

The Secret History of the Feminist Movement

by Peter Shaw



The feminist movement, it has just been learned, was actually concocted by men. Specifically, a small group of planners meeting in 1962 set in motion the developments of the next 30 years concerning men and women. These men acted in a selfish spirit of personal aggrandizement. The heretofore secret minutes of their planning group are in the possession of a former Securitate (Romanian Secret Service) agent, code named Preposteroff, who penetrated the group at the behest of the KGB. Preposteroff would not permit us to examine the minutes, but we are assured that they are authentic. Accordingly, we have paid over to the said Preposteroff a fabulous sum of money in small bills. In exchange, he has supplied the following account which, he assures us, is scrupulously based on the documents.

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How those arrogant Yankee conspirators would have been astonished had they known that their little plot was both encouraged and kept track of by me—an apparent confederate of theirs who was actually a Major General in the Securitate! At each meeting of the planning group, I read aloud and then theatrically burned before their eyes the minutes of the previous meeting, which I had taken care to photograph (and later on to Xerox). But to proceed to my *histoire*.

The words I am about to set down will answer one of the great mysteries of the feminist movement: How can it be that after nearly 30 years of triumphs by feminism, the condition of women is unmistakably worse than it was before all the agitation commenced? BFM (Before the Feminist Movement), women were secure in their persons and treated with deference and delicacy; SFM (Since the Feminist Movement), they walk the streets and shopping centers of the nation in fear of being accosted or raped. BFM, sex led toward marriage; SFM, sex leads to venereal disease and even AIDS. BFM, women looked over suitors and chose the one they preferred; SFM, women agree that there is a shortage of suitable mates. BFM, most women lived in one or another degree of comfort provided by the wages of a man; SFM, a significant number of women live in or near poverty as single parents. Tobacco and alcohol usage

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has risen among women, and the diseases brought about by such substances have become more prevalent.

None of these outcomes can be explained without access to the minutes of the secret men's group that brought them about. Yet it has to be understood at the outset that the men involved did not mean women harm, even though they certainly did not wish them well and frankly planned to exploit them. These men were dissatisfied with the situation of men in 1960. Some of their complaints were age-old, some of recent vintage.

Men's lot had not always been to work: this condition was but a few thousand years old. In primitive societies, in addition to performing the domestic chores, women did all the planting, tilling, harvesting, and distributing of produce. Men hunted, fornicated, and went to war. In the course of the 1950's, men of the planning group's nominally privileged class had been obliged to add long commutes to their workdays. Forced to spend an increasing amount of time outside the household, they suffered a weakening of their domestic authority. At home each night, they were treated to an evening of entertainment via the new medium of television, where they were often mocked and humiliated in situation comedies.

The cultural analysis of the day said that women lorded it over men as wives and moms. A favorite metaphor described women in terms of the Black Widow spider, whose female snapped off and ingested the head of its partner following copulation. Women were sitting pretty. Men were being reduced to automata: creatures in gray flannel suits, denatured corporation men, organization men. Women, freed by modern appliances, supermarkets, and birth control, lived leisured existences of beauty parlors, theater matinees, book clubs, lunch in town, and shopping. What it came down to was that men worked all day while women were on vacation. The men paid off their mortgages and kept up their life insurance, then died of heart attacks, leaving everything to still youthful wives.

It was I, acting on standing KGB instructions to undermine the social and cultural bases of capitalist society, who outlined the plan adopted at the first meeting. Initially it was necessary to entertain superficially attractive proposals such as setting up weekday, in-city dormitories stocked with Asian prostitutes to

spare the men their commute and the evening frustrations of a household with children. If practicable, this would be fine, I remarked. "But since it is not," I went on, "let us begin by clarifying our problem in the starkest possible terms: it comes down to not getting enough sex and having to do too much of the work." At these electrifying words, many hands shot up. Yes, these were the problems, all agreed, and the solution lay in reasserting male dominance.

Patiently, I pointed out that in the modern world it was not possible to coerce women. They were naturally controlling, difficult to argue with. Nor was it practicable to appeal to their generosity or better nature. They knew a good thing when they saw one and were not about to surrender their current advantages. They would not so much as admit how well they were doing: if challenged they would represent themselves as long-suffering mothers, guardians of home and family values, and steadying influences on the naturally wayward male.

But here, it slowly emerged, was the very key we were looking for. We could turn women's stance of aggrieved self-righteousness to our purposes. Women complained that husbands were dull and otherwise inadequate; that they came home after work in a surly state; that they were unappreciative of their wives' accomplishments of the day, indifferent to new slipcovers, unaware of a new hairdo or a new dress. Very well, we concluded, our task is to employ the fulcrum of women's insistence that theirs is an unsatisfactory lot in such a way as to make *them* bring about the changes we desired.

This much agreed upon, the secret group adjourned. It met again the following year, 1963, on the spur of two new social developments both highly favorable to its agenda: the abortion pill and the civil rights movement. Taken together, these developments pointed to a master solution for *both* of the group's agenda items of sex and work.

The pill, more than previous forms of contraception, had the potential to set women free from sexual responsibility or even sexual restraint. The civil rights movement had been especially popular with upper-middle-class progressive women since the Supreme Court school desegregation decision of 1954. The same women just might be susceptible to the appeal of a liberation movement employing similar rhetoric in their own behalf. The trick would be to make it appear that the new movement was motivated not by self-interest but by concern for other women—women of lesser status trapped in lives of sexual unfulfillment. Never mind that lower-class women had higher promiscuity rates than the women who would speak on their behalf. Properly phrased, the new movement's demands could appear as efforts to liberate the less fortunate, while actually yielding a bounty of personal titillation and sexual adventure for women of privilege. Stage one of the plan—sexual "liberation"—was to be put into execution immediately.

Our success was stunning. A revolution of sexual liberation was launched, precisely in the terms anticipated. As was indicated by the revolution's popular book titles—*Sex and the Single Girl*, *The Sensuous Woman*—this was apparently a movement of, by, and for women. No suspicion of the role of the secret committee ever crossed anyone's mind. The result of the sexual revolution was to bring promiscuity into vogue among the previously hard-to-obtain women of the secret group's own class. Now one could go from one to another of them virtually at will, and be entertained like a Pasha by hours—and hours who had made themselves adept at physi-

cal contortions or at such sexual subtleties as the external use of Ready Whip (ironically enough, one of the very same prepared foods that in recent years had helped bring about an actual liberation for women from the time-consuming dreariness of cooking). Decidedly, the sexual revolution was a success—for men.

The third meeting of the secret group took place in 1967: it was time for the second stage of the master plan. The sex kittens were now to be redirected to relieving men of their burden of work. The plan once again called for women to take the lead—something that would be accomplished by elevating the idea of "career." All that this term had ever signified up to now was that men who worked in larger organizations could count on seniority raises as they went along. Professional men were sometimes said to have *distinguished careers*, but for the most part they had professional "practices," a word destined to disappear from the language thanks to the revolution the secret group now launched.

It was gradually insinuated into the minds of women that men did not drag themselves to work each day simply in order to pay the mortgage and put food on the table, but rather experienced the adventure of *career*. Onward and upward they moved through the progressive rewards and satisfactions of career. Women had been excluded from the professional world because men did not want to let them in on the adventure. Women would now demand the right to work—ignoring the obvious circumstance that most of their sisters would find themselves not on the executive ladder but in canning factories or on production lines.

A number of devices were employed to enhance the chimera of career. Recognizing that the same low-level office work that had long been necessary would continue to employ the most people, and that these workers would continue to be women, jobs like "secretary" were renamed with career titles like "executive assistant," "executive secretary," and "administrative assistant." Later on, the repetitive work performed at the secretarial level could be glamorized by association with evolving office technologies, so that typists became "word processors" and "computer coordinators."

Women who wanted work were often qualified only for low-prestige jobs like nursing and teaching. With nursing, keeping them in their place was accomplished first by applying new designations—"nursing practitioners" and "physician extenders"—and then by multiplying administrative titles, chores, and designations. Accordingly, the head nurse was replaced by the "clinical coordinator," "director of nursing," or "assistant vice-president in charge of nursing."

With women teachers, we were able to take advantage of a fortuitous development: the coincidental decline of educational levels that from the beginning of the women's movement up to the early 1990's resulted in bringing down the level of college instruction to a par with grammar school. This meant that women could be kept at the same level of teaching, but with the illusory prestige of being college instructors.

Women eventually came to dominate most of what are known as the "soft" subjects—English, sociology, anthropology, psychology. In addition, special divisions of "feminist studies" were set up, and college administrations were tripled in size to employ increasing numbers of women. In the meantime, men continued to conduct the serious business of the universities in physics, chemistry, biology.

When it came to the major role of women in society—caring for children—the rising divorce rate brought on by the sexual revolution provided the opportunity to keep women employed. Many children now needed to be looked after in groups while their mothers worked. Who better to care for them than . . . women? It was necessary only to professionalize child care, to gild it with the ever-attractive patina of career. Not baby-sitting locations but Child Care Centers were brought into existence. The centers employed *trained personnel*. They were supervised by *daycare specialists*. All those employed in this work were on professional career tracks that would bring them up through directorships to positions in regional administrative offices for child care, onto activist legislative lobbying groups, and so on.

With the child care “profession,” as with the others, women had been lured into either taking over work from men or continuing to shoulder their traditional burdens. In other words, our success was complete. Female employment rose to some 50 percent of the work force. Since women could get jobs, husbands could abandon wives and children in favor of new partners. These abandonments yielded for the male both sexual satisfaction and freedom from work to support two families. To be sure, without work experience single mothers earned substantially less than their husbands had, and began to sink toward poverty. But so deftly had the romance of career been implanted in the minds of the feminist leaders that instead of calling for men to resume supporting women, they demanded only better careers and higher wages. The secret committee now had women where it wanted them—at work and in sexual bondage.

Nor did it seem that things would be reversed. We knew that we could count on the upper-middle-suburbanite opinion class of women to keep things going. They earned salaries high enough to allow them both sexual freedom and Murphy Brown-like single motherhood. This class, organized as the feminist movement, could be counted on to continue manufacturing the litany of complaints that gave women the illusion of making demands and achieving victories even as they were being further and further immured in sexual exploitation, work, and child care. Furthermore, the emphasis on what the opinion class termed “patriarchy”—the power of men over women—rendered all women inferior by definition. Theirs had become a self-imposed, psychological second-class status quite the opposite from the commanding social position they had previously held.

This last development—the devolution of women’s status—gave everyone in the group pause. We had not intended to bring about the denigration of women, but only to reduce their privileges. It seemed that in this and other respects, things had perhaps gone too far. And so yet another meeting was convened in 1991. As we assessed the situation, the condition of women, toward whom all had initially borne resentment, had grown bad enough to appeal to our by now atrophied instincts of chivalry. First, as Dan Quayle had observed, the apparently-so-desirable, sexually irresponsible behavior of privileged women, when it had spread to the lower classes, reduced their women to penury. So long as welfare alone was required to deal with this outcome, the secret group had been willing to pay the price. But now two unforeseen and undesirable developments considerably altered the situation.

First, the sexual irresponsibility that had spread downward had begun to flow back upward. The new, trickle-up morality

affected the young in particular. Suddenly not just adult but child sexual promiscuity had become permissible, along with *child* single-parenthood on a scale extensive enough to bring to our own class a poverty heretofore restricted to the foolishly promiscuous among the lower classes. The secret committee had started by practicing on adult women; now the worst results of its manipulations were appearing in successive generations of young women and girls—among them the members’ own daughters and granddaughters. Second, defeminization—the loss of femininity among women performing rough men’s work—also began to spread upward. Privileged women were not being hardened by working as truckers or warehousemen, but even in offices and universities they were growing ever more shameless and vulgar.

Things had gone too far: the secret group had proven to be too clever by half. The entire experiment had to be reversed so as to bring the relationship between the sexes back to a workable equilibrium. Above all, women had to be granted their differences from men—their different sexuality, different relationship to children, different kinds of work they could do well. This meant ending both rampant sexual promiscuity and the cultural atmosphere that made women feel it was virtually mandatory for them to go to work.

Like women, men had not truly benefited from women’s promiscuity and going to work. Where women had grown more sexually aggressive, male impotence often followed. Where men indulged in extramarital sex, their wives often responded by doing the same. The resultant rise in the divorce rate had cut many a man’s equity in half, obliging him to work even harder than in the past in order to support two families. For, as it turned out, women *did* come around to demanding support after divorce, despite their claims of equality with men.

As for female employment lightening men’s work burden, this had somehow not come about. In the first place, women did not really do men’s work, as we have seen. More importantly, women treated their wages as discretionary income. Instead of producing time off from work for men, working women simply raised a family’s standard of living. This benefited lower-income men, but made less difference for the well-heeled class to which the members of the secret committee belonged. Most disturbingly, a respectable researcher on heart disease found that “men with highly educated wives who work outside the home faced a greater risk of dying of a heart attack than did men with less educated wives.” In short, giving up the changes set in motion by the committee in 1962 now promised to be more of a relief than a sacrifice.

Not surprisingly, a debate ensued on how to achieve the group’s aims. One side again called for a reassertion of male authority. Cooler heads pointed out that this was no longer an option: all the fundamentals of male-female relationship had been altered. On the other hand, I pointed out, less had changed than might seem to be the case, so that there still existed many bases on which to work toward the desired turnaround. I was now as willing to help right the situation as I had initially been committed to weakening the social fabric. For I was no longer in the employ of either the KGB or the Securitate, nor had I been since the end of the Cold War. Indeed, I was an American, and as such I was just as worried as anyone else about the deterioration of the relationship between the sexes.

I therefore went on to point out that marital infidelity, which according to pop sociologists has reached 50 percent, was actually at only 3 to 4 percent a year, and the total number of married people who had ever strayed was no higher than 15 percent, and not rising. Nor had female responses changed as much as advertised. "Women have needs of intimacy, home and family" admitted Betty Friedan in 1987. In 1986, a feminist wrote in the *New York Times* "Hers" column that she felt jealous over her nurturing husband's intimacy with their infant daughter. She put off weaning in order to keep him from feeding the baby and because continuing to nurse was for her "a physical want." She concluded that "women who do all the parenting . . . have a special power that I have relinquished. It is the power of being everything to a child."

Women had begun to realize that going to work was not all it had been cracked up to be. The gradual realization that they were in many respects worse off had spread even to the privileged women not obliged to undertake onerous work. For example, in 1993 "three quarters of female doctors surveyed in Canada said they had been sexually harassed by male patients," according to a study in the *New England Journal of Medicine*. The two women doctors who conducted the study showed that the so-called empowerment of women had not made them free. "The vulnerability inherent in their sex seems in many cases to override their power as doctors," they concluded. If women had started to refer to their inherent vulnerability, I pointed out, they were on the verge of change.

Such a change, furthermore, was already apparent, and was decidedly in the direction of traditional romance, marriage, and family. A key item was a 1989 report by Danielle Crittenden in the *Wall Street Journal*. She wrote that "the articles women's magazines are publishing today are little different from those that feminist authors such as Betty Friedan and Barbara Ehrenreich dug up in the back issues of the *Ladies' Home Journal* as evidence for their thesis that women in the 1950's were being indoctrinated into submissive domesticity." She concluded that "if women's magazines are in any way a barometer of a female zeitgeist, then women today are as neurotically insecure and preoccupied with getting married as feminist writers say they were three decades ago." After hearing this, the members agreed that a revolution was not called for so much as a gentle nudge to push the zeitgeist a bit faster in the direction it was already taking.

If anything, the danger lay in allowing word to get out that little had actually changed in the relationship between the sexes and that feminism had left women worse off. A recognition of either circumstance might well set off another round of sexual revolution and radical feminism. Far better to foster the current self-congratulatory mood of the feminists and to encourage them to continue presenting one another with awards.

At the same time, it would once again be necessary very delicately to encourage female complaining. Especially useful in this regard was the false history of women being perpetrated by the feminists in order to make themselves appear as benefactors. The secret group had cause for worry when Ruth Bader Ginsburg was appointed to the Supreme Court. Her curriculum vitae revealed a steady upward course starting back in the supposedly benighted 1950's. She went from Cornell to Harvard Law, made Law Review, transferred to Columbia Law, was awarded a prestigious Federal District Court clerkship, a professorship at Rutgers Law, and eventually a judgeship of her own on the Federal Circuit Court of Appeals.

Not only Ginsburg, but her female classmates at Columbia had advanced virtually as far as they wished. As the *Wall Street Journal* reported, "most of the women in the class ended up following career paths similar to the men—law firm partners, judges, academics, public-interest lawyers and in-house corporate attorneys." Luckily for the plans of the secret group, the women journalists who reported on these careers presented them as sagas of victimization. Each success was made to seem a triumph over sexist adversity, with the result that no one noticed that careers had always been possible for women who wanted them.

The slight nudge to the zeitgeist advocated at the 1992 meeting was duly administered, but I do not know if further meetings ever took place. My cover was blown when a group of dossiers on Romanian Securitate agents was sold by a former librarian at the KGB's Moscow archive. He filched them before departing, like myself, for the West. Nevertheless, it is not difficult to make out the influence of the committee in developments since 1992.

Quite unaware of the implications of what they were doing, the feminists reversed themselves on pornography. As usual, they railed against men. But in demanding special protection from sexual exploitation by men, they admitted their unique vulnerability as women. In 1963—that is, BFM—one of the first steps in destroying feminine modesty had been an arrangement by the committee to secure favorable reviews, some of them by women, in the *New York Review of Books* and other opinion-making journals, of the book *The Story of O*. This is a misogynistic fantasy in which rape and sexual degradation are employed to reduce women to humiliating sexual bondage. By the 1990's—SFM—women, including the feminists, were seeking relief from the very humiliations they had seen as sexual liberation in the 1960's. To me, the former Preposteroff, the hand of the committee was evident in the feminists' amnesia: they evidenced no inkling of their own movement's implication in the rise of pornography.

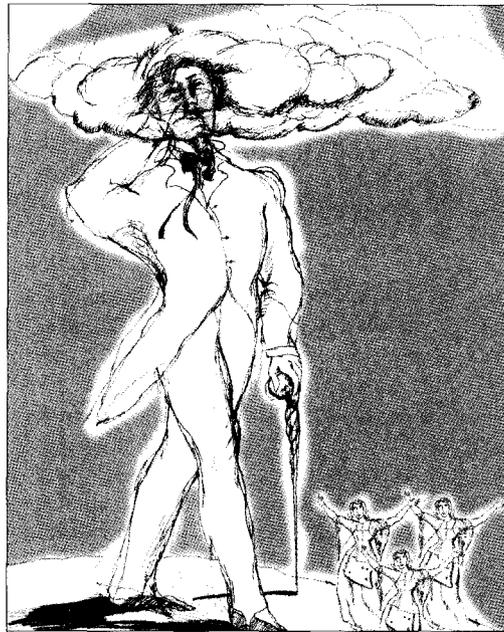
Next, once again in the feminist language of attacks on men, the feminist movement began to agitate for even more protections against male sexual and physical power. Sexual conduct codes were instituted at colleges. In offices, male sexual behavior and speech came under control to the point where so much as smiling at a woman could lead to charges. Here and there the observation was made that such codes depicted women in the stereotypes of the distant past. Indeed, they were being depicted not so much as they had been in the 1950's as how they had been during the Victorian era. But, again thanks to the committee, the feminists were able to ignore the implications of their own Victorianism.

If the committee ever met again after 1992, which is doubtful, it determined that no further interventions were necessary as of 1993 or 1994. The retreat from feminism was being satisfactorily conducted by the intellectually moribund but still activist feminist movement. Employing a distracting rhetoric of complaint and demand—both of which revived caricatures of female behavior supposed to have once been fostered by men—the movement was now dedicated to defining women as different and vulnerable, and to securing special protections for them. The committee could safely let the issue rest. Its members would have to reconvene to restore equilibrium only if the feminists went too far in making women out to be inferior.

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Where Have the Women All Gone?

by Mark Racho



Anna Mycek-Wodecki

“The Queen is most anxious to enlist everyone to join in checking this mad, wicked folly of women’s rights,” wrote Queen Victoria in 1870 to Sir Theodore Martin. “Woman would become the most hateful, heartless and disgusting of human beings, were she allowed to unsex herself.” Pausing only to add “fanatical” and “idiotic” to Her Majesty’s adjectives, and with a century and a quarter’s hindsight to my advantage, I can only admire the Queen’s prescience. It is not that the fishwives and Madame Thenardiens have grown any fishier—for they were always bad enough—it is rather that the Cosettes and Di Vernons have disappeared. I do not say that women ought to be Victorian violets, or that every new freedom gained by the sex should be repealed, but it is sad to note how each advance seems to make women more unsatisfied, more spiteful, and more vulgar.

It is difficult to tell precisely when the corruption set in; a misogynist might reply sardonically “the Garden of Eden,” but I love the ladies too well to join the crabby ranks of woman-haters through the ages, so my judgment must be more considered, though romantic, and I am forced to choose a time before I was born—the 1960’s, “between the end of the Chatterley ban / and the Beatles’ first L.P.” Although not all women ran mad during the 60’s, enough did to induct their daughters *en masse* into the cult of feminism; this, added to the revolting politics of the period, and its orgiastic carelessness and general degradation, broke ground for an age that was new but whose vices were old, an age whose roots could be found in the Rome of Elagabalus or the London of the Restoration. An even more violent outbreak of familiar “modernity” can be discerned in the early 1980’s with the discovery of AIDS and our subsequent fixation on the medical and mechanical aspects of sex. Since then the “modern young woman” has taken much pride in speaking, acting, and clothing herself very much like a

whore, while thinking like a puritan. Now there is no longer even the romantic pretense of the 60’s; the free love, gentleness, and innocence that the imagination paints upon that decade have become the naked and unnatural aggression, selfishness, and viciousness personified by the “role model” worshiped in a thousand “women’s studies” courses—the modern Messalina, Madonna Ciccone.

However, women being women, the newfangled young ladies are entirely naive when it comes to the actual relations between men and women—the vulgar loudmouth so proud of her equality and “empowerment” knows less about men than the shyest Dickens virgin, hence the prevalence of “date-rape” (i.e., being taken advantage of). These pitiful creatures so “secure in their sexuality” are nevertheless innocent of facts that their unenlightened grandmothers knew, namely that men are carnal. And as it was women who civilized men through the ages, their abdication of that role leaves men to run riot and act as abominably as ever they did. My father’s solicitous behavior toward my mother taught me how decent women ought to be treated, but the old Adam in me, encountering so many girls ready to buy love and attention at the price of a one-night stand, could only marvel and prevail.

A fundamental tenet of the cult of feminism is that women must act with all the rudeness, contempt, and brutality that men sometimes exhibit toward women and toward each other; this is called “empowerment,” and men are supposed to be frightened of a “powerful” woman. In fact, men find such women laughable. Because we have outgrown our fears of the frigid grade school teacher, we are not impressed by Hillary Rodham Clinton, we have only contemptuous chuckles for Madonna Ciccone because we have seen better bodies on cheaper whores, and our only reaction to the frozen smile on the (surgically improved?) face of Naomi Wolf as she fulminates about sexism is “cute babe . . . what did she say?” The modern Barbie-bitch responds to this by trying to outdo men,

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