

A. A. Donskov, ed. *L. N. Tolstoi i N. N. Strakhov: Polnoe sobranie perepiski. Sostaviteli L. D. Gromova, T. G. Niki-forova. Ottawa: Slavic Research Group at the University of Ottawa and State L. N. Tolstoy Museum, Moscow, 2003. 2 vols., 1079 pp (paper).*

Tolstoy scholars will greet this book with cheers and applause—at last, a complete edition of the correspondence between Tolstoy and his long-term friend, Nikolai Strakhov, philosopher, journalist, and critic. The bond, perhaps surprisingly strong, that linked these two men was formed in the early 1870s and lasted until Strakhov's death in 1896. Strakhov became a frequent visitor at Iasnaia Poliana, not only as a favoured intellectual companion for the master, but a family friend, welcomed by the Countess and the children. When separated—Strakhov lived in St. Petersburg—he and Tolstoy wrote each other quite frequently, discussing whatever was on their minds—works-in-progress, future plans, business (Strakhov often served as Tolstoy's agent in dealings with publishers, also editor and proof-reader), philosophy, religion, mutual acquaintances, health, gossip, the weather. Fortunately, each participant preserved most of the other's letters (how many of us today do that with our e-mails?), and since their first publication in 1914<sup>1</sup> they have been a gold mine for Tolstoy biographers and scholars, a priceless source of insight into the workings of his mind. They rank alongside Tolstoy's other most revealing long-term intellectual correspondence, that with his distant relation, Countess Aleksandra Andreevna Tolstaia (Alexandrine).

By now a rarity and accessible only in research libraries, the Modzalevskii edition is also unsatisfactory in other ways. Many of Tolstoy's letters were deliberately excluded, apparently just to save space, especially if they had already been published

somewhere else. Others had not yet come to light. Furthermore, Modzalevskii stops in 1894, two years before Strakhov's death. Finally, only a few letters from Strakhov to the Countess were included or of the letters the two Tolstoys wrote him jointly. These latter lacunae had already been made up by Professor Donskov and his distinguished Russian associates with the publication of another volume in this series.<sup>2</sup> Now *all* (or almost all, see below) the Tolstoy-Strakhov letters plus the letters to Strakhov from Tolstoy and his wife together have been brought together in two convenient volumes, for which we should all give thanks. A fact that adds even greater excitement to this new edition is that it includes no less than nineteen letters from Strakhov to Tolstoy never published before.

To be sure, there are still some lacunae in the correspondence, gaps that will probably never be filled. For example, Tolstoy seems to have saved only two of Strakhov's letters in 1872, while writing 37 of his own, carefully preserved by his addressee. Likewise, quite a few of Tolstoy's letters from 1886-1887 seem to be lost. But once again, it is a joy to have the surviving letters so accessible.

The edition is an attractive one, nicely printed on good paper. Besides the letters, it contains an informative and illuminating introduction by Professor Donskov, the harbinger of a more substantial study still to come. It offers a translation by John Woodsworth of a small part of the 1896 Strakhov biography by Boris Nikol'skii<sup>3</sup> and many

1. *Perepiska L. N. Tolstogo s N. N. Strakhovym, 1870-1894*, ed. B. L. Modzalevskii (St. Petersburg: Izdanie Obshchestva Tolstovstogo Muzeia, 1914).

2. A. A. Donskov, ed., *L. N. Tolstoi i S. A. Tolstaia. Perepiska s N. N. Strakhovym* (Ottawa, 2000).

3. This translation, alas, is not free from errors. On p. Iviii the word *krasheninnyi*, "made of *krashenina*, a coarse peasant cloth," has been misread as *krashennyi*, "dyed"; the phrases *v dolbiashku*, *s entikh do entikh*, used of the educational methods in the seminary Strakhov attended, does not mean "a literally 'hard-hitting' approach," but rather "rote memorizing, from these lines to these lines." On p. Ivii "language arts" as a translation of *slovesnost'*, the subject Strakhov's father taught in the Belgorod seminary, surely reso-

illustrations—portraits of both correspondents, facsimiles of the letters and of Tolstoy manuscripts with Strakhov corrections. Viewing these facsimiles, one must marvel again at the extraordinary skill and dedication of scholars like Lidiia Dmitrievna Gromova, who have learned to decipher Tolstoy's impossible handwriting. The letters themselves are attractively arranged, each one beginning a new page and followed by annotations in slightly smaller type. This system leaves a good many blank spaces, very convenient for writing notes. There is a good index of names (but not subjects) at the back of vol. 2.

My parenthetical "almost" above indicates some puzzlement over discrepancies among the three major publications of these letters, the new Donskov edition (D), Modzalevskii's (M), and the Jubilee edition of Tolstoy's works (J). Here are some statistics in tabular form (numbers of letters):

	D	M	J
Tolstoy to Strakhov	236	77 <sup>4</sup>	235
Strakhov to Tolstoy	231	189 <sup>5</sup>	0 <sup>6</sup>

The noticed discrepancies are as follows:

1. A letter from Strakhov to Tolstoy dated September, 1876, M No. 34 (p. 87) with a note stating that the end of the letter is missing and that Tolstoy replied to it and to a Strakhov letter of 12 October only on 13 November. This letter is not in D.

2. Also not in D is M No. 52 (pp. 120-121), dated June-July 1877. This text is technically not part of the correspondence, but rather the draft of a letter by Tolstoy designed for publication, dealing

notes a bit too loudly of twentieth- and twenty-first century North American classrooms.

4. Plus the draft of a letter from Tolstoy to Katkov in Strakhov's hand with corrections by Tolstoy.

5. Plus three letters from Strakhov to Countess Tolstaia and one "attachment," a list of books compiled by Strakhov for Tolstoy.

6. Some Strakhov letters are quoted in annotations.

with M. N. Katkov's refusal to publish in *Russkii Vestnik* the final installment of *Anna Karenina*. The draft is written in Strakhov's hand, but has corrections by Tolstoy. J, vol. 62, pp. 329-331 prints two versions of this text as a letter to Katkov, neither identical with the one in M. A note on p. 332 reports a statement by Countess Tolstaia that instead of this letter Tolstoy sent a telegram to Katkov, demanding that he return the manuscript of the final installment and adding that in the future he, Tolstoy, would have nothing further to do with *Russkii Vestnik*.

3. Not in D is M No. 177 (pp. 299-301), Strakhov to Tolstoy, 13 September 1882, but with a note stating that the date should be 13 October, on the grounds that the letter responds to Tolstoy's letter of 11 October.

4. Two letters from Tolstoy to Strakhov, M Nos. 230a (p. 398), dated end of 1880s or beginning of 1890s, and M No. 231 (p. 398), dated 4 February 1890 are neither in D nor in J.

5. Tolstoy's letter of 18-19 July 1883 is in D but not in J.

One would have liked some explanation of these anomalies.

As one would expect from the Gromova-Nikiforova team, the annotations to these letters are on the whole excellent—precise, informative, trustworthy, making effective use of the vast consultative resources of the Tolstoy Museum. The notes are so good that one would often wish for more of them—more detail, fuller explanations. For example, there is an illuminating note on p. 25 concerning Prince V. P. Meshcherskii, the publisher of *Grazhdanin*, for which Strakhov frequently wrote. Here I learned to my surprise that Meshcherskii was Karamzin's grandson. Of course, it would have been possible to include more information concerning this influential figure, including his relations with the royal family and the secret subsidies *Grazhdanin* received from the privy purse. The notes in D are generally fuller than those in M, but once in a while M offers more, and in such cases one regrets that this information was not simply carried over into D. For instance, M, pp. 203-205, offers a long and interesting note on Prince V. N. Gorchakov, an ancestor of To-

Istoy's whom he planned to use as the prototype for the central character in the unfinished story *Truzhdaiushchie i obremenennye* [*Those Who Labour and are Heavy Laden*]. This Gorchakov rose to be a major general and military governor in Reval, but was then disgraced, convicted of speculation and banished to Siberia. D conveys none of this. Similarly, on pp. 436-37 M gives a detailed characterization of Tolstoy's old friend Ivan Ivanovich Raevskii (1835-?), at whose estate he stayed while working on famine relief in 1891. D (p. 885) hardly identifies him at all. Lack of space can hardly be the excuse, for there are in D a great many superfluous notes. How many times, for instance, need we be told that when Strakhov sends his greetings to "the Countess" (Grafine) he means S. A. Tolstaia? Did we really have to be informed that Balzac was "a French writer, author of the epic *La Comédie humaine*, comprising 90 novels and stories"? On the other hand, cross-referencing is quite sporadic, and one must often resort to the index to find where a character was first mentioned and annotated.

In conclusion, I am pleased to be able to offer in homage one little factlet, an amplification to the annotations. The "Kopteva" mentioned by Strakhov in his letter of 21 April 1877 and described by him as "an old maid ... former beauty and nihilist, extremely well read and advanced in her views" is given no footnote at all. In the index she is identified only as "an acquaintance of Strakhov's." Surely this is Mar'ia Nikolaevna Kopteva, sweetheart of Leskov's "enigmatic" friend Artur Benni and the model for Liza Bakhareva in *Nekuda* [*No Way Out*]. Alas, I do not know her dates.

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