up with the active contribution of the feminists as experts or voluntary workers. The publications by feminist authors, besides the monthly periodical, contributed to the rise of the public awareness and understanding about women’s demands in the changing social framework. Feminists got the most important books by western feminist thinkers translated (see for example Charlotte Perkins Gillman’s work on women’s economical subordination, translated by R. Schwimmer). Women authors at the same time published works on the analysis of society or individuals’ socialization on marriage, on women’s work from a feminist point of view. (see e.g. the works of Szidónia Wilhelms, Sarolta Geócze, or their male colleagues, Andor Mádny and Géza Kenedi.) These early feminist publications in Hungary did formulate an alternative point of view to the essentialism of their age. There are several arguments in their texts, which can be interpreted as early versions of the definition of the difference between sex and gender. The feminists rejected the idea that the characteristics which were attributed to women at that time are of biological origin. Also, they refused to take traditional roles for granted. The significance of these writings was that they challenged the contemporary images of what a woman could be. In this way their achievement was the creation of the “modern woman”, the woman of the twentieth century.

Notes

2 Péter Bánáy. A magyar anyának... [Request of Hungarian mothers... ] 1790.
4 Éva Také. Egy két szó... [A few words on women in marriage.] // Tudományos Gyűjtemény, 1822.
6 Katalin S. Szevgári described these situation in her work: Numerus clausus intézkedések... [Numerus clausus between the two wars]. Budapest, 1988.
10. Letters to the City Council. — The correspondence was discovered in the Archive of Budapest. IV. 1704b.

Women’s History  201


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THE OPEN HOUSE AND ITS HOSTESS
(From the History of the Participants of the Dissident Movement)

In the following article the results are presented from the research «Women in independent social processes from the 1950s to the 1980s in Leningrad», which was conducted by the author with the support of the Heinrich Böll Foundation in 1994–1995.

The phenomenon of the «open house» — a house where there were constantly many guests, where home readings of poems, concerts or seminars were organized, where an intellectual atmosphere prevailed and changes of opinions occurred, where friends from other cities and countries could always find a shelter — is described in the literature of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This often figures in stories of the older generation of Petersburgians, and is encountered today as well. This phenomenon is diverse and may be examined from different aspects. That which presents interest for sociological research in the present time is these «open houses» from the 1950s to the 1980s and their place in independent social processes in these years, and also those who «kept» such a house — their mistresses. We will examine one of the important roles of the «open houses» — their function (along with underground publications) as an institution of the illegal public sphere.

The public sphere (6. 49–55; 7. 625) appears in open society as a «social stratum» between the private sphere and the state. Its function is to inform the authorities of the needs of society and, more importantly, to implement control in processes of decision-making, changing of the political course, and the function-
ing of the government as a whole. The public sphere is formed by individuals, freely expressing their opinions in written and oral forms, conducting a free discourse. It can only exist in a society where citizens are not limited in their freedom of assembly and association, speaking out and publishing their opinions on themes, presenting interest for society. The institutions of the public sphere are meeting places (clubs, cafes, parks, salons), and also the independent commercial press. In the closed Soviet society of the examined period the public sphere, as understood in Western terms, did not exist. However, there was an attempt to construct an alternative social life, to create a «public sphere of illegal status», which was undertaken by dissidents and representatives of the «second culture». Their lifestyle reproduced some elements of the public sphere of open society; for example, they attempted to freely debate and publish uncensored printed materials.

The «Open Houses» of the Dissident Movement and its Functions

In the dissident movement, the «open house» played an especially important role. The functioning of dissident life and activity was possible only in tested, defiant, trusted places of meeting for its members, where that which took place within the walls could remain secret for outsiders. These places could only be the apartments (rooms) of dissidents. A house would most often become open and begin to fulfill some of the functions in the dissident movement as a result of circumstances. However, the owners of such an apartment would assimilate the «openness» of their home as a norm, and tried to optimally adapt the course of their family’s daily life to this situation. Most often one home would fulfill several functions, or, more rarely, only one of the following:

1. «Staff-Apartment»

The «staff apartment», in analogy with the terminology of the revolutionary times, is the name given to the apartment of an authoritative leader (ideologue, head) of an underground group or opposition circle, where meetings of dissidents took place, signature on appeals were gathered, and preparations were made for the publication of bulletins, journals, and printed leaflets. Especially outstanding descriptions of the «staff apartments» can be found in the memoirs of participants of the Moscow rights protection movement (for example, see the memoirs by A.T.Marchenko (1993), or by A.Amalrik (1991)). In Leningrad, where the dissident movement had a more underground character than in Moscow, the staff apartments were known only to a small circle of people. The owners of a «staff apartment» were exposed to the greatest danger, since they were constantly under surveillance, and in the event of a search their homes always contained enough evidence for arrest.

2. «Library»

Almost all of the underground literature, circulated in the city, passed through the apartment «libraries». The owners were the center of a large circle of association, and they implemented the circulation of literature from one part of their circle to another. In the «library house» literature was brought in for a short period of time and given to readers, who quickly read and duplicated it, then returned it. In this apartment books did not lie idle for long; they passed through one «library», then were transferred to another, and their circulation ceased only if they were removed in a search. The necessary conditions for the functioning of a library house was the reputation of its owners for being reliable and cautious people, and the availability of their contact with the «suppliers» of underground literature. The books, as a rule, arrived through Moscow or from abroad. Usually, the function of the owners was limited to the coordination of the circulation of the books; they did not take part in any other protest actions. This allowed the «library» to exist for a long time (5—10 years), and participants in the movement could use a home that had not been «overexposed» by radical protest activities as a place to keep different dissident materials.

*They brought me a pile of books, mostly tamizdata*. They always gave out books for a very short period, and many — very many people — wanted to read them. I gave them to my acquaintances, and they very intensively recopied all of them on a machine, or photographed them. There was a long line of people waiting for these books...

*This was an entire industry, accomplishing all of this. When they arrested me, I slept for a whole week, because ten years wouldn’t have been enough for me to sleep... There was also an archive in my apartment... Then, in the investigation, they accused me of being a coordinator and a conspirator. (M.K., 1938).*

*Uncensored books brought into the country from abroad (as distinctive from tamizdata — uncensored literature published in Russia).*
3. «Information Center»

The function of the «information center» was close to that of the «library», but the risk to which its owners were exposed was considerably higher. Whereas the «library» circulated basically uncensored fiction literature, translations of foreign authors, and issues of the «Chronicle of Current Events», the «information center» ended up with «ksiyos»* (or «bullets») — letters and notes from political prisoners from camps and psychological wards, which somehow made their way into the hands of their acquaintances outside. As a rule, moreover, they ended up in exactly those homes whose owners brought these notes to the leadership’s attention and forwarded them to the publishers of the «Chronicle of Current Events» in Moscow.

They dictated to me or slipped me papers, «bullets», written in ways difficult to read. A «bullet» is a prison note, very small, with much written on it. They are usually written on tissue paper, and «flicked» away, where necessary. How they got out, I to this day don’t know. And I would never have dared to ask. But somehow those pieces ended up with me. There was information on who sat in which zone and how many. Especially important, of course, were the «politizatory». Did I understand what I was doing? Yes, of course. I understood that the earth below me burns. This was the period of the greatest danger for those who created the «Chronicle». The fact that I remained free is a miracle. (E.R., 1951).

4. «Help Centers»

Daily life in the dissident environment became more complicated as a part of the participants was constantly in prison under interrogation, or in prison camps or special psychological hospitals. Because of this, providing help for political prisoners, as well as the support of their families remaining in freedom, was vital. The homes that were «help centers» fulfilled different functions: in one it was possible to receive material help, in others it was possible to simply eat, live for a while, or receive advice and moral support.

The dissidents would come, knowing this home, without clothes, without shoes, hungry, and there would be money there gathered for them.

* Slang word denoting any document, mainly identity cards.

5. «Meeting Places»

Here took place animated informal discussions, seminars on various themes: religious, philosophical, political. And an outstanding example of such a house was the apartment of Tatyana Goricheva and Viktor Krivulin, in which in the midst of the 1970s there took place a philosophico-religious seminar and where was published the underground journal «37a» (the memoirs of the organizers of this seminar were published — see 2: 5).

The seminar sprung up in 1975... In the beginning it was 40–50 people meeting twice a month... the majority of the participants of the seminar «37a» belonged to the nonconformist creative intelligentsia. There were many poets, writers, philosophers and artists, which could not publish or officially exhibit their work. The seminar was strictly oriented towards culture, and tried to find new routes for Russian culture. Its founders strove for a unity of Christian culture with contemporary unofficial culture, hoping for the opportunity of a creative movement that would find an exit from the dead end of the post-Stalinist condition of society. (2, 173).
There was always someone living in their home, and there were always
night teas and night poetic vigils. We washed the floors there in turn,
prepared something for them, brought them some kind of food... They
entered there over the windowsill. They also had many cats, whom every-
one called by name and patronymic. (From an interview with G.G., 1948).

As is obvious from these examples, in the «open houses» there was an inter-
 twining of the private sphere (the daily life of the family) with the public sphere
(discussions and dissident activities).

«Open houses» of the participants of the dissident movement were not the
only, but possibly the most outstanding, example of how an apartment, as a pri-
date dwelling, also fulfilled a social role, and carried a double burden. Only in
private apartments was it possible to pronounce original ideas, read and discuss
uncensored literature, and find an escape from the dead end of unrealized cre-
ative aspirations. The transfer of the «public» sphere into the home was the only
possibility for its existence in the conditions of the closed social system.

The Mistresses of the «Open Houses»

The «open house» could be maintained by a man, a woman, or, most often, a
husband and wife; however, from the memoirs and interviews of participants in
the independent social processes from the 1950s to the 1980s there is not a de-
tailed image of the master of the open house, but the mistress is described clearly
even. This shows that the important role in the creation and support of the
«open houses» belonged, according to tradition and by virtue of various circum-
stances, to women. It is possible to reconstruct one of the character types (though
not the only one) of the mistress of the open house: these were women of old or
middle age, well-educated and intelligent, with a thin sense of humor, and na-
tives of St. Petersburg. It was characteristic for the «open house» to be located in
the center of Leningrad, and for the mistress to be constantly present (especially
in the evenings). The spirit of tradition was important in these homes, as was the
succession of a spiritual life from previous generations. The mistresses of these
apartments remembered much of historical life and fate, and kept many secrets.
No matter what the «profile» of the home: be it an artistic or poetic salon, a
dissidents’ «library», or simply a place of free association, the mistress played
the role of a wise counselor. Those around them appreciated these women for
their discretion, insight, their ability to speak their minds, to help, and to create
an atmosphere of complicity in any situation.

I entered the home, having been brought there for the first time by my
friend... The kitchen... The kitchen was about ten square meters, the usual
kitchen for an old Petersburg, sufficient, I would say — dim but very
clean. A woman sat in the kitchen. Sitting there, she seemed to be as a fairly old person, and, so to speak, not one of those women who watch
after themselves, regardless of age. She had no kind of hairstyle, was
wearing some kind of a smock, in front of her stood a small liquor-glass of
vodka, and she was saying: «Your mother...! Vermint.» Her expression,
this mother, had a concrete address. On Ligovskiy prospect there was an
insane asylum, and in this asylum was a certain artist Ivanov, a typical victim
of that time, whom she had gone to visit, and tried to pull out of
there, and finally pulled out... Then, I immediately, upon having seen this
woman, felt an inexplicable liking for this person, I felt all which, genera-
ly speaking, was felt by people of different ages crossing the threshold
of this house, because people of young, middle, and old age tried to get to
this house. What attracted people there? I don’t ever know. There was a
peculiar circle there. That is, generally intelligentsia. I can say that in
this house had been almost everyone, many interesting people. There was
a hearth of kindness, a place of association of people, which morally
simply gave people the ability to survive. (From an interview with R.I.).

According to witnesses, frequenter of the «open houses», they were espe-
cially attracted by the opportunity to freely discuss different subjects. There was an
appreciation for the society which made meeting possible and the atmosphere
that was conducive to the changing of opinions. That place, which was occupied
by the hostess herself in the processes of associations of the guests, was different.
Some of them were themselves the center of attention, and society united just
around then, whereas in other homes the mistresses kept themselves in the shadow,
created comfort for their guests and, then observed the proceedings from the
side. However, these two forms of leadership of the «open house» seem to be two
variants of the same role:

I think, that the role of women was really very great, because they, one
way or another, formed the world view. And they didn’t only serve tea.
They might generally not serve tea at all, but then what ideas they served?
(From an interview with M.B.)

The role of the mistresses of the «open houses» may be formulated like this: it
was the creation of an environment, the creation of a foundation for the springing
up of thoughts, ideas, and in the final analysis, social opinion and social life.
In many interviews it was mentioned that, at the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, the «open house», especially the house salons in Leningrad, «began to sprout like mushrooms». In the present time it is possible to trace the development of the opposite tendency: «open houses», as they were earlier, are decreasing, and many of those which were existing earlier have largely ceased to function. It may be assumed that the role which they earlier played now belongs to cafes, clubs, and street art salons. Since the social system has become open, in society there have appeared new problems and opportunities for self-realization in the public sphere, while its earlier «kitchen» form of existence is gradually dying out, and together with this the home is ceasing to carry its double burden as its role and function are now limited to alone the private sphere.

Literature

6. Habermas, Juergen. «The Public Sphere», New German Critique 1:3 (Fall 1974), originally published in 1964 as an encyclopedia article in Fischer-Lexikon.

Translated by Kris Finlon

Julia Zhukova (National Library of Russia, St. Petersburg)

ON AN INSTRUMENT FOR WRITING «HERSTORY»

As we know, one of the objectives of international feminist movement is the compilation of «herstory», that is, developing a new outlook on historical process from which women, for many reasons, have seemed to be «barred».

History in general, and Russian history as well, still appears to be of men’s making, with men acting as its analysts.

Incongruously man-biased, historical science tends to approach world history, and 18th and 19th century Russian history specifically — the period the researcher is concerned with — mainly as political and military history, the history of formation and development of bureaucratic institutions, the history of revolutionary movement, etc., while ignoring the history of cultural and spiritual growth and development of the society, the analysis of which can not be unrelated to the history of family and the study of development of other spheres of public consciousness implicating women. (In Russia researchers have had more concern with «herstory»). However, in spite of a large number of both monographic studies on prominent women and studies of generic character we can speak so far only of an initial stage of research, the stage of «approximation».

Meanwhile, working out a comprehensive culturological concept and thorough analysis of women’s contribution to society’s development requires the application of new research strategies.)

The issue of «male» and «female» research outlook on history is bound up with such problems as: 1) absence of any school or trends of «women’s studies» in Russia; 2) lack of contacts between male and female researchers; 3) almost total lack of contacts between the strengthening women’s and feminist movements and «women’s history» scholars.

I would like to notice that acquaintance with feminist theory and women’s movement activists, who make a friendly and interested audience, «the audience worth working for», often leads to the change of female scholars’ personal convictions. The scholars get what might be called second wind; they become aware of the importance of «herstory», and, seeing things at a new angle, they fathom new depths in the texts which have seemed unintelligible and «articulated».

Since the sources women’s history scholars have to use tend to be very specific, the search for biographical data is what cramps the researcher’s efforts to study women’s contribution to the process of society’s spiritual growth. For instance, the bulk of the nineteenth-century biographical data is contained in official registers (departmental service lists, commissioned officers lists, Chapter of decorations lists, etc.) where but a scrap of information about very few women living at that time can be found. And it is no wonder, given the overwhelming men’s dominance at that period.

Available biographical and bio-bibliographical tools, with very few exceptions, contain very little information about women. As a result, Russian society of the surveyed period appears to be sexually homogeneous.

As we found out upon our scrutiny of some biographical reference-books, there is only one entry about a woman for every 30 about men. The same 1:30
FEMINIST THEORY AND PRACTICE: EAST—WEST

Papers presented of international Conference.

St. Petersburg
1997