

# **The Sexual Revolution in Post-Reform Russia: Left-Radicalism, Feminism and its Connection to Terrorism from 1861 to the Great War**

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The first years after the abolition of serfdom were the time of the last burst of noble luxury. A large mass of cash, value earned by others, was withdrawn from the sphere of production and directed into their own consumption. Lands of the few nobles owning serfs needed to be compensated. The government paid off the nobles, who then sunk into a much deserved oblivion. Peasants then went about buying Russia, making it the most egalitarian European society in terms of land ownership. Within 49 years the peasants had to pay the government back, however, soon, Alexander III canceled these payments.

The early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is thus the final stage of moral crisis, the beginning of which was declared by Dostoevsky in the middle of the 1870s. His novel *A Raw Youth* (sometimes translated as *A Teenager* or *The Adolescent*, from the Russian Подросток) saw the new generation of Russians aspiring to be “Rothschilds.” It was rare to find a major writer of most political backgrounds at the time believing any differently.

Arkady Dolgoruky, the main character, was a symbol of his era. He is illegitimate, and the son of a landowner who was totally dissolute in his life. He was raised by strangers and has no real home. Under nihilism, only power can be real. The nihilist movement was “scientific” in that it only recognized blind cause and effect. Since wealth was the best means to power, Arkady set upon “being like a Rothschild” as his main goal.

The book is a condemnation of the mentality that is at the heart of this paper: the destruction that western liberalism and capitalism wrought on Russia. Arkady adopts the ideas of “global citizenship.” Since there are no moral norms, money raised from the gambling table is the same as money actually earned. The result is that he becomes addicted to roulette, as Dostoevsky apparently was himself. The ideas of the sexual revolution, already present in the “western” capital of St. Petersburg, turn on Arkady as he realizes that the powerful can take his love interest with ease. Because he has bought into the nihilists code, he has nowhere to stand to complain.

Struggling to reconcile materialism to freedom, Arkady, in dealing with this cognitive dissonance, is split into two people, a common motif in Dostoevsky. The first is the “rational egoist,” one ostensibly social and constructive, while the other, not really distinct from the first, is the lustful hunter, the one who seeks to possess, exclude and ultimately destroy. Ultimately, only chaos results from this both at a social and psychological level, leading Arkady to admit that only in purity can true youth be maintained.

## *The Background: the Pre-Revolutionary Revolution*

The death of Nikolai I in the midst of the Crimean War signaled the revolution. The abolition of serfdom in 1861 (just a few years later) seemed to hammer the final nail into the

coffin of the “shameful past.” The few survivors of the Decembrist revolt, a noble revolution stopped by Nicholas, saw this event as a worthy end of their lives, and a victory over their nemesis, the conservative Nikolai and all he stood for.

The nobility of the Russian Empire, at one point accustomed for centuries to serve the throne and Fatherland, ingloriously left the stage. They also led the revolutionary movements. Not quite capitalist, not traditional, ideologically confused and altogether secular, these indebted families, the target of all royal policy from Ivan III onward, went to the cities and led the liberal revolution in 1905.

After the freedom of the serfs in 1861, the nobles were to be compensated for their lost labor. The fact that the Emperor can easily cancel these payments shows the irrelevance of this class. The nobility did not invest the money in the improvement of Russia, but preferred to consume in their wasteful lifestyle. Thus was laid the cornerstone of the imminent coming of economic impoverishment and ruin of the nobility on the one hand, and the collapse of the Russian Empire - on the other.

The “wives of the Decembrists” were the initial leaders of the proto-feminist movement in Old Russia. The most powerful and elite names in Russian life engaged in an oligarchical uprising against Nicholas I that has been lionized as “democratic” by an American historical establishment not well schooled in irony. Names such as Volkonskaya, Trubetskaya, Annenkova, Muravievya, Naryshkina and Fonvizina, just to name a few, read like a history book of Russian history since the Troubles. These were the elites who revolted as the “Decembrists” I 1825, and now, their wives were to do their part for the New Age.

Such ultra-elite names showed the titanic power backing feminism and social decay. These were the same names that sought to overthrow royal power since the earliest days of the Moscow autocracy. These were the same names that one reads about that tried to overthrow Ivan IV and Boris Gudenov, installed “tsar oligarch” Vasili Shuskii during the Russian time of troubles in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, installed Peter I and his Masonic clique in the very late 17<sup>th</sup> century, ruled as an oligarchical, pagan cult throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century and now, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, sought the Jacobin Revolution in Russia.<sup>1</sup> The upper reaches of the nobility were anything but conservative. They were deeply Masonic and pagan. It is the same families and the same ideology: pagan statism and absolutism. They were elitist revolutionaries.

At the turn of the century in Petersburg, many of these name families consecrated themselves to Dionysus and used the artificial “crystal palace” as their symbol. This served as the epicenter for the rich and powerful in Peter's “Floating City.” The desire was to bring “Parisian” manners to Russia, as it was understood to mean at the time. To be “Parisian” was to be Bohemian and politically revolutionary. Gypsy choirs, seen as libertine and non-Christian, were used to bring the Dionysian feelings to their apex while the vodka flowed. The idle rich, the old noble families long replaced and the salon women were willing to listen to any “spiritualist” that flattered them. The males were almost all deeply involved in Freemasonry and Jacobin politics. The females had other pastimes (Ekshtut, 2010).

In Rosina's (2009) work on the women of the Decembrists, she writes concerning the “Wives:”

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<sup>1</sup> These are all historical eras where the nobility set themselves against the crown. This changed when Peter I, having been initiated into the Lodge in Amsterdam, created his “new men” to revolutionize Russia. After Peter, the “new men” ruled Russian with a foreign, German Masonic clique often called the “Bironschinia.”

A number of special studies emphasizes the social significance of their acts in exile. For the first time, a woman had become involved in Russian politics. This contributed to the formation of a new type of Russian woman. The Decembrist protest against the accepted norms of social behavior brought them to the first step towards the formation of women's self-consciousness and emancipation, perhaps not even subconsciously. In subsequent years, women began to claim their rights to equality with men, education, work and participation in social struggles (Rosina, 2009).

The strange analysis here is typical of the westernized Russian historian. Apparently, the slew of immensely powerful female women from St. Olga to Marfa Boretskaya<sup>2</sup> to Catherine II escaped her, but these were hardly the first women involved in politics. It is ironic how the ultra-elite (and they remained so in exile, which was not difficult or arduous) are seen to be fighting “accepted norms of social behavior.” They were the norms of behavior. Worse, that this feminism and sexual revolution is traced back to the most powerful and elite families in Russia whose recent history made them to be tyrants of the first order. Oligarchy was their only concern, but they needed a chaotic social system from which to emerge. Stable identities are the enemy of all revolutions.

It is not difficult to see, therefore, that revolution had a female cast from the beginning. As the traditional rulers of the home, these westernized libertines sought to revoke the old moral order in their revolutionary praxis. Their husbands sought to do it politically, they sought to do it privately. The wives of the Decembrists, especially the elite families Trubetskoy and Volkonsky, become centers around which the new left was created in Siberia. The wives of the exiled Decembrists had a tremendous impact on the formation of the Russian female character, accentuating the virtues of self-sacrifice for the new cause.

### *Psychological Revolution in Russian Literature*

Post-reform Russia destroyed the idea of woman. Gradually, from the revolution of Peter I, the woman became an object of male desire and her worth was measured accordingly. The elite crust of urban High Society led the way in destroying Russian manners and Christian customs. The slogan of the elite was “freedom of the will outside prudence and decency” as the consequences of western capitalism made their way through the once strictly Christian society.

This use of the orgy was described by Peter Dmitrievich Boborykin (1836-1921) in the novel *Evening Sacrifice* (1868). This “hellish scene,” a pagan, unbridled orgy with ten men, deliberately took place during Lent, when the Orthodox Church does not bless even marital conjugal intimacy. After the publication of the novel, Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin, in an anonymous 1868 review, revealed that these were elite initiations into what was called the “Athenian Vespers.”

Boborykin writes:

The youth are today filled with the revolutionary idea of not taking the old morals Russia seriously. They feel the passionate need to develop themselves and their

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2 Marfa was the oligarchical ruler of Novgorod from 1438 to 1439. She favored the region's conversion to Polish Catholicism to defend itself against Ivan III.

views on life; to live according to their new moral and social rules and requirements. This was strongly permeated all among those who were called nihilists. The movement was just as destructive as constructive (Boborykin, 1868).<sup>3</sup>

Evening Sacrifice is a novel essential to any analysis of the era. Mary M, the heroine, is convinced that her husband never loved her. Upon visiting her friend, she catches her with a new lover. Intrigued with this lifestyle, she quickly succumbs. The elite of Petrograd are fond of citing commonplace clichés about Spinoza and Rousseau (usually incorrectly), and this provides the thinnest of justifications for their lifestyle. As she falls deeper and deeper into this Bacchanal, she is rescued by Stepan Labazina. Mary goes from philosophical view to philosophical view, throwing herself into different lifestyles before realizing that she is nothing – there is nothing behind the masks. She commits suicide at the end of the novel. In this novel, superficial Petersburg ladies have education without substance. Perfect for the superficial, it cannot be applied to a life seeking meaning. The pseudo-intellectual life exists to justify vice. It is not to be taken seriously. Mary made that error.

In September 1900, Boborykin wrote the story “Classmates.” The heroine of the story, just graduated from a provincial secondary school with a gold medal, says “For now it is not difficult to get a divorce. Everywhere divorce is common, and not just in the main cities.” Divorces were granted by the provincial nobility to their peers for the slightest of causes.

The demand for female involvement in politics and business was always connected to the objectification of these same women sexually. The Russian version of the “bustle” was a means of giving the illusion that the wearer was far better endowed than she really was. Female clothing was now to be seductive. The literature of the day was loaded with references to the “African passion” a euphemism to unbridled lust that has been artificially provoked. The older form of female dress was very complicated. Given the hundreds of buttons and straps, the experienced servant took roughly two hours to remove the formal dress of a society lady in Petrograd. The new “African” style was merely to life the skirt.

In the circles of the capital's bohemian fashion the “Athenian Vespers” became commonplace. Poet Olimpovna Pallas Bogdanov-Belsky (1885-1968) arranged several Athenian trysts at his apartment on the Fontanka and slowly, such gatherings became the talk even of provincial capitals. She called herself a “sacred prostitute” and “orgiastic poet.” From the upper classes, she developed a bohemian lifestyle her wealth could afford, and joined the socialist revolutionaries, the eternal pastime of the idle rich. The mistress of E. Sazonov, she soon ran away to “marry” S. Bogdanov and at least one more “husband” later on. Her significance lies in explicating the cliché lifestyle of the wealthy in Petrograd just before and just after the revolution.

Dmitry Ivanovich Pisarev, the most consistent of the nihilists, spoke for “Young Russia” as he demanded the destruction of “decrepit despotism, decrepit religion, frail rafters of the official morality!” Apparently such morality was not as official as he implies. Unrestrained debauchery was celebrated by Pisarev and it knew no bounds not only in theory but also in practice. In a letter of the same era, he justifies the “new thinking” like this:

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3 The full text in Russian: Боборыкин П. Д. Сочинения. (Volume 3) Вступ. ст., сост., подгот. текста и примеч. С. Чуприна. Худож. Лит., 1993. [http://az.lib.ru/b/boborykin\\_p\\_d/text\\_0090.shtml](http://az.lib.ru/b/boborykin_p_d/text_0090.shtml)

According to my convictions a woman is free in body and spirit, and may dispose of it according to her discretion without answering to anyone, even her husband. If a woman who can enjoy life will not, then there is no virtue. This behavior is a result of the mass of prejudices which hamper pleasure and produce useless and imaginary difficulties. Life is beautiful, and we must use it. From this point of view I look at it and find it fair that each person was guided by the same rule (Pisarev, 1958).<sup>4</sup>

The dual events of Tsar Nicholas' death and the freedom of serfs created a turning point in the consciousness of the public, and the “woman's issue” was now mainstream. In S. Nechayev's Catechism of a Revolutionary, the family is denied entirely, while AI Herzen, financed in London by the Rothschilds, sees the family as an institution protecting the “corruption of men.”

Famed leftist and materialist N. Chernyshevsky went even further, recognizing the right of women to free love as part of the revolutionary creed. IV Stasov argues that the failure of the small farms of the lower nobility and the rise of a “noble proletariat” of impoverished families with noble titles, created an individualist ethos where families disintegrated and women were left without support.

The incorruptible Emperor Alexander III shocked the slightest impropriety in family relationships, it does not hide his disfavor those of his relatives who violated the sanctity of the bonds of marriage. However, members of the imperial family is not terrible, even the august anger. Grand Dukes did not consider it necessary to imitate the Emperor in his pious family life. They openly kept mistresses, the many sported second families and illegitimate children. The elite press enjoyed “exposing” these foibles along with a very liberal approach to truth. In seeking to undermine the authority of the fairly popular Alexander, the press began circulating rumors (some quite accurate) about the moral failures of more distant royal relatives.

The new Russian woman of all orders except the peasant, sought to gain the “unconditional right to personal happiness.” Previously, the Russian merchant class, at least some of whom were building the new “bourgeois” order in Russia, were seen as the most vulgar and parasitic of classes. As the nobility steadily was ruined and degraded, the merchants grew rich and sought to take the trappings of aristocratic life for themselves. The merchants who were not Old Believers were the source of a new market for luxury, foreign architecture and the sexual revolution. Without the military service of the old nobility, women were easily able to become successful in the merchant realm.

Boris Mironov writes that between 1841-1850, the Orthodox Church authorized an average of 77 divorces yearly. After the Great Reforms of Alexander II, this number radically increased. Between 1867-1886 the average was 847 divorces a year, and from 1905 to 1913 the average increased to 2565. From 1841-1850 adultery was the cause of divorce about 4% of the time. From 1905-1912, it became 97.4% (Mironov, 2012: 384ff).

### *Chernyshevsky, the Elite, and Pagan Materialism*

This writer is by far the most significant in promoting and popularizing the sexual revolution in post-Reform Russia. Chernyshevsky believed that good is what is useful, and bad is what is harmful. Thus, there are no good or bad people: one is good when in search of

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4 Also see Peter C. Pozefsky's (2003) *The Nihilist Imagination: Dmitrii Pisarev and the Cultural Origins of Russian Radicalism (1860-1868)*. Peter Lang

something pleasant for him/herself and doing useful things for others as well, whereas one is bad when what brings pleasure to him/her is harmful to others. Yet, Chernyshevsky claimed that human behavior is determined by the laws of nature.

In Chernyshevsky's *What is to be Done?* (1863), the heroine, Vera, is visited by a "beautiful being" that teaches her about the new sexual order. In the section "Vera's Fourth Dream," this being reveals the truth about woman and the progression of her forces from fragmentation to unity. Describing a festival in the fully utopian, liberated society, a poet begins to speak that unpacks the symbolic integration of woman.

The era of Asarte is that of the nomadic life. Woman is seen as a bearer of pleasure and, while idealized, is also a prisoner. The beautiful women servicing the warrior elite among the nomads is described with the most costly gifts and esteem, but ultimately, Astarte reduces her to a temporary amusement (368-369).

The scene moves from the nomad's tents to a city. The city is saturated with every sort of beautiful song, statue and poem as its inhabitants live for love alone. Among the nomads, the woman was a slave. She bore the marks of servitude and saw her circumstances as normal and even privileged. The warrior elite were in control and the woman were just a substitute for masturbation. In the city, woman is worshiped, she has power. This power comes from the ability of the female form to enslave the male and render him irrational. Aphrodite is the goddess of power, but not of intellectual maturity.

From there comes the troubadours, the goddess "Chastity" rules where the man dedicated himself to the service of the woman. This irrationality exists for the sake of conquest. When this is accomplished, the woman's state is worse than under the nomads. She is merely ignored (370-376). The being that guides Vera through all this says that her existence was manifest only when this system began to crumble and the final state was reached.

Yes, Vira Pavlovna saw. It was herself ; it was herself, but a goddess. The goddess' countenance is her own countenance, her living countenance, the features of which are so far from perfection ; every day she sees more than one face more beautiful than hers. This was her own face, kindled with the brightness of love ; more beautiful than all ideals left to us by sculptors of the ancient time, and by the great artists of the great age of art. Yes, it is she herself, but kindled by the brightness of life ; it is she, more beautiful than whom are hundreds of faces in Petersburg, which is so poor in beauty. She is more beautiful than the Aphrodite of the Louvre, more beautiful than all the beauties of the past (Chernyshevsky, 375).

Vera has become a goddess and she possesses all the sensual pleasure that was contained in Astarte as well as all the ecstasy and contemplation of beauty which was present in Aphrodite. Lust was mixed with reverence and power and was not canceled by their integration. She became the Goddess of Freedom and Equality.

Once manifest to the whole world and adored by it, she brings utopia. The "sacred groves" of the Old Testament pagans is carefully hidden in the verbiage of citrus growing, but the hypocrisy of Chernyshevsky could not be clearer. Just as a materialist rejecting free will can argue for freedom and equality among human beings that are not distinct from the rest of creation is not a lapse in thought of logic, but a concealing of the nature of this "utopia." Its symbol is the Crystal Palace, as the new architecture is glass and metal. All work is mechanized, all exists in

abundance and there seems to be no ruler except for the ever-present causality, mechanism and determinism.

Science has solved all production problems, there is a generally uniform climate and deserts are blooming (Chernyshevsky, 380-387). Female clothing is simple and free flowing. It is clear that the author sees these new dresses as incitements to sexual activity. The nature of this palace becomes clearer with odd and ominous passages such as this:

But here there are no remembrances, no dangers of want and woe ; there are only remembrances of free labor with full satisfaction, of abundance, of good, and of enjoyment. Here the expectations of the time to come are the same. What a comparison ! And again, the nerves only of our working people are strong, and therefore they are able to endure a great deal of enjoyment ; but they are coarse, obtuse ; but here the nerves are strong as those of our laborers, and developed, susceptible, just as with us (Chernyshevsky, 386).

Happiness exists only for those whose memories have been erased. Enjoyment comes with little work; overt rule does not exist; all evolve upward with no sinking to a “common denominator.” Passions do not control man since both love and reason check its power. Where this freedom comes from is not mentioned.

The Goddess of Freedom and Equality is joined by the Goddess of the “Love of Humanity” where all national boundaries are erased. She is termed the “elder sister” meaning she is more primal and more significant than “freedom” and equality. Chernyshevsky begins to drop hints – as he did above --- that there is more at work here than this simplistic image depicts. The new Goddess can take on the features of any ethnic group without having any identity of her own. In fact, the entire idea of identity is dropped out. The “Love of Humanity” takes a more practical shape when the Palace itself is built by “foreign workers.” These do the work, along with the machines, while the actual residents of the palace have little to do but “walk beside” them.

Equality of women in marriage was the basic principle in Chernyshevsky. For him, sexual freedom was always prominent as a clear consequence. The rise of capitalism in Russia meant the rise of both foreign ideas and the domination of the west. As early as 1860 ML Mihaylov wrote: “Participation in the work of industry, science and art in general should be available to everyone as an adult member of society.” Maximizing the labor pool in industry is the very first focus of early feminism. Chernyshevsky was no different, in that his heroine finds happiness and fulfillment “in the workplace.”

Sexuality was paramount as Chernyshevsky advocated a “revolving door” system of “marriage” where women can be passed from man to man “with respect.” The earliest manifestation so f feminism before 1861 all concerned their “freedom to labor.”

### *The Decadents and the Rise of Pagan Capitalism*

Zinaida Gippius is one of the lesser decadents known n the west. Flirting with Satanism, Gippius, a cross-dressing woman, preferred to be called a “witch” or “the demoniac.” The decay of the Symbolist movement in D. Merezhkovsky and Dmitry Vasilyevich Filosofov led to the “triple marriage” of the three in a demonic union that was envisaged to become a new “elite religious order.” This existed in numerous levels: the ontological, literary, personal and erotic. It

existed on all at once. There is no mere “spiritual” love (erroneously called Platonic), but it functions only as another level of the erotic.

In Gippius, love is the synthesis of “freedom and God.” This is no God of the Christians, but the erotic energy. Bisexuality was Gippius' solution, having affairs with both genders. In this era, homosexuality was on the level of ideological trend. At the beginning of XX century, same-sex love in the circles of the artistic elite became fashionable. From the memoirs of Alexander Benois: “I was particularly impressed that those of my friends who belonged to the cult of homosexual” do not hide and seek its public acceptance. Gippius saw bisexuality as the hermaphrodite. From the diary of Zinaida «Contes d'amour» (1893): “In my mind, my desires, in my spirit, I am no longer a man, my body, I am no longer a woman. But they are so fused that I know nothing of either.”

The self was destroyed. She painted a thick layer of white blush that gave her face kind of death mask. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century only actresses were painted. Gippius was also an actress, charming and deceiving people. She would charm, and then pour on a tub of icy arrogance, evil words and and mocking, outspoken contempt. By the 1930s her appearance was a strangely twisted red hair with her cheeks dyed in bright pink. She dressed with a pink ribbon around her neck, a monocle, a cape and when she was offered a cigarette, she would thrust out a tongue like a snake to grab it.

For the decadents, “Eros” was connected to the cult of Dionysus. “Free Love” became a symbol of the decay of the self. K. Brysov wrote in this regard: “He has attained freedom from all appearances and conventions. His life is subject only to the whims of its moments.” Merezhkovsky's “Death of the Gods” begins with the painful and destructive gap between the spiritual and the corporeal, the earthly and heavenly principle in man, which is manifested most clearly in relation to Eros. One aspect of this dichotomy is the pagan Dionysian and the Christian “cult of shame.” For D. Merezhkovsky ancient world bears a true harmony since the spiritual and physical are one. This excluded the term “sin” in the relationship of man and woman.

The time of “sickness” is that of the “Galilean despondency.” Christian morality introduced disharmony in the relations among people in that it forbids the sensual side of man's being. This separation of the spiritual and corporeal introduces the idea of sin and its subconscious craving for sin as a forbidden fruit. At the same time, sensuality without corresponding psychological acceptance of it leads to the “masochistic and sadistic component.”

In Alexander Kuprin, the story “Sulamith” takes place in the temple of the goddess Isis, contested by priestesses who performed the role of Horus, Anubis, Toot, Isis and Nephthys, indirectly enter into debate with the Symbolists that turn natural high human feelings in a perverted cult object. The main part of the ceremony was to find parts of the body of Osiris and sacrifice the phallus, can be attended only by the initiated. The whole scene is a bloody sacrifice which appears cruel and unnatural “in the sanctuary around the image of the goddess, covered with a black veil, the priests and priestesses circle in the sacred frenzy, shouting, barking, the ringing and rattling of instruments. Some of them are lashed with whips of rhinoceros skin, others used short knives in the chest and shoulders to create long bloody wound. . .” The love of the gods Isis and Osiris is to stimulate the carnal instincts. In the ecstasy of the now mad priests, they shout: “Where is your phallus, O god of light! Come fertilize the goddess! Her breast is languishing with desire! Her womb is like a desert in the hot summer months!” This is the prelude to the castration.

The king, Solomon, fears the Queen Astiz, since she controls the levers of lust. According

to the author, her love is not free, and is as intoxicating as the “poppy drink” which was given to the participants in the Temple of Isis so as to keep people in the fire of “sacred madness.” “The unbridled sensuality” of the queen led to her spiritual loneliness, to the loss of Solomon's love. She both loves and hates him – loves him as the “only man for her” and hates him because she feels his judgment on her practices. She is spoiled and immature, worshiped in the temple far more than Isis herself. Kuprin's diagnosis: uncontrollable sensuality leads to the destruction of the individual

This is connected to capitalism in his *Moloch* (1896). In this story, the engineer Andrei Bobrov works for a remorseless capitalist enterprise, completely nihilistic in its mentality, that is slowly alienating Bobrov's sensibilities. The firm is owned by Kvashnin, a self-described nihilist, who uses his power and wealth to steal, Nina, Bobrov's wife. Afterwards, he suffers a nervous breakdown. As is a common motif in Russian prose, he then dissociates himself from reality, seeing a “double” of himself who he hates. The last lines concern “Dr. Goldberg” injecting Bobrov with some unnamed concoction. It is clear his time is over.

Consider the product and D. Merezhkovsky Kuprin, we see that the social aspect of the image out of love relationships, and in the foreground is the motive of the correlation of spiritual and physical principles in amorous feelings. The main problem for the Symbolists, and particularly for D. Merezhkovsky, it was to overcome internal contradictions through the sanctification of human flesh beginning, through the deification of Eros, so in his novel love story is inextricably linked with the choice of faith. In contrast Kuprin shows that true love is, regardless of religious, it defies the human soul. The theme of eros is presented in the literature of the Silver Age is not unique and diverse, which may be the subject of further study.

### *Elite Agendas: the “Woman's Congress” and Capitalism*

In 1908, the wives of Russia's political elite created the first “Woman's Congress” in St. Petersburg. Rejecting the “feminist” label, they opted instead for *ravnopravok*. One of its attendees was Alexandra Kollontai. The institutionalization of Russian feminism at this and other conferences created a “new woman.” She was unkempt, had short hair and had abandoned all feminine manners. The more radical were part of the nihilist movement and all read Chernyshevsky. They refuse to shave or clean their fingernails. This was a deliberate shock to Russian society.

The daughters of the elite looked down on family and hated all mannerisms that stressed nurturing. Prince Meshchersky had reached a point where he remarked that the “educated” woman had lost the ability to love. Here, the decay of the family meant the decay of all morals and cohesion. Further, since feminism was immediately attached to the revolutionary movement, socialism, the decay of the family and unshaven, smelly women all became one anti-cultural object.

In a recent analysis of Anna Volkova's journalism, we read:

Appearing objective, impersonal, and derivative on the surface, on a deeper level Volkova's published writings are permeated with her personal experiences and beliefs. Most of her work dealt with subjects closest to her heart: education and vocational training, the position of women, the upbringing of children, innovations in charity and social reform. In her treatment of these subjects, she often described or prescribed approaches that were the diametric opposite of her

own experiences as a child or woman (Lindenmyer, 2001: 131).

At the time, this was “journalism.” The term did not yet have its plastic prestige. The Russian press was particularly bad, having no concern for even a pretense of scruple where overthrowing the monarchy was concerned. As always, no real censorship existed and the far left ran the urban papers unopposed. The admission here is that the typical male argument against women in these professions was right. Truth and justice were not the issue, but bending reality to support the new agenda was. Worse, she admits that there was a surface “objectivity” that served only to deceive. In Russia, this was normal.

It must also be stressed that the new capitalist relations were essential for the development of feminism and sexual nihilism. Writing on the first fashion magazine in Russia (like this is a cultural milestone), the significance of social breakdown could not be overstated:

The laws of competition eventually led to a broadening of subject matter as a vehicle for expanding readership. By the end of the eighties, women’s magazines had turned to the still unsolved problems of women’s education, professionalism, and gender relations (without, of course, abandoning fashion and the domestic scene). In the process, they supplied readers with a new range of images; the appearance of the female student and the woman doctor, for instance, implied that these ideas were gaining social acceptance. The magazines thus helped to legitimize a pro-education, pro-equality agenda. Rather than insist on the need for legal reform to allow for these new roles, however, they instead challenged women to enter the marketplace by spotlighting women professionals, their activities, and their achievements. The rules of commercial business promoted individualism through economic competition and thus undermined government paternalism, at least for as long as the market remained unregulated. These new ideals, though, were not an unqualified blessing. The race for profit had justified otherwise intolerable behavior. . . (Marks, 2001: 112-113)

Like the above, there is a surface objectify that covers over a startling set of admissions. First, that image had taken the place of reality. To depict these new “roles” meant that the reader was convinced that they were real, or that they were “accepted.” They were not, at least for the bulk of the population, but the purpose was to convince others that they were and bring it forth by wish fulfillment. Second, that capitalism was a means to bring about a “pro-equality” agenda. “Government paternalism” is another term for the common good. Once this is overthrown, the will to power is all that is left.

As Russian men are dying against Japan or later, the Germans, this is what occupies the mind of the “women's movement.” were the leaders of this movement in the later 19<sup>th</sup> century. “women's movement.” As always, this puerile movement comes into existence precisely at a time of high wages and the alteration of typical jobs from the severe discomfort of the mines to the comfortable existence of an editor, university professor or office worker. As always, men are at the forefront, promoting “equality” as a means to a) combat the monarchy's fairly advanced social legislation against capitalism and b) lower wages overall.

Elena Yukina writes concerning the 1908 Congress, “Where the ravnopravki received their money for such a grand event is not clear” (Yukina, 1998: 14). Some indication is given by

their backgrounds:

Who were they? They were mostly from Petrograd, but all regions of Russia were represented. The Congress had its attendees fill out a questionnaire that revealed most of the delegates were from the high commercial and industrial bourgeoisie, which itself was mixed within the traditional left-intelligentsia. A handful were from the lower orders, while peasants were totally absent. The median age was over 30, were educated, and mostly married (Yukina, 1998: 14).

Kollontai did all in her power to obey the male Bolsheviks and divide the movement along “class” lines. Given the bizarre way the Marxists defined “class,” this is meaningless. More significantly, she argued that “an autonomous women's movement does not exist.” The implication was that it is embedded in “class.”

Concerned with the “economic needs of Russian womanhood” was ironic only in that this was the very last group that should have been consulted on what the typical Russian woman needed. Needless to say, the agenda was largely masked. While slogans about “Duma democracy” and “equal rights” were bandied about, the Congress made clear that “the problems of the modern woman is not exhausted in the struggle for the equality of rights.” This bland statement conceals much of the agenda. Any movement stressing “procedural” concerns is not being honest. No one goes to the barricades for “formal democracy” or “freedom of contract.” They go to the barricades to impose their will.

Olga Shapir (Schapiro) (d. 1916) was one of the more significant ideologists of this early movement. Nearly every entry on her life says that she was “from the peasantry.” Her own autobiography says the opposite. Deceit is built in from the first line. Her father was an army officer serving under the Jacobin Paul Pestel. She was only a small percentage Russian. Her concern was the “free love” element of feminism. Her essential argument was that the main conflict between the sexes is due to a gender stratification based on sexual ownership. “The powerlessness of women is the source of all injustice” was one of her more modest statements. The history of Russia sees many women with a great degree of power. Whether it be Miznek, the concubine of the False Dmitri, “Tsar” Catherine I, an actual sex slave, the two Annas and Catherine II were utter disasters for Russia at every level. It might also be noted that most of these were quite sexually liberated.

She married a powerful Jewish husband and quickly moved into both the free love and “populist” movement, one of the least descriptive names in political history. Yukina writes:

OA Shapir stressed “the pleasure principle” in a woman's life and affirmed a woman's right to happiness in any suitable form, whether it be marriage without love or love without marriage. Even the “abandonment of family” was acceptable. In her literary works, she gives examples of women gaining a different, non-traditional outlook on life, showing examples of self-directed activity, independence and self-reliance. Her heroines demonstrate positive social and intellectual qualities. When the type of women that is committed to traditional ideals, serving the family and nation, Shapir paints them in the worst colors: total self-rejection, doomed to failure. . . . She gives an unequivocal condemnation of

women subjected to the traditional virtues such as searching for a husband, the substitution of the interests of loved ones for her own, a lack of independence, passivity and inaction in addressing their own destiny. She protests against the phenomenon of female self-sacrifice as the norms of female life. Selfishness is the key to liberation (Yukina, 1998).

This is the issue that the Congress would not permit the public to see. Her novels are poorly written, since each scene has characters that are crude symbols for ideological caricatures (cf *The Stormy Years* for an excellent example of this). Plots are uninteresting (very much like Chernyshevsky), but at the very least, Shapir is honest and forthright in her demands. Virtue is really a vice, since to guard one's honor is to submit to male dominated typologies. To submit to a male sexually is to become "independent." Over and over again, childbearing is the worst curse imaginable. It focused one's attention on something outside the self, and this, while leading to disaster, will not fulfill the woman's destiny. The common good here is explicitly rejected, so even if an action leads to depravity, it is still to be permitted since it leads to "self-fulfillment."

The origin of this, of course, is evolution. The women's movement is "inevitable" and "a force of nature" in creating an evolving, developing woman. This speech, "Ideals for the Future" was her contribution to the 1908 Congress (Shapir, 1909: 896-898). Nature creates the feminist movement, and nature also creates the legitimization for the destruction of its purpose in childbearing.

Her autobiography seems to suggest that her father was somewhat less than egalitarian. She says that her father was "from peasant stock, a landowner and a nobleman and an outstanding personality. His passion, his unbridled temper and insane drive to personal freedom permitted her own development into "restrained self-determination." This seems to be an admission that her father was violently abusive, and this turned her into an abusive, insane and passionate advocate of the will to power. Her mother was Swedish, and was the traditional conservative woman. It is clear that her own abuse led her to admire the power that came with the paterfamilias. She sought that for herself.

Barabra Engel writes in English:

The burgeoning marketplace had much the same effect. A by product of Russia's industrialization drive, the market encouraged the desire for individual pleasure and gratification and fostered patterns of consumption that cut across social divides" (Engel, 2004: 113).

Capitalism again is a liberal, hedonistic agent that destroys social institutions by undercutting them. Going to the lowest drives and promising their liberation and pleasure (for a price), the Russian feminist movement was born through the relation between capitalism and free love.

### *Jews, Sexuality and Terror*

The emblems of the "Silver Age" were revolutionary terror, drug addiction, alcoholism, sexual promiscuity and the odd fixation on suicide. After 1905, terror became widespread. By the end of 1907, the total number of those killed by leftist terror was about 4,500. Between January of 1908 to mid-May of 1910 the police at all levels recorded nearly 20,000 terrorist attacks and

expropriations (ie political looting). Roughly 1000 civilians and 5000 civil servants were killed using various methods.

Many women were involved in these attacks. What is always deleted from the hackneyed histories of the era are their motivations. Combing through police records of the day, these political “martyrs” engaged in their well funded murder spree based on their being “tired of life.” “I am weary, excitement is in political violence” or “I seek adventure” were common explanations for the mental torment and anguish of these deaths. Most of the terrorists of all genders had no political program and were semi-literate. Teens of 14 to 16 were not uncommon.<sup>5</sup>

O. Budnitsky writes in his work “Female Suicide in Russia” (Phoenix, 1996) that “the strange part of these left-socialist terrorists was a high percentage of Jews and women. A full third of the terrorists involved were female Jews. A Geyfman argues that the terror cells in pre-revolutionary Russia were almost exclusively Jewish and near the Pale of Settlement. Solzhenitsyn writes in Two Hundred Years together that the 1905 lifting of the press censorship was “like eliminating police from the streets.” It is rare that the historian realizes the nature of journalism 100 years ago. Their purpose was not to “report news” they did not even provide the pretense of that. In Russia at the time, the “popular dailies” had the purpose of causing trouble, promoting liberal interests and writing narratives about events, rather than reporting on events.

Zionism was legal in Russia so long as it kept its distance from the revolutionaries. Of course, since the two movements were quite similar, communism and Zionism functioned together. Large, well armed and wealthy federations of Zionist cells functioned in Poland and Ukraine and were quickly mobilized by the German government once World War I began. Berlin created the “Liberation of Russian Jews” movement that armed and mobilized western Russian Jews. Part of the Russian mobilization for war was to remove these cells from Poland, Belarus and Ukraine. The Bund was the result of the final fusion of Zionism and communism.

The Jewish Bund, in 1904, had a total of 23,000 members. By 1907, this number reached 34,000. These were armed militia groups demanding the end of tsarism and the destruction of the Orthodox church. By contrast, the Social Democratic Party in Russia in 1905 had about 8,000 members. By 1900, almost 30% of all those arrested for political offenses, were Jews. There were 140 million people in the Russian empire in 1903, with 7 million being Jews. At the same time, Jews made about half of all membership lists in far left parties.<sup>6</sup>

In 1910, the far left instituted “International Women's Day” through the Jewish communist Clara Zetkin at a the International Conference of Socialist Women” in Copenhagen. The Soviet Encyclopedia says that, in 1917, “the government prevented the celebration of this holiday, soon boiling over into a violent at the main weapons plant in Russia at Pulitov.” This clash is traditionally seen in Soviet history as the beginning of the February revolution and the date was February 23 (March 8 Julian).

February 23 of 1917 was also Purim. Andrei Kuraev argues that the Jewish connection to that day was clear in 1910. The communists, planning to destroy all Christian holidays and rewrite the calendar, needed a set of new days to celebrate. The problem was that they always seemed to coincide with Jewish holidays. The heavily Jewish nature of the left automatically connected Clara with Esther.

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5 This is summarized in detail (in Russian) from A. Alexeev's (2007) Features of Reform in Russia's Silver Age. Science and Life, 3. <http://www.nkj.ru/archive/articles/9763>

6 The complete and definitive list of all members of the 1917-1924 Bolshevik movement can be found in Russian here: [http://ldn-knigi.lib.ru/JUDAICA/Evrei-Rossii\\_1917-1924.htm](http://ldn-knigi.lib.ru/JUDAICA/Evrei-Rossii_1917-1924.htm). Bolshevism was overwhelming Jewish.

Solzhenitsyn writes that accuracy was not a function of journalism, but advocacy. They deliberately distorted debates in the Duma, concocted platforms for candidates, attributed political positions to politicians in elections and generally invented a reality that had no relation to daily life. There was no “Hill Reporters” as journalists were seen only as “muckrakers.” It was not an honest profession and no prestige attached to it.

The Jewish role in media, its defense of terrorism and dogmatic liberalism is beyond dispute. The rightist Duma member (and one of the assassins of Rasputin, Purishkevitch called the press “covering” the Duma the “Duma of Settlement.” All major newspapers were owned by Jews and without variation supported the leftist cause. SM Propper controlled the Commercial Gazette; Yuri Bak owned the major daily of the Cadet party while the Russian Gazette was overseen by V Jabotinsky and Lurie-Larin, later to achieve fame as the architect of “War Communism.”

M Gorodetsky ran the more popular Penny Journal while the mainstream daily Kievan Thought was owned by Ion Kugel and one of its “mainstream” contributors was Leon Trotsky. Sverdlov's brother Averbahom built the literary careers of Yuri Goldshteyn, H Altus, Znovy Grzhebin and even Maxim Gorky. The truth is that the royalist, Orthodox press in the cities did not exist with any great circulation. Long after the revolution, the national composition of the Moscow delegation at the Congress of Writers in 1934 is, out of 600 has 92 Russians and 72 Jews.

When Tsar Nikolai II issued his Manifesto in October of 1905, Witte called a meeting of the elite press in Petrograd. Arriving was a small army of Jews including Propper, Notovitch, Chodsko, Arabazhin and a host of much smaller editors and owners. Uninterested in the normal role of the press, these capitalists all demanded leftist political reforms immediately. They demanded the removal of Trepov as Governor of the region, total amnesty for all convicted terrorist, the removal of all law enforcement and Cossacks from the capital and to hand over police duties to the “Red Militia of the People.” This became known as the Manifesto of the “Association of Newspaper Owners.”

In a striking foreshadowing, the system of Jewish capital, press and political operatives functioned exactly the same as it does in 2015 America. A journalist or professor who sought to analyze the left radicals for what they were faced professional ostracism, riots and violence at his place of work. Papers such as “New Day” and “The Kievan” were more even handed, but its employees could find work in no other place.

Like today, to openly support political terrorism and defend its practitioners was a sign of professional success and “good manners.” The presence of the Tsar's infamous police services was very rare, since it was quite limited in numbers and normally out-gunned by Jewish revolutionary groups. The political landscape of Russia at this time is precisely the opposite of the typical English-language history textbook. The “pogroms” are creations of western imaginations, not history. Deaths from these alleged “pogroms” were more often non-Jewish than Jewish, and local militias, Zionist or otherwise, were well armed.

Many myths include the prohibition of Jews owning property, attending universities or living outside the “Pale of Settlement.” The latter is particularly humorous since it was a place where its low taxes made Jewish merchants even more well positioned over their Christian rivals. Of course, Jews lived in all Russian cities and owned far more property than the church or the decayed nobility. Jews made up about 40% of Russian merchants by 1910.

Jews in western Russia paid a lower tax rate than Slavs. They were usually exempt from military service. Land purchases were encouraged by the state to bring Jews to agriculture at a much lower price than for Slavs. The Pale of Settlement created a Jewish oligarchy with far more privileges than the Orthodox Russian. The Pale was purely self governing, making the Kahal, one of the more powerful landowners in the region, a religio-political center off limits to non-Jews. The Pale's school system was excellent and furnished graduates that attended Russia's major urban university far out of proportion to their numbers. All told, about 18% of Russia's Jews lived in the Pale, where American schoolchildren are told was a "Jewish ghetto."

Jews were roughly 15-20% of the population of Warsaw, Minsk; almost 30% of Krakow and Lv'iv and even more in the port city of Odessa. Jewish militias functioned openly in all of these cities and featured intelligence, heavy weapons and a tight control over the executive of the city.

In Summer of 1903, Theodore Herzl traveled to Petrograd to assist in the removal of Jews to Palestine. He met with the Ministry of Finance under Plehve and Witte himself, seeking to make the financial removal of Jewish assets from Russian banks easier and to transfer these to Palestine. Witte's problem was the development of Jewish nationalism would be forbidden on Russian soil. Plehve condemned Jewish acts of loansharking and pornography in western Russia. His proscribing of Zionist periodicals in Petrograd earned him a death sentence in 1904. The world of capitalist modernity had its limits.

### *Conclusion*

Capitalism, sexual liberalism, paganism, Judaic control and feminism are all one and the same movement in Russia. While the bulk of the peasantry and the church remained faithful, the rich and powerful were Moloch – the god of abortion and capitalism; the ancient form of child-sacrifice in Tyre, where children were killed in a belly of the idol in exchange for profits. The elite decayed as the royal world was destroyed. From Peter I until Nikolai I, the crown was either non-existent or purely secular. The 18<sup>th</sup> century saw the destruction of the Russian tsarist idea as Orthodox churches in the empire were destroyed to where, by the start of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there were less than half of their original number.

Capitalism is a universal solvent. Seeking to bring all social relations under the control of money, it reduces human acts to mere power and control. The sexual revolution follows in its wake without fail, especially among those consecrated to its existence. Like in the Old Testament, the oligarchy of Tyre (powerful enough to ensnare Solomon himself) sought to use sacrifice to maintain its power. St. John the Baptist felt the consequences of sexual lust as he was beheaded, as did Pope Sixtus II, as the victim of the magical rites of the Emperor Valerian.

In Russia, the upper nobility had the most to gain from the revolution, and so they threw themselves in it from the Novgorod oligarchy in the middle ages to the 1905 Revolution. Money was more powerful than faith, family and nation and women were at the forefront of them all.

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