

# RELIVING AYN RAND'S WE THE LIVING



*A Gen Z and Millennial Guide to  
the 2020 Election and Beyond*

MARK T. SHUPE

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## RELIVING AYN RAND'S WE THE LIVING

Introduction	3
Prologue Part I	5
Foreword by Natalie Schroder	8
Eating Cake (Chapters 1 - 3)	10
The Soaps (Chapters 4 - 6)	13
Rope A Dope (Chapter 7 - 9)	16
Say's Law (Chapters 10 - 12)	19
Imagine (Chapters (13 - 15)	22
Reverence (Chapters 16 - 17)	25
Requiem (Anna Akhmatova)	28
Prologue Part II	32
The Peoples (Chapters 1 -3)	34
Protection Rackets (Chapters 4 - 6)	37
Pragmatism (Chapters 7 - 8)	40
Politics of Pull (Chapters 9 - 12)	43
Existence (Chapters 13 - 15)	47
Undefeated (Chapters 16 - 17)	49
The Captive Mind (Czeslaw Milosz)	52
About the Author	56

# INTRODUCTION

**Dateline: September 21, 2020**

During a July conference call with Ricky Porco, the internet publishing guru at the Center for Individualism (CFI), he floated an idea. Let's write another eBook, one about re-reading an important book after many years away from it. At the time, I was part of an online study group and re-reading Ayn Rand's classic, *Atlas Shrugged*.

But instead of that, I suggested a lesser known, yet the very important first novel of Rand's - *We the Living*. We presented the concept to Hunter Hastings, the creator and curator of CFI, and he was excited about publishing it. So I started reliving *We the Living* myself.

The idea for this eBook quickly became more interesting and multi-faceted. First, I decided to create a weekly blogpost series, and then a new Facebook study group. We invited people who were unfamiliar with Ayn Rand, and also readers who have read *We the Living* or other Rand novels. The goal was for every member to learn something from each other.

This epic story was written by Ms. Rand while she was in her late 20's, and a refugee from the Bolshevik Revolution. She was a millennial in today's terms. Instead of coming of age during the Great Recession and its high unemployment, it was the Great Depression of the 1930's. The relevance is that both were caused by government force applied to human interaction.

*We the Living* was published in 1936 when Rand was 31 years old, and the dramatic love story's protagonist, Kira Argounova, was 18 years old when the novel begins. Gen Z in today's terms, but instead of digital technology and its social media dominance, Kira grew up with the new electrification of homes and telephone communication. In either era, Kira and today's Gen Z tend to be independent minds with an entrepreneurial spirit.

Although set in 1920's Soviet Russia, I asked our online forum for questions and comments about the novel's characters, their circumstances, and relate them to current events in 2020 America. Lastly, I decided this book would reflect my new perceptions and inferences from reliving *We the Living* more than 15 years later, and include some of the contemporaneous comments from our study group.

With the exception of philosopher Onkar Ghate's essay, *Justice in a Benevolent Universe*, I did not refer to any other commentary, expert or otherwise, about the novel. None of the conjecture about current events, or impressions about the novel, are the representations of Ayn Rand or any other person who is a student or advocate of Rand's philosophy of Objectivism. They are mine alone, or the person quoted, with great admiration for Ayn Rand's achievements, and gratitude for their impact on my principles for living independently.

With the exception of *Requiem* and *The Captive Mind*, this eBook's chapters were written during the week in which the study group was active. The date of each blog post's original release is the Dateline under the title. There was no advance plan for the narrative of this eBook. I was reading with the collective, and about 3 – 6 chapters ahead to prepare ice breaker questions for group discussion.

However, there was one important element missing - the voice of one of 2020 America's great Generation Z members. As Poetic Justice would have it, we are thrilled to introduce Natalie Schroder to our audience. As you will see in the Foreword to this eBook, she is very capable of speaking for herself, and making *We the Living* relevant to today's young adults. Reminiscent of the spontaneous order of free market economics, we became aware of Natalie through our *Reliving We the Living* Study Group on Facebook.

Thank you for spending time with us on this short journey; one taken through the mind, body, and spirit of a truly independent soul living in a 'Democratic Socialism' hell. Hopefully, it will inspire you to read and appreciate more of Ayn Rand's ideas for your own life on planet earth.

# PROLOGUE

**Dateline: October 27, 2020**

Published in 1936, *We the Living* is the first novel from philosopher Ayn Rand, and is a dramatic love story that takes place in the aftermath of the Bolshevik Revolution. While Ms. Rand experienced the Revolution while growing up in St. Petersburg, it is not about Russia. Closer to being a philosophical autobiography, *We the Living* is about the nobility of human life.

In particular, the novel champions the individual reverence one must hold tight for their own life, dramatizes what it takes to be truly alive in a totalitarian hellhole, and how rare it is. To that end, the lead character, Kira Argounova, is the centerpiece of Ms. Rand's benevolent universe premise, as Ayn Rand Institute philosopher Onkar Ghate explains,

*You must have a clear and sacred devotion to your own mind, life, and requirements of reality. Heroine Kira Argounova depicts the nature of this metaphysical conviction. In an ending of astonishing beauty and power, the story shows what it looks like to remain untouched by the evil of one's surroundings.*

Kira is also the antidote for the malevolent universe premise that defined 19th century Russia, led to the 1917 Revolution, and defines 21st century American multiculturalism. Essentially, it says that life is a series of catastrophes that individuals are not equipped to manage. As a result, our survival depends on group identity and expert leaders to declare losers in their staged tribal feuds. Sound familiar?

Yet, this epic was written by a late twenty-something Ms. Rand – a millennial in today's terms. But instead of coming of age during the Great Recession and its high unemployment, it was the Great Depression of the 1930's. Yet, both were caused by government force applied to human economic interaction and share the same individual vs. the collective conflict as Soviet "justice."

So does the 1960's New Left, and its latest manifestation, 2020's BLM Democrats represent men against man. In *We the Living*, Ms. Rand demonstrates the moral dichotomy,

*I explain the philosophical, psychological, and moral meaning of the men who value their own lives and of the men who don't. I show the first are prime movers of mankind, and the second are metaphysical killers, working for an opportunity to become physical ones. In *We the Living* I show they are motivated by a life premise or a death premise.*

The novel introduces us to Kira at once, and Rand masterfully illustrates their life premise marching into a malevolent society, *“She had a calm mouth and slightly widened eyes with the defiant, enraptured, solemnly and fearfully expectant look of a warrior entering a strange city and is not quite sure whether he is entering as a conqueror or a captive.”* She was 18 years of age – Gen Z in today’s terms. Instead of digital technology and its social media dominance, she grew up with the new electrification of homes and telephones.

*We the Living* begins in 1922, and the Argounov family was returning to their home city after a four-year forced exile to the Crimea. In reality, 1926 is the year Ayn Rand left her family in St. Petersburg to emigrate to the United States. In the introduction to the 60th anniversary edition, philosopher and Ms. Rand’s intellectual heir, Leonard Peikoff, relates the genesis of the novel,

*Her husband Frank O’Connor, and his brother Nick were horrified by her experiences in Russia, and they convinced her that Americans had no idea of the truth. A young Russian had said to her at a party in 1926, just before she left for America: “When you get there, tell them that Russia is a huge cemetery and that we are all dying.” We the Living told them.*

More specifically, the novel tells us what happens to individuals when government bypasses its only morally defensible role – protecting individual rights, and instead abuses legal force. It quickly devolves into a protection racket while brandishing the ideals of the “common good.”

Universal health care is a 2020 American example of runaway government’s crime syndicate. Not only was US Supreme Court nominee Amy Coney Barret grilled by Democratic Senators over “Obamacare,” her Republican defenders were no better. They refused to condemn Obamacare for its immoral premise: rights derived by force.

*We the Living* also told us about Kira’s love for a man; love that is rooted in reverence for her own life and her fight for her own future. Recognizing our highest values in the person of another is the nature of love. Love is of individual ethics. Conversely, Ms. Rand explains the metaphysics, *“Peoples know nothing of the spirit of man, for peoples are only nature, and man is a word that has no plural.”*

Love’s prerequisite is self-esteem. Lives that matter belong to people who have reverence for their own lives first, will fight relentlessly for their futures, and do the same for those who choose to live. However, the dominant philosophy of 2020 America teaches there are no absolutes, values are subjective, and your life’s value is measured by self-sacrifice, either for your tribe or the “goodness of humanity.”

Its likely consequence was a spike in Soviet Russian suicides and opioid abuse in 2020 America. But no one can explain the shared philosophy of Soviet Russia and Progressive America better than did Ayn Rand in the 1960's,

*The rapid degeneration of our present age, when men are brought to the level of concrete-bound animals, incapable of perceiving abstractions; when men are taught they must look at trees, but never at forests, makes it necessary for me to warn: do not be misled by those who tell you that *We the Living* is no longer relevant.*

Following Frederic Bastiat's admonition to "*Pick Up The Torch do Say's Law,*" I and my colleagues at the Center for Individualism are keeping *We the Living* relevant. For example, the third chapter titled Say's Law begins,

*When political force controls the economic decisions of daily life, a society decivilizes. Muscle cancels minds as the means for creating value, money diminishes as the tool for trading them, prices become perverted, and markets atrophy.*

In addition, the ***Reliving We The Living*** project combines a Facebook forum that cultivates questions and comments that relate the characters and circumstances of the novel with current events, and weekly blog post series that summarizes the plot and the novel's underlying principles for living.



# FOREWORD

Dateline: October 25, 2020

by Natalie Schroder



I entered this year much in the same way that Kira Argounova enters Petrograd at the beginning of *We the Living*: hopeful, spirited, and blissfully unaware of the horrors that were to come. When I first read *We the Living* at the age of fourteen, I was of course struck by the unimaginable desolation of life in the Soviet Union, and Kira's burden of being forced to live in a world that targets anyone who dares not to submit to the control of the masses.

But never would I have ever thought that I would one day see parallels between Kira's life and my own. Reading it again at eighteen, the same age as Kira when this story begins, I find myself a different person in a world completely unfamiliar to me. I never wanted to see the slightest bit of similarity between Kira's world and mine, but now I must watch as history begins to repeat itself once again.

My experience of attending college and interacting with people my age is strikingly similar to Kira's. As the newest generation of voters, and during an election that is almost an intellectual civil war, everyone is quick to take a side, and quick to proclaim their hatred for anyone who does not agree with them. And the side that recruits the overwhelming majority of devoted followers is the Left. The Left has come to bear a striking similarity to the Proletarian movement, claiming to call for equality while ultimately just retaliating with vengeance against anyone they deem an oppressor.

They pledge their allegiance with the same fanatical, cultish fervor as the Proletarian students of Kira's world. It seems as though every thought, every conversation, every interaction is tainted by Leftist propaganda. It is the subject constantly bubbling under the surface, threatening to breach at any given moment. And if you do not actively take the pledge, agree with everything said by the Left, and regurgitate every bit of propaganda to anyone who will listen, then, just like a suspected bourgeois, you place a target on your own back.

Like Kira, I refuse to be bound to any collective. I will not adhere myself to either side. My highest priority is my own freedom as an individual, the freedom to choose my beliefs rather than have them chosen for me. But to my peers, that is almost worse than choosing the opposite side. To them, it is incomprehensible. They mistake independence for indifference; they preach that neutrality is even more evil than active hate, all while not even realizing the immensity of their own hate.



Their most powerful tool for controlling their people is guilt. Guilt for being born with any kind of privilege, guilt for not sacrificing yourself to the collective, guilt for even daring to think of yourself. If they can make you feel guilty simply for existing, they can control you. Social media is the perfect vessel for this tactic, a step up from the posters and slogans plastered across the walls of Petrograd. Many of those same slogans can now be seen all over Instagram, along with cartoonish, candy-colored infographics explaining things like systemic racism, white privilege, and the evils of capitalism.

I see these things posted by my own friends, people whose kindness and compassion have been exploited, people who are victims of the extreme guilt-inducing mind control techniques of the Left. I understand why they do it. They have been made to feel so incredibly guilty that they sacrifice their individuality just to try and rid themselves of a fraction of that guilt. In time, the guilt diminishes and is replaced by a sense of self-righteousness that comes from employing the very same tactics that crushed them in the first place. They feel they are doing the right thing; they feel morally just and good. They don't care if it means losing themselves in the process.

Even I am not immune to the guilt. I am not as solitary as Kira; I rely on the comfort and security that comes with having friends. And when I see my friends shaping their entire identities around Leftist causes, believing in them so fervently that it hurts, I feel guilty. To them, finding out that someone they consider a friend does not buy into all of these same causes would feel like betrayal. I don't want to cause them that kind of pain.

I'd like to hope my future is not as bleak as Kira's. To read this book while watching the world morph into it is unnerving. I read about Kira's experiences as a student and see my own. I watch her struggle to survive in a world that aims to destroy her and wonder if my own world will ever come to that. I see her ultimately lose the battle, and hope that I will never see a similar kind of fate. Kira mentions that she has always felt that something was promised to her, a great future full of all her highest values. She is denied that promise.

I don't want to be denied the same. I don't know what awaits me in the future, or whether I will ever get to see the future I've always dreamed of, but I will continue to believe that it is possible. Though so much is uncertain, I can still have certainty in myself, certainty that no matter what happens, I know who I am and what is important to me, and nothing and no one can take that away from me.

*Natalie Schroder, 19, currently resides in Southern California. She is in her first year of college and plans on majoring in health sciences with a long-term goal of attending medical school. Natalie also has a strong passion for writing, and has had her work published multiple times.*

# EATING CAKE

Dateline: August 10, 2010

You can have your cake and eat it too; so say Soviet authorities in 1920's Russia. Just not today. The Party needs the cake, and will be consuming their share of it first. The consolation prize for patience was lice infestation. Literally it's free, figuratively, not so much. This describes the package-deal offered to the human cattle in Chapter 1 of Ayn Rand's 1936 novel, *We the Living*.

As they arrived in Petrograd riding boxcars from Crimea in the south, Alexander Dimitrievitch Argounov and his family were among them. Appearing first is the determined, idealistic, and naive 18 year old (and 1920 Russian Gen Z'er) daughter Kira, *"with the defiant, enraptured, solemnly and fearfully expectant look of a warrior who is entering a strange city and is not quite sure whether he is entering it as a conqueror or a captive."*

Our *We the Living Study Group* accepted the challenge of understanding this important novel last week, and Chapter 1 presents a sharp contrast between Kira's optimism and the despair of her family and their fellow travelers. Lurking in the shadows of the Facebook private forum, **Doctor J** explains and gives us a modern example,

*She could not relate to shallowness. It's OK to miss things, but obsession can lead to depression and suicide in challenging times. I miss root beer barrel candy but it's not something I need to be talked off the ledge for, though the Beer Police in Central Planning (Congress) are working on outlawing that.*

The absurdities of socialism are presented immediately in *We the Living*, *"From the border of Poland to the yellow rivers of China, the red banner rose triumphantly to the sound of "Internationale" and the clicking of keys, as the world's doors closed on Russia."* While humor is a great weapon for maintaining dignity in the face of brutality, it's not easy to find, but here Rand inserts a little sarcasm with her irony,

*"Could you please step out for a moment, citizens?" Two gentlemen were traveling comfortably in that private little compartment, one of them on the seat, the other stretched in the filth on the floor. Left alone where no one could watch, the lady in the fur coat unwrapped a little bundle of oiled paper. She had a whole boiled potato.*

This economic system, known affectionately in 2020 America as ‘Democratic Socialism,’ is what leads to the cherished equality of a train toilet becoming a private dining room. Thankfully, it is expertly explained by a passenger as: *“if you’re not a speculator, you’ll starve, but if you are, you can buy anything you want, but if you buy you’re a speculator, and then look out.”*

Another way to illustrate this cognitive dissonance is the greeting the train passengers received upon arrival at Petrograd station in Chapter 2. The first banner read: *“Comrades! We Are the Builders of a New Life!”* The other banner read: *“Lice Spread Disease! Citizens, Unite on the Anti-Typhus Front!”* The comparative irony Rand presents with these is stunning — to be a comrade is to be lice, citizens are builders where building is forbidden, and life is defined as avoiding death.

The death avoidance premise also defines 2020’s progressive economic lock-down banners: *We’re All In This Together! Flatten the Curve! Wear a Mask, Save a Life!* Their consequence was ‘peaceful protests’ in Democratic party strongholds like Minneapolis, Seattle, Brooklyn and Portland, which are now eerily similar to the scene witnessed on 1920’s Nevsky Prospect in Petrograd,

*New signs were cotton strips with glaring, uneven letters. Gold letters spelled forgotten names on the windows of new owners, and bullet holes with sunburst cracks still decorated the glass. There were stores without signs and signs without stores.*

One of those forgotten names was that of Kira’s uncle. *“Vasili Ivanovitch spoke seldom. He said only: Is that my little friend Kira? The question was warmer than a kiss.”* Here, Ms. Rand gives us another glimpse into Kira’s character, it seems she adores her uncle Vasili. Much like Kira’s father Alexander, he was a self-made man, *“his backbone had been as straight as his gun; his spirit as straight as his backbone.”*

Independence is what commands Kira’s attention and respect, to a fault, and clarity is what Ayn Rand commands in her writing, to the vexation of her critics. Lurking in the corridors of our Facebook forum, **Mama Bear** relates one such experience while *Reliving We the Living*,

*Ayn Rand’s description of worn and weary people is so realistic: such as the woman left at the train station with her eight children because there was no room in the box car. She really defines her characters and the era, many readers could not imagine that type of life.*

The conversation continued with **The Padre** saying “we are able to personalize, through the Argounov family, what confiscation of private property truly means. The family is physically and emotionally devastated.” Except Kira refuses to be devastated, and most people cannot imagine the type of life she envisions.

In Chapter 3, Rand brings clarity by focusing on Kira’s childhood during the Argounova’s vacations at their summer residence. While the house faced their spacious, manicured lawn and gardens, it had its back to the side of the hill overlooking a river “like a mass of rock and earth disgorged by a volcano and frozen in its chaotic tangle.”

Kira preferred to face reality, unconditionally, because there are no conditions,

*Kira was left alone to spend her days in the wild freedom of the rocky hill, as its undisputed sovereign. She swung from rock to rock, grasping a tree branch, throwing her body into space. She made a raft of tree branches and, clutching a long pole, sailed down the river.*

**“Some enter life from under temple vaults, head bowed in awe. Some enter with a heart tramped, crying for the warmth of the herd. Kira Argounova entered life with the sword of a Viking pointing the way and an operetta for a battle march.”**

*She knew she had a life and it was her life. She knew the work she had chosen and which she expected of life. Her future was consecrated, because it was her future. Over Lydia’s bed hung an ikon, over Kira’s — an American skyscraper.*

# THE SOAPS

Dateline: August 17, 2020

Daytime drama became a phenomenon in late 1950's America, and like a novel, it allowed for longer dialogue to develop dramatic story lines and romantic relationships. Not only is *We the Living* a great title for a soap opera, the novel is loaded with drama and romance. For example, in Chapters 4–6, our *We the Living Study Group* was introduced to the love triangle between Kira, Leo, and Andrei.

Like viewing a new soap episode, it helps to know Kira's attributes and context. With her family back in Petrograd and visiting cousins in Chapter 2, Kira was asked about fresh fruit in Crimea, "*I never notice what I eat.*" When told she should wear longer skirts, Kira answered "*If one has the material. I never notice what I wear.*"

In these instances, she reveals her indifference to what she can't control. When the conversation changes to new, Soviet system career choices, Kira avers, "*I think the discussion is superfluous. I am going to the Technological Institute.*"

To her family, this is not an appropriate choice for a young female, and her older sister Lydia demands, "*When did you decide that?*" Kira answers, "*About eight years ago. I'll be an engineer. I'm going to build because I want to build.*" Then Chapter 4 transitions from Kira's childhood to her young adulthood,

*During the lectures, she smiled suddenly, at no one in particular; smiled at a wordless thought of her own. Her childhood had been a cold shower, gay, hard and invigorating. Now she was entering her morning, with her work before her, with so much to be done.*

This is how people think if they are truly alive. Conversely, her cousin Victor declares, "*A modern man of culture must preserve an objective viewpoint which, no matter his personal convictions, enables him to see our time as a moment of gigantic importance to humanity.*" Kira replies, "*Nonsense. It is an old and ugly fact that the masses exist and make their existence felt. This is a time when they make it felt with particular ugliness. That's all.*"

Kira's focus is on what she can control, especially her ambitions, for the singular reason that she wants it. She has no interest in those who want little more than to avoid death. As the master of her future, and being an idealistic Gen Z 18 year old girl, her attention is also drawn to young men who have not

surrendered to their circumstances, whatever that may mean. The first one we are introduced to is Leo, *He was tall, a cap was pulled over his eyes. His mouth, calm, severe, contemptuous, was that of an ancient chieftain who could order men to die, and his eyes were such as could watch it. Kira leaned against a lamp post, looking straight at his face, and smiled.*

Chapter 5 further reveals Kira's naivete during her first encounter with Andrei Taganov, the young Soviet enforcer who overhears her saying, *"When the traces of their republic are disinfected from history — what a glorious funeral march this will make."* Later, her Uncle Vasili asks, *"How about it Kira? Do you think you'll live your whole life under a Red Boot?"* Kira replies, *"No, it can't last forever."* In the benevolent universe of reason, reality ultimately prevails.

Still unaware of each other's names, Kira and Andrei's second meeting at the Institute triggers Kira's sense of danger,

*He stopped and turned, waiting for her. The sidewalk sloped at a steep, frozen angle. Her feet slipped perilously. His strong hand closed over her arm with a smile, "I suppose you weren't afraid." She said, "On the contrary I was very much afraid — this time."*

Lurking at the Facebook forum, **Doctor J** trolls Andrei, *"He's a hopeless twit. But his character is just developing!"* Chapter 6 proves this when Kira tells him, *"I thought that Communists never believed in doing anything but what they had to do."* Andrei replies, *"I must be a very poor Communist, I've always done only what I wanted to do."* She then asks, *"Your revolutionary duty?"* Andrei takes the bait,

*There is no such thing as duty. If you know that a thing is right you want to do it. If you don't want to do it — it isn't right. If it's right and you don't want to do it — you don't know what right is and you're not a man.*

Also using a bogus public service dialectic, presidential nominee Joe Biden justifies his vice president running mate selection,

*I need someone who understands we are in a battle for the soul of this nation. To get through these crises, we need to unite for a better America. Kamala Harris gets that. A fearless fighter for the little guy, and one of the country's finest public servants.*

What the confused Andrei Taganov and life-long dimwit Joe Biden have done is invoke the 19th century moral philosophy of Immanuel Kant - duty as an end in itself. Directly opposed is America's moral premise - our lives, liberty, and happiness are an end in themselves.

Biden's supporters are ignorant of the fact there are no little guys in America's founding principles - the soul of this nation is distributed equally among each individual. Avoiding reality, and its ensuing chaos, define the Democratic party's malevolent universe death premise.

Coming of age during the economic and political chaos of a middle class under assault, Gen Z and Kira hold dearly to their life premise of productive happiness.

Andrei continues, *"You're going to say that you admire our ideals, but loathe our methods."* Kira stands firm, *"I loathe your ideals. You will turn your paradise into the most unspeakable hell: your claim that man must live for the state."*

**Doctor J** offers to our online forum: *"Although young, Kira instinctively understood it would not be of any advantage to sell her soul and blindly obey people. Duty is accountable to no one. We are told we will be better for it while it actually can kill us on so many levels."*

To be continued . . . .

Leo wonders, ***"Who suffers in this world? If only one could come down to the level of those who never want it, never miss it."***

Andrei dreams, ***"To bring the millions up to where I want them – for my sake."***

Kira insists, ***"Haven't you ever wanted a thing for no reason save one: that you wanted it?"***



# ROPE A DOPE

Dateline: August 24, 2020

Now that we are deep into Part I of *We the Living*, its interesting that on Sunday August 16th, philosopher Harry Binswanger recalled his first experience with Ayn Rand's 1936 novel. As a freshman at MIT in 1960, he attended a lecture and became not only enchanted with Rand's ideas, but also the clarity of her convictions. Soon after, he tackled an intellectual and emotional tour de force, *Atlas Shrugged*.

After returning from John Galt's world, he was surprised by the equally impressive and psychological *The Fountainhead*, then the science fiction-like *Anthem*, and lastly *We the Living*. Aware that Rand's earliest novel was the closest to an autobiography, he thought, "It won't be very much. It will be one of these novels about a person's childhood."

*It was the same thing over again! And I fell in love with Kira. So I love We the Living. I can see now that it was Ayn Rand from the beginning. True, it wasn't as philosophical, but it was love of life, the love of freedom, and the love of a woman for a man.*

That man is Leo Kovalensky, a fugitive from the Soviet police. Chapter 7 sealed Kira's emotional desire when she whispered, "*I was thinking about you, today. Were you thinking about me?*" Leo replied, "*You know what I wanted to tell you?*"

*Without thought, without will or question, in a voice that was someone's order to her, not her voice, she answered, "Yes." And someone's order to her repeated through her lips, persistently, hungrily, insanely: "Leo, I love you."*

However, Soviet friend Andrei had taken her to the opera the previous evening. To prepare for the event, Kira spent hours with her mother and sister to create a new dress from an old one. Later that night at home, the girl who didn't care what she wore "*remembered regretfully that he had said nothing about her new dress.*" The dress was something she made, because she wanted it, and recognition for what is good.

While Andrei's Communist pathology prevents him from recognizing the desires of others, Chapter 8 illustrates the same disregard for human life that was inflicted on his family by the Czar's police. Yet

during the Revolution, the morning after a battle, he shows mercy to an enemy soldier. *“As long as one can walk . . . ,”* said Andrei. *“One walks,”* finished the man. They fight for the sake of the fight. Is this a contradiction? In our online forum, Doctor J checks its premise,

*Andrei is not noble. He has allowed himself to be brainwashed. An honorable man thinks for himself. Like a lot of citizens during that time in Russia, honorable behavior was only on display when leadership wasn't watching. When they were, they towed the party line.*

And Kira understood the Party line, as well as the punch line. When interrogated by Andrei's accomplice, Pavel Syerov, about meeting with Leo, *“Who was that man at the gate with you last night?”* She replies, *“What man?”* He repeats, *“Who was that man?”* Kira resists, *“I wasn't interested enough to ask him.”* Syerov continues, *“Very well. I won't ask you that.”* Kira then asks, *“Who was that man?”* Syerov pounds the table, *“Citizen Argounova, do you have to be reminded that this is no joke?”* Kira was ready, *“If it isn't, will you tell me what it is?”* Pavel unravels, *“You'll understand what it is and damn quick.”*

Here, Gen Z'er Kira has exposed Rand's sense of humor and Pavel's greatest weakness — he has nothing without public cooperation. She knows his object is unearned wealth, his carrot is social justice, and his stick is his criminal gang. Greed, envy, and fear are also the hallmarks of today's Democratic party.

In chapter 3, we were treated to Kira's sense of justice. A bully at her school in Crimea had *“declared a boycott against a freckled little girl.”* Kira, who normally ate lunch alone, was confronted while sitting with this girl. *“Do you know what you're doing, Argounova?”* demanded the leader of the girl gang. *“Eating mush. Won't you sit down?”* Instead, the thug asks, *“Do you know what this girl here has done?”* Kira replies, *“I haven't the slightest idea.”*

In both cases, Kira adopts the technique of playing by their rules and giving them more rope for hanging themselves. The bully responds, *“You haven't? Then why are you doing this for her?”* Kira was ready, *“You're mistaken, I am not doing this for her. I am doing it against twenty-eight other girls.”* The bully unravels, *“So you think its smart to go against the majority?”* Democracy in action.

Today, the joke is the so-called Democratic National Convention — a show about nothing except airing grievances. A Festivus celebration of wiseguys embalming Joe Biden as honorary crime boss, er, beacon of hope and change. Lurking at the forum, Uncle Bob relates, *“I briefly studied education at*

*Moscow State in 1973. I have a feel for the dialectic of those times and how, even now, people who grew up in that respond to the world.*“

In 2020 America, Democratic mob hatred of the individual is focused on President Trump, so he's out there giving them more rope. Imagine him saying, *'if this convention isn't a joke, will you tell me what it is? I haven't the slightest idea.'* The malevolent universe of President Obama's hope and change is why Trump ran for President. Portland's punks, Chicago's chaos, Baltimore's blight and the destruction of New York as a world-class city come to mind.

In 1920's Russia, Andrei's criminal mob religion was political propaganda, its church was government, and its baptism was fire. Their goal was to wrest power from the feudalism of Czarist Russia, whose church was medieval. Their shared enemy was, and is, the individual. In Chapter 9, Kira explains,

*If I asked people whether they believed in life, they never understand what I meant. So I ask if they believe in God. If they say they do, then I know they don't believe in life. Whoever places his highest conception above his own possibility thinks very little of himself and his life.*

Kira continues, *"It's a rare gift to feel reverence for your own life. To want the highest possible, now, for your very own."* Andrei unravels, *"You're a strange girl."* To which Kira tells him, and us, *"You see, you and I, we believe in life. But you want to fight for it, to kill for it, even to die — for life. I only want to live it."*

**In America.**

# SAY'S LAW

Dateline: August 31, 2020

When political force controls the economic decisions of daily life, a society decivilizes. Muscle cancels minds as the means for creating value, money diminishes as the tool for trading them, prices become perverted, and markets atrophy. In *We the Living*, Chapter 4, Alexander Argounov agrees to be paid in lard for his handkerchiefs, and in Chapter 5, tenants who are private traders are charged exorbitant rates for being bourgeois.

Arbitrarily condemned as exploiters, the entrepreneurial types integrate their mental with their physical energy, open businesses in order to survive, and quickly fail because consumers have no money. This downward spiral is a necessary consequence of Say's Law, aka the law of markets — production creates its own demand.

In 1920's Petrograd, the mind has been neutered by the Revolution, material capital is depreciating quickly, financial capital exists only on the black market, and production has regressed to mindless, medieval standards.

The beginning of Chapter 9 continues, *“Argounov's Navy Soap was a failure. Galina Petrovna's energy found their next business venture.”* Her new patron had instructed, *“Remember, eighty seven tablets is all you have to put into a box labeled ‘One Hundred.’ Great future in saccharine.”* Galina then instructs, *“Sorry, it's too bad about your studies Kira, but you'll just have to help. You have to eat, you know.”*

*Kira counted the little crystals in the palm of her hand. She tried not to breathe or swallow; when she did, the white powder, seeping through her lips and nostrils, bit her throat with the pain of a piercing, metallic sweetness.*

For the benefit of us in 2020 America who can't comprehend the horror of this, **Doctor J** explains to our Facebook forum,

*The saccharine used back then to replace sugar, and only allowed for the Communist leadership, was rarely found even on the black market. To be found with it was instant death — it would have meant it was stolen from a high ranking official. A little trivia here!*

Of course, Alexander and Galina's daughter Kira is not an economist. Her chosen profession is another applied science — engineering. Yet the great Austrian economist Ludwig von Mises tells us, *"Economics is Life,"* and Kira is a lover of her life. Her ability to produce, particularly as a Gen Z female engineer in the 1920's, required political and economic freedom.

When she meets the love of her life Leo, at the end of Chapter 9, he tells her, *"Kira, I am going away, tonight. Forever. To Germany. I'm a fugitive Kira. A counter revolutionary."* She demands, *"I'm going with you Leo."* Economic freedom.

Chapter 10 begins with the capture of Leo and Kira aboard a smuggler's boat escaping the slavery of Soviet Russia. The cap of the Baltfleet sailor who held them in custody bore *"A five-pointed Soviet star. Kira, her eyes glued to the red star, the star that filled her eyes, but could not reach her brain, muttered foolishly, softly, as a child."*

Here, Ayn Rand has exposed to the reader to Kira's subconscious reaction, which is similar to the fear she sensed when meeting Soviet enforcer Andrei for the second time in Chapter 5. Their first meeting was at the Student Council election a few days earlier. There, she overheard a Soviet speaker named Pavel tell a friend how Communism's economic slavery would work,

*It's on the internal front that we have to dig our trenches. When our enemies fall, there is no blood, no cry. The world never knows when they were killed. Sometimes, they do not know it themselves.*

The larger faction at the election meeting — the Whites who stood for the status quo against the Reds' tyranny, closed with an old drinking song, *'Days of Our Life,'* that was,

*Born long before the Revolution in the stuffy rooms where they discussed philosophy, and with forced bravado drank cheap vodka to the futility of life. Kira frowned; she did not sing. She noticed the students in leather jackets and red kerchiefs kept silent too.*

This was the malevolent universe of chaos and impotence that both Kira and the Communist minority at the election wanted to leave on the dust heap of history. By Chapter 11, millennial Leo had been freed, and with Gen Z'er Kira, had settled in to their new apartment, yet *"She had never given much thought to the necessity of keeping alive. She found suddenly that the mere fact of keeping alive had grown into a complicated problem which required many hours of effort."* Home economics.

The only friendly face from the Argounov or Ivanovitch family homes was her cousin Irina, who shared Kira's love of life. In Chapter 11,

*They sat in the shadows and talked about Rembrandt, whom Irina was studying; and the new perfume Vava had received from a smuggler — real French perfume. Irina had cried smelling it.*

Mind, body, and spirit as an integrated unit, as opposed to the treatment Kira received from her family after taking an apartment with Leo in Chapter 10,

*How could you? Have you no conception of shame? Did you stop to think it was a mortal sin? And the Church . . . for centuries . . . all of our Saints have told us that no sin is lower! The Saints who, for our sins . . . Such women should not be allowed to live!"*

This medieval mysticism was the disintegration of mind and body that Kira had rejected. It was also the status quo that the Whites, at the election meeting, wanted to preserve. Kira was not political, her life's goals depended on the economic way of Say's Law, and its life premise of reason, purpose, and pride.

Starving, Kira and Leo ventured to Petrograd's train station black market for food in Chapter 12. There, they witness the arrest of a desperate old woman who was accused of being a 'speculator.' Her life now canceled, the snitch, who was the real 'speculator,' approached them, *"Here you are citizens. Bread, ham, anything you wish. No trouble. We know our business. The next moment, Kira was running down the street, fleeing wildly, senselessly from a feeling she could not explain."*

Rand has again exposed Kira's subconscious reaction to the death premise of Marxism — life is chaos and people are impotent. Their demand is submission to the Soviet collective. Last week in 2020 America, you were exposed to their chaos in Kenosha WI, Minneapolis MN, and Portland OR; and the impotence of police departments who were ordered to stand down in submission to the cancel culture of today's organized, violent, collectivist, Marxist mobs — BLM and Antifa, CNN and the New York Times.

The Democratic party's muscle canceling your mind.

# IMAGINE

**Dateline: September 7, 2020**

Vasili Ivanovitch was Kira Argounova's uncle, she his niece, and each other's favorite. When the Argounov family returned to Petrograd, she had become 18 years old. Uncle Vasili was 60, *"His sunken eyes were like a fireplace where the last blazing coals fought against slow, inevitable ashes."*

Although set in 1920's Russia, what Rand describes here is no different than the livelihoods crushed by 2020's Wuhan virus inspired lock downs. Before the Soviet criminal gang of Democratic Socialism, Vasili owned his life and built his future,

*He started as a trapper in the wilderness of Siberia, with a gun, a pair of boots, and two arms that could lift an ox. His relatives heard no word for ten years. His muscles and long hours of frozen Siberian nights had paid for every fur that passed through his hands.*

Chapter 2 introduced us to Vasili's ante Soviet past, *"he opened an office of which his relatives could not afford the door knobs,"* and Kira's aspirations, *"It's the only profession for which I don't have to learn any lies. Steel is steel."* By Chapter 15, Kira and Leo were in their apartment after brutal days of unrewarded and forced labor,

*She, as she did not want to be seen, stood before him now, bent over a Primus, in an aura of kerosene and onion smell, her hands slimy with raw mud. She wondered dully whether there was any place on earth where one could eat without begin sick of every mouthful.*

The contrast is stark – the life premise of our benevolent universe vs. the death premise of the mob's malevolent one. Vasili chose to live in a primitive environment and used his impressive mental and physical energy to create wealth. Kira was imprisoned in a primitive environment and using her prodigious mental and physical energy to avoid death.

On Nevsky Prospect, the latter was glorified by Soviet banners, *"We, toilers of Petrograd, greet our British class brothers! Welcome to the land of the Soviets where labor is free! The women of the state pledge their support to England's proletariat in its struggle with Imperialists!"* In other words, the worship of mediocrity, the persecution of the good for being good, and its moral inversion.



Imagine, in 2016 America, that someone who never held political office ran for President. Imagine doing that without the support of a major political party, their corporate donors, or labor unions. Imagine the revulsion of his powerful Communist enemies at nearly every major media outlet and university in America.

Imagine him winning with populism, and then doing the unimaginable – what he said he would do. And doing it effectively for his vision of a legitimate American government, because he wants it. Imagine him single-handedly goading ‘public servants’ into exposing their own ethical corruption, intellectual incompetence, and metaphysical death premise.

Imagine their hatred, slander, investigations, riots, looting, and murders – in the name of compassion, because they *‘just like doing things like that.’*

Imagine John Lennon’s song, necessarily inverted by its mindless promoters.

For Vasili and Kira, this meant sacrifice yourself to others or sacrifice others to yourself. In Chapter 13, Soviet enforcer Andrei explains the latter to Kira. After returning from his summer of looting the Volga region (fly-over country), he tells her, *“Well, I guess everybody knows it. The villages – that’s the dark spot on our future. They’re not conquered. They’re not with us.”* Lurking in our online forum, Starter explains Andrei’s frustration,

*There’s a level of independence that threatens their cause. One example, big storms in Iowa a couple weeks back, and the community rallied around itself, gratefully receiving outside help, not whining about it. Local individuals choosing to work together.*

This chapter also illustrates the former when Leo is asked by his employer to volunteer as a teacher in a new night school for Cultural Advancement. He is told it will be *“a voluntary gift to the state.”* Of course, these free-will donations are reinforced by the Soviet criminal justice system, a contradiction in terms if there ever was one, as Leo and Kira discovered the hard way.

When their building manager forced them to cede one of their rooms to a Comrade, they appealed to the People’s Court where Leo asked, *“Is this a court of justice or a musical comedy?”* The judge replied, *“So-called impartial justice, citizen, is a bourgeois prejudice. This is a court of class justice. Next case!”* And so says the Democratic party’s 2020 San Francisco District Attorney.

Class justice was further defined in Chapter 15 when Kira began her new job – a gift from Andrei to avoid starvation. There she observed, *“The House of the Peasant occupied someone’s former mansion . . . how strict that sympathy was . . . Tina ran the typewriter, a habit which had sprung over the country . . . no one was responsible nor could be punished . . . a steady drone of activity.”* Avoiding reality had become a prized skill to be rewarded with a Soviet paycheck.

Propaganda, ratting out friends and strangers, and demonstrations, were where the money was, prison free, for avoiding reality, for the time being. And today. On June 17th, future 2020 Democratic nominee for Vice President Kamala Harris was recruiting zombies for the terror wing of her Party,

*They’re not gonna stop, this is a movement I’m telling you. Everyone beware, because they’re not gonna stop before Election Day in November, and they’re not gonna stop after Election Day. Everyone should take note. They should not, and we should not.*

In Chapter 14, Kira had asked, *“Andrei, why doesn’t your party believe in the right to live while one is not killed? You may claim the right to kill, as all fighters do. But no one before you has ever thought of forbidding life to those still living.”* Here, Kira has noticed something new about 20th century brutality – conform, or achieve real victimhood, or both.

Inspired by the 19th century philosophers who condemned that era’s grand, humanistic achievements, Communism’s morality is subjective and individual human lives have no intrinsic value. For example, when the new Comrade arrived home to her room one night,

*Marisha came in when Kira was alone. Her little pouting mouth was swollen, her eyes red. “Citizen Argounova, I’m afraid I’m in trouble. It’s that damn louse Aleshka. Said I’d be bourgeois if I didn’t let him. What am I gonna do?”*

Gen Z’s *“Kira said she didn’t know.”* Uncle Vasili Ivanovitch, a Baby Boomer, surely didn’t know. What they both knew very well, is that no one avoids the consequences of an entire society that avoids reality. Their lives and livelihoods were being canceled for the crime of being good.

Just ask any 2020 New York City restaurant and theater professional, thanks to their pathetically corrupt Democratic Socialist Mayor, who *‘just likes doing things like that.’*

# REVERENCE

Dateline: September 14, 2020

The frigid Russian winter, an apartment with little heat and less food, and endless hours standing in lines, day after day, searching for work that didn't exist, was finally rewarded – a diagnosis of incipient tuberculosis for Leo. As his doctor told Kira at the beginning of Chapter 16, *“Tuberculosis is a serious disease, citizen. In Soviet Russia – it is a fatal disease. If that young man is dear to you, send him south. If you have a human possibility, or an inhuman one – send him south.”*

Later that day, millennial Leo had decided *“Don't let's think about it. There is nothing we can do.”* To which Gen Z'er Kira replied, *“Nonsense, Leo. You're going south.”* Kira's focus and determination is essential and normal to her life premise, not calamity. Misfortune is to be handled quickly and forgotten. It is human nature to take rational action, to control one's environment, to live. Entrepreneurs know this. President Trump really knows this. Nineteen years ago last week, on Flight 93, Todd Beamer and his compatriots knew this and declared, **“Let's Roll!”**

Over the next two weeks, Kira waited hours in *“ghastly lines of deformed creatures – the smell of the morgue”* at three hospitals. At the State Medical headquarters, it was *“hours of waiting in dim, damp corridors that smelt of carbolic acid and soiled linen.”* Reminiscent of President Obama, it was a teachable moment; *“a mystic absolute, one had to be a member of a Trade Union and get a dispatchment to a Trade Union Sanatorium.”* Or qualify for healthcare.gov marketplace subsidies.

After countless meetings with Trade Union heads, their secretaries, recommendation letters, exceptions begged, and bribes demanded, Kira asked for help from her cousin Victor who replied, *“I want you to realize that my party membership is a sacred trust not to be utilized for purposes of personal advantage.”* Kira remained undaunted, *“She was firm, erect, her voice did not tremble. She was not afraid to beg. It was her mission, her quest, her crusade.”* What Kira wanted was rooted in her highest values – her life, and she loved Leo.

Earlier, in Chapter 14, Kira had been called to visit her Aunt Maria who had become deathly sick from a hemorrhage,

*She jerked up. Eyes were wide open with a horror beyond all human dignity. Staring at Kira, she screamed, I want to live! I want to live! She fell back. Her hair jerked like snakes on the pillow and lay still. Nothing moved but the black that slithered down the skin of her throat.*

Following doctors' orders, and desperate to help Leo, Kira paid an unannounced visit to her Soviet friend Andrei in Chapter 17. He then tells her that she is his highest value, *"My life is twenty-eight years of that for which you feel contempt. I'd give everything I have – everything I could ever have – for something you can't give me!"* She breathed, *"What did you say Andrei?"*

*It was terror in her eyes, a terror of the thought she had seen for a second so very clearly. She was not thinking of him; she was not thinking of Leo; she was thinking of Maria Petrovna and of the red bubble on dying lips.*

Aunt Maria Petrovna had lived her life preparing for death. Her moral choices were guided by the mystics of the mind – the Church. Upon facing imminent death, Maria realized her error and turned to the only person she knew who chose to live. Andrei's moral choices were guided by the mystics of muscle – the Party. He lived his life for the battle, one that could only end in death, yet he was beginning to realize that he was wrong.

While Kira admired Andrei's masculinity and independence, which is President Trump's offense, and qualities of Leo, she abhorred Andrei's values. Kira understood that Andrei's devotion to her and the Party would lead him to a similar fate as Aunt Maria's sacred trust in miracles and the Church. For Kira, the much higher value was her life, and to the extent she could succeed, her future with Leo.

This is in sharp contrast to the conditions that exist in a society that adopts 'Democratic Socialism.' When a criminal gang controls prosecutors offices or court benches, transparency disappears, along with evidence and witnesses. Last week, the US Department of Justice disclosed that senior staff on Robert Mueller's Special Counsel team had erased data from over 20 smartphones. This is the kind of obstruction for which they accuse others, and use it to justify middle of the night, no-knock SWAT raids on their political targets.

One of the several targets whose life and treasure have been ruined is Julian Assange, who has been held in a high security prison since last spring, following years of exile in an embassy in London. His extradition hearing to the United States began last week, and he faces up to 175 years on espionage charges. While Assange exposed corruption at the Democratic National Committee in 2016, he's been under criminal investigation by the Obama Administration since 2010.

It seems Assange had published information that harmed the sensitivities of Obama era CIA and Pentagon officials over 'misinformation' regarding their war machine. In *We the Living*, Leo Kovalensky also faced the consequences of Marxist class warfare, and Kira's efforts with the Soviet Administration exposed the chaos and impotence of social justice,

*Because . . . In a kitchen with a spoon . . . In a corner saloon he belched . . . In a bed stained with yellow, a child slept . . . On a sack of flour, they rolled . . . A pale forehead knocked the stone floor . . . In the roar of machines men swung arms – Leo was sentenced to die.*

The connection between Leo's universal health care death panel, and the shamelessness Ayn Rand assigned to the others in this paragraph, is a profound achievement of *We the Living*. These characters demonstrate zero self-esteem. They have no reverence for their own lives. Because of that, they create no values and have no respect for the baby or anyone else. When living loses the happiness of purpose, and muscles do the work of machines, society decivilizes, and the ideals of Western justice disappear.

This is the essence of self-sacrifice, and of reverence for Society or God. When the moral ideal of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness is replaced with the greater good, there is no sustainable moral code.

# REQUIEM

**Dateline: November 13, 2019**

Thirty years ago this week the Berlin Wall came down. The catalyst was Soviet Premier Gorbachev ordering armed guards away from the wall. He had deluded himself to believe that socialism could exist without fear. The event was international news for several days, and it led to the eventual fall of the Soviet Union and the reunification of Germany.

Of course Poland's courageous Solidarity labor movement led by Lech Walesa, the work of Pope John Paul II, and the extraordinary partnership of Britain's Lady Margaret Thatcher and President Ronald Reagan - he implored Gorbachev in a 1987 speech at Berlin's Brandenburg Gate - "*tear down this wall!*", were also essential.

But for many people in the United States, this was a ho-hum course of events. For America's intelligentsia and their ignorati, Reagan was still a B movie actor, much like President Trump was a reality show TV star, and socialism was the dominant philosophy of America's national media and universities.

Josef Stalin's Great Terror in Soviet Russia was not taught in schools, and neither was Mao Zedong's Cultural Revolution in China. Only Hitler's Final Solution was well known, and that is because Nazism was rebranded by Western intellectuals as right-wing fascism. This was so Western socialists could distance themselves from the 20th century depravity they shared with their Comrades.

It is upon this anniversary that we introduce the Poetic Justice Warrior who witnessed, and personally experienced, the Great Terror. She swore to its victims that their story would be told for future generations to know and understand. She is the great Russian poet, Anna Akhmatova.

## Remembering Requiem

In 1940, Akhmatova wrote a collection of poems titled *Requiem*. They eloquently express her personal raw emotions and those of the women whose husbands, sons, brothers, and fathers became the subjects of Stalin's mass imprisonment. They were artists, poets, and publishers after all.

For example, her son had been arrested on numerous occasions for alleged 'counter-revolutionary activity,' and she would cue for many hours, many times, in an attempt to deliver food to him and plead with his captors.

By 1938, Akhmatova had become a well-known poet in Russia, and on one of these occasions outside a St. Petersburg stone prison she met a woman:

*One day somebody in the crowd identified me. Standing behind me was a woman, with lips blue from cold, who had, of course, never heard me called by name before. Now she started out of the torpor common to us all and asked me in a whisper (everyone whispered there): 'Can you describe this?' And I said: 'I can.' Then something like a smile passed fleetingly over what had once been her face.*

This became Akhmatova's inspiration and motivation for writing *Requiem*, but she dared not publish it. Instead she memorized it and shared it only with close friends. *Requiem* was finally published in 1963, without her consent, in Munich, Germany. This was two years after the construction of the Berlin Wall.

In hindsight, *Requiem* may not have survived to foretell the Berlin Wall's ominous presence, or celebrate its glorious crumbling, if she had published it instead of memorizing it. In 1993, it was revealed that Akhmatova had been under investigation by the intelligence agencies of the Soviet 'deep state.' They had bugged her apartment and kept her under constant surveillance. Stalin's spies had created a dossier that totaled 900 pages of "denunciations, reports of phone taps, quotations from writings, and confessions of those close to her".

In this excerpt from *Requiem*, she expresses some of the emotions that surrounded her in 1938. They include disbelief, rationalization, stunned grief, agony, deep mourning, and perseverance. All of which Akhmatova cycles through this set of poems.

***For seventeen months I have been screaming,  
Calling you home.  
I've thrown myself at the feet of butchers  
For you, my son and my horror.  
Everything has become muddled forever –  
I can no longer distinguish  
Who is an animal, who a person, and how long  
The wait can be for an execution.***

Anna's close friend, Lydia Chukovskaya, was also a dissident author and poet, and wrote about the tactics of their small trusted circle of friends who would create poetry and distribute it. For them, the ritual was to write poetry for each other on a scrap of paper, read it, memorize it, and burn it in a stove.



Oral circulation was their mode of publishing, or as Chukovskaya describes, “*It was like a ritual. Hands, matches, an ashtray. A ritual beautiful and bitter.*” This was done while casually conversing in code for the electronic eavesdroppers and quietly memorizing:

***Silent flows the river Don  
A yellow moon looks quietly on  
Swanking about, with cap askew  
It sees through the window a shadow of you  
Gravely ill, all alone  
The moon sees a woman lying at home  
Her son is in jail, her husband is dead  
Say a prayer for her instead.***

In Akhmatova’s own words, *Requiem* was “*One hundred million voices shouting through her tortured mouth.*” And “*A poem without a hero.*” All for the inhuman ideals of socialism.

## **Requiem’s Hero**

As poetic justice would have it, *Requiem* was published for the first time in Russia in 1987, two years before Berlin’s monument to fear was torn down. Its existence had proved that the Soviet empire was not founded on a Marxist ideal for a better society. There’s no such thing, Lenin and Stalin knew it, that was merely a ruse for Western intellectual suckers. Nobel prize winning Polish poet Czeslaw Milosz also proves it in his book about the mental anguish suffered by Soviet propagandists, *The Captive Mind*.

Lenin never visited his proletarian workers at their factories and Stalin’s ideal was the ratting out of everyone by everyone. In today’s China, the ruling elite’s reverence for so-called Marxist ideals is as insincere and unbelievable as America’s Democratic leadership’s reverence for Constitutional principles and Christian values. The idea that their Democratic Socialism can be implemented without the fear of violence cruelly avoids reality.

After regularly reading to Russian soldiers in military hospitals during World War II, Akhmatova was condemned in 1946 by Stalin’s Central Committee, along with others, for bourgeois, individualistic writing and expelled from the Union of Soviet Writers.

From Requiem's section titled *The Verdict*:

***The word landed with a stony thud  
Onto my still-beating breast.  
Never mind, I was prepared,  
I will manage with the rest.  
I have a lot of work to do today;  
I need to slaughter memory,  
Turn my living soul to stone  
Then teach myself to live again. . .***

Thanks to the smashing of the Berlin Wall thirty years ago, the people of Poland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, East Germany, and the rest of the Soviet orbit have the opportunity to teach themselves to live again. The self-reliance of the bourgeois individualists idealized in the poetry of Poetic Justice Warrior Anna Akhmatova are Requiem's heroes.

They are the ones victimized by the force of socialism in Soviet Russia and the freedom fighters armed with reason, purpose, and pride who ripped away the iron curtain. When celebrating the fall of the Berlin Wall, it is imperative to know and understand the people and events behind it.

# PROLOGUE II

**Dateline: July 21, 2020**

What is going on in 2020 America? Financial repression via central planning of the money supply. Government purchase of corporate equity and debt securities to manipulate their prices. Speech codes imposed by one class of people on the others with their violent riots and looting in our city streets.

Because these conditions did not come into being without historical precedent, it's important for us to examine the past in order to understand current trends and their consequences. One of those stories, *We the Living*, comes to us in vivid detail, thanks to an eyewitness account.

It is no secret that Ayn Rand was a prolific and controversial writer and philosopher. To this day, her life's story and work are admired by individualists around the world, and reviled by collectivists who merely know her name.

Rand's best-known product is her greatest, and last, novel, *Atlas Shrugged*. Published in 1957, it is the defining, fictional statement of her philosophy of Objectivism. For a sample of its principles, this column quoted Rand's character Ellis Wyatt on July 10, 2020,

*Only those who produce, not those who consume, can be anybody's market. I deal with life-givers, not with cannibals. Here, we trade achievements, not failures — values, not needs. We're free of each other, yet we all grow together. What greater wealth is there than to own your life and to spend it on growing? Every living thing must grow.*

What is not well known is Rand's uniquely important first novel. Published in 1936, *We the Living* described the conditions and despair that prevailed in 1920's Soviet Russia, and from which Ayn Rand escaped as a young woman. On December 24, 2018, the Poetic Justice Warrior Spotlight Series explained,

*We the Living was Rand's opening salvo for her sense of life in the world of fiction. As an émigré from Soviet Russia in 1926, she could speak with authority about the life-sapping totalitarianism that held her country hostage. So it makes sense that she was shocked to find acceptance of Soviet style oppression among American intellectuals and politicians.*

From this immovable platform, Rand launched a career that improved the lives of millions of people, those who are driven by the irresistible force of reason, purpose, and pride. As Rand herself wrote

many years later, and re-published in the 60th anniversary edition of *We the Living*,

*I had not read this novel as a whole, since the time of its first publication in 1936, until a few months ago. I had not expected to be as proud of it as I am. In regard to We the Living, I had felt that my means were inadequate to my purpose, and that I had not said what I wanted to say as well as I wished. Now, I am startled to discover how well I did say it.*

Now, it is our turn to re-examine this novel of life-sapping totalitarianism that holds a country back. We'd like to invite our readers to re-examine this story from the past with us, and to reflect on what we can learn about the forces at work in our present day from the pages of *We the Living*.

It's our belief that this project is relevant to your life's experience in 2020 America, and this will be revealed to each participant, on your own terms, as each chapter unfolds. Our online forum was set up as a Private Group; membership will not show up on Facebook profiles.

We will learn together about the virtues, vices, and motivations of each character, and the ethical and political context of their actions. We will also relate the individuals and political climate of the novel, 1920's Soviet Russia, with their counterparts in 2020 America and ask ourselves,

***What is the dominant philosophy that drove the Soviets?***

***How does it manifest itself in American postmodern culture?***

***Who is Kira Argonouova?***

***Why is it essential to learn from Kira's example?***

***Will it guide our personal conduct and culture so that every human being can live and grow?***

# THE PEOPLES

Dateline September 21, 2020

*The Return of the Primitive*, originally published as *The New Left: The Anti-Industrial Revolution*, is a 1971 collection of essays by Ayn Rand that analyzes the culture, schools, and politics of 1960s America. This was about 50 years after Russia was consumed by class theory criminal gangs, and 50 years before America's Democratic party was consumed by race theory criminal gangs. Both theories are fatal to the faithful, and fatally flawed to those who obey reality.

The first three chapters in Part II of Ayn Rand's 1936 novel, *We the Living*, are a literary description of how avoiding reality appeared to those who lived in 1920's St. Petersburg, Russia. By 1924, the city had been renamed Petrograd by war, and then Leningrad by committee.

The absence of logic in a society dominated by religious, and then political mysticism was illustrated frequently in Chapter 3. For example, Kira's mother Galina said of her own brother, formerly wealthy by dealing with the reality of the Siberian fur trade, "*Vasili has never been practical. What do we do now? We have the complex method.*"

*Take last week for instance. Our subject was Factory. The history class taught the development of factories. Physics class taught all about machinery. The arithmetic teacher gave problems about production and consumption. The art class drew factory interiors.*

Simply put, the minds who invented machinery, the entrepreneurs who created demand, the technical savvy of skilled workers, and the efficiency of complex supply chains had been replaced by bozos. In 2020 America, think Venezuela, Cuba, Minneapolis, and Portland.

What is considered fine art also reflects the dominant culture, and Chapter 3 introduces us to a friend of Leo's, one he met while spending the summer regaining his health in Crimea. Ayn Rand laughs as Antonina describes a popular, new verse as,

*Thoroughly delightful. Such depth of emotion, yet so – essentially modern: 'My heart is asbestos that remains cool over the blast furnace of my emotions' – or something like that – it is really superb.*

Galina had also described the predictable progress of the Method,

*Our distribution of commodities has not yet reached a level of perfection. The sunflower seed oil I got last week was so rancid I couldn't use it. But then, this is a transitional period. Of course, I get a better ration cards because I'm in a preferred class of pedagogues.*

Today's preferred class of pedagogues are pushing their complex method called Critical Race Theory (CRT), which replaces individual talent and lives of meaning with the damaged souls of tribalism. At its core, CRT claims the Western ideals of justice are inherently racist, ethnicity has no biological grounds, and 'white society' uses law to handicap non-whites.

This is mind-blowing self destruction, and last week President Trump directed the Office of Management and Budget to issue cease and desist orders where CRT has infected federal agencies. Yet its infestation of corporate America is another matter. Many of them actually fund the race theory criminal gangs that loot and destroy their urban retail stores and innocent small-business owners.

As Kira explained to Andrei at the end of Chapter 3, *"It's possible for every one of us to have to face a death sentence some day. Does it mean we have to prepare for it?"* Like too few American corporatists, Andrei knew he was preparing his own possible death sentence, but earlier in Chapter 2, Kira had met Irina's friend Sasha Chernov, who was anxious to end the Soviet domination and get on with his life,

*"Sasha was thrown out of University for trying to think in a country of free thought." Kira said, "I'm sorry," feeling that she liked him. Sasha drawled, in a tone of conviction, "It was really not essential. There are some values an autocratic power can never subjugate."*

Lurking in the online forum, Clementine explains,

*Sasha knows, and Kira, that there is a sense of self within each individual that a collective can never reach and never control. The University and the Party can try to bring Sasha down and cast him out, but they can't stop him from thinking and living as an individual.*

Kira then asks Sasha, *"Aren't you playing a very dangerous game? The people has claimed too many victims already – of your kind."* Sasha replies, *"Russia has a long revolutionary history. They know it. They're even teaching it in their schools."* Reflecting on 2020 America, **The Padre** adds,

*In the time of COVID, state instrument teachers' unions are refusing to teach. Parents, who relied on the union teachers to babysit their kids are now contemplating alternatives. They're an escape from the propaganda mill. Perhaps Sasha was right – there is hope.*

It seems Sasha's naivete is similar to what Kira's was at the beginning of the novel. He thinks the revolutionary history of Russia will be the downfall of the Soviet insurgents when he asks, "*Do you think the Russian worker is a beast that licks its yoke while his mind is begin battered out of him?*"

Which brings us to the opening sequence of Part II, and Ayn Rand's artistic description of St. Petersburg – a manifestation of the human mind, body and spirit in material form, that is being abused in the ensuing chapters.

*Peoples know nothing of the spirit of man, for peoples are only nature, and man is a word that has no plural. Petrograd is not of the people. It is a stranger, aloof, incomprehensible, forbidding. Petrograd does not need a soul; it has a mind.*

To comprehend the power of Ms. Rand's depiction of St. Petersburg that "*is the work of man that knows what he wants,*" Clementine helps the study group by adding,

*St. Petersburg did not start with a cathedral to honor God. I remember a TV miniseries about Peter the Great. Asked if he's naming the city after himself, "No, for the Saint, of course." Then he gives such a wicked grin that I remember laughing, "yeah, right."*

The criminal gang of Soviets imposed a new religion on Russia's people, enslaved their bodies, and tried in vain to deface the city that does not need a soul – because it has a mind, as Ayn Rand illustrates in ***We the Living***,

*A poster hung high on a wall. On the poster, a huge worker swung a hammer toward the sky, and the shadow of the hammer fell like a huge black cross over the little buildings of the city under its boots.*

What today's race theory criminal gang didn't learn is that independent minds can not be subjugated by the complex methods of bozos.



# PROTECTION RACKETS

Dateline September 28, 2020

Part II of Ayn Rand's epic 1936 novel *We the Living* began with an abstract about the history and consciousness of St. Petersburg, Russia. In our Facebook study group, *Clementine* introduced us to the 1986 TV miniseries, *Peter the Great*. In an early scene of the movie, Czar Peter asks the assistant priest to the head of the Russian Orthodox church,

*Our Lord told the Jews that the world must come to an end, and man come to judgement before the death of his last disciple. Correct? Correct, sire. Yet the last disciple has been dead for 17 centuries. Why hasn't the world ended? Hmm, God, like a Czar, might change his mind. Very good, Father. Very resourceful!*

From God to the Czar to the Party, and inevitably the individual, Chapters 4 – 6 illustrate the death spiral of socialism's vortex. It begins with Kira coming to face to face with the 'speculator' she first met at the train station in Part I, Chapter 12, the one who had caused her subconscious mind to experience terror.

Now, this speculator was in her apartment with Leo, and recruiting Leo to front a private food store in Petrograd. It would be supplied with contraband from Soviet insider Pavel Syerov. Much like President Obama's 2012 hot mike moment with Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, "after my election, I have more flexibility," a principled Kira fired back,

*A lamp stood on a table; in its glow, she could see Morozov's face leaning toward Leo's, his slow words muffled to a sly, guilty whisper. "What are you talking about?" Kira threw at Morozov with the violence of a slap in the face. "A little business deal, Kira Alexandrovna."*

After Morozov left, Kira asks Leo, "This isn't a joke you're playing on me, is it? Or have you lost your mind entirely?" Leo replies, "I'm glad to find some use for it." This neutering of the mind continues at Pavel Syerov's house party, the one celebrating Morozov's deal with Leo that will make them wealthy,

*Pavel Syerov can afford anything now. Anything on this God-damn earth! He can buy you all, guts and souls! I'm going to be a very great man! No one appreciates me, I'll show 'em who's got the whip! I've got a secret, a great secret! But I can't tell you.*

Protecting us poor dumb slobs, 2020 Democratic Presidential nominee Joe Biden can tell us: *“I’m the guy, said we follow bin Laden to the gates of hell. I’m the guy who helped bail out the automobile industry. I’m the guy that ran the Recovery Act. I’m the guy that set up drug courts. I’m the guy that helped put together the Iran deal. I’m the guy that got the Brady Bill passed. I’m the guy that asked the CDC to keep detailed reports.”* And the guy who invented water?

What he can’t tell you, as reported last week, is that Hunter Biden got wealthy exploiting his power of political pull with Russia and China. *“C’mon, man?!”* The keeping of secrets becomes the essence of daily life when avoiding reality dominates everyone’s mind. Chapter 5 begins with Kira leaving a meeting of her excursion guides and telling a colleague,

*“Yes, a splendid speech. Of course, our cultural duty to the proletariat is our primary goal.” It was easy to say. It was easy after she looked straight at Leo and laughed: “Leo, why those foolish questions? Don’t you trust me?”*

In 2020 America, the sadistic treatment and ensuing death of George Floyd by Minneapolis police preceded a summer of riots, looting, Molotov cocktails, and murder. Yet Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison withheld video evidence of Floyd’s arrest. Why? Ellison is a trained Communist who will instinctively lie to protect the Party.

Conversely, Kira was forced to lie to protect herself and Leo from the Party. At her cousin Victor’s wedding party in Chapter 5, his new father-in-law, Ilyitch Lavrov, explained this and exposed the effects of Pavel’s and Victor’s great secret,

*I still see the people starved and ragged and crushed under a boot. Only the boot is red. I didn’t go to Siberia to fight for a crazed, power-drunk, bloodthirsty gang that strangles the people as they’ve never been strangled, that knows less of freedom than any Czar.*

In the wake of the ensuing commotion, Victor’s father Vasili approached Lavrov, *“Let us drink to our children’s happiness.”*

Yet last week’s death of Supreme Court Justice Ginsburg, and the ensuing threats of “blowing up the system” if President Trump nominated a replacement, was reminiscent of the paranoia that opens Chapter 6,

*Comrades! The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is surrounded by a hostile ring who watch and plot for its downfall. But no external enemy, no heinous plot of world imperialists is as dangerous to us than the internal enemy of dissension within our own ranks!*

Of course, shipping Party loyalists to Siberian, or Minnesotan gulags doesn't help much until **af-ter** the Party holds absolute power. In that spirit, 2020 Presidential candidate Michael Bloomberg is swelling the Party ranks. His offer to pay the outstanding fines of 32,000 Florida felons, and regain their voting privileges, is designed to help secure that state's large electoral college. The elegant duplicity of the Communist loyalty and purgatory package-deal was explained at a Soviet Party meeting,

*We must follow, with absolute discipline, the program dictated by our Party . . . We don't need the obstinate, unbending Communist of iron . . . Idealism, comrades, is a good thing in its proper amount.*

Faith and loyalty to scripture and doctrine is demanded, for now, maybe, at least until God, Czar, or Party changes its mind. Exiled Democratic Minnesota Senator Al Franken knows how this works, and so does the exiled Baltfleet naval officer, Stepan Timoshenko (the one who had arrested Leo and Kira in Part I, Chapter 10 while they were escaping to Germany).

Drunk, Timoshenko tells his last Soviet friend Andrei, "I've never felt better in my life. Free and finished. No worries of any kind any more. How many years you got left at the Institute? Think you'll need it? The learning?" Timoshenko, mind finally severed from future, asks Andrei,

*Have you ever seen a woman falling on the street, vomiting blood on the cobblestones, dying of hunger? I have. Did you see the limousines speeding at night. Did you see who's in them?*

Pavel Syerov and Stepan Timoshenko were drunk and boasting over the same great secret – the Party was nothing but a protection racket promising "freedom to all suffering humanity!"

*"Did ever occur to you, Comrade Taganov, what a peculiar thing it is so many of our Party comrades are dying of overwork? Suicides. Only the papers will never say it."*

# PRAGMATISM

**Dateline October 5, 2020**

In week one of our We the Living Study Group, we were introduced to year five of the Soviet Revolution: *“the State’s New Economic Policy (NEP) had allowed a temporary compromise.”* It is 1922, and in Part 1, Chapter 2 we were also introduced to Kira’s Gen Z cousin, Irina,

*A door crashed open and something came flying into the anteroom; something tall, tense, with a storm of hair and eyes like automobile headlights; and Galina recognized Irina, her niece, a young girl of eighteen with the eyes of twenty-eight and the laughter of eight.*

Representing Soviet temporary compromises was Irina’s brother Victor, who tells his family, The days of confiscations are past. The Soviet government has a most progressive policy outlined. The most promising career for a woman is offered by employment in a Soviet office. One has to be practical nowadays – as you ought to know.

Here, Ayn Rand has used an economy of words to illustrate the implied threat in every sentence: there will be future confiscations, ambiguous centralized economic power is progress, and female careers outside a Soviet office are not promising. Practicality means pragmatism, rational principles be damned.

Irina’s principles were still being developed, yet she knew she wanted to live. More precisely, to learn what it was like to be really alive. Upon seeing her cousin Kira for the first time in four years, she excitedly asks, *“Did you eat fresh fruit in the Crimea? I’ve been dreaming, yearning and dying for grapes. Don’t you like grapes? Victor, they’re wearing the funniest things in the south. Did you notice Kira’s wooden sandals?”*

While Kira’s dream was to build, and work with steel because it doesn’t tell lies, Irina’s was paint and illustration because great art reflects her highest values. Victor’s highest aspiration was to conform; to do anything necessary under the fog of Soviet dictates. He would volunteer for the dirty work needed to enforce the equality of their social justice.

To attain power, the Soviets preached ‘equality,’ for the ‘goodness of humanity.’ It was a world-wide Proletariat Lives Matter movement after all. In Chapter 2, Kira asks Victor what his *“stupendous whole”* called society really means,

*I don't understand it. To whom is it that I owe a duty? To your neighbor next door? Or to the militia-man on the corner? Or to the clerk in the cooperative? Or to the man I saw in line, third from the door, with the old basket and the woman's hat?*

Yet, mindless duty is nearly universally accepted in 2020 America. In Chapter 1 of Part II, Ayn Rand explains that “the peoples” does not have a mind. In 1776, Adam Smith explained further in his classic treatise on economics, ***An Inquiry in to the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations***,

*It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their own self-interest. We address ourselves not to their humanity but to their self-love, and never talk of our own necessities, but of their advantages.*

However, in order to rationalize government power, the 1920's Soviets and 2020 American Democrats chose the 19th century economics and philosophy of Karl Marx,

*The less you eat, drink and read books; the less you go to the theatre, the dance hall, the public house; the less you think, love, theorize, sing, paint, the more you save-the greater becomes your treasure. The less you are, the more you have.*

This quote from Marx was intended to demonize capital, and capitalists, yet it became the ideal behind Soviet control of every day life in 1920s Russia. In this case, “treasure” belongs to Communist Party insiders and Washington political elites. With the removal of Revolutionary leader Leon Trotsky in 1925, pragmatic five-year New Economic Plans (NEP) became the norm.

Likewise, in Part II, Chapter 8 of *We the Living*, Victor Dunaev betrays everything he had ever claimed about self-sacrifice being a virtue and self-interest being a vice. He paid his dues by informing the Soviet secret police about his sister Irina's ‘counter-revolutionary’ behavior. In order to get ahead in Party politics, Victor snitched that Irina was hiding her boyfriend Sasha in their apartment.

Victor's father-in-law knew betrayal, and the Soviet ‘big secret’ very well. During the wedding party in the previous chapter, Kira had heard Lavrov's wife grunting about Leo Kovalensky's new-found display of wealth, “*And they say private traders don't make no money . . . Dictatorship of the Proletariat*,” Lavrov growled, and spat loudly.”

Irina, still desperate to learn what it was like to be really alive, was arrested, taken to prison, and sentenced to ten years in a Siberian gulag. Upon being hauled away, she faced Victor,

*Her eyes stopped him. They were looking at him fixedly; they looked suddenly like the eyes of Maria Petrovna in the old portrait. She turned and followed the soldiers. Without a word. She went first.*

Her life now ended before it had really begun, Irina's eyes had acquired the consciousness of the living dead, something Ayn Rand had described when Kira noticed a Soviet guard at the Petrograd train station, "*His eyes were austere and forbidding like caverns where a single flame burned under cold, gray vaults. The soldier looked at her coldly, indifferently, astonished.*"

The soldier's vision was closed to a future for himself, and he was surprised to see it in another human being. Irina's father Vasili was finally broken too; not by Maria's kind of submission to God or Victor's to Society, but by the 18th century moral philosophy of Immanuel Kant that combined both and dominated Soviet culture,

*Many years ago, I felt sure of what I thought. I knew when I was right and I knew when to condemn. I can't do it now. I don't know that I can condemn anyone for anything. You're my son Victor. I love you. I can't help it, as you can't help being what you are.*

Vasili has submitted to the idea that we can not know what is objectively true, so principles are subjective. We do not possess free will, so good intentions are all that matter. Here, *We the Living* becomes the ultimate mystery novel. While visiting Irina in prison, before her transport to Siberia, Irina asks Kira,

*There's your life. You begin it, feeling that its something so precious and rare, so beautiful that its like a sacred treasure. Now its over, and it doesn't make any difference to anyone. But there's something that should be understood by all of us. Only what is it, Kira? What?*

**What?**

# POLITICS OF PULL

Dateline: October 12, 2020

Chapter eight of Ayn Rand's novel *We the Living*, Part II ends with Gen Z Irina's dreams crushed in a Siberian gulag, and Chapter nine begins with her millennial brother Victor's Communist Party promotion. The two are related, he engineered his sister's devastation despite insisting "*I want you to realize that my party membership is a sacred trust not to be utilized for purposes of personal advantage.*"

On her way to prison for the crime of being good, Irina asks Kira a question she might have asked her pragmatic brother, "There's something that should be understood by all of us. Only what is it, Kira? What?" In our *We the Living* online forum, **Clementine** contributes part of a conversation with her teenage daughters,

*My younger daughter was analyzing the question of what is happiness, and realizing the contradictions in altruism. What's the point of living? Why are we alive? Who do we live for?*

Victor's reward is little different than Joe Biden being awarded the Democratic presidential nomination for ravaging the reputations of Judge Robert Bork in 1987 and Justice Clarence Thomas in 1991. After all, as Victor tells his new bride Marisha, "*My dear, we must never forget, our social duties come first, above all personal considerations.*" For contrast, later in chapter nine, Kira tells her boyfriend, "*Leo, I can't reproach you. I can't blame you. I know what you're doing. I know why you're doing it. But listen: its not too late.*"

Leo had given up on his future; living for the present was his only option. Refusing to submit, Kira can't reproach him because of Andrei, to whom she says, "*You were the best your Party had to offer the world.*" Andrei replied, "*Say I'm a traitor. Maybe I am. And maybe I've just stopped being one. You see, I feel certain of nothing in that involved mess they call existence, of nothing but you.*" He was going in the opposite direction of Leo, but for similar reasons.

Leo gave in to the mystics of muscle whose duty is to Society; Andrei to the mystics of the mind whose duty is to God. To them, existence was no longer real, they had become selfless. To Kira, existence was primary and human ideals follow. Her virtue was selfishness, Leo was the higher value, and her life and happiness an end in itself.



Conversely, 2020 America's Democratic party is dominated by the Bernie Sanders & Sandy Cortez coalition of baby boomers and millennials (Motto: *Go Pound Sand!*) who share a perverted sense of romance about the Soviet ideal of self-sacrifice.

In Chapter 10 of this 1936 novel, former Soviet naval officer Stepan Timoshenko prophesizes them by telling us how this works, *"You know more about it than I do, more than millions of young fools do, that watch us from all over the world with worshiping eyes. We had fools who thought in their doomed hearts that we made it for all those downtrodden ones who suffer on this earth. But you and me, Comrade Morozov, we have a secret."* In this wonderfully crafted scene by Ayn Rand, Timoshenko brings the reader in on their two big secrets,

*With a smile that frightened Morozov more than the laughter: Don't look so scared, you don't have to be afraid of me. I'm nothing but a wretch, beaten by you, Comrade Morozov.*

The terror Morozov felt is the same terror Kira had felt in the Petrograd train station when she witnessed Morozov condemning a desperate old woman to Soviet police. Except there's one big difference: Kira was selfish – she wanted to live as people were meant to live. Instead of pounding sand in a society of zeroes, Kira wanted to turn it into cement and glass, or maybe silicon wafers some day. Morozov's looting evades reality because it produces nothing. No self-esteem is selflessness.

Evading reality was his death sentence in the court of moral justice, and Timoshenko was the officer of the court delivering the verdict. Last week, officers of the court Joe Biden and Kamala Harris gave clear indications of their intention to pervert America's justice system – pack the US Supreme Court into a super-legislative political instrument for Soviet-style class warfare. A *"bonehead idea"* according to Biden in 1983, and that's saying something.

In Chapter 11, Andrei tells Kira about his plan to report Syerov's black market operations with Leo and Morozov to his chief, *"I'm expecting the highest integrity from the men I am going to face. Don't make me face them with less than that on my part."*

Andrei didn't want to know what Kira might have known about Leo's business, and Chapter 12 reveals the integrity charade. While being arrested by Andrei and his goons, Leo questions their pretense, *"I realize that one should know how to respect the grandeur of authority under all circumstance. No matter how trying to the self-respect of those in power."* Leo and Andrei both understood the Soviet scam rooted in fear.

Equally absurd, last week, Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi announced an inane 25th Amendment commission for removing President Trump. As only he can, Trump exposes this, “*Crazy Nancy is the one who should be under observation. They don’t call her Crazy for nothing! She’s gone crazy, she’s a nutjob. I think they put it in so they can put Kamala in, replacing Biden.*”

In a similar vein, Andrei’s plan was to get the Soviets to expose their own looting, and him regain his self-respect. He explained to his chief, “*It will also be important to explain how a penniless aristocrat laid his hands on the very heart of our economic life.*”

The economic life of 2020 Democrats is their Green New Deal – a cabal of crony corporatists, environmental lobbies, socialist foundations, progressive think tanks, and government agencies looting human productivity under the guise of saving the planet. Biden, Sanders, Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton come to mind as famous examples among many thousands of politicians who became wealthy from “public service” careers that produced nothing. Because of this, the productive virtues of the individual mind are the greatest threat to Party ideology, except the selfless kind.

Accordingly, President Trump is reviled by political elites and their loyal voters whose minds were stunted by ***The Comprachicos*** of progressive government education. Fortunately, our Facebook study group proves the remedy exists, and its rooted in the volition of human consciousness, as Clementine explains,

*Gen Z is searching for answers in the collectivist “serving something greater than yourself,” and sensing that has no real purpose. My daughter was working her way to that conclusion as she started reflecting on the character of Howard Roark in *The Fountainhead*.*

# EXISTENCE

Dateline: October 19, 2020

The eleventh week of our We the Living Study Group on Facebook ended with Part II – Chapter 15, and with Gen Z's Kira asking herself about Andrei's suicide. While attending his state sponsored celebration of the ultimate self-sacrifice, *"Kira Argounova stood without moving and listened attentively. Her eyes held a question she hoped the world could answer. She wondered whether she had killed him, or the revolution had, or both."* Yet, among the crowd there was widespread ambivalence,

*The Field of Victims of the Revolution was in the heart of the city, on the shore of the Neva, a vast, white desert stretching a half mile. A bald spot on the scalp of Petrograd. A woman hissed, "What do they have to commit suicide about? Who the hell was he, anyway?"*

Andrei Taganov was someone who had not yet failed the Krylenko test. Nikolai Krylenko was president of the supreme tribunal for prosecuting military trials in 1920's Soviet Russia. As the leading enforcer of "socialist legality," his courts determined a person's continued existence on political whim.

Today we call it social justice, and its most prolific apologist is Edward R. Murrow award winner Keith Olbermann. One week after leaving Disney owned ESPN, this perfect storm of anger, ignorance, and arrogance declared on October 8th,

*The task is twofold, the terrorist Trump must be destroyed, and he and his collaborators – the Williams Barr's, the Kyle Rittenhouse's, and the Amy Coney Barrett's must be prosecuted, convicted, and removed from our society while we try to rebuild it!*

For contrast, on October 15th, Dr. Leonard Peikoff, giant of philosophy and intellectual heir to Ayn Rand, was celebrated on the occasion of his 87th birthday as the perfect storm of reason, humor, and generosity. In a small aside during his first-ever zoom conference, he inserted independently, "I am voting for Trump, thank you."

Yet last week, the Democratic members of the Senate Judiciary committee proceeded to give Judge Barrett the Krylenko treatment, implicitly demanding she toe their Party line for approval to the US Supreme Court.

Hoping to crack her independent virtues, Judge Barrett was steel, and steel doesn't lie. The moral corruption and hubris of these Senators was best described by Kira's cousin Victor at Andrei's memorial. A Soviet sellout himself,

*Our only aim is the honest toil which profits no one, but all. The lesson we are to learn here today is a Party that rules by sacrificing itself to those it rules.*

Today we call it servant leadership, “for a more just and caring world,” by golly. As its progenitor Robert Greenleaf explained, “*The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant-first to make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served.*” Of course, “other people” is ambiguous, and one's highest priorities are their own, if they so choose.

Servant leadership implies we are poor, dumb slobs in the chaos of existence; desperate for benevolent dictators in a malevolent universe, or as Kira protested to Andrei in Chapter 13, “*you've tried to tell us what we should want.*” No matter, the important thing is for the independent virtues of the leader to be sacrificed for the “goodness of humanity.”

In contrast, when Kira first met Leo early in Part I, her subconscious mind immediately recognized his independence,

*Kira leaned against a lamp post, looking straight at his face, and smiled. She did not think; she smiled, stunned, without realizing she was hoping he would know her as she knew him.*

When Kira subsequently met Andrei, she subconsciously also recognized his independence,

*She stared up into two gray eyes that looked like the eyes of a tamed tiger. For one short second, they looked at each other, silent, hostile, startled by each other's eyes.*

However, Kira did not smile at Andrei. Instead, during their second encounter, she asked, “*Don't you know that we live only for ourselves, the best of us do, those who are worthy of it? Comrade Taganov, how much you have to learn!*” After Leo's arrest by Andrei's goons in Part II – Chapter 13, she tells him,

*No, you didn't know. But it was simple. Go where men live in your Red cities and see how many cases like this you can find. (Leo) wanted to live. You think everything that breathes can live? You've learned differently, I know.*

For Kira, her life, and Leo's, were primary standards of value. The alternative was to cease to exist. They were exceptional because they took ownership of their futures. *"Now look at me! I was born and I knew I was alive, and I knew what I wanted. Something that knows how to want, isn't that life itself?"* Regarding the State as the highest standard, she asks Andrei, *"Do we want the crippled, creepy, crawling, broken monstrosities that we're producing? Are we not castrating life in order to perpetuate it?"*

In the Red cities of 2020 Democratic party teachers' unions, their creepy monstrosities march, chant, loot, burn, and kill. These selfless "peaceful protestors" are the State heroes for Victor Dunaev's *"honest toil which profits no one."* No kidding. Yet, Kira demands Andrei recognize the ones who may be fighting for their own independence,

*Aren't those who know how to live, aren't they too precious to be sacrificed in the name of any cause? What cause is greater than those who fight for it? And aren't those who know how to fight, aren't they the cause and not the means?*

This amazing chain of events, masterfully crafted by Ayn Rand, begins in Chapter 10. There, Timoshenko delivers Poetic Justice to Morozov's face when he learns that he's the ultimate victim. In Chapter 11, Andrei exposes Pavel's corruption to his Soviet chief, and in Chapter 12, Leo challenges Andrei's veneer of integrity. Yet it is in Chapter 13 when Kira blows up their entire house of cards. She tells Andrei how and why she had to use him to save Leo,

*There was a big commissar, and I went to see him. He told me, why couldn't one aristocrat die in the face of the USSR? I'm grateful to that commissar. He gave me permission to do what I've done. I don't hate him. You should hate him. What I'm doing to you – he did it first!*

Now Kira wondered if the revolution had ended Andrei's existence, or had she? Neither, Andrei had chosen reverence for the other-worldly ideals of "others" that necessarily suffocate the human spirit.

# UNDEFEATED

**Dateline: October 26, 2020**

Chapter 17, Part II is the chilling story of Kira's escape to Latvia in Ayn Rand's 1936 epic novel, *We the Living*. In a principled life of motion and purpose, she chose an arduous journey from the mental and physical torture of the east, and toward the modern, classical liberalism of the west.

After what seemed like endless days and nights on a desolate train ride, Kira's journey necessitated a brief rest stop to change clothes and eat. Ahead of her lay the night-long, final trek across a barren, winter frontier. It compelled only the essentials, so Kira gambled on a safehouse,

*She knocked at a door. A man opened it. She slipped a bill into his hand and tried to explain. She did not have to explain much. Those in the house knew and understood.*

In the previous chapter, and in a chance meeting on her way to the train station, Gen Z's Kira ran into her beloved Uncle Vasili on the streets of Petrograd, now Leningrad. While he desperately clung to hope that Europe will somehow rescue Russians from Soviet slavery, Kira told him,

*Uncle Vasili . . . over there . . . where I'm going . . . I'll tell them about everything . . . It's like an SOS . . . And maybe . . . someone . . . somewhere . . . will understand . . . .*

Prior to that, Andrei had surrendered his body to Soviet totalitarianism in Chapter 15, and Leo was surrendering his mind. After learning of her relationship with Andrei and being released from jail, Leo explains, "*Because, you see, that sets me free.*" Kira then asks, "*Free . . . from what Leo?*" He answers, "*From a little fool who was my last hold on self-esteem.*" Millennial Leo had been defeated by overwhelming, government-enforced selflessness.

Conversely, it seems hatred of President Trump is rooted in his refusal to be defeated over his love for America. His resilience and perseverance in the face of desperate and virulent opposition is not unlike Kira's, and his arrogantly confident egoism befits Leo. As a result, Trump represents a grave threat to 2020 America's war and welfare statist. Taking his turn, former Clinton Administration Labor Secretary Robert Reich threatened on October 18th,

*When this nightmare is over, we need a Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It would erase Trump's lies and name every official, politician, executive, and media mogul whose greed and cowardice enabled this catastrophe.*

Despite greed and cowardice being the hallmarks of ‘Democratic’ Socialism’s exponents, Joe Biden being the exemplar, as reported by the New York Post on October 14th, Leo finally asked Kira, “*Have you nothing to say?*” She turned and looked at him calmly, and answered, “*Only this, Leo: it was I against 150 million people. I lost.*” Men against man.

Yet, Kira had not lost her fitness for living or right to moral justice. Because self-esteem is a matter of life and death, pride defends the meaning of Kira’s life, her most precious ideal,

*She had to walk west. That was the only problem, that was the total of all problems. She did not have to think. She had to get out.*

Here, Ayn Rand has identified Kira’s singular goal and its essential action. To live demanded the reason of Western civilization because the mysticism of the east meant death by altruism or force. For Kira, her devotion to logic led to one thing – the energy of her mind and body coordinated in pursuit of her ultimate goal, and it was time to act.

While all other options had been exhausted, Kira had been here before. At the end of Part I, chasing every possibility offered by the Soviet socialist criminal gang, she got Leo to a sanitorium in Crimea to save his life. Now, it was Kira’s turn, and this is the extraordinary and beautiful message of *We the Living*. Your life and happiness are your highest value; not Society, not God, not others, and not retribution.

This is the essence of the Preamble to America’s Declaration of Independence, and also the advice received from Leonard Peikoff (author of ***Objectivism: The Philosophy of Ayn Rand***) by teaching impresario Lisa VanDamme, and posted online on October 16th,

*A few years in, I considered getting out of education. I sought guidance from people I respected. The worst advice: Figure out where you want to make an impact; to change the world. From Leonard: Reflect on your week. What made you the most happy? Extract principles about what activities bring you satisfaction. Pursue a career that features those.*

However, for most 2020 Americans, Kira’s message from Uncle Vasili and millions of Russians is not getting through. Public education is grounded in public service, social justice, non-profit, and giving back. All based on the false premise that there is “something greater than yourself.”



While Robert Reich may be an irrelevant turd from the 1990's, the depravity of "Truth and Reconciliation Commissions" have been popular among government elites in over 40 countries and three decades. Perhaps the most egregious example is the aftermath of terrorist Nelson Mandela's "Democratic Socialism" disaster. As Martin van Staden, Head of Legal Policy at the Free Market Foundation of South Africa wrote in 2017,

*We were supposed to move away from the Apartheid mentality. Instead, we have doubled down. The so-called Prevention of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill of 2016 is perhaps the gravest threat to freedom of expression which South Africans have ever faced.*

Kira Argounova's attitude and behavior offer the glorious alternative to fighting for reparations or revelation – pride. When Leo asked her, "What is there to bind me?" She looked straight at him, and only her lips moved as she answered with the greatest calm of her life: "Nothing Leo." Chapter 16 ended, "Well good-bye, Uncle Vasili" . . . "Good-bye, Kira." She walked away without looking back.

Never letting setbacks get in the way of her aspirations, and with freedom on the horizon, in defense of man against men, Kira's mind, body, and spirit achieved its ultimate clarity,

*She smiled, as if she had lived it. She had known something which no human words could ever tell and she knew it now. Life had been, if only because she had known it could be. A moment or an eternity – did it matter? Life, undefeated, existed and could exist.*

# THE CAPTIVE MIND

**Dateline: January 31, 2020**

The popular notion of a having an open mind is considered a good thing, its owner having an unbiased approach to new ideas. Accordingly, a closed mind is considered a bad thing, it is unwilling to consider contravening facts and logic. However, both of these propositions are ambiguous. Does having a really open mind regard all ideas as moral equivalents? Yes, it holds no firm convictions, it is anti-conceptual. Do the owners of really closed minds question their assumptions or judge their propositions? No, that would threaten their emotions, and their self-worth.

An Objective approach is to think in terms of passive and active minds. Passive minds have never learned or have chosen not to think critically. Whether it's closed-minded stubbornness or open-minded egalitarianism, they disown responsibility for independent judgment, and lean heavily on the dogma of their religious, ethnic or political tribes.

In contrast, active minds confidently pursue lives of purpose rooted in logic, productiveness, and independence. From this analysis, it seems that passive minds are the fuel of totalitarian political machines, but what happens to the individuals who possess active minds; those whose intellectual lives and livelihoods are subjugated by these despots? This is what Poland's poet laureate, philosopher, and Poetic Justice Warrior Czeslaw Milosz answers for us in his 1953 book *The Captive Mind*.

## **Enslavement Through Consciousness**

It's also a popular notion that tyrannical oppression dashes critical thinking, but Milosz contends the opposite is what actually happens. In this collection of essays, he surveys the mental gymnastics employed by those who strive to preserve their personal dignity in the face of annihilation.

The book portrays the experiences of four intellectual contemporaries of Milosz. The ones who submitted to, and rationalized, their proselytizing for the New Faith of the Stalinists. Their mandate was to unify the public for submission to Soviet central authority, and their philosophical message was rooted in dialectical materialism – the idea that people will merely, and instinctively, respond to socioeconomic carrots and sticks.

Their tool was The Method, the creation of artistic propaganda in the style of Soviet Realism. *The Captive Mind* illustrates the Soviet strategy of winning over the passive minds of the mass public, and the tactics of the victims who adapt by activating their own minds.

***In a room where  
people unanimously maintain  
a conspiracy of silence,  
one word of truth  
sounds like a pistol shot.***

The conspiracy of silence is one concocted with oneself, or what Milosz discovered as Ketman in Islamic theology. Also known as taqiyya, it is the practice of concealment and deception in order to preserve one's faith. As the Prophet said, *"He who keeps secrets shall soon attain his objectives."*

For today's Islamic terrorists, it's a matter of life and death (yours). For the intellectuals and bourgeoisie in Milosz' Soviet occupied Poland after World War II, it was a matter of life and death (theirs). On the sanctity of human life, Milosz' poem *Encounter* reads –

***We were riding through frozen fields in a wagon at dawn. A red wing rose  
in the darkness.***

***And suddenly a hare ran across the road. One of us pointed to it with his hand.  
That was long ago. Today neither of them is alive. Not the hare, nor the man who  
made the gesture.***

***Oh my love, where are they, where are they going? The flash of a hand, streak of  
movement, rustle of pebble  
I ask not out of sorrow, but in wonder.***

The Communist iron curtain of hopelessness fell quickly in post war Poland, and Ketman became necessary. While persecution forced the Poles to conceal their antipathy for their Soviet masters, Milosz describes another soul-destroying effect. For the intellectuals participating in Soviet Realism's propagandist fraud, their conspiracy was no longer imposed from the outside, it was internalized.

Using the metaphor of actors, Milosz observes, *"After long acquaintance with his role, a man grows into it so closely that he can no longer differentiate his true self from the self he simulates."*

Cognitive dissonance is the tool of totalitarians. This works perfectly well for the Soviet masters of the artists who succumbed to pragmatism.

As Milosz tells us about both, *"Their defense against total degradation is to swindle the devil who thinks he is swindling them. But the devil knows what they think and is satisfied."*

The compromises become endless, active minds become passive and degraded, and lives of reason, purpose and pride become impossible.

## The New Faith

Born in Lithuania, Milosz grew up in part of Czarist Russia, and was living in Warsaw with his family when the German National Socialists (Nazis) invaded to start World War II. During the war, he worked in the underground Resistance, published several books under a pseudonym, and joined communist Poland's diplomatic corps after the war.

Disgusted with the reality the New Faith and refusing to embrace the big lie of Soviet Realism, Milosz defected to the West in 1951, and moved to California in 1960. According to New York Time book reviewer Leon Edel, “

*Underlying all his meditations, is his constant amazement that America should exist in this world, and his gratitude that it does exist.*

According to book reviewer Akshay Ahusa, “Another book that deserves to survive, and I fear will not, is Czeslaw Milosz's ***The Captive Mind***. The book is a study of the capitulation of artists to the demands of Communism, the fact that so many people are willing to accept what they must know are lies for the sake of their political affiliation.”

For the first 40 years of Milosz's life, the dominant political philosophy was the soul-numbing collectivism of monarchy, fascism, and communism. Personal liberty and economic freedom were the unknown ideals, yet the ethical underpinnings of Communism survived the war, and were growing in the American media and education establishments. In the chapter titled ***Looking to the West***, Milosz writes,

*“Are Americans really stupid?”* I was asked, in Warsaw. If only the people in the West really understood the mechanism of the *“great Stalinist epoch,”* and if only they would act accordingly! Everything would seem to indicate that they do not understand.

That mechanism was fragile, yet American education elites harbor no gratitude that America exists. They prefer the example of their Eastern counterparts and their allegiance to the New Faith, “to inoculate others with the basic principles of enthusiasm for a revision of Marx according to Russian patterns.”

Since the 1960s, the American revision is cultural Marxism. Compulsory education inoculates students from critical thinking skills, the heights of human potential, and the depths of depravity. There are no heroes to emulate outside politics and entertainment, the Soviet Great Terror is ignored, and history is being erased.

Instead of Soviet Realism propaganda, we have modern art and CNN for avoiding reality. The academic enthusiasm for anti-concepts like multiculturalism, subjective rights, inequality, climate change, diversity, and speech codes round out the cultivation of passive minds.

As poetic justice would have it, Poetic Justice Warrior Czeslaw Milosz was able to spend the last half of his life in pursuit of happiness while teaching at university in America,

*Above all in the United States, something has occurred that is without analogy in the preceding centuries. A new civilization has arisen which assures its masses a share in the output of its machine production.*



## MARK T. SHUPE

Mark Shupe retired on October 1, 2018 from a 30 year career as an investment advisor. He consulted with individual clients on the fiduciary side as a trust advisor, and also with a major Wall Street retail firm, including branch manager and training manager.

On November 1, 2018, Mark created the Poetic Justice Warrior blogpost series at the Center for Individualism. Its purpose is to highlight the heroes of Western civilization, their achievements we typically take for granted, and expose the inhumanity of 'social justice.'

While growing up in the 1960s, Mark spent a lot of time with his grandfather, Ralph Shupe. Professionally, he was the owner/operator of the family dry cleaning business. Intellectually, he had an active mind and taught Mark a little about conceptual thinking. One afternoon while Ralph was quoting Kahil Gibran, Mark noticed *Atlas Shrugged* and *The Fountainhead* on the bookshelf.

Mark began reading Ayn Rand's fiction in the late 1990s, starting with *The Fountainhead*. The logic and the morality of Rand's characters, and the novel's fundamental principles were so compelling he hasn't stopped. *We the Living* was one of those stories, and it is as important today as it was when Communism was widely accepted in American academia and media a century ago.

Today, he is the creator, curator, and capitalist at Poetic Justice Capital Management, a consulting firm for financial advisors.