
Reviews

Lev Tolstoi. *Voina i mir*. Moscow: I. V. Zakharov, 2000. 799 pp.

Imagine, to quote the cover of the book under review, a *War and Peace*—"For the first time: the Real Lev Tolstoy, the Real *War and Peace*,"—which is only half the length of the 500,000 plus words that you associate with that title.* The benefits would be enormous: a 50% reduction in reading time and, perhaps—although this is not so essential to exercise-conscious readers who may already lift weights—an equal reduction in the physical weight of the book. I. V. Zakharov, known in Russian publishing circles as an exceptionally shrewd businessman, offers up just that: a shorter *War and Peace* [hereafter designated as Zakharov], that claims to be, nonetheless, the first full/complete edition of the great novel [*pervaia polnaia redaktsiia velikogo romana*] (Zakharov, front and back covers and 2). What we have here is a phrase of monumental ambiguity, possibly hinting at a most stunning literary discovery: maybe we have been missing the "real" *War and Peace*?

Leaving aside for the moment the serious student of Tolstoy, who, in reading the Zakharov text, will quickly (sooner, one hopes, rather than later) identify the ruse, imagine the casual Russian reader who might, like many counterparts in America, go for a *Reader's Digest* version of a novel the size of *War and Peace*. Or imagine the younger reader, reading the Zakharov for the first time, who might not even be aware of the longer, and quite different version, by Tolstoy.

The back cover (repeated verbatim on p. 2) of Zakharov's *War and Peace* invitingly advertises the novel's "five chief distinguishing virtues":

*My thanks to Sara Glassman, Mount Holyoke College, class of 2001, who contributed to this review by comparing the first 250 pages of the Zakharov text to the Jubilee edition of *War and Peace*.

(1) One-half as long and five times more interesting;

(2) Almost no philosophical digressions;

(3) One hundred times easier to read: all the French has been replaced by Russian in a translation by the author himself;

(4) A lot more "peace" and a lot less "war";

(5) Prince Andrei and Petya Rostov don't die.

Put aside your horror, purists, and endeavour to assess the merits of these claims dispassionately. After all, more than one American publisher has recently solicited the advice of Tolstoy scholars about an English translation of Zakharov's *War and Peace*.

(1) *Length*. Now be honest! Haven't you ever wished that the novel weren't so long? What if this shatteringly brilliant novel could somehow be made shorter and still render faithfully the author's intentions? Zakharov's text is indeed shorter, not by one-half, as claimed, but at least by one-quarter or approximately 130,000 words. More readers might read a shorter *War and Peace*. More readers might have the time to read the novel more carefully.

(2) *Almost no philosophy and history*. There are good arguments to be made for the omission of the historical and philosophical sections. Tolstoy himself allowed them to be moved from the body of the novel to an appendix for the third (1873) and fourth (1880) editions of the novel, edited by N. N. Strakhov. These passages were permanently restored in the fifth (and subsequent) editions, when publication rights to the novel were acquired by Tolstoy's wife. Moreover, and this despite more than 100 years of printing the "digressions" (to use the Zakharov term) in the body of the novel, the highly respected Tolstoy scholar N. K. Gudzii argued in 1963 that the third edition was artistically superior to the canonic text.

(3) *French passages translated*. No surprises here. Beginning with the third (1873) edition mentioned above, the 2-3% of the novel originally written in French has been translated into Russian.

(4) *More peace and less war*. The omission of the "philosophical digressions" might well tip the balance of the novel toward the less bellicose domestic front. Short of carping about the apparent redundancy of this claim in light of points 1 and 2 above, perhaps we need not be defensive: on the face of it, "more peace" does not automatically convey a serious threat to the integrity of the novel.

(5) *Andrei and Petya don't die*. Hmm. Here, of course, even the most generous approach to Zakharov's text is totally derailed. Andrei and Petya are supposed to die. Petya's pointless death at the threshold of his conscious life is merely sad, but Andrei's torturous and enlightening march to the afterlife carries with it some of the most probing spiritual themes of the longer *War and Peace*. The Zakharov ends, however, with a recuperated Andrei arranging a marriage between Pierre and Natasha and then hurrying off with the victorious Russian army to Paris. Such a monstrous departure from the novel is akin to the old pawnbroker recovering from Raskolnikov's blows and, spiritually transformed by her near-death experience, refusing to press charges. Or Anna Karenina recovering from a slight concussion after being pushed into an oncoming train just before her reconciliation with Vronsky, or The mind boggles at the possibilities!

The problem, of course, is not simply that the Zakharov is "tampering" with *War and Peace*. "Tampering," "deforming," "renovating," "satirizing" are a vital and respected part of the literary process. What we have here is something far more insidious because the "tampering" consists of passing off a scholar's construction of Tolstoy's first version of *War and Peace* as a whole and complete text. Zakharov takes his text almost word for word from E. E. Zaidenshnur's brilliant textological construction of the early conception of Tolstoy's novel, published by the Academy of Sciences in 1983 (vol. 94) in the scholarly series *Literaturnoe nasledstvo* under the title *The First Completed [zavershennaiia] Edition of the Novel War and Peace*. Zaidenshnur's construction of *War and Peace* relies, in part, on exhaustively meticulous study of drafts and variants, but more

than half of her text is taken from a text entitled *1805*, which Tolstoy had published in 1865-66 in the popular journal *Russkii vestnik*, some two years before he completed work on the novel as we know it (or as we thought we knew it before Zakharov). Needless to say, Zaidenshnur's annotated scholarly edition makes no pretense of passing itself off as "the Real *War and Peace*" (Zakharov, 2 and back cover). Nonetheless, the Zakharov is virtually nothing more than the Zaidenshnur text, except for the "come hither" language to prospective buyers of the book. A curiously piquant, but irrelevant comparison: the Zaidenshnur text cost 9 r. 60 k. in 1983 and was printed in an edition of 25,000 copies; the Zakharov text carries a price tag of 91 r. but its first printing of 5,000 copies was surely not its last.

To be strictly fair, the unnamed editors of the Zakharov *War and Peace* list three sources for their text: the Zaidenshnur work (misidentified as vol. 96 of the *Literaturnoe nasledstvo* series), Volumes 13-16 (drafts and variants of *War and Peace*) from the complete works of Tolstoy (the "Jubilee edition") and the 1873 third edition. It's hard to imagine in what ways the latter two references were used, save for the extremely odd one-and-a-half page "From the Author" [*Ot avtora*] (taken from "Variants to the First Volume of *War and Peace*,"¹ that prefaces the Zakharov. Tolstoy's remarks consist of an apology for his aristocratic origins and for his focus on characters from his own social circle, because, among other reasons, the life of the lower classes is *nekrasiva* [not pretty] (Zakharov 5). If nothing else, this preface suggests the enormity of the changes that Tolstoy subsequently underwent in his attitudes toward the peasants, to say nothing of his own class.

The experience of reading the Zakharov text is not without its voyeuristic pleasures; it's a bit like attending a play rehearsal when the actors are still searching for their characters. Zakharov's Andrei, for example, is much less sympathetic; he has a ways to go before he will become the noble,

1. *Polnoe sobranii sochinenii*. 90 vols. (Moscow, 1928-58) Vol. 13 (1949), 238-240.

but doomed, figure we've grown to know. Sonya's generous nature has not yet been tainted by calculating self-interest. Dolokhov is still ensnared in the romantic clichés that define him: he kills Andrei's cousin in a duel while serving in the Finnish army, after which he spends three harem-filled years in Georgia, fighting with Persians. Odd tidbits absent from the final text induce a smile of surprise: Andrei's take on the affair between Boris and Helene, Rostov at a brothel, or news of Helene's death from a miscarriage accompanied by the pointed observation that she had been separated from her husband for nine months.

For the most part, and increasingly in the latter half of the Zakharov text, the reader who already know the novel well is overtaken by anxiety. With so much of the Tolstoy text yet to come and so few pages remaining to the text in hand, the reader begins to experience the anxiety of frustrated anticipation, worrying lest favourite scenes be treated differently, that kisses might not be given, fights not fought, or epiphanies not reached. Indeed, two-thirds of the way through, this reader felt compelled to turn to the final chapter and read backwards, chapter by chapter, the sooner to learn how much of Tolstoy's novel was missing.

What then to make of Zakharov's *War and Peace*? A shorter, variant text to pique the curiosity of readers who already know the Tolstoy text? A convenience for busy readers in search of ways to save time? A disingenuous scheme to gain new market share? A Hollywood happy ending to alleviate stress in these difficult post-Soviet days? Whatever the motives, Zakharov's book has enjoyed success, if only among the Tolstoy aficionados who eagerly read it and then hold forth on how unethical the book is. One fervently hopes that the Zakharov text will not make its way to our shores in English translation.

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Peter Brock and John L. Keep, eds. *Life in a penal battalion of the Imperial Russian*

Army: the Tolstoyan N. T. Iziumchenko's story. Trans. J. Keep. York (UK): William Sessions Ltd, 2001. xiv + 63 pp.

The liberation of the peasants in 1861 in Russia was followed by a tumultuous period when many prominent writers were subjected to harsh attacks by critics of the social movement for the lack of moral values in their works. The failure of the *Going to the People* movement of 1874 showed clearly that the progressive circles of the Russian Empire had lost their sense of reality and their spiritual link to the people. This was the inevitable result of the educated classes' attempts to imitate Western models, deepening even further the rift between upper and lower classes. In *The Power of the Land* (1882) Gleb Uspensky, for example, examined in detail tragic feelings of desolation at Russia's inability to achieve the true social conditions for the free development of the individual.

Following the assassination of the reformist Tsar Alexander II in 1881 by young radical intellectuals-turned-terrorists, the government underwent a sharp change in attitude and began taking much more repressive measures against any kind of dissidents.

The outgrowing of social and political illusions also led to a disillusionment with the Russian Orthodox Church, and a growing number of non-conformists from all social classes turning to sectarians or to foreign Gospel preachers.

It was against the background of this atmosphere that Leo Tolstoy, following the completion of *Anna Karenina*, entered his so-called 'spiritual crisis' period, as he explained in *Confession* (1882). His new-found faith, no matter how confused, gradually came to inform his innermost conceptions of life, duty, faith, the philosophy of the land-tillers and, most importantly, the idea of pacifism and non-violent resistance to evil, and was in turn reflected in the views of his followers, subsequently known as Tolstoyans, perceived as a dangerous sect by both state and church.

One of the latter group, Nikolai Trofimovich Iziumchenko (1867-1927), was introduced to the Tolstoyans through the influence of a village