Suffragists and Russian Suffering

Vulnerability in Early Progressive US Movements

Katharina Wiedlack

Abstract

This article analyzes American pro-Russian revolutionary newspaper and magazine articles, biographies, political speeches, poems, etc. between roughly 1880 and 1917. It asks what strategies American social progressives, including suffragists and feminists, developed to create empathy for the Russian revolutionaries, and the Russian people more generally, at a time when the American authorities, as well as the public, was rather anxious about foreign and domestic radicalism. The article identifies suffering Russian women at the center of narratives that intended to create sympathy for the Russian Revolution. Particularly vulnerable female bodies were used as veneers to draw the American audience and the world into supporting the revolution. The article approaches the topic of vulnerability through the work of literary scholar Thomas Laqueur, and specifically his analyses of suffering as a literary trope, to explore the narratives' particular structures and the kinds of Russian vulnerabilities that the writers presented. It analyzes the affective attachments to the bodies at the center of these narratives, and the subsequent imaginaries they inspire, thereby crucially influencing American cultural and political imaginaries as such through the application of Laqueur's ideas. Additionally, the analysis will focus on the question why suffragists and feminists were so particularly invested in the creation and dissemination of these humanitarian narratives, suggesting that the support of Russian revolutionary women was as much in solidarity with the Russians as it was a means to further their own causes and ideas, including women's emancipation.

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Suffragists and Russian Suffering

Vulnerability in Early Progressive US Movements

Katharina Wiedlack

This article is part of a larger project about the significance of Russia and Russian entities for US identity formations and the negotiation of values during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. I contend that the corporeal vulnerability of female (and queer) Russian martyrs, in need of American "support," if not even outright "saving," and who appear so prominently in current homophile and feminist North American discourses, has historical roots. Furthermore, I claim that American progressive thinking emerged within a discursive field structured through narratives of Russian backwardness and female suffering and hopes for Bolshevik communism to be a liberating force for women worldwide. Looking at pro-Russian revolutionary texts produced between roughly 1880 and 1917, I identify vulnerable female bodies that served as pretenses for drawing the world into supporting the revolution.

Building on prior literature that investigates the exceptionally widespread support for a foreign revolutionary struggle at a time when the American authorities as well as the general public were rather anxious about foreign and domestic radicalism, I argue that American social progressives, including suffragists and early feminists,[1] developed and distributed narratives about suffering Russian women not only to create sympathy for the Russian Revolution but also to further their own causes and ideas, including women's emancipation. Moreover, through their lobbying efforts, women found or claimed substantial agency.

I approach the topic of vulnerability through the work of literary scholar Thomas Laqueur and, specifically, his analyses of suffering as a literary trope. Adopting Laqueur's approach, I analyze how the humanitarian narratives successfully created public and individual affects toward Russian people. I am particularly interested in the affective attachments to the bodies at the center of these narratives and

the subsequent imaginaries they inspired, thereby crucially influencing American cultural and political imaginaries. Furthermore, I am interested in the question as to why suffragists or early feminists were so particularly invested in the creation and dissemination of these humanitarian narratives. Connecting Laqueur's approach on suffering to feminist and queer works on vulnerability, I conceptualize vulnerability as both a relational element, in terms of Judith Butler's thinking,[2] and as something that gives rise to social and cultural separation, in the sense put forth by Martha Fineman.[3] Following Deborah Gould's work on affects and emotions, I explore how affective intensities toward vulnerable Russian bodies serve as a tool to historically demarcate "political imaginaries and their conditions of possibility."[4] Taking a cue from Heather Love's seminal book *Feeling Backward* (2007),[5] I further investigate the relevance of affective aspects of US–Russia imaginaries for the concepts of futurity and progress.

Scholarship on American solidarity with the Russian revolutionaries at the turn of the century, and especially its iteration in the Free Russia Movement, is divided along two contrasting views. One view, which is most strongly supported by David S. Foglesong's analysis of the Free Russia Movement in his monograph *The American Mission and the "Evil Empire"* (2007), is that the American supporters were driven by a "Messianic outlook" or "American Messianic approach" to liberate Russia and recreate it in their own image, American twentieth-century capitalism, which was put forth in their discourses as an ideal place and model for the world.[6] Following this school of thought, American progressives would have interpreted Russian revolutionaries exclusively as being suffering victims, without agency, who needed saving by already enlightened Americans.

In his influential book *Modernization from the Other Shore* (2004), historian David Engerman interprets American support of the Russian Revolution and subsequent modernization under Bolshevik rule along similar lines. Although he does not fully support the idea that American witnesses to the Russian Revolution presented Russian people as helpless victims, he, like Foglesong, asserts that American intellectuals were convinced that their own "industrial, urban, cosmopolitan, rational, and democratic" society had already represented the peak of human achievements, "endors[ing] radical forms of social change everywhere except in the United States." Moreover, he claims that these American supporters of Russia accepted coldheartedly the great human sacrifice involved in the project of Bolshevik industrial modernization, convinced of its "accompanying dialectic of suffering, through which present hardship would give birth to future prosperity."[7]

Many feminist American and Russian studies historians, including Julia Mickenberg, Choi Chatterjee, Beth Holmgren, and Chelsea Gibson, who have equally analyzed

American views on Russia at the turn of the twentieth century, challenge this view.[8] Looking beyond the accounts of officials such as diplomats and other (male) experts, and taking into account the perspective of humanitarians and social reformers, feminists, and abolitionists, these feminist scholars argue that the Americans, acting on behalf of the Russian revolutionaries, were indeed interested in political change that reached beyond the Russian territories. In other words, they believed at least partly in the Russian revolutionary ideas, and saw their cause as connected to their own struggle. The reason why Engerman and Foglesong missed these influential socio-political discourses is, arguably, because their research was exclusively concerned with the predominantly male domains of diplomacy and institutional academic knowledge production. Feminist activism and its mediation through journalistic and other writing, as well as charitable activities, were surely equally pivotal in forming public opinion, however.

I follow this feminist line of thought and focus on the connection between Russian revolutionary activities and American feminists. I will show that the humanitarian narratives around vulnerable female Russian revolutionaries presented both a messianic outlook and an Americanized version of the female revolutionary. Further, I argue that, in many cases, the desire to reform or even revolutionize US society drove support for the Russian revolutionaries because women saw themselves as fighting for the same cause: women's liberation and equity. In this way, American women partly projected their own ideas onto Russian radicals or interpreted their politics and actions through their context-specific lenses, regardless of and, in some cases, in contradiction to Russian women's stance on feminist politics.

Tragic Russia

> The Russian people suffer under the Czar. And this is why we regard it not only as our right, but our duty to struggle with all our might and by every means against the despotism which is the supreme cause of our country's woes. And I appeal to you, in the name of humanity, in the name of the honor of men and of women, to do your utmost to help us to rid ourselves of this … barbarous and stupid power called Czarism …
>
> "A Russian Woman's Experience," *The Woman's Journal* XXXVI, No. 4 (January 28, 1905), 14.

American cultural discourses of the late nineteenth century presented Russia as a dark place, full of tragedies produced by an unjust, backward, authoritarian regime. Popular theater and film productions, as well as historical writing and suffrage and

women's rights journals and magazines such as the *Woman's Journal* quoted above, popularized the idea of a dark Russia and offered eyewitness testimony as proof to the tragedy of Russian suffering.[9] Progressive discourses placed suffering Russian revolutionary women, or "martyr-heroines" as historian Barbara Alpern Engel calls them,[10] at the center of their humanitarian narratives, partly as a spectacle, but partly also to delineate humanitarian and feminist ideas around their vulnerable bodies.

In his seminal essay "Bodies, Details, and the Humanitarian Narrative" (1989), Thomas Laqueur interrogates the question of "how details about the suffering bodies of others engender compassion and how that compassion comes to be understood as a moral imperative to undertake ameliorative action." He argues that, already during the eighteenth century, detailed narratives of ordinary individuals' suffering, pain, and death became popularized in a fashion that suggested a causal link between the deeds of the readers and the suffering of the subjects of the narrative. He identifies these descriptions as a new "aesthetic enterprise" and form, "the humanitarian narrative," which relies on "detail as the sign of truth." They create a "reality effect" and hence are a crucial part of "the literary technique through which the experiences of others are represented as real in the humanitarian narrative." Equally important is the way in which the humanitarian narrative presents an individual body, not only as the site of vulnerability, pain, and suffering "but also as the common bond between those who suffer and those who would help and as the object of the . . . discourse through which the causal links between an evil, a victim, and a benefactor are forged." Importantly, the humanitarian narrative reveals to the world "the lineaments of causality and of human agency": humanitarian actions being the humanitarian narrative's "moral imperative."[11] Although Laqueur focuses on medical rather than journalistic and fictional writing, I argue that features of his humanitarian narrative are equally present in the social and political writings on Russian revolutionary women by progressives, and especially feminist authors, between c. 1880 and 1920. I build my argument partly on Chelsea Gibson's exhaustive work on the role of the Russian "revolutionary martyr-heroine" for the emergence of the American Free Russia Movement.[12]

Gibson elaborates on Barbara Engel's analysis of the martyr-heroine as a central aspect of the Russian revolutionary movement. Engel identifies the self-fashioned, internalized, and highly gendered myth around the martyr-heroine as being crucial for eliciting public sympathy and support for the violent revolutionary movement. Presenting the women revolutionaries as unconditionally devoted, vulnerable, self-sacrificing, and almost holy figures, this myth greatly influenced generations of Russian revolutionary women and men, independent of their various political affilia-

tions. While Engel's work focuses exclusively on the Russian context, Gibson demonstrates that the mythology of the Russian martyr-heroine was, from the time of its emergence, translated into the American context, where, "inflected by American expectations and framed for an American audience,"[13] it not only crucially influenced American views on Russian revolutionary actions and their protagonists but also ignited pro-revolutionary activities in the USA. While Gibson is primarily interested in how the US's focus on the suffering and self-sacrifice of female revolutionaries legitimatized or even glorified terrorist violence in support of the Russian Revolution, I am interested in the incorporation of this "suffering Russian martyr-heroine" into humanitarian narratives that helped American women create affective humanitarian structures, thus allowing them to become active socio-political agents in a public and transnational arena, or, in other words, full citizens of the United States. I argue that through their focus on Russian vulnerable bodies and their (often) deadly acts of resistance against injustice, American women found agency within the political realm. Although this is not the main concern of my article, I suggest that this position of the female (or femininized) vulnerable Russian martyr, as a subject of American empathy and as instigator of humanitarian action, is still prevalent in humanitarian narratives in American public culture, for example, as embodied by the Pussy Riot activists,[14] as well as amongst young, vulnerable, and feminized homosexual men.[15]

There's a Light in Dark Russia; Or, The Emergence of the Heroic Female Martyr

The mythology around the noble Russian underground revolutionaries emerged on the international terrain with the work of the anarchist revolutionary Sergei Kravchinskii, known as Stepniak,[16] and his highly popular portrayal of famous Russian revolutionaries, titled *Underground Russia*,[17] which was published in English in 1882. Stepniak visited the US in 1890 to lobby for the revolutionary cause and co-founded the American branch of the Society of Friends for Russian Freedom (SFRF). Suffragists and women's rights advocates became part of the early phase of the SFRF, among them the inaugural members Julia Ward Howe and Alice Stone Blackwell and the later member, Elizabeth Buffum Chace.[18]

During the late 1880s and 1890s, stories about Russian women revolutionaries and their violent acts were quite frequent in the American mainstream press and popular culture. Following Stepniak's cue, these narratives represented Russian revolutionary women as heroic figures of the highest moral caliber, making them appear as "educated and western-style liberals fighting for a constitutional, democratic government,"[19] rather than as socialist radicals, thereby interpreting their deeds not as terrorist acts but as acts of self-defense. Progressive women, in particular, amplified

the idea that the female Russian radicals were "respectable, sympathetic, and westernized," sacrificing themselves to "rid the world of a tyrant," as an author of *The New York Times* expressed it in 1878.[20] The label and philosophical movement associated with these female Russian revolutionaries, "nihilists" and "nihilism," in difference to later labels such as "communists," "socialists," or "anarchists," seemed less threatening and helped create a sympathetic image of Russian revolutionary women within broader US discourses. And feminists participated in this rhetorical deradicalization, even though radicals such as Emma Goldman played an active part in their pro-revolutionary coalition. The Russian Empire feared and accordingly dehumanized these women terrorists, while the Russian intelligentsia celebrated them for their terrorist acts.

One of the radical Russian women whom Stepniak made popular in the US was Sophia Perovskaya, a revolutionary from St. Petersburg. Perovskaya participated in the assassination of Alexander II of Russia, which, after several failed attempts, finally succeeded on March 1, 1881. Perovskaya was hanged for it six weeks later. Her story was arguably intriguing for many, including social reformers and suffragists, because she did not try to escape her arrest by fleeing St. Petersburg. When captured, she asked to be treated like her male comrades and not to be given any lenience for being a woman. Perovskaya was the first women ever to be executed for a political crime, which many international observers viewed as a crime against the natural order of things.[21] Her appearance, her demeanor (her resistance), and her gender (perceived as additional vulnerability) inspired sympathy among the observers of the trial, and her execution created a furor far beyond the Russian boarders. Stepniak emphasized Perovskaya's beauty and youthfulness and connected it closely to her revolutionary abilities. He thereby cemented what Gibson calls the "important facet of the martyr-heroine trope: the more beautiful the woman, the more righteous her cause."[22] Importantly, Perovskaya's womanhood and the seemingly connected vulnerability were emphasized as the source of her commitment to the revolutionary cause in Stepniak's writing. Moreover, according to Stepniak, Perovskaya was only one of many fully dedicated women who did not fear hardship, loss, or even death.

Another example of Stepniak's strong influence on the American humanitarian narrative of Russian vulnerability and suffering was his portrayal of the revolutionary Olga Liubatovich in the *Chicago Tribune* in 1883. Stepniak detailed Liubatovich's escape from exile and her participation in the revolutionary underground in quite dramatic terms, emphasizing her girlish character and her love for one of her comrades, whom she married and with whom she had a child. When her husband was arrested, Liubatovich had to decide between her child or the fight for the revolution: "On the one side was maternal feeling; on the other her ideal, her convictions, her

devotion to the cause which [her husband] steadfastly served. She did not hesitate for a moment." She ended up leaving her child behind; the child soon died, and, after failing to free her husband, Liubatovich herself was arrested. Ending Liubatovich's story, Stepniak emphasized that "hundreds and hundreds" of Russian women shared her fate.[23] Through his detailed stories of individual Russian women heroines and their simultaneous embedding into the narrative of Russian female vulnerability and suffering as a nationwide phenomenon, Stepniak laid out the template for many humanitarian narratives to come.

What arguably drew suffragists and feminists to the Russian revolutionary cause was the high percentage of female revolutionaries among the different groups and movements. Women made up between twenty and fifty percent of the various radical groups/circles, student protests, labor collectives, etc.[24] More often, these women were even more radical and devoted to the cause than their male counterparts, since they could not reconcile the socially expected roles with their revolutionary aspirations and were thus forced to break with their former lives and families. These Russian women, like many other women around the world, were invested in finding ways to advance the role of women within society, demanding women's rights and equality with men.[25] In essence, Russian women's low literacy rate, their subordinate place in society, and the fact that they were neither allowed to hold their own passports nor get a job without a male relative's permission were increasingly understood and presented as signs of the entire country's backwardness—a backwardness created by the czarist regime, which held civil society back, preventing modernization and inhibiting progress. The entire country was increasingly represented by the figure of the struggling Russian woman.[26]

Russian revolutionaries and their US supporters imported the narrative of Russian female martyrdom into US discourses, using significations projected onto white and middle-class women, including "purity, innocence, and maternal nurturing."[27] Seen against this foil of Victorian ideas of white middle-class womanhood, Russian women's revolutionary actions, including acts of violence, were understood as "a product of [female] natural instincts, not a political agenda."[28] In fact, the narrative of the martyr-heroine equally built upon the image of the barbaric and despotic Russian Empire, as "only true despotism could compel women's 'tender natures' to assassination or regicide."[29]

In successfully promoting the myth of the Russian martyr-heroine, Russian revolutionaries also implemented what Susan Morrissey has termed a "moral economy of terrorism,"[30] a logic that justified political violence by emphasizing the victims' guilt and the assassin's morality. Although violent political action was generally at odds with the American ideal of a respectable woman, the demonization of the czarist

regime as violator of vulnerable women, and the whole of Russia's integrity and life, allowed the media of the time to present the female terrorists not as transgressive but instead as performing their "'natural' duties as wives and mothers."[31]

George Kennan, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and the Establishment of the Humanitarian Narrative

Along with Stepniak and other Russian Nihilists who addressed the American public through liberal publications such as *The North American Review*,[32] George Kennan (1845–1924), the American liberal and Russia expert, played a significant role in changing public opinion in the revolutionaries' favor. Previously a defender of the czarist regime, Kennan spent much of 1885 and 1886 touring Siberian hard labor camps, penal labor colonies, and distant exile colonies, as correspondent for *Century Magazine*.[33] The experience of meeting many well-educated, Western-oriented political exiles who suffered under an inhumane penal system amid poor living conditions at their various locations transformed Kennan entirely. He became a dedicated lobbyist for the revolutionary cause, offering American readers humanitarian narratives in the form of intimate stories of individual revolutionaries.[34] Kennan's emphatic language encouraged his American readers to imagine themselves in the position of vulnerable Russian exiles, freezing to death in the harsh, remote Siberian landscape "because they dared ask for the liberties enshrined in the US Constitution."[35]

Kennan is one of the American liberals that Engerman identified as representing Russian revolutionary activity as a political struggle against an intolerable government, to further progressive liberal aims and to reach the American status quo. While Kennan, like Stepniak, idealized beautiful, noble-yet-vulnerable Russian women as victims of czarist oppression, he did not emphasize their agency and resistance. Rather than representing revolutionary women in action, he showed them as political prisoners in their isolated exile in Siberia. Accordingly, rather than heroism and bravery, his narratives presented the tragic conditions of everyday hardship and the struggle to simply survive. In his writing, the region of Siberia became a metaphor for the Russian regime's brutality and disregard of human life, an unlivable place that could only mean death to vulnerable women. Kennan toured the US in the late 1880s and early 1890s, giving lectures about what he had witnessed in Siberia. To illustrate the effect of czarist brutality on the beautiful young women, and to heighten reactions to his narratives, Kennan used poignant photographs. He showed pictures of women before their imprisonment and displacement and contrasted these with images from the time of their Siberian exile, showing "worn, broken, almost invalid wom[e]n." To inspire further emotional reactions from his audience, he asked them to look for the "trace of the beautiful young girl who was sent to Siberia," only to shock

them even more with the information that the young girl had died while he was in Moscow with her.[36] This "story was typical; [o]ut of six women that appeared in his lecture, five died—two by insanity, two by disease, and one by suicide."[37]

Kennan often presented cases of "cultivated and attractive" young women and mothers who went "violently insane," due to the brutality of the czarist regime.[38] He detailed the inhospitable and cruel conditions in the Kara Gold Mines, located in Eastern Siberia and other places, where women served their sentences of hard labor. He described in detail how the great potential of individual noble women, who could have otherwise contributed to the progress of Russian society, was wasted in prison. He also described the mental toll from which their psyches had suffered, as a result of the inhumane conditions of Transbaikal and the brutality of the treatment in the hard labor camp. Moreover, he emphasized that the women were often young mothers, violently separated from their small children. In one case, he "even read a letter supposedly written by [a] little girl to her mother" and told the audience that, due to the pain of separation, the woman had gone insane and died.[39] Kennan presented the young women at the Kara mines as innocent victims of a ruthless Russian regime. While he mourned their deaths, he equally "portrayed them as a source of hope for Americans who longed to see Russia liberalized . . ., and he concluded that it was 'impossible to despair of the future of a country that contains such women.'"[40]

The humanitarian narratives that Stepniak, Kennan, and others offered to the American audience portrayed vulnerable women as victims of arbitrary cruelty by a regime that did not care for human beings. Indeed, these women were used as antidotes to the czarist regime's barbarity. They were represented as driven by their natural maternal instinct to care for all who suffered—not only for their immediate family but for the entire country. Not everyone in the US fully subscribed to this essentialist narrative, which was built on problematic binary gender stereotypes. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, the women's rights activist, for example, was drawn to the emancipatory political aspects of the participation and leadership of Russian women in revolutionary movements.[41] Interested in nihilism, communism, and socialism, Stanton traveled to Europe in the 1880s, where she met Stepniak and other Russian revolutionaries. Piotr Kroptokin, in particular, left a lasting impression on Stanton. In her memoirs, she wrote that "Krapotkine told us of his sad prison experiences, both in France and Russia. He said the series of articles by George Kennan in the *Century* were not too highly colored, that the sufferings of men and women in Siberia and the Russian prisons could not be overdrawn."[42] Back in the US, Stanton emphasized in her writing and speeches the suffering and hardship as well as the bravery of Russian women. In her 1888 address to the International Council of Women in Washington, DC, Stanton praised the "noble Russian women who have so courageously identified themselves in the struggle for freedom, and expiated their love of liberty on the scaffold, [the]

dungeons of St. Petersburg and the mines of Siberia. [These women] prove triumphantly that woman knows how to die for a principle."[43] At the same meeting, Stanton read a letter that Kropotkin had written to the women, lobbying among the elite in the audience for support and solidarity with their poor sisters, suggesting they should take a lesson from Persovskaya's self-sacrifice and dedication.[44]

While the Russian radicals' terrorist acts might have been intriguing signs of agency, I suggest that female women's rights advocates, such as Stanton, were especially drawn to Perovskaya and other female Russian martyrs because of the strong agency they demonstrated in the face of death. They did not simply accept their vulnerability and powerlessness but embraced them as the strongest form of resistance possible in their situation, forcing the Russian regime to show its most violent side. Although the intensity of the diverse lobbying efforts, including the efforts of the American Free Russia Movement, decreased significantly after its initial phase, and although the influence of the American humanitarian narrative about female suffering in Russia was not yet reflected on the terrain of official diplomatic relations, these efforts profoundly changed the prevailing American view of Russian revolutionaries: from terrorists to civic actors in the cause for freedom and western progress.[45]

During the last twenty years of the nineteenth century, more and more humanitarian narratives that focused on the hardship of heroic and brave, vulnerable Russian women started appearing in popular culture, especially in romance fiction.[46] The American poet Joaquin Miller, for example, dedicated the poem "To The Czar" (1897) to the "maiden, gentle born" Perovskaya, who could not coup with the "the foulest wrong the good God knows" and who therefore had to act by helping assassinate Alexander II, for which she was punished by hanging: "And did a woman do this deed? / Then build her scaffold high / That all may on her forehead read / Her martyr's right to die!"[47] Many of these narratives positioned a white woman as Russia's future against a racialized, dark, and backward Russia.

Catherine Breshkovsky, Alice Stone Blackwell, and the Tales of Russian Suffering

One of the key figures and female martyrs featured in the narratives about Russian female suffering was Ekaterina Konstantinovna Breshko-Breshkovskaia, known in the USA as Catherine Breshkovsky.[48] Breshkovsky was portrayed in the American press as the embodiment of Russian female vulnerability and suffering endlessly defied. She herself contributed to the proliferation of narratives of white heroic female suffering, set against a Russian Orientalized barbarism. Breshkovsky was already an elderly woman when Kennan met her in her exile on his tour through Sibe-

ria in the 1880s.[49] He saw in her a hint of a brighter future behind all the Russian darkness.[50] Breshkovsky was in her sixties by the time she went to the US in 1904 to lobby for the revolutionary cause.

Once in the US, Breshkovsky became a staple feature in *The Woman's Journal*, the nation's largest suffrage newspaper.[51] In his article in the newspaper, Kellogg Durland from the University Settlement in New York City famously presented Breshkovsky as a "heroic Russian woman" of "noble spirit," who had suffered twenty-two years in prison and Siberian exile before she came to the US. "This woman of destiny," according to Durland, aimed at nothing less than the "soul-emancipation of the vast peasantry" for whom she was a "Joan of Arc who might lead armies to victory … Schooled to face death any day, she worked as though eternity reached before her. [T]o look upon the face of this silver-haired apostle is like receiving a benediction."[52] The article was accompanied by a portrait of Breshkovsky, dressed in simple clothes, with white hair cropped at the ears. In a comment on Durland's article, Alice Stone Blackwell, *The Woman's Journal* co-editor and Free Russia advocate, emphasized that Breshkovsky was a "living refutation of the argument that woman cannot be induced to take an interest in politics," showing the true "possibilities of feminine human nature."[53]

In 1904, Breshkovsky was already a revolutionary icon in Russia; but in the US hardly anyone knew her, with the exception of radical activists, feminists, and anarchists.[54] Once in the US, she managed almost immediately to gain the trust and support of highly influential women, among them the women's rights advocates and pioneers of the US settlement house movement, Lillian Wald, Jane Addams, and labor organizer Helena Dudley.[55] Through the involvement and support of progressive US women, the narrative of the Russian female martyr was also marked as politically significant. And while most scholars emphasize that American allies ignored the violent aspects of the actions of Russian female revolutionaries, Chelsea Gibson and Julia L. Mickenberg argue that the use of violence by female revolutionaries was part of their appeal.[56]

Unsurprisingly, then, other famous supporters were the feminist anarchist Emma Goldman and, perhaps most importantly, Alice Stone Blackwell. Blackwell was a passionate suffragist, women's rights activist, and labor reformer, daughter of suffragist Lucy Stone and Henry Brown Blackwell, co-director of the National Woman Suffrage Association, the American Woman Suffrage Association, and co-editor of *The Woman's Journal*.[57] Together with Kennan, Blackwell revived the American Society of Friends of Russian Freedom in the years leading up to 1904 and Breshkovsky's arrival to the US.[58] Blackwell, who had already been a member of the first iteration of the American Society of Friends of Russian Freedom in the early 1890s, transformed the Society into "a small news bureau," employing the strategies used to disseminate news about women's suffrage.[59] With the assistance of Kennan, she sent reporters

out to newspapers and magazines all over the country, having the news translated from Russian to English.[60]

Blackwell, Addams, Wald and Dudley, and other progressives were drawn to Breshkovsky and the Free Russia Movement because they were interested in expanding their own agency beyond the national level.[61] The image of Breshkovsky as a modest, yet dedicated, grandmother allowed the settlement and women's rights advocates to reach beyond their circles, in their attempt to lobby for support of the Russian cause. Mainstream media such as the *New York Times* willingly printed favorable portraits of "a little white-haired and mild-eyed woman, the prevailing Slav type, but with intelligent and pleasantly smiling features."[62] The focus on Breshkovsky's body and age allowed reporters to represent her as a non-threatening and very likeable gentle person, which made her persecution and treatment by the czarist regime seem completely exaggerated and outrageous and, in turn, her revolutionary efforts the more heroic. *The New York Times*, for example, emphasized that "this little woman, who is now far advanced into the fifties, has been working and suffering and working again more than thirty-five years for the cause of Russian freedom."[63] *The Sun* equally emphasized her features to create empathy among the readers, saying that "her face is delicate and intellectual . . . Her grizzled hair contrasts strikingly with an almost youthful complexion and alert eyes,"[64] and the *Chicago Daily Tribune* saw her eyes "flashing with the spirit of freedom,"[65] despite all the pain and suffering she had endured. All these articles also commented on her dress, describing it as a simple "multitude of garments,"[66] or "shawl[s]" from under which Breshkovsky looked out,[67] endowing this woman, who was the daughter of a nobleman and who had entirely given up her comfortable existence, with the look of a peasant women.

One widely distributed portrayal of Breshkovsky was that of Ernest Poole. First published in January 1905 in the progressive magazine *The Outlook* (which sold around 100,000 copies per week[68]), it was later published as a stand-alone publication and sold at Breshkovsky's speaking events.[69] In the opening lines of his depiction, Poole describes Breshkovsky's features in detail, emphasizing how the cruelty of the Russian regime had altered her body:

> Her hair, once cut in prison, has grown again. A great wavy mass of gray frames a face broad, heavy, deep-lined with suffering. Her eyes, deep under high-arched brows, now flash the fires of her dream, now beam forth the warm affections of one whom hundreds call endearingly "Babushka"—little grandmother. Her voice, . . . ran swiftly over her own sufferings, but rose passionately describing her country's degradation. Daughter of a nobleman . . .; then revolutionist, hard labor convict and exile for 23 years in Siberia; and now a heroic old woman of 61, she has plunged again into the dangerous struggle for freedom. The Russian Revolutionary Movement is embodied in this one heroic figure.[70]

Typical for the humanitarian narrative, her body serves not only as the sight of the regime's cruel acts but also as a source of revolutionary agency.

Blackwell, Kennan, and her many other American supporters arranged several opportunities for Breshkovsky to speak to American audiences in settlement houses, at socialist meeting halls, at women's colleges, and in suffragist clubs, in order to collect donations.[71] Blackwell organized and published translations of her speeches.[72] To reach a broad audience and to increase the willingness to donate, especially from the more affluent classes, Breshkovsky's American advisers, such as Paul Kellogg of the New York settlement project Greenwich House and editor of *Charities*, suggested that Breshkovsky emphasize the economic and social hardships of the Russian people, as well as the lack of education.[73]

Obviously supporting a strategy that wished to show Breshkovsky as just one of the millions suffering from czarist despotism, *The Woman's Journal* printed excerpts of her speeches and passages from interviews where she emphasized the plight of young women and children: "My fellow-prisoners were mostly young women of the nobility, excellent and charming persons, but delicately bred, and not physically able to bear such hardships. They sickened one by one. Their bodies became blue with scurvy. Those of us who kept well had to spend all our time going from bed to bed nursing the sick . . ., but my companions died one after another, till half of them were gone."[74]

Moreover, Breshkovsky presented revolutionary activities as "philanthropic" acts in magazines such as *The American*,[75] in order to appeal to affluent American men and women interested in charity. In emphasizing the role of women in revolutionary activism, and in focusing especially on those aspects of revolutionary action that resembled charitable causes within the US that were predominantly domains of female philanthropy—efforts to feed the hungry or house the homeless, for example—she became a popular role model for women in progressive circles.

In January 1905, soldiers of the Imperial Guard opened fire on a mass of unarmed demonstrators in St. Petersburg. Led by the peasant priest Father Georgy Gapon, the people had come to the Winter Palace to demonstrate for better working conditions. The world was outraged by the cruelty of this act, and, thereafter, Breshkovsky found a new and broader audience. In an essay in *Outlook* in February 1905, she revered Father Gapon as an example of what happened to those brave people who dared to care about the suffering of their fellow people and who tried to fight for betterment of their conditions.[76] She described the suffering of the Russian peasants as unimaginable to foreigners and emphasized that there were many Father Gapons in Russia, who needed their support.

White Women's Bodies, Rape, and the Creation of the "Dark Cossack Soldier"

The Russo-Japanese War and the first Russian Revolution in 1905 further enhanced public sympathy for Russian revolutionaries such as Breshkovsky; but when the failure of the first revolution became apparent, many American analysts, and a large part of the public, returned to believing that the Russian peasants were not ready to fight for freedom.[77] Thus, Free Russia activists increased their efforts to present to the American public the suffering of the Russian people—"oppressed, down-trodden, famine-stricken, and wretched"[78]—and introduce female revolutionary figures in whom they could believe. Especially in the years after the first, failed revolution, many articles focused on the physical violation of Russians, for example, brutalization by soldiers, prison guards, and police. In these texts, vulnerable female bodies reflected not only the selfish and cruel acts by which the czarist government subjugated the Russian people but also the hope for the survival and final victory of humanity in "darkest Russia."

One of the individual heroic women that captured the attention of sympathetic Americans was twenty-one-year-old Maria Spiridonova, who assassinated the security official G. N. Luzhenovskii in 1906, before she was jailed and trialed. While her initial act received little attention in the US, a letter in which she detailed her abuse by police and jail guards—which was printed in the liberal Russian newspaper *Rus*—shocked the American public and convinced many of the cruelty of the czarist regime.[79] In a letter from Tambov jail, Spiridonova describes how officers beat her and burned her naked body with cigarettes, thus implying that they also raped her. American newspapers such as *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Washington Post*, the *Detroit Free Press* reported on the account, strongly protesting the brutality to which the young woman had been subjected.[80] Additionally, these articles described Luzhenovskii as a monster who "murdered men, assaulted women, [and] crippled children,"[81] calling him a "wholesale murderer and destroyer of women and girls."[82]

Kellogg Durland, who followed Spiridonova's case during his time in Russia in 1906 and 1907, published several texts about her life and her revolutionary act.[83] In 1906, he interviewed Spiridonova in prison. His profile of her in his popular book *The Red Reign*, published in 1908, describes her as a divine figure, a "delicate girl" with "soft, blue eyes," who was brave enough to dare what no one else would. Durland quoted her testimony before the court, where she allegedly said, "You may, now, kill my body, but you cannot destroy my belief that the time of the people's happiness and freedom is surely coming."[84] In his writing, Durland contrasts Spiridonova's dedication and willingness to sacrifice herself in almost religious terms with the ruthlessness of the Russian police men who brutalized her. To elicit strong affects in American audiences,

such as sympathy, pity, and concern for the female revolutionary, outrage about injustice, and antipathy toward the czarist regime, he describes the young woman's violation in what was, for his time, drastic language: "They stripped their prisoner, stark naked, and even at the sight of her bruised and bleeding body did not stop their hellish inquisition of sensuous debauchery and torture. They scarred her quivering flesh with the lighted ends of their cigarettes. They caressed and pounded her by turns."[85]

Significantly, Durland focuses on the woman's body and what men's violence did to her vulnerable flesh. In describing the physical assault of the young woman, he recreates the reality and manipulates his readers into affective reactions. In doing so, Durland builds on earlier accounts that had also illustrated the cruel barbarism of the czarist regime, by exhibiting the effects it had on individual female bodies. Leroy Scott pointed out that Spiridonova's "body was the body of Russia; just so was Russia daily treated,"[86] and in a poem published in her magazine *The Woman Rebel*, Margaret Sanger expresses the view that the Russian officers violated Spiridonova "with the whole iniquity / that hath been done to Russia by her Czar."[87] Breshkovsky also recounted horrible scenes of the mass rapes of female prisoners on her trip to her Siberian exile, to exemplify the cruelty of the czarist regime,[88] and Kennan reported in 1891 that, due to the "fear of insult or outrage" (a code for assault or rape), women prisoners were forced to live with male exiles in Siberia.[89]

Durland, Scott, and others continued their description of female suffering in their articles for the *Woman's Home Companion* and *The Outlook* until the Russian Revolution.[90] While their accounts sensationally focused on rape and other forms of violation of the female body and mind, they also addressed female agency. Although they highlighted women's political agency, they framed it in depoliticized terms, suggesting that women's maternal instincts and their strong empathy for the victims of czarist cruelties had "impelled so many gentle-souled women to" revolutionary action.[91] Following this gendered logic, Scott describes, for example, one female revolutionary as a "delicate girl," "with her gentle, quiet smile," who told him that "when one's people is suffering such agony, one has no right to think of self." Although his account comes across as deeply condescending, it can be assumed that his conclusion was what drew feminists to supporting the Russian cause: "This girl represents the voices of thousands of Russian women. When, in the happier future, the history of the Russian Revolution is written, one feature of the great struggle which will distinguish it from other movements of its kind will be the part played by women."[92]

Like Scott, Durland, and Kennan, settlement house activists who supported women's suffrage, such as Jane Addams, Lillian Wald, and, of course, Blackwell, contributed to the popularity of the humanitarian narrative that portrayed Russian women

as both the victims of czarism and the future of Russia.[93] When Breshkovsky was arrested and again sent into exile in Siberia between 1907 and 1910, the Free Russia advocates increased the dissemination of narratives of Russian females suffering even further. Again, the Free Russia movement narrated Breshkovsky's story as one of hardship and suffering to create sympathetic interest in the Russian revolutionary movement. Goldman, Wald, Blackwell, and other supporters managed to correspond with Breshkovsky frequently, publishing excerpts and quotes of her letters in the *Woman's Journal* and other American magazines.[94] Most of these letters are also reprinted in Blackwell's detailed portrait of Breshkovsky, *The Little Grandmother of the Russian Revolution*, which was published in 1917.[95]

Blackwell's depiction of Breshkovsky quotes Kennan's and others' accounts, which describe her as a self-sacrificing grandmother. Their eyewitness accounts are supplemented through direct quotes of Breshkovsky's public speeches, utterances during discussions and other conversations, as well as through the aforementioned letters to Blackwell and other supporters during her second exile. Breshkovsky not only became a celebrity in the eyes of the US, but the already planted idea of an unjust, despotic, backward czarist regime that needed to be removed also manifested itself as mainstream opinion.[96] Theresa Serber Malkiel, a socialist suffragist of Russian origin, celebrated Breshkovsky as an international role model[97]; the socialist feminist and editor of *The Progressive Woman*, Josephine Conger-Kaneko, dedicated several articles to the "aged woman, white-haired, bent, soul-tortured in her efforts to enlighten an enslaved people"[98]; and feminist anarchist Goldman celebrated Breshkovsky in her journal *Mother Earth* as a saint-like woman, "undaunted by cruelty, persecution, and privation."[99] Elsa Barker, a popular poet, wrote the poem "Breshkovskaya" (1910), which depicted her as a female version of Jesus Christ: "Take in your hand once more the pilgrim's staff— / Your delicate hand misshapen from the nights / In Kara's mines; bind on your unbent back / That long has borne the burdens of the race, / The exile's bundle, and upon your feet / Strap the worn sandals of a tireless faith."[100] Interestingly enough, the poem, like many of the articles on Breshkovsky, focuses on her body, thereby not only serving as evidences of suffering and victimization but as embodiments of collective Russian suffering. Many news and magazine articles, such as the feminist magazine *The Progressive Woman*, set the female embodiment of Russian suffering against the specter of czarist inhumanity embodied by a terrifying Cossack prison guard.[101]

While the young, white, female body became a metaphor for Russia suffering under czarism, the Cossack soldiers, often racialized as dark figures who flogged people with whips, increasingly epitomized czarist brutality and the executive body of cruelty. Contributing to the construction of the Cossack soldier as a symbol for czarist

barbarism, the Society of Friends of Russian Freedom declared as one of its primary goals in 1907 to be the end of the "violation of women by the Cossack soldiery."[102]

During the decade leading up to the year 1917, more and more popular culture productions, especially silent films, featured Russian women being victimized by the czarist regime, which was embodied by the exoticized Cossack soldier.[103] *The Cossack Whip*, for example, a film released in 1916 and directed by John H. Collins, stars Viola Dana as a young revolutionary heroine (Illustration 1).[104] In the film, the lead character becomes a revolutionary to avenge her sister's rape and brutal murder—she was flogged to death—by a police prefect. Again, as in the narratives around Spiridonova, and as in many of Breshkovsky's speeches and letters, the young women's violated bodies become the central foci, demonstrating czarist injustice.

The representation of Russian national vulnerability and suffering through the bodies of white females, both young women and gentle old babushkas, in popular culture productions such as *The Cossack Whip* and *The Girl Nihilist* show significant similarities to a variety of other well-known silent films that guard white womanhood.[105] As Gibson argues, "The most obvious parallel is *The Birth of a Nation* (1915), which portrayed the KKK as saviors, after a young white woman was assaulted by a black man. The Klan flag, for example, contained the color white to represent the purity of white womanhood."[106] Thus, the films build on the well-known racist narratives of an Othered threat against white women, who are idealized as pure and sacred bodies in need of masculine support rather than rational agents, in order to elicit the audience's emotional support and solidarity with the Russians. Unsurprisingly, *The Cossack Whip* and *The Girl Nihilist*, like many of the films about "darkest Russia" under czarist rule, end their stories with the main characters moving to a safe location in the US,[107] while the *dark* Cossacks either die or stay behind. Hence, the depiction of these white female bodies, bearing suffering and hope, and their dark (Cossack) counterparts who perpetuate backward barbarism, signify the visible and seemingly increasing divide between the enlightened West and the barbaric East that Choi Chatterjee identifies in public discourses of the time.[108] Interestingly, this discursive East/West divide concealed the dissent not only within the political Left but within the political sphere of the US in general—at least for a time.

The Russian Revolution and the First Red Scare

When news about the Russian Revolution broke in March 1917, many Americans of different political persuasions became quite excited. Women's active participation in the provisional government, as well as in the fighting action, fascinated many, and this attention was used by suffragists and socialism proponents and opponents to further their own agendas and to push for women's rights in the US. A new and

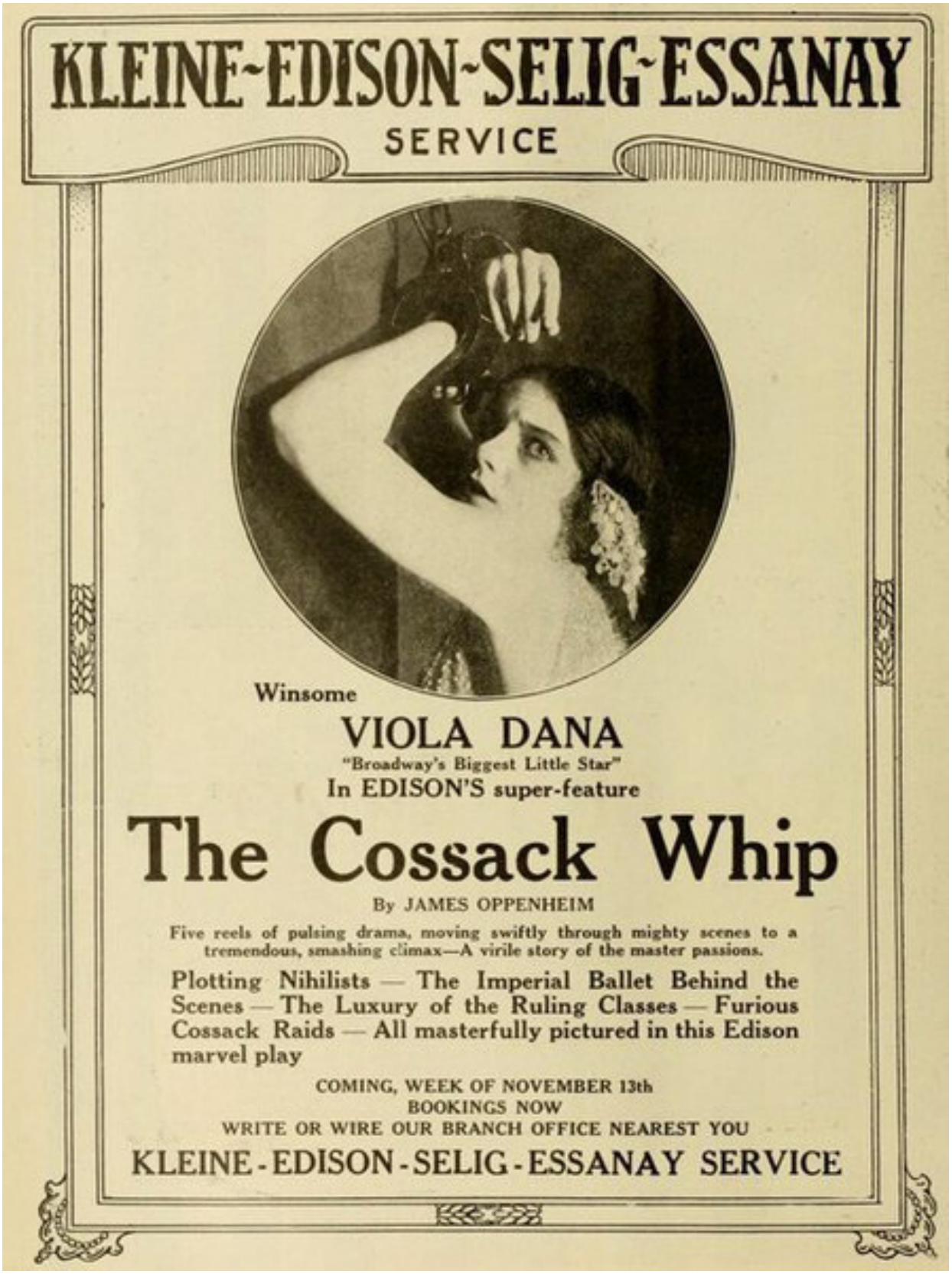

Illustration 1: Poster for the 1916 film *The Cossack Whip*.
From https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:The_Cossack_Whip.jpg. This work is in public domain.

younger generation of feminists, including Bessie Beatty, Louise Bryant, Rheta Child Dorr, and Florence MacLeod Harper, became interested in the Russian Revolution, and they focused particularly on women's participation in it, in addition to its effects on the social and cultural lives of Russians.[109] This interest grew even stronger when the Provisional Government established equal suffrage for women in March 1917. American reformers, suffragists, and feminists fighting for full citizenship as well as psychological, sexual, and economic emancipation for women, observed with feverish excitement the events unfolding in Russia, particularly the introduction of new marriage laws, access to divorce, the abolition of the category of illegitimate children, paid maternity leave, access to abortion, and a program of sex education.

While many suffragists viewed developments in Russia as merely a good opportunity to (successfully) pressure the American government into granting women's suffrage, others were convinced that the "darkest Russia" was emerging as a global model for women's equality.[110] For these feminist Leftists, the "events . . . acquired an immediacy almost unimaginable today," strongly affecting the "collective sense of possibility."[111] Mainstream American enthusiasm for the Russian Revolution, however, disappeared when the Bolsheviks took power, and, significantly, when they decided to retreat from the war, rather than joining the Americans and other aligned forces in their fight against the Germans. The broad Free Russia Movement, which had been a coalition between socialists, communists, anarchists, nihilists, suffragists, and other progressives, had already fallen apart over the question as to whether or not the US should join the war, and the Bolshevik revolution divided their ranks even further. Most liberals, like Kennan, were against the Bolsheviks, while progressive realists accepted the Bolsheviks, even if they might have preferred the survival of the interim government under Kerensky. The latter group included people as far apart politically as Addams, Wald, and Blackwell, as well as Goldman. Unfortunately, "these progressive realists between 1917 and 1919 ultimately lost control of the Free Russia narrative in the US that they had helped create.[117] In the wake of the Bolshevik Revolution, defense of Russian Revolution no longer easily corresponded with American values or political goals."[112] In a climate where the hegemonic discourse supported the government's pro-war agenda, the anti-war feminists with their support of the Russian Revolution were increasingly labeled as subversive, *un-American* or *anti-American*.[113]

Conservatives successfully co-opted the narratives crafted by the Free Russia alliance. They used the narrative of the Siberian exile system, previously used to show the barbaric nature of the czarist regime, changing only the name to "gulag system," in order to call attention to the Bolshevik's atrocities, to prove their alleged inhumanity.[114] Ironically, feminists now found themselves in opposition not only to their former allies but also to their former protégé: Catherine Breshkovsky—one of

the most engaged pro-war, anti-Bolshevik activists.[115] Moreover, the feminists' support or even acceptance of the Bolsheviks as legitimate power was used to discredit them in the US as subversive elements and threats to the public. While there is no evidence or reason to believe that Breshkovsky supported the vilification of feminists as Bolsheviks, her popularity and her story of being ousted from power and sent yet again into exile in Vladivostok were instrumentalized for American anti-Bolshevik and anti-feminist discourses.

Conclusion

The humanitarian narrative of vulnerable Russian women suffering under the barbaric czarist regime significantly shaped American discourses in the years leading up to the Russian Revolution. While this kind of narrative was originally introduced by Russian revolutionaries, American progressives, among them many influential feminists, played a crucial role in popularizing it, with the intent of creating positive, affective responses by their audiences.

The humanitarian narrative of American feminists and other progressives portrayed vulnerable Russian women as victims of a barbaric regime—first the czarist, and later, perhaps unintentionally, the Bolshevik regime—and moral vanguards of a bright Russian future. The narrative of beautiful, educated, vulnerable (young) women martyrs, who stood firmly behind their beliefs while being violated by the barbaric Russian regime, builds on Victorian ideas of women's caring and nurturing instincts, amplified with ideas about women's political potential. The gendered representation of women's bodies as being vulnerable emphasizes the cruelties of both regimes, the czarist and Bolshevik one. It imbues the women with moral and progressive significance while simultaneously representing individual women's bodies as embodiments not only of Russia's victimization but also its resilience and potential. This depends on the Orientalizing of the Russian regime as "darkest Russia." Unsurprisingly, Russian women were imagined as being white in such humanitarian narratives, building upon, and projecting onto, the Russian context racist American tropes of black perpetrators threatening innocent white women. While it seems that American suffragists and early feminists were deeply moved and inspired by the Russian women's agency and resistance, their emphasis on Russian women's vulnerability supported discourses that solely focused on women's vulnerability and suffering—discourses that would soon dominate public discussions. Furthermore, such narratives partly reaffirm Victorian white, middle-class gender norms, idealizing caregiving and motherhood. This seems ironic, as the exploitation and publicizing of Russian women's suffering gave American women access to the political sphere.

Through their humanitarian narratives of Russian suffering, these women influ-

enced American views on Russia, creating discourses of emphatic care. And while some of the discourses on Russian women's martyrdom backfired when the US joined the allied forces in WWI, turning against the Bolsheviks, their lobbying for humanitarian relief to Russia after the war was successful. These women's efforts are proof that David Engerman's claim that American intellectuals accepted Russian suffering as necessary collateral in the Bolsheviks' modernization project is, at least partly, wrong. In fact, the focus on Russian suffering, and the strong affective responses to Russian women's vulnerability, allowed American women to develop notions of progressive values in a modern society, which included their own liberation and political activity.

Acknowledgments

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Notes

1 I differentiate "suffragists" from "early feminists" to indicate that early women's rights advocates, fighting for women's right to vote (suffragists), were not (yet) identified as feminists, nor did they use the term for themselves. Nevertheless, these women can be seen as representing political ideas about women's liberation and equity that were later brought forward under the label "feminism," for example, by the activist Carrie Chapman Catt. See Carrie Chapman Catt, "'Free Love' Charge Held Ridiculous," *New York Times*, February 15, 2014.

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3 Martha Albertson Fineman, "The Vulnerable Subject: Anchoring Equality in the Human Condition," *Yale Journal of Law and Feminism* 1, no. 10 (2008).

4 Deborah B. Gould, *Moving Politics: Emotion and ACT UP's Fight against AIDS* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 3.

5 Heather Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007).

6 David S. Foglesong, *The American Mission and the "Evil Empire": The Crusade for a "Free Russia" since 1881* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 35.

7 David C. Engerman, *Modernization from the Other Shore: American Intellectuals and the Romance of Russian Development* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004), 2, 5.

8 Julia L. Mickenberg, "The New Generation and the New Russia: Modern Childhood as Collective Fantasy," *American Quarterly* 62, no. 1 (2010), DOI: 10.1353/aq.0.0118; Julia L. Mickenberg, "Suffragettes and Soviets: American Feminists and the Specter of Revolutionary Russia," *Journal of American History* 100, no. 4 (2014), DOI: 10.1093/jahist/jau004; Julia

L. Mickenberg, *American Girls in Red Russia: Chasing the Soviet Dream* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017); Choi Chatterjee, "Lady in Red: Russian Revolutionary Languages in the American Imagination, 1917–39," in *The Global Impacts of Russia's Great War and Revolution, Book 2: The Wider Arc of Revolution, Part 1*, ed. Choi Chatterjee, Steven G. Marks, Mary Neuburger, and Steven Sabol (Bloomington: Slavica, 2019); Choi Chatterjee, "Transnational Romance, Terror, and Heroism: Russia in American Popular Fiction, 1860–1917," *Comparative Studies in Society & History* 50, no. 3 (2008), DOI: 10.1017/s0010417508000327; Choi Chatterjee, "'Odds and Ends of the Russian Revolution,' 1917–1920: Gender and American Travel Narratives," *Journal of Women's History* 20, no.4 (2008), 10.1353/jowh.0.0047; Choi Chatterjee and Beth Holmgren, ed., *Americans Experience Russia: Encountering the Enigma, 1917 to the Present* (New York: Routledge, 2013); Chelsea C. Gibson, "Russia's Martyr-Heroines: Women, Violence, and the American Campaign for A Free Russia, 1878–1920," PhD diss. (Binghampton University, State University of New York, 2019).

9 See, for example, Henry Grattan Donnelly's *Darkest Russia: A Grand Romance of The Czarist Realm* (1891) as well as its 1917 film adaptation and the film *The Girl Nihilist* (1908). See Wacław Gąsiorowski, *Tragic Russia* (London: Cassell Limited, 1908).

10 Barbara Engel, *Mothers and Daughters: Women of the Intelligentsia in Nineteenth-Century Russia* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1983), 153–55.

11 Thomas W. Laqueur, "Bodies, Details, and the Humanitarian Narrative," in *The New Cultural History*, ed. Lynn Hunt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 176–78.

12 Gibson, "Russia's Martyr-Heroines," 79–122.

13 Gibson, "Russia's Martyr-Heroines," 12.

14 M. Katharina Wiedlack, "'both married, both moms, both determined to keep getting their message out': The Russian Pussy Riot and US Popular Culture," in *Marlboro Men and California Gurls: Rethinking Gender in Popular Culture in the 21st Century*, ed. Astrid M. Fellner, Marta Fernández, and Martina Martausová (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017), 131.

15 Katharina Wiedlack, "Gays vs. Russia: Media Representations, Vulnerable Bodies and the Construction of a (Post)Modern West," *European Journal of English Studies* 21, no. 3 (2017): 246, DOI: 10.1080/13825577.2017.1369271.

16 Chatterjee, "Transnational Romance," 773; Gibson, "Russia's Martyr-Heroines," 12.

17 Peter Scotto, "The Terrorist as Novelist: Sergei Stepniak-Kravchinsky," in *Just Assassins: The Culture of Terrorism in Russia*, ed. Nina Khrushcheva and Anthony Anemone (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2011), 105.

18 Gibson, "Russia's Martyr-Heroines," 73; Alice Stone Blackwell, "The Friends of Russian Freedom," *The Commons* 10, no. 3 (1905).

19 Gibson, "Russia's Martyr-Heroines," 12. Most of these women were indeed privileged and educated members of the bourgeoisie, but they were also radicals, willing to exercise violence. Yet, American observers and advocates mitigated their radical ideas and acts of violence, rather than focusing on their gendered vulnerability.

20 "A Russian Chief of Police," *New York Times*, May 11, 1878.

21 Anke Hilbrenner, "The Perovskaia Paradox or the Scandal of Female Terrorism in Nineteenth Century Russia," *The Journal of Power Institutions in Post-Soviet Societies*, no. 17

(2016): 1–2, 10, DOI: 10.4000/pipss.4169.

22 Gibson, "Russia's Martyr-Heroines," 105. This trope still lives on today, for example in the mystification of the Pussy Riot activists Maria Alyokhina and Nadezhda Tolokonnikova in the American press in the years following their arrest in 2012.

23 Sergei Stepniak, "A Female Nihilist," *Chicago Tribune*, July 7, 1883.

24 Richard Stites, *The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia: Feminism, Nihilism, and Bolshevism, 1860–1930* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 129; Engel, *Mothers and Daughters*, 173; Gibson, "Russia's Martyr-Heroines," 93.

25 Elizabeth A. Wood, "The Woman Question in Russia: Contradictions and Ambivalence," in *A Companion to Russian History*, ed. Abbott Gleason (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2009); Stites, *The Woman's Liberation Movement*, 129.

26 An influential fictional narrative that personalizes the plight of Russia through a female character and her struggle for emancipation is Nikolai Chernyshevsky's *What is to be Done?* (1861). Interestingly, this book influenced many active feminists in the US, not the least Emma Goldman.

27 Gibson, "Russia's Martyr-Heroines," 84.

28 Gibson, "Russia's Martyr-Heroines," 85.

29 Gibson, "Russia's Martyr-Heroines," 85.

30 Susan K. Morrissey, "The 'Apparel of Innocence': Toward a Moral Economy of Terrorism in Late Imperial Russia," *The Journal of Modern History* 84, no. 3 (2012), DOI: 10.1086/666051.

31 Gibson, "Russia's Martyr-Heroines," 81.

32 A Russian Nihilist, "Empire of the Discontented," *North American Review*, February 1879. For the defense of nihilism, see also Ivan Panin, "The Assassination of the Tsar," *International Review*, June 1881; Ivan Panin, *The Revolutionary Movement in Russia, Reprinted from the* New York Herald (Cambridge, Mass.: Moses King, 1881).

33 Frederick F. Travis, *George Kennan and the American–Russian Relationship, 1865–1914* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1990).

34 George Kennan, "Prison Life of the Russian Revolutionists. I.," *Century Illustrated Magazine* 35, no. 2 (1887); George Kennan, "A Siberian Tragedy," *Century Illustrated Magazine* 33, no. 1 (1886); George Kennan, "The Life of Administrative Exiles," *Century Illustrated Magazine* 37, no. 3 (1889); George Kennan, "The Convict Mines of Kara," *Century Illustrated Magazine* 38, no. 2 (1889); George Kennan, "State Criminals at the Kara Mines," *Century Illustrated Magazine* 38, no. 4 (1889).

35 George Kennan, "The Last Appeal of the Russian Liberals," *Century Illustrated Magazine* 35, no. 1 (1887): 50.

36 George Kennan, "Russian Political Exiles, Lecture," qtd. in Gibson, "Russia's Martyr-Heroines," 111.

37 Gibson, "Russia's Martyr-Heroines," 111.

38 Kennan, "Russian Political Exiles, Lecture," qtd. in Gibson, "Russia's Martyr-Heroines," 112.

39 Gibson, "Russia's Martyr-Heroines," 113.

40 Gibson, "Russia's Martyr-Heroines," 114.

41 Lori D. Ginzberg, *Elizabeth Cady Stanton: An American Life* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2009).

42 Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *Eighty Years and More: Reminiscences 1815–1897. The Truly Intriguing and Empowering Life Story of the World Famous American Suffragist, Social Activist and Abolitionist* (New York: T. Fisher Unwin 1898), 411, https://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/stanton/years/years.html.

43 National Woman Suffrage Association, *Report of the International Council of Women* (Washington, DC: Rufus H. Darby, 1888), 432.

44 National Woman Suffrage Association, *Report*, 441.

45 Travis, *George Kennan*, 229.

46 Chatterjee, "Transnational Romance," 775.

47 Joaquin Miller, *The Complete Poetical Works of Joaquin Miller* (San Francisco: Whitaker & Ray Co., 1897), 196–97.

48 Alison Rowley, "Russian Revolutionary as American Celebrity: A Case Study of Yekaterina Breshko-Breshkovskaya," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Women and Gender in Twentieth-Century Russia and the Soviet Union*, ed. Melanie Ilic (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018); Mickenberg, *American Girls*, ch. 1; Ben Phillips, "Political Exile and the Image of Siberia in Anglo-Russian Contacts Prior to 1917," PhD diss. (University College London, 2016); Choi Chatterjee, "Imperial Incarcerations: Ekaterina Breshko-Breshkovskaia, Vinayak Savarkar, and the Original Sins of Modernity," *Slavic Review* 74, no. 4 (2015), DOI: 10.5612/slavicreview.74.4.850.

49 Breshkovsky became the first (revolutionary) woman sentenced to hard labor at the Kara Gold Mines, but it seems she never worked there but instead spent most of her sentence in prison or house arrest.

50 George Kennan, "A Ride through the Trans-Baikal," *Century*, May 1889.

51 *The Woman's Journal* published several dozens of stories about Russian women between 1880 and 1917. See also Theodore Stanton, *The Woman Question in Europe: A Series of Original Essays* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, and Rivington, 1884), ch. 14. For women's internationalism in more general terms, see Louise Michele Newman, *White Women's Rights: The Racial Origins of Feminism in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); Allison L. Sneider, *Suffragists in an Imperial Age: U.S. Expansion and the Woman Question, 1870–1929* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

52 Kellogg Durland, "An Heroic Russian Woman," *The Woman's Journal* 35, no. 49 (1904): 385, 390–91.

53 Alice Stone Blackwell, "For Russian Freedom," *The Woman's Journal* 35, no. 49 (1904): 388.

54 See Alice Stone Blackwell, *The Little Grandmother of the Russian Revolution: Reminiscences and Letters of Catherine Breshkovsky* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1917); Lincoln Hutchinson, ed., *Hidden Springs of the Russian Revolution: Personal Memoirs of Katerina Breshkovskaia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1931); Alexander Kerensky, "Catherine Breshkovsky, 1844–1934," *Slavonic and East European Review* 13, no. 38 (1935); Emma Goldman, *Living My Life*, vol. 2 (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1931).

55 Breshkovsky did not support women's suffrage activism in Russia because she thought of suffragists as selfish, working only to advance the political status of women but not the greater society. In America, however, Breshkovsky engaged with suffragists such as Blackwell.

56 Gibson, "Russia's Martyr-Heroines," 130; Mickenberg, "Suffragettes and Soviets," 1030.

57 Lynne Masel-Walters, "To Hustle with the Rowdies: The Organization and Functions of the American Woman Suffrage Press," *Journal of American Culture* 3, no. 1 (1980), DOI: 10.1111/j.1542-734x.1980.0301_167.x. For more on Blackwell, see Jennifer L. Martin, "Alice Stone Blackwell: Soldier and Strategist for Suffrage," Master's thesis (Florida State University, 1993); Joyce Jeanne Ballard, "Making the World Better: Alice Stone Blackwell and the Woman's Suffrage Movement," PhD diss. (Providence College, 2000).

58 Blackwell, *The Little Grandmother*, 125.

59 Gibson, "Russia's Martyr-Heroines," 145.

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113 Beverly Gage, *The Day Wall Street Exploded: A Story of America in Its First Age of Terror* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); Kirsten Marie Delegard, *Battling Miss Bolsheviki: The Origins of Female Conservatism in the United States* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012); Erica Ryan, *Red War on the Family: Sex, Gender, and Americanism in the First Red Scare* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2016); Kim Nielsen, *Un-American Womanhood: Antiradicalism, Antifeminism, and the First Red Scare* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2001).

114 Chatterjee, "Imperial Incarcerations," 851. The fact that the conservative narratives simply exchanged the two regimes with one another, to support their agitation, does not mean that the hard labor camp systems did not continue to exist under the Bolsheviks.

115 When Breshkovsky came to the US in 1919, Helena Dudley "came bearing a letter from

Wald and Addams that begged Breshkovsky to stay out of American politics and speak only about 'neutral' topics—namely, the suffering of four million Russian war orphans." Gibson, "Russia's Martyr-Heroines," 265. But their efforts were in vain; Breshkvosky spoke before the Overman Committee, strongly arguing against the Bolsheviks. Another feminist protégé who became a powerful agitator against the Bolsheviks was Maria Bochkareva, who had formed the Women's Battalion of Death and fought in WWI. She fled from the Bolsheviks to America and met President Theodore Roosevelt, who was a critic of the Bolsheviks. Roosevelt donated a small sum of his Nobel Peace Prize money to Bochkareva's cause. See Kathleen Dalton, *Theodore Roosevelt: A Strenuous Life* (New York: Random House, 2007), 502–503. With the help of the suffragist Florence Harriman, Bochkareva also got to speak with President Wilson, who concretized his plans for an America intervention in Siberia only several weeks later. See David S. Foglesong, *America's Secret War against Bolshevism: U.S. Intervention in the Russian Civil War, 1917–1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 162. Maria Bochkareva's book *Yashka: My Life as Peasant, Exile, and Soldier* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1919) supported American Red Terror discourses.

About the Author

Katharina Wiedlack is currently an Elise Richter research fellow in the Department of English and American Studies at the University of Vienna and principal investigator in the arts-based project "The Magic Closet and the Dream Machine." Previously, Katharina held post-doctoral positions at Humboldt University in Berlin and the University of Flensburg and was a visiting professor at the Center for Advanced Media Studies at Johns Hopkins University. Katharina is the author of *Queer-Feminist Punk: An Antisocial History* (Zaglossus, 2015) and co-editor of the volumes *Queering Paradigms VIII: Queer-Feminist Solidarity and the East/West Divide* (Peter Lang, 2020), *Import-Export-Transport: Queer Theory, Queer Critique and Activism* (Zaglossus, 2012), and *Körperregime und Geschlecht: Gendered Subjects VI* (Studienverlag, 2011).

Contact: Katharina Wiedlack; University of Vienna; Department of English and American Studies; katharina.wiedlack@univie.ac.at.