

## Women in the World of Gender Stereotypes: The Case of the Russian Female Terrorists at the Beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

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### Abstract

*Many contemporary researchers of female violence claim that gender stereotypes dominate works about militant women. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the historical works about the Russian female terrorists in order to find out whether those stereotypes influence its contents and the scholars' conclusions. Typology of the gender stereotypes that exist in the works about women terrorists is constructed in the article and used for the analysis of the historical literature. The article is concluded with the discussion about what is to be done in order to avoid the gender stereotypes and write a new balanced research on the topic.*

**Key words:** Russia, Terrorism, Gender, Stereotypes, Historiography, Female Militancy, Russian Revolution, Russian Women

In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Russian authorities were facing serious problems that emerged because of systematic political terror. At the beginning it was connected with the activity of the underground revolutionary organization People's Will (Narodnaya Volya), later, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, mostly with the activity of the Party of Socialists-Revolutionaries (PSR), namely its conspiratorial terrorist body, the SR Combat Organization (Boevaia Organizatsiia). The most striking feature of this terror was that many terrorists were women. And it wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that it was the terrorism that gave Russian women one of the greatest opportunities to take an active part in the political life of pre-revolutionary Russia. Not having any legal political rights and, thus, not having any other way to influence the situation in the country, women could act only illegally. This drove a number of them into the ranks of the radical outcast, where their male comrades were willing to give them greater recognition than they could reasonably have expected within the traditional establishment (Geifman 1993, 12).

Female participation in pre-revolutionary Russian terrorism is a topic that has already been touched upon by a number of scholars and laymen. According to the contemporary researchers dealing with the problems of female violence, the works about terrorist women are characterized by the existence of gender stereotypes that influence the way they are written and the conclusions made (Sjoberg & Gentry 2007, 7). The purpose of this article is to analyze the historical works about the Russian female terrorists in order to find out whether those stereotypes influence its contents and the scholars' conclusions. If that's the case, the identification of the stereotypical representations of the terrorist women would show what is to be done in order to avoid such problems in future works on the topic. The term "stereotypes" is used in this article in accordance with S. A. Basow's definition: "Stereotypes are strongly held overgeneralizations about people in some designated social category. Such beliefs tend to be universally shared within a given society and are learned as part of the process of growing up in that society". (Basow 1992, 3). When it comes to "gender stereotypes", each culture creates its own meanings for the terms *female* and *male*. These meanings involve a series of expectations regarding how each gender should behave. When exaggerated, these expectations become gender stereotypes (Basow 1992, 2), that can refer to characteristics associated with each gender (Wharton 2007, 128).

Traditionally the characteristics associated with women have a dual nature: they are seen either as madonnas or as whores (de Cataldo Neuburger & Valentini 1996, 32). On one hand women are seen as sinful – wanton, deceitful instigators of lust and pollution, on the other hand there has always been a positive model of a good woman, modest and hard-working, pious and chaste, devoted to her household and children, and submissive to her husband (Engel 2004, 8-9). Such an image of a good woman doesn't imply that she can employ violence and participate in terrorist activities. As a result, while men are traditionally seen as having a certain familiarity with violence – whether as defenders or aggressors, women are associated with nurturing and caring, as protectors and givers of life, rather than destroyers (MacDonald 1991, 4). Thus women are considered not to be violent by nature, because women's violence falls outside of the ideal-typical understandings of what it means to be a good woman.

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That's why violent women are mostly (but not always) considered to be bad and deviant (Sjoberg & Gentry 2007, 2). In order to analyze the historical works about the Russian female terrorists at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century it is necessary to construct a typology of the gender stereotypes that are normally used in the works about violent women. The scholars have different ideas about it and thus the combination of their ideas can be used for this construction. Y. Schweitzer distinguishes two existing approaches to the explanation of terrorist attacks undertaken by Palestinian female suicide bombers. According to him, one approach, appearing primarily in the Arab and Muslim media, has cast female suicide bombers as heroines and pioneers, while the more dominant and "Western" approach has presented them as socially deviant and, in some measure, as "damaged goods" (Schweitzer 2008, 132). In other words, the first group of authors see the terrorist women as saints, while the second one approaches them as sinful and bad. Each of those approaches operates with its own set of gender stereotypes. The second approach can be also described through the three narratives distinguished by L. Sjoberg and C.E. Gentry. The authors suggest that the existing narratives about violent women portray them either as 'mothers', women who are fulfilling their biological destinies; as 'monsters', women who are pathologically damaged and are therefore drawn to violence; or as 'whores', women whose violence is inspired by sexual dependence and depravity (Sjoberg & Gentry 2007, 12).

Thus in this paper the typology of gender stereotypes that consists of two approaches and three narratives that belong to the second approach is used for the analysis of the literature about the Russian female terrorists. The first approach, that glorifies female terrorists, tends to idealize them. The authors use a lot of poetic descriptions that emphasize these women's unique personality and divine qualities of purity, beauty, piety, and rare brilliance (Schweitzer 2008, 132). All these help to contextualize heroines' aberrant behavior (participation in violence) in the traditional gender order. The female terrorist is constructed as embracing culturally accepted gender norms at the same time that she steps outside of them – she is modest, chaste, and a purveyor of family honor in her personal life, whereas she is fierce, courageous, and the equal of men in the name of the cause (Ness 2008, 22). The great majority of works about the Russian female terrorists by the members of the PSR and their sympathizers before and after the Russian revolution of 1917, are written in accordance with the principles of this approach. The purpose of their writings was to glorify the fighters against the Tsarist regime. The result was a series of mostly biographical works about terrorist women, that contained idealization of the heroines. E. Jones Hemenway defines such kinds of biographies as hagiographical.

As she puts it, "the subject of the hagiographical text embodies a religious – or revolutionary – ideal and thereby joins the pantheon of saints" (Jones Hemenway 2006, 80). Typical for the hagiographical biographies are their striking similarities with each other in the way the stories about the terrorist women are told, the details and events that the authors highlight etc. This means that writing a biography of a female terrorist had to follow a particular standard. According to M. Mogilner this standard was the presentation of the underground revolutionary women as very young frail girls that were supposed to live pure and bright lives, but sacrificed everything they had for the cause of the revolution (Mogilner 1999, 50). And this standard is obviously similar to the way of presenting female terrorists as ideal heroines, the way it is described in Schweitzer's article. One common feature that is present in many hagiographical works about the Russian female terrorists is reference to their beauty. The notion of beauty seems to have two different meanings there: the first meaning is connected to the common understanding of physical beauty as attractive appearance, the second meaning goes beyond it, referring to the women's spiritual beauty.

Physical beauty is mentioned directly in connection to Maria Spiridonova (Nevinson 1935, xx; M-in, 10), Maria Benevskaya (Popova, 182; Radzilovskaia & Orestova, 520-521), Esfir (Tatiana) Lapina (Pribylev, 39), Natalia Klimova (Kakhovskaya 1926, 152), Tatiana Leontieva (Ivanovskaya, 129) by references to their attractive appearance. However, the spiritual beauty of the female terrorists comes into the focus of the authors more often and it obviously has a special standard in accordance with which those women are described. First of all, this kind of beauty is marked by a spiritually beautiful face, which was the case for works about Spiridonova (Vladimirov 1906, *Maria Spiridonova*, 90-91; M-in, 6), Ekaterina Izmailovich (Tovarisch 1907, 12-13), Anna Solomakhina (Zilberblat 1930, 149-150). The second trait of the spiritual beauty are woman's eyes that are normally described as shiny, clever, expressive, innocent. Such descriptions are provided for Spiridonova (Vladimirov 1906, *Maria Spiridonova*, 90-91), Benevskaya ((Radzilovskaia & Orestova, 520-521), Maria Prokofieva (Spiridonova, 482-483), Dora Brilliant (Ivanovskaya, 57-58; 76-77; 82), Leontieva (Ivanovskaya, 129), Lidia Sture (Ivanovskaya, 155-156), Solomakhina (Zilberblat 1930, 149-150). Finally, the third trait is the reference to purity, chastity and innocence that characterized the women's look. That was the case for the descriptions of Spiridonova (Vladimirov 1906, *Maria Spiridonova*, 91; M-in, 6), E. Izmailovich (Tovarisch 1907, 12-13), Leontieva (Ivanovskaya, 129).

Interestingly enough, the spiritual beauty that the authors of the hagiographical biographies referred to sounds more like the kind of beauty that people used to see in Orthodox icons, where the saints are represented with ascetic faces, large eyes that look away from a materialistic world to a more spiritual one (Bulgurlu 2005, 23-24). This means that references to the spiritual beauty were intended to create holy images of those women giving them a status of saints, analogous with the Orthodox iconic ideal. Spiritual beauty implies the existence of beautiful personal features that belonged to the Russian female terrorists. In many cases the authors write about the “beautiful” or “tender” souls of these women. This is especially relevant in case of Fruma Frumkina, who according to all the authors didn't possess physical beauty, but was, instead, a human being with beautiful soul (see for example Roizman 1926, 303; *Pamiyati Frumkinoi i Berdyagina...*, 8; Pribylev, 15). Those “beautiful souls” were characterized in the hagiographical works by a special set of personal features. Among the traits of character typical for the Russian female terrorists the authors quite often mention being humble and quite (see Gorinson 1924, 236; Fridberg 1929, 158-159; Ocherk Pamfilovoi-Zilberberg Ksenii..., 26-27; Steinberg 1935, 103). Special attention is given to their kindness.

The author of Zinaida Konoplyannikova's biography writes about softness and humanity that characterized all the Russian terrorists. The example that shows that those features belonged to Konoplyannikova as well is the episode in that biography when she refuses to attack general G. Min because of the presence of little children on spot (*Geroi russkoi revolyutsii* 1917, 19). V.E. Vladimirov dedicated a lot of place in his work about Spiridonova to the description of her as a person, who has been kind to people from the early childhood. The illustration to this is the story about how little Spiridonova gave her shoes to a poor child (Vladimirov 1906, *Po Delu Spiridonovoi...*). Nevinson writes about Spiridonova's merciful and generous nature (Nevinson 1935, xviii), calls her “courageous and high-souled woman” (Nevinson 1935, xxi). Steinberg shows E. Izmailovich's kindness by mentioning her depression after an innocent person was shot during her escape from prison (Steinberg 1935, 105). Physical and spiritual beauty, kindness, being humble and quiet, - all these positive qualities resemble the best features that characterize stereotypical representation of a good woman. This means that as well as the authors who see the contemporary female terrorists as ideal heroes, the authors of the hagiographical biographies showed the Russian terrorist women as ideal good women with their typical female features.

At the same time the authors of the hagiographical biographies mention terrorist women's special talents that differentiate them from ordinary good women. S.P. M-in characterizes Spiridonova as a gifted, sincere and truthful person with an outstanding public speaker talent (M-in, 7, 10). N. Yurova in her article about the Menzhinski sisters mentions that the characters of her article had a lot of different interests and were extremely cultivated people (Yurova 1968, 260). K. Prokopovich mentions that Sofia Khrenkova wrote poems and even publishes an example of her poetry in his article (Prokopovich 1923, 288). A. Fridberg writes about Evstolia Rogozinnikova's incredible musical talent (Fridberg 1929, 154). Such kinds of descriptions go beyond the simple presentation of a good woman and show Russian female terrorists as not ordinary good people but outstanding personalities, who sacrificed their talents for the cause. The authors of the the Russian female terrorists' hagiographical biographies gave different explanations to the reasons of their participation in terrorist organizations. Normally love to common people as well as hatred and rage towards the political regime in the country are considered to be important for their decision to sacrifice themselves for the cause:

such things were written about Frumkina, Spiridonova, Brilliant, Alexandra Sevastianova and Sture (*Pamiyati Frumkinoi i Berdyagina...*, 9; Vladimirov 1906, *Maria Spiridonova*, 11-12; Vladimirov 1906, *Po Delu Spiridonovoi...*; Savinkov 1908, 5-6; Ocherk Pamfilovoi-Zilberberg Ksenii..., 14; Zhukovskii-Zhuk 1925, 252; Nevinson 1935, xvii; Steinberg 1935, 17). Savinkov gives quite an unusual explanation to self-sacrifice in case of Benevskaya. The author mentions her strong religious beliefs as an important reason for her participation in the Combat Organization of the PSR: according to him, she wanted to sacrifice her soul for the people by becoming a murderer and found a place in the Bible that according to her approved it (Savinkov 1909, *Vospominaniya Terrorista...*, 206). Such an explanation puts Benevskaya in line with the Orthodox saints that sacrificed themselves for the faith. The writers mention also more specific reasons that drove women into the terrorist ranks. The anonymous author of the book about Frumkina interpreted her participation in terrorism as the only way for her to fight against the lack of political rights in the country (*Pamiyati Frumkinoi i Berdyagina...*, 11). In case of Lidia Ezerskaya, G. Lelevich mentions her rebellious spirit that led Ezerskaya into terrorism (Lelevich 1922, 12). Yurova gives the same explanation to the revolutionary activities of the Menzhinski sisters: according to her they were no restrained girls, but rebels by nature (Yurova 1968, 251). “Bloody Sunday” of 1905, according to I. Zhukovski-Zhuk, was the point that changed Sture's life and made her determined to become a revolutionary (Zhukovskii-Zhuk 1925, 251).

Lidia Rudneva in E.N.'s biographical article about her also had 1905 as a decisive moment for her future life, that influenced her underground activities. Her decision to become a terrorist is explained by her experience of being in prison (E.N. 1927, 141). According to G. Lelevich, Ezerskaia's decision to become a revolutionary was a reaction to her general feeling of frustration (Lelevich 1922, 13). Zhukovskii-Zhuk also mentions spiritual and intellectual frustration as a driving force for Sture's revolutionary activities (Zhukovskii-Zhuk 1925, 251). All the reasons suggested by the authors are supposed to show that the women joined terrorists because of their unusual experiences and traits of character that made them different in comparison to other women. In general, it is obvious that the authors tried to convey the idea that those women couldn't stay calm in the situation they lived in and thus had to do something about it. Underground activities of the terrorists women is all that interests the authors of the hagiographical works. They rarely write about the private lives of their heroines that were not connected to their struggle. Mogilner in her book explains it by the idea that the real heroine is supposed to sacrifice not only her life but also her right to love, have a family, get kids.

The only love of her life are common people and all the sacrifices are given to that kind of love (Mogilner 1999, 54). That's the kind of explanation that K. Zilberberg gives in her article about Sevastianova, who didn't have any interests and wishes that were not connected to her revolutionary activities, because the common people were the love of her life (Ocherk Pamfilovoi-Zilberberg Ksenii..., 7-8; 34). This means that although the terrorist women were seen as good women in traditional meaning, they had to sacrifice the most important female roles and duties: being wives and mothers. There fore it is no wonder that the authors of the hagiographical biographies find in these women features that were unusual for the stereotypical good woman. The hagiographical biographies of the Russian female terrorists contrast their feminine features with the traits that characterize them as warriors and revolutionaries. According to A.V. Pribylev, revolutionary women in Russia were enormously devoted to the idea and ready to do anything for it (Pribylev, 3). This means that the female terrorists were seen as much more devoted to the cause in comparison to their male comrades.

Many authors mention fanatical devotion to revolution that characterized Brilliant, Leontieva, Maria Shkolnik, Prokofieva, Klimova, Frumkina, Lapina (Savinkov 1909, *Vospominaniya Terrorista...*, 34-35; 79-80; 125; Chernavskii 1930, 59-60; *Pamiyati Frumkinoi i Berdyagina...*, 8; Pribylev, 14; 39). As well as real warriors the terrorist women are normally presented as people with strong character: B. Gorinson writes about Sevastianova's determination and bravery (Gorinson 1924, 237), M. Chernavskii calls Prokofieva and Klimova the strongest people in Savinkov's group (Chernavskii 1930, 32; 59-60), A.V. Pribylev writes about Frumkina's strong character (Pribylev, 14), I. Zilberblat compares Solomakhina's character to steel (Zilberblat 1930, 149-150). M. Premiroy writes about his fellow Socialist Revolutionary comrade Marusya, who, according to the author, was not afraid of difficulties and faced all of them the way men did (Quoted in: Petajkina 2005). This last remark shows that the women that took part in revolutionary terrorism were seen by the authors of the hagiographical biographies as ideal human beings that were both good women and also had qualities that normally characterize brave men.

As a result the hagiographical biographies have created ideal images of Russian female terrorists that was one-sided and highly ideologized. Such an approach was the case mostly because the hagiographical works were written by the colleagues and supporters of the terrorist women, but not professional scholars and had ideological purposes as their main task. However, some of the stereotypes created in the hagiographical works are still present in the works of contemporary historians. Of course, Russian female terrorists are not presented in these works as saints anymore, but many stereotypes that comprised the holy image of them are repeated in different historical works without due reexamination. As well as the authors of the hagiographical biographies, the scholars very often write about two kinds of beauty of the female terrorists. A. Knight uses Savinkov's and V.M. Zenzinov's memoirs in order to write that Benevskaia was beautiful and charming (Knight 1979, 148), thus highlighting her character's attractive appearance.

In his article about Fanny Kaplan, Ya. Leontiev quotes the memoirs of a Latvian marksman who wrote about Kaplan's physical beauty, black hair and big eyes (Leontiev 1995). Spiritual beauty comes in focus when A.F. Savin writes about purity and inner beauty of Prokofieva, paying special attention to M. Spiridonova's poetic discription of her (Savin 2001, 37-38). It is remarkable, that in all those cases the information about the beauty of those women comes directly from the hagiographical texts. Many authors repeat the ideas about outstanding personal features that characterized female terrorists. Stites writes that all the Russian radicals were sincere, incorruptible and had strong will (Stites 1978, 311). Petaikina adds to those qualities selflessness, firmness, endurance and aspiration as well as ability to accomplish any task (Petajkina 2005).

A. Knight mentions moral purity that was maintained by those women (Knight 1979, 142). K.V. Gusev writes about Konoplyannikova's high morality, devotion to the ideas, the features, that according to him in general make difference between the Russian terrorists of the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, that were noble knights, and the contemporary terrorists, that are evil and ruthless (Gusev 1992, 5). Such conclusions are obviously based on the idealistic descriptions presented in the hagiographical biographies. As well as the earlier Russian writers contemporary historians insist on the female terrorists' fanatical devotion to revolution (see for example Knight 1979, 149). They also write about love to common people as the main driving force of their activities (Stites 1978, 272; 311; Budnitskii 1996; Pushkareva 1996, 47-48) and political murder as a way to sacrifice oneself for the cause (Knight 1979, 143-144; Lyandres 1989, 448; Gusev 1992, 35; Geifman 1993, 324; Budnitskii 1996). Together with those features that characterized female terrorists as good women contemporary historians write about the qualities that helped them in their terrorist activities although those qualities were not typically feminine. Stites writes about the rebellious character of Konoplyannikova, that, probably, was the main reason why she ended up in the terrorist ranks (Stites 1978, 271-272).

As well as Hillyar and McDermid he mentions Spiridonova's strong will (Stites 1978, 311; Hillyar & McDermid 2000, 140-141). K.V. Gusev describes Spiridonova's and Anastasia Mamaeva's bravery as well as Kaplan's determination (Gusev 1992, 30; 35; 81). According to Praisman, Sture was a person with the character strong as iron (Praisman 2001). In their books Geifman and Morozov write practically the same thing about Sture and her comrade Anna Rasputina by mentioning the courage that they showed before their execution (Geifman 1993, 64; Morozov 1998). In general, contemporary historians quite often give very high characteristic to the female terrorists' behavior after their arrest. For example, Praisman characterizes Rogozinnikova's behavior at her trial that resulted in death penalty as "heroic" (Praisman 2001). The doubts that come up in connection to such descriptions are based on the fact that in all the cases mentioned above the authors quote the primary sources as well as the early works about female terrorists without examining them as ideological writings that had their purpose in creating hagiographical images of the women terrorists giving them the features that they were supposed to possess according to the revolutionary standard. And because of that their writings acquire the standard style of the hagiographical biography although the authors don't have such a purpose. Thus gender stereotypes that were applied to the terrorist women at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century have become a part of contemporary historical works not giving their authors an opportunity to go beyond them.

Unlike the first approach to the problem, the second one implies that the reasons why women join terrorist organizations are mostly personal and have little to do with their political preferences or ideological beliefs. All the three narratives as well as all the gender stereotypes employed by the scholars drive them to that conclusion. No wonder that Knight writes directly about the Russian female terrorists that women "were often unable to separate personal motives from political and social goals and to see their actions in a broad political perspective that excluded their own self-perception" (Knight 1979, 151). In order to understand how this kinds of conclusions are made it is important to describe the existing narratives through the gender stereotypes employed and see how those narratives and stereotypes are used in the works about the Russian female terrorists. The mother narrative describes women's violence as a need to belong, a need to nurture, and a way of taking care of and being loyal to men (Sjoberg & Gentry 2007, 12-13). In other words, the violent woman in question is seen as a person who is exercising her family functions (as mother, wife, daughter) in relation to men. No wonder that the authors who create in their works the mother narrative pay special attention to the women's family backgrounds, that might explain their political deeds (Nacos 2008, 222-223). The family background can give information about whether the woman was recruited into terrorist ranks by a family member. This in its turn gives way to the stereotype of the female terrorist following her lover or husband, or perhaps her father, brother, or cousin, into terrorist groups and activities (Nacos 2008, 224).

Family backgrounds of the Russian terrorist women have long been in focus of historians that write on the topic. A. Knight dedicates a significant part of her article about the female terrorists to creating a comprehensive picture of their backgrounds. She summarizes the results in a table that presents aggregated information about 44 women's social origin, education, occupation, nationality (Knight 1979, 144-145). A. Hillyar and J. McDermid dedicate the whole book to reconstructing a collective biography of Russian women revolutionaries with a special stress on family and social backgrounds (Hillyar & McDermid 2000). The whole bulk of literature on terrorism in pre-revolutionary Russia doesn't include a single similar work about men. All the authors that write about Russian female terrorists normally start their accounts with identifying the backgrounds of their heroines (see for example Geifman 1993, 12; Budnitskii 1996; Praisman 2001). This tendency seems to be very significant although it doesn't always lead to the conclusions about the role of the family relationships in the women's recruitment into the terrorist ranks.

However, such conclusions are present in some of the works thus making gender stereotypes a part of the authors' conclusions. In general, it is quite common that historians introduce female members of the terrorist groups through their family and personal relationships with famous male terrorists or revolutionaries: Prokofieva is normally referred to as Egor Sozonov's fiancé (see for example Morozov 1998; Praisman 2001), Evgenia Zilberberg (Somova) as Savinkov's second wife (Morozov 1998), Brilliant as the cousin of a famous revolutionary G. Sokolnikov (Praisman 2001), Ksenia Zilberberg as the wife of terrorist Lev Zilberberg (Praisman 2001), Varvara Linkova-Petropavlovskaja as the mother of the 18-year-old terrorist V. Petropavlovskii, F. Grudanova and E. Averkieva as mothers of the male members of the PSR in Povolzhie (Petajkina 2005). Of course, it also happens that less famous male terrorists are introduced through their relationships with more famous male terrorists (for example, Praisman introduces Sergei Moiseenko as Boris Moiseenko's brother (Praisman 2001)). However, it happens quite rarely that a male terrorist is introduced through his relationship with a female terrorist (probably the only example is when Savin refers to I. Brilion as the brother of Brilliant (Savin 2001, 173). This implies that as a rule men get into terrorism not because they follow their wives/fiancés/sisters etc., but because of the ideological reasons. In the case of women it is more common to see the personal relationship as a condition of joining the terrorist ranks.

Terrorism as a choice that gives an opportunity to exercise the female need to belong and a way of being loyal to men is presented in Savin's book about Sozonov. The author is quite sure that Prokofieva became a terrorist only because of her wish to be together with her fiancé (Savin 2001, 195). It means that according to Savin, the decision to become a terrorist was not based on ideological reasons in this case, but was Prokofieva's typically female need. Although the personal relationship with Sozonov was the reason for Prokofieva's decision, Sozonov in Savin's opinion was not in any way connected to Prokofieva's recruitment directly: on the contrary, according to the author Sozonov had no idea that his fiancé would follow him (Savin 2001, 195). This means that in the author's opinion Prokofieva though was not manipulated into terrorism by her fiancé, but anyway decided to get into it because of him. The same kind of attitude is presented in Gorodnitskii's book when he writes about Yulia Yurkovskaia, who was a fiancé of Evgenii Grigoriev, a man chosen by Grigorii Gershuni to kill Konstantin Pobedonostsev, the Ober-Procurator of the Holy Synod. According to the author, Yurkovskaia was active during the conversations between Grigoriev and Gershuni and willing to commit the attack herself (Gorodnitskii 1998, 46-47). Such a desire to be active in the mission that was given to her fiancé implies that Yurkovskaia wanted to follow him. But such an interpretation shows the woman's decision as although personal and self-made, but not ideological or political.

In the mother narratives the women's violence is often attributed to vengeance driven by maternal and domestic disappointments. In other words, political violence committed by women is not seen as driven by ideology and belief in a cause, but instead as a perversion of the private realm (Sjoberg & Gentry 2007, 31-32). And this is the second reason why the information of the terrorist women's background draws so much attention of the scholars. If a terrorist woman has a history of failing her duties as a mother and wife, that becomes a reason enough to claim that she wants to compensate for this in her terrorist activities. At the same time, similar reasoning is behind the idea that sometimes women turn to terrorism out of simple boredom (Nacos 2008, 229). Being disappointed in her life as a daughter, wife or mother the woman is considered to be compensating for it by becoming a terrorist. Petajkina writes that many female socialist-revolutionaries, especially the young ones, saw their underground activities as a risky and gripping game (Petajkina 2005). In other words, underground work, including terrorism, is presented here as a means of making one's life exciting and less boring. Similar kind of attitude is expressed by O. Budnitskii when he writes about Alexandra Izmailovich: the author asks himself and the reader, if this young woman from a rich aristocratic family was simply romantic when she decided to become a terrorist (Budnitskii 1996). This obviously means that according to Budnitskii Izmailovich was bored and looking for a change.

Some authors interpret Ezerskaia's (who was married and had a son) decision to join the terrorists as an attempt to bring some excitement in her life as well. According to Lelevich, she became a revolutionary terrorist after having left her family because of dissatisfaction with her life as a wife and mother (Lelevich 1922, 13). A. Geifman writes directly that Ezerskaia, at the age of thirty-eight "dedicated ... [herself] to terrorism either from boredom, or a need for self-assertion" (Geifman 1993, 156). Family life was too boring according to L. Praisman for another female terrorist, Rogozinnikova, as well. He writes that in spite of her husband's request to go abroad and continue her education Rogozinnikova decided to commit a terror attack (Praisman 2001). If a woman has lost her husband, son, brother or father in fight, that becomes a reason enough to assume, that she has become a terrorist because of her personal loss (Nacos 2008, 223). Such an attitude is presented in the mother narrative by claims that women join terrorist groups after having experienced a personal trauma.

Intense frustration because of it is considered to be a strong motivator for them (Gonzalez-Perez 2008, 19). Their motivation is explained as the impulse to exact revenge (Zedalis 2008, 57). Self-sacrifice through terrorism in this condition produces a calming effect on their difficult emotional states and becomes an answer to the pain they cannot bear (Schweitzer 2008, 137). Mescheryakov makes a generalization that tragic family problems especially the ones connected to the loss of the relatives were the reason of a psychological breakdown for many future revolutionaries. According to him, Spiridonova went through it after the death of her father and it was natural to her to end up in the company of revolutionary terrorists (Mescheryakov 2001, 26-27). Hillyard and McDermid in their book also see a personal tragedy as the reason for Spiridonova to commit her attack on G. Luzhenovskii. They give a detailed account about Spiridonova's involvement with Vladimir Volskii, a fellow terrorist. The authors find it important to highlight that "The night of his [Volskii's. – N.P.] proposal was to be their last meeting for the next eleven years, as the following morning Volskii was arrested accused of PSR membership and a few days later Spiridonova carried out her terrorist act" (Hillyard & McDermid 2000, 172). This implies that Spiridonova's attempt on G. Luzhenovskii was connected to her loss of the loved one, which was a result of Volskii's arrest. Thus both books directly bound Spiridonova's personal loss with her activities as a terrorist.

The monster narrative is quite often employed by the contemporary historians that write about female terrorists in Russia at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century mostly because the idea about insanity and mental instability of those women has found quite many proponents among them. The monster narrative eliminates rational behavior, ideological motivation, and culpability from women engaged in political violence. First of all, violent women are described as insane (Sjoberg & Gentry 2007, 13). That's why female terrorists' emotional condition is often presented as unstable and even depressive (Zedalis 2008, 58). It is considered to be a proof of the monstrous and deviant nature of the terrorist women. Geifman writes about a wide range of stimuli that frequently were personal and arose from deep-seated emotional problems and conflicts, rather than from radical zeal or a solid grounding in revolutionary theory, that proved critical in driving young men and women to terrorist acts (Geifman 1993, 155-156). In other words, according to the author, terrorists of both sexes quite often started their activities because of their mental instability and problems that that instability caused. However, as we will see below, such a reason to explain women's participation in terrorism comes up much more often than in the case of men.

A. Knight is the first among the professional historians who sees mental instability as a common feature of the Russian female terrorists. She finds a proof of it in the fact that they committed suicides fairly often, especially during periods of inactivity – in prison, exile or abroad, and had apparent disregard for their own lives (Knight 1979, 150). Petajkina's opinion is very close to Knight's: according to her female terrorists were obsessed, passionate, had a tendency to exaltation, easily got depressed (Petajkina 2005). More often, however, historians point out mental instability in individual cases without making any generalizations. According to A.I. Spiridovich, Leontieva was a mentally unstable young woman used by the terrorists because of her connections in high society and at the royal court (Spiridovich 1916, 189-190). This means for the first that Leontieva became a terrorist due to her mental instability and for the second that even under such conditions terrorism was not her own choice, but was the result of the cunning of the Combat Organization's male leaders. Knight mentions that Leontieva showed strong signs of mental illness after being arrested (Knight 1979, 152). Geifman characterizes her as a person of questionable emotional stability (Geifman 1993, 55; 170) as well, thus implying that Leontieva's mental problems were the reason to join the Combat Organization. Frumkina's numerous attempts on lives of different government officials seem irrational to Knight as well thus giving her a chance to make a conclusion about Frumkina's mental instability (Knight 1979, 152-153).

Budnitskii also characterizes Frumkina in his book as inadequate and irrational (Budnitskii 2000, 165). Knight mentions that Spiridonova was accused of "feminine hysteria", thus implying that mental instability was the case for Spiridonova as well (Knight 1979, 159). The other scholars who characterize Spiridonova as hysterical are E. Yaroslavskii (Yaroslavskii 1919, 3; 5), E. Breitbart (Breitbart 1981, 333), A. Geifman (Geifman 1993, 315-316), Mescheryakov (Mescheryakov 2001, 73). Breitbart also claims that Spiridonova was kept in the psychiatric ward before her trial after the arrest (Breitbart 1981, 338), thus implying that she had serious mental problems (however, without giving any proof of this fact). Lapina is characterized as "hysterical" and "impulsive" both in Praisman's and in Morozov's books (Praisman 2001; Morozov 1998). M.I. Leonov describes Evgenia Allart as a nervous girl who behaved herself impudently (Leonov 2007, 177). Geifman writes about Rogozinnikova, who at her trial, obviously deranged, broke her silence only by periodic gales of laughter (Geifman 1993, 168). This gives an impression that Rogozinnikova was out of her mind as well.

Brilliant according to Geifman was an obvious introvert known for her tendency toward depression and hysteria, who after a while became increasingly unstable (Geifman 1993, 324). Similar mental problems were according to the author characteristic of Lurie as well (Geifman 1993, 324). Quite many scholars pay attention to Kaplan's mental instability. R. Stites writes that she was, according to the contemporaries, mentally unstable (Stites 1978, 312). S. Lyandres mentions that she made an impression of being hysteric (Lyandres 1989, 432) and quotes D.D. Donskoi who describes her as demented, being in a state of exaltation as if she were a holy idiot (Lyandres 1989, 440). K.V. Gusev writes about her exaltation as well (Gusev 1992, 81). A.L. Litvin calls her "hysterical and sick" (Litvin 2003, 21). Ya. Leontiev uses even the opinion of a psychiatrist in order to diagnose Kaplan's mental problem, giving it typically female interpretation (Lenin as a father figure that has to be killed by a young woman so that she can find a sexual partner) (Leontiev 1995). Thus instability of a woman that decides to be a terrorist is shown here as a common place and a typical phenomenon. To sum up, Leontieva, Frumkina, Spiridonova, Lapina, Allart, Rogozinnikova, Brilliant, Lurie and Kaplan are presented as mentally unstable by many historians who use earlier works and memoirs of the contemporaries in order to prove it. Lyandres adds to this list Alexandra Izmailovich as well (Lyandres 1989, 433).

However, the author doesn't explain what makes her unstable and no information about Izmailovich's poor mental health can be found in any kind of sources. The fact that Izmailovich is included in that list without any reason shows how much the gender stereotypes connected to the terrorist women's mental instability influence historians and their works. O. Budnitskii, although, accepting that mental instability was quite common among the female terrorists, unlike all the rest of the researchers puts forward a question, whether this instability was the reason to become a terrorist or a result of psychologically difficult life of terrorists (Budnitskii 1996; Budnitskii 2000, 163-165). And that is the only case in literature on the topic that doubts the common opinion that only mentally sick and depressed women join the terrorist ranks. Some kind of development of the idea that mental instability was rather a result of underground terrorist activities than a reason to become a terrorist can be found in Petajkina's article. According to her, failures in underground work made women understand their helplessness, which made them disappointed. This resulted in depressions and psychological problems (Petajkina 2005). Interestingly enough, the author represents this development as typical for women, showing thus that mental instability as a result of underground life existed in their case, but not for the male terrorists.

In some individual cases the authors also suggest that mental instability came as a result of terrorist activities, but not as their precondition. Stites sees Spiridonova's nervous condition as a result of long imprisonment in Siberia (Stites 1978, 311). Rabinowitch highlights that her physical and mental condition had been fragile from the time of her first beatings and confinement (Rabinowitch 1997, 185), thus implying that her nervous manner and hysterical condition were the result of her terrorist activities, but not the reason to undertake them. According to Mescheryakov, Spiridonova's nervousity and emotionality were typical for a young person with maximalist mind, especially for the one who like Spiridonova lost her father and had little contact with her mother (Mescheryakov 2001, 66). This means that the author is trying to understand his heroine and analyze her behavior through the context in which she lived, thus presenting a more balanced picture of Spiridonova's personality and her reasons to become a terrorist. Praisman writes about Leontieva that she became mentally unstable while being in prison and not before that (Praisman 2001). A. Geifman also writes about SR Mariia Seliuk who proved unable to tolerate the pressure of underground life, became completely unbalanced, and lost the ability to function as a terrorist (Geifman 1993, 169).

Interestingly enough, even in cases when the authors do not write directly about mental instability or insanity of the female terrorists, they quite often show those women as depressed while making the choice to become terrorists. Knight presents Konopliannikova's underground terrorist activities as a result of restrictions that were imposed on her work as a village teacher by local authorities, which led to strong frustration (Knight 1979:145-146). Similar reasons for Maria Fedorova's participation in terrorism are given by K. Morozov: she was a former village teacher fired by local authorities for her enlightening work with peasants (Morozov 1998). Thus, even in cases when terrorist women are not called directly insane, the problems with professional life that lead to frustration and depression are considered by historians to be a reason enough to join terrorists. Terrorist women are often presented in the monster narrative in denial of their femininity, no longer women or human (Sjoberg & Gentry 2007, 13). Their interest in violence is explained by the fact that since they are not really women and thus engage in the activities that have always been considered to be a male domain (de Cataldo Neuburger & Valentini 1996, 33). The same type of argumentation lays behind the writings of those who claim that women become terrorists in order to reach gender equality or express their gender equality in this way (Nacos 2008, 226).

Some of the authors show terrorist women's wish to abandon their femininity through the statements about their reluctance to get married and get a family. Petajkina writes that the female terrorists put very little value to private and family life (Petajkina 2005). According to I. Yukina, that happened because the roles of wives and mothers would disturb their underground activities (Yukina 2007, 143). This means that according to the authors the women that take part in terrorism have to become more male than female in traditional view in order to be able to do all the activities included. In other cases scholars connect non-typical for women behavior of the female terrorists to the feminist ideas that influenced them. That was the case according to A. Knight, although she admits that the terrorist women were the opponents of feminism. Because of that influence the female terrorists had a deep sense of their unequal position as women and urgent need to prove their usefulness to society (Knight 1979, 141). Yukina develops this idea by claiming that all the people were equal in terrorist organizations and thus women got a chance to come to the level of men, which was considered to be a human norm. According to the author, the reason why terrorist women were so extremely strong and loyal to the cause was that they wanted to be like men (Yukina 2007, 142). A.F. Savin comes to the same conclusion when he writes that Prokofieva became a terrorist only because of her wish to become equal with Sozonov (Savin 2001, 195).

In order to become equal to men women terrorists tend to be more fanatical, more cruel, more deadly, because they have to prove their belonging (Nacos 2008, 228). And that is why a monstrous women's violence is characterized as quite different from male violence. A violent woman is considered to be more deadly and thus she is more a threat to society in comparison to a violent man (Sjoberg & Gentry 2007, 37). Gorodnitskii writes that Leontieva was a person who didn't know the limits of violence (Gorodnitskii 1998, 238). In other words, she is presented as an extremely ruthless and cruel person. Praisman writes about the murder of a French businessman Muller committed by Leontieva. Her attitude to the event leads the author to the conclusion that Leontieva considered a murder as a totally normal event (Praisman 2001). Budnitskii mentions Spiridonova's composure during the moment when she was shooting Luzhenovskii with five bullets (Budnitskii 1996; Budnitskii 2000, 176). Mescheryakov interprets Spiridonova's letter where she writes about her attempt on Luzhenovskii as a proof of her calmness during the attack. He also suspects that she got pleasure out of seeing her victim's fear and confusion (Mescheryakov 2001, 114). Budnitskii highlights lack of reflection in cases of Praskovia Ivanovskaia and Shkolnik when they made their decisions to become terrorists (Budnitskii 1996).

This implies that joining the organization that had killing people as its main means of struggle was not a big deal for those women. Praisman writes that Konoplyannikova was ready to murder the wife of her victim G. Min who tried to stop her, although this woman had nothing to do with the crimes that the revolutionaries incriminated to her husband (Praisman 2001). The author also highlights the fact that Rogozinnikova who wanted to explode the main prison administration, was not worried about a lot of innocent victims that her action would cause. This leads Praisman to the conclusion that Rogozinnikova didn't consider human life as important (Praisman 2001). All the cases mentioned above show us that the historians pay special attention to the facts that can show terrorist women as extremely cruel and ruthless. The reason for that is obviously the authors' traditional view on women as non-violent beings and as a result their surprise that women take part in terrorism. That's why the most vicious cases with women's participation draw so much attention. The whole narrative blames women's violence on the evils of female sexuality (Sjoberg & Gentry 2007, 13). In this respect violent women are often characterized by their capacity (or lack thereof) to have sex with men; women's involvement in sexual activity is always closely connected to their violence: they commit violence either because of their insatiable need for sex with men, men's control and ownership of their bodies, or their inability to have sex (Sjoberg & Gentry 2007, 46).

The only case in the literature about the Russian female terrorists that presents this stereotype is the theory of E. Breitbart (Breitbart 1981) and Yu. Felshtinskii (Felshtinskii 1985), who claim that G. Luzhenovskii was Spiridonova's former lover and she shot him because of jealousy without any ideological reasons for that (Breitbart 1981, 333-334). Some contemporary historians approach this idea with a great deal of scepticism seeing it more as an attempt to write a flashy work than to do a serious research (see about it Budnitskii 1996; Praisman 2001). Whether it is true or not, the very fact that such a version appeared says a lot about the attitude towards the female terrorists and their activities. The authors that employ the whole narrative sexualize women's violence, paying special attention to their physical appearance, especially when they have a chance to write about them as being beautiful (Sjoberg & Gentry 2007, 42). It is obviously a means to make a sharp contrast to the image of a tough terrorist (Nacos 2008, 221). Knight mentions that Klimova was a captivating beauty and immediately after that writes about her participation in the bombing of Stolypin's dacha in August 1906, which resulted in the death of 32 persons (Knight 1979, 155).

Praisman goes even farther in using this stereotype: every time he mentions the names of the Russian female terrorists (Leontieva, Benevskaja, Anastasia Bitsenko, Rogozinnikova, Sture), he writes about their beautiful appearance and contrasts it to their deeds by using expressions as “cruel murderer” or giving a detailed account on their crimes (Praisman 2001). Leontiev in his article about Kaplan quotes the memoirs where she is described as a very beautiful woman who was popular with the men (Leontiev 1995). All those cases show us that the authors try to highlight the female sexuality in the Russian female terrorists in order to use it as something directly connected to their terrorist deeds. The whole narrative very often underlines if the female terrorist is unattractive. The reason for that in MacDonald’s words is that “these women are so very ugly that the only way they can catch men’s attention is by becoming killers” (MacDonald 1991, 6). Again, the woman’s actions are interpreted as an attempt to get a man, which means, being emotional while making her choice and willing to get submissive. Praisman quotes Spiridovich, who in his turn calls Anna Pigit as a very unattractive and unpleasant fanatic (Praisman 2001). This implies that such a woman has become a terrorist only because her unattractive appearance prevented her from doing something better with her life. And, of course, her devotion was fanatical and irrational, first, because she was a woman and it was natural for her to be like that, and, second, because that was the only and thus the most important thing going on in her life.

It is obvious that the mother, monster and whore narratives are used quite much by the historians who write about the Russian terrorist women. However, those three narratives aren’t equally employed by the scholars: the whore narrative, although exists, isn’t represented as much as the mother and the monster narratives. The reason that the mother narrative is so much used by the historians probably lies in the fact that it is based on the general and the most common understanding of the female nature. The monster narrative is so popular mostly because the traditional view on women and femininity doesn’t accept women as potentially violent. And that is why it is easy to explain female participation in terrorism by the women’s deviation. When it comes to the whore narrative, it seems that the reason why it is not very much used in the historical works has its roots in the earlier writings on the topic that were based on the idealization of those women and their deeds. That idealization resembled the Orthodox Christian representations of saints so much that it didn’t leave any space for the sexual aspects of those women’s lives. As a result, the tradition of the whore narrative didn’t exist until recently and thus the scholars didn’t have any standard in this field which they could follow in their writing. It led to the situation that even in the works of those who saw the Russian female terrorists and their deeds as criminal those women still were presented without sexuality, pure and chaste. This obviously highlights the strong connection between the early and contemporary works on the topic, and between the two approaches to the topic.

The analysis of the historical literature shows that the gender stereotypes typical for different kinds of writings about violent women are actively used in them. The two dominant approaches presented in this paper contain two opposite views on the problem. Some contemporary historical works have features of both of them and thus one can hope that the picture presented in those works tends to be more balanced. However, since both approaches are based on the stereotypical ideas about women and violence, those works are filled with the gender stereotypes. The main reason for the stereotypes’ reproduction in the contemporary works besides the traditional ideas about women and femininity is that in many cases the scholars use the primary sources and earlier works on the subject without due examination. Such a reexamination could help one see beyond the ideological texts and to avoid repetitions of the facts that were manipulated to match the hagiographical standard. That’s why using the archival documents that were not meant to be published and read by many people could help scholars see those women in a new, less stereotypical way. Mescheryakov wrote Spiridonova’s biography using this kind of materials and as a result his work is a new way of looking at her life and deeds. However, as it was shown above, even his book didn’t avoid the gender stereotypes. That’s why the main thing to be done is reconsidering the traditional views on women and femininity. Contemporary researchers of violent women think that women are no different from men with regard to their violence (Nacos 2008, 217-218). And this should be the starting point of any research about violent women that will give scholars an opportunity to write new kinds of works on the topic.

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