

Chto Takoe Azefshchina?:

The Azef Affair and Late Imperial Russian Modernity

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“Petersburg streets possess one indubitable quality: they transform passersby into shadows.”

-Andrei Bely

“Now when even was come, he sat down with the twelve. And as they did eat, he said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. And they were exceedingly sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I? And he answered and said, He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me.”

-Matthew 26: 20-23

Introduction: Azefshchina- What's in a name?

On January 18, 1909 (O.S.) the former Russian chief of police, A.A. Lopukhin, was arrested and his house was searched. Eleven packages containing letters and documents were sealed up and taken away.¹ Lopukhin stood accused of confirming to representatives of the Socialist Revolutionary Party that one of their oldest and most respected leaders, Evno Azef, had been a government agent working for the secret police (*Okhrana*) since 1893. The Socialist Revolutionaries (or SRs) were a notorious radical party that advocated the overthrow of the Russian autocracy by any means necessary.² The Combat Organization (*Boevaia Organizatsiia* or B.O.) of the SR Party was specifically tasked with conducting acts of revolutionary terror against the government and, since January of 1904, Evno Azef had been the head of this Combat Organization.³ This made him the government's most highly placed secret agent in a revolutionary organization. Lopukhin's alleged denunciation of him was, understandably, met with shock and outrage by the public at large.

For weeks, intense interest continued to revolve around Lopukhin's alleged involvement with the SR party; yet, equally intense curiosity quickly began to gather around the mysterious figure of Azef, whose exact whereabouts remained unknown. It was rumored that he had been playing a double game: taking money from both the police and contributors to the SR cause,

informing on revolutionaries while simultaneously organizing and helping to conduct the assassinations of prominent government officials. Within days, what had initially been referred to as the Lopukhin Affair became the Lopukhin-Azef Affair, and finally the Azef Affair. In the words of one observer, the Azef Affair “struck Russian life with the terrible destructive force of a bomb; giving rise to horror and confusion in society. For the entire week no one has been able to think or talk about anything but this event. All other questions and interests have faded into the background...everyone feels the presence of a terrible danger.” It was “a moment of deep moral shock” appearing “suddenly, like thunder from a clear sky” just when the preceding revolution had seemingly “lost its terrible aspect” and Russians had begun to “dream about the approach of peaceful times.”⁴ Within weeks a new term, *Azefshchina*, was being used to describe the pervasive sense of moral terror produced by the Azef Affair, as well as the political, cultural, and social milieu from which it had sprung. *Azefshchina* had become *Zeitgeist*.

The Russian language has a tradition of coining new words by taking the name of a prominent figure (sometimes real, sometimes fictional) and adding to it the suffix *-shchina*, which has a loose correlation to the English suffixes ‘ness’ and ‘ism’ (i.e. it converts qualities attributed to an individual figure into general abstract phenomena). Often the word describes (or posits) a new social type, or a new social disease. Perhaps the most famous example of this was Nikolai Dobroliubov’s 1859 article in the journal *Sovremmenik* entitled “*Chto takoe Oblomovshchina?*” or “What is Oblomovism?”. In this article Dobroliubov took traits from the fictional character of Oblomov, in Ivan Goncharov’s 1859 novel of the same name, and used them to define (and thereby attack) the gentry reformers of the 1840s. Oblomov was a good-intentioned, but chronically lazy, nobleman who often talked about reforming the conditions of his serfs, but couldn’t get out of bed long enough to actually do anything for them. Dobroliubov

coined the term '*Oblomovshchina*' as a "new word in the development of our society" which was "more than just the felicitous creation of a powerful talent" but rather "a product of Russian life, a sign of the times."⁵

The *Azefshchina* was understood in similar terms. The goal of this paper is to explore some of the ways in which the *Azefshchina* was understood to be such a 'sign of the times' and to identify elements of this symbolism that were shared across ideological or political divisions. I will argue that Azef essentially represented specific fears about modernity in the public imagination linked to Russia's rapid industrialization. Beginning in the 1880s, the Russian Empire undertook an extensive top-down industrialization project, maintaining a sustained annual rate of overall industrial growth of 8 percent per year during the 1890s.⁶ The dislocations wrought by this rapid industrialization, and by the accompanying growth of the market economy, were widely perceived to have eroded the traditional loyalties and stable identities upon which Russian society had once been based. The dramatic expansion of Russian cities brought people from diverse social and cultural backgrounds into close proximity with each other: often for the first time. The growing power of money in society (especially its wider availability to members of the non-noble classes), and the increasing influence of impersonal bureaucracies (whose already strong position in Russia was only increased by rapid industrialization) were all vivid reminders that Russian society was undergoing an unprecedented transformation.

The state responded to the dislocations wrought by this rapid transformation through an expansion of its police apparatus and an increasing reliance on arbitrary punitive measures. The *Okhrana* "placed agents in educational, social, and political institutions as well as in factories to keep an eye on actual and potential dissidents."⁷ On January 9, 1905, a peaceful procession of workers led by the priest (and government agent) Georgii Gapon petitioned the Tsar for

workplace reforms only to be callously gunned down on their way to the Winter Palace. When the shooting subsided, around 130 people lay dead, with another 299 seriously wounded. Known as ‘Bloody Sunday’, the event helped to spark the Revolution of 1905, which raged across the empire for nearly two years (according to Abraham Ascher it only ended with the dissolution of the Second Duma in 1907).⁸

Despite the concerted effort by the autocracy to preserve the traditional structure of society while simultaneously introducing vast modernizing projects, society was becoming more fluid, heterogeneous, and ultimately incomprehensible to those accustomed to the traditional estate system of *soslovie* which divided society into nobility, clergy, and peasantry. For many Russians, Azef not only embodied fears of an intrusive and untrustworthy state, but also of the new shape society was taking. He was perceived to be a Judas who had betrayed his SR companions, the government, or both, for his own personal gain. Allegations about his penchant for debauched living only augmented perceptions that he was morally depraved and loyal to himself alone. Furthermore, his incredible success as a double-agent represented the epitome of the indeterminate identity. For years he was able to deceive friends, colleagues, and even family (his wife of many years was committed to revolutionary principles). The fear that this somehow represented the new mercenary face of modern Russia was shared by both conservative reactionaries and liberal reformers.

After sketching a brief biography of Azef the man, I will focus on his conversion into a symbol. Making Azef representative of a phenomenon like modernity required making him more (and less) than a man. In the section “Azef the Culprit” I will describe how the *Azefshchina* was framed in the public imagination by detective novels and crime stories portraying Azef as villain, society as victim, and a vast array of commentators, spectators, and

readers as detectives deciphering clues and determining guilt. Further, I argue that Azefshchina reflected broader anxieties about life in the modern city, giving readers a new framework with which to interpret the alien urban environment in which they now lived. The next section “Azef the Monster” will develop this theme, providing specific examples of the dehumanization of Azef and his conversion into a ‘monster’ able to personify ‘evil’ and thereby serve as a scapegoat for larger social and economic problems. I will also argue that exaggerated descriptions of Azef’s ugliness were essentially an attempt to stabilize his identity by locating external signifiers of internal deviance: thereby helping to quiet the widespread fears of invisible (or unrecognizable) enemies that Azef seemed to embody for many.

The last two sections, “Azef the Jew” and “Azef the Agent” will illustrate how two prominent representations of Azef were both dehumanized images of ‘the enemy among us’ with strong ties to fears about modernity. In “Azef the Jew” I will illustrate how stereotypes of Jewish cliquishness, of their supposed lack of loyalty towards the Russian empire, and their alleged prominence (and mercenary behavior) in the marketplace, were all used to argue that the problems plaguing Russia’s quest for economic and industrial modernization were Jewish in origin. I will discuss how Azef’s Jewish identity was taken by many conservative Russian nationalists as proof that all Jews were treacherous and ruthless in their quest for wealth, and used to forward a platform of ‘Russia for the Russians’ which posited an ethnically unified government as the only safeguard against corruption and treachery.

In “Azef the Agent”, I will look at another common depiction of Azef in which he appears as a surrogate for larger processes associated with Russian modernity. For many reformers (and/or those sympathetic with the goals of the Russian revolutionary movement) Azef’s significance lay in the fact that he was an agent provocateur and a police spy. As such, he

represented for them the perfidy and corruption of the autocracy. The tsar's had long relied on informers and spies in an attempt to monitor their vast and heterogeneous empire. Yet ever since the assassination of Alexander II by revolutionary terrorists in 1881, the use of spies and *agents provocateurs* to infiltrate and expose revolutionary cells had become widespread and systematic. Under Alexander III and Nicholas II, the Russian state ultimately responded to contemporary challenges with an increased reliance on repressive measures: modernizing and centralizing the police apparatus to expand its efficiency and its reach. Azef, who had managed to infiltrate the highest echelons of the SR party, was a manifestation of the worst fears of revolutionaries (for whom mutual trust based upon a shared moral imperative was an almost sacred bond) and reformers alike: a symbol of a duplicitous government harnessing modernity for reaction rather than reform, and willing to employ the most deplorable tactics to maintain their hold on power.

Newspapers were an important space in which this symbolism was constructed, and newspaper articles comprise the bulk of this paper's source material. The *Azefschina* dominated the news cycle for weeks. Numerous articles attempted to sketch Azef's biography, to reconstruct his mysterious career and to establish his guilt or innocence. The majority of those unable to attend the widely anticipated Duma inquiry could read the wild descriptions and detailed transcripts of it that dominated the pages of numerous papers for days. This was in many ways Russia's first modern news sensation. The Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905 (the loss of which was a major impetus for the subsequent revolution) increased the demand for information among rural peasants and urban workers who were required to provide men and supplies for the war effort. This demand was met by newspapers, which dramatically increased their circulation in the cities and spread into rural Russia for the first time.⁹ Furthermore, changes in the censorship laws implemented during the revolutionary period ended

prepublication censorship and coupled with declining publication costs to produce a rapid expansion of the publishing industry. According to one self-taught peasant in 1905: “Until the war our peasants read no newspapers and considered this an unnecessary and superfluous matter.”¹⁰ From this point on however, newspapers would increasingly define the manner in which Russians from all walks of life imagined their nation and the wide world beyond it.¹¹

The *Azefshchina* is thus a lens through which to view important political, social, and cultural fault-lines emerging during a period of rapid change in Russia. What emerges as a common factor, on both the right and the left of Russian politics, is a significant unease with modernity: described and imagined by both sides as a world infiltrated by degenerative elements and/or a moral infection that needed to be purged from the government, the Russian nation, or the SR Party. The rapid top-down industrialization which had begun in earnest by 1892, the uncertainty and fear associated with life in the modern city, the increasing prominence of market capitalism, the spread of bureaucratic centralization: Azef was used to represent all of these things. He became a contemporary metaphor for the intra-revolutionary period: a ‘sign of the times.’

Azef the Man

Speculations about Azef’s true identity were a constant part of discussions about him. While the frequently asked question ‘Who was Azef?’ (*Kto zhe byl Azef?*) usually referred to whether or not he was a double-agent, a committed revolutionary, or a faithful government agent, there was a widespread curiosity about the man himself. Before moving on to the controversy that ultimately transformed him into a larger than life symbol of the age (and/or all of its ills), it is perhaps useful to say a few words about what is known about him. Evno Azef

was the second of seven children: the son of a poor Jewish tailor named Fischel. He was born in the Jewish Pale of Settlement, in the small town of Grodno, on July 11, 1869. When he was five years old, his father took advantage of the loosening of restrictions on Jewish settlement by moving the family outside of the Pale to the city of Rostov-on-Don. This booming industrial and commercial center had been nicknamed “the Russian Chicago’ ...for its unexpected economic boom in the third quarter of the nineteenth century” and had become a magnet for those seeking to improve their fortunes and/or provide better opportunities for their families.¹²

Fischel Azef ultimately fell far short of fortune: he was apparently not cut out for business and his foray into commerce, the cheap drapery shop he opened, failed to lift his family out of poverty.¹³ The family continued to live in squalor in a town that, much like the real Chicago, was just as notorious for its rapidly expanding slums as for its burgeoning industry. During the spring “whole sections of the city turned into impassable swamps” and in the fall “the mire and manure reached above people’s knees, and occasionally a family would not dare to leave the house...lest they be immersed in a mud bath.”¹⁴ Life for the Azefs was hard: poverty took its toll on family relations and quarrels were frequent. The mother attempted to run away on at least one occasion and according to a relative “the children were going crazy.”¹⁵ Evno must have learned to navigate his way through complex and tense interpersonal relations at a very early age.

Despite his failings in business, Fischel Azef tried his best to do right by his children. At the very least, he made sure that they received an education (which was more than most men in his position were able to do). If he could not immediately improve their condition, he seemed determined to provide his children with the tools to avoid such a fate permanently. It is unclear whether Evno was influenced more by his father’s passion for upward mobility, by “the Rostov

atmosphere of hunting for quick and easy profits”, or whether, like many who have experienced life in poverty, he simply developed a fervent desire to escape such a life by any means necessary.¹⁶ In 1892, local officials began to investigate his role in the distribution of revolutionary proclamations (a possible sign of an early, and less exclusively self-interested, desire to eradicate poverty and/or improve Russian society in general). In order to finance his getaway, Azef allegedly sold a consignment of butter with which he had been entrusted by a merchant in his capacity as a travelling salesman, pocketed the eight hundred rubles, and used it to run off to Karlsruhe, Germany where he enrolled in a polytechnic academy and pursued a degree in engineering.¹⁷

The discussion of Azef’s career from this point forward, both by commentators in 1909 and subsequently by historians and biographers, has been saturated by moralizing and speculation. Azef was clearly an unsavory character, and this certainly had an impact upon the course of *Azefshchina*. Yet an undue emphasis upon moral judgments and/or psychological profiles of the man himself has obscured more compelling aspects of the Azef affair.

Azefshchina was a widespread social phenomenon that cannot be explained by a mere character sketch of the man. He may have been genuinely disagreeable, but this does not explain the monstrous caricature he became in the public imagination, or why he seemed to represent Russian modernity.

Since he never kept a diary and any conclusions drawn from his actions are necessarily speculative, I will refrain from grand explanations (moral, psychological, or otherwise) of his behaviour. I am ultimately more interested in the myth than the man. What seems clear is that from this time forward, Azef abandoned any revolutionary aspirations he may have had about bettering mankind in general, and began to focus more exclusively on improving his own

situation. On April 4, 1893 he wrote a ‘feeler’ letter to the Police Department in St. Petersburg, offering his services as an informant among a revolutionary student group in Karlsruhe to which he belonged. By June he was officially working for the *Okhrana*: receiving 50 rubles a month to forward his knowledge of the group’s activities to the police.¹⁸ Within a year he had made the acquaintance of Khaim Zhitlovsky and his wife, founders of the Union of Socialist Revolutionaries Abroad (an early incarnation of the Socialist Revolutionary Party), and become one of the group’s first members.¹⁹

If anything can be said with certainty about Azef, it is that he was very good at his job (so good, in fact, that the true nature of his activities remains a continuing source of controversy). He stood out among his fellow students and revolutionaries because of his “devotion to the Revolution and its ideals.”²⁰ He immersed himself completely in the revolutionary role: even his wife Liubov’ Menkina, a young seamstress with radical sentiments whom he had met in Darmstadt in 1895, was convinced that he was a revolutionary and seemingly relished the role of being the wife of such a great man.²¹ By 1901 he had been tasked with concluding negotiations to fuse the various groups in the Union of Socialist Revolutionaries into one united Socialist Revolutionary party.²² He was literally one of the SR’s founding members. According to the historian Boris Nikolaevsky, Azef’s “double game” dates from around this time. By 1902 at the latest, Nikolaevsky claims that Azef was holding back crucial information about his position in the party, as well as the terrorist activities of the party’s Combat Organization (a semi-independent militant arm of the SR party devoted to the commission of terrorist acts against the autocracy). In particular, Azef did not disclose to his *Okhrana* handlers the fact that he had become quite close to the Combat Organization’s leader, Grigorii Gershuni.²³

Upon Gershuni's arrest in 1903 Azef took over as the chief of the Combat Organization. Working with his second-in-command, the terrorist Boris Savinkov, between 1904 and 1907 Azef allegedly organized the successful assassinations of prominent officials such as the notoriously brutal Minister of the Interior Viacheslav von Plehve, the tsar's uncle and governor-general of Moscow Grand Duke Sergei Alexandrovich, and the prominent churchman and government union organizer Georgii Gapon, as well as the attempted assassination of the Petersburg governor-general Fedor Dubasov. If he did play a guiding role in these acts, he certainly didn't disclose it to the police. However, since these assassinations (especially the assassination of Plehve) gained Azef profound respect and admiration amongst the revolutionaries, he did not hesitate to take credit for them. While the level of his actual involvement in planning these assassinations is still a subject of controversy, there is no doubt that he capitalized upon the belief that he was personally responsible in order to solidify his position within the ranks of the SR party. He was widely regarded as a hero: the last man you would expect to be a traitor.

Like many 'great men', certain allowances were made for Azef that would not have been extended to men of lesser stature. He was apparently very fond of drinking and carousing with loose women upon whom he spent large quantities of money. He "spoke of Parisian gaiety with great animation" and excused his debauchery by claiming that "the life of a revolutionary was so burdensome that one often needed to forget oneself amidst merriment."²⁴ Such blatant licentiousness ran counter to revolutionary morality. Yet no one seemed to see this as a sign that Azef was anything other than what he claimed to be. Indeed, his reputation was so secure that he managed to weather several significant accusations that he was working for the police. On September 8, 1905 the SR party received a letter warning that "a certain T---, an ex-convict [and]

the engineer Aseff, a Jew, who had recently arrived from abroad” were in fact spying for the government.²⁵ Without losing his composure for a moment, Azef was able to divert attention to the mysterious ‘T’, who he claimed must be an SR named Tataroff. Azef was able to convince the SRs to kill Tataroff, while he himself remained free of suspicion. Any accusations against him, it was believed, could only be provocation on the part of the government intended to sow the seeds of mistrust and disunity amongst the party.

It took a long time for the accusations that finally brought him down to stick. Vladimir Burtsev, editor of a radical Russian journal published in Paris, had been working closely with a mole in the secret police named M.E. Bakai, who had assured Burtsev that the *Okhrana* had a highly placed agent in the SR party. Burtsev claimed that after encountering Azef in the street one day, he suddenly asked himself “If I have recognized Azeff so easily from afar, why cannot police detectives, who most certainly know him by sight, recognize him when he appears in St Petersburg in so conspicuous a manner?”²⁶ From this point on, Burtsev worked to uncover the truth about Azef: eventually confronting former *Okhrana* chief Lopukhin on a train, where the latter (apparently outraged over revelations about the true nature of Azef’s activities in the Combat Organization) confirmed that Azef had worked for him. The SR leadership had previously refused even to listen to Burtsev’s accusations, claiming that “If Azef is a provocateur, we are all provocateurs.”²⁷ Some had even considered having Burtsev killed for slander. It was finally Lopukhin’s word on the matter (later confirmed by an SR delegation) that convinced the leadership of Azef’s treachery.

At half-past three on the morning of January 6, 1909, after having been confronted in his Paris apartment hours earlier by an delegation of his former comrades, Azef fled to the Saxon town of Friedrichsdorf (home of his mistress Hedwig Klopfer, who would become his constant

companion in exile), and left his wife a forwarding address in Vienna.²⁸ From this point on, his precise whereabouts became a mystery. He left confusion and devastation in his wake.

According to one of his former SR companions “the transition from ‘Azef-comrade’ to ‘Azef-provocateur’ took away all strength and will” from the party. Distrust of one’s comrades now ran rampant.²⁹ When the story became public with the arrest of Lopukhin several weeks later, this distrust spread throughout Russian society. Certainty about the limited “extent of terrorist encroachments” had been the “chief moral support of the reasonable elements of society” during the Revolution of 1905.³⁰ But then, “suddenly, like thunder from a clear sky, the Lopukhin-Azef affair came tumbling down upon us.”³¹ Azef damaged public trust in the government just as he had destroyed the SR’s ability to trust its own members. The government’s need to spy upon society to protect itself from dangerous elements had long been accepted by many as a necessary evil. But how to reconcile this with the revelation that the *Okhrana*’s most highly-placed agent was suspected of duplicity? “Spies and revolutionaries, revolutionaries and spies” lamented one observer, “who can figure out where one begins and the other ends?”³²

Azef the Culprit

Azef stood accused of murdering government officials (as well as at least one comrade – Tataroff-- whom he accused of working for the secret police to divert attention from himself), and of actively deceiving and betraying his comrades, his family, and the government. The Azef Affair injected elements of fear and uncertainty into a society in desperate need of trust and stability. Historians of the United States have argued that the reportage of murders and other horrifying crimes in the burgeoning mass medium of newspapers increasingly made sense of extreme social transgression by identifying the perpetrator as a monstrous ‘other’: thereby

helping to restore society's confidence in itself.³³ Literary critics have described how the detective novel emerged from this same impulse: echoing the desire to restore order to the chaos of modern life, symbolized in heinous, or mysterious criminal acts.³⁴ Much of the commentary and reportage on Azef partook of this dynamic: the effort to define the nature of Azef's transgression was an effort to contain the chaos he had unleashed upon Russian society and to reintroduce trust (whether in the government, the revolutionary movement, or society in general). Each of these groups perceived themselves to have been victimized; all, whether in their capacity as newspaper commentators, government officials, SR spokesmen, or members of the reading public, consciously or unconsciously, took upon themselves the mantle of the detective in their desire to define Azef's crime against them.

The Azef affair coincided with the height of the detective craze in Russia. According to Jeffrey Brooks, "during 1908 nearly 10 million copies of detective stories were published at 15 kopecks or less."³⁵ Although these numbers declined in following years, in 1909 detective stories still "prevailed over all types of printed material at newsstands, in railroad and tram cars, as well as among pupils and students."³⁶ Russians loved detective stories and they were reading them everywhere. Brooks, in his analysis of lower-class Russian literature, *When Russia Learned to Read*, claims that the rise of detective stories after the Revolution of 1905 marks a significant shift in popular conceptions of the individual's relationship to society. Whereas the rebellious, and/or independent individual had previously been typified by the bandit hero who stood *outside* of society (and who was ultimately called upon to pay the price for his freedom), the private detective who dominated the literary landscape after 1905 "was a hero of order and his appearance in Russian popular literature signifies the diffusion of a new sense of order, one in which the private community had an increased stake."³⁷

Reportage on the Azef affair consciously identified it with the world of the detective novel, and often tended to blur the distinction between the real and the literary. Detective novels tapped into (and augmented) a growing public appetite for the sensational, and the aura surrounding the Duma hearings into the affair were nothing if not a sensation. Spectators “waited for devastating revelations” about the “hellish plots” of the “demonic character” and “ingenious provocateur” Azef.³⁸ One writer speculated that “more fantastic and entertaining stories will in time be written about ‘The Great Azef’ than all of Sherlock Holmes’ put together. Conan-Doyle probably never dreamed of such audacious escapades and schemes as those conceived and implemented by Azef.” The article goes on to denounce Azef for his womanizing and his generally dissolute lifestyle, explaining that “a novelistic (*romanicheskaia*) aspect played an enormous role in the life of Azef, as is the case for many different revolutionaries.”³⁹ Interestingly, the author alleged that Azef identified with the world of the detective story to explain his motives.

Many accounts that were devoid of specific references to the literary nevertheless had strong connections to the detective genre. This was true of one article about the arrest of Lopukhin, identical versions of which appeared in *Novoe Vremia*, *Sanktpeterburgskaia Vedomosti*, and *Gazeta Kopeka*. This article introduced the *Azefshchina* to the public, containing many elements of the intrigue and high melodrama typical of crime reportage at this time, which would characterize much of the tone given to the Azef Affair:

“On the night of January 18th three men assigned to monitor the Christmas festivities in the neighborhood ... where Lopukhin lived received orders to quickly assemble a significant detail of policemen for the search of his apartment and his arrest. [At 6 A.M.] the policemen silently entered [the building where Lopukhin lived]. The doorman was awakened and instructed to ring Lopukhin’s apartment. The door was opened by a maid. Lopukhin was still asleep. It was ordered that he be awakened and at the same time the police entered the receiving room, into which the half-dressed Lopukhin quickly appeared. He was presented with the decree concerning his arrest and the search of his apartment. At first he seemed embarrassed but then,

after recovering from his initial fright, said: ‘Carry out your business gentlemen’ and sat in a chair next to the desk in his office, where the search began under the supervision of the investigator.”⁴⁰

The article goes on to describe, in detail, the search of Lopukhin’s apartment, which covered 15 rooms and lasted until 3 o’clock that afternoon. What is striking about this article is the extent to which it relies upon suspense. Unlike contemporary news stories in which the body, so to speak, appears on page one, the description here is drawn out. The reader essentially accompanies the investigators in successive stages from the public sphere into the private: from the dark streets of Petersburg, to the gatehouse, to the door, to the receiving room, and finally to inner-sanctum of Lopukhin’s office. The private world of a once-powerful official is laid bare before him.⁴¹ The suspense is sustained by the fact that, although the search itself is recounted, its results remain a secret (except for the tantalizing description of 11 packages of documents that were sealed up and taken away).

This public-private dynamic is typical of mystery and detective narratives in which “private space was mysterious space, the site of secret evils demanding to be penetrated, investigated, exposed, and mapped out by the reader.”⁴² The detective genre emerged from the concerns and anxieties of the modern city, whose rapid growth in the 19th century (Russian cities like Moscow and St. Petersburg tripled their populations between 1861 and 1910) presented new and mysterious landscapes that required deciphering. The genre had its origins in Gothic mystery stories, such as Eugene Sue’s *Les Mysteres de Paris*, or Edgar Allen Poe’s *The Man of the Crowd*, in which the city was a dark labyrinth that blended public and private into new and uncertain forms.⁴³ The crowd, for many observers, was the most intriguing and unsettling aspect of the modern city. The horror of crime stories, and likewise the horror of the Azef Affair, was largely contained in the impossibility of discerning whether or not the people one

brushed shoulders with on the street were average citizens or sinister villains. Individual faces, and individual identities, were swallowed up in the strange new organism of the crowd: at once menacing, hypnotizing, and largely illegible to the unskilled eye. Only the detective was equipped to read the crowd: to distinguish the culprit from everybody else. The detective novel, by allowing readers to participate in the act of detection, endows them with the sense that they have learned to read the urban landscape: to decipher the crowd.

Reportage and commentary on the Azef Affair was similarly motivated by the desire to read a seemingly illegible situation. Consider Prime Minister Stolypin's speech to the Duma on February 11, 1909:

"The Azef affair is an absolutely simple affair; and for the government and the Duma the only worthy, the only profitable exit from it is by the path of candid exposition and assessment of the facts. Therefore gentlemen, do not expect a passionate, defensive, or accusatory speech from me; this would only darken/obscure (*zatemnilo*) the affair...I want to illuminate (*osvetit'*) the entire business not from a departmental, not even from a governmental, but from a national point of view. But before moving on to an unbiased exposition of the facts, I must determine the sense and meaning which the government gives to several terms."⁴⁴

The tone of this speech was markedly different from most of what had preceded it in the Duma. Ever since Lopukhin's arrest, discussions of the Azef Affair had been characterized by vitriolic finger-pointing with little in the way of 'candid exposition' or reference to hard facts. While Stolypin would certainly not have considered himself a detective, his attempt to restore order through a dispassionate review of the evidence shared the same impulse to decipher modern society and explain apparent mysteries through the application of human reason which is a prominent undercurrent of detective and crime stories. This impulse to translate the *Azefshchina* into an intelligible framework, to 'solve the mystery' of Azef and thereby to contain the uncertainty he had unleashed upon Russian society, was shared by commentators and readers alike.

Azef the Monster

One of the primary means by which early newspaper crime accounts and detective novels restored order from chaos was by representing the criminal as an ‘other’: an image of deviance from society rather than a representative of it. The social balance was restored by placing the perpetrator outside of the moral and social order. Life could continue on its normal course.⁴⁵ To calm fears about ‘the killer in our midst’, perpetrators were often marked by exaggerated distinguishing features: an entire ‘science’ (physiognomy-which claimed the ability to read an individual’s personality and character traits by an examination of their physical features: especially the face and skull) was developed to help identify criminals by their (often racialized) physical appearances, and to thereby restore the citizenry’s confidence in their neighbors. Once the mask was removed, the perpetrator became easily identifiable for what he was. This section will explore some of the ways in which Azef’s image was altered in order to contain the fear and uncertainty he had unleashed. Whether as part of a general desire to restore Russian society’s confidence in the fact that their world was not populated by unidentifiable traitors and spies, or as an attempt by those who actually knew Azef to claim that they themselves had not been fooled by his trickery, Azef was made into a monster.

Historians of the Azef Affair have largely taken for granted the fact that Azef was an extremely ugly man. Yet none have noticed how these descriptions participate in the dynamic described above. Few books on the subject fail to include gratuitous descriptions of his alleged hideousness. According to Richard E. Rubenstein “photographic evidence confirms the ovoid skull, surmounted by a short crop of dark, wooly hair; the pronounced occipital ridge and dark brows overhanging surprisingly large, protuberant eyes; the large, flat nose, fleshy lips, and round, jutting jaw that makes one think of unlikely combinations such as a black Mussolini or a

Jewish Tatar.”⁴⁶ Based upon such a description, one might be puzzled when studying the photographic evidence for oneself. The picture included below reveals a man who, if not exceedingly handsome, was nevertheless far from being monstrously ugly. This equation of ugliness with specific ethnicities derives not from a neutral analysis of the ‘photographic evidence’, but rather from the language of physiognomy which was especially prominent in descriptions of Azef in 1909, and which often implied that Azef’s treachery had a racial foundation.



Such language is admittedly surprising when found in contemporary scholarship; yet Rubenstein is not alone in his seemingly unconscious appropriation of this racist paradigm. Practically every work on Azef participates in this kind of language, apparently oblivious to its obvious racist undertones. Anna Geifman, for example, explains that whereas there had been a tendency on the part of his acquaintances “to absolve any and all of Azef’s repulsive physical traits” prior to his confirmation as a double agent, this tendency disappeared once his treachery was revealed.⁴⁷ It is unclear exactly what she means by the word ‘absolve’, which almost seems

to indicate that Azef's appearance was a sin (or perhaps an indication of sinfulness?). Her explanation points to, but doesn't seem to grasp the significance of, a paradigm that was repeated over and over in descriptions of Azef by his former friends and comrades after his unmasking.

Consider the following accounts of first encounters with him:

“The first impression which Azef produced on the director was not in his favor: the coarse appearance of his face with its fat African lips, whose nasal pronunciation was repellent...”⁴⁸
Letter to the editor from Kropotkin (a prominent anarchist): “I saw Mr. Azef only one time in my life. Several years ago he paid me a visit...accompanied by an SR companion. His appearance did not make a good impression on me, and our conversation was very uninteresting....[Later] I quickly realized that the provocateur Azef and the unpleasant fat man who visited me were one and the same.”⁴⁹

In these accounts, Azef's ugliness appears as a clue that points to his inner duplicity. The protagonists react instinctively to his appearance as though to the presence of evil. This is clearly an attempt by those who knew him to absolve themselves from the disgrace of having been deceived.

Others may have been fooled, but *they* realized something was wrong the minute they laid eyes upon him. Yet if Azef had truly produced such instinctive impressions, how did he ever deceive so many? How was it that, even when faced with overwhelming evidence of his treachery, so many had refused to believe that it was true? The above statements are meant to emphasize Azef's 'otherness': to replace the mythology of the undetectable police spy that had grown up around Azef (and which had wreaked such havoc in revolutionary circles by sowing the seeds of mistrust among former comrades) with the myth of an easily identifiable villain.

In another example, Azef almost appears to be struggling to contain his true self beneath a mask of plump congeniality:

“Azef...produced a strange impression on me in the very first minute of our acquaintance. His face and eyes, penetrating and repellent, somehow ran counter to his entire figure-fat, good-natured, with an awkward manner. There seemed to be manifested in him a mild, good natured, hesitant person. He spoke with a noticeable sluggishness; his speech was in some way ungainly, and forgive me, not very intelligent. His voice sounded unpleasant, especially striking me in the first moments of our acquaintance, but then he very adeptly composed himself and tried to emphasize his good nature in various ways.”⁵⁰

This is not a man, but a monster masquerading as a man. By the careful observer, he could not be mistaken for a harmless citizen. Monsters are not human: they need not, indeed cannot, be taken as representative of society at large. They represent, instead, an aberrant ‘other’ that exists outside the community. Monsters require no soul-searching: they merely require identification and eradication. One merely needed to look beneath the surface (to read the physiognomy) to see what was lurking within. This dynamic is clearly mirrored in the following illustration from the front page of *Gazeta Kopeika* on January 28, 1909:



This picture reflects the dual aspect of the Azef myth. As an agent-provocateur he was dangerous because of his ability to hide in plain sight. As a monstrous personification of evil, he was dangerous, but also easy to identify. The image almost represents a symbolic transformation through the act of unmasking. The latter picture clearly exaggerates the features of the former: not only is he fatter (perhaps meant to signify uncurbed appetites), but his head is square. His nose is flatter, his eyes are set further apart, and his eyebrows are now connected (a trait attributed to werewolves in folk belief). In the first picture Azef resists the full-frontal gaze of the viewer: his face turned partially to the side, his moustache partially conceals his mouth and his head is covered in a hat. In the second the viewer confronts him head-on and he is fully exposed as an obvious other. Again, the message is clear: there was no need to worry about the possible 'police agent in our midst'. The act of unmasking diminishes the threat of the invisible master spy by turning him into an identifiable monster. Order could be restored: a revolutionary could trust his comrades again; a citizen could rest assured that the government was not riddled with unidentifiable traitors. As a monster, Azef was both easily recognizable and unrepresentative of the whole. Making Azef a monster ironically made him less of a threat.

Azef the Jew

The impulse to make monsters is predicated on the need for an easily identifiable enemy who exists outside of one's own camp: the more this enemy is dehumanized (the more he is reduced to a simple representation of evil) the more effective he is as a scapegoat. Evil explains everything...one need look no further. The same impulse that created a monster out of Azef made monsters out of Jews more generally. The demonization of Jews by anti-Semites in Russia fulfilled this same function: it created dehumanized enemies who could explain what was wrong

with Russia (i.e. the dislocations wrought by Russia's rapid and uneven fin de siècle industrialization, as well as the uncertainty and instability of modernization more generally), while leaving ethnic Russians untarnished. This section will explore how Azef became a personification of the Jews in anti-Semitic discussions of him, and how the *Azefshchina* was used to explain the problems plaguing Russia (terrorism, revolution, bitter party politics, the loss of stable identities and traditional loyalties, etc.) as emanating from the Jews. By defining *Azefshchina* as a Jewish problem, Russian nationalists in the media and the Duma sought to shield ethnic Russians from the stigmas (greed, duplicity, etc.) associated with the Azef Affair, to propagate their own political platform of 'Russia for the Russians' and to strengthen their positions as politicians, social commentators, etc. The career and the person of Azef, they argued, was proof of what they had been saying all along.

Vasily Rozanov, a prominent conservative writer, and "one of fin de siècle Russia's most articulate anti-Semites", provides perhaps the most succinct summary of the conservative anti-Semitic position on Azef.⁵¹ According to Rozanov, to understand Azef, one "only need[ed] to take into account the fact that he was a Jew." For Rozanov, Azef's behavior was far from surprising: on the contrary, it was merely the manifestation of "the eternal Jew".⁵² If Azef was duplicitous, it was because Jews were duplicitous; if Azef had sacrificed morals and principles for personal gain, it was because this was an inherent Jewish tendency. For those who saw Jews as monstrous, identifying Azef as a Jew explained everything.

A familiar stereotype of Jews, and one which was especially prominent in descriptions of Azef, concerns their alleged love of (and ruthless cunning with) money. Such stereotypes reflect a broader anxiety about the uncertainties unleashed upon society by the volatility of the capitalist marketplace and a desire to assign blame for it upon non-Russians. Conveniently, the beginning

of Azef's government career in 1893 corresponded almost exactly to the beginning of Sergei Witte's tenure as Minister of Finance in 1892, during which Russia experienced unprecedented industrial expansion: growing at an estimated 8 percent a year on average (largely on the backs of the peasantry, the sale of whose grain was the primary means by which the government financed investments in industry). By 1900, this rapid growth had exhausted the peasantry and caused an economic depression that was a significant factor in the subsequent unrest and revolution.⁵³ For those concerned with the rapid changes occurring in Russian society, the correspondence of the careers of Azef and Witte may have appeared quite sinister. As an ethnic German he was already associated with foreignness in the minds of many. Not surprisingly, "the most fantastic rumors" concerning Witte's alleged involvement in the Azef Affair were commented upon in newspapers at the time.⁵⁴

The timing and duration of Azef's long tenure as an agent of both the secret police and the revolutionary terror therefore offered a perfect symbol for the widespread belief in Russia that the Jews were the agents of capitalist modernity, and that this modernity was part of a conspiracy to infiltrate society and the government for the purpose of enslaving the Russian people for their own gain. According to Benjamin Nathans, "during the last three decades of the nineteenth century, social and geographical mobility among significant portions of the Jewish population transformed the Jews' relationship to Russian society and the imperial state. Jews became an unmistakable feature of Russia's fin de siècle social landscape and of public and official discourse about social change."⁵⁵ The equation of Jews and modernity was not, of course, restricted to Russia. Indeed, the ubiquity of Jews as a symbol of modernity in the western media may have been an important reason for the growing prominence of anti-Semitism in Russia. The empire was, after all, extremely heterogeneous and Jews were only one of many

ethnic and religious minorities that gained an increased urban presence through the processes of economic and social reform. Germans had long been the foreigners every Russian loved to hate; Poles were widely despised as Catholics and troublemakers; and, since the mid-nineteenth century, Islamophobia had gained influence in official circles uneasy about the Muslim populations Russia had acquired in places like the Caucasus and Central Asia.

Yet, as Yuri Slezkine has illustrated, the Jews seemed to have a special relationship with modernity that made them an easy scapegoat for those uncomfortable with the rapid pace of social, cultural, and economic change. Slezkine provocatively argues that “the modern age is the Jewish Age, and the twentieth century, in particular, is the Jewish Century. Modernization is about everyone becoming urban, mobile, literate, articulate, intellectually intricate, physically fastidious, and occupationally flexible...Modernization, in other words, is about everyone becoming Jewish.”⁵⁶ Like other groups (Gypsies, Armenians, the Chinese in Southeast Asia, the Lebanese in South America, etc.) the Jews were often prohibited from owning land or otherwise excluded from social privileges, and were forced to provide essential services that the other sectors of society could not, either because of religious prohibition, social taboo, or preoccupation with predetermined occupations. Slezkine refers to these groups as service nomads, or “Mercurians” after Mercury: “the god of all those who did not herd animals, till the soil, or live by the sword; the patron of rule breakers, border crossers, and go-betweens; the protector of people who lived by their wit, craft, and art.”⁵⁷

The Jews were far from being unique as service nomads or Mercurians. They were unique only in that they were the most prominent Mercurians in Europe: the birthplace of industrialization, nationalism, and of the ‘modern world.’⁵⁸ Since they were so well situated to adapt to modernity (because modernity was about everyone becoming a service nomad) the Jews

were some of its most prominent beneficiaries, as well as the most prominent target for those who perceived this modernity to be a threat. Unlike other prominent service nomads in Russia, most notably the Germans, they were not connected to a state that could intervene on their behalf.

In a vitriolic rant entitled “The Germ of Discord”, the anti-Semitic columnist Mikhail Men’shikov used the lack of Jewish statehood to explain Jewish deviance in general, and the actions of Azef in particular:

“The entire essence of the colossal scandal about which we now speak is all illuminated, not in the character of our government and not in the character of the Revolution, but simply in the Jewishness (*zhidovstvo*) of the provocateurs: in that specifically Jewish essence, which compels that tribe to excel in every kind of fraud. The essence of all Jewish fraud is mediation (*posrednichestvo*). From the time of the destruction of Jerusalem (just as for 500 years before it), the national character of the Jews developed alongside trade, and from that time they invariably remained true to that vocation... The Jews are devoid of a restraining, disciplining patriotism and national honor. The native inhabitant of a country recognizes that in committing dishonorable mediation, he betrays not only his own conscience-but also that of his fatherland, -the Jews, whose fatherland was once Zion, do not feel that way. Because of this, Jewish mediation is almost always criminal, almost always to the detriment of both sides.”⁵⁹

Here we see an explicit link between Jewishness, capitalist modernity, and the *Azefshchina*. It is also a clear example of Azef and his career being used to represent all of the Jews and to draw larger conclusions about Russian society. Azef’s mediation between the government and the Socialist Revolutionaries is taken as typical of all Jewish (read capitalist) mediation. The only form of legitimate mediation for Men’shikov was that of a unified and paternalistic Russian government, which would be tempered by a ‘restraining and disciplining patriotism and national honor.’ Party politics and liberal ideas, Men’shikov believed, emanated (like all that plagued Russia) from the Jews and had created “anarchy at the top” which had spread downwards until “the entire great country resemble[d] a sick man stricken in half his body with paralysis.” The solution for Men’shikov was unity. This was not only an argument for the purging of foreign elements and the creation of an ethnically unified state; it was an

argument for continued state intervention in the economy based upon the belief that a pure Russian state, restrained by the love of nation, would always work in the best interests of that nation.

Men'shikov believed the government to be the mercy of the Jews: riddled with Jewish agents and liberal political ideas of allegedly Jewish origin. The Azef Affair was for him a perfect illustration of the government's folly in sacrificing the principle of ethnic and ideological unity and allowing itself to be infiltrated. Not only had it employed Jews, but it had also begun to tolerate people of uncertain political loyalties. The government had "apparently completely lost its criteria for the choice of employees. For the last half-century our elites have established a liberal indifference towards whether or not high officials have political sentiments, and if so, of what kind. Under the influence of western revolutionary ideas they began to think that the highest wisdom lay in tolerance towards such ideas and that it was decidedly all the same who passed through the highest corridors of power." The folly and the danger of such political indifference had now, he argued, become quite clear. Men'shikov claimed that like an infection of the mind, liberal ideas might cause a person to "commit acts surprising even to the one who carries them out." Even if one were "the chief of the secret police, but in [their] heart a Kadet, [they] might inadvertently find [their] soul to be akin" to a representative of the Socialist Revolutionaries.⁶⁰

Anti-Semitic Russian Nationalists like Men'shikov attempted to use Azef's Jewishness to discredit broad swaths of the Russian Left. Liberal, non-nationalist, political platforms were perceived to be a Jewish ploy to undermine the Russian nation. Not surprisingly, Azef's Jewishness was also used in attempts to discredit the Russian revolutionary movement. From its earliest manifestation in the Decembrist Uprising in 1825, the Russian revolutionary movement

had acquired a heroic mythology both in Russia and abroad. Revolutionaries positioned themselves as the champions of the downtrodden: selflessly sacrificing themselves in a quest to liberate ‘the people’ from the oppressive yoke of the Russian autocracy. Russian revolutionaries often garnered enormous respect abroad: sometimes becoming minor celebrities among progressive circles in France, Switzerland, and elsewhere. Azef, argued many Russian nationalists, exposed the revolution not as a bastion of morality populated by heroes, but rather as “a psychopathic underground” populated by “damaged people predisposed to crime.” Such people were easy prey for “people of mercenary motives, of the type of Azef or Bakai, people of a Yid mentality [who] worm their way” into revolutionary circles.⁶¹

This logic was used by government partisans to claim that the state was not engaged in the deceitful tactics of political provocation. Controversy over the legality of such tactics coupled with a widespread moral unease about them to make accusations of provocation an effective weapon with which to damage the government’s popular image. Yet Azef, it was argued, illustrated why the government had no need to resort to provocation since “every revolutionary organization already has in it a Judas: we don’t search for him; he searches for us...After all, was Iscariot sent by the Pharisees? He was himself an apostle: one of the elect.”⁶² The fact that Azef had begun his government career by volunteering to inform upon the revolutionary group of which he was already a member was common knowledge at this point. Rather than being seen as an isolated case, this was taken by many as typical of the revolutionary movement and the role of Jews within it.

The figure of Judas, despite being a common metaphor for treachery in societies with a Christian tradition, was often seen by anti-Semites as representative of the Jewish nation. This was certainly the case for those who used Judas in their commentary on the Azef Affair. The

assertion that each revolutionary circle had its own Judas was both a reference to the high representation of Jews within the revolutionary movement (according to Slezkine, Jews made up “17 percent of all male and 27.3 percent of all female activists of the People’s Will Party” which been responsible for the assassination of Alexander II in 1881, and “the first Social Democratic party in the Russian Empire was the Jewish Bund”⁶³) and an sly reference to the alleged Jewish tendency towards treachery. Supposedly preying on the ‘damaged’ and weak-minded revolutionaries, Jews like Azef were accused of “convert[ing] the revolution into a type of cattle-breeding” by “skillfully rais[ing] revolutionaries, like rabbits, in order to sell them to the police.”⁶⁴ The claim that greedy Jews betrayed revolutionaries on their own initiative was used to disassociate the government from the widely disparaged practice of employing agents-provocateurs (a practice in which they had engaged for years).

Thus, ‘Azef the Jew’ was a multi-purpose symbol. The scandal created by the Azef Affair was used to attack liberal reforms and to reassert the need for an ethnically Russian government unified around the principles of autocracy. Revolutionary groups like the Socialist Revolutionaries were characterized as agents of a Jewish conspiracy to dominate Russia. The entire revolutionary movement, as illustrated above, was purported to be completely in the hands of the Jews. Yet, Azef’s Jewishness was not only used to condemn the Left, it was also used to cover up the questionable practices of the Tsarist regime. Not only did Jews make agents-provocateurs unnecessary, they were also the real cause behind the recent revolution. Vasilii Rozanov argued that to understand the Revolution of 1905, one only needed to understand Azef. “In this”, he argued “the revolution is revealed: a Yid (*zhid*) who kills. Here the essence of the revolution is expressed very well.”⁶⁵ Here the revolution has nothing to do with the kind of Tsarist oppression reflected in the events of Bloody Sunday; it was all because of the Jews. For

such anti-Semitic conservatives, the social type (and the social illness) represented by *Azefshchina* was the Jew.

Azef the Agent

Of course, not everyone shared this opinion. According to one Duma deputy, “the matter is not about Azef, but about *Azefshchina* [and] *Azefshchina* is a much wider phenomenon: provocation, which has developed widely all across Russia worries everyone.”⁶⁶ This representation of Azef as a provocateur (and/or the debate about whether or not he really was one) was far more common than the depiction of Azef as a Jew; for many, the image of spies and provocateurs was just as monstrous as the image of the Jew for anti-Semites. There was a concerted effort, by those on both the right and the left of the political spectrum, to make Azef representative of the rival political camp and to thereby place opponents outside the bounds of accepted social standards. The stated objective of the inquiry into the Azef Affair proposed to the Duma by the Social Democrats was to “illuminate the dark side of Azef’s activities [and] to determine from what kind of soil such a striking incident might spring up.”⁶⁷ Similar sentiments were shared by their opponents. Just like ‘Azef the Jew’, Azef the spy was not a man, not a Russian, but a dark impersonal force inimical to the legitimate social order (variously defined).

In the aftermath of the assassination of Tsar Alexander II in 1881, Russian security organizations had been reorganized and expanded. The need to infiltrate and crush terrorist organizations like the People’s Will (the group responsible for Alexander’s death) required more investigative information. According to Charles A. Rudd and Sergei Stepanov, the new Minister of the Interior, Nikolai Ignat’ev, “set police work on a new course.” Both surveillance of the general public by detectives, and the infiltration of subversive groups by secret agents increased

dramatically. These detectives and agents were all employed by the newly established Division for the Protection of Order and Social Security, or as it was more commonly known, the *Ohkrana*.⁶⁸

This new organization aimed to modernize the Russian security apparatus through the application of “the new police science of data quantification.” The increased flow of surveillance data was subjected to “systematic processing at headquarters, where agents compressed it onto standardized forms that clerks could store and retrieve in a hurry.”⁶⁹ The agents who provided this information were the cornerstone of this modernized police force. E.P. Mednikov, an agent credited with helping to destroy the People’s Will shortly after 1881, established a detective school in Moscow training would-be agents in the “doctrines and tactics of subversives” as well as in the techniques of undercover work.⁷⁰ The elite agents tasked with infiltrating revolutionary organizations became the “pride of the *Okhranka*”: providing hard evidence of the effectiveness of their modern professionalizing approach to police work.⁷¹

The link between bureaucratization, surveillance, and modernity has long been noted by social theorists.⁷² According to Weber, modern bureaucracy is “the rule of expert knowledge” and requires the gathering of information through surveillance.⁷³ Furthermore, “the increasing demand of a society accustomed to absolute pacification for order and protection (‘police’) in all fields exerts an especially persevering influence in the direction of bureaucracy.”⁷⁴ The creation of a rationalized bureaucratic police apparatus like the *Okhrana*, which used an extensive network of spies in order to pacify Russian society in the wake of the assassination of Alexander II, clearly partook of this process.

Yet, as is so often the case, these tactics raised difficult moral questions. Spies (especially those tasked with infiltration) occupy a complicated gray area in modern politics.

Allan Hepburn claims that spies are created by politics and ideologies. The more that modern states derive their legitimacy from adherence to a particular ideology, the more that they demand ideological uniformity (whether to democracy, nationalism, or a hodgepodge like Russia's Official Nationality of 'orthodoxy, autocracy, and nationality'), the more that they require the policing of the populace to determine their loyalty. Demonstrating their fidelity through professional dissimulation, spies reveal that "authenticity may be irrelevant to commitment or character."⁷⁵ Deviousness and treachery become demonstrations of loyalty and patriotism when employed by the spy in the interests of the state. The more that the autocracy was associated with them, the more easily its image of benevolent paternalism was replaced by the image of a cynical and duplicitous regime concerned only with maintaining its hold on power.

Like all governments (although perhaps more than many) the tsars had long used spies to inform themselves about the state of society and possible threats to their rule. Nicholas I's infamous Third Section (established to determine and enforce loyalty in the aftermath of the Decembrist Uprising in 1825) had long been a target of criticism. The Okhrana was established as a modern replacement of the Third Section, whose failure to stop the assassination of Alexander II in 1881 was attributed its outdated police practices. Yet the very success of the Okhrana's new program, with its emphasis on the use of secret agents to infiltrate and expose revolutionary groups, gave rise to the popular perception (in many ways justified) that Russia was now crawling with spies. Azef, as the most successful agent in the history of the Okhrana (serving for over 15 years and managing to infiltrate the very heart of what was arguably the most dangerous revolutionary organization in Russia) easily became the face of the government's controversial counter-revolutionary tactics for those eager to use him in order to tarnish the image of the autocracy.⁷⁶

Perhaps the most damaging accusation directed at the government's surveillance program was the assertion (often based in truth) that government spies were *agents provocateurs* –that they deliberately provoked people to commit terrorist acts in order to undermine the public image of the revolutionary movement. These accusations ultimately implicated the government in terrorist violence. Days after the arrest of Lopukhin inaugurated the *Azefshchina*, the SR Central Committee in Paris released a statement in which it described the government's "system of political provocation" as an effort to "threaten the security and lives of private individuals and introduce into society widespread demoralization...with the aim of strengthening reaction."⁷⁷ Thus, it was not the Socialist Revolutionaries' stated commitment to terrorism that endangered the lives of Russian citizens, but the government's use of provocation.

The image of the government deliberately provoking acts of violence against its citizens was the antithesis of the tsar as 'little father' kindly watching over his children. Needless to say, the government eagerly sought to disassociate itself from the stain of provocation. To do so it needed to defend Azef. There was no disassociating Azef from the government: it was therefore necessary to disassociate Azef from provocation by carefully defining the term and arguing that it did not apply to him. Prime Minister Stolypin's speech to the Duma on February 11, 1909, was primarily concerned with this task. Stolypin claimed that "according to revolutionary terminology, any individual providing information to the government [and who] has any connection to the police is a provocateur." Such a definition was, of course, too broad: more slander than substance. "The government, meanwhile, considers a provocateur to be a person who takes upon himself the initiative to commit a crime and involves a Third person who is placed upon that path by the initiative of the agent-provocateur."⁷⁸ Such a definition, he argued, could not be attached to the activities of Azef, or any other government agent.

For many on the left, Stolypin's definition was merely an exercise in "juridical subtlety" and contained loopholes large enough to accommodate the most despicable acts.⁷⁹ Was it possible, they asked, to "really settle who concocted a crime and who just reported on it?" Furthermore, Stolypin apparently only condemned those who initiated crimes. What about those who didn't "invent crimes, but only help[ed] to execute them", those who "seeing that a person thirsts for terrorist acts...supply him with prepared and detailed plans [or] help him to obtain a bomb"? From Stolypin's point of view, they argued, such individuals were not provocateurs, "but can we really say that such actions are legal?"⁸⁰ Supporters of the government countered that it was the Socialist Revolutionaries and others like them who had given birth to provocation with their terrorist tactics, and that if the government was guilty of such acts it was only responding in kind.⁸¹

Much of the vigor behind the mudslinging on both sides was motivated by a desire to divert the implications of the Azef Affair away from one's own camp, towards that of one's enemies. These implications were just as damning for the opposition as they were for the government. In the words of Peter Struve, co-founder of the influential Constitutional Democrat (Kadet) Party, the Azef Affair "morally annihilates...the system of revolutionary terror...The SR Party in this sense, after the *Azefshchina*, no longer exists."⁸² The use of the Azef Affair to tarnish the image of the revolutionary movement has already been mentioned above (i.e. anti-Semitic claims that the *Azefshchina* proved that the revolutionary movement was controlled by the Jews). Yet such accusations would hardly have troubled the revolutionaries themselves. They *were* concerned, however, that the affair had irreparably damaged the prestige of the Russian revolutionary movement. "Travel abroad", said one observer. "You will no longer hear anything about revolutionaries. Where there are Russians, wherever they speak about Russians,

you will hear about provocateurs.” Before the *Azefshchina* “the civilized world knew only ‘Russian revolution’, *now* it is literally bombarded with Russian provocation. *Then* in every honest person they saw a revolutionary. *Now* in every revolutionary they suspect a provocateur.”⁸³

Even more troubling was the fact that Azef had gone undetected for so long. Not only had he infiltrated the Socialist Revolutionaries, he had become one of its most prominent leaders. Furthermore, he had been vehemently defended against accusations that he was a traitor. “My confidence in Azef” said his former comrade Boris Savinkov “was so great that I should not have believed his guilt even if I had seen it stated in his own handwriting. I should have considered it a forgery.”⁸⁴ Trust in Azef had been unwavering. Vladimir Burtsev had had good reason to fear for his life as he continued to press the case for an investigation into Azef’s treachery. Several SRs had vowed to kill him unless he relented.⁸⁵ No less a figure than the revolutionary hero Vera Figner warned him that if his accusations proved groundless he would be forced to shoot himself for all the harm he had caused the revolution.⁸⁶

Once Azef’s treachery had been exposed as a fact, the zeal with which he had been defended was both embarrassing and highly alarming. How could they not have seen it? How had they overlooked the clear signals provided by his flamboyant lifestyle: his love of women and money? Was this the revolutionary morality they had so long cherished? The Azef Affair inaugurated a period of intense soul-searching within the ranks of the Socialist Revolutionaries, ultimately resulting in a complete reorganization of the structure of leadership. A special investigatory commission of SRs was convened. In 1911, after meeting seventy-three times, and investigating thirty-one people, the commission published its findings as *The Conclusions of the Investigatory-Judiciary Committee on the Azef Affair (Zakliuchenie sudebno-sledstvennoi*

komissii po delu Azefa). Although their findings found the SR leadership guilty of extreme naïveté and romantic idealism in their unwavering support of Azef, most of the blame was laid at the feet of the Combat Organization, which, it was argued, had become far too autonomous and too susceptible in its conspiratorial clannishness to the influences of a strong personality like Azef.⁸⁷

Yet many disagreed strongly with this demonization of the Combat Organization. A stinging rebuttal was published by the Socialist Revolutionary Party in Paris (a major headquarters of the movement) in which the *Conclusions* were labeled a “parody of judgment” and ridiculed for “having the audacity to declare as guilty those who were the primary victims of provocation.”⁸⁸ Instead, blame was definitively assigned to the centralized and caste-like structure of the party center: to its increasingly bureaucratic organization and “bureaucratic spirit” which was “the enemy of morals and selfless idealism” because “it values a person only to the extent that ...he is useful for the performance of a function necessary for the progress of the bureaucratic machine.”⁸⁹ No one had paused to consider Azef’s inner state both because he partook of the special aura emanating from “the cult of the great center” and because he kept the wheels of the bureaucratic machine spinning by satisfying its demand for money.⁹⁰

Azef was frequently accused, by both sides, of having exploited his position for personal gain. In the internal debates of the SR party, he became not only a personification of the ‘bureaucratic spirit’, but of ‘the power of money’ as well. Not only did he receive a regular paycheck from the police, but he had also been instrumental in securing funds for the SR party: funds to which he was given unquestioned access. The sensational assassinations of such hated figures as Grand Duke Sergei Alexandrovich and von Plehve had made him a revolutionary celebrity, and as such he attracted large donations from sympathizers. It was a tragic paradox,

claimed the Paris SR's decree, that "the socialist party, fighting against the domination of money and capital in modern society, itself needs money for its struggle."⁹¹ The image of Azef, a man of dissolute lifestyle and questionable morals, a provocateur who had helped to found the movement and organized its most stunning successes, haunted the Socialist Revolutionaries. He embodied the irony that they were dominated by the very forces they claimed to oppose: forces which had transformed their noble movement into "paper actions, paper investigations, a paper struggle."⁹² There was a growing sense that the movement had been subordinated to the interests and machinations of a faceless, soulless bureaucracy. Carrying out political assassinations required a high degree of certainty that the act served a higher purpose. This certainty had been destroyed. Ultimately, the leadership could not weather the criticism that their long association with Azef brought down upon them and the entire central committee resigned in disgrace.⁹³

Clearly, accusations of association with 'Azef the Agent' were damning for all sides. But how does this representation fit into the larger framework? The *Azefshchina* reveals that the fear of spies shared striking similarities with the fear of the modern crowd (as illustrated in detective/crime stories) and the fear of Jews by Anti-Semites.⁹⁴ The modern crowd was an unreadable, potentially violent, environment where one could not be certain about the true nature of those they brush elbows with. It was Azef's extremely successful career as a spy that seemed to unsettle people the most: he signified the professionalization of dissimulation and its association with larger entities like the government and the revolutionary movement.

Spies have been around for most of recorded history, yet they seem to have a special affinity for modernity (or perhaps modernity has a special affinity for them). Espionage is (to use Slezkine's terminology) a quintessentially Mercurian profession. Just as Mercurians are

“vocational foreigners”, so too are spies.⁹⁵ Indeed, a comparison between the traits characterized as Mercurian by Slezkine, and those attributed to spies in Allan Hepburn’s theoretical analysis of espionage and culture is striking: “All Mercurians are multilingual”⁹⁶ and “spies tend to speak several languages”⁹⁷; service nomads create and speak “special secret languages” to protect the knowledge of the ‘clan’ from the Apollonians⁹⁸; spies use codes which “presume shared knowledge” in order to “encrypt secrets” and “exclude” outsiders.⁹⁹ Mercury was the god of border-crossers, and in an age characterized by political and ideological boundaries the spy is both a transgressor and a preserver of these boundaries.¹⁰⁰ If the modern age has been the age of universal Mercurianism, it has also been the age of spies.

Conclusion: “Azefomania”

The *Azefshchina* was a significant moment for early 20th century Russian society. More than just a sensational news story, the Azef Affair was a moment of intense national self-scrutiny. There was a widely shared perception, one which cut across significant political and ideological divisions, that things were going terribly wrong in Russia, and that Azef somehow embodied it. He became a symbol of something larger, something sinister, and he seemed to be everywhere. He was seen walking down Nevsky Prospect in St. Petersburg, boarding a steamship for South America in Genoa, and hiding in a small town on the French Riviera.¹⁰¹ It was claimed that he was leading a band of thieves in the forests of Siberia and organizing peasant rebellion on the Volga.¹⁰² It was even said that he had been in Paris, converting a zeppelin into a “carrier of terror.”¹⁰³ Certainly more than a man, he at times seemed almost the embodiment of fear:

“Omnipresent Azef. Abroad, just like here at home, there is beginning to develop a genuine Azefomania (*azefomaniia*). Everyone imagines Azef to be everywhere. They see him at the same time in London, Paris, Brussels etc. And in every city they see him in different places at

the same time. In Brussels, Russians have even placed the announcement in various newspapers, printed in prominent letters: ‘RUSSIANS BEWARE: AZEF IS IN BRUSSELS.’”¹⁰⁴

Azef occupied a seemingly paradoxical position in the public imagination: descriptions of him blended a conspicuous, easily-identifiable (because of his ‘monstrous’ appearance) figure with the image of a mysterious and ubiquitous presence. Azef could not hide himself on the Nevsky because “it would be impossible to mistake such a repugnant mug”, yet in Brussels Russian citizens needed to be warned of his presence.¹⁰⁵ Azef was guilty of astonishingly successful treachery and subterfuge. The primary threat he posed (and the primary sin he was guilty of) was in-authenticity: being other than what he seemed. And yet descriptions of him so often included references to his social ineptitude and his inability to hide his devious nature. How are these conflicting representations (sometimes contained within the same description) reconciled?

I argue that these seemingly contradictory representations of Azef are actually quite closely related. They are firstly an attempt to articulate fears about rapid modernization: about the unfamiliar, the unreadable crowd, the insincere and/or in-authentic identity, the corrosive social effects of capitalism (perceived as mercenary), and the growing power of faceless bureaucracies. Yet they are often simultaneously an effort to blunt these almost ethereal fears by locating them in an easily identifiable enemy. As illustrated above, the attempt to make Azef an easily recognizable personification of evil was both an attempt to contain the threat that he posed, and to locate this threat outside the ‘legitimate’ social order. Whether this legitimacy was derived from ethnic Russianness, loyalty to the autocracy, revolutionary morality, or the defense of the downtrodden ‘people’, Azef was the perpetual antithesis: the representative of an illegitimate modernity.

Modernity is a notoriously broad term, and the claim that the *Azefshchina* was somehow ‘about’ modernity admittedly runs the risk of being too vague. This conclusion is, nevertheless, unavoidable. On several different counts, commentators upon the Azef Affair were specifically engaged with problems and concerns which were (and, perhaps more importantly, which were *perceived* to be) undeniably modern. The strong identification between the Azef Affair and detective/crime stories placed it within a well-established discourse specifically concerned with the modern urban environment. Scholars like Yuri Slezkine have illustrated how Anti-Semitism was often rooted in the anxieties of agrarian societies faced with the dissolution of their traditional orders and their replacement by the mobile, service-oriented, social-order of modern capitalism. An analysis of Azef’s depiction in Anti-Semitic newspapers like *Novoe Vremia* reveals that Azef’s Jewishness was indeed linked to such modern phenomena as party politics, national economies, and the fear of unrestrained (in this case by ‘national honor’) capitalism. Finally, the figure of Azef the Agent was connected, by critics of both the government and the Socialist Revolutionaries, to the rise of bureaucratic centralization and the power of money: spies like Azef satisfied the insatiable bureaucratic thirst for information, and were believed to thrive in bureaucratic environments that valued outward performance above inner convictions.

It seems fitting that a century so characterized by the politics of paranoia and the fear of ideological and racial contamination should have been inaugurated by spy scandals like the Dreyfus Affair in France and the Azef Affair in Russia, in which the villain is a Jewish spy. As possible harbingers of things to come, such events are unsettling to say the least. The *Azefshchina* reveals a strong tendency, on both the right and the left of Russian politics, to envision modernity as an invasion by hostile forces and to articulate the solution in terms of apocalyptic purging. “In the polluted ferment of the country” said Mikhail Men’shikov, “in

which such people come streaming in” it was perhaps useful to use provocateurs to concentrate these “harmful elements” just as “doctors evoke inflammation to uncover an abscess.”¹⁰⁶ The obvious implication is that these ‘harmful elements’ (for Men’shikov, Jews and revolutionaries) would subsequently be purged from the Russian body thereby making it healthy again. “He who has ears let him hear” declared the Paris SR Party in a phrase borrowed from the book of Revelation, “the bureaucratic machine has been set in motion...He who struggles against evil, should not permit the appearance or taking root of that same evil in his own camp.”¹⁰⁷ The ‘bureaucratic machine’, just like the increased presence of Jews, was a symptom of Russian modernity. The primary threat was the unstable identity: the duplicitous Jew, the spy, the faceless bureaucrat. Purging ‘evil’ elements by verifying the revolutionary, nationalist, or ethnic credentials of Party members and politicians is implied as the only way to purify the system.

This ‘Azefomania’ was clearly significant. Azef became much more than a man in the public imagination: he was a symbol, ‘a sign of the times’. The *Azefshchina* became a commentary on the ills of Russian society in 1909: revealing a strong undercurrent of paranoia and uncertainty about forces that were (and that were believed to be) undeniably modern. Increasing economic and social mobility, the centralization and expansion of government, rapid urbanization: all of these processes were reflected in the discussion of Azef and the social conditions that had enabled his astonishingly successful career as a spy. The widespread characterization of these processes as evil, personified in the ‘monstrous’ figure of Azef (in all of his various incarnations), presents a vision of modernity as an enemy to be conquered, a disease to be contained. Thus, if the *Azefshchina* represents a consensus opinion about modernity between elements on the left and the right of Russian politics in 1909, this was not a consensus conducive to cooperation or gradual reform.

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¹ Throughout this article, unless otherwise noted, I will use the "Old Style" Julian calendar which is 13 days behind the "New Style" Gregorian calendar.

²"Arest Lopukhina" in *Novoe Vremia*: January 19, 1909.

³ Anna Geifman, *Entangled in Terror: The Azef Affair and the Russian Revolution* (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources Inc., 2000), 55.

⁴ *Novoe Vremia*: January 25, 1909.

⁵ Nikolai Dobroliubov, "What is 'Oblomovshchina?'" from: W.J. Leatherbarrow and D.C. Offord, eds., *A Documentary History of Russian Thought. From the Enlightenment to Marxism* (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1987), 230 (italics mine).

⁶ Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Soviet Experiment: Russia, the USSR, and the Successor States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 17.

⁷ Abraham Ascher, *The Revolution of 1905: A Short History* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2004), 2.

⁸ *Ibid*, 27, 215.

⁹ Jeffrey Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read: Literacy and Popular Literature, 1861-1917* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2003), 28; 110-111.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 29.

¹¹ On the role of newspapers in facilitating the political and national imagination, see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (New York: Verso, 1983), 32-36. While I am not committed to Anderson's thesis that nations are 'imagined communities', I find his argument about the ability of newspapers to construct a social imaginary quite useful. The newspaper reader performs his morning ritual of newspaper reading "in silent privacy, in the lair of the skull. Yet each communicant is aware that the ceremony he performs is being replicated by

thousands (or millions) of others of whose existence he is confident, yet of whose identity he has not the slightest notion...What more vivid figure for the secular, historically clocked, imagined community can be envisioned?" (35).

¹² Anna Geifman, *Entangled in Terror*, 13.

¹³ Boris Nikolajewsky, *Aseff the Spy: Russian Terrorist and Police Stool* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Doran & Company, Inc., 1934), 23.

¹⁴ Anna Geifman, *Entangled in Terror*, 14.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 16.

¹⁶ Boris Nikolajewsky, *Aseff the Spy: Russian Terrorist and Police Stool*, 23.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 24.

¹⁸ *Ibid* 25-27.

¹⁹ Anna Geifman, *Entangled in Terror*, 37.

²⁰ Boris Nikolajewsky, *Aseff the Spy: Russian Terrorist and Police Stool*, 30.

²¹ Anna Geifman, *Entangled in Terror*, 39-40.

²² Boris Nikolajewsky, *Aseff the Spy: Russian Terrorist and Police Stool*, 43.

²³ *Ibid*, 53. Anna Geifman, in her book *Entangled in Terror*, denies that Azeff was anything but a loyal government servant. To do so she has to ignore all statements about him made by the SR party, which she sees as part of an attempt to blacken the reputation of the police by claiming that they were riddled with untrustworthy and unsavory agents. Although much of her book is based upon extensive research, her primary arguments about Azeff's true role in the secret police are often based upon scanty or questionable evidence or are otherwise highly speculative.

²⁴ *Novoe Vremia*: January 28, 1909.

²⁵ Boris Nikolajewsky, *Aseff the Spy: Russian Terrorist and Police Stool*, 123.

²⁶ Charles A. Ruud and Sergei A. Stepanov, *Fontanka 16: The Tsar's Secret Police* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999), 144.

²⁷ Anna Geifman, *Entangled in Terror*, 108.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 145.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 138.

³⁰ Abraham Ascher, *The Revolution of 1905: A Short History*, 215.

³¹ *Novoe Vremia*: January 25, 1909. Olga Matich's article "Backs, Suddenly, and Surveillance in Andrej Belj's *Petersburg*", published in *Russian Literature LVIII* (2005), sheds an interesting light on the above reference to 'suddenly' and 'thunder from a clear sky'. *Petersburg* was inspired by the traumatic events of the 1905 Revolution, and heavily influenced by the revelations of the Azeff Affair. Bely uses "suddenly" as a metaphor, analogous to the symbol of the bomb (the primary instrument of the Combat Organization's assassinations), for the tumultuous years of the revolution: "The bomb, which is the motor of *Petersburg's* plot as well as emblem of the unexpected (of the novelistic 'suddenly') can be said to underwrite the novel's disjunctive, fragmentary structure and its unexpected, explosive poetics." (156). "As an embodiment of evil, 'suddenly' exists behind the reader's back, who fears its unexpected and undesirable appearance" (157).

³² *Novoe Vremia*: February 13, 1909.

³³ See for instance, Karen Haltunnen, *Murder Most Foul: The Killer and the American Gothic Imagination* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1998) and Andie Tucher, *Froth and Scum: Truth, Beauty, Goodness, and the Ax Murder in America's First Mass Medium* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1994).

³⁴ See A.E. Murch, *The Development of the Detective Novel* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1958).

³⁵ Jeffrey Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read*, 142.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 151.

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- ³⁷ Ibid, 208.
- ³⁸ *Novoe Vremiia*: February 14, 1909.
- ³⁹ *Novoe Vremiia*: January 22, 1909.
- ⁴⁰ “Arest Lopukhina” in *Novoe Vremiia*: January 19, 1909. This article was reproduced word for word in *Sanktpeterburgskaia Vedomosti* and *Gazeta Kopeika* on January 20th.
- ⁴¹ Indeed there is are elements of role-reversal and table-turning surrounding descriptions of Lopukhin’s role in the Azef affair, especially prominent in lower-class accounts, that will be discussed in detail below.
- ⁴² Karen Haltunnen, *Murder Most Foul: The Killer and the American Gothic Imagination*, 123.
- ⁴³ Ibid, 124.
- ⁴⁴ *Rech’ predsedatelia soveta ministrov P.A. Stolypina* in *Sanktpeterburgskaia Vedomosti*: February 12, 1909.
- ⁴⁵ See Karen Haltunnen, *Murder Most Foul: The Killer and the American Gothic Imagination*.
- ⁴⁶ Richard E. Rubenstein, *Comrade Valentine: The True Story of Azef the Spy-The Most Dangerous Man in Russia at the Time of the Last Tsars* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1994), 2.
- ⁴⁷ Anna Geifman, *Entangled in Terror: The Azef Affair and the Russian Revolution* (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources Inc., 2000), 152.
- ⁴⁸ *Azef v Moskve* in *Novoe Vremiia*: January 27, 1909.
- ⁴⁹ *K delu Azefa (Pis’mo v redaktsiiu)* in *Novoe Vremiia*: February 1, 1909.
- ⁵⁰ *Vecherniaia Khronika—k delu Azefu* in *Novoe Vremiia*: January 27, 1909.
- ⁵¹ Yuri Slezkine, *The Jewish Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 12.
- ⁵² V.V. Rozanov, *Kogda nachal’stvo ushlo... i Mimoletnoe* (Moskva: Izdatel’stvo “Respublika”, 2005), 290.
- ⁵³ Nicholas Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 400-405.
- ⁵⁴ *Gazeta Kopeika*: February 8, 1909. See also Boris Nikolajewski, *Azef the Spy: Russian Terrorist and Police Stool* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Doran, & Company, Inc., 1934), 16-18. Nikolajewski draws on Lopukhin’s *Memoirs* (Moscow, Gosizdat, 1923) in which the latter claimed that had been approached by Witte with a plot that included “nothing less than the assassination of the Czar, to be carried out by the Police Department through the revolutionary organizations.” If such a plot had been proposed (or carried out) Azef, as the Department’s most influential agent among the revolutionaries, would certainly have been expected to play a hand in it.
- ⁵⁵ Benjamin Nathans, *Beyond the Pale: The Jewish Encounter with Late Imperial Russia* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002), 3.
- ⁵⁶ Yuri Slezkine, *The Jewish Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 1.
- ⁵⁷ Slezkine, *The Jewish Century*, 7-8.
- ⁵⁸ Ibid, 39; I recognize that the term ‘modern world’ is not self-explanatory and that modernity is a notoriously slippery concept. I understand modern here in the sense given by Slezkine and Gellner: especially characterized by the replacement of rigid hierarchical societies by those with the more fluid social and occupational boundaries that are typical of the industrialized world.
- ⁵⁹ *Novoe Vremiia* January 22, 1909.
- ⁶⁰ Ibid.
- ⁶¹ *Novoe Vremiia*: February 14, 1909.
- ⁶² Ibid.
- ⁶³ Slezkine, *The Jewish Century*, 151.
- ⁶⁴ *Novoe Vremiia*: February 14, 1909.
- ⁶⁵ Ibid, 575.
- ⁶⁶ *Rech’ Bulata* in *Sanktpeterburgskaia Vedomosti*: February 12, 1909.
- ⁶⁷ *Rech’ Pokrovskogo* in *Sanktpeterburgskaia Vedomosti*: February 12, 1909.
- ⁶⁸ Charles A. Ruud and Sergei A. Stepanov, *Fontanka 16: The Tsar’s Secret Police*, 54-55.
- ⁶⁹ Ibid, 59.

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- ⁷⁰ Ibid, 60-61.
- ⁷¹ Ibid, 62.
- ⁷² For an excellent survey of some of the dominant arguments on the subject, see chapter one of Christopher Dandeker, *Surveillance, Power and Modernity: Bureaucracy and Discipline From 1700 to the Present Day* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990).
- ⁷³ Max Weber, *Economy and Society* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1978), 993.
- ⁷⁴ Ibid, 972.
- ⁷⁵ Allan Hepburn, *Intrigue: Espionage and Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), xiii-xiv.
- ⁷⁶ *Sanktpeterburgskaia Vedomosti*: February 13, 1909. According to one writer, "the revolutionaries grasped at Azef for three reasons: first...to discredit the government...second to vindicate their friend Lopukhin, and third to malign the activities of the Okhrana."
- ⁷⁷ *Zaprosy ob Azefe* in *Sanktpeterburgskaia Vedomosti*: January 21, 1909.
- ⁷⁸ *Rech' predsedatelia soveta ministrov P.A. Stolypina* in *Sanktpeterburgskaia Vedomosti*: February 12, 1909.
- ⁷⁹ *Rech' Sokolova* in *Novoe Vremiia*: February 14, 1909.
- ⁸⁰ *Rech' Maklakova* in *Novoe Vremiia*: February 14, 1909.
- ⁸¹ *Rech' Uvarova* in *Sanktpeterburgskaia Vedomosti*: February 14, 1909.
- ⁸² *Likvidirovanoe delo* in *Novoe Vremiia*: February 11, 1909.
- ⁸³ *Provokatorekaia Epopeia*, from Boris I. Nikoleavsky Collection, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, California: 615:5.
- ⁸⁴ Boris Nikolajewsky, *Aseff the Spy*, 225.
- ⁸⁵ Anna Geifman, *Entangled in Terror*, 109.
- ⁸⁶ Boris Nikolajewsky, *Aseff the Spy*, 272.
- ⁸⁷ Anna Geifman, *Entangled in Terror*, 134-135.
- ⁸⁸ A. Lipin, *Sud nad Azefshchinoiu* (Paris: *Izdanie Parizhskoi Gruppy Sotsialistov-Revoliutsionerov*, 1911), 59.
- ⁸⁹ Ibid, 95-96.
- ⁹⁰ Ibid, 92.
- ⁹¹ Ibid, 98.
- ⁹² Ibid, 101.
- ⁹³ Anna Geifman, *Entangled in Terror*, 137.
- ⁹⁴ See Louis Begley, *Why the Dreyfus Affair Matters* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009). One need only mention the Dreyfus Affair in France between 1894-1906 (in which the Jewish officer Alfred Dreyfus was wrongly accused of spying for the Germans) to reveal how prominent the association of Jews with spies was in Europe at this time. According to a French diplomat involved in the case, Maurice Paleologue, Dreyfus' "indiscreet curiosity, his constant snooping, his air of mystery, and finally his false and conceited character, 'in which one recognizes all the pride and all the ignominy of his race' [had] made him a suspect for a long time" (Begley, 8). In France, as in Russia, the fear of Jews and spies was ultimately a fear of modernity rooted in a fear of change: a fear of the uncertain and/or the unseen, a fear of unstable political and/or ethnic identities.
- ⁹⁵ Slezkine, *The Jewish Century*, 8.
- ⁹⁶ Ibid, 20.
- ⁹⁷ Allan Hepburn, *Intrigue: Espionage and Culture*, 12.
- ⁹⁸ Slezkine, *The Jewish Century*, 19. Slezkine also notes that "Beyond the Jewish world, Yiddish was, along with Romani [the language of another Mercurian people-the Gypsies], a major source of European underworld vocabularies."
- ⁹⁹⁹⁹ Allan Hepburn, *Intrigue: Espionage and Culture*, 50.
- ¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 11.

¹⁰¹ *Gde Azef?* In *Gazeta Kopeika*: January 21, 1909; *la videl Azefa!* and *Poiski Azef* in *Gazeta Kopeika*: January 29, 1909.

¹⁰² *Novoe Vremiia*: January 22, 1909; *Azef...Lbov* in *Gazeta Kopeika*: February 5, 1909.

¹⁰³ *Azef vozdukhoplavatel'* in *Gazeta Kopeika*: January 24, 1909.

¹⁰⁴ *Gazeta Kopeika*: February 12, 1909.

¹⁰⁵ *la videl Azefa!* in *Gazeta Kopeika*: January 29, 1909.

¹⁰⁶ *Novoe Vremiia*: February 14, 1909.

¹⁰⁷ A. Lipin, *Sud nad Azefshchinoiu*, 110 and 112.