

# **RUSSIA'S GAY LITERATURE AND CULTURE: THE IMPACT OF THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION**

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The widespread belief that the Bolsheviks liberated Russia's homosexuals has long been a point of pride for gay leftists and a confirmation of the worst fears of those on the right who see an intrinsic and subversive link between communism and homosexuality. In this essay, Simon Karlinsky reviews the experience of gay and lesbian Russian writers to challenge the assumptions about Bolshevik policies underlying both perspectives. He documents a brief flowering of gay literary culture between the revolutions of 1905 and February 1917, and then shows how it withered during the 1920s as the Bolsheviks, even as they decriminalized homosexuality, steadily restricted its expression in the arts. The denigration of gay literature was due in part to the class background and politics of several prominent gay authors, but it resulted as well from the Bolsheviks' general unease with sexuality and their belief that homosexuality was a mental illness. The Stalinist crackdown on homosexuals, although enormously worse, did not represent a total break with earlier Bolshevik policies, as previously thought. Karlinsky also briefly discusses the ways in which gay people survived the Stalinist years and the reemergence of an underground gay literature since the early 1970s.

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When the topic of repression and liberation in Russia is brought up, many people in the West tend to visualise it in simplistic and schematic terms. First, they believe that Tsarist Russia was an inflexible tyranny that had never changed since the time of Ivan the Terrible. Oscar Wilde's 1883 melodrama *Vera; or The Nihilists*, in the first scene of which the characters converse while an endless file of political prisoners in chains is slowly marched off to Siberia, is a good illustration of this view.<sup>1</sup> Then, according to the popular scheme, Lenin and Trotsky overthrew the tsar, freed the serfs, and liberated women and gays. Still later, Joseph Stalin supposedly reversed the gains of Lenin's liberating revolution and converted the Soviet Union into a police state.

To understand the history of human rights and freedoms in Russia, including the rights of gays and lesbians, we need to consider at least six revolutionary changes that the country has experienced during the past century and a quarter. They are: (1) the liberal reforms of Tsar Alexander II in the early 1860s (the "first revolution from above"); (2) the massive, nation-wide uprising known as the Revolution of 1905; (3) the peaceful overthrow of the monarchy by a coalition of moderate-democratic and libertarian-socialist parties in February 1917; (4) the October Revolution at the end of 1917, led by Lenin and Trotsky; (5) the collectivization of agriculture and the suppression of the remaining freedoms of speech and press, followed by Stalin's reign of terror begun in 1929 and, except for some relaxation during World War II, continued until his death in 1953; and finally (6) the "second revolution from above" currently waged by Mikhail Gorbachev, with his campaigns for an open society (*glasnost*) and economic reconstruction (*perestroika*). The revolutions of 1905 and of February 1917, which brought unprecedented new freedom of expression for Russian gay and lesbian writers are all too often conflated in Western minds with the Bolshevik-led October Revolution, routinely credited with the sexual liberation achieved by the two earlier revolutions.<sup>2</sup>

There is a considerable body of evidence that prior to the Westernizing reforms of Peter the Great (at the very beginning of the eighteenth century) male homosexuality was widespread and tolerated in all strata of Russian society. This is attested by foreign travelers and also by the sermons and denunciations by Russian Orthodox churchmen of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, who repeatedly complained about the prevalence of homosexuality.<sup>3</sup>

Beneficial as the Westernization of the eighteenth century was for Russia, it also brought in its wake a previously uncommon abhorrence for the less usual forms of sexual expression. During the reign of Peter the Great, in 1706, his German military advisers drafted a new Military Legal Code, *Moskovitische Kriegsreglament*. Patterned after the military code

that existed then in Sweden, this was the first legislation in Russian history that penalized consensual male homosexuality. The prescribed penalty for "sodomy between two men" was burning at the stake. However, the tsar, who was known to dabble in bisexuality on occasion, soon mitigated this penalty and there are no known instances when it was applied. The provisions of the 1706 legislation were incorporated and broadened in the Military Code of 1716, which called for corporal punishment for sodomy and for the death penalty or hard labor for life when rape or other use of violence was proven. The consensus of Russian historians is that the military regulations of 1706 and 1716 pertained only to soldiers on active duty and did not concern the rest of the population.<sup>4</sup>

Criminalization of male homosexual behavior for the whole of Russian society came with the promulgation of a new Legal Code drafted in 1832 during the reign of the most brutal of the Romanovs, Nicholas I. This code did not retain the military legislation of Peter the Great, but was instead patterned on the criminal codes that existed at the time in various German principalities, especially that of Würtemberg, which it copied. Following the example of these countries, the new code included Article 995, which prohibited *muzhelozhstvo*, a term that the courts interpreted as anal intercourse between men. An entry on homosexuality in the *Brockhaus-Efron Encyclopedia* (vol. 20, St. Petersburg, 1897) states that attempts to charge persons with homosexual practices other than anal under Article 995 were not recognized by Russian courts. There was also Article 996, which covered homosexual rape and seduction of male minors or mentally retarded men. The violators of Article 996 were to be deprived of all rights and sent to do hard labor in Siberia for ten to twenty years.

The penalty prescribed for violating Article 995 was deprivation of all rights and resettlement in Siberia for four to five years. Leo Tolstoy's novel *Resurrection* (1899) contains a vignette about a high government official who was convicted under the provisions of Article 995. The man arranges to be transferred, keeping the same rank, to one of the major Siberian cities, where because of his culture and musical talent he is received at the city's best homes. Tolstoy intended this episode, and another one in the same novel where a government-employed lawyer advocates equal rights for homosexuals, to illustrate the corruption and moral laxity of Tsarist Russia.

Article 995 could not have been enforced very stringently, for in the first half of the nineteenth century we find several prominent statesmen and writers whose homosexuality was a matter of general knowledge. One man who could not reconcile his homosexuality with his conservatism and his fundamentalist religiosity was the great writer Nikolai Gogol (1809–1852). This conflict caused Gogol to starve himself to death at the age of forty-three.<sup>5</sup> At the opposite social pole of nineteenth-century Russia there were male homosexuality and lesbianism among the peasant

religious sects in the far north of Russia and in the religious dissident communities along the river Volga. Two of these sects, the Khlysty (the name is a distorted plural form of "Christ") and the Skoptsy (Castrates) had recognizable homosexual, bisexual, and sado-masochistic traits in their folklore and religious rituals. (There is a comprehensive bibliography on these sects' rituals cited in the notes to Boris Filippov's biography of the poet Nikolai Kliuev, to be discussed below.)

### The Post-Reform Situation

The abolition of serfdom, the replacement of a corrupt judiciary system with trials by jury open to the press and the public, reduction of military draft from twenty-five years to five, and other liberal reforms initiated by Alexander II in 1861 did not make Russia a democracy. But they did free fifty-two million enslaved human beings, allow some autonomy in local self-government and relax the censorship of books and periodicals. The reforms also radicalized Russian universities, encouraged revolutionary ferment (unintentionally, of course), and brought in their wake a feminist movement, which eventually secured the access of women to higher education and their entry into numerous professions.<sup>6</sup>

In this new atmosphere homosexuality became far more visible in both Russian life and literature. One of the greatest Russian celebrities of the 1870s and 1880s, both nationally and internationally, was the explorer and naturalist Nikolai Przhevalsky (1839–1888). His books about his travels and adventures (such as his discovery of the undomesticated horse, *Equus przewalskii*), were translated into other languages and avidly read in England and America. A biography by Donald Rayfield shows that each of Przhevalsky's expeditions was planned to include a male lover-companion between the ages of sixteen and twenty-two. His renown was so great that he could represent each new lover to the authorities as an indispensable personal assistant needed for the planned expedition, whereupon the Russian government would pay for the education of the lover and commission the youth as a lieutenant in the army.<sup>7</sup> Przhevalsky's coeval, the bisexual novelist and literary critic Konstantin Leontiev (1831–1891), whose book on Tolstoy's novels remains to this day a recognized classic, was not as well known as the explorer. This was because his contemporaries and posterity felt uncomfortable with his virulently reactionary politics ("slightly to the right of the tsar," as a modern critic described his views) and also with the rhapsodic glorification of male beauty and the male body so often found in his stories and novels.<sup>8</sup>

Prominent on the Russian literary scene during the last two decades of the nineteenth century were two lesbian couples. Anna Yevreinova (1844–1919) held a degree in law from Leipzig University and was highly

active in the feminist movement. She was the founder of the important literary journal *The Northern Herald*, which she edited jointly with her lover-companion Maria Feodorova. Polyxena Soloviova (1867–1924) was a Symbolist poet and the first translator of *Alice in Wonderland* into Russian. She shared her life with Natalia Manaseina, the wife of a well-known scholar who left her husband to become Soloviova's lover. In a fictional guise, the emergence of lesbians and gay men on the cultural scene of the 1890s was reflected in the novel *People of the 1890s* by the now-forgotten writer Alexander Amfiteatrov. Published in 1910, the novel had as two of its principal characters a powerful lesbian banker and a gay "decadent" poet, who appeared in public in garish makeup and jewelry, worn to show his gayness.

Among the notable and overt gay figures of that period were the popular poet Alexei Apukhtin (a classmate and one-time lover of Peter Tchaikovsky); Prince Vladimir Meshchersky, the conservative and notoriously gay novelist and publisher, frequently invited to the imperial palace by the last three tsars (when Meshchersky was caught on the palace grounds, performing a sexual act with a soldier of the guard, Tsar Alexander III ordered that the witnesses be silenced and the charges dropped); and of course the mostly gay coterie of "The World of Art" group, headed by Sergei Diaghilev, which in 1898 inaugurated the art journal of the same name that in a few years permanently changed the view Russians had of their cultural heritage. Diaghilev coedited the journal with his cousin and lover Dmitry Filosofov.<sup>9</sup> After the breakup of his long relationship with Filosofov, Diaghilev found a new lover in Vaslav Nijinsky. His subsequent involvement with ballet, which affected that art in every country, is too well-known to dwell on.

In the new introduction to a French edition of her biography of Tchaikovsky (first published in Russian in 1936, reissued in French in 1987), Nina Berberova cites several other circumstances that can confirm the visibility and impunity of male homosexuals in turn-of-the-century Russia.<sup>10</sup> There were at least seven gay Grand Dukes at the time (uncles, nephews, or cousins of the last two tsars). The most flamboyant of this group was the Grand Duke Sergei Alexandrovich, the uncle of Nicholas II. This uncle regularly went to the theater and other public functions with his current lover. Gay relatives were not restricted to royalty but seem to have turned up in many upper-class Russian families. Vladimir Nabokov's memoir about his Russian childhood, *Speak, Memory*, shows that each of his parents had a gay brother, as did Nabokov himself (his brother, Sergei Nabokov, who lived in Austria with his lover, perished in a Nazi gas chamber during World War II).

With regard to the lower classes (peasants and the urban proletariat), Peter Tchaikovsky's private diaries published by his brother Ippolit (*Dnevniky*, Moscow, 1923) are a good source. We read in them of a likable cab driver and hustler named Vanya whom Tchaikovsky saw when

he came to Moscow from his home in the country (at times, the composer's schedule was so crowded that the diary entry reads "Vanya. Hands only"). A homosexual butler at the estate of a wealthy friend Tchaikovsky visited became the composer's sympathetic listener during a crisis in one of his love relationships. The diaries also describe the composer's visits to lowly Moscow taverns that were apparently gay hangouts. Mikhail Kuzmin's novel *Wings* and Nikolai Kliuev's poetry (both to be discussed below) mention, respectively, a Saint Petersburg gay bathhouse patronized by men of all classes, and gay farmers and farmhands whose love-making Kliuev immortalized in some of his poems.

Nina Berberova's wide research on the situation of Russian homosexuals at the time of Tchaikovsky's death yielded only one instance in the 1890s of a man who was charged under the provisions of Articles 995 or 996 of the penal code. This was the case of a man named Langovoy, who taught classical languages at an elegant private boarding school for boys. Parents of several of his students lodged a complaint that Langovoy had seduced their sons. The case got into the newspapers. Langovoy was tried and found guilty of having had sex with a boy of thirteen. The sentence was banishment to the provincial city of Saratov. After five years, Langovoy was amnestied and allowed to resume his teaching job. Given this cultural atmosphere, the recently revived canard about Tchaikovsky being forced to poison himself by a group of fellow alumni of the School of Jurisprudence supposedly hostile to his homosexuality can be seen as a web of fantasies.<sup>11</sup>

During the half-century that preceded the revolutions of 1917, one can find the presence of relatively well-adjusted Russian gays and lesbians in every stratum of society, including the peasantry, the merchant class, the army and the clergy. One area of Russian life where they were invisible was in the revolutionary movement. An enormously important aspect of Russian society from the 1860s on was the radicalization of the educated class, so vividly reflected in such literary classics as Turgenev's novels *Fathers and Sons* and *Virgin Soil*, Dostoevsky's *The Possessed* and Andrei Bely's *Petersburg*.

Whether their ideas were Populist or Marxist, whether their revolutionary programs came from Proudhon, Bakunin, or Plekhanov, Russian revolutionaries of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries subscribed to a Victorian, puritanical and patriarchal ethic devised in the 1860s by the utilitarian positivists of that period. The ascetic outlook of Russian radicals at the end of the nineteenth century has been ably analyzed and documented by the British historian Aileen Kelly in an essay where she summed up those revolutionaries' ideal as follows:

The revolutionary was to turn himself into a flawless monolith by suppressing all private emotions, interests, and aspirations that stood in the way of the total and unhesitating subordination of his reason and

will to a doctrine of revolutionary change. Not only art, literature, and personal relations, but all intellectual enquiry, when not directly relevant to the cause, were prohibited as the futile pastimes of superfluous men.<sup>12</sup>

This was the tradition that formed the thinking of such key revolutionary figures as Lenin, Trotsky, and Stalin. The Russian anarchist Alexander Berkman, in an American jail for attempting to assassinate a man he saw as an "exploiter," discovered that working-class men could be gay and have homosexual desires. This struck Berkman as a shattering reversal of everything that the Russian revolutionary tradition had taught him. Berkman communicated what he had learned to the anarchist leader Emma Goldman (Berkman's former lover), who early on had made the rights of homosexuals a part of her political agenda. Berkman's book about his prison experiences, first published in New York in 1912,<sup>13</sup> had an impact on the thinking of a few revolutionary leaders in Russia, with the result that during the parliamentary period between the revolutions of 1905 and February 1917 at least two antimonarchist parties supported the repeal of the laws that prohibited any form of consensual, adult sexual expression: the Anarchists and the middle-of-the-road Constitutional Democrats. One of the founders of the Constitutional Democratic Party, also known as Kadets, was Vladimir Nabokov, Sr., the father of the novelist. He contributed a scholarly article on the legal status of Russian homosexuals (cited in Notes 4 and 5 below) to the homosexual emancipationist journal published by Magnus Hirschfeld in Berlin.

But the view that the state should not regulate private sexual relationships and that sexual preferences transcended class boundaries, espoused by Goldman, Berkman and Vladimir Nabokov, Sr., was not typical of Russian early-twentieth-century revolutionary leadership. A far more common attitude toward sex can be found in Lenin's correspondence of January 1915 with Inessa Armand, his close political ally. Armand sent Lenin her draft of a pamphlet, intended for dissemination among women factory workers, about the rights of women in the Socialist state of the future. Lenin disagreed violently with Armand's statement that in a society based on equality a woman should have as much right as any man to have casual affairs and to refuse to bear children if she didn't want them. Such rights, in Lenin's view, were of interest only to the women of the bourgeoisie. Proletarian women, Lenin assured Armand, would not want and should not be given such "bourgeois" rights. In the German Communist Clara Zetkin's book *Reminiscences of Lenin*, which records her conversations with him shortly before his death in 1924, we see that Lenin in power retained the same negative view of sexuality that he had earlier conveyed to Armand. In Zetkin's last chapter, "Women, Marriage and Sex," we read that Lenin regarded *any* kind of sexual liberation as antisocial and non-Marxist.<sup>14</sup>

## Between the Revolutions of 1905 and 1917

The nation-wide uprising in the summer of 1905 forced Nicholas II to issue his October Manifesto, which authorized a parliamentary system and virtually abolished preliminary censorship of books and periodicals. After 1906, there appeared gay and lesbian poets, fiction writers, and artists who saw in the new freedom of expression a chance to depict their lifestyles in an honest and affirmative manner. Mikhail Kuzmin (1872–1936), the most outspoken, prolific, and well-known of Russia's gay writers, made his literary debut in 1906, when he published his autobiographical novel *Wings*, a story of a young man who slowly realizes that he is a homosexual. He learns through experience to value his orientation and to see its positive side. At the end of the book, he agrees to live with a sophisticated older man who loves him, a decision that makes him feel as if he has grown wings.

Between 1906 and 1923, Kuzmin wrote several other novels, numerous short stories, some plays, and a great deal of poetry, most of them depicting gay love and gay sex. His stories and poems appeared in the best literary journals of the time. His plays were performed in theaters and staged by amateur groups. *Wings* became the catechism of Russian gay men, and it was republished every few years. Its last publication in Kuzmin's lifetime occurred in 1923, when a publishing house owned by the Soviet government brought it out in Berlin. After that it was not published anywhere until the rediscovery of Kuzmin by Western scholars in the 1970s, when *Wings* was translated into most Western languages and found a new and enthusiastic reading audience.<sup>15</sup>

Among other important literary phenomena between about 1905 and 1910 was the appearance of the novel *Thirty-Three Freaks* and the collection of stories *The Tragic Zoo* by Lydia Zinovieva-Annibal. These two books did for Russian lesbians what Kuzmin's *Wings* had done for gay men: They showed the reading public that lesbian love could be serious, deep, and moving. Some of the writings of Zinovieva-Annibal (1866–1907) were published after her untimely death by her husband Viacheslav Ivanov, a major Symbolist poet and essayist. Ivanov was a bisexual, who included in his much-acclaimed verse collection *Cor Ardens* (1911) a section called "Eros" where he openly depicted his infatuation with another man.

Around 1910 there appeared in Russia a group of poets called peasant—not only because of their origin, but because the fate and survival of the peasant way of life in the twentieth century was their central theme. The undisputed leader of this group was Nikolai Kliuev (1887–1937). Born in a peasant family belonging to the Khlysty sect, Kliuev learned (and taught his followers) how to combine his native village folklore with the modernist style and versification developed by the Russian Symbolist poets. His two books of verse published in 1912, *The Chiming Pines* and *Brotherly*

*Songs*, created a sensation and made Kliuev a celebrity. Kliuev's unconcealed homosexuality did not prevent most poets and critics as well as many literate peasants from seeing him as the foremost literary spokesman for the whole of Russian peasantry.

Kliuev had affairs with many peasant intellectuals, but the greatest love of his life was Sergei Esenin (1895–1925), better known in the West because of his brief marriage to the American dancer Isadora Duncan. For about two years (1915–1917), Kliuev and Esenin lived together as lovers and wrote about this in their poetry. Esenin was a remarkable poet in his own right. Although married to three famous women (a celebrated actress, and Leo Tolstoy's granddaughter, in addition to Duncan), Esenin could write meaningful love poetry only when it was addressed to other men.<sup>16</sup>

The new freedom to depict homosexual relationships in prose and poetry did not go unchallenged. A number of writers and critics were outraged or disgusted. The conservative response was epitomized in G. P. Novopolin's indignant book *The Pornographic Element in Russian Literature* (1909). Taking an openly racist approach, Novopolin wrote that, to his knowledge, homosexuality had previously existed only among the "less-civilized" peoples: the mountaineer tribes in the Caucasus and the Arab countries. Introduction of such themes into Russian literature by Zinovieva-Annibal and Kuzmin were read by Novopolin as efforts to corrupt Russian young people. His book condemned these two writers as purveyors of filth.

At the other end of the political spectrum from Novopolin there was Maxim Gorky. A member of the Bolshevik Party since 1905 and a close personal friend of Lenin, Gorky was at that time the most popular revolutionary writer anywhere. Everything he wrote was translated into other languages, his books enjoyed enormous sales, and his earnings were one of the main sources of financial support for the Bolshevik Party. In the summer of 1907, Gorky wrote to the playwright Leonid Andreyev about the favorable depiction of homosexuality in the writings of Kuzmin and Viacheslav Ivanov: "They are old-fashioned slaves, people who can't help confusing freedom with homosexuality. For them, for example, 'personal liberation' is in some peculiar way confused with crawling from one cesspool into another and is at times reduced to freedom for the penis and nothing more." Another typical response from the political left can be found in a book of essays by the Socialist journalist Alexei Achkasov, published in 1908. Achkasov defended the scandalously successful novel *Sanin* by Mikhail Artsybashev (whose protagonist asserted the right of any good-looking man to take by force any woman he desired, because women, in his view, enjoy being raped by attractive males). Achkasov wrote that because Sanin's lust was stallion-like, it was closer to human nature and more normal than the "spider-like and

snail-like lust which the priests of the upside-down Eros preach." The "mass pilgrimages to Sodom and Lesbos" in post-1906 Russian literature were undertaken to deflect young people from the "glorious struggle of three years ago" and to serve the interests of the enemies of "political and social change and renewal," Achkasov concluded.<sup>17</sup>

But the Symbolists and the Acmeists, groups that were then in the vanguard of Russian literary life, acclaimed the lesbian and gay writers as important new talents who had important new things to say.<sup>18</sup> Some of the other literary figures who wrote on lesbian and gay themes on the eve of World War I were Marina Tsvetaeva (1892–1941),<sup>19</sup> one of the greatest poets of this century (unlike Esenin, Tsvetaeva could write beautiful love lyrics addressed to either men or women); the short story writer Sergei Auslender; the poet Riurik Ivnev, whose obsessive theme was a dream of being burned or singed by a male lover;<sup>20</sup> Yevdokia Nagrodskaya, the author of trashy best-sellers, whose 1911 whodunit *At the Bronze Door* revolved around the question of which of the three male protagonists would turn out to be gay; the fine lesbian poet Sophia Parnok (1885–1933); and a few lesser writers one could name.

There were also gay artists on the scene, such as Konstantin Somov and Russia's foremost painter of male nudes Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin, to say nothing of gay musicians, scholars, actors, and stage directors. The overwhelmingly gay atmosphere around the various enterprises that Sergei Diaghilev undertook from 1898 on—whether an art journal, art exhibit, production of an opera, organization of concerts or of a ballet company—was only the most obvious example of the amazing tolerance of homosexuality which typified that period. Such figures as Diaghilev, Kliuev, and Kuzmin were national celebrities, much written about in the press. Their homosexuality was known to everyone and caused no problems in their social or professional lives.

## The Post-Revolutionary Situation

The provisional government, formed by the Constitutional Democrats and Socialist Revolutionaries after the abdication of Nicholas II in February 1917, lasted for only eight months. Constantly sabotaged by the monarchists on the right and by Bolsheviks on the left, the regime managed to promote human rights and freedoms on a scale not experienced in Russia before or since. That was when women and minorities were given full civil and political rights, including the vote. Freedom of religion, speech, press, labor unions, and strikes became a reality, the prominent feminist Sophia Panina was given a cabinet-level post, and all vestiges of censorship were abolished. The seizure of power by Lenin and Trotsky in October 1917 was hailed by many then (and is still often regarded) as an enhancement of the rights gained by the revolutions of

1905 and February 1917. But as far as rights (including gay rights) and personal freedoms are concerned, the October Revolution was actually a reversal and a negation of the two earlier revolutions rather than their continuation.<sup>21</sup>

In the early 1920s, Christopher Isherwood visited the Hirschfeld Institute in Berlin. In *Christopher and His Kind*, he wrote that Magnus Hirschfeld, the leading figure in the German gay liberation of the period, "was being drawn into an alliance with the Communists" [...] "because the Soviet government, when it came to power in 1917, had declared that all forms of sexual intercourse between consenting adults are a private matter, outside the law."<sup>22</sup> This misreading of the Bolshevik leaders' position on gay liberation cropped up in Germany and England in the 1920s, and it gained wide currency in the West in the 1970s. It is usually backed by the claim that in December 1917 Lenin's government abolished all laws against homosexuality, as is asserted in John Lauritsen and David Thorstad's much-quoted 1974 book.<sup>23</sup>

There existed before the revolution only two laws in this area, the already mentioned Articles 995 and 996. What was abolished was the entire Criminal Code of the Russian Empire, of which these articles were only a small portion. Nina Berberova, who left the Soviet Union in 1922 and who had many gay friends both in the USSR and in emigration, when told of the American publications that state that homosexuality was legalized by the Soviet leaders in 1917, thought it too funny for words. "But in that case, the abolition of the old Code had also legalized murder, rape and incest," she said. "We had no laws on the books against *them* in 1917–22 either."<sup>24</sup>

The February Revolution was met by Russian writers and other intellectuals with almost universal support. But the October Revolution quickly split the literary community. With remarkable unanimity, all male gay and bisexual writers welcomed the October takeover. Nikolai Kliuev saw in Lenin a new peasant tsar who would protect village life from modernization and support the traditional ways of the peasantry. Esenin equated Russia giving birth to the worldwide revolution with nature yielding a harvest and the Virgin Mary giving birth to Christ. Mikhail Kuzmin, as his diaries and the poems and memoirs about him (cited in John Malmstad's biography) show, saw in the October Revolution a "long-awaited miracle" and characterized those who were opposed to it as "animals and scum."

When the civil war ended, a new Soviet Criminal Code was promulgated in 1922 and amended in 1926. In the sexual sphere, this code prohibited sex with minors under the age of sixteen, male and female prostitution, and pandering. It did not mention sexual contacts between consenting adults, which meant that adult male homosexuality was legal. The provisions of this code extended to the Central Russian and the Ukrainian Republics of the USSR. But, according to Valery Chalidze, an

expert on Soviet criminal law, the previously widespread homosexual practices in the Caucasus (e.g., Georgia) and in the Moslem areas of Central Asia (the Azerbaijan, Turkmen, and Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republics) were persecuted and punished during the 1920s.<sup>25</sup>

In Central Russia, including Moscow and Leningrad, two forms of the Soviet government's negative attitude to homosexuality became evident after the end of the civil war: morbidizing it by regarding it as a mental disorder; and dismissing or ignoring its manifestations in literary works that appeared in the 1920s. If the nineteenth-century legislation considered homosexuality as a crime to be punished, the Soviet regime in the 1920s saw it as an illness to be cured. This view is clearly stated in the book *Sexual Life of Contemporary Youth*, published in Moscow in 1923 under the aegis of the People's Commissariat of Public Health and authored by Izrail Gel'man. The book was based on an anonymous questionnaire about sexual practices, circulated among young factory workers, farmers and university students. Two of the respondents were lesbians, aged twenty-three and twenty-eight, both of working-class background and both ardent Communists. The author's comments on these two cases reads: "Science has now established, with precision that excludes all doubt, [that homosexuality] is not ill will or crime, but sickness [...]. The world of a female or male homosexual is perverted, it is alien to the normal sexual attraction that exists in a normal person."<sup>26</sup>

The other prominent Soviet "expert" on homosexuality in the 1920s, Mark Sereisky, stressed that it should not be punished because it is a form of mental illness. He emphasized the pathology of the phenomenon by replacing the verb "to be" when writing of it with the verb "to suffer." Sereisky opened his entry on homosexuality in the Soviet Medical Encyclopedia (reprinted in the first edition of the Great Soviet Encyclopedia in 1930) by defining it as "sexual attraction, counter to nature, to persons of one's own sex." He then stated that some 2 percent of men "suffer from homosexuality" and that some outstanding figures, such as Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci, "were victims of homosexuality." Sereisky listed a number of emotional infirmities to which homosexuals are supposedly prone: They tend to be hysterical, infantile, and rude and to live in a world of their own fantasy. The entry in the medical encyclopedia ends with Sereisky's description of his experiments to cure male homosexuality by transplanting a heterosexual man's testicle(s) to a homosexual. He believed that this method could "cure" all homosexuals once the problem of the body's rejection of alien tissues was solved.<sup>27</sup>

If the medical view in the Soviet Union of the 1920s was that homosexuality was a curable illness, in the literary and intellectual spheres it was mentioned less and less, and was all but unmentionable by 1930. The right to publish literary works on gay and lesbian themes, won after the Revolution of 1905, still obtained till 1929. Established gay poets, such as

Kliuev, Kuzmin, and Parnok, were producing their best work during the 1920s, but their books were either not reviewed in the Soviet press or dismissed as something irrelevant to the new Socialist society.

The example of this self-imposed blindness to gay themes was set by Leon Trotsky's discussion of Nikolai Kliuev's long poem "The Fourth Rome" (1922). By that time, Kliuev had lost his illusion that the Soviet regime would protect the religious dissenter sects (the Bolsheviks persecuted them far worse than the tsars had), and he saw the urbanization and electrification campaign as a threat to the nature and wildlife of his native Olonets region. Kliuev was also disappointed that his ex-lover Esenin had given up his peasant ways, joined an urban poets' group, and announced in a poem that he would henceforth go about "in a top hat/ And in patent leather shoes."

The first section of "The Fourth Rome," addressed to Esenin, described in an "eat your heart out" tone Kliuev's newfound lover, the peasant-born novelist Nikolai Arkhipov, and the ecstasy of making love to him. In its explicit homoeroticism the poem has no precedent in Russian poetry. With densely crowded images, Kliuev depicted his five fingers, "five fellows both reckless and wild," reaching for his lover's genitalia "in red-haired woodland, near waterfall veins," and bringing him to orgasm. He sang the glories of Arkhipov's body, with its "shore of nipples, the torrid island of buttocks/The valley of the groin, the plateau of knees," and predicted that Arkhipov "shall be beloved by my people" because he comforted the poet in his hour of need.<sup>28</sup>

Here is how Trotsky paraphrased this opening section of "The Fourth Rome" in his influential book *Literature and Revolution*: "Recently, Kliuev embarked on a quarrel in verse with Esenin, who resolved to start wearing a frock coat and top hat and informed us of this in his poem. Kliuev saw in this a betrayal of peasant roots and he peevishly berated the younger poet, exactly like a wealthy peasant scolding his younger brother who decided to marry a hussy from the city and join the down-and-outs."<sup>29</sup> Trotsky ignored the powerful gay eroticism of the passage and discussed the conflict in class terms only: The poet Kliuev represented the wealthy peasantry (*kulaks*), incapable of understanding Socialism and doomed to extinction, while Esenin, a poor peasant, was still salvageable. (In actuality, Esenin came from a far more affluent family than Kliuev.)

It is important to note that Trotsky did not attack the poets for their homosexuality—indeed, he virtually heterosexualized them with his reference to the "city hussy"—but only for what he saw as their class origin. This became the standard approach of the Soviet press during the 1920s to all writers, whether gay or not, whose reputations dated from prerevolutionary times. Esenin, Kliuev, and Kuzmin were highly supportive of the October Revolution when it came, but this did not prevent

Trotsky and the Soviet press from seeing them as superfluous in postrevolutionary times. As John Malmstad's biography of Kuzmin and Boris Filippov's of Kliuev show, they were, after about 1922, more and more stereotyped in the Soviet press, Kuzmin as a bourgeois aesthete and Kliuev as a spokesman for the exploitative *kulaks*. But well-established non-gay poets such as Anna Akhmatova and Osip Mandelstam were also treated with scorn during the same period because their art, like Kuzmin's, had deep roots in Western culture. The poets and novelists of the peasant group, who before the revolution saw Kliuev as their leader, were berated during the 1920s for their idealization of traditional village ways. (In 1988, Soviet literary magazines began to publish massive documentation about the brutal persecution of various writers and other cultural figures by the Soviet government, from the early 1920s until the end of the Brezhnev period.)

The lesbian poet Sophia Parnok, on the other hand, was not reviled in the 1920s as either bourgeois or lesbian. She had not acquired a significant reputation before the revolution as Kuzmin and Kliuev had. When her two most important and mature books, *Music* (1926) and *In a Hushed Voice* (1928), appeared they were greeted by total silence in the press. No one, except for a few poets in the USSR, was aware of these two books' publication.<sup>30</sup> The gradual clampdown on gay authors may have had as much to do with their class backgrounds (as perceived by the regime) as with their homosexuality, but it still resulted in a steady decline in the visibility of gay literature and art in the course of the 1920s. We must also remember that among the numerous talented poets and prose writers who appeared on the literary scene after the October Revolution there was not a single lesbian or gay figure.

Though consensual homosexuality was nominally legal in the Soviet Union in the 1920s, most gay men who wanted a career in the arts or in government had to resort to a tactic practiced to this day—marriage to a woman—in order to deflect suspicions. This practice was unknown in Russia prior to the October Revolution. The painter Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin, noted for his male nudes, was married early in the 1920s, after which he specialized in scenes of farming and numerous portraits of his wife. The poet Pavel Antokolsky and the actor-director Yury Zavadsky were lovers in 1918 according to Marina Tsvetaeva's memoirs, and made no secret of their relationship. By the mid-1920s, they were married men. Riurik Ivnev, the bard of gay sado-masochism in prerevolutionary times, dropped gay themes, got married, and was allowed to join the Soviet diplomatic corps.

The Soviet authorities, in line with the medical views of the time, believed that a gay man could be easily cured by marriage or by medical treatment. A good example is the case of Chicherin. The diplomat Georgy Chicherin (1872–1936), a classmate of Kuzmin, had been quite comfort-

able with his orientation prior to 1917. After joining the Bolshevik Party in 1918, he broke all contact with Kuzmin and his other gay friends. Chicherin scored many diplomatic victories for the Soviet Union between 1918 and 1925. Then he was urged by the Soviet Government to commit himself to a series of psychiatric clinics in Germany. A memoir published much later by his cousin in the West revealed that the illness in question was his homosexuality. No cure was achieved, and in 1930 Chicherin was dismissed from his post, again "for reasons of health."<sup>31</sup>

Another major figure whom the Soviet authorities tried to keep in a lifelong closet was the great filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein. Eisenstein may have internalized the homophobia of the Russian and international Communist movements, as when he told the Soviet critic Sergei Tretiakov that if it were not for Marx, Lenin, and Freud, he would have ended up as "another Oscar Wilde."<sup>32</sup> But he did yield to his gay desires when visiting Berlin and Paris and even more so during his 1930–1932 stay in Mexico to make a film, where he became openly gay and almost caused an international scandal. The Soviet government blackmailed him into returning to Moscow by threatening to disclose his private life. Before he was allowed to make another film, he had to submit to that Soviet cure-all for homosexuality: marriage. His friend and assistant Pera Attasheva volunteered to go through the ceremony, though they never lived together.<sup>33</sup>

### The Stalinist Period

The growing hostility of the Soviet government and press to homosexuality, observable during the 1920s, culminated in the new law, Article 154a (soon changed to 121) of the Soviet Penal Code. This law, announced on December 17, 1933, and made compulsory for all the republics of the Soviet Union on March 7, 1934, outlawed sexual relations between men and prescribed five years of hard labor for voluntary sexual acts and eight years for using force or threats and for sex with a consenting minor.<sup>34</sup> Maxim Gorky, true to form, hailed that decree on the pages of both *Pravda* and *Izvestia* as a "triumph of proletarian humanitarianism" and wrote that legalization of homosexuality had been the main cause of Fascism.<sup>35</sup> Ironically, this was the same time the Nazis in Germany launched their persecution of German homosexuals, claiming in many cases that gays had a particular affinity for Communism.

As Wilhelm Reich pointed out in 1936 and Valery Chalidze in 1977, Article 121 did not merely make homosexuality a crime against public morality. It was now seen as a crime against the state. Reich wrote that homosexuality was placed in the same category as other crimes against society such as "banditism, counterrevolutionary activities, sabotage, es-

pionage, etc." Chalidze noted that "the Soviet authorities apparently seriously believed that homosexuality was a political crime." Cases of this nature were often investigated not by the police "but by the agencies of state security." Reich testifies that in January 1934 there were mass arrests of homosexuals in Moscow, Leningrad, Kharkov, and Odessa, including many actors, musicians and other artists.<sup>36</sup>

From about 1930 on, the opinion that homosexuality equalled opposition to the Soviet system became entrenched in the minds of Soviet bureaucracy. In 1936, Commissar of Justice Nikolai Krylenko proclaimed that there was no reason for anyone to be homosexual after two decades of Socialism, and that those who persisted in remaining homosexual must be "remnants of the exploiting classes" and, as such, deserved five years of hard labor. No one from the working class could possibly be homosexual, so the people who hang out "in their vile secret dens are often engaged in another kind of work, the work of counterrevolution."<sup>37</sup>

Yet, during the Stalinist age, Soviet persecution of gay men was neither continuous nor total. In the case of well-known personalities, such as Eisenstein, the popular operatic tenor Sergei Lemeshov, the pianist Sviatoslav Richter, and numerous male ballet dancers, the authorities were willing to look the other way, provided the man was married and kept his homosexuality out of public view. During my own experiences as liaison officer and conference interpreter in the 1940s and 1950s (in the undivided and then divided postwar Germany), I met a considerable number of Soviet gay men who were in the Red Army or the diplomatic corps or were entertainers. Most of them managed to escape detection and found ways to express their gay sexuality.<sup>38</sup>

### The Post-Stalinist Decades

During the decades that followed Stalin's death in 1953, foreign scholars and tourists were again able to come to the USSR for extended stays. Homosexuality was (and still is) a state crime. But foreign visitors were able to find clandestine gay communities in all major cities.<sup>39</sup> As they had done under Stalin, the Soviet political police still used homosexuals as informers and for recruiting foreign gay men for espionage.<sup>40</sup> Several memoirs published abroad and cited in Vladimir Kozlovsky's book describe instances where straight KGB agents were required to participate in gay sex for purposes of entrapment.<sup>41</sup>

Still, the post-Stalinist years were a time of slow social change. The decade of the 1970s witnessed the emergence of gay and lesbian writers, the first under the Soviet regime (writers who treated gay and lesbian themes in the 1920s had all come out before the October Revolution). Unable to publish their work, they had to resort to *samizdat* (literally, "self-publishing") or *tamizdat*, "publishing over there," that is, sending

their writings abroad. Not much is known so far about Yevgeny Kharitonov, who worked as a teacher of pantomime, circulated his gay fiction in *samizdat* and died of heart failure in 1981 at the age of forty.<sup>42</sup> Far better documented is the case of poet Gennady Trifonov who served a hard-labor sentence in 1976–1980 for privately circulating his gay poems<sup>43</sup> and who since 1986 has been allowed to publish essays and reviews in Soviet periodicals, provided he makes no reference to gay topics. Two Soviet writers have come out as gay after emigrating from the USSR. They are David Dar (1910–1980), the widower of the noted novelist Vera Panova; and Edward Limonov, the bisexual author of the autobiographical novel *It's Me, Eddie*, which contains detailed descriptions of the narrator's intimate contacts with American black men.<sup>44</sup>

More light has been shed on the situation of lesbians in the Soviet Union in recent years in memoirs published abroad by women who had served time in gulag camps and were able to observe lesbian behavior there,<sup>45</sup> and in works of fiction by Soviet feminist writers expelled from the USSR.<sup>46</sup> It is now possible for Soviet writers in good standing with the authorities to mention homosexual topics in their work published in the West. Thus, the poet Viktor Sosnora described in his book of meditations, *The Flying Dutchman* (published in West Germany in 1979), the dismemberment of a famous and elderly actor by four drunken army officers in a Leningrad bar. Sosnora begged the barmaid to call the police but she laughed and urged the soldiers on. When he persisted, she replied that homosexuals are not human beings and that anyone who defended them had to be one himself.<sup>47</sup>

The current *glasnost'* campaign has made homosexuality a mentionable topic in the Soviet press, but it has not done anything for gay rights so far. The two most hopeful signs in this area go back fifteen years into the past. In 1973, there was published in Leningrad a *Textbook of Soviet Criminal Law* whose authors pointed out that no logical or scientific grounds had ever been stated in any Soviet juridical publication for criminalizing consensual sexual acts between males. The authors cited the example of other Socialist countries where antihomosexual laws have been rescinded without any demonstrable harm to society.<sup>48</sup> Also in 1973 came the publication abroad of Venedikt Erofeev's *Moscow to the End of the Line*.<sup>49</sup> A *samizdat* classic since 1968, the book is an odyssey of an alcoholic who manages to get drunk at every subway station in Moscow by consuming anything from champagne to furniture polish. This is accompanied by a stream of this man's consciousness about the dishonesty and secretiveness of Soviet society. A part of his interior monologue, used by Kozlovsky as an epigraph to his book, reads: "Allow me to point out that in our country homosexuality has been eradicated, finally but not totally. Or, more correctly, totally, but not entirely. Or, still more correctly, entirely and totally, but not fully. Because what is it that people

have on their minds these days? Nothing but homosexuality." Should these two unrelated phenomena (the textbook and Erofeev's quip) find successors in the next decade or so and should they multiply, understanding of homosexuality in the Soviet Union at the end of the twentieth century might yet return to the levels observable in the century's first two decades.

# **Notes to Karlinsky, “Russia’s Gay Literature and Culture: The Impact of the October Revolution”**

## Karlinsky, "Russia's Gay Literature and Culture: The Impact of the October Revolution"

1. The persistence of this misinformed view among many intelligent, well-read people can be exemplified by John Cheever's essay on Anton Chekhov, "The Melancholy of Distance," in James McConkey ed., *Chekhov and Our Age* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University, 1985). In it, Cheever claimed that Chekhov wrote fiction and plays because that "was all one could write without being sent to Siberia" (pp. 133-34). In reality, Chekhov published his powerful indictment of the conditions at the penal colony at Sakhalin, *The Island of Sakhalin*, in 1894, *without* securing the approval of the government censors and with no repercussions. Tolstoy's novel *Resurrection*, with its derogatory description of the tsarist system and its sympathetic portrayal of revolutionaries, was cleared for publication by the censors in 1899. These are only two out of hundreds of examples one could cite to show the absurdity of Wilde's and Cheever's perceptions of turn-of-the-century Russia.

2. Wilhelm Reich, in the second half of his *The Sexual Revolution*, examines sexual liberation in the Soviet Union, which Reich visited in 1929. (The book was first published in German as *Die Sexualität im Kultukampf* in 1930. An expanded German version, with much new material on the Soviet situation, came in 1936. A translation into English, with the new title, *The*

*Sexual Revolution*, appeared in 1945. I've used a revised version of this translation, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1969.)

Though critical of many measures adopted under Lenin and Stalin, Reich assumes throughout that no sexual rights existed in Russia prior to the October Revolution. Nor is the book particularly reliable on the situation of Russian homosexuals in 1917-1929. But Reich is highly informed about the period that followed 1929, after he had studied the conditions in the Soviet Union in person.

3. On the situation of male homosexuals in the Kievan (eleventh to thirteen centuries A.D.), the Muscovite (fourteenth to seventeenth centuries) and the modern periods of Russian history, see my survey "Russia's Gay Literature and History (11th-20th centuries)," *Gay Sunshine*, no. 29/30 (Summer/Fall 1976) (referred to hereafter as GS 76). Polemics about this piece and correction of errors, *Gay Sunshine*, no. 31 (Winter 1977). Updated translation into Italian: *Sodoma* no. 3, 1986.

In that 1976 survey I cited the book *Rerum moscovitarum commentarii* by Sigmund von Herberstein, who served as the ambassador of the Holy Roman Empire to Moscow early in the sixteenth century; and the poem "To Dancie" by the English poet George Turberville, who visited Moscow in 1568. Both of these authors reported, with shock and amazement, the prevalence of male homosexuality in all social classes in Russia at that time. GS 76 also quoted complaints about the impunity of homosexuality by such churchmen as the Metropolitan Daniel (his Sermon no. 12, dating from the 1530s) and the Archpriest Avvakum (in his *Autobiography*, 1673). Numerous other instances of testimony by foreign visitors and denunciations by Russian clergymen about the undisguised practice of "the sin of Sodom" in Muscovite Russia could be cited.

The Croatian Catholic priest Juraj Krizhanitch, who stayed in Russia from 1659 to 1677, described the Muscovite gay mores in his book *The Russian State in the Middle of the 17th Century* (cited from the Russian translation, *Russkoe gosudarstvo v polovine XVII veka*, Moscow, 1860. Chapter 2, pp. 17-18): "Here in Russia, this repulsive crime is treated simply as a joke. Nothing is more frequently discussed in humorous public conversations. One man brags of having committed this sin, another man reproaches someone about it, while a third man invites you to sin. The only thing lacking is for them to commit this crime in public." Summarizing the available testimony, Sergei Soloviov, the most authoritative Russian historian of the nineteenth century, concluded: "Nowhere, either in the Orient or in the West, was this vile, unnatural sin taken as lightly as in Russia" (S.M. Soloviov, *Istoriia Rossii*, 3rd ed. Saint Petersburg, 1910, p. 750). I am grateful to Alexander Poznansky for suggesting these last two examples and for additional information on legislation concerning homosexuality in Russia, cited in the following notes.

4. On the military regulation of 1706, see M. P. Rosenheim (or Rozengeim), *Ocherk istorii voenno-sudnykh uchrezhdenii v Rossii do konchiny Petra Velikogo* (Historical Survey of Institutions of Military Justice Up to the Demise of Peter the Great), Saint Petersburg, 1878, p. 299. On the military code of 1716, Vladimir Nabokoff, "Die Homosexualität in Russischen Strafgesetzbuch," *Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen*, Berlin, no. 5, 1903, p. 1160. On the applicability of these laws to military men only, S. I. Viktorsky, *Istoriia smertnoi kazni v Rossii i sovremennoe ee sostoianie* (A History of the Death Penalty in Russia and Its Present Status), Moscow, 1912, p. 145.

5. On Gogol's homosexuality, see my book *The Sexual Labyrinth of*

*Nikolai Gogol* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976). The book also surveys the situation of Russian male homosexuals of the educated class during the first half of the nineteenth century. On the rarity and difficulty of enforcing Article 995 in the nineteenth century, see the article by Nabokoff (i.e., Vladimir Nabokov, Sr., the father of the novelist), cited in note 4 above.

6. On liberalization in the areas of free speech and press after the reforms of the 1860s and the Revolution of 1905, see Jacob Walkin, *The Rise of Democracy in Pre-Revolutionary Russia: Political and Social Institutions Under the Last Three Tsars* (New York: Frederick A. Prager, 1962). On the progress of women's rights in pre-revolutionary decades and on women's situation during the Soviet period, the most informed and least prejudiced book is Gail Warshovsky Lapidus, *Women in Soviet Society. Equality, Development, and Social Change* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978). The first sentence of chapter 1 reads: "No discussion of the problem of sexual equality in Soviet society can take the Bolshevik revolution of 1917 as its starting point." Yet this has been the starting point for most Western studies of the sexual politics in the Soviet Union from the 1920s to our time.

7. On Nikolai Przhevalsky, see Donald Rayfield, *The Dream of Lhasa: The Life of Nikolai Przhevalsky, Explorer of Central Asia* (Ohio University Press, 1977). Also my reviews of this book, "Przhevalsky: The Russian Livingstone," *University Publishing*, no. 5 (Summer 1978); and "Gay Life Before the Soviets: Revisionism Revised," *The Advocate*, no. 339, April 1, 1982.

8. Konstantin Leontiev's novel *The Egyptian Dove* was published in a rather lame translation by George Reavey (Weybright and Talley, 1969). The publication of this novel in English brought forth two important essays on Leontiev: Clarence Brown, "Slightly to the Right of the Czar," *The New Republic*, April 17, 1969; and W. H. Auden, "A Russian Aesthete," *The New Yorker*, April 1970. In Russian, there is a full-scale critical biography: Yury Ivask, *Konstantin Leont'ev. Zhizn' i tvorchestvo* (Bern, Switzerland: Herbert Lang & Co., 1974).

9. On the relationship between Diaghilev and Filosofov and their role in the whole of Russian turn-of-the-century culture, see Vladimir Zlobin, *A Difficult Soul: Zinaida Gippius* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980); also my essays "Sergei Diaghilev, Public and Private," *Christopher Street*, March 1980 (reprinted in *The Christopher Street Reader*, [New York: Coward-McCann, 1983]; "A Cultural Educator of Genius," in Nancy Van Norman Baer, ed., *The Art of Enchantment, Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, 1909-1929*, published by the M.H. de Young Memorial Museum in conjunction with their Diaghilev exhibit, 1988-89, San Francisco, pp. 14-25; and "Diaghilev," *International Encyclopedia of Dance*, Selma Jeanne Cohen, et al., eds. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, forthcoming).

10. Nina Berberova's account of Russian homosexuals in the 1890s is in "Préface à l'édition de 1987" to her book *Tchaïkovski* (Paris: Actes Sud, 1987).

11. For refutation of the renewed rumors about Tchaikovsky's forced suicide see Nina Berberova, Malcolm H. Brown, and Simon Karlinsky, "Tchaikovsky's Death Was Not a Suicide," *High Fidelity*, August 1981; and the same three authors' "Doubts About Tchaikovsky," *New York Times*, August 9, 1981. The most devastating critique of the suicide version is Alan M. Kriegsman, "The Great Suicide Debate," *Washington Post*, March 28,

1982. Nina Berberova's new introduction, cited above, the authoritative essay by the historian Alexander Poznansky, "Tchaikovsky's Suicide: Myth and Reality," in *19th Century Music*, volume 11, no. 3, Spring 1988 and Poznansky's forthcoming book on Tchaikovsky and the homosexuals of his time should lay to rest for good the untenable claims of the suicide theory proponents, including those of Tchaikovsky's biographer David Brown.

12. Aileen Kelly, "Self-Censorship and Russian Intelligentsia, 1905-1914," *Slavic Review*, 46, no. 2 (Summer 1987). The author does not restrict her purview to the period mentioned in the title, but traces and documents the negative attitudes toward all forms of sexuality among Russian radicals beginning with the 1860s.

13. On the negative view of homosexuality in the Russian revolutionary tradition at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, see Alexander Berkman, *Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist* (reissued New York: Schocken Books, 1970).

14. V. I. Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* [Complete Collected Writings] (Moscow, 1958), 49, pp. 50-57, contains the cited correspondence with Inessa Armand. Lenin on sexual liberation: Clara Zetkin, *Reminiscences of Lenin* (New York: International Publishers 1934); the book was written ten years earlier.

15. For a biography of Mikhail Kuzmin, see John E. Malmstad, "Mixail Kuzmin: A Chronicle of His Life and Times" (in English) in vol. 3 of Kuzmin's collected poetry, *Sobranie stikhovrenii* (in Russian), edited by Malmstad and Vladimir Markov (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1977). See also my review article on this collection, "Death and Resurrection of Mikhail Kuzmin," *Slavic Review*, 38, no. 1 (March 1978) and the section on Kuzmin in GS 76. A selection of Kuzmin's fiction, plays and poetry in English translation by Michael Green, *Selected Prose and Poetry*, was published by Ardis in 1980. An edition in Russian of Kuzmin's complete collected prose writings is being currently brought out by Berkeley Slavic Specialties, Berkeley, California, under the editorship of Valdimir Markov et al. Seven volumes have appeared so far.

16. The relationship between Nikolai Kliuev and Sergei Esenin is discussed in greater detail in GS 76. A volume of Kliuev's poetry in English, translated and with a preface by John Glad (Nikolai Klyuev, *Poems*) was published by Ardis in 1977. Of the recent biographies of Esenin in English, only Gordon McVay, *Isadora & Esenin*, Ardis, 1980, deals with this poet's bisexuality in detail, if a bit reluctantly. See also my review of Gordon McVay's earlier book, *Esenin, A Life* (Ardis, 1976), in *The New York Times Book Review*, May 9, 1976. A two-volume edition of Kliuev's writings, *Sochineniia* [Works], Gleb Struve and Boris Filippov, eds., was published by A. Neimanis, Munich, 1969. Of particular interest are Boris Filippov's biographical essay, which cites a number of publications on homosexual and bisexual practices in the religious rituals of such sects as the Khlysty, whose folklore Kliuev had incorporated into his poetry; and the British Esenin specialist Gordon McVay's selection of letters and other documents, obtained from secret Soviet archives, which illustrate Kliuev's love affairs with Esenin and other men. Filippov's and McVay's contributions are both in volume 1.

17. Maxim Gorky and Leonid Andreyev, *Neizdannaia perepiska* [Unpublished Correspondence], in the series *Literaturnoe nasledstvo* [Literary Heritage] (Moscow, 1965), 72; 288. I am grateful to Vladimir Kozlovsky for pointing out this correspondence in his book (see note 34). Alexei Achkasov, *Artsybashevskii Sanin: Oko' o polovogo voprosa* [Artsybashev's Sanin: Concerning the Sexual Question] (Moscow: 1908) pp. 5-7 and 16-18.

18. A sympathetic account by a visiting foreigner of the reception in the Russian intellectual community of Kuzmin's, Zinovieva-Annibal's and Viacheslav Ivanov's books can be found in Werner Daya, "Die sexuelle Bewegung in Russland" [The Sexual Movement in Russia], *Zeitschrift für Sexualwissenschaft*, no. 1, Leipzig, 1908. I thank Siegfried Tornow of West Berlin for sending me his unpublished lecture "Homosexuality and Politics in Soviet Russia," from which I learned of Daya's article.

19. On Marina Tsvetaeva's life, writings and lesbianism, see my book *Marina Tsvetaeva, The Woman, Her World and Her Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985). Her relationships with women are more fully documented in the second printing, 1987.

20. On Riurik Ivnev's gay pyro-masochism, see Gordon McVay, "Black and Gold: the Poetry of Riurik Ivnev," *Oxford Slavonic Papers*, New Series, vol. IV (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971).

21. The most complete and reliable account of human rights in Russia before, during and after the February and October revolutions is Mikhail Heller and Alexander Nekrich, *Utopia in Power: The History of the Soviet Union From 1917 to the Present* (New York: Simon & Schuster, Summit Books, 1986).

22. Christopher Isherwood, *Christopher and His Kind*, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1976, pp. 17-18.

23. John Lauritsen and David Thorstad, *The Early Homosexual Rights Movement (1864-1935)* (New York: Times Change Press, 1974). The book is a good source on the early homosexual movements in Germany and England. But the section on Russia (pp. 62-70) is deplorably biased and uninformed. The authors follow Wilhelm Reich in the assumption that no liberation of any kind was possible in Russia prior to the October Revolution. They cite Mikhail Kuzmin's 1920 volume of gay verse, *Veiled Pictures*, as something that became possible only under the Bolshevik rule. They quote five lines from Mark Sereisky's article on homosexuality in the 1930 edition of the Great Soviet Encyclopedia about the impunity of male homosexuality in the Soviet Union, but do not note that the context surrounding these lines describes the condition as a serious mental illness in urgent need of a cure.

The main exhibit in their case for the Bolsheviks' enlightened views of homosexuality is a rather mysterious brochure by Dr. Grigory Batkis, *Die Sexualrevolution in Russland*, published in Berlin in 1925. It is claimed in the German edition that the work was first published in the USSR in Russian in 1923. But while the German edition is available at some libraries, no researcher has been able to find a copy in Russian, either in the Soviet Union or abroad. As Wayne R. Dynes points out in his *Homosexuality. A Research Guide* (New York: Garland, 1987), p. 141, the Batkis brochure was printed "for foreign consumption" and never appeared in the USSR.

24. Professor Berberova said this when I visited her at her home in Princeton in 1977. I showed her Isherwood's statement as well as John Lauritsen's and David Thorstad's book and their rebuttal to my 1976 survey article (GS 76).

25. Valery Chalidze, *Criminal Russia. Essays on Crime in the Soviet Union*, translated from the Russian by P. S. Falla (New York: Random House, 1977), pp. 143-144.

26. I. Gel'man, *Polovaia zhizn' sovremennoi molodezhi. Opyt sotsial'no-biologicheskogo obsledovaniia* [Sexual Life of Contemporary Youth. An Essay in Sociological and Biological Investigation] (Moscow and Petrograd: State Publishing House, 1923).

27. M. Sereisky, "Gomoseksualizm," in *Bol'shaia meditsinskaia entsik-*

*lopediia* [The Great Medical Encyclopedia], P.A. Semashko, ed. (Moscow, 1929), vol. 77, 1929, columns 668–72. This article was reprinted in an abridged form in the first edition of *The Great Soviet Encyclopedia*, 1930.

28. Nikolai Kliuev, "Chetvertyi Rim" [The Fourth Rome], *Sochineniia* 2: 229–303. For an English translation of the beginning of this poem (with some vexing misprints) see GS 76.

29. Lev (Leon) Trotsky, *Literatura i revoliutsiia* [Literature and Revolution] (Moscow: Glavlit, 1923), p. 47. The passage on Kliuev and Esenin is cited in my own translation from the original Russian edition, rather than from the available English translation (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960), where this passage is on p. 65.

30. Only in the 1970s, when the Soviet scholar Sophia Poliakova prepared the complete collection of Parnok's poetry, wrote her biography and sent them to be published in the West, did this major lesbian poet achieve posthumously the acclaim that was her due. See Sophia Parnok, *Sobranie stikhov vorenii* [Collected Poems], S. Poliakova, ed. (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1979). The introductory essay by Poliakova is a biography of Parnok and a study of her poetry. Poliakova has also published a book about the love affair between Parnok and Marina Tsvetaeva in 1914–1916 and its reflection in their writings, *Zakatnye ony dni* [The Sunset Days of Yore] (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1983). The affair of Tsvetaeva with Parnok is described in chapter 3, "Two Rival Suns," in Karlinsky, *Marina Tsvetaeva*. See also Rima Shore, "Remembering Sophia Parnok (1885–1933)," *Conditions: Six*, 1980.

31. On Georgy Chicherin's homosexuality, see Malmstad, "Mixail Kuzmin," pp. 24–25 and notes 28 and 29 to chapter 1. The biographies of Chicherin in the various editions of *The Great Soviet Encyclopedia* always mention his sojourn in Germany in search of a cure for an unspecified illness. A note to Alexander Meyendorff's memoir "My Cousin, Foreign Commissar Chicherin," *Russian Review*, April 1971, explains that references to Chicherin's poor health or health problems were euphemisms for his homosexuality.

32. Marie Seton, *Sergei M. Eisenstein*, revised ed. (London: Dennis Dobson, 1978), p. 119. (Originally published in 1952 by The Bodley Head.) Other passages in Seton's book that deal with Eisenstein's homosexuality are on pp. 30, 48–49, 73, 133–34, 139, 231–32, 279, and 426 ff.

33. Some of the other sources on Sergei Eisenstein's homosexuality are Stan Brakhage, *Film Biographies* (Berkeley: Turtle Island, 1977), pp. 98–99, where Kenneth Rexroth reports a conversation with Eisenstein in which the director admitted that he was forced to return to the Soviet Union by a threat to expose his sex life; Thomas Waugh, "A Fag-Spotter's Guide to Eisenstein," *Body Politic*, no. 35, July/August 1977, an excellent demonstration of homoerotic imagery in Eisenstein's films (I thank Tom Waugh for providing me with the texts of the last two items); and Jerry Heil, *The Russian Literary Avant-Garde (1920s and 1930s)* (doctoral dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1984), pp. 130–31 and 168–69. On the role of the American pro-Communist writer Upton Sinclair in cutting off the funds for Eisenstein's Mexican film project and denouncing him to Stalin when Sinclair found out about the director's sex life, see Edmund Wilson, "Eisenstein in Hollywood," in Wilson, *The American Earthquake* (New York: Doubleday, 1958) pp. 367–413.

34. The text of Article 121 is cited on p. 155 of Vladimir Kozlovsky, *Argo russkoi gomoseksual'noi subkul'tury* [The Slang of Russian Homosexual Subculture] (Benson, Vt.: Chalidze Publications, 1986). The book is a cornucopia of information about the situation of lesbians and gay men in Russian and Soviet culture.

35. Maxim Gorky, *Sobranie sochinenii v 30 tomakh* [Collected Writings in 30 volumes] (Moscow: 1953), 27: 238. This essay appeared in both *Pravda* and *Izvestiia* on May 23, 1934.

36. Reich, *The Sexual Revolution*, pp. 209-210; Chalidze, *Ugolovnaia Rossia* (the Russian edition of his *Criminal Russia*) (New York, 1977), pp. 227-28, cites instances of homosexual activities viewed as political crimes by the Soviet judiciary authorities. This attitude is confirmed by the speech of Nikolai Krylenko (see note 37).

Other sources on the wave of arrests of Soviet homosexuals in 1934 are Philip Jason, "Progress to Barbarism," *Mattachine Review*, August 1957 (an interview with a witness of those events); and Boris Nikolaevsky, *Power and Soviet Elite*, Janet D. Zagoria, ed. (New York, 1965), p. 31.

37. A transcript of Krylenko's speech was published in *Sovietskaia iustitsiia* [Soviet Law] (Moscow, 1936), no. 7. It is cited in Kozlovsky, *Argo russkoi*, p. 154.

38. My own contacts with Soviet gay men in Germany are described in "Gay Life in the Age of Two Josephs: McCarthy and Stalin" (a review of John D'Emilio's book *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, couched in the form of a personal memoir), *The Advocate*, no. 366, April 28, 1983.

39. "G." (pen name of an American scholar and critic), "The Secret Life of Moscow," *Christopher Street*, June 1980.

40. George Schuvaloff (pen name of a Soviet writer who recently died in New York), "Gay Life in Russia," *Christopher Street*, September 1976.

41. Kozlovsky, *Argo russkoi*, pp. 156-59, cites three instances from memoirs published in the West in 1975, 1979, and 1982 where heterosexual KGB agents were compelled by their superiors to engage in gay sex in order to entrap foreign visitors for purposes of espionage.

42. On Kharitonov, see Kozlovsky, *Argo russkoi*, pp. 185-186. On pp. 193-95, Kozlovsky reproduces Kharitonov's prose fragment "A Leaflet" (*Listovka*), a sort of manifesto for gay rights and an examination of Soviet society's hostility to homosexuals.

43. See my article "The Soviet Union vs. Gennady Trifonov," *The Advocate*, August 19, 1986. Since some of his work is now publishable, Trifonov has given up his fight for an exit visa (a fight in which he was engaged during the last two decades) and chosen to stay in the Soviet Union.

44. Limonov's *It's Me, Eddie* was published in Russian by Index Publishers, New York, 1979. The English translation by S. I. Campbell was brought out by Random House, New York, 1983. On Limonov's subsequent novels, see Edward J. Brown, "Eddie-Baby on the Town," *The Nation*, September 26, 1987.

45. Lesbians in gulag camps are mentioned in the second volume of Eugenia Ginsburg's memoirs, published in English as a separate book, *Within the Whirlwind*, trans. Ian Boland (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981). Kozlovsky cites extensive passages from *Moi vospominaniia* [My Memoirs] by E. Olitskaya, vol. 2 (Frankfurt, 1971), about lesbian customs in the Soviet labor camps as well as several other authors of memoirs and fiction on this theme on pp. 111-17 of his book.

46. On lesbian themes and experience described by Soviet feminist writers see Tatiana Mamonova, ed., *Women and Russia: Feminist Writings from the Soviet Union* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984); and Julia Voznesenskaya, *The Women's Decameron*, translated by W. B. Linton (Boston: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1986).

47. Viktor Sosnora, *Letuchii gollandets* [The Flying Dutchman], (Frankfurt/Main; Posev, 1979), pp. 211-213.

48. Mikhail Shargorodsky and Pavel Osipov, *Kurs sovetskogo ugolovnogo prava* [Textbook of Soviet Criminal Law], vol. 3, (Leningrad, 1973). Quoted in Kozlovsky, *Argo russkoi*, pp. 163-64 and Tornow, "Homosexuality and Politics."

49. Venedikt Erofeev (pen name), *Moskva-Petushki*, Ami (Israel), no.3, 1973. English translation as *Moscow to the End of the Line*, 1980. Cited in Kozlovsky, *Argo russkoi*, p. 6.