

dynamic life independent of and beyond anybody else's idea of it. Instead of observation, appreciation, coherence, or even simple biographical retailing to do his one task, Briggs offers us bargain-basement psychoanalysis: "At the deepest level of his psyche Leo Tolstoy seems to have been an unhappy, unpleasant man attracted to other unhappy, unpleasant men through inescapable affinity" (110). Right back at you, Tony B.!

Briggs concludes while up to his chin in his theory of Tolstoy's

outright aggressive enmity. It is this *negative* principle, in his personality, thinking and writing that makes overall sense of Leo Tolstoy, consistently explaining the man, his life, his conduct and most of his work. (111)

That'll save students some reading—Tolstoy explained! *Bolshoe spasibo!* Any beginner would learn more about Tolstoy—his voice, his power, his genius—in the five minutes it takes to read the first chapter of *Childhood* or *Anna Karenina* than by reading the entire *Brief Lives: Leo Tolstoy*. I've quoted almost as many words by Briggs in this review as Briggs quotes Tolstoy.

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**Ореханов, Георгий. *Жестокий суд России*: В. Г.**

***Чертков в жизни Л. Н. Толстого*. Москва:**

**Православный Свято-Тихоновский**

**Гуманитарный Университет, 2009. 192**

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Alexander Chertkov is probably one of the most controversial figures in the history of nineteenth century Russian literature. His supporters view him as Leo Tolstoy's favorite pupil and most devoted disciple who sacrificed his own well being in

pursuit of popularizing his teacher's ideas. His opponents, on the other hand, see him as an opportunist whose attempts to monopolize publishing rights to Tolstoy's literary heritage resulted in Tolstoy's final break up with his family. In his book *The Cruel Judgment of Russia: Vladimir Chertkov in Lev Tolstoy's Life* (*Жестокий суд России: В. Г. Чертков в жизни Л. Н. Толстого*) published in Moscow in 2009, Georgy Orekhanov adds his voice to those of Chertkov's opponents while also presenting the views of Chertkov's supporters.

In the introduction to his book Orekhanov gives credit to Chertkov not only for his monumental work of preserving of Tolstoy's writings, but also for editing and supervising the publication of the first Russian-language edition of the complete works of Tolstoy. He also notes, however, that the success of Chertkov's work for a long time made it impossible for critics

to ask 'unpleasant' questions, the most important of which would have been the following: how accurate is the picture of Tolstoy's relationship with Chertkov based mainly on memoirs of Chertkov and people who shared his views. (4, my translations throughout)

Orekhanov further explains that for a long time "the right to speak and write about Chertkov was monopolized by his students and followers" (5). He also notes that since Chertkov's archives have never been thoroughly analyzed or completely catalogued, "no serious study of Chertkov's personality has been conducted either in pre-Soviet or in Soviet [scholarly] literature" (5). In the remainder of the introduction, Orekhanov provides a comprehensive overview of existing works about Chertkov and his relationship with Tolstoy.

In the beginning of the first chapter Orekhanov provides his readers with information about Chertkov's family and his life prior to his

encounter with Tolstoy. Chertkov was born into a prominent and well-off aristocratic family. The Chertkovs' house in St. Petersburg was often visited by members of the royal family, including the emperor Alexander II with whom Chertkov's mother was closely acquainted when he was still the heir to the throne. In his autobiography Chertkov mentions that on several occasions Alexander II paid him extraordinary attention. There were even rumors that Chertkov was the emperor's out-of-wedlock son. In his memoirs Chertkov reveals that as a child he often played with the future emperor Alexander III. Orekhanov concludes that "the intervention of Chertkov's close family members, especially his mother, later significantly softened all governmental measures against Chertkov's and Tolstoy's anti-government and anti-church activity" (23).

Chertkov and Tolstoy met when Chertkov, in search of a more meaningfully spiritual life, quit his promising military career, became increasingly interested in Protestantism, and began his charitable work among peasants. Prior to his first encounter with Chertkov, Tolstoy was experiencing "an attack of loneliness" that followed his "religious crisis" (27). Orekhanov quotes from a letter from Tolstoy's wife, Sofia Tolstaya, to her sister: "I have been lonely before, but never as lonely as now. It is so clear, so evident to me that nobody wants to know me and that I am of no interest to anyone" (27). (Is she referring to herself or to Tolstoy?) Orekhanov takes the side of the Russian Orthodox Church and claims that this loneliness was Tolstoy's "spiritual recompense for his departure from 'Christ and His Church'" (27). Chertkov, who entered Tolstoy's circle during this time of isolation, soon became the writer's closest friend which he remained, regardless of some disagreements, until Tolstoy's death. At their first encounter Tolstoy and Chertkov felt a "spiritual affinity" (28). Orekhanov notes, "The exceptional closeness of this relationship is evident in the number of letters [Tolstoy and Chertkov sent to

each other]. In twenty-seven years of their relationship Tolstoy wrote Chertkov nine hundred letters (including telegrams), i.e., on average one letter every ten days—more than to anybody else including his family members. Chertkov wrote to Tolstoy even more often than Tolstoy wrote to him, evidenced by the 1127 letters written by Chertkov to Tolstoy. Orekhanov writes:

Chertkov's active and energetic work and his attention to the writer's ideas promoted the development of their mutual closeness and sense of spiritual communion. In addition, the letters they wrote to each other during the early stage of their relationship demonstrate that Tolstoy was very attracted to a young man carried away by religious questions, ready to hark enthusiastically to his teacher's every word, and highly motivated to materialize them in his own as well as anybody else's life. (29)

Their relationship also had a practical side: Chertkov was actively involved in publishing Tolstoy's works, disseminating them in Europe and "preserving [Tolstoy's] literary heritage for future generations" (31). The achievement of the last two objectives became the main goal of Chertkov's life.

In the early 1890s, writes Orekhanov, "Chertkov took the road of conscious opposition to the political regime [in Russia] whose opponent he had been for a while" (43). Orekhanov suggests that Chertkov felt antagonistic to the Russian Orthodox Church. Thus, for example, also in the 1890s he became increasingly interested in the history of religious sects in Russia. He began collecting documents for a project he later called "The History of the Persecution of Christians in Russia" (43). The government issued a resolution to exile Chertkov to Siberia. Because of his family's friendship with the royal family, however, the decision was amended and Chertkov was offered a choice: be exiled to the Baltic territories where he would live under police surveillance or be exiled outside of Russia for an undefined period.

Chertkov chose the latter and went to Great Britain where he would spend eleven years of his life. Orekhanov comments that Chertkov was “exiled to a country that he loved no less than he loved Russia” (56).

Orekhanov claims that since Tolstoy was “deprived of the direct help of his closest and most loyal assistant,” he “was apparently insulted and offended” by the decision of the government (45-46). Orekhanov also notes that Chertkov’s exile resulted in the “escalation of [Tolstoy’s] anti-government and anti-church hostility” (45).

While in Great Britain, Chertkov established several publishing houses that published most of Tolstoy’s works, including some which were forbidden in Russia, and tried to monopolize the publishing of the works of Tolstoy in English and other European languages. Some of the publishing houses Chertkov founded became “important mechanisms of disseminating the views of Tolstoy and his followers in Europe, including their views on religious topics” (47). In other words, “thanks to his wide and varied connections in Great Britain, Chertkov carried out intensive propagandist work, creating in Europe the image of Tolstoy as a fighter against the [Russian] regime and Church” (52).

In Great Britain, Chertkov also built a depository for Tolstoy’s works. Orekhanov provides a detailed vivid description of this depository:

The depository was built in accordance with all the newest recommendations on correct storage; correct temperature and humidity was maintained by the use of a special gas heater and ventilation system. [The depository] was equipped with a state-of-the-art fire control system. (64)

An advanced alarm system was installed, and the depository was built in such way that in case of an earthquake the building would sink into the ground, but would not be destroyed (64).

Orekhanov also discusses the reasons why Tolstoy gave Chertkov exclusive rights to publish his written works. Tolstoy refused to collect any royalties on his work. He also did not want any royalties to be collected after his death. He suspected that after his death his family members would disregard his instructions and would start collecting royalties on his writing. Tolstoy, at the same time, believed that his loyal friend and favorite pupil, Chertkov, would diligently follow his instructions. One of Orekhanov’s main conclusions is that as a result of the fear that his family members would not follow his instructions and would receive money for his works, Tolstoy became completely dependent upon Chertkov. Orekhanov writes, “It’s hard to say when exactly this unnatural situation emerged in which [Tolstoy] finally formed this relationship with his young friend, the situation in which Chertkov acquired total control over Tolstoy’s literary heritage and, in fact, over his life” (60).

Orekhanov suggests that Chertkov started take steps towards establishing control over Tolstoy’s works early in their relationship. Thus, he had persuaded Tolstoy to give him copies of all his works. As early as the late 1880s

[Maria] Tolstaya [Lev Tolstoy’s daughter], who always felt complete confidence in Chertkov, begins to suspect him of some sort of haste. She thinks that Chertkov is overly zealous in the way he pulls works from under father’s pen. (43)

Orekhanov also notes that “Using Tolstoy’s lack of interest to collecting his royalties, Chertkov acquired a monopoly in copying, archiving, translating and publishing the new works of Tolstoy” (65). Later Chertkov extends his monopoly to Tolstoy’s earlier works, as well as his essays and letters. In later years, Tolstoy’s concern increased that his family members might not follow his instructions, and instead use his works as they

pleased. Tolstoy's anxiety resulted in the writing of his will in secrecy.

In the following chapter, Orekhanov discusses Chertkov's role in the writing of the will. His analysis of the support and assistance provided by Tolstoy's youngest daughter, Alexandra, is particularly interesting. Orekhanov, who is a priest of the Russian Orthodox Church in addition to being a literary critic, pays significant attention in his book to Tolstoy's and Chertkov's relationship with church. He even suggests that Tolstoy, whose complex relationship with the clergy resulted in his excommunication and whose will recommended that there be no priests at his funeral, changed his

mind during the last days or hours of his life and wanted to confess. Chertkov after Tolstoy escaped from Yasnaya Polyana was with Tolstoy all the time and refused to permit the priest or even the writer's family members to see Tolstoy. Orekhanov's greatest accusation is that during Tolstoy's last days Chertkov used the writer's isolation and lack of strength to protect his own rights to Tolstoy's works which had been assigned to him by Tolstoy in his will and did not allow Tolstoy to reconcile with his family and with the church.

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