as *Marxism and Linguistics* (New York: International, 1951).

⁵ Kreinovich was involved in many conflicts with local fishermen on Sakhalin, enforcing the jurisdiction of the new Soviet fishing collectives Gilyaks had joined. Grant, *In the Soviet House of Culture*, 72–80. By contrast, however, he was much less a figure of formal political life than Cherniakov, who worked in the Murmansk regional administration from 1928 to 1937.

GRANT: In a letter he wrote late in his life, Kreinovich once said that he considered himself too naive, that “innocence is worse than thievery” [*prostota khuzhe vorovstva*]. Did you ever have that feeling about him?

CHERNIAKOV: Oh, looking back, we were all that way. I was an exception only in that I began studying Marxism before the revolution. When I was still in high school, my parents rented out one of their rooms to boarders. Two brothers came to live in our house They represented themselves as aristocrats, and perhaps they were, but more importantly they were Marxist revolutionaries. They had all the literature—Lenin, Plekhanov, Bogdanov. It was 1915 or 1916. Then suddenly they disappeared. Either they went abroad or went into hiding. But they left all their books behind. So when they left I started to read it all. We were lucky that the police didn’t find out since it was a crime to have those kinds of books around. But I kept them right until the revolution.

SECOND SESSION, JUNE 24, 1996

GRANT: So, you started studying in 1925. Can you tell me about the other graduate students you studied with?

CHERNIAKOV: Well, we all had the Ethnographic Division in common. Before the Geographic Institute with the university, and the formation of the Geographic Faculty within the university, I was still in the Geography Institute, in the Ethnography Faculty under Shternberg. He brought together a relatively small group, we were all working in different parts of the country, we would go off and collect data.

As a rule, when we were in the field we didn’t think of ourselves as researchers but as civil servants. So when people were stationed in Siberia or the Far East for their research, most of the time they were working in kolkhozes, or an artel, or an elementary school. Shternberg approved of this since this gave us cause to share the problems of the people we were studying. We had common interests with the people we were studying and could see their life as they did. It wasn’t like the later Soviet school, when you would go somewhere for 2 weeks and then come back and write it all up. We stayed in the field for a few years, and shared in people’s successes and failures. It was just assumed that you would experience at least a few annual cycles—a few winters, a few springs, a few summers. You know, you arrive in the summer, that was the usual tradition. The summer would be spent in language training. You trip your way through the fall, by winter you can more or less speak, and by the following summer you are a real member of the community. That’s when you really start your work. It wasn’t like someone who just showed up for weddings and funerals.

So, who else was there? Semushkin went to the Chukchi. He eventually became a writer. Stebnitskii went to the Koriaks, and learned the language; he wrote their first primer and translated textbooks. He wrote a grammar for the language. He became a leading specialist in Koriak studies. Kreinovich went to the Gilyaks.

GRANT: Can you tell me about the people here? [We look at the 1926 photograph of him and his colleagues reprinted in the Foreword.]

CHERNAKOV: Those are my comrades. I could tell you as much as you like about any of them. [N. G.] Shprintzin was a museum worker. She was very close to Bogoraz and worked very closely with him on museum affairs. [Ian P.] Koshkin went to work with Evenks, the same thing. Then there's [Saul M.] Abramzon, he went to work with the Kyrgyz. That was a very different direction than most of us. He got in trouble with the local obkom there. The first secretary of Kyrgyziia wanted to destroy him, but he held out. [Stepan A.] Makar'ev, he studied Vepsy, but he was a fieldworker, and put out a textbook called *Field Ethnography* under Bogoraz' supervision.⁶ I see [Pavel Iu.] Moll. He studied the Chukchi. You know who's not here? [Valentin A.] Avrorin—he went to work with Nanaitsy, knew all the dialects. [Elena V.] Talonova was also a museum specialist. She was more of a generalist.

GRANT: Can you tell me which courses of Shternberg's you attended?

CHERNAKOV: Of course. Material Culture, Social Culture, and Religion. Those were three separate courses. But he began with a general course called Introduction to Ethnography.

GRANT: Which one did you like most of all?

CHERNAKOV: That's hard to say. Simultaneously we listened to Shternberg's lectures in ethnography and Bogoraz' lectures in ethnogeography. They were two completely different people. Bogoraz had an infectious enthusiasm and won us over with his erudition and wide-ranging curiosity. Shternberg was the absolute opposite. He spoke very unclearly. He muttered, took long pauses between sentences, and smoked constantly, coughing. He stuck very closely to the information he brought with him on index cards that he brought to every lecture. He would often bring whole drawers of these cards with him so that he could respond to students' questions with entire citations that he had transcribed from various books. He was even, to a certain extent, hard to make out at times. And yet his lectures were so substantive. They gave you such a vivid picture of other worlds.

Shternberg lived not far from the university. After the lectures we would often walk in the same direction back to our homes. These were unforgettable conversations for me. He would always talk philosophy and history as we walked. Sometimes I tried to argue with him and he would very patiently explain his positions. For me it was a school of its own, no less than the formal lectures at the university.

GRANT: People say that Shternberg liked to start speaking in Nivkh every now and then during lectures?

CHERNAKOV: Well, he cited things occasionally, but it was nothing unusual.

GRANT: Do you remember who you read in those courses? For example, in his course on Social Culture?

CHERNAKOV: We read Tylor's book, *Primitive Culture*. Mostly we read foreign works—Boas, Rivers.

GRANT: Did Shternberg and Bogoraz make references to political topics when they lectured?

⁶ Stepan Andreevich Makar'ev, *Polevaia Etnografiia* (Leningrad: Izdanie etnograficheskoi ekskursionnoi kommissii etnootdeleniia geofaka LGU, 1928).

CHERNIAKOV: Yes, of course, you should consult Bogoraz' publications on the topic. He frequently wrote about the revolution.

GRANT: What about drawing northern peoples toward socialism? Were there those kinds of lectures?

CHERNIAKOV: You know, that wasn't really necessary. All of our lectures in one way or another were about the importance of drawing northern peoples into the Soviet fold, bypassing feudalism and capitalism and entering directly into socialism. That was our mission. It was of course a great achievement and a big mistake. What happened of course is that people left their old lives behind, but had no training to speak of for the new lives they were to participate in. Instead of eliminating traditional cultures, we should have tried to advance them, to elevate them. Instead of eliminating traditional reindeer herding, we should have tried to create an "advanced reindeer herding" [*razvitoe olenevodstvo*].⁷ Technically advanced. If we had taught them how to drive motorized sleds, instead of making them leave the taiga, and how to iron their own clothes, that would have been an accomplishment.

GRANT: Was it palpable that a new nationalities policy was in place in the 1930s under Stalin?

CHERNIAKOV: Of course we felt it. It was evident at every step of our work. I mean, we all started out our work learning native languages, writing literacy primers, promoting native intellectuals. And suddenly, we are told that we are supposed to discourage native language use, to attract people instead to the Russian language. Basically, to Russify them.

GRANT: How did the Saami you knew react when that policy came into effect?

CHERNIAKOV: What do you mean "react"? No one ever asked. You have to remember that this was the same time when Stalin ordered that all native children be placed in boarding schools so as to forget the way of life their parents had. People resisted but the resistance was quelled, that's all there was to it. Then there was the whole transfer of nomadic peoples to sedentary life. Whole Saami families were just moved into small towns. It was all looked upon as prudent and even generous.

GRANT: Going back to Shternberg, did he ever talk about his work for Russian Jewry? Was it a large part of his work?

CHERNIAKOV: His study of Jews is a special field unto itself. He was a leader of the Jewish Ethnographic Circle. He read lectures there. I went once. He had a particularly interesting article on this too. It wasn't his specialty, but it occupied much of his time.

GRANT: Did Shternberg ever say anything about his visits to New York?

CHERNIAKOV: He mentioned it in his lectures a number of times, about how both he and Bogoraz had been in America. It's difficult for me to remember the details. They talked about their opinions about international events with some frequency.

⁷ Cherniakov's reference to "advanced herding" seemed a play on the expression used frequently in the Brezhnev period, "advanced socialism" [*razvityi sotsializm*]. His position resonates with the 1920s Soviet policies toward Siberian indigenous peoples, promoting native culture within a strict framework of government supervision.

GRANT: A few days ago, I went to see Shternberg's grave, where the aphorism "All humanity is one" [*Vse chelovechestvo edino*] is written at the head of the gravestone.⁸ Was that an idea that often came up in his lectures?

CHERNAKOV: Of course. But mostly what I remember is the methodology: The stationary method, the practical mastery of the language, and the use of language not only for the receipt of information, but for scientific analysis itself. So language always had a double role: for information, and for analysis in and of itself.

GRANT: After Shternberg and Bogoraz, who were the successful ethnographers?

CHERNAKOV: [pauses] Of course, there aren't many. There were interesting people, and intelligent people here and there. The Slavists, for example. For example, there is one fellow who is being translated from German now. What is his name? Then we had that specialist in Turkish languages . . . I forget the name. [Boris Ia.] Vladimirtsov was a specialist in Mongolian languages.

GRANT: In the 1930s, one talks about how much fieldwork diminished after the arrival of Stalin.

CHERNAKOV: Well, I spent 10 years in the field from 1928 to 1937, so I can't say there was any obstacle. But I also can't say that it was all fieldwork pure and simple, because I worked mainly in Murmansk as the First Secretary there of the Committee for the New Alphabet. In the Murmansk regional offices, I took part in the redrawing of boundaries for the Murmansk okrug. Then again in 1959 I took part in the census for the Kola Peninsula, so I was doing different things. Most of us did that. Vdovin, for example, taught for a few years. I usually went a few times a year for a month. It wasn't a leave of absence, just part of my work, and I always felt comfortable there. People always invited me to stay in their homes, but I didn't want to offend them so I always stayed in the same room in the same hotel.

GRANT: Can you tell me about Shternberg's funeral?

CHERNAKOV: First I should tell you about his illness. He was living in a dacha just outside of Petersburg. It was in the summer of 1927. He was a friend of Professor Kagarin and his wife. I went to the Kagarins once and he told me that Shternberg was very sick. Sarra Arkadievna met us and told us that he was very sick and couldn't see anyone. He was already on his deathbed at that point.

When he died, Bogoraz was very active in organizing the funeral, and I was his secretary, so Bogoraz and I did much of the work. Preparing documents, ordering the coffin . . . There was a meeting at the university where his coffin was. After that we went to the cemetery. I remember that I was taking care of various tasks for others, so I went back on forth on my bicycle around the city. The whole group moved rather slowly along Nevskii Prospekt and then over to the Party Committee building on the Moika, where various party officials also made speeches about him. I had to dash about on my bicycle to prepare the meetings, and then finally, I went ahead with the coffin to the cemetery, with Sarra Arkadievna, Koshkin, quite a number of well-known cultural figures. There were a lot of people at the funeral.

⁸ Shternberg is buried in Preobrazhenskoe Evreiskoe Kladbishche in the southern end of St. Petersburg.

At the cemetery, they had asked me to choose a spot, and I had chosen a location beside the famous artist, Antakol'skii, but for some reason, it didn't suit Sarra Arkadievna, and she required that it be moved to another spot. I can't remember why, perhaps it was too shady there. Then they asked me to speak at the graveside in the name of his students. The speech was published somewhere I can't remember . . . *Vestnik* . . . ? There were only two issues, but the first one included my speech. It was a journal of student works. The first issue was dedicated to Shternberg. The first article is mine, though it didn't carry my name. You should absolutely find it. It would be very useful.

GRANT: Do you know whether Sarra Arkadievna got along with Bogoraz? One gathers from their letters that they were not fond of each other.⁹

CHERNIAKOV: That is also difficult for me to say. I know that their relations were somewhat strained. But I couldn't say they were antagonistic. Now as far as relations between Bogoraz and Shternberg were concerned, I can say. Shternberg often went to Bogoraz for help on his English. Bogoraz had been in the United States longer than he, and he had a much better command of the language. And Bogoraz always helped him. He was always helpful, but rather official with Shternberg.

GRANT: Did you know Iulia Averkieva? She also did some work on the *Social Organization* manuscript with Sarra Arkadievna.

CHERNIAKOV: I knew her, of course. It was so sad how much time she spent in labor camps. Then there was Koshkin. They shot him, if I recall. It was a horrible, horrible time. The Red Terror.

GRANT: This is why you have to write your autobiography.

CHERNIAKOV: Yes, but you know, I can only write about myself.

⁹ AAN f. 282, o. 5, d. 70.