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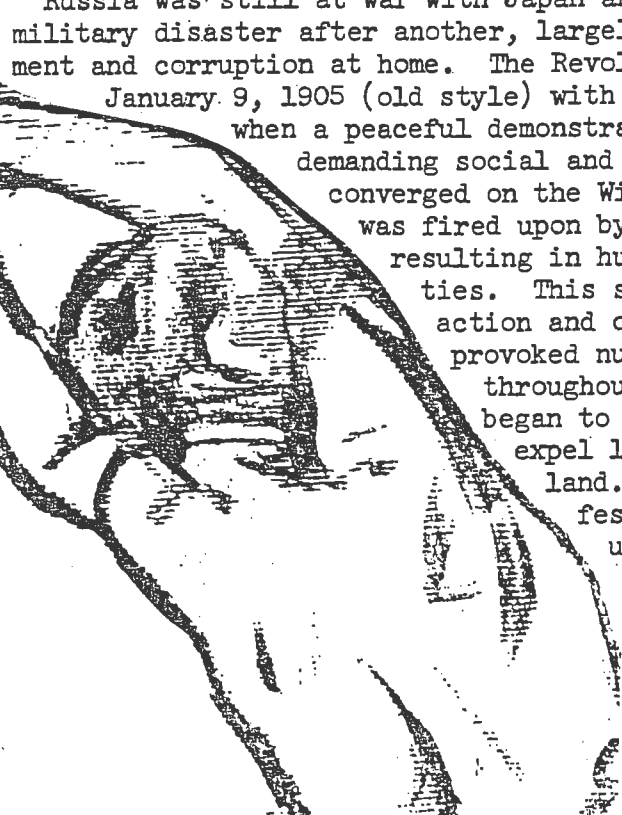
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RUSSIAN SATIRICAL JOURNALS: 1905-1907

Back in 1905, Russia had its "long hot summer" that led to an exhilarated outpouring of satirical journals which has rarely been equalled. A large number of these journals has been acquired in recent years by the Memorial Library and is housed in the Rare Books Department.



Russia was still at war with Japan and was suffering one military disaster after another, largely due to mismanagement and corruption at home. The Revolution itself began January 9, 1905 (old style) with "Bloody Sunday," when a peaceful demonstration of workers demanding social and political reforms converged on the Winter Palace and was fired upon by government troops, resulting in hundreds of casualties. This savage repressive action and other grievances provoked numerous strikes throughout Russia. Peasants began to burn manor houses, expel landlords and seize land. Students and professors closed the universities in protest. Ominous mutinies began to take place in the armed forces, such as that aboard the Black Sea cruiser Potemkin, immortalized in Eisenstein's

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film. Finally, in October, a local Moscow rail strike, called in demand of civil liberties and amnesty for political prisoners, quickly spread throughout the country and brought on what was probably the most complete general strike in history. Tsar Nicholas II was helpless in the face of this sort of national passive resistance and was forced to make concessions.

In the Manifesto of October 17, 1905, which was published according to the proposal of Count Witte, head of his cabinet, the tsar promised to give the Russian people "the unshakable foundations of civil liberty: inviolability of the person, freedom of conscience, speech, assembly and unions." Other concessions related to amnesty for political prisoners, suffrage, and the convening of the State Duma, a representative legislative body. However, most historians now agree that the October Manifesto did not represent the triumph of the revolution, but served to gain a reprieve for Russian auto-  
cracy.

It was at this moment in Russian history, often referred to as "the days of freedom," that we witness the most concentrated outpouring of satirical journals that Russia has ever known. Artists and writers used their newly won freedom to convey the furious hatred and contempt stored up over the centuries by the Russian people towards their oppressors. Similar manifestations had occurred in other revolutionary epochs, such as the Reformation, the German Revolution of 1848 and the French revolutions. In Russia the established thick literary journals were too inflexible to provide the



immediate response to the swift course of events that only newspapers and satirical journals could provide.

So-called humorous journals already existed in the nineteenth century, but they were quite devoid of social content. A weekly journal, called Zritel' (The Spectator), appeared in July 1905 and opened a campaign against bureaucracy, but it could not ridicule the upper strata, nor portray the oppression of the population. Current events had to be treated with great caution, and articles were written largely in Aesopian language. Even while exercising moderation in its jibes, The Spectator won wide support. However, with the appearance of No. 17 on October 2, 1905, the journal was suppressed. It was reborn on October 30th, after the October Manifesto, and in line with its defense of free press its first issue was not submitted to the censors. Now The Spectator could belabor the various figures in public life that had been protected by censorship a month earlier. The upper bureaucracy, cabinet members and the royal clique came in for their share of ridicule. Other satirical journals began to appear and attacked the regime without mercy.

Altogether, some 263 different satirical journals appeared in Russian during 1905-1907. If the satirical journals issued in other languages are taken into account, then the total would exceed 400. Various figures have been given by different authors for the total circulation of these journals: 5,175,000 copies, 23, 175,000 copies, and 40 million copies. The public was wider still because of the fact that materials were often reproduced in newspapers and other journals throughout the country.

In perusing these journals one is struck by their suggestive names and stark appearance. Many of them bear names that suggest the mood of the times, such as weapons of revolt and oppression (Bullets, Machine gun, Rifle, Bombs, Sword, Shrapnel, Bayonet, Whip, Lash, Rope, Poison), or combat (Duel, Volley, Fighter), or total destruction and inundation (Storm Wave, Ninth Wave, Whirlpool, Storm, Precipice). Other names suggest signals for revolt (Whistle, Bell ringer, Signal, Lantern, Flame, Banner). More in keeping with the sting and sharpness of satire are names of birds and insects (Wasp, Bumblebee, Woodpecker, Sting, Bill, Scorpion, Raven, also Porcupine), or names of appropriate objects (Axe, Nail, Needle, Arrow).

Other names suggest satire and humor more directly (Juvenal, Satire, Buffon, Clown, Scandal, Punch, Tattler, Free Laughter, Red Laughter). A most interesting category are names of other worlds and their outlandish creatures (Evil Spirit, Vampire, Wood-Goblin, Fairy Tales, Land of Dreams, Hell's Mail). The remainder do not fall readily into any category, but are instructive for what they suggest about this period in Russian history, the state of mind of the Russian people (On the Eve, It is Dawning, Freedom, Gadfly, Meeting, Pepper, Sedition, Mirror, Bouquet, Arabesques, Painter, Hammer, Scythe, Retreat, Octopus).

With regard to the contents of these journals, satire and caricature occupy the center of the stage. However, graphic representation is so stark and brutal that it overshadows the editorial and literary efforts. Alongside the caricatures appear unique landscapes -- pictures and photographs of the revolution, terror against the background of nature. These journals attracted some of the best artists of the period, such as Dobuzhinskii (who later emigrated

### 3 P H T E N I



to the United States and designed sets for many years in the American theater), Kustodiev, Remizov, Chekhonin and others. The literary lights who played an active role include, M. Gorkii, V. G. Korolenko, and S. Gusev-Orenburgskii. Viacheslav Ivanov, F. Sollogub, V. Briusov and I. Bunin occasionally contributed their literary works.

Most of the journals are without overt political party affiliation, because the liberal intelligentsia itself was now split and divided after the October Manifesto. The political physiognomy of the satirical journals of 1905-1907 may be understood better by dividing

them into two periods. During the first period the journals concentrated on Bloody Sunday, the October Manifesto, the December Uprising and the figures connected with these events. The best satirical journals made their appearance at this time, probably because they were fresh and spontaneous in their reflection of Russian life. However, the satire of this period cannot be called humorous. The sombre background of Russian life meant that acrimonious castigation prevailed over gay laughter. The dying bureaucratic regime was usually represented as trying by all means at its disposal to postpone the hour of its doom by implementing minor reforms and promises of reform and by filling the prisons with insurrectionists. Graphically, the old regime was portrayed as a donkey being carried on the peasant's back. Public figures close to the throne were constant targets of ridicule, including "The Great Magician" Count Witte, Durnovo, the Minister of Internal Affairs, and General Trepov. Even Tsar Nicholas II became a suitable object of ridicule.

The first issue of Pulemet (Rifle) for 13 November 1905 was suppressed and its editor, N. G. Shebuev, was sent to jail and brought to trial for insulting His Majesty and "insolent disrespect for Supreme power" in violation of Articles 103 and 128 of the Criminal Code. Shebuev was sentenced to a year in prison. This was the first of many such cases involving these satirical journals. In another case, the editor of Zloi Dukh (Evil Spirit) was sent to Siberia for four years. As the autocratic government regained its strength, many more journals were suppressed or confiscated. Altogether, 147 issues of 91 titles were confiscated or banned officially during 1905-1907. Even journals that were not officially banned were nevertheless not to be found in the public library or were withdrawn from sale by the police and gendarmes.

In the second period of the revolution, which can perhaps be characterized as a period of constitutional illusions (and subsequent disillusionment) and mounting repression by the regime, the satirical journals focused on the dissolutions of the First State Duma, elections to the Second Duma and its activities until mid-July 1907. As the political life in Russia led to more and more frustration and disillusionment, the popularity of the satirical journals began to ebb. In some cases outright



pornography was printed alongside social satire. If revolution gives rise to political satire and caricature, then anti-revolutionary reaction propagates erotic satire and caricature. This also happened in France at the end of the eighteenth century when the Thermidorists banned political caricatures. The commercial entrepreneurs were also somewhat responsible for the decline of satire, for they knew that pictures were the main gimmick for attracting the public to their journals and so did not exert themselves to enlist literary talent. As a result, the content of these journals became sheer rubbish. Also, certain stereotypes and themes were so often repeated that the public became immune to their sting and sharpness. Finally, in 1907 several "satirical" journals appeared that represented the anti-revolutionary and pogrom-oriented Black Hundreds.

The Memorial Library acquired its first satirical journals when 39 such titles were purchased in 1949 as part of the Russian Underground Collection (described in U.W. Library News, June, 1963). Additional issues and titles were acquired in Geneva in 1965 during my book-buying

trip. A third batch of 150 items was acquired last year from a dealer in New York.

In an effort to evaluate the quality and completeness of our collection, we were able to identify 100 such satirical journals. On the basis of the holdings given in the new Union List of Serials, we could also compare our holdings with the other major collections of Russian satirical journals in the U.S., with the following results:

	Titles Held	Issues Held
Memorial Library	84	265
Library of Congress	79	311
New York Public Library	83	316
Stanford University (Hoover Institution)	49	121

It is safe to say that our collection of Russian satirical journals is one of the best in the U.S., and represents an important source for our scholars concerned with the history, literature and art of Russia at the beginning of this century.

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