
Remembering Lidiia Dmitrievna Gromova-Opulskaya

compiled by Edwina Cruise

The death of Lidiia Dmitrievna will be met with deep sorrow by all of us interested in Russian literature. One of the best has passed away. When I was studying at Moscow State University there was a saying that Lidiia Dmitrievna “knows everything and even more.” And that was exactly my impression when I wrote my books on Tolstoy and Chekhov. Her knowledge of Russian literature was impressive, and being a generous and enthusiastic person, she was always ready to share her knowledge with us, proud that Tolstoy studies are presently enjoying increasing popularity all over the world.

It is cold today. Lidiia Dmitrievna has passed away. But we are all grateful to have met this open-minded and unique representative of Russian scholarship.

GEIR KJETSAA,
UNIVERSITY
OF OSLO



My personal contact with Lidiia Dmitrievna was not extensive: two Jubilee conferences at Iasnaia Poliana, 2000 and 2003, conveniently timed for academics around Tolstoy’s birthday at the end of August. The impression Lidiia Dmitrievna made on me that first summer was astonishing. A mas-

sive presence. She knew everything, took pleasure in everything, was unfailingly polite (even to the amateur enthusiasts who turned up to talk). She could single out the workers in any crowd, the ones who had done their homework and were worth engaging, while dismissing the others with a friendly nod, her eyes already fixed somewhere else. People turned to Lidiia Dmitrievna intuitively for the pacing of things, to resolve a paradox, and for final commentaries.

I remember a strange thought that crossed my mind: "A completely *free* person." Free, because (or so it seemed to me) she didn't have to live wholly where we were living, in the chaotic present, battling American blindness, culturelessness, casual and mediated violence, wondering daily whether it was worth it and What, then, Should We Do. Lidiia Dmitrievna seemed to exist partly in that present, but mostly she was distributed among those Tolstoyan decades that she had so fastidiously filled in, which demanded her constant vigilance and readiness to adjust or refine some overlooked detail. Thus the presentations that seemed to engage her most were not the flashy interpretation or big revisionist statement but the modest, concrete, documented topic that shed some light on a previously obscured corner. This is the freedom of knowing what and how one has agreed to serve. In that service one is always productive and at home. Perhaps such a model of life-scholarship cannot survive into the harried, multi-tasking twenty-first century, but Lidiia Dmitrievna's deeply rooted image will remain an inspiration.

CARYL EMERSON,
PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

I met Lidiia Dmitrievna for the first time in Harrogate, England. The year was 1990 and the doors from the Soviet Union to the West had unexpectedly been flung wide open. To the last International Congress of *Soviet* and East European Studies came the old Soviet emissaries as well as scholars who earlier had not been allowed to go abroad. There was a strange mixture of people.

Lidiia Dmitrievna and I appeared on the same panel. When she spoke about the new collected works of Tolstoy, I was struck by the cheerfulness of this little lady, her enthusiasm. I was somewhat taken aback by her words: "Я конечно этого не увижу..." [Of course I will not see it through].

I got to know her better when we (Galina Galagan was also in the group) travelled to Leeds to visit Michael Holman. Lidiia Dmitrievna had a delicate and good-natured sense of humour. When we started discussing translations of Tolstoy, Michael brought out the English translation where Anna's pregnancy is disguised as a "strange Ori-

ental disease" (Nabokov): "I am beremenna." We all laughed.

My next meeting with Lidiia Dmitrievna was in Bratislava three years later, at The International Congress of Slavists. In Bratislava we sensed that a new "iron curtain" had appeared—the "green" curtain of dollars. The now *Russian* delegation lived in a dormitory, not too close to the Congress premises. One day I saw Lidiia Dmitrievna sitting on a bench outside and went up to her. She told me she was tired of papers but had to wait for a special bus that came only when sessions were over to fetch the Russian delegates for their quarters. What a chance for Tolstoy discussions! We sat on the bench for over two hours.

In 1997 I wrote to Lidiia Dmitrievna in hopes that she might help get me into the Tolstoy archives to look at manuscripts of *Anna Karenina*. Now started a race against the Russian bureaucracy. After the first Yeltsin years of freedom the old system was tightening its grip. When I submitted the IMLI invitation procured by Lidiia Dmitrievna, the Russian consular officer haughtily replied: "This is not enough. You need a confirmation from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs." I turned to Lidiia Dmitrievna again. By now the correspondence went quicker: a fax-machine had appeared at IMLI.

When I finally arrived in Moscow and went to IMLI, I had a big box of chocolate with me for Lidiia Dmitrievna—all the trouble she had taken to get me the right papers! She wrote the "orders" for me to get into the Tolstoy archive and disappeared to get them duly stamped. And took the chocolate box with her. When she came back she apparently felt she owed me an explanation: she had given the box to the person who had been getting and sending all the faxes for my invitation. Dear Lidiia Dmitrievna—always so thoughtful!

During my stay in Moscow I visited her several times at her home. She tried to help me to ask for the right manuscripts at the archive, not an easy task since manuscripts had been reshuffled and renumbered. And how could anyone read Tolstoy's handwriting? All these loops and knots reminded me of the backside of the embroideries I did in my school years. I realized I had no patience for textology.

Lidiia Dmitrievna's interest in foreign scholars' research and her willingness to help us set her apart. When I think of her my inner eye catches her in an orchard on a sunny autumn day, collecting red-cheeked apples in a basket. She smiles and says: "There are many good apples ripening this year."

BARBARA LÖNNQVIST,
ABO AKADEMI UNIVERSITY

I first met Lidiia Dmitrievna in 1982, when I was in Moscow on an IREX. My chaperone/guide was Valeri Aleksandrov of IMLI (who has remained my friend ever since), and he introduced me to Lidiia Dmitrievna. All three of us were among many passengers on a bus to Iasnaiia Poliana—my first trip there. I sat across the aisle from Lidiia Dmitrievna and we had a nice talk. She had just defended her *doktorskaia dissertatsiia* (the *kandidatskaia* was long before), and I asked her how that went. Obviously, it went well, but she said she had been quite anxious. I liked her very much. There was never a trace in her of the common aggressive/defensive Soviet behaviour in relation to Americans; we were just human equals.

I got to know Lidiia Dmitrievna much better during later visits to Moscow, especially during another IREX in 1992. I would call her and she would always generously invite me to lunch at her cozy apartment on Potapovskii pereulok. The food was always excellent and abundant, and the conversation fascinating. We talked about personal matters—her daughter in Canada and her grandchildren—and we talked very frankly about world affairs. But mostly we talked about her work, most recently on the new Tolstoy edition, also her continuation of the Gusev biography and her updating of the Gitovich chronology of Chekhov. I marveled at her ability to decipher Tolstoy's handwriting, which she had learned to do with great ease.

In the post-Soviet period Lidiia Dmitrievna was troubled by the fact that few young people were interested any more in being trained by her as literary scholars—the course was difficult and the rewards, especially economic rewards, few. She did her work for love. She loved scholarship and couldn't imagine being without it. Her daugh-

ter wanted her to come and live in Vancouver, but Lidiia Dmitrievna couldn't imagine what she would do there. She thought she would die there of boredom. After her last health episode, she said she was only working enough for two people instead of four! Tolstoy and Chekhov were her life. She loved them, and she loved studying them.

Her second husband, Pavel Gromov, was a fine scholar. His posthumous life of Chekhov is very good, and Lidiia Dmitrievna was very proud to get it published, after much effort, in the series *Zhizn' zamechatel'nykh liudei*.

I regretted that Lidiia Dmitrievna never learned English, so that she never could read the output of foreign scholars in her field, including mine. But I gave her books anyway, which she always received graciously and gratefully—and, I suspect, immediately gave them away to others. I myself was the beneficiary of such quick turn-arounds, as grateful recipient of books presented to her by younger scholars (though not foreigners).

Without Lidiia Dmitrievna Moscow is a less attractive place for me. I miss her very much.

HUGH MCLEAN,
PROFESSOR EMERITUS,
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY

I first met Lidiia Dmitrieva in fall, 1987, when I stuffed myself into a van full of Russian scholars in downtown Washington, DC. The van's destination was Dulles Airport; I was hitching a ride to chat with the noted Americanist Dmitri Urnov, who knows a great deal about horses. Our conversation, which raced from Akhal-teke to Orlov Trotter, seemed to delight the bright-eyed, rosy-cheeked woman sitting behind us. Even then she looked grandmotherly. When Dmitri prompted me that the woman behind us was the leading specialist on *Kholstomer*, I do recall swooning slightly. I had been introduced to Lidiia Dmitrievna just moments before, but her name, a rapid-fire multisyllabic jet stream, literally flew in one ear and out the other.

I do recall treating her to an ice cream cone at the airport, both of us licking away, smug like cats. And then energetic, heartfelt hugs before she boarded the plane.

I didn't see Lidiia Dmitrievna again until August, 1998, the first international Tolstoy conference at Iasnaia Poliana. I was giving a paper on Frou-Frou and I was very nervous; did I have anything worth saying in that august company? Lidiia Dmitrievna, always generous and open-minded in her reactions to presentations by foreign scholars (but I only learned this later), did not disappoint. She urged me to hurry up and publish because she needed the commentary for the new Tolstoy edition.

I owe my invitation to Lidiia Dmitrievna's home to the *Tolstoy Studies Journal*. Literally. On March 8, 2002, International Women's Day, I came to her door with two complete sets of the journal and a flowering plant. Lidiia Dmitrievna proudly showed me her apartment, extravagantly rusticated by her late husband, Gromov, who loved to work with wood. It reminded me of an upscale hunting lodge. An ingenious use of space permitted the display of an enormous number of books. We had a wonderful talk that day in her light and airy study. Nothing gentle or grandmotherly about her probing questions and encyclopedic memory! We had a wonderful lunch to celebrate the holiday. The sweet wine gave us both rosy cheeks.

The last time I saw Lidiia Dmitrievna was at Iasnaia Poliana, the 2003 Tolstoy conference. She was physically weaker and her eyes were worse. But she was, nonetheless, in fine form, energetically responding to papers. Emboldened by our discussion the previous year, I could hardly wait to present my ideas on the English novel in *Anna Karenina* to her. Again she responded with a note of urgency, mobilizing us all to help with the work of the new Tolstoy edition.

Thank you, Lidiia Dmitrievna, for your extraordinary dedication to Tolstoy studies. I owe you so much.

EDWINA J. CRUISE,
MOUNT HOLYOKE COLLEGE

I have known Lidiia Dmitrievna personally for the past fifteen years and over this time our friendship has grown in strength through personal visits in both Russia and Canada as well as through several joint projects, the most significant being the two-

volume complete correspondence between Tolstoy and Strakhov, published a few months before her passing. What impressed me about her (as, I suppose, all those who knew her) was her enormous knowledge of her country's literature—especially, of course, Tolstoy—and her infectious love and respect for him as man and writer. Above all, she loved his works of fiction (she was rather less impressed with his political and religious treatises), along with his diaries, letters, and reminiscences by his contemporaries, and especially the variants of his works.

It was my privilege to work with her on several occasions in the Moscow Tolstoy Museum's treasure room [*stal'naia komnata*], verifying the Jubilee Edition texts against Tolstoy's original manuscripts. This was indeed a rare opportunity to watch the world's most accomplished Russian textologist at work, marveling at her ease in reading Tolstoy's frustrating handwriting (which so few, unfortunately, are able to decipher correctly). Her love for following the stages [*proslezhivanie etapov*] of Tolstoy's literary career is legendary. Only through a meticulous analysis of the variants, she often emphasized to me, can one appreciate the thought process of the writer and bear witness to the otherwise unseen struggle of artistic creation.

A related memory is observing her give seminars to students, at both Moscow University and the Russian Academy of Sciences Institute of World Literature. With characteristic openness and sincerity she encouraged them not to rely on simply regurgitating past studies [*perezhovyvat' perezhovannoe*], but, through the exhaustive study of original sources and especially the variants, to be bold in drawing and expressing their own conclusions.

She laid particular emphasis on the ability to decipher Tolstoy's handwriting, which she had mastered to a higher degree than any other scholar. (Her passing may very well delay the publication of the remaining books in the current 100-volume edition for this very reason.) With her help (particularly through the alphabet table of Tolstoy's letters which she drew up for me in her own hand), I managed to gain some proficiency in this art. I take pleasure in enclosing the table

herewith (see Fig. 1), in the hope that it will inspire at least a few budding Tolstoy scholars to heed the advice of one of the most eminent Tolstoy specialists the world has produced.

ANDREW DONSKOV,
THE UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA

No doubt many other contributors have written about Lidiia Dmitrievna's hospitality to foreign scholars, whom she wined and dined whenever they were in Moscow. We ate in the kitchen, of course, but my favourite room was the study. Compared to the rest of the wood-paneled apartment, this room was relatively bare. Her bed stood in it, right next to her desk, which was positioned, for maximum light, under a large window. Despite near blindness, Lidiia Dmitrievna continued working up until her death, and indeed she told me many times that her life was her work.

I greatly admired Lidiia Dmitrievna both as a scholar and a leader. In the first role, she was most famous for her preparations of texts for academic editions not only of Tolstoy, but of Chekhov, Dostoevsky, and others. She was the most accomplished reader of Tolstoy's handwriting, which became particularly illegible after he injured his right arm and hand in a riding accident in 1864.

Lidiia Dmitrievna was always called in to decipher disputed phrases or words in Tolstoy's manuscripts. She also loved the art of separating the layers of a manuscript and deciding which ones had preceded others. She once explained to me why she had devoted herself to lowly textology. For her, it was the essence of literary scholarship, and interpretation, though more glamorous and also necessary, was abstract by comparison. If the text is inaccurate or spoiled, she told me, interpretation won't be based on reality. Lidiia Dmitrievna felt an obligation to future scholars to get things right. She learned and practised her skills under conditions that do not

exist today in Russia, and she worried about the dearth of good young textologists to replace her.

Lidiia Dmitrievna practised leadership by example rather than by intimidation. She was formidable without being fearsome. The daughter of a village school teacher from the Moscow region, she rose through the Soviet system under the patronage of the great Tolstoy scholar N. K. Gudzi. She had obviously been a very handsome young woman in the Russian style, and in old age she still carried herself with womanly confidence in her good looks. She had piercing blue eyes that remained alert and even a bit grave while she smiled, which she did frequently. In the politics of her profession, Lidiia Dmitrievna steered a prudent course between the best and the possible. She tried to achieve her aims without unnecessary friction. At the same time, she was very tough. She expected the respect that she deserved, and she got it. When she rose in any forum, everyone listened carefully. Often her remarks synthesized discussion and ended it. While speaking her mind and, in a sense, setting the parameters of debate, she always looked for something redeeming to say even when she deeply disagreed with a position, and she never insulted any speaker.

Although her interpretive writings, especially those from the Soviet period, followed predictable lines, I was often surprised how open she was to various ideas, especially in private conversation. She had genuine intellectual curiosity. She assumed that one should not lie in public, but one should also not say everything one thought. This applied to the private lives of the Tolstoyes and especially to sexual matters, which she thought were nobody's business. I'm afraid that Lidiia Dmitrievna, who had a direct connection to Tolstoy through her mentor and many others, has taken some very juicy gossip to her grave.

DONNA TUSSING ORWIN,
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

A	a	а	Г	г		
Б	б	б	Ф	ф		
В	в	в	Х	х		
Г	г	г	Ц	ц	4г	г
Д	д	д	Ш	ш	ш	ш
Е	е	е	У	у		
Ж	ж	ж	Ъ	ъ		
З	з	з	Ы	ы		
И	и	и	Э	э		
К	к	к	Б	б		
Л	л	л	Ю	ю		
М	м	м	Я	я		
Н	н	н	Ѡ (амб)	Ѡ		
О	о	о	Ѣ	Ѣ		
П	п	п	Ѥ	Ѥ		
Р	р	р	Ѧ	Ѧ		
С	с	с				
Т	т	т				

Figure 1: L. D. Gromova-Opulskaya's key to Tolstoy's handwriting.