

The Russian Subtext of *Atlas Shrugged* and *The Fountainhead*

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Atlas Shrugged (Rand 1957) and *The Fountainhead* (Rand 1992) are set in the United States, but there is a subtext that readers unfamiliar with Russian history and culture can miss. Ayn Rand grew up in Russia and lived there until late autumn 1925. Her championing of objectivism, individualism, and capitalism was, in large part, a response to the mysticism, subjectivism, and communalism that dominated Russian philosophy in her formative years (Sciabarra 1995). In *Atlas Shrugged* and *The Fountainhead*, she projected her knowledge of life in Soviet Russia onto an American canvas and attacked Russian values and ideals, convinced they had paved the way for the Bolshevik Revolution and the brutal dictatorship that followed.

This essay will describe economic, political, and cultural conditions in Russia before and after the Bolshevik Revolution and their reflections in *Atlas Shrugged* and *The Fountainhead*.

Atlas Shrugged

Atlas Shrugged is often seen as a quintessentially American novel because of the apotheosis of individualism, but there is an important Russian subtext that gets lost in translation.

Economic and Social Conditions

The unraveling and ultimate collapse of the economy depicted in *Atlas Shrugged* actually happened in Russia. The unraveling began during the Great War (World War I) and accelerated after the February 1917 Revolution (March by the Western calendar) which

was sparked by shortages of bread and other necessities.¹ The February Revolution brought in a Provisional government that was democratic but ineffective. Frequent “breakdowns of transportation” (the phrase used in official reports) led to factories closing for lack of supplies and to even more severe shortages that spurred riots and demonstrations in the cities. By the autumn of 1917, Russia was in a state of de facto anarchy. Soldiers were refusing to obey orders and deserting in droves, peasants were seizing gentry-owned land, and workers were taking over the factories. Lenin encouraged these initiatives. One of his slogans was “Loot the looters!”—a trenchant version of Karl Marx’s description of the end of capitalism: “the expropriators are expropriated” (Marx 1967, 763).

Shortly before the Bolshevik Revolution, Lenin laid out his plan for the transition period from capitalism to communism. A “Dictatorship of the Proletariat,” composed of the “armed workers” (really the Bolsheviks and their supporters), would crush class enemies and run the economy. The latter would be easy.

The accounting and control necessary for this have been *simplified* by capitalism to the utmost and reduced to the extraordinarily simple operations—which any literate person can perform—of supervising and recording, knowledge of the four rules of arithmetic, and issuing appropriate receipts. When the majority of the people begin independently and everywhere to keep such accounts and exercise such control over the capitalists (now converted into hired employees) and over the intellectual gentry who preserve their capitalist habits this control will really become universal, general and popular; and there will be no getting away from it, there will be “nowhere to go.”

The whole of society will have become a single office and a single factory, with equality of labor and pay. (Lenin 1975, 383)

Everyone will have become a hired employee of the state.

Lenin specified, however, that:

The question of control and accounting should not be confused with the question of the scientifically trained staff of engineers, agronomists, and so on. These gentlemen are working today in obedience to the wishes of the capitalists, and will work even better tomorrow in obedience to the wishes of the armed workers. (382)

After the Bolshevik Revolution (October 1917, November by the Western calendar), Lenin concentrated on suppressing political opposition and silencing his critics rather than embarking on immediate wholesale nationalization. In the course of the next few months, however, the banks were nationalized (in response to a strike by bank employees), and the government took over factories that had closed to keep production going.²

The winter of 1917–18 was unusually severe, even by Russian standards, but fuel was not to be had. Even government offices were unheated. One writer recalled that he burned everything he had, even his books, just to keep warm and if he had had a wooden leg he would have taken it off and burned that too. In Moscow and Petrograd, electricity was available for only a few hours a day and, even during those hours, power failures were frequent.

Meanwhile the Great War was still going on. As German troops neared Petrograd (formerly St. Petersburg), a desperate Lenin accepted German terms in March 1918. The cost of peace included giving up Ukraine, Russia's breadbasket, which exacerbated the food shortage. In May 1918, Lenin set up a "grain dictatorship." Armed search detachments expropriated surplus grain from the peasants, leaving them with only enough to live on and sometimes not even that. The next year the peasants planted less, which further exacerbated the food shortage. There were terrible famines in 1920 and 1921.

Full-scale Civil War broke out in June 1918. By the end of 1919, the Bolsheviks were winning, but the war was not completely over until October 1920. As soon as it broke out, the Bolsheviks national-

ized the remaining privately owned large factories and prohibited free retail trade (they had already nationalized wholesale trade) and stepped up the “Red terror” (their term). In November 1920, the few small private businesses that had survived the Civil War were also nationalized.

As the food crisis worsened, barter replaced money, which galloping inflation had rendered worthless.³ To the Bolshevics, the disappearance of money was a sign they were nearing full communism. City-dwellers moved to the countryside, or to areas not yet Bolshevik controlled, in search of food and personal safety. Rand’s family moved to the Crimea. Private publishing firms and theaters closed because they could not get paper or fuel, which were rationed, or access to a printing press. All printing presses had been nationalized. The wholesale nationalization of this period was motivated by a combination of desperation and ideological fervor. Some Bolshevics thought they were making a great leap forward into full communism.

Former tsarist officers were drafted into the Red Army and Navy. Others volunteered out of patriotism stimulated by foreign intervention on the side of the White Armies. The Bolshevics did not trust these officers. A political Commissar had to approve their orders and their wives and children were held as hostages. The dual system of authority—one Bolshevik, one “bourgeois specialist”—was instituted in factories and plants as well. (All specialists were automatically “bourgeois” regardless of class origin.) The Cheka (the secret police), the arm of the “Red terror,” became a law unto itself, notorious for its brutality and corruption.

Food rations were based on class origin. Members of the former “privileged classes,” the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie, got the least and manual laborers got the most. Party members and persons they favored got higher rations. They were the new privileged class, the beginning of what Rand called “an aristocracy of pull.”

By the end of 1920, eleven million people were prematurely dead, the overwhelming majority from starvation and epidemics. Another five million died in the famine of 1921 and seven million children were homeless. The economy was at a complete standstill. The

production of pig iron, a crucial industrial commodity, had plunged to 2% of its 1913 level. Many other figures could be given. Desperate to rebuild the economy, instead of demobilizing the Red Army, Trotsky organized the troops into “labor armies,” subject to military discipline. Deserters were shot.

The sailors of the Kronstadt naval base (outside Petrograd) revolted in March 1921. One of their slogans was “Down with the Commissarocracy!” (the Communist government). The revolt was put down, but the shock of it (the Kronstadt sailors had been ardent supporters of Bolshevism) was one of the factors that prodded Lenin into announcing a “New Economic Policy” (NEP). Another factor in Lenin’s decision was peasant revolts erupting all over the country. (The peasants were relatively quiet during the Civil War because they thought a White victory would mean the return of the gentry.) The Bolsheviks did not want to admit having made a mistake so they retrospectively labeled the failed policies “War Communism,” even though they began before the Civil War and continued after it was over. Lenin (1975, 669) also announced that “the class struggle is continuing; it has merely changed its forms.” His announcement became a slogan of the NEP period (1921–28).

Under the “New Economic Policy,” the government retained ownership of the economy’s “commanding heights”—large factories, banks, and foreign trade. Forced requisitions of grain were replaced by a fixed tax and, to encourage production, peasants could sell their after-tax surplus at local markets. The hated “labor armies” were disbanded. Small private businesses (to provide consumer goods) were legalized a few months later; the Party had learned from bitter experience that peasants would not sell their grain if there was nothing to buy. Private theaters and printing presses reopened, the stringent war-time censorship was relaxed, and the Cheka was replaced by the OGPU.

The Bolsheviks feared that the institution of NEP could lead to a resurgence of “bourgeois” ideologies and even to a “bourgeois restoration.” Strategies designed to prevent this included funding organizations of artists and writers committed to the Revolution. Funds were limited, so competition for them was vicious. The most

aggressive organizations demanded a “dictatorship of the arts” run by themselves. Funds for scientific research were also limited. To get them, directors of research institutes cultivated a Bolshevik patron and tried to show the relevance of their projects to “building socialism.” Most people, in Russia and in the West, believed that the institution of NEP meant that the Bolsheviks had come to their senses, that there would be no more utopian schemes. They were wrong.

Rand left Russia just in time. Restrictions on foreign travel were tightened in 1925, competition for government funds became even more vicious, and planning for a “command economy” (commanded by the government not by market forces) began. In 1928, Stalin instituted the first Five Year Plan. He promised that after five years of austerity and superhuman effort, Soviet citizens would be living in a paradise. Instead the standard of living plummeted.

How closely Rand followed developments in Soviet Russia after she left is not clear, but she certainly knew that the promised paradise never materialized. She also knew, at least in a general way, about dekulakization (the persecution of the kulaks, the so-called rich peasants), the forced collectivization of agriculture, what Robert Conquest (1986) calls the “terror famine” of 1932–33, in which millions of peasants, mostly Ukrainians, were deliberately starved to death,⁴ the show trials of 1936–38, the Great Purge, which began in December 1934 and culminated in the Great Terror (1936–39), and the expansion of the Gulag (the network of slave labor camps run by the secret police). Rand’s own experience in Soviet Russia had a permanent impact on her. She narrowly escaped the 1924 purge of “bourgeois” students from the University, she knew young girls and boys who were arrested and sent to Siberia, and her father’s business was nationalized twice.

Reflections in *Atlas Shrugged*

In this novel, Rand projected statist and collectivist trends already evident in the United States into the future, but the subtext is what she had seen in Russia. She regarded a mixed economy as an

institutionalized civil war that would end in the victory of the most brutal and most ruthless contenders.

Rand drew on her knowledge of Russia eclectically, omitting World War I and conflating the period of “War Communism” (1917–21) with the period of the New Economic Policy (1921–28). In a strictly chronological account (which the novel is not intended to be) the attempt to seize Rearden’s mills would have occurred in the autumn of 1917; they would have been nationalized in June 1918, and remained nationalized in the NEP period.

The heroine of *Atlas Shrugged* runs a railroad. Rand knew from personal experience the consequences of a breakdown in the transportation system. Dr. Stadler’s complaint that he almost froze to death and numerous references to city-dwellers exposed to the elements for the first time in their lives describe the first winters of Communist rule. “People said . . . that no one could be blamed for the unusual severity of the snowstorms. They did not care to remember that there had been a time when snowstorms did not sweep, unresisted, down unlighted roads and upon the roofs of unheated houses, did not stop the movement of trains, did not leave a wake of corpses counted by the thousands” (Rand 1957, 466). Midway in the novel, the use of electricity is prohibited above a certain floor—“the tops of the buildings were cut down.” Skyscrapers did not yet exist in Moscow or Petrograd; the use of electricity was limited in other ways. Toward the end of the novel, the lights go out in New York City. This is an event of apocalyptic significance (which I discuss below).

The villains of *Atlas Shrugged* are moochers or looters or both. One of them, Wesley Mouch, reports that “California’s gone to pieces . . . There’s a civil war going on there . . . They’ve declared that they’re seceding from the Union, but nobody knows who’s now in power” (1029). This corresponds to conditions in Ukraine after German troops withdrew in the autumn of 1918 as mandated by the armistice that ended the Great War. Mouch had already reported that the farmers of South Dakota had marched on the state capital, burning everything on their way and every home worth more than ten thousand dollars. With some differences, this describes peasant

revolts in Russia in 1917 and 1921–22. Elsewhere in the novel (845), the government expropriates the seed grain; the Bolsheviks did just that when they thought that peasants were hiding their surplus.

The protagonists of *Atlas Shrugged* refuse to work “at the point of a gun.” This is a reference to government directives in general, which punish noncompliance with fines and/or imprisonment, and to the Bolsheviks’ dual system of authority in particular. In the novel, government officials have no idea how to run the economy (Lenin thought it would be easy) so they resort to nationalization and brute force, much as the Bolsheviks did. Lenin assumed that capitalists “converted” to managers (of the factories they had owned) and “gentlemen” engineers and scientists would obey the “armed workers.” Rand’s heroes do not refuse to obey; either they vanish or they await orders, fully aware that the moochers and looters have not a clue of what orders to give.

Atlas Shrugged demonstrates the consequences of “the mind on strike.” The Bolshevik Revolution was made in the name of the “toilers,” people who work with their hands. The strike is a weapon of organized labor. American labor unions go on strike for economic goals (higher wages, etc.). In Russia, workers went on strike for political reasons too. The General Strike of October 1905, organized by councils (soviets) of workers and revolutionaries, paralyzed Moscow and St. Petersburg for ten days. The “frozen trains” in the novel were preceded by real frozen trains and streetcars in 1905. Nothing moved. In desperation, the tsar issued a manifesto promising a Duma (parliament) and other reforms. Rand was a baby at the time, but vivid memories of the General Strike were passed on to the next generation. Lenin mythologized the role of the soviets in 1905 and made “all power to the soviets” a Bolshevik slogan in 1917.

The antecedent for the provision in Directive 10-289, in *Atlas Shrugged*, that attaches workers to their place of employment and penalizes deserters, is Trotsky’s “labor armies,” except that in the novel, the labor boss vetoes a death penalty. Managers in the novel cry “Give us men!” really meaning “Give us men with ability.” As the Russian economy deteriorated, engineers, managers, and other “bourgeois specialists” were given special privileges to encourage

them to do their best. Their position was insecure, however, because an honest mistake, or a mishap truly beyond their control, could result in being accused of counterrevolution and sabotage.

In the autumn of 1917, mobs invaded palaces, mansions, country estates, shops, and ordinary homes, removing everything of value and engaging in wanton destruction as well—breaking up furniture, burning libraries, defecating in vases. To protect works of art and other valuables, the government nationalized them. In other words, the government became the looter. In *Atlas Shrugged*, Francisco d'Anconia removes everything of value from his Mexican mine so the looters will have nothing left to loot when they nationalize it.

In his paean to money, Francisco says that “money is *made*—before it can be looted or mooched—made by the effort of every honest man, each to the extent of his ability” (387). His speech is Rand’s reply to persons who think money (or love of money) is the root of all evil, to Marxists who regard money as a fetish, and to the disappearance of money during the Civil War. “Money is the barometer of a society’s virtue,” Francisco explains, the tool of honest trade engaged in voluntarily, value for value. Looters rob defenseless people after they’ve disarmed them—in Soviet Russia, the penalty for illegal possession of a weapon was death—but their loot becomes a magnet for other looters, so the race goes on and the most ruthless prevail. “When force is the standard, the murderer wins over the pickpocket” (390).

To a woman who disagrees with him, Francisco scathingly replies: “[W]hen we’ll see men dying of starvation around us, your heart won’t be of any earthly use to save them” (392). The subtext is famine in Russia in 1920 and 1921. Later on in the novel, a young girl just returned from a famine region is distraught by what she had seen, especially a mother holding her grown son in her arms. This is a secular Pietà; Rand sometimes used Christian imagery for effect.

At the beginning of *Atlas Shrugged*, New York’s Fifth Avenue is described as a “prosperous street,” because “not more than every fourth one of the stores was out of business, its windows dark and empty” (12). This applies to the main streets of Moscow and Leningrad (formerly Petrograd) in the NEP period. An emigre who

returned for a visit in 1926 reported that everything was the same, only shabbier. Also drawn from this period is Dr. Stadler's rationalization for cooperating with the government—"what can you do when you deal with people?" (180). "The public has been demanding economy," he explains, and "science is the first thing men will sacrifice. This is the only establishment left. There are practically no private research foundations any longer. Look at the greedy ruffians who run our industries. You cannot expect them to support science" (183). Soviet scientists needed a Bolshevik patron. Dr. Stadler needed a lobbyist, Dr. Floyd Ferris, the self-styled "valet of science" who is less and less deferential to Dr. Stadler as his own power increases. Soviet scientists were supposed to work on projects that would benefit the proletariat. Dr. Stadler's name is attached to Project X, the Thompson Harmonizer, which has no economic benefit whatsoever to the proletariat or to anyone else, quite the contrary; its purpose is to terrify everyone into obeying the government.

In the Bible, God says: "Let there be light." Electricity put the power to create light in human hands. Early twentieth-century Russians condemned or exalted electricity for that reason. The philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev, a leading God-seeker (see below) called electricity "black magic," a sinful, demonic force, and considered it the epitome of modern man's hubris (Berdyaev 1954, 292–93, 316–18). He praised the Catholic Middle Ages as the "most military, least bourgeois" period of European history and scorned peace and prosperity as bourgeois values. The scion of an old aristocratic family, Berdyaev yearned for a "new nobility," a nobility of the spirit, as opposed to a nobility of wealth or inherited rank. One of his goals, and a goal of God-seekers generally, was a "revolution of the spirit" that would overcome liberal and Marxist materialism. Berdyaev has much in common with villains of *Atlas Shrugged* and *The Fountainhead* who disdain material wealth and technological innovation. Another Russian philosopher, Nikolai Losev, the last of the God-seekers, also regarded electricity as a demonic force and resisted using it for many years. In *The Fountainhead*, the talentless writer Lois Cook wants no electricity in her home, which is ugly on purpose.

The Bolsheviks wanted to overcome “Russian backwardness,” so they exalted technology provided it was part of a government plan. Lenin said (in 1920) that “*communism is Soviet power plus the electrification of the whole country*” (Lenin 1975, 494). The agency in charge of electrification (GOELRO) was Soviet Russia’s first venture in systematic planning. So grandiose were the hopes Lenin invested in electrification—it would, among other things, create the “new man”—that skeptics referred to electrification as “electrofiction.” A painting of this period depicts a peasant couple gazing with wonder at a naked lightbulb dangling from the ceiling, which they call Ilich’s lamp (after Lenin’s patronymic).

Rand’s ideal of the new man has much in common with Trotsky’s in that both exalt the rational consciousness and what it can achieve, and both envision the overcoming of dualism (Sciabarra 1995, 371–72). Also relevant to Rand’s thought is the technologism of the Bolshevik heretic, Alexander Bogdanov. He argued that mastery of technology was more important than ownership of the means of production in making a ruling class, and emphasized the key role of energy in economic development, even predicting atomic energy. Bogdanov’s technologism appealed to people inside and outside the Party. His utopian science fiction novel, *Red Star* (1907), about a technologically advanced perfected communist society on the Red Planet Mars, in which everyone is supremely rational, was reprinted several times in the 1920s. Also reprinted, but not as popular, was *Engineer Menni* (1913), a prequel to *Red Star*. Bogdanov’s book *Tektology* (from *tekhton*, the Greek word for builder) had a special appeal to engineers and other technologically-minded young people. They probably appealed to the young Rand as well. Dagny Taggart studied engineering in college. John Galt invents a motor that will draw static electricity from the air. Ellis Wyatt discovers a new way of extracting petroleum from shale. Hank Rearden invents a “miracle metal,” a new kind of steel. Even Kira, the female protagonist of *We the Living*, goes to a Soviet university to become an engineer, and dreams of building an aluminum bridge. Some avant-garde architects of the 1920s favored aluminum because of its “lightness,” and glass because of its “transparency.” They envisioned an “aerial architec-

ture,” as distinct from massive, earth-bound structures.

Unlike Rand, Bogdanov believed that the lone scientist or inventor is obsolete. He advocated a cultural revolution that would overcome “bourgeois individualism” and “bourgeois egoism,” and result in a specifically proletarian art and science that expressed proletarian values, egalitarianism and collectivism in particular. The masses, not an individual, would be the subject of proletarian art. Proletarian scientists would develop a collective methodology and work on projects that benefitted the proletariat.

The villains of *Atlas Shrugged* and *The Fountainhead* echo the anti-individualist aspects of Bogdanov’s views and of Marxism in general. (The “great man” is the vehicle of anonymous social forces.) One of Rearden’s disparagers says: “Of what importance is an individual in the titanic collective achievements of our industrial age?” (Rand 1957, 33–34). Another one reviles Rearden for “stick[ing] his name on everything he touches” (34). Stalin, which means “man of steel” in Russian, “stuck his name” on an entire city in 1925. Tsaritsyn became Stalingrad.

Russian Values and Ideals

Rand developed her philosophy against values and ideals long prevalent in Russia, especially anti-individualism and anti-rationalism, because she blamed them for the economic collapse described above. The ideals and values to which she objected stemmed from Christianity (the official religion of the Russian Empire), which permeated the culture, affecting people whether they were religious or not. Even the atheistic intelligentsia perpetuated these values. Among them were the socialist ideal (“from each to his ability, to each according to his need”), self-sacrifice, redemption through suffering, a communal ethos, asceticism, and humility. In addition, Rand developed her own version of apocalypticism, a major theme in Russian thought and culture after 1900.

The socialist ideal can be traced back to the New Testament:

Neither was there any among them that lacked; for as many

as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold.

And laid *them* down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need. (Acts 4.34–35)

In Acts 5.1–10, a husband and wife sell a possession but keep back a part of the price. Their “greed” is attributed to Satan and they are both struck dead.

The slogan, “from each to his ability, to each according to his need,” was coined by the utopian socialist Henri de Saint Simon—an aristocrat, by the way. During the French Revolution, he fled to England, where he was impressed by the productive power of the new industrial technology. Unlike early and medieval Christians who valorized poverty, Saint Simon wanted to eliminate it. He believed that industrialization made this possible, provided it was planned and directed by a technocratic elite that controlled distribution as well. He called his vision “the new Christianity.”

Marx and Engels adopted Saint Simon's slogan and much of his ideology. Lenin specified—following Marx's “Critique of the Gotha Program”—that there would be two stages of communism. Only in the second stage (full communism) would people be paid according to their need. At that point, material goods would be so abundant that any person who wanted “truffles, cars or pianos, etc.,” could have them (Lenin 1975, 380).

One reason Marxism took root in Russia was that a communal ethos was already deeply embedded in the culture. The land tilled by the peasants was owned by the village commune (the *mir*), which parceled it out to families for cultivation according to such criteria as family size (need) and the number of able-bodied men. The Slavophiles idealized the *mir* as the epitome of *sobornost'*, union in Christian love and freedom in which individuality (not individualism) is retained. By individuality they meant self-expression and self-realization within the community, not apart from or against it. They also claimed that the *mir* would save Russia from the class conflict

raging in Western Europe. Their idealization of the *mir* was taken up by Populists (*Narodniki*), Russian socialists who based their ideology on the peasantry, not the proletariat. They claimed that the peasant is a socialist by nature so, thanks to the *mir*, Russia could bypass capitalism and proceed directly from feudalism (the serfs were emancipated in 1861) to socialism.

Russian Marxists countered that stages of development could not be skipped; their country would have to go through capitalism before proceeding to socialism. Nevertheless, Lenin opposed the reform proposed by Prime Minister Peter Stolypin after the Revolution of 1905, which would have allowed peasants to opt out of the *mir* and own the land they tilled. Stolypin argued that giving the “strong and the sober” a stake in society would negate the appeal of revolution. Lenin agreed, which is why he opposed Stolypin’s proposed reform. The peasants were finally allowed to opt out of the *mir* in 1910, but those who did so were resented by other peasants, who forced them back into the *mir* in 1917 and 1918.

In *Atlas Shrugged*, the implementation of the socialist ideal in the Starnes factory is preceded by a vote. Almost everyone voted yes, ostensibly because they had been taught to regard that ideal as superior to “egoistic” capitalism, but really because they were motivated by envy and greed. Coveting the “unearned benefits” of those above them, they did not realize that their “unearned benefits” were coveted by those below them. Everyone had to justify his or her needs before the “family” (the entire workforce), and it was the shiftless and irresponsible who benefitted. Persons with ability were sentenced to work overtime without pay. There were no “allowances” for “personal luxuries” and “amusements” but, somehow, people found money for liquor. (Alcoholism is an age-old problem in Russia.) A music-lover denied money to purchase a record took to drink and got killed in a barroom brawl. Gerald Starnes, the former co-owner of the factory, disdained material wealth, but he raked off a small fortune for himself. Ivy Starnes really didn’t care about wealth; her motivation was power. She ended up determining everyone’s need and enjoyed making people grovel. The Russian counterparts of Gerald and Ivy Starnes joined the Communist Party

for the special privileges and/or the power that membership entailed. This is not to imply that all Communists were so motivated. One of the protagonists of Rand's semi-autobiographical novel *We the Living*, Andrei Taganov, is a principled communist.

The "sanction of the victim," a key concept in *Atlas Shrugged*, harks back to Jesus, who died for "our" sins. The injunction to self-sacrifice is especially strong in Russian Orthodoxy, which exalts the "kenotic Christ," the humiliated and suffering Christ, as distinct from the "pantokrator Christ," the victorious Christ. The image of the "kenotic Christ" was strong in Western Christianity too, but it got diluted during the Renaissance, the Reformation, and the Enlightenment. Russia never had a Renaissance or a Reformation and its Enlightenment was limited in scope and accompanied by mystical freemasonry, so the image of the kenotic Christ retained its full force. It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of the kenotic Christ in Russian thought.

Self-sacrifice and related concepts—altruism (living for others but not necessarily dying for them), redemption through suffering, a mystique of suffering generally, indeed a reverence for it, asceticism, and humility—were prime values of Russian culture. Boris and Gleb, two young princes of ancient Kiev, were beatified because they did not resist their murderers and turned down an opportunity to escape. Another saint, Seraphim of Sarov, did not resist robbers and refused to testify at their trial. Russian saints did not mutilate their bodies, as some Catholic saints did, but they too rejected the pleasures of the flesh. All Christians regard pride as a sin. Many Orthodox Christians associated reason with pride and with the "Latin West" (the Roman Catholic West). The Western concept of natural rights grew out of Roman law. The Slavophiles opposed Western "legalism" and were indifferent or hostile to individual rights enforceable by law.

Redemption through suffering is a topos of Dostoevsky's novels. To him, suffering had positive value as part of a Christian ethos of humility and love; it was not just something to be endured if necessary. For many Russians, suffering was a kind of imitation of Christ or a test of faith. So strong was the mystique of suffering that poverty was associated with spirituality, and wealth with emotional

superficiality or sin. Russian literature is replete with references to the “long-suffering people,” typically in a way that makes suffering into a virtue, and more than a virtue, an indication of Russia’s spiritual and cultural superiority to the West. For Rand, suffering is not a virtue; only the struggle against it is.

The revolutionary intelligentsia, a movement dedicated to “saving” Russia, preached a militant atheism but perpetuated the kenotic values in its ideology and in its Spartan lifestyle. A revolutionary who said that she liked strawberries was thereafter shunned by her comrades for the “sin” of expressing a purely personal feeling.

The intelligentsia was comprised mainly of “repentant noblemen” (and women) and sons of priests. (Russian parish priests marry, but they must do so before they are ordained.) The sons and daughters of the nobility were atoning for their privileged position (few were rich) by recognizing their “duty” to serve the people and to love them. The emphasis on duty comes from Kant, a major influence on Populism and on Tolstoi, and one of Rand’s *bêtes noires*.

The ideology of the intelligentsia featured a crude utilitarianism, epitomized by the dictum “boots are higher than Shakespeare.” Beauty was a luxury Russia could not afford. Theoretical science and disinterested scholarship were luxuries too. Scientists and scholars were supposed to undertake projects that served the people in one way or another.

The most zealous *intelligenti* tried to bring down the tsarist government. If apprehended and convicted, they were executed or imprisoned. Other *intelligenti* “served the people” as doctors, nurses, village schoolteachers, agronomists, veterinarians and so on. Their preachments of humility *vis-à-vis* the uneducated people fostered anti-intellectualism. Some Russians regarded the intelligentsia as “Christians without Christ” or as a “secular order of monks and nuns” because of their self-sacrifice and altruism. In fact, Jesus was a model for many *intelligenti*, atheists included (Bergman 1990).

Leo Tolstoi was not a revolutionary; he espoused nonviolence but he preached an ascetic ideal—no sex, not even in marriage, no alcohol, no tobacco, no meat. He wanted to give away all his property (he was very wealthy) but his wife would not let him.

So powerful was the communal ethos in Russia, that even Nietzsche's admirers perpetuated it (Rosenthal 1986; 1994; 2002). They highlighted the communitarian or collectivist aspects of *The Birth of Tragedy*, the loss of self-consciousness in Dionysian ecstasy. In addition, impressed by Nietzsche's attack on Socratic and Enlightenment rationalism and his insistence on the importance of myth, they tried to create new myths or revitalize old ones.

The God-seekers (*Bogostroitel'i*)—intellectuals who sought a new understanding of Christianity—combined Nietzsche and Christianity. One of them, Viacheslav Ivanov, exalted Dionysus as “the suffering God” and called him a precursor of Christ. During the Revolution of 1905, Ivanov advocated a new myth, an apocalyptic doctrine called Mystical Anarchism. He expected that Revolution to usher in an entirely new kind of society characterized by unlimited personal freedom and cemented by invisible and internal bonds of love (*eros* not *agape*), myth, and sacrifice. Who or what would be sacrificed, he never specified. All God-seekers opposed rationalism, materialism, positivism, and capitalism.

The leaders of the God-seeking movement were prominent poets and philosophers who propagated their ideas in the Religious-Philosophical Societies of St. Petersburg (1901–3, 1907–17) and Moscow (1907–17), among other venues. The St. Petersburg society was founded by Dmitry S. Merezhkovsky, the initiator of the movement. The meetings, which featured debates by clergymen and lay intellectuals on burning issues of the day, e.g., Christian attitudes toward sex, attracted capacity audiences and became the locus of a religious revival. Berdyaev was a co-founder of the Moscow branch. Both Societies closed in 1917, but the Bolsheviks allowed them to reopen under different names later on (see below).

Maxim Gorky, a famous writer, and Anatoly Lunacharsky, future Bolshevik Commissar of Enlightenment (Education), formulated a Marxist myth, a surrogate religion called God-building (*Bogostroitel'stvo*), intended to inspire the masses to sacrifice material well-being and life itself for the Revolution. The God-builders thought that the Revolution of 1905 would not only bring down the tsarist government, it would end capitalism as well. Gorky coined the

term God-building as a challenge to God-seeking. In this Marxist religion, Man was a god to himself. Its major tenets were worship of the spirit of (collective) humanity and collective immortality (rather than individual salvation). Lunacharsky praised the proletariat's "class idealism," its willingness to sacrifice. He opposed "class egoism," pursuit of material well-being.

Bogdanov was not a God-builder; he disliked religious language, but the Marxist myth was based on his epistemology.⁵ Lenin disapproved of God-building. Since all religion was "a form of spiritual booze" (Lenin 1960–70, vol. 10 [1962], 83), the difference between God-seeking and God-building was no more important than the difference between "a blue and a yellow devil" (quoted in Read 1979, 92).

Atlas Shrugged challenges the mystique of suffering and sacrifice. Hank Rearden yearns for "a sight of joy . . . for a moment's relief from that grey load of suffering which seemed so inexplicable and so unnecessary" (Rand 1957, 38). Dagny realizes that "joy is one's fuel" (68). She and Francisco are "incapable of the conception that joy is sin" (108). They enjoy sex without guilt, as do Dagny and Hank later on (though Hank has to be educated on this matter). Balph Eubank, one of Rand's villains, claims that the real essence of life is defeat and suffering and that privation is good for people (130). The residents of Galt's Gulch swear by their life and their love of it that they will never live for another person or ask another person to live for them. Beauty is one of their values. Hank gives Dagny all sorts of beautiful gifts, which she wears proudly. They work, not out of a sense of duty, but because they love their work.

Rand devotes a great deal of attention to epistemology in *Atlas Shrugged*, especially to the proposition "A is A." This stems from Aristotle, of course, but there is a Russian subtext too. The theologian Pavel Florensky (a co-founder of the Moscow Religious-Philosophical Society), rejected the proposition that "A is A," saying that it stemmed from the epistemological individualism of Descartes and Kant. It is unlikely that Rand read Florensky's writings, but his ideas were in the air. She might have heard about them from N. O. Lossky, her professor of philosophy, who returned to Orthodoxy in

1918 under Florensky's direction, and/or from Lev P. Karsavin, her history professor, who knew Florensky's thought well, and who was a close intellectual associate of Lossky (Sciabarra 1995, chapters 2 and 3; Sciabarra 1999, 5–8, 17).

Florensky claimed that truth is an antimony (the mutual contradiction between two principles or correctly drawn inferences, each of which is supported by reason). Although extremely hostile to Kant's philosophy generally, Florensky praised Kant for having the "boldness to utter the great word 'antinomy'." "In heaven there is only the one Truth," Florensky wrote. "But here on earth, we have a multitude of truths, fragments of the Truth, noncongruent to one another" (Florensky 1997, 117). Conversely, Rand maintained that "contradictions do not exist. Whenever you think that you are facing a contradiction, check your premises. You will find that one of them is wrong" (Rand 1957, 191; see also 315).

Rand's Apocalypticism

Many Russian intellectuals regarded the unprecedented suffering caused by World War I and the Civil War as a test or a trial, even as the prelude to the Apocalypse that would usher in the Kingdom of God on Earth (or a secular version thereof). They reviled people who complained of hunger and cold as "bourgeois philistines" and compared them to Israelites in the desert longing for the fleshpots of Egypt.

In the Revelation of St. John, the Second Coming of Christ is preceded by unheard-of catastrophes in the human and the cosmic spheres. The forces of evil proliferate beyond human capacity to contain them. At that point Jesus returns. He leads the forces of the good (or the saints) in a Final Conflict against the forces of evil. The victory of the saints is followed by the establishment of the Kingdom of God on Earth. The details of the apocalyptic scenario vary from one Christian denomination to another, but in all of them terrible trials and tribulations are portents of the End.

Marxism is a secularized Apocalypse. The Proletariat and the Bourgeoisie are the forces of good and the forces of evil. The

proletariat's condition steadily worsens (immiseration) until, led by its vanguard, the Communist Party, it revolts, defeats the forces of evil in a final conflict (the communist revolution), and proceeds to construct an earthly paradise.

Apocalyptic doctrines, Christian and secular, proliferated in Russia after 1900, partly because of the date itself, partly because the old order really was ending. Industrialization was transforming Russia. I have already discussed Mystical Anarchism and God-building. Merezhkovsky's thought was an influence on Mystical Anarchism. He believed that the Second Coming was imminent; Jesus Christ Himself would grant humankind a "third revelation" or a "third testament," that would reconcile all polarities and contradictions that human reason cannot reconcile—Nietzsche and Christianity, Christ and Anti-Christ, Russia and the West, etc. He championed his beliefs in best-selling novels and essays.

Rand's insistence that there are no contradictions and that false alternatives would be transcended was probably a response to his thought as well.

Merezhkovsky perceived the Revolution of 1905 as the beginning of the Apocalypse that would usher in the Kingdom of God on Earth. He proclaimed that Jesus was a revolutionary and that after the Apocalypse, Jesus Christ would be the only ruler. He (Jesus) would reconcile "the truth of anarchism" (personal freedom) and "the truth of socialism" (community). Other Godseekers developed their own versions of liberation theology. But while they wanted to abolish abject poverty, they denigrated mass prosperity as "soulless Americanism." The philosopher Simeon Frank once defined "Americanism" as "Genghis Khan with a telegraph." Conversely, a character in *Atlas Shrugged* suggests that Atlantis is really America (Rand 1957, 149). There was much speculation about the "lost continent" in early twentieth-century Russia, typically linked with interest in Theosophy and Anthroposophy, occult doctrines popular at the time, which were in turn linked with a rejection of rationalism and positivism generally (Rosenthal 1997).

Apocalypticism died down after the Revolution of 1905 but it revived during the Great War and was a factor in the Revolutions of

1917 (Rosenthal 2002, chapter 5; Rosenthal 1980). Lenin declared: “History will not forgive revolutionaries” if they do not seize power now—referring to history the way believers refer to God. “It would be an infinite crime on the part of the revolutionaries were they to let the chance slip, knowing that the *salvation of the revolution*, the offer of peace, the salvation of Petrograd, salvation from famine, the transfer of the land to the peasants depend on them” (Lenin 1960–70, vol. 26 [1964], 235). The Great War had given Bolsheviks a unique opportunity, Lenin argued; it had accelerated (not negated) the operation of historical laws and exacerbated the contradictions of capitalism, which will collapse in Russia, its weakest link. (Marx had expected capitalism to collapse in the developed industrial countries). The Russian revolution will be the spark that sets off the conflagration of world revolution.

Rand developed an apocalyptic scenario of her own. The forces of evil (anti-life) gain more and more power and man-made catastrophes proliferate. John Galt is the Messiah. When the lights go out in New York City (Rand 1957, 1076), he knows his work is done. There is no final conflict—the forces of evil implode. Rand believed that evil is impotent because it is irrational. This is a variant of the belief, found in Orthodox and in Catholic theology, that evil has no positive or creative power; it is only negative, only destructive. In Goethe’s *Faust* (which was well known and widely discussed in Russia), Mephistopheles introduces himself as the “spirit that negates” and says that destruction is his “proper element” (Kaufmann 1963, 161). In *Atlas Shrugged*, John Galt is called “the destroyer” but he is really a creator and a liberator. He is also “the avenger” (Rand 1957, 626), in a secular version of the Last Judgment.

On the last page of the novel (1084), Galt says: “The road is cleared: We are going back to the world.” He raises his hand and over the desolate earth he makes “the sign of the dollar” (instead of the sign of the cross). The motif of withdrawal from and return to the world is a topos of Russian hagiography. Galt and the new society he and his disciples are now free to construct will not be a effortless garden of Eden, but a society that demands and rewards rationality (a volitional concept according to Rand), creativity,

initiative, self-discipline, and hard work.

The Fountainhead

Like *Atlas Shrugged*, *The Fountainhead* is also considered a quintessential American novel, but there is an important Russian subtext here too—the intellectual and cultural milieu of the NEP period—that readers unfamiliar with this period can miss.

The theme of *The Fountainhead* is individualism versus collectivism personified by Howard Roark and Ellsworth Monckton Toohey, respectively. Rand associated individualism with rationality, creativity, happiness, and freedom. Collectivism she associated with mysticism, mediocrity, suffering, sacrifice of oneself and others, and compulsion. The novel is set in the Great Depression, when many intellectuals thought that capitalism had failed and individualism was obsolete. To Rand's horror, the Soviet Union was their model.

As stated above, the Russian subtext of this novel is the intellectual and cultural milieu of the NEP period. The Party had not yet designated an official proletarian or socialist art form, so it funded competing organizations, each advocating its own form or style and each claiming to speak for the proletariat. Some of these organizations championed more or less traditional forms while others advocated experimentation. But all of them glorified the anonymous masses (rather than individual heroes), attacked “bourgeois individualism” and “bourgeois egoism,” and denied the very existence of genius. They insisted that creativity is a collective process and that the artist or writer works for the people. He expresses their feelings and aspirations, not his own. Their campaigns, waged publicly and privately, spilled over into the high schools and universities as students took sides. Rand did not participate in these campaigns, but certain passages in *The Fountainhead* indicate her awareness of them. For example, Toohey describes Lois Cook's novel as “sound as sound, the poetry of words as words, style as a revolt against style” (Rand 1992, 233). This is an allusion to *zaum*, literally beyond the mind, the transrational language advocated by certain Futurist poets. They deliberately violated the rules of grammar and wanted to jettison

the culture of the past, or as they put it in their first manifesto, “A Slap in the Face of Public Taste” (1912), “to throw Pushkin, Dostoevsky, Tolstoi, etc., etc., overboard from the Ship of Modernity” (Lawton 1988, 51). Some scholars claim that Rand modeled Lois Cook on Gertrude Stein (Rand 1997, 210), but there is more to Cook than that. The deliberate ugliness of her home is a manifestation of the futurists’ aesthetic, which valorized cacophony, disharmony, and even a kind of crudeness, over classical conceptions of beauty. Unlike Cook, however, the futurists enthusiastically embraced technology.

Architecture in the NEP Period

Rand’s choice of an architect-hero was no coincidence. Architecture was the paradigmatic discipline of the NEP period. In architecture, classicists and modernists battled one another and modernists were in turn divided between Constructivists and Rationalists. All modernists were functionalists (form follows function), but Rationalists believed that architecture should be expressive as well. As described by Rand, Howard Roark is closer to the rationalists.

Subscribing to reflexology, the dominant psychological school, Modernist architects believed that a building shaped the psyche of the persons who lived or worked in it.⁶ Therefore, architects could actually create the “new man,” a person viscerally committed to socialism, one conditioned to think in terms of “we” rather than “I.” Their plans featured communal dining rooms, communal laundries, huge auditoriums, child-care centers, and so on. The amount of privacy, if any, was disputed. Some plans provided private sleeping quarters for married couples. Other plans assumed the imminent demise of the “bourgeois family” and had everyone sleep in a dormitory. Most plans remained on the drawing boards, for lack of funds, but the battles posed the issues that would have to be resolved when funds became available. In his speech to the jury, Roark asserts that “[c]ivilization is progress toward a society of privacy” (Rand 1992, 683).

In real life, ordinary Soviet citizens had little or no privacy. In

The State and Revolution, Lenin approvingly quoted Engels on solving the housing shortage by “expropriation of the present owners and by quartering in their houses homeless workers or workers overcrowded in their present homes” (Lenin 1975, 351). Once in power, the Bolsheviks did just that, allocating housing space according to a formula—so many square meters per person (the number varied). Most city-dwellers lived in a *kommunalka*, formerly the residence of an aristocratic or bourgeois family and their servants, converted to house a family in each room. They shared use of the kitchen and toilet with the other residents of the building. Of all the changes instituted by the Bolshevik Revolution, for many people, living with strangers was one of the hardest to bear. Cortlandt Homes, the housing project that Roark designed maximized personal privacy, as did Monadnock Valley, the vacation retreat he designed earlier in the novel.

Soviet architects, writers, et al., did not own their “product.” It belonged to “the people,” i.e., to the government, and could be “improved” and “corrected” by persons with political pull. In *The Fountainhead*, Toohey gets other architects appointed as co-designers of the housing project supposedly designed by Peter Keating, but really designed by Roark. When Roark learns that his design has been distorted, he dynamites the project and is vindicated in court. In the Soviet Union, he would have been executed for sabotage.

In *Sermons in Stone*, the book that made him famous, Toohey describes architects as

servants, not leaders. They are not to assert their little egos, but to express the soul of their country and the rhythm of their time. They are not to follow the delusions of their personal fancy, but to seek the common denominator, which will bring their work close to the heart of the masses. Architects—ah my friends, theirs is not to reason why. Theirs is not to command but to be commanded. (Rand 1992, 78)

These ideas were *de rigueur* for all areas of creative expression in Soviet Russia and they were gaining adherents in the United States. A

source of the Soviet version was Ivanov's idea of a "social command" (*nakaž*, which can also be translated "order") by which he meant a commission from the people, rather than from the wealthy or the powerful. In the 1920s, the "social command" turned into the Party command.

As his reputation grows, Toohey expands his purview to other fields. Cunningly avoiding explicit political statements, he confines himself to such bromides as equality, love, nobility of sacrifice, need for compassion. He "proves" the "superiority of folk songs" over other forms of musical art and of choral singing over any other manner of musical rendition" (221–22). This is because a folk song has no known author and in choral singing no one voice stands out. Toohey promotes "second-handers" like Peter Keating, who live off other people's ideas, because such people can be ruled and Toohey plans to rule them.

Determined to destroy Howard Roark, precisely because he recognizes Roark's genius, Toohey attacks Roark's Temple of Humanity (the Stoddard Temple) as "one man's ego defying the most sacred impulses of all mankind" (350) and he keeps up his campaign long after other newspapers have dropped it. In one especially vicious salvo, he finds a photo of Roark in a moment of exaltation and has it printed in *The Banner*, over the caption, "Are you happy, Mr. Superman?" (342). In Soviet Russia, the term "superman" was frequently used as a pejorative.

Later in the novel, Toohey tells Keating:

I don't believe in individualism, Peter. I don't believe that any one man is any one thing which everybody else can't be. I believe we're all equal and interchangeable. A position you hold today can be held by anybody and everybody tomorrow. Equalitarian rotation. . . . I chose you . . . to protect the field from men who would become irreplaceable . . . Why do you suppose I fought against—for instance—Howard Roark? (569)

Russian Sources of Toohey's Ideology

Toohey's egalitarianism echoes Soviet ideology in the 1920s and early 1930s. His idea of merging one's spirit with the "vast collective spirit of mankind" (300) is reminiscent of God-building. Conversely, Roark argues that creativity is an individual phenomenon. "There is no such thing as a collective brain" (679).

Toohey's "spiritual collectivism" can also be regarded as the essence of *sobornost'* (Sciabarra 1995, 110), but not in its original meaning. As Russian society fragmented during and after 1917, some God-seekers sought to reverse that process by postulating an ultra-communalist vision of *sobornost'* in which the individual virtually disappears (Rosenthal 1993).

To curry favor with Toohey, Peter Keating says that he has always believed that "true culture stems from the common man" (Rand 1992, 229). This idea has a long history in Russia (though not only in Russia). Populists maintained that the folk (*narod*) were the real creators of culture. Many Silver Age intellectuals distinguished between culture, the creation of the folk, and civilization, the product of abstract thought, associating culture with the peasants and civilization with urban intellectuals. Ivanov wanted to make the theater into an arena of "collective creativity" and myth-creation. The myths created by the (Dionysian) chorus, the authentic voice of the people in his view, would lead to a new cult, a new culture, and a new society, in that order. Lunacharsky envisioned a proletarian version of Ivanov's cultic theater. As Commissar of Enlightenment, he funded such ventures and helped organize some of them, e.g., theatricalized mass festivals with a "cast" of thousands.

Another feature of the Soviet cultural milieu between 1921 and 1932 was organizations of "proletarian" writers, architects, painters, and musicians, that propagated a crude form of Bogdanov's ideas on proletarian culture.⁷ Actually, many of their leaders were of "bourgeois" origin. The associations that Toohey founds resemble these organizations (as well as communist fronts in the United States). Among them are a club for Gail Wynand's employees that "spontaneously" turns into a Union, an organization of architects that will

supersede the “stuffy” A.G.A., and organizations of mediocre writers, painters, et. al. Toohey envisions a keyboard in which each key controls a special field, all keys are connected, and he punches the keys (557). He is not interested in material goods or in enjoyment. “Enjoyment is not my destiny. I shall find such satisfaction as my capacity permits. I shall rule” (635).

Toohey’s strategy is first divide and conquer, then unify and conquer. He gloats:

We found the magic word, Collectivism. Look at Europe . . .
We’ve fixed the coin. Heads—collectivism, and tails—
collectivism. Fight the doctrine which slaughters the
individual with a doctrine that slaughters the individual.
Give up your soul to a council [a soviet] or give it up to a
leader. But give it up, give it up, give it up. (639)

Toohey is obviously referring to Communism on one side, Fascism and Nazism on the other. I suggest that Rand had a second coin in mind as well—Bolshevism on one side, God-seeking on the other. The God-seekers were still a strong intellectual force in Russia after the Bolshevik Revolution. Their alternative to Bolshevism was not liberal democracy, which had indeed failed in Russia in 1917, but the other side of the Bolshevik coin, the ultra-communalist vision I mentioned above, a spiritual monolith just as hostile to “bourgeois individualism,” “bourgeois egoism,” and capitalism as the Bolsheviks.

The God-seekers perceived the Bolshevik Revolution as the triumph of “Western rationalism” and “godless humanism,” which intensified their yearning for a “revolution of the spirit.” They promulgated their ideas in the Free Philosophic Society in Petrograd (1918–24) and the Free Academy of Spiritual Culture in Moscow (1919–22). Berdyaev and Ivanov were co-founders of the Free Academy. Lev Kamenev, a leading Bolshevik and head of the Moscow Soviet (roughly equivalent to mayor), helped Berdyaev find a building in which to house the Society. Berdyaev himself got double rations of food and his home was not turned into a *kommunalka*. By contrast, the anarchist Peter Kropotkin starved to death.

Berdyayev's lectures at the Free Academy were standing room only. His views did not threaten the Bolsheviks at the time, probably because of their mutual hatred of capitalism.

At the end of 1922, however, Berdyayev was expelled from Russia along with over 160 other non-Marxist intellectuals, including Lossky and Karsavin. Their expulsion was preceded by arrest and interrogation. All of them were warned that they would be executed if they returned. This turnabout was part of the post-1921 Bolshevik strategy of preventing a resurgence of bourgeois ideologies. The Bolsheviks now considered religion the mainstay of bourgeois ideology.

While in Russia, Berdyayev claimed that the period of European history that had begun with the Renaissance is coming to an end. In emigration, he looked forward to a "new middle ages," praised Mussolini at the "only contemporary statesman," and said that communism and capitalism are equally un-Christian. His books were translated into all the major European languages.

During the Civil War, Ivanov reacted to a truly Hobbesian situation by seeking ever tighter bonds of cultic unity. He predicted a "new kind of humanism," for which he coined the term "monantropism," etymologically a movement toward oneness or the feeling of being one. Soon after that prediction, he condemned individuation (not just individualism) as the original sin (Rosenthal 1992,161–65). He left Russia voluntarily in 1924 (he had been trying to get permission to leave since 1921), settled in Rome, converted to Roman Catholicism, and was sympathetic to Mussolini's attempt to create an alternative to capitalism and communism (as many people were at the time, to their later embarrassment).

Merezhkovsky actively opposed the Bolshevik Revolution from the start. He called Soviet Russia the "realm of the anti-Christ," sided with the Whites, and fled Russia in December 1919, when it was clear they would lose. In exile, he tried to convince Mussolini that Il Duce had a divine mission to topple the Communist government militarily. More opposed to rationalism than ever, in *The Secret of the West*, Merezhkovsky condemned the proud individualism of "Atlantis-Europe" and warned that if Europeans did not change their ways,

they too would be destroyed (Merezhkovsky 1931). This book was translated into the major European languages. He welcomed the Great Depression in the belief that universal poverty would revitalize Christianity.

Nazis and Italian Fascists used the phrase, “revolution of the spirit,” to distinguish their ideologies from “materialistic” Communism. Whether they borrowed the phrase from Russians living in their country, or from translations of their work, or coined the term independently, is beyond the scope of this essay. My point is that several God-seekers placed great hopes in Mussolini, or were attracted to Italian Fascism (which, unlike Nazism, was not originally racist). It is worth noting, however, that Merezhkovsky, though not anti-Semitic, considered Hitler a lesser evil than Stalin.⁸

We have seen that in both *Atlas Shrugged* and *The Fountainhead*, Ayn Rand drew on her knowledge of Russia. The backdrop of *Atlas Shrugged* is the collapse of the Russian economy between 1916 and 1921. The policies followed by the government in the novel resemble those of the Bolsheviks in the first years of their rule. The subtext of *The Fountainhead* is the intellectual and cultural milieu of the NEP period. The protagonists of both novels reject the collectivist or communitarian orientation of the Russian intelligentsia and the Russian mystique of suffering and self-sacrifice. There is much more to be said about the Russian subtext of both novels, and of her essays as well, but that must await another opportunity.

Notes

1. The tsarist government introduced bread rationing toward the end of 1916. In March 1917, the Provisional Government declared a monopoly on grain. Peasants were ordered to deliver surplus grain to the state for distribution to the army and the cities, but the order was not enforced.

2. The Party and the government were formally separate but the same Bolsheviks ran both—so I use the terms interchangeably. After the Revolution, Lenin changed the name of his Party from Bolshevik to Communist Party, so I use these terms interchangeably too. In February 1918, the Bolsheviks changed the Russian calendar to the one used in the West.

3. To add a personal note, my grandmother, who lived in Russia at the time, bartered a fur coat for a sack of potatoes.

4. *The New York Times* did not report the famine but it was reported elsewhere (Conquest 1986, 309).

5. Bogdanov’s epistemology was in turn based on the Empiriocriticism of Ernst

Mach and Richard Avenarius, which dissolved matter into energy and human beings into bundles of sensations. Lenin opposed “Machism” because he thought it undermined the materialistic basis of Marxism.

6. Reflexology in psychology is not to be confused with the technique of manipulating pressure points on the foot. There were two schools of reflexology: Pavlov’s school of the conditioned reflex and Bekhterev’s school of the associative reflex. Reflexology, also called “Objective Psychology,” was a close relation to Behaviorism in the United States. John B. Watson, the founder of Behaviorism, borrowed the notion of conditioning from Pavlov. Incidentally, Pavlov was openly opposed to Bolshevism; he got away with it because he was famous.

7. These organizations achieved hegemony in their respective fields in 1928–29, but only temporarily. In 1932, the Party ordered them to disband and instituted an official art form: Socialist Realism.

8. The term “anti-Semitism” was coined in 1879 by Wilhelm Marr in order to justify hatred of Jews on non-religious grounds. Marr’s term caught on immediately, melding with linguistic theories that conflated language and race and distinguished between Aryans and Semites. Arabs are Semites too, but the term was applied almost exclusively to Jews.

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