

**#277**

**George Kennan and the Russian Empire:  
How America's Conscience Became  
an Enemy of Tsarism  
Helen Hundley**

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## George Kennan and the Russian Empire: How America's Conscience Became an Enemy of Tsarism

In 1885–1886, one of America's most respected reporters, George Kennan (1845–1924), changed his mind about the basic nature of the Imperial Russian government.<sup>1</sup> He would spend the subsequent four decades of his active life attempting to challenge U.S. policy and to mold U.S. public opinion, a goal he was largely successful in achieving. After his first trip to the Russian Empire in the 1860s, he had worked hard to create a benign portrait of Russia. Given its location in Europe, its monarchical system, and its alien nature, this was no small feat. After his experiences with critics of the Russian government in 1885 and 1886, he sought to expose the American public and government to the evils of the Russian government while separating its actions from the Russians as a people. To a great extent Kennan owed his change of opinion to the influence of the Siberian patriot, Nicholas Mikhailovich Iadrintsev (1842–1894), and his wide circle of friends and acquaintances, both inside and outside of Siberia.<sup>2</sup> The meeting of these two men, early in Kennan's investigation of the exile system, played a seminal role in the people he would meet, and the type of information he could access.

Kennan was certainly in a position to play the role he was to play. He had been preparing for it for over twenty years. An ardent supporter of the Union from Ohio, Kennan worked as a telegrapher during the early years of the Civil War and distinguished himself in the critical Cincinnati center. He then joined an exciting adventure, an expedition to plan the laying of telegraph line across Siberia in order to allow swift communication between the United States and the European powers. At that time, the attempt to lay

the Atlantic Cable had already failed twice. Perry McDonough Collins' plan sought to solve the problem through a joint effort of the Russian Empire and the United States. Thus, in 1865 and 1866,<sup>3</sup> the young George Kennan had a fascinating adventure, an adventure which left him with a lifetime love—Russia.

Kennan's book about his travels, *Tent Life in Siberia* gradually gained him some notoriety as an "expert" on the Russian Empire in the United States, but did not provide him with wealth.<sup>4</sup> It took some years after returning from his first trip to the Russian Empire to establish himself. In time, he found a career in reporting, and became a premier reporter for the new Associated Press. Over his career, he wrote on American politics, the Spanish-American War, President McKinley's death, the Russo-Japanese War, World War I, and the Russian Revolution.<sup>5</sup> He wrote for a wide variety of journals including the "hot" magazines and newspapers of his times including *Century Magazine*, *Atlantic Monthly*, and *The Outlook*.<sup>6</sup> In fact, a series written by Kennan might actually significantly improve the readership numbers of a magazine.<sup>7</sup>

In no small amount due to Kennan's efforts, by the 1880s a number of the American public saw the Russian Empire as benign, if exotic, and filled with interesting people.<sup>8</sup> A number of elements played into that perception. At times, the Russian Empire was perceived as being America's "only" friend in Europe. Secondly, the sale of Russian America to the United States, in addition to being a "Seward's Folly" joke, was also presented in some of the American press as a transaction which cheated

the Russian government when the United States failed to see that the Russian government received all that had been promised.

Finally and tellingly, the Russian Empire faced "evil revolutionaries" in the 1880s. Americans, for their part, certainly were increasingly fearful of "Eastern European bomb-throwing anarchists" as they viewed some of the immigrants to their own country who had opposed the Tsar or other European governments in Europe. The 1881 assassination of Tsar Aleksandr II only served to justify the Russian exile structure. Therefore, even to some Americans, despite its monarchist government, all those who criticized the Russian government must be wrong.

Kennan was not the person who initially challenged the very views on Russia that he had helped to create, but he certainly provided the most influential opposition to the Tsarist government after he changed his mind. Another man initiated that public battle. William Jackson Armstrong served as an inspector of U.S. Consulates in President Grant's second term. After his experience in Russia he came to believe that:

You have been used to hearing that this Tsar [Aleksandr II] is a liberal-despot and a kind-hearted man. You have associated his figure in a sublime act with that towering executive Chief of this republic—Abraham Lincoln. I mean: the emancipation of the serfs. But in thinking of their deaths, keep always this clear distinction in mind. Abraham Lincoln was assassinated for a cause which liberated 3 million slaves. Aleksandr II was killed for the enslavement of ninety millions of people—the one the martyr of Liberty, the other the martyr of Despotism.<sup>9</sup>

These words were repeated in a series of lectures initiated in the early 1880s by the prominent New York minister, the abolitionist, Henry Ward Beecher. In closing his lecture, Armstrong used equally unequivocal language, "...Russia is among States the monster criminal of the nineteenth century. There are no evidences in Siberia or elsewhere that can be legitimately, or even decently, adduced to vindicate before Americans either the humanity or the justice of that empire."<sup>10</sup> Even though serfdom had ended, to Armstrong and others, the Russian Empire continued to deserve the approbation of civilized people because of its policy of imprisoning and abusing large numbers of its people in Siberia, for actions which would not be illegal in democratic societies.

Armstrong sought to spark a battle specifically with Kennan, as the dean of knowledgeable American specialists on Russia, and one who heretofore had presented a positive view of Russia. If Kennan could "see the light" his change of heart would be taken seriously by important people. The succeeding battle of words with Kennan in print and on the lecture circuit stirred up public interest in the exact "nature" of the Russian Empire, as could be clearly displayed in the Siberian exile system.

At first, Armstrong's attacks seemed anti-Russian to Kennan, which caused him to strike back in defense against those who criticized Russians. At this time, Kennan generally defended all things Russian. For example, in 1882 Kennan lambasted those who sought to attack the Siberian exile system in a scholarly article in the *Bulletin of the American Geographical Society* in which he presented an outline of the criticism directed at the Russian system.<sup>11</sup> Kennan saw two

special prongs of the attack, one from partisan English papers, and the other from misguided Siberians. Kennan criticized the inflammatory agenda of the English "Tory papers" in their attempt to isolate the Russian Empire for international political reasons. Secondly, to Kennan, if the English had a political agenda, Siberians practiced the economic NIMBY [Not in My Back Yard] of the nineteenth century. In Kennan's analysis, after they became prosperous, Siberians sought to rid themselves of this institution which in no way added to property values. Two Russians were specifically unmercifully pilloried by Kennan, S. Maximov, for his *Siberia and the Hard Labour Exile*, and N.M. Iadrintsev. To Kennan, Maximov and Iadrintsev's works were, "...prejudiced and one-sided, but in many cases untrue...."<sup>12</sup> Kennan was genuinely incensed and disgusted by their criticism of Russian governmental policy. Unknowingly, he attacked the very person who would soon help to change his mind forever concerning not only Siberian exile, but the nature of the Russian government as well.

#### **1885 Trip to Siberia.**

Despite Kennan's spirited and immediate defense of Russia, as Armstrong had planned, he had piqued Kennan's interest.<sup>13</sup> The next logical step would be a trip to examine conditions in Siberia personally. How could an under-paid writer afford such a trip? Kennan convinced one of America's most popular late nineteenth century journals, *The Century*, to send him to Siberia. The entire expedition, contracted articles, and possible book, were painstakingly planned in conjunction with the president of the Century Company, Roswell Smith, and even with the United States Government.<sup>14</sup> Kennan was to receive \$6,000 for twelve articles with \$100 per month advance for up to fifteen months, to

support his wife, Emeline Kennan, while he was overseas. The Century Company also held out the possibility that it might publish any book arising from this expedition.<sup>15</sup> To the company, it did not matter what he discovered, at the very least, Kennan could be expected to write another very popular travel account.

Kennan attacked every issue he wrote on from a scholarly approach. His work on Siberian exile was no different. Planned articles and a book on the Siberian exile system would be researched from every point of view. Kennan began his work with an advantage few outsiders bothered to seek, he learned Russian. He was thus able to hold conversations with everyone he met, whether or not the interpreter was available or willing for him to speak to certain people. Kennan then sought to see as much of the exile system that he could, and meet as many people, both administrators and exiles, as possible.

To this end, for his trip to Siberia, both before and after his arrival in St. Petersburg, Kennan sought to obtain all of the official documents which would open the Siberian prisons to a foreigner. As he still had a very good reputation with the Russian government, Kennan easily obtained letters to the Governor-General of Eastern Siberia, General Ignatiev, and from the First Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs, while the Russian Minister to the United States, Baron Struve, and Aleksandr III himself, also helped to smooth Kennan's travels.<sup>16</sup> While those documents would be absolutely *de rigueur*, Kennan realized that more heartfelt and personal letters from a variety of non-government people would open up non-official sources.

#### **Nicholas Mikhailovich Iadrintsev.**

Before Kennan arrived in St. Petersburg in 1885, he had determined

to meet the very Siberian: he attacked virulently during the early 1880s battle with Armstrong, the Siberian author of *Sibir' kak koloniia*, Nicholas Mikhailovich Iadrintsev. Kennan wrote Smith in May 1885 that,

I think I wrote you from Washington that among the Siberian experts whom I particularly desired to meet and consult in St. Petersburg was Mr. Yadrintsef...I knew, from Mr. Yadrintsefs [*sic*] writings, that if I could make his acquaintance in a proper manner, and gain his confidence, I could not only get at the anti-government side of the exile question, but obtain a great amount of valuable advice and information with regard to Siberia, where he had spent nearly all his life... a man of high scientific literary attainments.<sup>17</sup>

From the beginning, Kennan was willing to look at the issue of exile from all sides, and as was his usual approach in all matters, he sought out the very best information to discover the "Siberian" side. While Iadrintsev was not known in the United States, by the 1880s he was a well-known figure in the Siberian *oblastnichestvo* or Regionalist/Nationalist movement in the Russian Empire, and served as a spokesman for Siberian issues.<sup>18</sup> Born and raised in Siberia, he was a leader of a generation of politically aware Siberians who sought greater autonomy, and an improved economy and cultural life for their region. The descendant of serfs who bought themselves out of serfdom, Iadrintsev's odyssey began as a lonely Siberian student in college in distant St. Petersburg in the 1860s. There, he and fellow Siberians began to designate themselves and their "country" officially as different and separate from Russia. His identification as a member of a project

to create a "United States of Siberia" led to arrest, exile, and the beginning of a journalistic career by the late 1860s. During his exile, Iadrintsev began to work for the Western Siberian government which led to a lifetime of access to government data on Siberia. After his release from exile he continued to study government data, to gather his own information from unofficial sources, and even to explore Siberia himself. In order to publicize this factual material as well as his and others' suggestions for new policies towards Siberia, Iadrintsev began to write the history of Siberia; in articles, he published in some of the most influential journals in Russia, in books such as his ground breaking, *Russkaia obshchina v tiur'mie i ssylkie* in 1872, *Sibir' kak koloniia* in 1882, or finally by establishing his own paper, *Vostochnoe Obozrenie* or *The Eastern Review*, founded in 1882 in St. Petersburg. To accomplish this prodigious work and reach those in power, he moved to St. Petersburg.

While many issues occupied his interest, Iadrintsev was particularly critical of the system of prisons and exile in Siberia. Siberians had reason to be concerned. Although Siberia had been used as a place of exile by the Russian government since the end of the sixteenth century, during the Napoleonic Wars and after the number of prisoners had increased exponentially. Prisoners of war, political prisoners, and religious schismatics and their families, were joined by thieves and murderers. After time spent in prison, most of these people, often accompanied by their families, were then left to their own devices to feed themselves, in a economy where they could rarely find full occupation. The resulting theft and murders made small villages, towns, and the countryside alike dangerous. Iadrintsev criticized the

waste of lives to exile, as well as the resulting economic and social damage to all those involved. The relative cheapness of the Siberian system made it possible to imprison an increasing number of Russia's population, without giving thought to the actual "guilt" of those sent to Siberia. The callous manner in which the prisoners and their families were treated exacerbated a bad system. To Iadrintsev, not only were the policies ill-advised and poorly administered, but the manner in which the government defended them was proof of a seriously malfunctioning government.

Despite the excellent quality and explosive nature of his information, Iadrintsev was reaching a limited number of people outside of the Russian Empire in the mid-1880s.<sup>19</sup> His meeting with Kennan gave Iadrintsev's views an American outlet, and a wider European outlet.

Although Kennan knew a great deal about the Russian Empire prior to the debate over exile, he felt the need to learn even more before leaving for Siberia. In the summer of 1884, a year before his planned expedition to Siberia, Kennan visited St. Petersburg and Moscow in pursuit of books on Siberia. He discovered that few stores had much of anything of any value on Siberia. As a result of the difficulty of his task, he spent more time in Russia than he planned.<sup>20</sup> At this point, Kennan discovered that Iadrintsev was not only the author of numerous works on current Siberian conditions and history, but he was also the editor of a very influential paper on Siberia, *Vostochnoe Obozrenie*, and a leader of a Siberian movement, the Siberian *Oblastnichestvo*. Of a more immediate use, Kennan learned of Iadrintsev's new book on the exile system.

Nicholas Mikhailovich Iadrintsev's exhaustive study of

Siberian life, *Sibir' kak koloniia*, was the best single source on Siberia at that time. Iadrintsev's use of data, access to government information, clear arguments, all combined with the corroborating information from other sources, convinced Kennan of Iadrintsev's value. According to George Kennan in his reply to William Jackson Armstrong in the *Chronicle*, Kennan made reference to his sources of information just prior to his trip to Russia to observe the prison systems, he was using N.M. Iadrintsev's, *Sibir' kak koloniia*.<sup>21</sup> Iadrintsev's book was new in the early 1880s and Kennan owned an 1882 edition. Kennan mentioned that in his rebuttal lectures prior to leaving for Russia, he was beginning to use Iadrintsev and noted how impeccable his credentials as a critic of tsarist policy were.<sup>22</sup>

The next year, after his arrival in St. Petersburg for the Siberian tour, Kennan spent a great deal of effort and time to meet Iadrintsev, and expressed awe upon finally meeting the Siberian explorer and his colleagues. Kennan noted in his journals that he was also touched by Iadrintsev's knowledge of Kennan's own work on Siberia, and the attention and grace with which he was greeted.<sup>23</sup>

Iadrintsev turned out to be the single most important contact Kennan would make as he started for Siberia.<sup>24</sup> As a direct result of Iadrintsev's guidance, Kennan learned the truth about the Siberian exile system specifically, and about the deeply troubled Russian Empire, generally. Before Kennan left St. Petersburg, he received yet another set of documents, albeit very unofficial documents. Iadrintsev provided him with a list of people and places, and letters of introduction to those in Siberia that the Russian government would certainly not have recommended that Kennan see, and he

would not have found, without specific directions and more importantly, introductions. In a seven page handwritten guide to Siberia, Iadrintsev provided Kennan with such widely varied information as the population of towns Kennan would, or should visit, as well as lists of people to see and institutions to learn about. He suggested vigorously that Kennan meet the editors of *Sibirskaiia Gazeta* in Tomsk, and *Sibir'*, in Irkutsk.<sup>25</sup> Not only did Kennan learn a great deal through these suggestions, he met Felix Volkhovsky,<sup>26</sup> a future close friend and colleague, at *Sibirskaiia Gazeta*.

Armed with his letters from Imperial Russian officials, as well as Iadrintsev's and his colleagues' suggestions and letters of introduction, Kennan and his photographer, George Frost, left for Siberia in the late spring of 1885. Despite the support from people in power, the trip he proposed remained a dangerous one. In order to allay his family's fears for his physical safety, as well as mitigate his sense of being cut off, he punctiliously sent post cards home to his wife, Emeline Weld Kennan, and other family members, especially his brother John.<sup>27</sup> These letters could only provide psychological help, however, Kennan needed more concrete proximate support. In this, Iadrintsev even served as a source of security for Kennan's trip. From the first, Kennan evidenced faith in Iadrintsev's honesty and tenacity. As Kennan set off for Siberia he made a note to himself in his notebook to "Threaten to telegraph to Editor of *Vostochnoi Obozrenie* [sic] if any trouble anywhere."<sup>28</sup>

By 12 June, Kennan had arrived at the gateway to Siberia, the Urais. He spent the summer in Western Siberia arriving in the capital of Eastern Siberia, Irkutsk, on 14 September. In the Fall of 1885, Kennan visited the

notorious Kara Mines in the Transbaikal. Following Iadrintsev's suggestions, he returned to European Russia after visiting large and small convict mines, city prisons, and after talking with an enormous variety of people including government officials, prominent citizens, those involved with the papers Iadrintsev suggested he meet, exiles, former exiles, and families of exiles.

In the process of his travels Kennan had indeed changed his mind about the nature of the Russian government, and discovered the basic evil of the exile system. He was frankly overwhelmed by the "noble heroic characters" of the exiles that he met. In a letter to Emeline, her husband admitted that "From every meeting with them I come away all inspired and stirred up."<sup>29</sup>

Kennan's return to St. Petersburg occasioned some concern on his part for his own safety, not only because of the explosive nature of the notes he had taken, but also because of his own physical ill health, and the deteriorating nature of George Frost's mind.<sup>30</sup> For these reasons, he moved quickly through St. Petersburg, traveled on to London, recuperated, and returned to St. Petersburg in the Spring of 1886. After Emeline had joined her husband in London, the Kennans socialized with prominent Russian political exiles, especially Stepniak [S.M. Kravchinsky] and Peter Kropotkin and their wives.<sup>31</sup> Kropotkin, Stepniak, Chaikovsky, and others, were impressed with Kennan's Russian and knowledge of their friends and genuine understanding of Russian conditions as a result of his trip. These judgments of Kennan resulted in long, fruitful relationships partially made possible by Iadrintsev's councils.<sup>32</sup>

After resting up in London with Emeline Kennan,<sup>33</sup> the couple returned

to the Russian Empire for a tour south to the Caucasus. The return served three purposes, not only had Kennan developed an intense interest in the Caucasus in proceeding years, he had also expressed a desire for his wife to meet his new friends. He not only wanted to share this new part of his life with her, but frankly, he wanted her opinion of these people and to find more time to talk to them about what he had learned. To these ends, they spent a very useful month in St. Petersburg obtaining more information from Iadrintsev and his friends. After the Kennans returned to St. Petersburg from London, in April of 1886, Kennan repeatedly sought out N.M. Iadrintsev and his contacts for further conversations, not only concerning the Siberian exile system, but also on a variety of topics of the day. While Kennan obviously was interested in talking to a variety of Russians, he did focus on Iadrintsev's view on everything from the possibility of a revolution to Leo Tolstoy's idea of a "Peasant Idyll." The interest was reciprocated. It must be noted that Iadrintsev also thought contact with Kennan was important. While informing Kennan of Siberian conditions, Iadrintsev sought out Kennan to learn about the United States.

In the long evenings and afternoon visits from the time of Emeline and George Kennan's arrival 14/26 April 1886 to 14/26 May 1886, Iadrintsev and his colleagues hosted parties and teas and visits for the Kennans practically daily. In May, Iadrintsev gave a large party, after which Kennan thought enough of the experience to put down as many names as he could remember.<sup>34</sup> This party was only one of many times Iadrintsev provided access to people Kennan would not otherwise have met. Most of these individuals either

were Siberians, or themselves had been in exile in Siberia or had family who had been.

Unlike during his visit the year before, Kennan evidenced absolutely no skepticism toward Iadrintsev's or other's views. His open-mindedness to Iadrintsev's ideas is perhaps reflected in the broad range of facts and opinions of his that Kennan recorded. They certainly discussed the serious defects of the Siberian administration, the need for a Siberian University, as well as the silly, vicious, and arbitrary government treatment of its population. Meanwhile, Kennan learned firsthand of the severe repression of the entire population in St. Petersburg following the assassination of Aleksandr II.<sup>35</sup>

Thursday morning 15/27 May 1886, the Kennans left for Tver and points south. They visited Moscow, Nizhni Novgorod, Kazan, and the Volga. As he had done for the earlier trip, Iadrintsev once again supplied Kennan with the names of people to see.<sup>36</sup>

#### **Back to the United States.**

Upon his safe return to the United States in 1886, Kennan felt he had a mission to inform Americans of the true nature of the Russian Empire. While doing so, he certainly wished to remind the American public of his ever-growing admiration for the Russian people as distinct from the Russian government. Kennan's initial and formidable hurdle was semantic. As he was well aware, as he himself had felt before his trip, to many Americans, *all* Russians who opposed any aspect of Russian policy were "Nihilists" and bomb throwers. While this homogeneity of opponents of the Russian government did not exist, the author knew it would be difficult to overcome stereotypes. In fact, he had found that "These people are not

'Nihilists,' they are not even revolutionists, they are peaceable, law-abiding citizens, who are striving by reasonable methods to secure a better form of government...."<sup>37</sup>

Kennan sought to reach the widest range of people through his writings and continuation of his public talks. His reports on conditions in Siberia were published serially by *The Century Magazine*.<sup>38</sup> After he returned to the United States, Kennan wrote his candid articles concerning his change of opinion.<sup>39</sup> The two volume *Siberia and the Exile System* appeared in 1891,<sup>40</sup> filled with damning data, first-hand stories, and drawings provided by Kennan's traveling companion, the artist, George Frost. This book would alter forever American public opinion concerning the Russian Empire.

American journals and papers themselves were certainly appreciative of Kennan's efforts. The Century Company's president, Roswell Smith, knew of Kennan's enormous impact personally as he wrote Kennan in June of 1888, he was even receiving letters from fellow journalists, such as the note from the editor and manager of the Greer Bay [Wisconsin] *Advocate*, which attested to Kennan's reach outside of the Atlantic coast. Smith effused that Kennan was "becoming a recognized authority on these subjects, and we are asked almost daily 'What does Mr. Kennan think of such and such statements?'"<sup>41</sup>

Back in the United States and England, Kennan personally persisted in his efforts to raise the consciousness of Americans to the nature of the conditions in Siberia, and the war the Imperial Russian government was waging against anyone who dared to criticize the government. Despite his heavy writing and reporting schedule that had to be maintained after his return from Russia, Kennan continued

his heavy speaking schedule. His earlier talks on Siberian "Camp Life" continued in their popularity, but were joined by discussions on the convict mines in Siberia. Through his talks, he continued to keep the "Russian Question" alive for Americans. His popularity or notoriety, throughout the country is reflected in his speaking schedule. By 1889, Kennan had already given six sold out lectures in Boston with three to four hundred standing inside and more outside of the hall. He wrote to his friend Volkhovsky that he planned to expand his speaking schedule in the future.<sup>42</sup> From his rather predictable appearance on the dais again in Boston, Massachusetts for their "Slavic Course" on 14 November 1892, to his discussion on convict mines in San Diego, California on 30 January 1895, his tales reached both coasts. He was repeatedly asked to speak at Charleston, South Carolina; Champaign, Illinois; and Berea, Kentucky. His speaking schedule even took him to the new cow towns of Wichita, Emporia, and Wellington, Kansas in the 1890s.<sup>43</sup>

### **Had Kennan Already Made up his Mind?**

Kennan's highly visible change of heart was certain to draw some very negative reactions. Those uncomfortable with and incapable of changing their own minds struck out, as did those who hinted that this change of heart was designed to sell magazines. After Kennan returned from the Russian Empire he was repeatedly accused of having already made up his mind about Siberia prior to his return. Kennan consistently and vehemently denied any such suggestions both publicly and very privately. Despite his genuine protestations, it does appear that after his battles with Armstrong, or certainly after he read Iadrintsev's *Sibir kak koloniia*, his mind was open to

criticism of the Russian system. No publishing "stunt" was ever intended, however. The accusations continued for years after Kennan's return from Siberia, which merely continued to fuel the discussion of Russia.<sup>44</sup>

Why then, had Kennan changed his mind? As a logical and basically decent man, he could not counterance a government which treated its population in the manner that the Russian Imperial government treated the Russian people. While he had discounted the British "Tory papers" attack on Russia, the vast preponderance of factual data from Iadrintsev and his fellow Siberians, added to the personal stories from exiles that Kennan met, and his judgment of these people's basic nobility, resulted in his turn around. Some people might have never been able to admit that they had changed their mind, especially in such a public manner. Kennan, however, could only tell the truth, even if it meant a seeming change of direction. In fact, however, his basic premise involving his respect for the Russian people never changed.

#### **Iadrintsev and Kennan's Scholarship.**

It is impossible to overestimate Iadrintsev's impact on Kennan's work from 1886 until the American died. Not only does Iadrintsev's influence exhibit itself in Kennan's private diaries, but the Siberian's own works, as well as those Iadrintsev led Kennan to, played seminal roles in *Siberia and the Exile System* and his other publications and ideas.

While Kennan was still in Russia and after he returned home, because of Iadrintsev's scholarly approach to issues, he was an excellent source for names of historians and their findings, as well as a source for basic data on the government and economy of Siberia.<sup>45</sup> The degree to which Kennan relied on

Iadrintsev for background material on Siberian history, Russian government, and personal information on Siberian writers is crystal clear in Kennan's notes to himself. Scattered throughout his notebooks, Kennan reminded himself to ask Iadrintsev specifically for everything from materials for a biography of Shchapov, the Siberian patriot, to a copy of a secret government report. While occasionally another name might be mentioned as a source of information, that name was rarely repeated.<sup>46</sup>

We know what became of Kennan's "want" lists. Iadrintsev fulfilled these wants. For example, a hand-written copy of a secret documentary analysis of the Siberian exile system written by the Governor-General of Eastern Siberia, D.T. Anuchin, filled one hundred pages of Kennan's Notebook No. 21.<sup>47</sup> Kennan continued to seek help, as he noted in his notebook during his trip to the Nerchinsk Mines to "Get info. from Iadrintsev and Kononovitch on Alabin and 'other' Siberian matters."<sup>48</sup> As we know, that information played a major role in the pages of *Siberia and the Exile System*.

Not only did Iadrintsev help with written factual information, he also supplemented the very important visual elements of Kennan's written work and talks. As photographs, pictures, and sketches were very important to Kennan's work, he and Frost purchased as many as they could wherever they went, but the purchases were never enough. Kennan relied on Iadrintsev as a source and conduit to others who could provide further pictures, not only on this trip but in the ensuing years.<sup>49</sup>

Iadrintsev's publications also served as research sources for Kennan. Even prior to Kennan's arrival in Siberia, Iadrintsev's *Sibir' kak koloniia*

had already informed Kennan's approach to the subject of exile. Kennan's own copy of the book, the 1882, four hundred and fifty page edition, provides a key to his interests and the impact of the *oblastniki* on his thinking.<sup>50</sup> Kennan's copy illuminates many of his sources for data on Siberian exile, the social and economic impact of Siberian exile, basic information on the Siberian economy, Siberian administration, and native Siberians. Kennan's notes and lines filled the sides of pages in chapters VI, VII, and IX. Kennan noted figures on exiles, cattle breeding and grain production, and stories concerning the mortality of exiles. Finally, he noted Iadrintsev's focus on the abuses of power rampant among the local administration. Iadrintsev had repeated the Siberian historian, V.I. Vagin's, story about Governor General Treskin's shortcomings in Chapter IX "Siberian Government." Kennan marked all of this tale.<sup>51</sup> Kennan himself noted that in his latest lectures just prior to leaving for St. Petersburg, he had utilized information from *Sibir' kak koloniia. Siberia and the Exile System* freely utilizes *Sibir' kak koloniia* and footnotes that information. In the body of the work, Kennan expressly quoted Iadrintsev's analysis of the negative impact of exiles on Siberian peasants, and the comparative cheap cost of the Siberian penal system.<sup>52</sup>

Iadrintsev's paper, *Vostochnoe Obozrenie* [St. Petersburg and Irkutsk], along with *Sibir'* [Irkutsk], *Sibirskaiia Gazeta* [Tomsk], all recommended to Kennan by Iadrintsev, also provided extremely important fodder for *Siberia and the Exile System*. Although much of Kennan's information was not, and could not be footnoted, he did provide references when possible. Once again, Iadrintsev's organ provided the plurality of sources from the issue of censor-

ship, corruption in the prison system, abuse of the exiles, and colonization of criminals.<sup>53</sup>

### Long Term Relations.

After his return to the United States, Kennan continued his contacts with a number of Russians met through this trip, especially Stepniak, Prince Peter Kropotkin, and N.M. Iadrintsev. Although these other men were important, Kennan was personally most attached to Feliks Vadimovich Volkhovsky, an exile he met when he followed Iadrintsev's direction to visit the offices of *Sibirskaiia Gazeta* during his visit to Tomsk.<sup>54</sup> Upon Volkhovsky's escape from Siberian exile, he "went to Kennan." From the Kennan's he moved permanently to England.

Stepniak, Volkhovsky, and Kropotkin had a great deal in common as they all fled the Russian Empire and were unable to return. While Stepniak and Volkhovsky became very active in the Society of Friends of Russian Freedom or "Free Russia," headquartered in London, Kropotkin wrote and worked tirelessly for change in Russia. Kennan remained a supporter, and they continued to pass information on to Kennan. Unlike the others, Iadrintsev was able to remain in Russia, and moved permanently from St. Petersburg to Irkutsk in 1888, providing invaluable connections to those still in Siberia and the unfolding political situation there.

The relationship between Kennan and Iadrintsev was not one-sided. The usefulness of the other was well understood early on in the relationship. Not only was Kennan picking Iadrintsev's brain for his views on all things Russian, Iadrintsev could turn to Kennan for information on American answers to society's problems and challenges. Kennan opened up American information to Iadrintsev. As early

as their first meeting, Kennan was making notes to himself to send Iadrintsev information and publications including the New York *Herald*, *The Century*, a Canadian paper, and U.S. government publications.<sup>55</sup> Later Kennan reminded himself that Iadrintsev wanted information on American Indian schools, and on "benevolent associations for improving the condition of minors in Western America."<sup>56</sup>

Once back in the United States, the conduit of information continued as Kennan began to receive his weekly copy of *Vostochnoe Obozrenie*. In turn, Kennan was sending Iadrintsev the Weekly New York *Tribune* to replace the Daily New York *Herald* he had been sending Iadrintsev. Kennan sent a list of papers he wished to receive and the money to pay for them. The connections were not all business, as Kennan spoke of the memories he and his wife had of their many good times at the Iadrintsev's.<sup>57</sup>

Often, when defending his degree of knowledge of Siberia to the American reading public, Kennan mentioned that he took and "constantly" read four or five Russian periodicals, including *Vestnik Evropa*, Russia's national paper, and Iadrintsev's *Vostochnoe Obozrenie*.<sup>58</sup> Iadrintsev's role as a source of information ended only with his death in 1894. Only months before Iadrintsev's death, Kennan was still counting on Iadrintsev to help him with his research. Kennan needed some photographs of the Caucasus and was certain that Iadrintsev would get them for him.<sup>59</sup>

#### **Influence of Kennan's Works.**

While American attitudes towards Siberia and Russian policy there were important, Kennan initially hoped to influence the policymaker in Russia, the Tsar himself, Aleksandr III. Kennan thought that if Aleksandr III learned of

the abuses of the exile system, and of its negative impact on Siberia, he would have to reform that system. It is interesting to note that at least in the 1880s, Kennan had absorbed the Russian myth/belief in the basic innocence of the Tsar, and his willingness to correct wrongs, only if he knew about them.

Charles Marvin, a noted English expert on Russia, provided an insiders' view of Kennan's possible impact. In an article, "Two Writers on Siberia, George Kennan and Henry Lansdell," Marvin sought to explain how good and reliable Kennan's work and opinions were, and how useless were those of Lansdell's, who sought to support Tsarist exile policy.<sup>60</sup> This stranger to both men, had Russian court connections. Marvin made it clear that Aleksandr II had at least read Kennan's works as they were serialized in *The Century*.<sup>61</sup> Not only Kennan believed that his works could influence Russian policy. This much better placed Englishman pointed to the new Tsar's anti-corruption movements since his coronation. Initially, Marvin fully expected at least moderate reforms.<sup>62</sup>

Aleksandr III did read Kennan's articles, while a discussion of Aleksandr's attempts at reform within the system cannot be covered here, Kennan had already been warned about the issue of the relative cheapness of this system, reason enough not to change. Thus, not unexpectedly, notwithstanding the great expectations for change, telling the truth had its cost, Kennan was banned from Russia "as long as Dmitrii Tolstoi was Minister of the Interior."<sup>63</sup>

Despite official tsarist approbation, the book and articles did indeed reach a wide audience outside of the United States. *Siberia and the Exile System* was almost immediately trans-

lated into German in 1890–1891, under the title, *Sibirien*.<sup>64</sup> By 1892, the entire two volume work had also been translated into Dutch, *Leven en lijden der Ballingen in Siberia*.<sup>65</sup> The real goal, however, was to get the work into Russian, and available in the Russian Empire. Extractions were made of his works and published by the Russian expatriate community in Geneva.<sup>66</sup> One hundred and sixty pages of *Siberia and the Exile System* were translated for *Sibir' i ssylka*, which was published in Paris in 1890 by the Paris Social-Revolutionary Literary Foundation. The book was published in the Russian Empire only after the 1905 Revolution.<sup>67</sup>

After the articles first appeared in the United States, merely possessing copies of Kennan's work could be dangerous in Russia. Despite this, exiles and others in Siberia sought copies. Iadrintsev provided that conduit. Unsurprisingly, Iadrintsev's paper, *Vostochnoe Obozrenie*, paid attention to Kennan's work. An associate of Iadrintsev's who worked with *Vostochnoe Obozrenie*, P. Golovachev, translated from Kennan's articles in *The Century*. Exiles throughout Siberia sought permission to translate Kennan's work.<sup>68</sup> This focus on his work had a price, and Iadrintsev knew that price well.

For example, Mrs. Chudnovsky in Irkutsk, with ties to *Vostochnoe Obozrenie*, asked to translate Kennan's *Century* articles. Iadrintsev was to pass the articles on to her.<sup>69</sup> Due to the danger of possession of such incendiary material, Kennan did not send copies directly. The articles were to be cut out of the journal and mailed from England to Iadrintsev by a third party, thus at least officially absolving the magazine and even Kennan from any complicity in the dissemination of radical ideas.<sup>70</sup> In one translator's case,

her husband was arrested and imprisoned for merely possessing two of Kennan's articles from *Century Magazine*. Two young female school teachers lost their jobs just because they knew this couple.<sup>71</sup>

### Conclusions.

While Kennan's *Siberia and the Exile System* and his other articles did not achieve his goal of reform from above, the publication of this material vindicated critics of the system. Kennan never ceased in his criticism of the Russian government. In fact, his disillusionment with the system deepened over the years. Moreover, Kennan maintained friendships with Russians made during his 1885 trip until his death, including N.M. Iadrintsev, Baron Korf, and Prince Kropotkin.

Iadrintsev's death in 1894 cost Kennan a major source of information, and gave Kennan an occasion to reflect on Iadrintsev's role in Russia. In an obituary Kennan wrote after hearing of Iadrintsev's death, Kennan stated that Iadrintsev was "... one of the best informed men in the world with regard to the history, archaeology, and anthropology of Asiatic Russia." His death would be a great loss as his life was "devoted to service of his native country."<sup>72</sup> While the obituary focused on Iadrintsev's anti-exile stand, Kennan also stressed the importance and role of Iadrintsev's newspaper, *Vostochnoe Obozrenie*.<sup>73</sup>

Death did not end Iadrintsev's influence. Kennan did not forget nor cease to utilize Iadrintsev's work. Until World War I at least, Kennan continued to seek out Iadrintsev's writings.<sup>74</sup> Thirty years later in the 1920s, while making a list of his important friends at the end of his most eventful life, only a few Russians were noted, including N.M. Iadrintsev. Why did Kennan choose to focus on Iadrintsev,

and continue to pursue a relationship with him? A number of elements were involved, including the fact that Iadrintsev's early writings identified him to Kennan as a thoughtful and informed person, Iadrintsev's availability in St. Petersburg in 1885, his personal willingness to work with Kennan at that time and later, Iadrintsev's broad range of Siberian connections, *Vostochnoe Obozrenie*,

Iadrintsev's timely return to Siberia, and finally Iadrintsev's wife, Adelaide, who helped to ease communication in the early years after Kennan returned to the United States. In the final analysis, Iadrintsev and Kennan shared a love of Siberia and its peoples, a scholarly approach to issues, and an intolerance for a waste of peoples' lives or quality of their lives.

## Endnotes

1. I wish to thank the Kennan Institute for Advanced Russian Studies of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars for the research fellowship and the librarians and archivists in the Rare Book and Manuscript Room in the Belyi Dom of Irkutsk State University, the State Archives of Irkutsk Oblast, the New York Public Library Slavic Division and Rare Books and Manuscripts Division, and the Library of Congress Manuscript Division, who made the preparation of this paper possible.

When necessary, both old style and new style dates are presented.

2. Frederick F. Travis' *George Kennan and the American-Russian Relationships 1865–1924* (Athens, Ohio, 1990) filled a gap by providing a study of Kennan's all-important impact. Of necessity, given its scope, limited space was expended on the Siberians, and Iadrintsev, who was only mentioned twice. Only recently did the Russians begin to study Kennan's role in their history. Efim Iosifovich Melamed's, *Dzhordzh Kennan protiv tsarizma* (Moscow, 1981), and his *Russkie universitety Dzhordzha Kennana* (Irkutsk, 1988), opened a new world of scholarship. See Melamed, "Sybir i zsylyka Geografa Kennana-Drodlowe podstawy dzieła," *Przegląd Wschodni* 2 (1991): 423–8, and M.D. Karpachev and T.V. Logunova, "Amerikanskii publitsist Dzhordzh Kennan o revoliutsionnom dvizhenii v Rossii," *Istoriia SSSR* 5 (1988): 189–199, for a recent discussion of the good quality of Kennan's work and its importance both then and now.

3. His notebooks from that trip showcase the young Kennan's acuity and talent. Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, George Kennan Papers 19. (Hereafter LCMD, GKP).

4. (New York and London, 1871). Due in no small part to his high profile following of the Russo-Japanese War, Kennan's first book on Siberia was reprinted in a revised version in 1910. A new printing with an introduction by Larry McMurtry (Salt Lake City, Utah, 1986) proved very popular to a new reading public a century later. Translations of the entire book and excerpts were made throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century. See Efim Iosifovich Melamed, "George Kennan (The Elder) in the Russian Press, 1871–1991. Annotated bibliographical index in the Russian Language" (Washington, D.C., Kennan Institute Occasional Papers, 1993), for periodical and book translations.

5. Other books include his *Campaigning in Cuba* (New York, 1899) and *E.H. Harriman: A Biography*, 2 vols. (Freeport, New York, 1922).

6. Publishers certainly understood his value. For example, he was much sought after by William R. Hearst to follow the Chinese political situation in the 1890s. LCMD, GKP 2, Folder 1891, Telegram from Hearst to Kennan.

7. According to the Advertising Department of *The Outlook* the announcement that Kennan would cover the Spanish American War in Cuba added 3,852 new subscribers—in one week. New York Public Library, Rare Book and Manuscript Room, George Kennan Papers 1, Folder 1881–1896, Letter 18 May 1898, p. 1. (Hereafter NYPL, RB&M, GKP).

8. See Norman E. Saul, *Concord and Conflict. The United States and Russia, 1867–1914* (Lawrence, Kansas, 1996), for the most thorough analysis of this complicated relationship. Also see, Norman E. Saul, *Distant Friends. The United States and Russia, 1763–1867* (Lawrence, Kansas, 1991).

9. William Jackson Armstrong, *Siberia and the Nihilists. Why Kennan Went to Siberia* (Oakland, California, 1890), 16, 39–40.
10. *ibid.*, p. 95.
11. "Siberia-the Exiles' Abode," No. 1 (New York, 1882): 13–68.
12. *ibid.*, pp. 34–5, 59. It is still uncertain what Kennan had actually read of Iadrintsev's at this point. Kennan clearly had not yet read Iadrintsev's book on exile.
13. Others had already written on the Siberian exile system by 1885. James W. Buel of St. Louis published *Russian Nihilism and Exile Life in Siberia* in 1884. While it was the first book published outside of Russia to expose the treatment of Russian prisoners, it would not have the impact that Kennan's work would have, as the author did not command the respect that Kennan did.
14. LCMD, GKP 6, Folder 1885–86, Letters and documents. Kennan was offered the chance to travel with the American officer being sent to thank the Russians for their kind treatment of the survivors of the "Jeanette" expedition. He respectfully declined to avoid any designation as an American official.
15. LCMD, GKP 6, Folder 1885, Document, "The Century Company and George Kennan. Agreement. 1 May 1885." Signed by Roswell Smith, President, and George Kennan.
16. LCMD, GKP 6, Folder 1885, Onionskin copy of Letter from GK in St. Petersburg to Roswell Smith, 18/30 May, 1885; copies of the documents themselves from the Ministry of the Interior and from the Tsar, Aleksandr III, are in NYPL, RB&M, GKP 1, Folder 4, #3252.
17. LCMD, GKP 6, Folder 1885, Letter from GK to Smith, St. Petersburg, 18/30 May 1885, 4–5.
18. The bulk of Iadrintsev's papers can be found in Irkutsk, in the GAiO, F. 295, N.M. Iadritsev, F. 593 *Vostochnoe Obozrenie*, and in the archives of the Eastern Siberian Branch of the Russian Geographic Society, AVSoRGO.
19. His *Sibir' kak koloniia* was first published in 1882, and was difficult to find in the bookstores in St. Petersburg in 1884 according to Kennan. It became partially available to western audiences when a version was translated by E.J. Petri as *Sibirien. Geographische, ethnographische und historische Studien von N. Jadrinzew* (Jena, 1886).
20. LCMD, GKP 15, Letter from GK to Emeline Kennan, 29 August 1884, p. 2.
21. Letter to the Editor, *Chronicle*, as reprinted in Armstrong, *Siberia and the Nihilists*, p. 98.
22. *ibid.*, p. 98.
23. LCMD, GKP 19, Notebook No. 1 America to Volga River 1885–86, pp. 5–6.
24. *ibid.*, p. 7. Kennan noted that while the other scientists and explorers he met made a number of suggestions, "Mr. Yadrintsev in particular took the most active interest in my plans."
25. LCMD, GKP 1, seven unsigned sheets in Russian, in Iadrintsev's distinctive handwriting. Tied in a bundle with other letters from Kennan's first stay in St. Petersburg.
26. When Volkhovsky escaped from Siberia in 1889–90, he "went to Kennan" first

before settling in England.

27. LCMD, GKP 1, Postcards, 9 June–13 November 1885.
28. LCMD, GKP 19, Notebook No. 1, America to Volga River 1885–86, p. 14.
29. LCMD, GKP 15, Letter from GK to Emeline Kennan, Tomsk, 3/15 February 1886.
30. Kennan was very circumspect in his notebooks about Frost's state of mind. He noted "Frost's hallucination" and his "nervous tension" while traveling in the Transbaikal in the fall of 1885. LCMD, GKP 6, Notebook No. 14, Stretinsk to Nertchinsk Mines and Chita, p. 121, Box 20, No. 16/No. 17. On the back cover Kennan noted that Frost thought everyone was a spy.
31. LCMD, GKP 20, Notebook No. 21, p. 19.
32. Peter Kropotkin, *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*, ed. James Allen Rogers, (New York, 1962): 143–4.
33. LCMD, GKP 1, Folder 1885–86. Letters from family and Henry Smith of the Associated Press. Kennan had been quite ill upon his return from the exhausting Siberian trip.
34. LCMD, GKP 20, Notebook No. 23, p. 24–5. It must be noted here that Kennan carefully separated the list from any reference to Iadrintsev's party.
35. LCMD, GKP 20, Notebook No. 21, pp. 19, 27–9.
36. LCMD, GKP 1, Letter, 10 May 1886.
37. "The Last Appeal of the Russian Liberals," *Century Magazine*, xxxv, 7 (November 1887), pp. 50–51.
38. See volumes 35 (1887) through 40 (1890) for articles on prison life, exile life, the head of the Buddhist church in Siberia, and Russian censorship.
39. Kennan self-censored his works in order to protect the identities of those who remained, or even those who had already left the Russian Empire and who might be in danger if their name or the full story of the circumstances of their escapes were public knowledge. Peter Kropotkin's story of escape was only published some years later by Kennan, with Kropotkin's full knowledge and support.
40. (New York). An abridged one volume version with an introduction by George Frost Kennan was published by the University of Chicago in 1958.
41. LCMD, GKP 1, Letter from Smith to GK, 30 June 1888.
42. LCMD, GKP 1, Letter from GK to F.V. Volkhovsky, 17 March 1889, p. 3–7.
43. NYPL, RB&M, GKP 5, "List of Talks," D.
44. LCMD, GKP 6, Folder 1890–99, Letter 18 February 1892, p. 5. For example, George Kennan wrote a thirteen page defense of his actions to the editor of *The Nation*. The fact that he never sent the rebuttal was consistent with his anger and disgust at having to defend himself, and the desire not to get caught up in time consuming replies to every accusation.
45. LCMD, GKP 20, Notebook No. 21, p. 8 in the back of the journal. For fear of the Tsarist authorities, Kennan scattered information and notes to himself throughout oddly paginated journals, to seek information from Iadrintsev.
46. LCMD, GKP 20, Notebook No. 14, p. 131; Notebook No. 21, pp. 8 and 6; and Notebook No. 23, pp. 4–3. These are only examples. The odd numbering is correct.

Kennan wrote from the front and back of his notebooks in order to protect his sources if his books were viewed by Tsarist agents.

47. LCMD, GKP 20, pp. 95–192.

48. *ibid.*, p. 131.

49. LCMD, GKP 6, Folder 1885, Letter from GK to Mr. Drake (Century Co.), Moscow, 2 June 1885, pp. 2–3.

50. New York Public Library, Slavic Division. This rare book had been “lost” for some decades. According to his notes to himself in the Spring of 1886 when he returned to Russia, he was having a copy of this book and Iadrintsev’s *Literaturnyi Sbornik* bound. LCMD, GKP 20, Notebook o. 23, pp. 17–16.

51. *ibid.*, pp. Ch. I, II, III, V, VI, and VII *passim*, 326.

52. v. ii, pp. 465–7.

53. *ibid.* v. I, pp. 266 and 333, and v. ii, pp. 260, 461, 466–7.

54. LCMD, GKP. Letters to and from Volkhovsky scattered throughout the papers reflect the close friendship that lasted until Volkhovsky’s death. Not only did they discuss politics, but they also kept up with family matters. Kennan even provided money to help Volkhovsky’s daughter leave Siberia. See especially Box 1 and Box 2.

55. LCMD, GKP 19, Notebook No. 1, p. 100.

56. LCMD, GKP 20, Notebook No. 21, p. 354.

57. LCMD, GKP 10, Letter from GK to Mrs. Yadrintsev, 12 March 1887.

58. “The Latest Siberian Tragedy,” *Century Magazine*, (April 1890): 889.

59. LCMD, GKP 6, Folder 1890–99, Typed copy of Kennan letter, 26 August 1893 to Mr. Hourwich.

60. Henry Lansdell, *Through Siberia*, 2 vols. second ed. (London, 1882). The Englishman, Lansdell, whom Iadrintsev described as a tourist, did not have much knowledge of Russia, nor did he take a scholar’s approach to the study of Russian culture and politics.

61. NYPL, RB&M, GKP 5, Marvin Folder, p. 2.

62. *ibid.*, pp. 25–26.

63. LCMD, GKP 1, Letter GK to Volkhovsky, 17 March 1889, p. 2.

64. 2 vols. (Otto Hendel). See also, *Siberien* (Berlin, 1890), 218 pages.

65. (Haarlem).

66. See “Les Prisoners d’etat. Russkie Gosudarstvennye prestupniki” (Geneva: M.K. Elpidin, 1891), 40 pages; or “Golos za russkii narod: otviet na Golos za Rosiiu” (Geneva: M.K. Elpidin, 1896), 35 pgs.

67. *Sibir’ i ssylka*, (St. Petersburg, 1906).

68. For example, Nikolai Baronoff in Vladivostok wrote Kennan on 6 October 1889, to say that a number of exiles in town wished to translate his work in order to disseminate it throughout Siberia. NYPL, RB&M, GKP 1, Folder 3, p. 1.

69. NYPL, RB&M, GKP 1, Letter from Irkutsk. L. Choondovsky [*sic*] to GK in England, 3/15 March 1889, p. 1 ob.

70. LCMD, GKP 1, Letter from Roswell Smith to GK, 28 May 1888.

71. NYPL, RB&M, GKP 1, Folder 3, 3 December [1889]. Letter to GK in English, pp. 5 and 9.
72. LCMD, GKP 11, "Obituary. Nikolia M. Yadrintsef." p. 1.
73. *ibid.*, p. 2
74. LCMD, GKP 95, 112, "Books to get—Siberia" 15 December 1900, "Notes" 6 December 1912.