

## Archangorodsky and Moorehouse: Good Initiatives and the Key to Success

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### Abstract

Russian literature gives us many brilliant examples of prophetic ideas. In the XX century, this line was continued by such talented writers, as Alexander Solzhenitsyn. One of his works, *The Red Wheel*, is deeply influenced by American writer John Dos Passos both in form and content. Solzhenitsyn's *Red Wheel* is a reflection of Dos Passos' *U.S.A.*: in the *U.S.A.* capitalism wins over socialism, while in *The Red Wheel* socialism wins over capitalism. Solzhenitsyn seeks the reason for that. With this regard, the article considers two key characters of these works: *The Red Wheel's* Ilya Archangorodsky and *U.S.A.'s* John Ward Moorehouse. We find out that John Ward Moorehouse achieves his personal objectives through bringing together two rivaling parties: capital and labor. Archangorodsky seeks the answer for the failure of reforms in Russia, and finds no answer. The answer, though, lies in social institutions: Moorehouse is the pioneer of public relations in America, and that is the social institution Russian desperately needs in order to survive, but fails to do so because of its absence.

**Keywords:** Archangorodsky, Moorehouse, *U.S.A.*, *The Red Wheel*, capital, labor

### Introduction

"The holy Russian literature is the very literature worthy to be worshipped", wrote Thomas Mann in 1901. One cannot disagree with this German writer. Indeed, Russian literature gave the reading world many incomparable images and characters, which many skillful writers would just desire to portray. The 19th century became the glory of Russian literature: some European writers even put it above all existing western literatures, claiming that Russian writers surpassed their western peers in skill and figurativeness. For example, Zola called Tolstoy "the Shakespeare". Dostoyevsky became a reference book not only for the West, but even for the East – recent data tell us that the Japanese are the nation most widely reading Dostoyevsky worldwide. The 20th century was just partly logical continuation of the 19th century: communist decades had their own, definitely unique, impact on national literature. One trend is still perceived: the best examples of the XX century Russian literature still try to answer the question "What to Do?" («Что делать?») put as early as in the 19th century. This question remained unanswered because, unfortunately, Soviet reality proved unable to solve the Russian dilemma, but only exacerbated it. That is why Soviet period features not only such talented writers as Maxim Gorky (Максим Горький) or Mikhail Sholokhov (Михаил Шолохов), who were the adepts of Soviet power,

but also such radically different writers as Alexander Solzhenitsyn (Александр Солженицын), who reckoned Soviet power as the worst evil Russian statehood and culture could ever have. The latter, in particular, is famous not only by his *GULag Archipelago* («Архипелаг ГУЛар»), but also for the epic *The Red Wheel* («Красное Колесо»), the first part of which, *August, 1914* will be discussed in this chapter.

Solzhenitsyn himself admitted that while writing his *Red Wheel* he was heavily influenced by John Dos Passos and his famous trilogy *U.S.A.* This trilogy had had particular influence on the form in which *The Red Wheel* is written. It looks like Solzhenitsyn copied Dos Passos's technique of "The Newsreel", in which the latter presented excerpts from the media, which, according to Dos Passos, were the most representative and informative news pieces of the time. However, the merit of the work should not be detracted by this. On the contrary, this unintentional injection from American into Russian literature enriched the latter, making Solzhenitsyn able to present his ideas in the way he wanted. However, it is not only the form, by which these two works can be compared. The main idea of both books can be compared, and, based on that, the characters can be compared as well.

The main idea of Dos Passos's book is "American capitalism is evil. Socialism can be the solution, although it is de-

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feated". The main idea of Solzhenitsyn's is diametrically opposite: "Russian socialism is evil. Russian capitalism could be the solution, although it was defeated". These theses are confirmed by the turns in the plot of the books as well as by epic descriptions of both historical and fictitious characters of the novels. The set of characters in both books provides wide option for comparison, as the characters in both books represent different strata of their contemporary societies.

In U.S.A., one of these characters is definitely one of the central: John Ward Moorehouse. Starting as a printing house agent, and gradually ascending the ladder into the world of tycoons. As he ascends, he gradually becomes one of the sharks of American business combining the features both of Theodore Dreiser's Frank Algernon Cowperwood and Sinclair Lewis's Babbitt (see my article *John Ward Moorehouse: Cowperwood or Babbitt*).

We observe something similar in Solzhenitsyn's *August 1914*. Among other protagonists, the writer portrays Iliia Isakovich Archangorodsky (Илья Исакович Архангородский), a "sagacious Jew", as the writer calls him. "Archangorodsky was the first expert on mills, and on the newest ones, any one you like, was such an expert that no mill was installed without his office from Tsaritsin to Baku" (Солженицын, p. 45). Iliia Archangorodsky is represented as a serious businessman, a good professional in his field, a wise, farseeing, sagacious person. In addition, Solzhenitsyn highly appreciates the principles on which the United States is built. When he talks about one of the main characters, Roman, and his wife Irina, Solzhenitsyn writes:

He talked lively, cheerfully, a lot. Irina even did not understand at first. He promised her that after **America, to where he had long wanted to travel, as into the most attractive, business-like, wisely built country**, (the bold script is mine – G.Sh.) and even before America, let only the war be over, they will travel by her favorite <...> route.

(Солженицын, p. 73)

These words have double value, since they are pronounced by native Russian protagonists, according to Solzhenitsyn. Here we cannot forget a controversial position of Solzhenitsyn, which he expressed upon and had been expressing since his arrival in the US in 1974: Western capitalism is in deep crisis, it is doomed to perish, that the will of the authorities and the society had been considerably weakened. In his speeches and statements, Solzhenitsyn expressed both his aversion to Soviet communism as well as his rejection of Western capitalism (Яковлев, 1979). However, these were political statements, which were directed both against the right and the left, pronounced specifically at the background of the raging Cold War. As for the above idea expressed in the *August 1914*, there is no doubt

in the sincerity of great Russian writer: there is no doubt that he genuinely believed that Americans within their historical, geographical, cultural, and other factors managed to create an effective and viable social and economic system.

"I am an engineer, I am not a merchant", Iliia Isakovich liked to say. Nonetheless, he would not abstain from buying and selling houses and lands (Солженицын, p.529).

In the novel we learn that at the dinner held by the Archangorodskys there will be a formerly prominent anarchist, now an apostate, an old friend of Archangorodsky's, a fellow businessman Obodovsky. He is bored by arguing with "dissenting, little knowing youth". Still, he makes an effort and proclaims the following words:

"I recognize this question, and it is almost twenty years old! On student parties at the end of the nineties we were asking each other the very thing. Then this schism had already become evident among students – on the one side, the revolutionaries, on the other side engineers, to destroy or to build. It seemed to me as well that it was impossible to build. One should visit the West to become amazed: how sedately live there the anarchists, how accurately they work. As for the BUSINESS, who ever DID something by his hands, he knows: industry is neither capitalist, nor socialist, industry is SINGLE: the one creating national treasury, common material base, without not single nation can live".

(Солженицын, p. 532)

Just like Archangorodsky, Obodovsky is against political turmoil in the country, preferring to do his business to the best way possible. When socialist revolutionary Naum asks Obodovsky:

"So, you forever turned away from revolutionary methods?"

On this, Obodovsky answers:

"I would call it otherwise. Earlier I was most of all concerned how to DISTRIBUTE everything, which is produced without me. And now I am more bothered how to CREATE. The best heads and hands of the country should think about this, while the weaker heads will deal with distribution. When a lot is created, then even with the mistakes of distribution nobody will remain without benefit."

(Солженицын, p. 533)

As we can see, there is a definite gap in Solzhenitsyn-depicted Russia between production and distribution, and nobody knows how to solve this controversy. The revolutionaries long for the revolution, which will free them from the chains of oppression and help them build society, which will be more just than their contemporary Russia. On the other hand, serious workers, businessmen, such engineers like

Archangorodsky and Obodovsky believe that the revolution is only harmful, that the solution is in diligence, industriousness, hard work, and in ingenious people.

“There are thousands of you [revolutionaries], says Archangorodsky. – And nobody works for long time. And it is not acceptable to ask. And you are not the exploiters. As for national product, you are consuming and consuming it. You think that the revolution will pay everything back”.

(Солженицын, p. 536)

While pondering about the fate of his motherland, Iliya Isakovich Archangorodsky thus finishes his monologue:

“The ways of history are more complicated than you would like to imagine. The country, in which you live, is in trouble. So what is right: get lost, hell with you? Or: I also want to help you, I’m yours? Living in this country, one should decide for oneself and stick to it: do you belong to it by your soul? Or not? If not – you can destroy it, you can leave it, there is no difference... But if yes - one should get involved in the patient process of history: work, convince and slowly move..”

(Солженицын, p. 537)

Thus, it is apparent that the eternal Russian question “What to do?” is in force. Both Archangorodsky and Obodovsky represent Russian business circles. Actually, they do know, what to do, but they do not know how to do. In the period described by Solzhenitsyn, Russia was an emerging capitalist economy beset by many controversies. One such controversy was the fast development of capitalism despite a small working class. Yes, there were emerging entrepreneurs in Russia, there was rising number of workers, there was a substantial quantity of well-off peasants (so-called *kulaks*), but, nevertheless, the booming of industrial capitalism could not prevent the catastrophe (for Solzhenitsyn) of 1917. From Archangorodsky’s monologue we know that one of the functional forces of developing capitalism in Russia could be the Union of Engineers, which could be far more prolific and useful than any political party. But most of all Archangorodsky is vexed by the fact that there is no liaison between upper and lower classes:

“From this side – the Black Hundred! From that side – the Red Hundred! And in the middle –... – he joined his palms as if depicting a vessel, - a dozen of workers want to break through – impossible! – he took the palms apart and slapped them: - they will squash you! They will laminate you!”

(Солженицын, p. 539)

Now, let us address a peer of Archangorodsky across the Atlantic Ocean, one of the main characters of John Dos Passos’ *U.S.A.* John Ward Moorehouse. This character, a

definitely round and dynamic one, reveals multiple features, which put him somewhere between Dreiser’s *Cowperwood* and Sinclair Lewis’s *Babbitt*. An extremely talented businessman, Moorehouse passes all the stages of shaping of businessman starting from selling newspapers and ending by organizing his own enterprise. Moorehouse is desperately looking for something, which could be new for American society, which would attract its attention, which could be useful for the society, for both opposing camps – capitalists (“The Black Hundred”) and workers (“The Red Hundred”). He seeks and he finds. He explores and develops a completely new field of early 20th century America – public relations, and establishes his own firm, which gradually becomes one of the monopolists in the area. This firm serves as a liaison between industrial capital and workers trade unions, bringing these two together and helping solving the problems when such problems emerge. When establishing his firm, Moorehouse gives a speech, in which he summarizes his program:

“Capital and labor <...> as you must have noticed, gentlemen, in the course of your varied and useful careers, capital and labor, those two great forces of our national life neither of which can exist without the other are growing further and further apart; any cursory glance at the newspapers will tell you that. Well, it has occurred to me that one reason for this unfortunate state of affairs has been the lack of any private agency that might fairly present the situation to the public. The lack of properly distributed information is the cause of most of the misunderstandings in the world . . . The great leaders of American capital <...> are firm believers in fairplay and democracy and are only too anxious to give the worker his share of the proceeds of industry if they can only see their way to do so in fairness to the public and the investor. After all, the public is the investor whom we all aim to serve”.

(Dos Passos, p. 284)

We may say here that Moorehouse has dotted his i’s and crossed his t’s. Longing for success, he managed to find the area where the interests of capital and labor overlap. Although Moorehouse was far from being an angel, his initiative would help subsequently to bring harmony between industrial capital and trade unions, from which both of these groups benefited. Owing to the efforts of such people as Moorehouse, the revolution and anarchy was prevented in America, and, generally, in the Western world. That’s why, for Dos Passos, a socially oriented writer, John Ward Moorehouse is the main character, but by no means a protagonist in his trilogy. It is actually a bit hard to speak about protagonists in the *U.S.A.*, but Moorehouse could be the one, should

Dos Passos confess more right-wing ideology.

However, for Solzhenitsyn, people like Moorehouse serve noble purposes. Archangorodsky and Obodovsky were right complaining that there was nobody between the Black and Red Hundreds to bring peace between these two. The tragedy of Russia was that capitalism as well as worker movement were not strong enough in the country. That is why, comparing Russia to the USA, Roman speaks about USA as “the most attractive, wisely built country”. What Russia desperately needed in those times, among other things, was entrepreneurs, who would provide liaison between capital and labor. However, how could such entrepreneurs emerge, when industrial capital and labor hardly existed in Russia those times? Anyway, John Ward Moorehouse with his public relations company could have provided the best solution for the conflicts maturing in Russian society, and had there been more such people as Moorehouse, the catastrophe (for Solzhenitsyn) of 1917 could have been avoided.

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