attitude of revolutionaries in the 1860s, re-evaluating the status-quo and committing themselves to ‘realism’. Only that which was immediately useful had any value. The 60s was primarily a cultural revolution, and had not yet turned its attention to the social aspects of Russian society.

A number of manifestos were published which all contained the same grievance. “The sovereign has betrayed the hopes of the people, the freedom he has given them is not real and is not what the people dreamed of and need.” They all pushed for greater equality, a system of merit and for appointments to public office to follow elective principles.

In 1862 a group of student radicals published a revolutionary manifesto called ‘young Russia’. It called for “revolution – bloody and merciless revolution”. Outlined in young Russia are two separate groups within Russia, both hostile to each other. On one side those ‘oppressed by all and humiliated by all is the party of the common people.’ And on the other the ‘landowners... the merchants... the government officials’ and ‘at their heart stands the Tsar’. They theorised that the Tsar could not survive without this oppressive group, nor the oppressive group without the Tsar, and so revolution would remove the oppressors from Russia.

The Populist Movement;

The 1870s gave rise to two populist groups, the Narodniki (‘to the people’) and the Narodnaya Volya (the peoples will). The populists aimed to achieve their ideal of a perfect society based on the peasant and village commune. The cultural revolt of the 60s gave way to concern for broader social problems. Populist at this time rejected the ‘laissez fair’ principles of the west, for they acknowledged the opportunity for exploitation which it created and did not want the struggles of urban proletariat life for Russia’s peasant population. Nor did they see a future in piecemeal political reform of the autocracy.

Fear amongst populists that Russia was embarking on the western path created an increased sense of urgency amongst revolutionaries. Between 1873 and 1874, 2000-3000 educated Populists from the nobility and intelligentsia decided to ‘Go to the People’. They visited peasant villages to share in the ‘true’ life of the peasant and to educate them to rise up in rebellion against the Tsar to establish a populist state.

The peasants viewed the populists with deep suspicion, many either beating them up or reporting them to police. Two major trials of 243 young revolutionaries were held in 1877-8. Those who escaped arrest or who had escaped from their place of ‘administrative exile’ kept the movement alive.

Populism draws to an end;

Some decided that revolution would not come from the conservative and traditional peasants. They turned their ideas to those of Karl Marx and to revolution based on the industrial workers. Others maintained their faith in the peasantry, and decided that a more organised party system would be needed. One such group was known as ‘Land and Liberty’ which appeared in 1876. Its leaders developed a highly organised system of central and local command which included a section dealing with escapes from prison of arrested members, assassinations of government officials as revenge for the ill treatment of its members and the discovery of traitors or police spies. The ideal of ‘going to the people’ remained but with a different approach from the first attempts. Revolutionaries would go dressed in peasant clothing to work in villages as doctors, teachers or skilled workmen, helping to organise resistance against tsarist officials and landowners.