

Every Man in His Tolstoy Humor: On Lev Osterman, Questions of Method, and More

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“Am I alone in this?” Michael Denner’s question—and a request to review a book by the unknown Tolstoy scholar Lev Osterman—greeted me at the end of August 2007. “Could you please comment on this book? Whenever I have tried to praise it in our professional circles, I usually get blank stares.” After reading Lev Osterman’s *Сражение за Толстого* (*The Battle for Tolstoy*, 2002), I had planned to write a simple, traditional book review, adding my heartfelt endorsements to Michael Denner’s enthusiasm for this slim volume. I highly recommend Osterman’s book to everyone who works on Tolstoy, teaches Tolstoy, or cares about the people who gave us the Jubilee. However, what I had intended as a simple review soon turned into a long investigation into the literary career of Osterman and the story of “his” Tolstoy.

I will start with the evaluation of *Сражение за Толстого* proper. A blurb hidden in a tiny font on the obverse of the title page reads, “In 1958 the last, ninetieth volume of the academic edition of L.N. Tolstoy’s Complete Works was published. The publication lasted thirty years filled with drama, about which nothing has been known to this day. Nothing as well has been known about the people who managed to bring the publication of the [Jubilee] edition to its conclusion.”

Osterman’s book tells us a gripping story about the everyday agony of academic publishing under the Soviet regime. However, its great

value is its demolishing of the rock-solid myth of Tolstoy’s untouchable status in the USSR before 1960 and of the special status of the scholars who assumed leadership roles in their selfless effort to produce unexpurgated, high-quality academic editions of his works. Osterman’s book aptly demonstrates that ever since Chertkov procured the tentative permission to publish the future ninety volumes in 1918, constant threat hung over the project, ranging from the prospect of a complete ban to partial mutilation of Tolstoy’s text, from illogical “hurry up and wait” orders to arbitrary retardation of the publication process.

Osterman illustrates the nature of the battle for Tolstoy—political ideology clashing with professional ethics—in two epigraphs to the book. One is from Tolstoy’s long essay *Конец века* (*The End of the Century*, 1905), on the inevitable bankruptcy of ideals built off expedient political goals. The second is a typical entry about the necessity to continue the moral battle to publish “everything by Tolstoy” that comes from the diary of Nikolai Sergeevich Rodionov, a longtime editor-in-chief of the Jubilee. Rodionov served in this capacity officially from 1936, when he replaced Chertkov after his death, to 1949, the year when the role of the Editorial Board (Редакторский комитет) assembled by Chertkov in 1928 and comprised of top Tolstoy scholars was relegated to that of “participants” on something like a subcommittee of scholars run by State Literary Publishing (Гослитиздат). The fealty

of Tolstoy specialists to the former was later transferred to that of the State Editorial Committee (Госкомиздат). These transfers of feudal bondage to various organs of the punitive ideological machine underscored the intensifying resistance of the Soviet authorities to the very idea of publishing the complete and all-too-subversive works of Tolstoy. The volumes of the Jubilee documenting the growth of Tolstoy's religious outlook—an outlook so uncomfortable to the regime—were frozen for years (such as volumes 23, 28, 48, and 49). When finally released after 1951, the names of the remaining members of the Jubilee editorial board were altogether removed from the title page of the rogue volumes, severely censored. A sinister totalitarian imprimatur graced nearly all volumes numbered 61 and above at their opening: "The edition is carried out under the supervision of State Editorial Committee" (Госредкомиссия). With the apparatchiks installed to watch over their shoulder, the surviving members of the team, Gudzii, Gusev, Kornev, Piksanov, and Rodionov, heroically carried on with the work begun in 1928. Throughout the thirty-year-long history of the Jubilee, Rodionov never ceased the battle bequeathed to him by Chertkov, and he and his team miraculously succeeded in publishing Tolstoy practically in his entirety.

The battle for the Jubilee included many stages. During the war, Tolstoy's archive moved to Tomsk. In the ensuing chaos, Rodionov was able to take all the prepared volumes, as yet not cleared for publication, to his house, thus saving decades of work until 1949, first from bombshells and then from possible confiscation. On September 7, 1946, the Zhdanovite Politburo of the Central Committee of VKP(b) issued a ruling concerning the academic edition, which enabled the State Editorial Committee to edit it down by shortening commentary and excluding those letters and notes by Tolstoy that "had no bearing on the social situation." Although Rodionov repeatedly vouchsafed that he was a sincere Soviet worker who never disputed party decisions, he also

kept insisting that Tolstoy deserved to be known in his completeness and that without such representation the world would never know the real Tolstoy. A year before Stalin's death, Rodionov received official warning accusing him of irresponsibility and abuse of office. In February 1954, a shaky compromise was reached to publish all of Tolstoy's works, as approved by State Editorial Committee, the new ideological boss.

Osterman concentrates mainly (although not only) on this battle for Tolstoy as he follows in the footsteps of Rodionov's diary. Whereas Tolstoy specialists may know something about the publishing of the Jubilee, the greatest value of Osterman's book is the considerable portions of Rodionov's diary it contains. This previously unavailable material is a priceless documentary source that allows us as never before to become insiders to the twisted and tragic history of the edition. Osterman became a close younger friend of Rodionov's in 1948, and his book is primarily a tribute to his late spiritual teacher and his teacher's wife, Natalia Ul'rikhovna (nee Avranek, the daughter of the renowned principal choirmaster of the Bolshoi).

The book tells several stories, those of the Rodionov family's noble ancestry (they were relations of the Princes Shakhovskoy), their participation in the толстовство movement at the turn of the century and before 1917, and Rodionov's acquaintance with Chertkov in 1918 as a young supporter of the Soviet co-op movement. It is through the initiative of Rodionov and his like-minded co-op enthusiasts and lovers of Tolstoy that an idea arose to lure Chertkov into the enterprise of publishing the whole of Tolstoy in Russia, including the works banned before 1917, as well as previously unavailable archival material. In the same year Chertkov and Aleksandra L'vovna Tolstaya had been searching for reliable allies among the representatives of the new order to realize the same goal, and a strong friendship was sealed.

After outlining the basic facts about the start-up of the Jubilee venture in 1928, Oster-

man interrupts the story of the publication proper and follows its fate indirectly through Rodionov's diary. The diary illuminates the contradictions and incredible stamina of Rodionov the man, highlighting his surprisingly pro-Soviet worldview and engrossing the reader in the smaller but no less meaningful emotional details of his family and household from the 1920s through 1952, the year Natalia Ul'rikhovna died. The years until Rodionov's own death to lung cancer in 1960 and during his common-law companionship with the widow of the writer Mikhail Prishvin are set off in another chapter that documents, among other things, the completion of the Jubilee in the new era, after Stalin. These separate storylines may only slightly or may not necessarily intertwine with Tolstoy. The longest chapter, *Дневник ополченца* (Diary of Ensign), is an unabridged rendition of Rodionov's diary accounts of his participation in World War II as a soldier in the people's volunteer corps until his disqualification due to age and poor health. The chapter mentions Tolstoy only to express Rodionov's wonderment at how well read the young generation may be in Hugo and how poorly in Tolstoy. It turns out that the editor-in-chief of the Jubilee was completely unaware of the scarcity of Tolstoy's books on public library bookshelves. The alleged spiritual ancestor of Socialist Realism, Tolstoy was unavailable for perusal!

Preoccupied with Rodionov's image of the classic representative of the old intelligentsia, Osterman quotes at length such problematic passages from the diary, presenting us with the Rodionov who is thoroughly compliant with the party line and even indoctrinated. Osterman interpolates his own polemics with those of his teacher who incomprehensibly failed to recognize that the hand impeding his work on Tolstoy and making Tolstoy unavailable to Soviet youth was the hand that fulfilled the will of the regime and its revered ideologues.

Because of these overlapping storylines and narrative strategies, Osterman's account

may at times be confusing and sometimes irritating. However, once you get used to its rhythms and mannerisms, it is not difficult to follow the Tolstoy part of the story. Rodionov assumed leadership of the Jubilee at a critical point in its history. Before his death in 1936, Chertkov had had several strokes and had been gravely ill for years. The provisions of the first Jubilee contract that he signed with Госиздат (State Publishers) in April 1928, allowing the board of editors to work, relatively well funded, under the gingerly protection of the enlightened State Editorial Committee consisting of Lunacharsky, Pokrovsky, and Bonch-Bruevich, were hard to enforce from the very beginning. They were increasingly difficult to enforce in the 1930s, when Lunacharsky and Pokrovsky were no longer alive, and Bonch lived under a real threat of persecution. Still, Chertkov and his team were ready to cope with all bureaucratic obstacles as long as the main condition of their work was satisfied: Absolutely all of Tolstoy's legacy should be published without alterations, emendations, or omissions. When Chertkov realized that his powers were failing, he summoned Rodionov in 1928 and would not let him leave without receiving his assurance that he would risk everything, even his life, to oversee the completion of Tolstoy's *свод* (harmony) (diary passages in Osterman 28-29). Rodionov, who was no scholar, but possessed the required "literacy" and "wit" as Chertkov put it, gave Chertkov his word of honor that Tolstoy's will of 1910 regarding the posthumous publication of his works would be done. Rodionov and Chertkov's son ran the Jubilee *de facto* from 1928. By the time of Chertkov's death in November 1936, seventy-two volumes were ready to go into print, but only thirty-eight had been published and the majority of the finished volumes languished in the editorial headquarters of the Jubilee team, located, quite fatefully, not far from the Lubyanka.

Stalin's bureaucrats and henchmen from Гослитиздат and the Central Committee were slowing the review process of completed vo-

lumes, insisting on shortening or changing commentary, or pretending that there was a dire shortage of work force and funds. The publication was stalled indefinitely due to an unfavorable political climate, the euphemism that the functionaries used to describe their busy lives during show trials and their destruction of class enemies at home and abroad. Osterman ventures several important explanations for this behavior. He explains that the literal sabotage of the work of the Rodionov team by Lozovsky, new head of Гослитиздат since 1936, had a rather easy if disturbing explanation. Lozovsky, previously arrested by Stalin and demoted from his post as head of International Trade Unions (Профинтерн), feared for his life. Lozovsky was simply too afraid to approve volumes that mostly contained the “anti-Soviet” Tolstoy at his best. In this macabre twist of events, Tolstoy’s texts could mean death for anyone who gave the green light to their publication. One of the members of the editorial board, V. A. Naumov (first name beyond the initials unknown), had already disappeared without a trace during the earliest stages of the purges in 1930, so says Osterman’s caption under one of the group pictures in his volume (29). At the peak of Stalin’s terror, Rodionov had to proceed with “innocent” volumes: variants to *Anna Karenina* or volumes 83 and 84, containing Tolstoy’s letters to his wife, Sofi’a Andreevna.

The efforts of Lozovsky and his like would close down the relatively independent editorial office near Lubyanka in 1939 and force the editorial team to work under direct control of Гослитиздат. A new, draconian contract was signed and the Jubilee venture was extremely tenuous from 1939 to 1949. No volumes reached the publication stage during that decade. Like Chertkov before him, Rodionov had to resort to acts of desperate courage and keen diplomacy to acquire the minimum funds necessary to continue the work as they tried simultaneously to shield Tolstoy’s text from the encroachments of Stalin’s zealots. Chertkov spent all of his life savings paying for the Jubi-

lee. Rodionov’s last remaining luxury was the spacious apartment left to the Avraneks for life by Lenin’s special decree. The apartment provided a refuge for Tolstoy’s works and a hiding place during the war. To procure the necessary funds, Rodionov sold some of the published volumes (surely, a very puny overstock) to second-hand book dealers in 1938 as well as some pictures from Chertkov’s archive to the Tolstoy Museum in Khamovniki.

For long months and years, Tolstoy specialists worked for free and then were only partially reimbursed. The most important trade-offs to preserve Tolstoy meant that they had to sacrifice their commentary and include safe doses of Lenin in the introductions to the volumes to balance out the grave cases of political blindness and class illiteracy of Tolstoy’s texts.

Chertkov’s and Rodionov’s dealings with the Soviet bureaucracy were often worthy of a plot by Zoshchenko, Kharms, or Il’f and Petrov. Consider these abridged passages from the diary that describe Rodionov’s futile attempts to meet with Zhdanov’s apparatchik, the historian Pospelov, the future editor-in-chief of *Pravda*, with whom at least eleven or twelve confirmed appointments were moved to “tomorrow.” Finally, they meet.

Rodionov: I have been so insistently trying to gain a chance to see you in order to seek your advice, receive your guidelines for action as to how we may resolve this painful situation without violating the will of L.N. Tolstoy and, at the same time, act in accordance with the current guidelines that the Central Committee of the Party has in mind.

Pospelov: You have committed serious errors. The first one is your lengthy commentaries. Tolstoy’s Complete Works is replaced with complete works of his commentators. The second error is your methods of commentary. You do not observe the contract and the contract stresses the need to be objective. Yet who could be more objective than Lenin? Why don’t you

enlist this most objective of all sources? Why do you write long biographies about the most insignificant people, even about those who ended up being counter-revolutionary?" (51-52)

Rodionov promised Pospelov complete loyalty regarding the commentaries and injections of objectivity while also securing Pospelov's guarantee that Tolstoy proper would be left intact.

Rodionov's ability to learn the talk of the regime as in the example above was ultimately successful in furthering the cause of the Jubilee. He finessed his tactics by methods of trial and error. In June 1937, he tried to summon the bureaucrats who were more or less boycotting the publication to *соцсоревнование* (Socialist competition) in order to expedite the publishing of a several-thousand-copy run of the academic Tolstoy for the masses. As we might expect, none of these strike brigade tactics helped. From August to early September 1938, Rodionov made another attempt at beating the bureaucratic beast at its own game when he delivered a talk to Soviet youth commemorating the 110th anniversary of Tolstoy's birth and reminding his audience about Tolstoy's will that his written legacy be made freely available to all. Rodionov spoke:

Only the Great October Revolution opened the door towards the carrying out of Tolstoy's will. Vladimir Grigorievich Chertkov roused a ready response from the leaders of the Soviet government and the Party. He held personal meetings with comrade Lenin and comrade Stalin in order to realize this [will of Tolstoy's]." (Excerpt from diary translated from Osterman 41)

In his hopes that the talk might be published or otherwise recorded, Rodionov believed, naïvely no doubt, that by praising the authorities' goodwill, he might actually bring that kindly support, bandied about in Soviet slogans, into being.

Rodionov more or less learned how to bluff where necessary for the sake of the edition. Moreover, in his sincere pro-communist eagerness to succeed, he felt that by promoting Tolstoy he was no different from other heroes of Socialist labor such as Aleksey Stakhanov and Pasha Angelina. He was firmly convinced that he was fighting his battle for the holy triumvirate, reappearing frequently in the diary, of Tolstoy, Lenin, and October. However, one of his desperate letters—one addressed to Stalin himself in 1950—he wisely never sent.

Thus, his ideological raptures tended to err on the side of caution. Chertkov's old-world and naïve honesty, on the other hand, revealed the sense of hopeless disconnect with reality as was fully expressed in his letters to Stalin. Two of these letters, reproduced by Osterman, belong in the tragic plot in the mode of catastrophism:

To you, dear and respected Iosif Vissarionovich, I feel emboldened to address myself as you are that comrade whose very initiative led this project to its good start in the wings of the late V.I. Lenin. I think that your single word is enough to bring to completion the formal side of the...affair." (From Chertkov's letter to Stalin in February 1934; Osterman 32-33)

In the last heart-rending letter, Chertkov fights his progressive sclerosis and is manifestly dyslexic. He reminds the leader, who in the summer of 1934 is preoccupied with his preparations for the Kirov affair, that he is a kind and simple-hearted man; he would understand the desperate situation of the team working without pay only to fulfill the will of Lev Nikolaevich concerning his writing (letter reproduced in Osterman 33-34).

In those moments when Osterman speaks in this book in his own voice and his tone is not pitched towards high pathos, he is capable of making fine discoveries. For example, he proves that in reality there was no documented evidence of Lenin's unequivocal support of the necessity to publish "the whole of

Tolstoy.” Apparently, Rodionov was skillful enough in promoting the myth that the Jubilee was little less than Lenin’s brainchild, and he was able to translate this myth into real contractual stipulations in all versions of the contract from 1928 through 1954. Osterman likewise is strong in presenting the positive role of front-row Soviet writers and the darlings of literary nomenclature (Aleksey Tolstoy before the war and Aleksandr Fadeev and Mikhail Sholokhov after the war) in supporting Rodionov (rather narrow-mindedly in the case of the latter two). With all that, Osterman’s book is neither a comprehensive nor a comprehensible summary of the Jubilee history. It is something else and something more. A good half deals with Tolstoy only minimally. The author’s own shadow hovers over his strange narration ever so strongly in his almost Gogolian apostrophes to the reader who is invited, through Rodionov’s diary, on a tour of Russia’s recent past. Osterman also figures fleetingly, like a *гоголь* (*fop*) taking a sneak stroll in the story of his eponymous author, in Rodionov’s retold diary. In it, in the entries somewhere in the early 1950s, “Leva Osterman” reads from his confession to Nikolai Rodionov and his wife, or has dinner with the Rodionovs in a family picture placed surreptitiously on page 146. Chapter 6, “Родионовский дом” (The Rodionov Home 135-56) is almost completely focused on Osterman’s personal friendship with Nikolai Sergeevich and Natalia Ul’rikhovna, his adopted *матушка* (little mother). The most enigmatic in the book’s message and structure is the seemingly uncalled-for appearance, at the end, of Osterman’s synopsis “Religious and Social Views of L.N. Tolstoy after 1879” (Религиозные и общественные взгляды Л.Н. Толстого после 1879 г. [реферат]).

Osterman dedicates about fifty pages to “thoughts and sayings of Tolstoy” after 1879 from the Jubilee, listed thematically rather than chronologically. The compiler of quotes explains in a short preface that he “abstained from his personal commentaries and especially

from extrapolating Tolstoy’s views towards the analysis of contemporary reality—this opportunity is reserved for the reader” (252). The two larger categories under which Osterman assembles Tolstoy’s quotes are obvious, “God and Man,” and “Man in Society.” So are the shorter chapters within each of the two categories, which include captions on Christian teaching and the possibility of social life without a state. At the end of this synopsis, which is little different from the conscientious longhand of a Ph.D. student getting ready for the write-up of his dissertation, only typeset and bound in a volume, we notice the date: May 27, 1984. Apparently, the date when Osterman completed his synopsis (1984) was meaningful for him in 2002 as the date he completed his account of the “battle for Tolstoy” and could invite readers to analyze post-1879 Tolstoy from the reality of 2002.

On the methods of good *толстоведение* (meditations about Osterman)

The enigmatic synopsis makes it necessary to address the genre and impetus of Osterman’s *толстоведение*. It does not seem entirely right to discuss the issue in terms of the merits or defects of Osterman’s scholarship; I would rather examine whether Osterman’s book may be symptomatic of Tolstoy’s reemergence as something *more* than rediscovery, at a propitious historical moment, of the celebrity already immortalized in a rigid canon. Osterman’s *толстоведение* appears to be part of a growing trend. The grassroots *пушкинистика* of the twentieth century helped its practitioners and readers survive the horrors of life without freedom at home or without native tongue in emigration. The emerging grassroots investigative reporting on Tolstoy in book clubs, on *New York Times* blogs, on Russian and American TV, and in “amateur” scholarship should alert us to the proliferation of a new obvious tendency: Namely, Tolstoy is in sync with our moment in history as almost never before. We have begun to look to Tolstoy for solutions to the unsolved problems and

blind alleys in our own biographies of the twentieth century; and we look to him again to provide us with guidelines for life in a thoroughly problematic new millennium.

I suggest that the reason Osterman presents the history of the first sixty years of the last century through the prism of Rodionov's personal diary (which was intimately connected with Tolstoy) and finishes the book on his own short writings on Tolstoy's religious views may stem from the same impulse. Osterman's impulse coincides with our current urge to experience history through personal and vital records, archives, and museum items. We devour personal testimonies of the survivors and the perished, composed during refugee transits or hidden in concentration camps. Only at the end of his life, it seems, did Rodionov realize the potential importance of his lifelong endeavor, of those twenty-six diaries and notepads, with symbolic gaps between 1928 and 1937, which Osterman partly reproduced in his book on Tolstoy. Perhaps the fateful, chilly ironies of historical coincidence mesmerized Rodionov. Having just finished his work on volume 13, the variants of *War and Peace*, he attended the famous march of German POWs through the streets of Moscow in July 1944. We learn from his diary that towards the end of his life—once the battle for the Jubilee was more or less won—Rodionov transferred his attention to literary memoirs by such masters of the genre as Teleshov, Pecherin, Gershenson, and certainly Prishvin, whose archive he was combing through in the 1950s.

The tremendous emotional power of personal experience and the immediacy of its expression, as well as its ability to break free from the dead circle of finality that encloses such experience once it is removed by the passage of time, is fully rendered in Rodionov's diary. I have hardly read a stronger and nobler expression of lucid grief from a parent who lost both his sons in the war. Rodionov's sons Sergey and Fyodor both went missing in action: Sergey in 1941 and Fyodor less than a

month before the end of hostilities in April 1945, apparently in an ambush set by Ukrainian nationalists near Lviv/Lwów. Tolstoy came to the rescue:

I keep thinking about Tolstoy. What would he do? What would be his attitude to war, to all that we have endured? Tolstoy, the great patriot, Tolstoy the great humanist...They say: How about his non-resistance to evil? His anti-militarism and conscientious objection...There is no contradiction! 'Non-resistance' is a result of man's spiritual struggle with himself, with all those base and bestial instincts in his human personality." (Rodionov's Diary in Osterman's book 109)

When he resumed his work on the Jubilee in 1944-47, still nourishing hope of at least one son's return, Rodionov dared to disagree with Tolstoy. In 1947, Rodionov and Natal'ia Ul'rikhovna went to the reopened Tretiakov Gallery. They sobbed in front of Kramskoy's "Безутешное горе" (*Inconsolable Grief*) and in front of Repin's "Не ждали" (*They Didn't Expect Him*). Says Rodionov: "L.N. was not right when he wrote about "*They Didn't Expect Him*" that it was 'no good.' This must be because he never expected anyone. But I was all turned inside out and saw this at night in my sleep. As well as Kramskoy's Christ and his (portrait of) Lev Nikolaevich himself" (123-24). Such subtle and painful disagreements with Tolstoy strongly recall Lydia Ginzburg's corrections of Tolstoy's attitude to vegetarianism and death itself in her *Blockade Diary*: "Death leaving no trace of life. The cat licks the plate clean. ... Not all like Ivan Ilich. Not like Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoy. But life was slowly beginning to ooze glimmering through the torpor, its desires intact, and with it the wish to live, the readiness to risk death" (102).

In one typical summing-up entry at the end of his life, Rodionov drew up his unofficial will appointing Lev Osterman to serve as his literary executor and entrusting to him the publication of his diary (on the condition that at

least thirty years would have elapsed after his death). In this sense, *Сражение за Толстого* is a partial fulfillment of Rodionov's will. Rodionov's diary has not been published in full, but Osterman's book is a threefold tribute nonetheless: to the whole Jubilee team, to Nikolai Seergeevich Rodionov and his family, and to Osterman's own sense of Tolstoy, in great measure thanks to his friendship with the Rodionovs.

Why Osterman and who is he? Lev Abramovich Osterman was a school friend of Nikolai Rodionov's elder son, Sergey. The new-fangled lieutenant with a thirst for humanitarian culture and respect for the old intelligentsia survived the war only because his elite technical unit was kept in the rear for special training: learning how to operate, fix, and fly the new generation of aircraft. Lev Osterman and the orphaned parents Rodionov adopted each other. Osterman described his spiritual discipleship with the Rodionovs most fully in the chapter "Уроки доброты" (Lessons of Goodness) of his latest book, *Течению наперекор. Примечательные события долгой жизни* (*Against the Current. Curious Events from a Long Life*).

Other than a young Jewish Muscovite whose sketchy silhouette transpires dimly in *Сражение за Толстого* who exactly is Osterman? If you have not read *Течению наперекор*, which is Osterman's critical autobiography, the answer will remain unknown. The author was born in 1923 in Moscow. His military training during the war permitted him to join various scientific labs in unrelated disciplines as he was completing his thesis in the Physics Department at Moscow State University. He work on turboelectric jets caught the eye of Petr Kapitza, but Osterman was possessed with a spirit of adventure and chose to work at the Institute of Geophysics of the Academy of Sciences. He later became involved in experimental procedures on nucleic acids and designed equipment for one of the first important biotechnological tests in the Soviet Union. Osterman is a recognized, world-class

authority in biotechnology and the author of the multivolume *Methods of Protein and Nucleic Acid Research*, published by Springer-Verlag in 1984.¹ Osterman's cumulative growth into one of the leading experts from the non-existent, partially banned, poorly equipped or just only emerging scientific industries in his country was apparently difficult to understand for his Western peers. It appears that Osterman made some bad decisions, devoting only two and a half pages in one of his volumes to isotochophoresis and failing to cite the existing Western authority on the topic. An Italian colleague from Milan, who did not understand that it was sometimes impossible to procure the latest scientific journals from the West, wrote in his review: "What about Neuhoff's school in Göttingen? Or the Japanese? It might be a good pretext for them to invade Russia again, Lev Abramovich." The same reviewer also wondered if one person could indeed write all three volumes—for such breadth and scope were unfamiliar for highly specialized scientific traditions of the West (or, as it turns out, the Far East as well) (Righetti 69-70).

Major libraries also experience a crisis of identity when cataloguing Osterman's books correctly: L. Osterman, Lev Osterman, Lev A. Osterman, and Lev Abramovich Osterman are one and the same author. The same person who wrote the award-winning *Methods, Сражение за Толстого*, and *Течению наперекор* (2004) also wrote *Интеллигенция и власть в России (1985-1996)* (2000), as well as works on Athenian democracy (1990) and Roman history (1997). The eighty-five-year-old retired scientist and "amateur" толстовед is not slowing down. In a recent issue of *The Futurist*, we can read Osterman's opinion piece proposing "a political system free of shortcomings of traditional democracy" with legislative powers handed over to the Solon-inspired Areopag—a board of "forty most esteemed." In his exciting intellectual autobiography of a Soviet scientist—one that reads as well as Solzheitzyn's *В круге*

первом (First Circle) and Kaverin's *Открытая книга (Open Book)*—Osterman tells us the story about his path to Tolstoy and towards writing non-scientific nonfiction through Rodionov. Around the time when *Methods* came out in 1984, Osterman made friends with the renowned hero of semi-dissident Soviet intelligentsia, the historian Natan Eidelman. Eidelman's work on the Decembrists brought back memories on *War and Peace*, his teacher Rodionov, and the desire to reconnect with Tolstoy.

Osterman retired from his job and began daily visits to the reading room of the Tolstoy museum in Moscow which housed all of Rodionov's Jubilee. After many months at the Museum and the Lenin Library (and 1150 pages of longhand notes), Osterman's synopsis of the Jubilee explaining Tolstoy's religious outlook was ready. The synopsis laid the foundation to Osterman's truth searching through Tolstoy. Tolstoy brought him to Solon, and Tolstoy's popular retellings of Herodotus and the life of Socrates led Osterman to write scenes from Roman history. After that he was ready to contemplate the fates of the intelligentsia and democracy in the rapidly changing Russia. *Сражение за Толстого* and *Течению наперекор* were the two remaining links that Osterman needed as he again resorted to Tolstoy and Rodionov to explain his life and his place in history.

In all of his non-scientific books, Osterman speaks with, and on behalf of, a very specific reader. He turns to the disappearing intelligentsia or to public intellectuals like himself for inspiration and response and does so in great measure thanks to Tolstoy. The editorial decision that Osterman made in putting together his emotionally riveting works on Tolstoy, Rodionov, and himself may be found in his other monographs, for example, in *Интеллигенция и власть в России (1985-1996)*, which came out in 2000. Being his first published work of non-technical nature, the book integrates clippings from Soviet and then Russian papers and journals, television inter-

views, media releases analyzed and discussed at home with his family and friends, in lonely diary ruminations, and in letters to his son to account for his life and opinions in the decade when Soviet civilization died. In one such letter of June 7, 1993, Osterman explains his inspirations for writing in a popular-biographical style and communicating with his like:

For me this selective group (selected through literature perhaps) is the Russian intelligentsia (from the ranks of nobility and mixed estates) and their heirs of our time. There is no other such intelligentsia in the whole world. No other country (in all of its social strata!) but the hapless Russia has brought up this selfless compassion, this pain for all those who are oppressed, this well-disposed attitude of altruism as the original premises of their being. ... My great fortune was to gain entrance into this cohort through the Rodionov family. The belonging to this group is not tightly tied with education. Nikolai Sergeevich did not graduate from the university (he was expelled for freethinking), while "little mother" only graduated from the Bestuzhev Courses for Women. (Интеллигенция 260)

Osterman is only interested in those who belong to this special core of public generosity and inner nobility and display unobtrusively in their everyday behavior their readiness for historical martyrdom. At the end of his last book, *Течению наперекор*, Osterman calls himself a chronicler of their spirit rather than man of letters:

All that I knew more or less well from documents and testimonials of ancient authors, from the diaries of L. N. Tolstoy and from my dear teacher Nikolai Sergeevich Rodionov, as well as from my own personal memoirs, observations, and diaries—all this I have included in my book in the humanities. I am happy that I was able to repay my debt to the Rodionov family which

has played such an enormous role in my life. It is with them that I was able to gain access to the ethical tradition which starts with Socrates and Seneca and continues through Tolstoy. I believe that thousands of readers will observe this tradition on my books. (426)²

Though it takes him several approaches, or perhaps thanks to his unorthodox method, Osterman alerts us to some disturbing gaps in our professional service. The non-academic community fulfills debts to our collective memory of Tolstoy better than do we. Osterman reminds us that we have overlooked a chance to write a solid analytical assessment of the Jubilee history, that we have overlooked Rodionov's diary, and that we have not shown our marks of respect to this extraordinary man, or to Chertkov for that matter. Chertkov's biography and critical edition of his essays and letters, as well as a complete publication of Rodionov's diary in Russian and English with detailed commentary, would be most welcome.

The Rodionov volume should have included an introduction paying tribute to Rodionov's fine scholarship on Tolstoy. Apart from the Jubilee, Rodionov's work on Tolstoy includes this partial list. In one of the moments when the Jubilee faltered, Rodionov published Tolstoy's diaries and notebooks for 1910 (*Дневники и записные книжки*). After the war, he published what is now a bibliographic rarity, a commented text of *War and Peace*, a result of his research during the war (*Война и мир*). Also after the war, Rodionov completed two volumes on Tolstoy's life in Moscow (*Л.Н. Толстой в Москве* and *Москва в жизни и творчестве Л.Н. Толстого*; the second (1958) a revised edition of the first (1948).)

Of course, Rodionov had reasons other than merely political to withhold his diary from immediate publication. Like most diaries, his as well documents uneasy moments such as those of bad blood between himself and Gudzii: The latter basically stole Rodionov's book contract. Rodionov was deeply hurt. He

described his wound years later when an invitation, spearheaded by Tolstoy's heirs abroad, to attend international congress in Italy arrived in 1958, and only Gudzii apparently was let out and traveled. These customary academic feuds are now history and have a right to enter the lore of *толстоведение* just like Lydia Ginzburg's mordant wit from her *Записные книжки* (*Notebooks*) or Jakobson's speech rejecting Nabokov have become part of the *fröhliche Wissenschaft* that we call our profession. We have arrived at a point when *толстоведение* is old and rich enough to deserve a history of its own. A nice series within this history should be written on the idiosyncratic destinies and biographies of those who have dedicated their lives to Tolstoy.

In this sense, Lev Osterman teaches us a great lesson about the return of the open diary and public intellectual culture to debates about Tolstoy. The author of *Мысли на каждый день* (*Thoughts for Each Day*) and *Круг чтения* (*Circle of Reading*) would have approved of this new tendency of a naked chronology of the soul written in the form of a historical blog.

Notes

1. The English translation came out in 1984. The Russian originals were sold out completely.
2. The text as quoted occurs only in the electronic edition of the book.

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