

The History and the Literature: *A Gentleman in Moscow*

Diane and Stan Henderson
OLLI at the University of Cincinnati
June 4, 2021

The History...

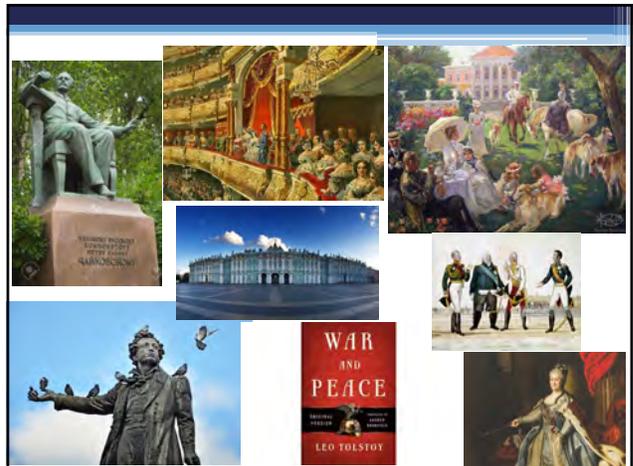
Setting the Tone

- “A revolution, a real, profound, a ‘people’s’ revolution to use Marx’s expression, is the incredibly complicated and painful process of the **death of the old order** and the birth of the new social order, of the mode of life of tens of millions of people. **Revolution is a most intense, furious, desperate class struggle and civil war.**”

• Lenin

A Cleansing

- “To overcome our enemies we must have our own socialist militarism. We must **carry along with us 90 million out of the 100 million** of Soviet Russia’s population. **As for the rest, we have nothing to say to them. They must be annihilated.**”
 - Communist leader Grigory Zinoviev
- “The rest” represented the nobility of Russia





Levels of Nobility

- At the top, the **tsar** and the imperial family
- Next, the aristocratic elite, a **hundred or so families** with immense landed wealth—if you weren't born into these families, "*Elle n'est pas nee*"
- Below the aristocracy, **the nobles**—officer corps, civil administration of government, lawyers, doctors, scientists
- Landed nobles are elites amidst a "vast sea of **peasant poverty and resentment**"

Russia's Own "Peculiar Institution"

- The origins of Russian nobility's wealth depend on the forced labor of serfs
- **Russia's brand of slavery**
- Emancipation in 1861 does not eliminate the chasm between peasants and nobility
- "**We shall live in perpetual fear of attacks from the wild tribes outside**"

Czar Alexander II



Industrial Growth; Feudal Society

- In spite of surging industrial growth leading up to WWI, **Russia in 1914** is still a feudal society
- Only **13%** of people live **in cities** (**England: 72%**, **Germany: 47%**, **US: 38%**)
- Peasants live on bread, pickled cabbage, and onion; **75% of army recruits rejected for health**
- Influx to cities cause horrific conditions: Police will not enter some areas; by 1870s St. Petersburg has the highest mortality rate of any major city in Europe

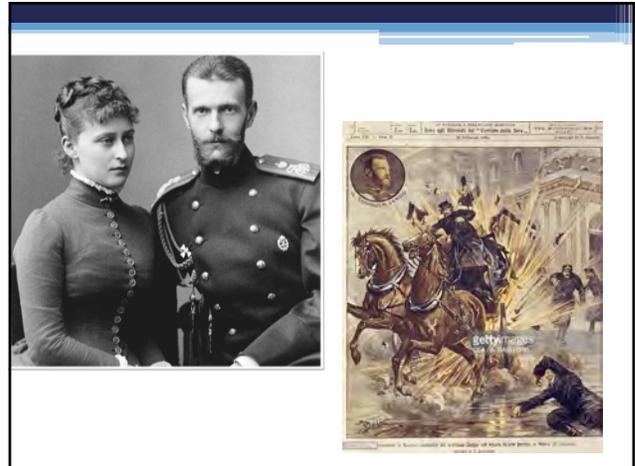
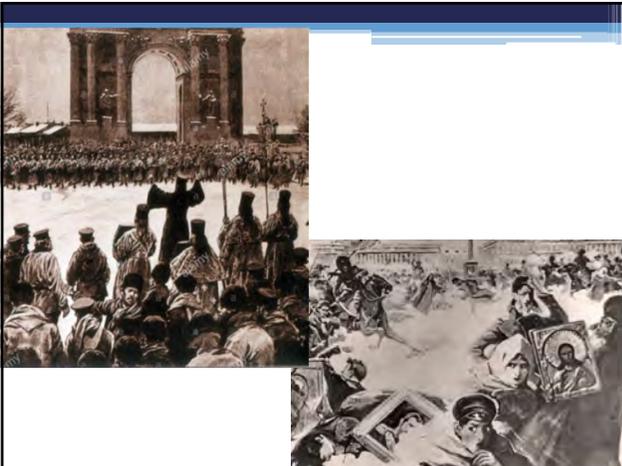
A Limited Monarch

- “What am I going to do? **I am not prepared to be a tsar.** I never wanted to become one” • Nicholas II, on his father's death at 49
- Personal qualities, “praiseworthy in a simple citizen,” are “fatal in a tsar”
- To be firm, insists on micro-managing all
- He becomes overwhelmed and then paralyzed by indecision
- “**Russia did not need a constitution to limit the monarchy since she already had a limited monarch**”



Growing Unrest

- **Bloody Sunday** in January 1905
- Grand Duke Sergei, Tsar's uncle/Tsarina's brother-in-law, assassinated
- October massive general strike; **Potemkin mutiny**
- October manifesto; creation of Duma, but violence spreads
- **1908-1910, 19,957 terrorist attacks**, 732 govt officials, 3051 private citizens killed nearly another 4000 wounded
- Prime minister killed virtually next to Tsar



War: Into the Abyss

- **1914**, after assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo, Russia supports the Serbs, stumbles into war
- “A period of barbarism is about to begin and it shall last for decades”
- **15.5 million men**, largest army in the war, but quickly falls apart
- **4.5 million killed or wounded—1.5 million in the first months**; no guns, no boots; tens of thousands shot off their own fingers to get out

1917: February Revolution

- Food shortages, 300% inflation leads to rebellion
- “**The age of debility has passed; cosmic events are approaching**”; Nicholas and Alexandra ignore the warning signs
- Morning of **Feb. 23, 1917**, 7000 workers leave a factory in Petrograd, crying “**BREAD**”; by nightfall, nearly 100,000 have joined; the next day 200,000; in **four days** “**the most stupendous military revolt in recorded history**” as city falls



1917: October Revolution

- **Provisional government** of Duma in tense partnership with Soviet of Workers
- 1500 killed in February revolution, mostly privileged class; joy and fear among nobility
- **March 2, Nicholas abdicates**
- April 3, Lenin returns to Russia, calls for war of “**masses against the classes**”
- October 26, **Bolshevik revolution**, followed by Decree on Land, giving peasants nobles' lands, legitimizing what's already happening



A Brutalized Peasantry

- A southern Russian estate attacked by deserters and peasants shortly after the Revolution
- They tore the house apart board by board, stone by stone, before burning what was left
- When they finished, they defiled the family patriarch's grave
- Two servants tried to stop them, but they were grabbed by the mob and beheaded; the peasants fed one of the heads to the dogs
- Later, when asked to account for the viciousness, they replied, **"Because they sucked our blood"**



Reds and Whites

- Bolsheviks move to consolidate power; civil war of the Reds (communists) and Whites (monarchists) begins
- **"A holy war of the oppressed against their oppressors, a holy war for the liberation of the workers from all oppression"** • Lenin
- **"Oh, how hard it is to live in Russia! We are all so stupid—so fantastically stupid"** • Gorky

Moving on “*Ci-Devants*”

- Decree requiring the **obligatory registration** of all “former landowners, capitalists, and persons who held **positions of authority in the tsarist and bourgeois order**”
- These represent **between four and five million**, a large percentage of whom are members of the nobility
- This social categorization becomes the basis for the notion of “**former people**”
- Bolsheviks have another name for former people: “**the yet unslaughtered**”

Capitalizing on Nobles’ Patriotism

- When the war breaks out in **1914**, many nobles, in a fit of patriotic fervor, **bring foreign capital back** home to Russia
- During the war laws limiting the ability to buy foreign currency are also passed
- **During 1917 revolutions**, as a great many nobles leave Petrograd and Moscow for the south or other Russian borderlands, most **keep their money and valuables in the banks**, never thinking for a minute they would not be safe
- The **banks** are thus **fully loaded** with money, gold, and jewelry when the **Bolsheviks strike**

The Bolsheviks’ Haul

- The Bolsheviks take nearly nine hundred million rubles’ worth of coin, art, antiques, precious metals and stones by late 1921
- In addition, the plunder includes a half ton of gold, silver, and platinum bullion; seven hundred thousand rubles in coins of various precious metals; sixty-five million tsarist rubles, and almost six hundred million rubles’ worth of government and corporate securities
- In total, as much as 1.6 billion rubles (roughly **\$160 billion today**) is, for want of a better word, **stolen**

More than Money was Stolen

- The mechanisms by which **family memory and customs** were passed from generation to generation are often severed
- **Deposit box owners are ordered to show up** with their keys so that their boxes can be inspected
- No intention of just inspecting the boxes; rather, they **confiscate the contents of every last box**, not just money and jewelry, but deeds, documents, and **even locks of baby hair**

Trying to Save Valuables

- The dowager empress Maria Feodorovna hides her **jewels in cocoa tins** and buries them under some rocks at her daughter Xenia's estate in the Crimea; a dog's skull marks the spot
- Another noble family buries most of their **wine cellar in a flower bed** behind their Moscow house
- A count takes apart his **automobile piece by piece**, which he then buries so well that **nothing of the automobile has apparently ever been found**
- A countess is so afraid of having her **sugar** confiscated she pours it **between two sheets** that she sews together



Aborted Rescue Plans

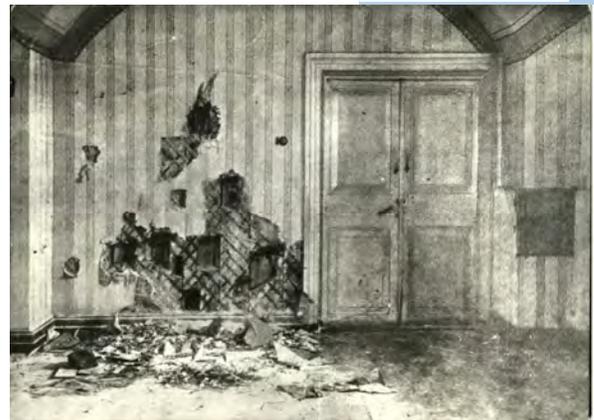
- After abdication, **Nicholas and his family are kept under house arrest** at Tsarskoe Selo
- The Provisional government **moves them to Tobolsk** in Siberia and explores ways to get them to safety
- Nicholas and Alexandra are each first cousins of George V through their respective mothers
- George chooses the monarchy over blood: fearful of anti-monarchical sentiment in **Britain**, he **refuses to take the Russian Imperial family**

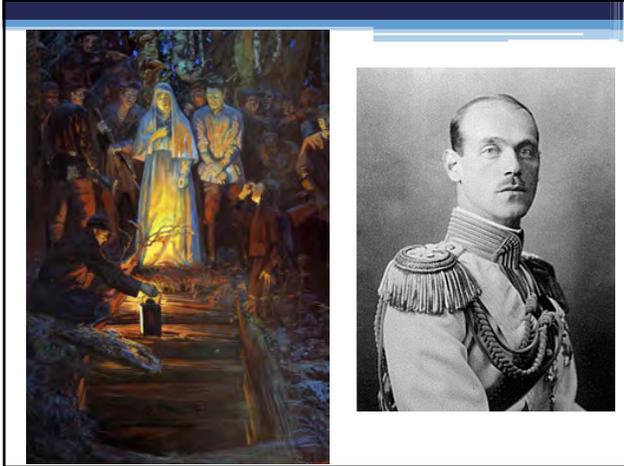




1918: The End of the Romanovs

- Lenin does not want a Tsar in exile; when the Bolsheviks take over in October 1917, the family's fate is sealed
- Moved to **Ekaterinburg** far to the east, with the White army closing in for rescue, **Bolshevik operatives murder the entire family** and servants
- Grand Duke Mikhail and his aide are **driven into the woods and shot**; their bodies are never found
- Ella, Nicholas's uncle and cousins are **thrown into a mine shaft with grenades**; hymns are heard along with the smell of flowers





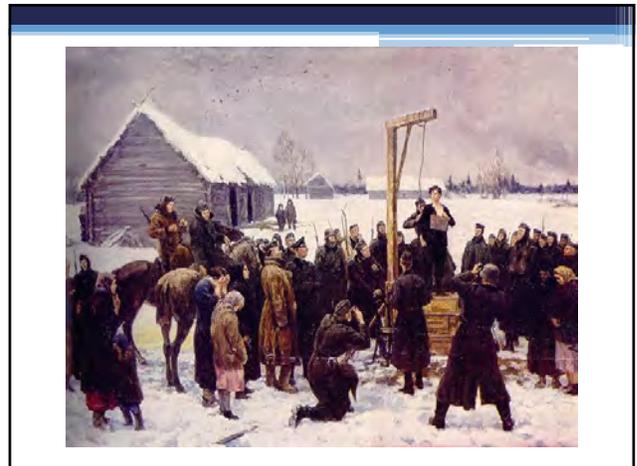
Russia Becomes a Noble Killing Field

- In June 1919 in Kharkhov, between 500 and 1,000 men and women are shot
- In August in Kiev, about 1800 and some 2,000 in Odessa die
- To the Bolsheviks, death of the bourgeoisie is an historical inevitability, **doing away with the ruling class is simply an act of euthanasia**



Barbarism

- Soul-chilling stories straight out of the Middle Ages
- **Mutilation of the still living is not rare**; heads and limbs are hacked off, faces bashed in, the sexual organs of men and women violated and cut off; some people are scalped; **some burned alive**
- **“Red hate and White hate raged side by side** through the beautiful wild country”: Whites in Yalta hang a seventeen-year-old boy for the sole reason that his surname, Bronstein, is the same as Trotsky's



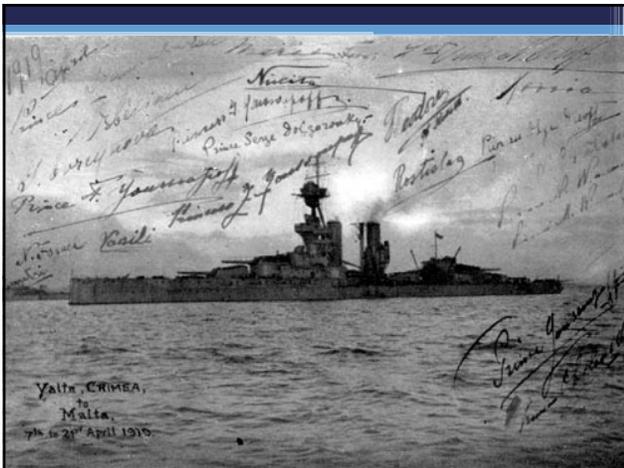
The Romanovs Who Survived

- Mass **exodus** from southern Russia and the Crimea **begins in the spring of 1919**. It lasts for more than a year
- Crimea is refuge to many aristocrats and members of the Romanov family, including **Dowager Empress Maria Feodorovna and her daughter Grand Duchess Xenia**
- On the morning of April 11, the last of the Romanovs finally sail into exile from Yalta



Last Boats Out

- **Final evacuation of the Crimea mid-November 1920**
- Includes all those who would be in danger were they to fall into the enemy's hands
- In the span of a few days, **146,000 people**—twice the expected number—are **placed on boats** and sent out over the waters of the Black Sea toward Constantinople
- **Approximately fifty thousand people**—most members of the former privileged classes—are **shot or hanged during the final weeks of 1920**



Leaving as a Last Resort

- Those who leave have a better chance to establish themselves than the typical Russian nobleman, given their education, knowledge of foreign languages
- They **carry their wealth** with them (usually jewels and silver stuffed in a few suitcases), and **leverage personal connections** to other European noble families.
- Few, if any, of the Russian exiles leave their homeland happily; leaving is a last resort

Leave or Die

- By the end of the war, between 500,000 and 3,000,000 have left Russia, the majority of the Russian nobility
- Only a few individuals survive from the aristocratic families that remained

Russia in 1921

- After two revolutions and seven years of war, Russia in 1921 lay in ruins. The cost in human lives was staggering. **Since the autumn of 1917, approximately 10 million people perished** of disease, starvation, execution, and battle wounds. Millions more, many of them Russia's best educated and most skilled, abandoned the country. The economy and industrial infrastructure were in shambles. The total value of **finished products produced in 1921 amounted to a mere 16 % of that in 1912**. According to one estimate, the national income in 1920 was only 40 % that of 1913. **The American dollar, which had traded for two rubles in 1914, was worth 1200 in 1920.** • Smith

The Social Cost

- Russia's cities and towns had been emptied out; **Moscow and Petrograd had lost more than half their residents**. Years of fighting, followed by back-to-back droughts in 1920 and 1921, unleashed famine along the Volga River that spread to much of central and northern Russia. Such was the extent of the hunger that **some Russians were driven to cannibalism**. Millions died. The entire social fabric had been shredded. Families had been torn apart, and an estimated **seven million orphaned children** were living on the streets, begging, stealing, and selling their bodies to survive. • Smith



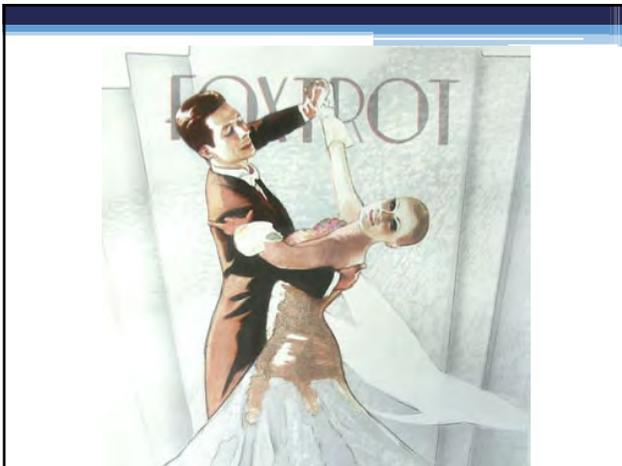
A Lulling Interlude

- In the **1920s**, Moscow is the center of everything, with people out **having fun** in cafés, restaurants, and theaters, at dances and house parties
- “Over it all hung an atmosphere of free camaraderie which would not have been possible under the gilded chandeliers and in the stately drawing-rooms of their ancestors. There was an **unaffected, frank jolliness** that reminded me of our own American Far West.”

• American journalist Hullinger

Moral Decay

- While young people are drawn to **new dances and jazz**, the Bolsheviks are shrill critics of the fox-trot, which they consider **decadent and lacking in class consciousness**
- Gorky is convinced the fox-trot fosters moral degeneracy and leads inexorably to homosexuality; the **fox-trot** is denounced as “**bourgeois masturbation**”
- Foreign **jazz is eventually outlawed**



Holding on to the Past

- While the **younger set** seeks new dances and the cinema—especially the beautiful Vera Kholodnaya (“The Queen of the Screen”), they **also have an appreciation for life before the revolution**, for the traditions of the nobility, for the customs of their families and their vanished world
- The 1920s sees a rebirth of one of the defining features of noble life: the ball
- The ladies hold lorgnettes and watch from the sides; groups of young people tell jokes and stories, laugh, and go out to smoke; when a young lady enters men go over and kiss her
- All the dancers are **former people—for many, their futures will be tragic**



Vera Kholodnaya

Creating the “Former People”

- “Former people” is a manufactured class of groups that have little or no shared identity before 1917
- In an attempt to **define class**, respondents are asked to give either their “**social origin**” or “**social position**”; the two are obviously not the same thing, and not surprisingly, members of repressed social groups tend to **ignore the former in favor of the latter**
- They do not write “former prince” or “son of a count” but give their current positions—in a sense, **trying to “pass”**
- According to the logic of the time, **hiding one’s past** was proof of being a **class enemy** hostile to Soviet power

We Need Them; We Want to be Rid of Them

- Approximately **20 percent of all Soviet bureaucrats** and technical experts are **from the old elite**
- 35% of the leadership of the People’s Commissariat of Agriculture, for example, are former nobles, and many more nobles fill the lower rungs of the ministry
- This **dependence on “class enemies”** not only feeds a sense of **insecurity** among the **authorities**, but also fosters **disillusionment** among the working and **lower classes**

Insidious Attacks

- **1920s** constitutes not a frontal assault like the civil war but “**low-intensity warfare**”
- Active from 1921 to 1925, **Operation Trust** has been called the most successful Soviet intelligence operation of the 1920s, and a great many Russian **exiles are lured back** to the USSR and to their deaths by its agents
- Not only are the security organs monitoring many of these **fox-trot parties**, but they are even **organizing some of them to set up people for arrest**

The Mousetrap

- A technique borrowed from the Okhrana, the tsarist secret police, the mousetrap (zasáda) involved **placing agents in the apartment of a person under suspicion** and then **detaining everyone who bothered to knock on the door**
- The mousetraps could go on for days until either the main target or enough possible enemies had been taken
- Former people are struck by how much the secret police know about them and their family's private life—they assume someone close to them has to be an informant



Paying for Industrialization

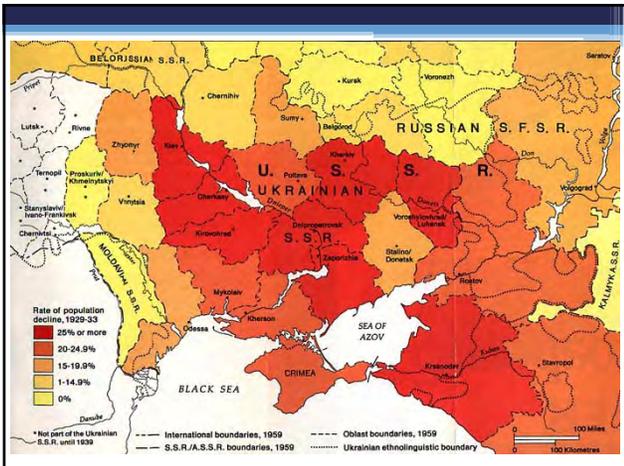
- Stalin's 1928 "revolution from above," is known as the Great Break
- **First Five-Year Plan:** chief goal is to turn the Soviet Union society into a major industrial power virtually overnight
- In **four years and three months** entire industries, from chemicals to automobiles, from aviation to machine building, are created out of nothing, and new cities, home to sprawling industrial complexes, **spring up**
- **Capital** to pay for industrialization **comes from peasants**
- Through encouragement, propaganda, intimidation, and deadly violence, Russia's **peasants are forced to give up land** and **move to large, state-administered agricultural collectives**





The Impact of Collectivization

- Before the program of mass collectivization ends in 1933, likely **more than two million people are deported** as class enemies to Siberia, the Urals, and Central Asia; hundreds of thousand are killed or die from starvation and exposure
- Peasants not deported do not necessarily have it any better: **famine leaves more than 5,000,000 dead by 1934**
- **Gulags** spring up in Siberia: **eighteen million inmates** passed through these camps between 1929 and 1953, the year of Stalin's death



“Socially Harmful Elements”

- New laws are being passed against socially alien groups
- In 1929, for example, a **new crime** makes it **illegal to attempt to reestablish the power of the bourgeoisie**
- Pravda talks of saboteurs with “grenades in their pockets” and the **remnants of the old elite** harboring “**dreams of avenging the revolution**”
- Broader notion of “**socially harmful elements,**” which included the unemployed, orphans, beggars, and petty criminals

Isolate and Deprive

- Address the threat of aliens through the introduction of internal, **domestic passports in 1932**
- Verbal instructions are given to **deny passports** to all “**class enemies**” and “**former people**”
- Intensity with which they are being “**pried out into the open and stepped on without pity**”
- Any concern denounced as “**bourgeois sentimentality**”
- “**Amazing tenacity of the human animal in clinging somehow to life**”



Defining the Undesirable

- Anyone is **singled out** if he had **hired labor** to make a profit, if she **lived off rents** or any unearned income, if she **engaged in trade**, if he had served **in the tsarist police force**, or if he happened to be **dependents of outcasts** over the age of eighteen.
- A final category comprises all “**lunatics**”

A Philosophy of Hatred

- “**Teaching Hatred**”
- **Hatred**, it turns out, was not to be condemned but instilled, **encouraged**, and celebrated
- For persons “**who cannot hate with passion are unlikely to be able to love with passion.**”
- “**We hate those principles on which the old society was founded and shall destroy them.**”

“Phantoms of the Past”

- “The living dead...phantoms of the past in the Soviet present”
- “Comrades! **When will this damned aristocracy be choked?**”
- “The palace-museum of former Count Sheremetev [...] is of doubtful historical value since there already are **quite a number of such lairs of former satraps outside Moscow [...]** now populated by persons with suspicious pasts.”



Former People in Former Places

- James Abbe, an American journalist, who visits the USSR in 1932, hung out at the bar in the swanky **Metropol Hotel**
- The bar is popular with diplomats and journalists and Western tourists because of its jazz bands and the beautiful, **elegantly dressed barmaids and cocktail waitresses**
- According to Abbe, most of the women were **daughters of former aristocrats** and rich bourgeois—fluent in English, French, and German, forced into working in the bar as honeypots for the new communist hierarchy

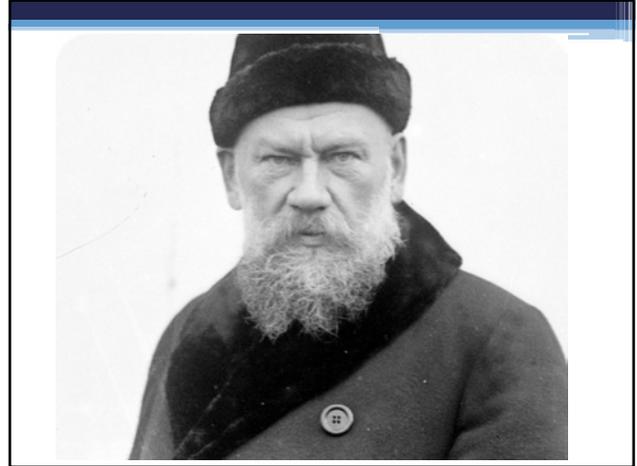
Erasing even the Dead

- Across Russia, officials looked to cemeteries for free building material; as many as 40,000 tons of iron, bronze, granite, and other stones were ripped out of the ground
- Much of the **marble used to decorate the earliest Moscow subway stations in the 1930s came from tombstones**
- Stripped of their material assets, many cemeteries were then bulldozed, and **apartment blocks, workers' clubs, parks, and soccer fields were built over the dead**
- This served both to **further erase Russia's tsarist past** and to show that the Soviet government was indeed **making life better, more cheerful**



The Few who Survived

- It is not surprising that some in the West looked to the rising Communist state with hope; what is surprising is that some were Russian nobles
- “What is [Tolstoy] but a man who’s managed to be a parasite under three régimes? An **Aristocrat under the Tsarism. Professor under the capitalism. Proletarian man-of-letters under the Dictatorship Proletariat.**”
- Tolstoy was not in exile long before experiencing a political change of heart and returning in 1923
- The so-called **Comrade Count** (also Worker-Peasant Count) became a leading men of Soviet letters with three Stalin Prizes
- At his home he was waited on by a family servant who still **addressed him as “Your Excellency”**
- He died, unmolested, in Moscow in 1945



Operation Former People

- **1934 assassination of party boss Kirov** gives pretext for a new campaign of repression and terror
- Even though 46,000 are deported from border areas, in Leningrad itself the main **target is former people**
- Most targeted are families of **“former big landowners”** and **“former aristocrats”**
- Beginning February 27, Operation Former People will remove virtually every last former person within four weeks
- **This time the Communists include the children and grandchildren, the “counterrevolutionary reserve”**



Housing Shortage as an Excuse

- In the early 1930’s, Russia is dealing with a severe urban housing shortage; one solution: empty the cities of undesirables.
- **Between 1933 and 1935, 75,388 Leningraders are exiled, or simply shot, freeing up 9,950 apartments and rooms**
- “The honor of living in the great city of Lenin should belong only to workers [...] Never again will these human degenerates—the aristocrats of tsarist Russia—exult over Soviet land [...] **We shall clean our great city of any and all counterrevolutionary scum”**

Former People as Fifth Column

- Former people are **accused of secretly collaborating** with foreign powers to undermine the work of “millions of their former slaves” and stop the advance of socialism
- **“Hitler’s trustworthy allies,”** one report calls them. These people are not even human, but “venomous chameleons, trying to take on a Soviet appearance,” “tsarist scum,” “poisonous snakes,” “parasites,” “vermin”
- **Between February 28 and March 27, 1935, more than 39,000 people, 11,072 of them former people, are expelled from Leningrad**



The Great Terror, 1937-38

- Darkest chapter in Soviet history
- Rise of Hitler and Japanese militarism in the Far East and **perceived external threat to the USSR contributes** to the tension and logic that leads to the Great Terror
- **Stalin, however, is arguably more obsessed with the domestic menace:** a fifth column attack from within in coordination with the German and Japanese armies
- The Great Terror is conceived as a **preemptive strike**
- Everyone, save Stalin, is suspect; enemies lurk everywhere



The Blood of the Great Terror

- According to one reliable estimate, the NKVD **arrests 1,575,259 people** during 1937–38
- Of these, **1,344,923 are convicted**, and more than half of them—**681,692—are shot**
- This makes for a **killing rate** of approximately **1,500 people a day** between August 1937 and November 1938

Sources

- Smith, Douglas. *Former People: The Final Days of the Russian Aristocracy*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012.
- Sollohub, Edith. *The Russian Countess: Escaping Revolutionary Russia*. Impress Books, 2017.
- Taylor, Edmund. *The Fall of the Dynasties: The Collapse of the Order, 1905-1922*. Garden City, 2017.

The Smith book (*Former People*) has been invaluable in preparing this presentation. While I have not quoted text, except for a couple of particularly long passages, the bulk of the content is drawn directly from Smith's work.

... and the Literature



A novel about “the persistence of [a] Former Person in the new Russia”
—Amor Towles, in the voice of Comrade Leplevsky

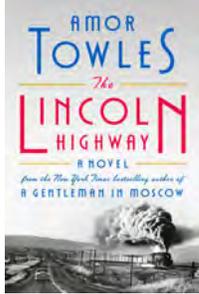
Published September 6, 2016



About Amor Towles

- Born and raised in Boston area
- Undergraduate degree from Yale
- MA in English from Stanford (his thesis was published in the *Paris Review*)
- He "has been a gentleman in Manhattan since 1989" - *NY Times*
- Spent 20 years as an investment banker, travelling the world
- First novel, *Rules of Civility*, published in 2011 – named by the *Wall Street Journal* as one of best books of the year
- *Gentleman* is his second novel, but ...

Coming October 5...



A Final Tidbit: The "TV Series"

- Rights were acquitted by Carolyn Newman of Entertainment One in August 2017
- Limited TV series (likely to be on Apple+)
- Unknown release date
- And the count is ...



Kenneth Branagh
"his waxed moustaches spread like the wings of a gull."

Why We Chose *A Gentleman in Moscow*

- It deals with an interesting time in history (Stan revealed in his preparations)
- The novel has been enormously popular –
 - a) *LA Times*: 84 weeks on the best seller list
 - b) *NY Times*: 57 weeks on the hardcover fiction list
 - c) on the Pacific Northwest Booksellers Association for two years
 - d) Remains an Amazon editor's pick for Best Literature & Fiction
 - e) A best book of 2016 for *Chicago Tribune*, the *Miami Herald*, the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, the *St. Louis Dispatch*, and NPR
 - f) Several newspapers and celebrities picked it as a "best read in quarantine"
- Russia is in the news, though as Towles notes, "It was not timely in May [2016]."

And ...

"Irresistible . . . In his second elegant period piece, Towles continues to explore the question of how a person can lead an authentic life in a time when mere survival is a feat in itself . . . Towles's tale, as lavishly filigreed as a Fabergé egg, gleams with nostalgia for the golden age of Tolstoy and Turgenev." · *O, The Oprah Magazine*

"I think that it is an old-fashioned 'word-of-mouth' phenomenon. It's the kind of book you want to tell a friend about ... [and] it is utterly refreshing to read a book with such an affirmative act of optimism at its center. We all need a 'will to joy' these days." · *Lynn Neary, NPR*

Historical Fiction

- The first qualifier for us to use it in one of these classes
- And, according to Rostov ...
 - "History is the business of identifying momentous events from the comfort of a high-back chair."

Characteristics of Historical Fiction

- A mixture of real and fictional events
 - "I generally like to mix glimpses of history with flights of fancy until the reader isn't exactly sure of what's real and what isn't." · *Amor Towles*
- A conflict or problem that is real or mirrors the time and place
- Descriptive writing
- Intriguing plot that makes sense
- Historically authentic place and time

The "historical" here is a bit different

- Towles does not consider himself a "Russologist"
- He writes from "areas of existing fascination" here it is his longstanding fascination with Russian literature
- He finishes a first draft and THEN does the applied research to fine tune the details
- The result is that the "history" is not quite as much front and center as it is in many (most?) historical novels
- Yet,
 - "A masterly encapsulation of modern Russian history" · *Kirkus Reviews*

His inspiration

“Over the two decades that I was in the investment business, I traveled a good deal for my firm. Every year, I would spend weeks at a time in the hotels of distant cities meeting with clients and prospects. In 2009, while arriving at my hotel [the Hotel Richemond] in Geneva for the eighth year in a row, I recognized some of the people lingering in the lobby. It was as if they had never left. Upstairs in my room, I began playing with the idea of a novel in which a man is stuck in a grand hotel. Thinking that he should be there by force, rather than by choice, my mind immediately leapt to Russia, where house arrest has existed since the time of the Tsars.”

• Amor Towles

The Metropol: Then



MOSCOW c. 1922



...and Now



The Lobby



... and yes that is Amor Towles



The Front Desk



The Boyarsky



“...the finest restaurant in Moscow, if not in all of Russia. With vaulted ceilings and dark red walls reminiscent of a boyar’s retreat, the Boyarsky boasted the city’s most elegant décor, its most sophisticated waitstaff, and its most subtle chef de cuisine.”

The Piazza

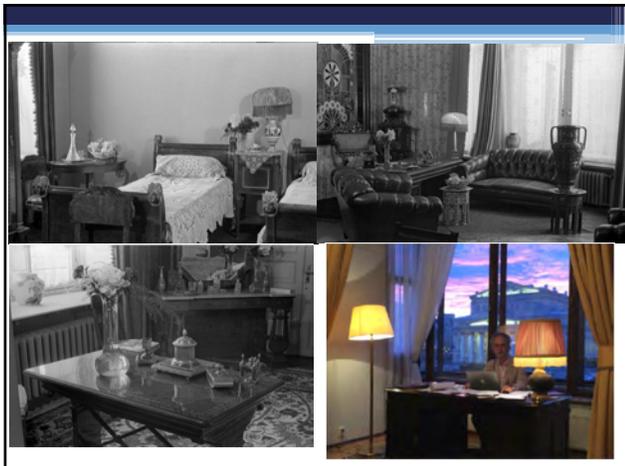


“Not only was she marveling at the room’s scale and elegance, but at each of the individual elements that seemed to turn common sense on its head: A ceiling made of glass. A tropical garden indoors. A fountain in the middle of a room!”

The Shalyapin



“Once a beehive of activity the Shalyapin was now more a chapel or prayer and reflection.”



The Book's Impact on the Metropol...



Drinks have been created

The book is for sale in the lobby

Structural Curiosity #1

...the chapters advance

First Half – Doubling

- one day after arrest
- two days after
- five days
- ten days
- three weeks
- six weeks
- three months
- six months
- one year
- two years
- four years
- eight years
- sixteen years after arrest

Second Half – Halving

- eight years until the Count's escape
- four years until
- two years
- one year
- six months
- three months
- six weeks
- three weeks
- ten days
- five days,
- two days
- one day
- ... finally, the turn of the revolving door

Structural Curiosity #2

(Did you notice anything about the chapter titles?)

- An Ambassador
- An Anglican Ashore
- An Appointment
- An Acquaintanceship
- Anyway ...
- Around and About
- An Assembly
- Archeologies
- Advent
- An Actress, An Apparition, An Apiary
- Addendum
- Anonymity
- Adieu
- Arachne's Art
- An Afternoon Assnignation
- An Alliance
- Absinthe
- Addendum
- An Arrival
- Adjustments
- Ascending, Alighting
- Addendum
- Antics, Antitheses, an Accident
- Addendum
- Adagio, Andante, Allegro
- America
- Apostles and Apostates
- Applause and Acclaim
- Achilles Agnoistes
- Arrivederci
- Adulthood
- An Announcement
- Anecdotes
- An Association
- Antagonists at Arms (And an Absolution)
- Apotheoses
- Afterwards ...
- And Anon

And a cast of ...

- Achilles
- Adam
- Ariadne
- Irina Arkadina
- Humphrey Bogart
- Johann Sebastian Bach
- Ludwig van Beethoven
- Laverniy Pavlovich Beria
- Napoleon Bonaparte
- Sandro Botticelli
- Nikolai Bukharin
- Juliet Capulet
- Cerebrus
- Anton Chekhov
- Frédéric Chopin
- Christopher Columbus
- Charles Darwin
- Denis Diderot
- Fyodor Dostoevsky
- Friar Tuck
- Galileo Galilei
- Nichol Gogol
- Maxim Gorky
- Alexander Gorsky
- Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel
- Adolf Hitler
- Thomas Hobbes
- Robin Hood Vladimir Horowitz
- Lazar Moiseyevich Kaganovich
- Kostantin Kostantinovich
- Nikita Krushchev
- John Locke
- Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov AKA Lenin
- Lady Macbeth
- Vladimir Mayakovsky
- Georgy Maximilianovich Malenkov
- Osip Emilyevich Mandelstam
- Karl Marx
- Vladimir Mayakovsky
- Medea
- Romeo Montague
- Michel de Montaigne
- Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
- Modest Petrovich Mussorgsky
- Nicholas II
- Sancho Panza
- Alexander Pushkin
- Don Quixote
- Sergei Rachmaninov
- Ilya Repin
- Jean Jacques
- Robinson Crusoe
- Rousseau
- Harrison Salisbury
- Scrooge
- William Shakespeare
- Socrates
- Sam Spade
- Joseph Stalin
- Stanislav Szukalski
- Pyotor Ilyich Tchaikovsky
- Theseus
- Tiresias
- Leo Tolstoy
- Alexis de Tocqueville
- Jules Verne
- Zephyrus