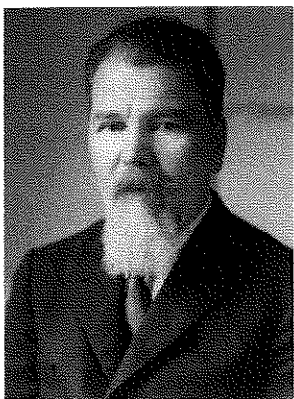

Translations

Encounters with Tolstoy (N. A. Tsurikov)¹



N. A. Tsurikov
(late 1930s - early 1940s)

The following memoirs on Tolstoy are the result of, but not limited to, several weeks spent by the author at Iasnaia Poliana as teacher of one of Tolstoy's grandsons. Nikolai Aleksandrovich Tsurikov (1886 - 1957) was mainly known within the Russian diaspora as a writer (he used the pen names Ivan Belenikhin and Z), literary critic, and publicist. A participant in both World War I and the Russian Civil War, Tsurikov left Russia in 1920 for Constantinople, and in 1923 settled in Prague. Published widely in leading émigré newspapers and journals (*Russkaia mysl'*, *Studencheskie gody*, *Rul'*, *Rossia*, *Vozrozhdenie*, *Bor'ba za Rossiiu*, *Za svobodu*, *Molva*, *Mech*, and others), he was editor of *Den' russkoi kul'tury* and member of the editorial committee of *Rossia i slavianstvo*. It is precisely in two of these émigré publications—*Rossia i slavianstvo* and *Vozrozhdenie*—that Tsurikov, often as Ivan Belenikhin, began publishing his reminiscences of life in pre-revolutionary Russia in the form of short essays.

His account of Tolstoy, originally serialized in *Vozrozhdenie*, was based only partially on the short time he spent at Iasnaia Poliana in 1909, when he was a law student at Moscow State University. His impressions and experiences were also inspired by witnessing, and having grown up in close proximity to, Tolstoy's extended family and life on their estates.

Appearing for the first time in English, Tsurikov's account presents a refreshing contemporary look, not clouded by doctrinal prejudices, at the great writer and novelist.²

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On June 12th 1898, together with Sonia Nikolaevna [the wife of Il'ia L'vovich³ - N. T.], I visited the Tsurikov, Afremov and Levitskii⁴ families. My impression was very favourable, I grew fond of many, but I fell ill and did not complete my tasks, rather I caused trouble and distress to both the Levitskiis and my own family. (From Tolstoy's diary, Tolstoy 99.)

My reminiscences of Tolstoy were published, with the above heading, almost 30 years ago. They did not appear as a separate pamphlet, or in a journal, but in a newspaper (*Vozrozhdenie*⁵), where they were serialized over the course of several issues. It goes without saying that these memoirs are not accessible to the general reading audience.

Approximately one month after my memoirs had appeared, I. A. Bunin,⁶ whose meetings with me I have described separately, mentioned them in his article "On Tolstoy memoirs" (Bunin 2-3).

Finished reading Tsurikov's *Encounters with Tolstoy*. Very valuable and well written. Tsurikov is absolutely correct in saying that there is no end to memoirs on Tolstoy. Do many of them really represent Tolstoy the way he was? In Tsurikov's memoirs he is unusually real and alive. Tsurikov says that most memoirists who write about Tolstoy belong to a different social class than him. I would add: that is the problem, but not with Tsurikov. One would hope, therefore, that the *Encounters with Tolstoy* will not be lost among similar essays in that genre (2).⁷

Those acquainted with memoirs of Tolstoy know that generally they can be divided into two, unequal and very different categories: recollections of Tolstoyans, very often approaching hagiography, and memoirs of those who, willingly or not, came to know not a saint, but a sinner, and described him as such. They perceived and described him from a most uninteresting perspective—that of his consistency [or lack of it—V. T.]. Both groups, moreover, very often came from a different class and background than Tolstoy; they therefore naturally, though unintentionally, missed vital and essential points. In both types of memoirs we would be left with reminiscences that convey dark and heavy impressions. If these memoirs did not include examples of Tolstoy's own religious-moral instructions or the illustrations of his behaviour which contradict his teaching—very frequently in the course of a few pages or chapters—none of Tolstoy's non-pedantic sayings, which are totally full of true Tolstoyan scope, aspiration, and witticism, would have come down to us, and we would be left with dark and heavy impressions of him. (An example of such a saying is that in all of Ibsen's dramas people ascend the mountain.) On the one hand, one cannot but feel sad and vexed while reading D. P. Makovitskii's⁸ *Notes from Iasnaia Poliana*⁹ with its dedication to the Chinese people, gentle, forgiving, and non-resisting in the face of evil, thereby especially dear to Tolstoy, or his recollection of Tolstoy's discourse on peace or a non-violent future revolution, etc. On the other hand, when a visitor to Iasnaia Poliana recalls Tolstoy's appetite in consuming well-prepared mushrooms of three kinds out of three separate jars, these "mushrooms" push everything else into the background, and stick in one's memory like burdock to hair—impossible to remove.

There also exists a third, though scarce, category of Tolstoy memoirs. I remember one landowner who held a grudge against Tolstoy for his story *Master and Man*. "After reading *Master and Man* I cannot stand to ride during snow storms anymore. As soon as I see even a little snow, I stay in. He has really killed me." Such impressions were, of course, not created during a day trip to Iasnaia Poliana via express train from Moscow or St. Petersburg—one had to reside somewhere nearby, in a snowed-in estate.

Then there were those for whom Tolstoy's collective teachings were entirely foreign, in so far as they can be considered his own, since they represented his corrected version of Christianity with certain additions. Finally, there were friends, not just of Sofya Andreevna or Lev Nikolaevich, but of part or all of the family. My parents, who shared some of Tolstoy's pedagogical and social attitudes and opinions, belonged to this last group but shared characteristics of all three.

My own reminiscences are peculiar in that I saw Tolstoy mainly in my childhood and youth, and only once in my adulthood. Tolstoy loved children and communicated surprisingly well with them. That may explain my early impression of him. I must mention one other circumstance as well. Tolstoy was a man of exceptionally intense feelings that never ceased to exist in him. Contrary to the distortions put forth by Tolstoy's obsequious followers, to the end of his days Tolstoy was subject to all earthly passions, loving, understanding, and viewing life like no one else. Where the ordinary person, especially one castrated by our one-sided "foolish," rational education, would pass by not noticing anything, a whole world—stormy, moving, attractive, and repulsive alike—would open up for him.

Although I do not enjoy recalling it, and I do not wish to offend any of Tolstoy's followers, the impression which I formed of him over the course of two weeks in 1909 was as follows. The old Tolstoy was not kind, at least rather stern, he was jealous, far from indifferent toward food, very attached to his former life, and even a miser. In other words, he was filled with all sorts of striking human vices. I would not mention this side of him if I believed that great people can be judged only by the presence of virtues (and little people only by the absence of vices), and had I not witnessed how excited he became at the presence of anything good, and had I not seen that all of his ponderous and excruciating doctrines were but an external manifestation of his self-appraisal. Lacking in kindness and good humour, Tolstoy was deeply moral, and, together with his vices, had a very functioning conscience. Everything I write and mention is not in condemnation and judgment, but rather in defence of a great writer and man from the colourless stylization of mediocre disciples.

Lastly, were these recollections a reflection of only my own experience, I would, of course, not recount them.

Owing to his sensitivity, Tolstoy was very impressionable and changed according to his surroundings. In Iasnaia Poliana he acted one way, when in Nikol'sko Viazemskoe, Grinevka, or Kochetki (the estates of S. L. and I. L. Tolstoy and his son-in-law M. S. Sukhotin¹⁰) he acted differently, and finally, became unrecognizable once torn away from the company of his Tolstoyans or when visiting not children, but strangers.

The overwhelming majority of those describing Tolstoy remember him from Iasnaia Poliana not in the times of Fet and Turgenev, but of Chertkov and Gusev,¹¹ when it was a blatantly tasteless combination of a rationalistic monastery and an old genteel estate.

I was able to observe him in a completely different environment, one which had been described [in his works—V.T.] by himself in earlier periods of his life. Whether acting as religious philosopher or moralist and pedagogue, Tolstoy never ceased to be a Russian master and lord, both in its positive and negative aspects. If one strives to understand Tolstoy both as a writer and equally as an outstanding individual, as opposed to simply glorifying or ridiculing his teachings, this has to be remembered at all times.

I was born and grew up in the "land of Turgenev." This is a very fitting term, and it was used by all of us locals. Among the natives of our land are Zhukovskii, Del'vig, Sukhovo-Kobylin, the brothers Kireevskii, Khomiakov, Zhemchuzhnikov, Apukhtin, Polonskii, L. Andreev, Tiutchev, Tolstoy, Turgenev, Leskov, Fet, and Bunin. The last six rank also among "our" writers.

"Our land" was not very large. It consisted of a small circle with a radius of approximately 100-150 versts,¹² enclosing the neighbouring uezds of the Tula, Orel, Kaluga, and Riazan' provinces. The "country of Turgenev" could be defined as two adjacent uezds of the neighbouring provinces of Orel and Tula. Almost the entire *Sportsman's Sketches* took place in this area, with occasional excursions to the Kaluga, Kursk, and Tambov provinces (*Khor' and Kalinych, L'gov, Lebedian,* and others), and many other works of Turgenev took place in "our land" as well.

Reading the works of "our writers" in our own homes, we locals understood very well how all of our surroundings were connected with the unforgettable images of their works. Illustrations of their writings appeared before us daily. The delight felt after spending an entire April day in the field or forest, and, upon returning, reading an account of our very same April day in *Anna Karenina* is indescribable. Tolstoy's artistic depiction interwove and mingled with everything that had just now trembled in the quiet, peaceful, inquiring, and tense evening April air that saturated the surroundings.

Of course, while proud of "our" writers, we did not claim to be the only ones who could understand and appreciate them. But for us they were surrounded by a particular aureole. Leskov's way of life, partly already gone or disappearing, yet truly eternal, the life of Tiutchev, Fet, Turgenev, Tolstoy, and Bunin surrounded us. We called this land "Turgenev's," not because he was our favourite, but because so many names which were immortalized and became well known to the general public existed as authentic places bearing the same exact names up to the revolution. Bezhin Meadow [Bezhin lug], Beautiful Spring [Krasivaia Mech'], previously entirely unknown and glorified by Kasian; the little noticed ravine "Kolotovka," where Iasha the Turk captivated the Wild Barin and "Muddlehead" [in *The Singers*] with his "The Paths that Lay Across the Fields" [*Ne odna vo pole dorozhenka*]: all these places are not made up, but existed in our time and are located not far from Spasskoe-Lutovinovo,¹³ the latter yielding only to Iasnaia Poliana in the endearing sound of its name. Not only names, but also "our" events often inspired Turgenev. Local events provided not only Leskov with a Shakespearean theme: not far from *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* also lived *King Lear of the Steppes*.

Leskov described our way of life, Tiutchev, Tolstoy, and Fet our natural surroundings, Bunin our wretched yet beautiful villages, yet Turgenev did more for us. He sang praises to our countryside by calling it by its actual names. And that is why we provincials proudly called it "Turgenev's land."

"Turgenev's land" is where I remember first meeting Tolstoy in my childhood, be it on his

sons' estates or in our own home, not far from Pokrovskoe, which belonged to his sister Marya Nikolaevna. Tolstoy used to meet at Pokrovskoe with Fet and Turgenev, who would travel from the neighbouring Mtsensk uezd.

I can remember the Tolstoys for as long as I remember myself. Some of them were close friends. Of course I could well imagine the difficult relations within their family. This awareness arose not through reading, but from experience. Having witnessed much, I am able clearly to distinguish between the right and the wrong of all parties involved. It is precisely the trust that some of the Tolstoys placed in me, their openness, their hospitality, which force me completely to avoid this issue in my subsequent remarks. All these conflicts, with or without sufficient reason, have been described many times in detail.

I was seven or eight when I first met Tolstoy. It was in the early winter months. We children had just returned from an afternoon stroll. It was getting dark and lights were lit in the house when father returned from work in town and announced in the lobby without taking his coat off that Tolstoy was arriving in an hour and would be spending the night. Immediately the house was in an uproar; one can only imagine my mother's difficult position. Without any warning, unexpectedly, in the middle of winter in the country, when no fresh produce can be found, she quickly had to improvise a tasty vegetarian dinner. It had to please the great writer, who, as was well known, was not indifferent to food, yet it must not, God forbid, make him sick.

We children were also anxious. Tolstoy the writer was well known and adored by us. We had used his textbook to learn to read and write, and his short stories, fables, and tales were among the first things we read. Our father had just read *A Hunt I Couldn't Resist* [*Oxota pushche nevoli*] to us the night before.¹⁴ It recounts awaking in the forest, surrounded by frost-covered trees that looked in Tolstoy's imagination like a fabulous palace. Already dreaming about rifles and hunting, we were especially impressed by the part about an injured bear, its jaw broken by a bullet, who falls down on Tolstoy and encloses Tolstoy's head in its jaws, while the peasant tracker attacks the bear with a stick to save his master. Waiting impa-

tiently, we were not so anxious to meet the author as the hunter and protagonist of Tolstoy's story.

My memory of this first meeting is, of course, very vague. I recall a grey-haired frowning old man, sitting at the table and arguing about something with my father, while we stared at him. Noticing us, he asks: "Why are they staring at me?" – "Ah, I read them your story *A Hunt I Couldn't Resist* yesterday, so now probably they are trying to see if you have any scars on your forehead."

Tolstoy immediately changed. He called us and we surrounded him. My older brother, it seems to me, was placed on his lap, and he began to recount this and other hunting incidents. We felt comfortable with him—his account was fascinatingly interesting. I distinctly remember him lifting his hair and showing a scar on his forehead left by the bear's jaws.

My second and third encounters with Tolstoy took place under exceptionally interesting and extraordinary circumstances.

Every summer we were visited by our grandfather from Kaluga, N. S. Kashkin,¹⁵ back then still an alert old man, and by his brother-in-law, K. N. Boborykin, from the neighbouring Efremov district.¹⁶ The two, both old friends of Tolstoy, usually travelled to our estate to meet.¹⁷ When Tolstoy heard that they were at our house, he too arrived (I don't remember whether he came from Grinevka or Iasnaia Poliana) to see them again.

In his memoirs, D. P. Makovitskii recounts Tolstoy's commenting rather skeptically about my grandfather Kashkin. This entry is dated February 17, 1905, ten years after the meeting that I recall. Makovitskii writes:

For some reason we began talking about N. S. Kashkin, a member of the Petrashevskii circle,¹⁸ whom Tolstoy befriended during the latter's exile to the Caucasus. "He is 70 years old, is friends with Dostoevsky and Petrashevskii, a Fourierist - why does he continue to serve as judge?" asked Tolstoy" [*sic*]. The footnote reads: "Lev Nikolaevich met Kashkin in 1853 in Zheleznovodsk, after that they frequently met in 1856 and 1857 in Moscow. They were on a first name basis with each other. Kashkin outlived Tolstoy. Died in 1914 (Makovitskii Vol. I, 181).¹⁹

I purposely cite this passage to underline that, not long before this comment, Lev Nikolaevich gladly met with Grandfather, and, as will be shown, recounted the past with great joy.

As I have mentioned, another one of Tolstoy's old acquaintances, K. N. Boborykin, was also visiting us. He had met Tolstoy and become friendly with him (although not as close as Kashkin) while a young artillery officer in Sebastopol. Having retired after a long military and civic career in administration, and living in Moscow during the winter months, he often visited Tolstoy in Khamovniki. In complete contrast to his brother-in-law, Boborykin was a soldier through and through, and yet was also a liberal and radical and an admirer of Miliutin,²⁰ and in some areas shared Tolstoy's views.

Unfortunately I was ten years old at the time of their meeting and, therefore, as striking and as vivid my memories are, little of a concrete nature has remained.

These three elders, living historical chronicles, who remembered the most striking and interesting moments of the second half of the nineteenth century, met for the last time in our house. "Taking advantage" of the circumstances that he was not at home but in someone else's house and among people of like mind, Tolstoy managed to force himself to forget his usual topics for a while. He was unusually lively and cheerful.

In the evening, after the traditional walk, inspection of the grounds, the stud farm, and exercising of the horses, stories and accounts of days gone by began. Probably because all three enjoyed remembering their youth, and these dear memories connected them, the entire evening was devoted to the Caucasus, Sebastopol, and Moscow before the emancipation. War, hunting, battle scenes, and adventures, Caucasian and Sebastopol generals along with their companions-in-arms and acquaintances, Tolstoy's song *How the Devil Made us Take the Mountain on the Fourth* [*Kak chetvertogo chisla nas nelegkaia nesla goru zanimat*], were followed by accounts of balls and evenings of Moscow.

"Do you remember how the two of us met, Lev Nikolaevich?" asked grandfather.

Tolstoy smiled. "Was it at the springs?"

"Yes, and remember the circumstances? Here

is what happened. We arrived at the spa with a friend in the evening and could not find any shelter. Everything was taken. It was awful weather. Finally we found a place, but were warned that there was already someone sleeping in the hut. Indeed, someone was sleeping under a cloak. After I had warmed up and eaten a little, I retrieved the latest of issue of *The Contemporary* [*Sovremennik*]²¹ and began to read aloud. It happened to be *Childhood*. With each page I became more and more captivated. I could stand it no longer, and finally interrupted the reading to exchange enthusiastic impressions with my friend. Only initials appeared at the end of the story. 'Who could it be – I would love to know!' my friend said. All of a sudden, the previously motionless cloak moved and a voice was heard: 'I am the author.' We were astounded, and could not believe it at first. Within an hour, we already felt as if we were old friends."

"Yes, I remember. Your reading was excellent, and, of course, being a young author, I was very flattered to hear such complimentary reviews," confirmed Tolstoy.

Many years later, this day was still remembered in our family, and my grandfather especially enjoyed recounting it. In his younger days, he had been very handsome and amiable.

"Lev Nikolaevich told me," Grandfather used to say, "'You used to be very popular in Moscow, Nikolai Sergeevich, having returned from your Caucasian exile, a 'Georgievskii cavalier,' young ... remember, how we used to go out for dinner with you after balls?' 'Of course, I do,' I would answer. 'Did we not have dinner at Chevalier's on Leontiev lane, where your Olenin, leaving for the Caucasus, bid his friends farewell? It is no wonder, that we were popular.' You see, we returned at the same time as the Decembrists, and the young girls could not tell us apart and possibly not know who had been exiled for what reason and for how long. However, the Decembrists were old men, while we were still young!'"

The usually very serious and dry Boborykin almost ruined the whole evening with one of his stories, by which he unwittingly distressed Tolstoy. He recalled how Tolstoy enjoyed leading the newly arrived soldiers onto the bastion [at Sebastopol. – V.T.] surrounded by buzzing bullets, and

would look them in their eyes. He concluded approvingly: "you probably needed this for your fascinating writings."

"Could I have done such a thing?!" was Tolstoy's horrified response.

"Yes, you actually did it to me."

Tolstoy, visibly upset, could not calm himself and continued repeating "how horrible, how horrible!"

The third time Tolstoy visited us was in the beginning of June 1898—he mentions this visit in his diary of June 12 that year.²² A famine had struck our uezd and Tolstoy, who always fed the hungry, raising funds for such causes, visited us in order to inspect the entire uezd together with my father. This time Tolstoy did not stay long, and the conversations mainly focused on the famine and the organization of facilities to feed the population. From this visit I chiefly recall the immense anxiety among the women. Both my mother and Sofya Nikolaevna worried about feeding Tolstoy, who was not feeling well. Later on, I remember witnessing all the agitation, troubles, and efforts directed to Tolstoy's diet. This was proof of the care and thoughtfulness that constantly surrounded Tolstoy in his home, and which, without exaggeration, prolonged his life. This trip, recorded in Tolstoy's diary, did indeed lead to a serious illness at Levitskii's house on the border of our uezd. Father returned from the trip a little earlier with many interesting impressions before Tolstoy fell ill.

"As soon as he is torn out of his surroundings," he said to my mother, "he becomes unrecognizable and completely transformed. All of those stubborn and persistent repetitions of the same sayings, his ponderous and irreconcilable polemic—everything vanished and we were in the company of the old Tolstoy, the author of *War and Peace*. He likes everything, sees and understands everything. How amazingly pointed and accurate were all of his remarks about farming, fields, horses, and the villages which we passed. Gavriila, sitting on the coach-box, kept shaking his head. Once we arrived at Nadezhda Timofeevna Afremova's, I truly did not recognize him anymore. This was not a philosopher, but a 'marquis.' His French was charming; he was cheerful, courteous, amiable, and gallant. At first she was reserved and cool toward him, yet hospitable, but

in the end she broke down and surrendered to his charm. Even relations were discovered, and Tolstoy remembered how, long ago in Moscow, he courted her cousin, and how they parted friends. And on the next day, he examined the estate, gave extremely practical advice, and while exercising the horses inquired about their origin and bloodlines. By the end of the day, he had conquered everyone—from the stable-man up to the old woman." In order fully to understand these lines, it should be mentioned that at one time Nadezhda Timofeevna's favourite son suffered from a nervous disorder precipitated by religious doubts. The old woman, who adored her son, was herself very religious. She blamed her son's condition on Tolstoy's influence and could not forgive him for that, calling him Ivan Il'ich [*sic*],²³ a known fool-for-Christ in Moscow at that time.

Between these three earlier encounters and a more prolonged one, when I lived on his estate for two weeks during my university days, I happened to meet Lev Nikolaevich several times, mostly at his son's estates.

Once I grew up, I found out that our family was very negative about some specific aspects of Tolstoy's religious teaching. There was general regret that he had abandoned his literary activity, but a certain aura still surrounded his name. Later on, I wondered how was it possible that people whose religious convictions and feelings were deeply hurt and offended by Tolstoy could, nevertheless, love and consider him close. I came to certain conclusions which I have already mentioned. My father, for instance, believed that Russia is nothing without Orthodoxy, and yet not only was he fond of Tolstoy the writer—this, of course, was the main source of his fondness—but they were like-minded in many areas. They agreed on questions of pedagogy, farming, interrelations of urban and rural life, adoption of a simpler life in general, labour issues, and overall everything which can be defined as vital social issues.

And such an attitude was not unique to my father. Tolstoy was never alone in his Weltanschauung (the beginnings of which are easily traced even to his earlier works, not to mention *War and Peace*), and his views cannot, therefore, be defined as something specifically Tolstoyan. They were held across a spectrum from Russian

liberalism to conservatism. Tolstoy may be said to have expressed not only his own thoughts and moods, but also those of his surrounding society, and, of course, he was himself influenced by the latter. On the other hand, there can be no doubt that he, in return, had a great impact on society.

When it comes to pedagogy, for instance, Tolstoy had a great influence on my father, who organized a public school on our estate. Other landowners founded similar schools, free of charge, but it was unheard of and for some even disgraceful that we, the master's children, grew up with the servants and attended the same school, which we all completed.²⁴ To some degree, I have to admit, I myself suffered from such a Tolstoyan approach, since it was very difficult to pass entrance examinations into one of the higher grades of the "gymnasium" after years without systematic study.

The like-mindedness of Tolstoy and my father is easily confirmed by two humorous paradoxes, which delighted Tolstoy when he heard them, and provoked a very flattering and characteristically "Tolstoyan" remark from him. I still remember the circumstances in which these aphorisms were uttered, which were so characteristic of the interaction and understanding between Tolstoy and a non-Tolstoyan.

Like Tolstoy, my father was passionate about riding. For both of them, it was more than merely "a more or less uncomfortable mode of transportation" and, at the same time, much more than simply sport. In the same way in which a peasant woman's song is not simply a satisfaction of the need for music, but a special activity (characteristic of folk music), riding was not considered a sport by them, but a "hunt" (this word was not only used in the country for actually hunting animals, but also to express the desire for other things, such as riding). It was thirty versts to Grinevka. I was twelve, my brother fourteen, and both of us had been riding well and for a long time. Having learned that Lev Nikolaevich was at Grinevka, we left at six o'clock in the morning with Father. Half a verst away, Father broke into a trot. Our horses were thoroughbred trotters, roughly one-and-a-half meters in height. Too small to climb onto my horse without help, once on top, I was in control. We were approaching the

porch at full speed in a row, Father in the middle with us on both sides, neck and neck. Tolstoy's coachmen Abram, having heard the sound of hooves, came running from the stable. Lev Nikolaevich was already standing on the porch.

"Ah, well done, very good that you came, and they ride so well. Splendid! Are you tired?" he asked, patting me.

"No, not I all," I replied, even though I was barely standing on my feet, trembling.

Tolstoy invited us to wash up and inquired of my father, "You are keeping them at home, are you not? You are not sending them to the gymnasium?"

"No, I keep them home."

"Why?"

"If they must become fools, let them at least not be fools through and through."

"What did you say?" Tolstoy rejoiced. "Let them be fools, but not through and through! Well, you have made this day a feast day. You know, you have hit the nail on the head. Excellent! A whole plan..."

While we were washing up, the "pedagogical" discourse continued.

"Everybody speaks about development," Father continued. "One has to 'develop one's personality' etc. Actually, not a single word appears for no reason. They do indeed 'unwind'²⁵ you know, just like a ball of threads. They take a child with talents, as God has created it, and let's go ahead and unwind. They unwind and unwind, for about twelve years, and then—there is no more thread left, just a 'piece of paper' in their hands. One should wind – instead they unwind."

Tolstoy's face lit up.

"You know, we frequently disagree, but that is not important. People's hands are covered with different kinds of glue—they reach for one thing, but different things stick. With us, it is different—we have the same glue. As much as we argue, we still agree often."

A great number of Tolstoy memoirs could use this aphorism as a motto, and first and foremost the reminiscences of this writer.

Here is another example of Tolstoy's attitude toward "non-Tolstoyans." It is well known that many pious Orthodox Christians held memorial services after Tolstoy passed away. By no means

can this be viewed as the usual, unscrupulous, utilization of the Church by non-believing intelligentsia for political protests, nor can it be considered a protest against the Church's excommunication of Tolstoy. The former attitude would sicken them, and Tolstoy's excommunication, as much as it saddened them, they found absolutely logical and impeccably consistent. Not only did Tolstoy deny many Church rites, but he would often rudely condemn not only rites, but also sacraments and basic Christian dogma. The Church has condemned him, and has thereby legalized what he has done himself, that is, it has recognized him as not belonging to the Church.

But, aside from memorial services, I also recall another remembrance of the newly departed Tolstoy. It may have been mentioned in the press, I think. A close relative of mine, who was a very pious believer and at the same time adored Tolstoy, instead of holding a *panikhida* [memorial service – V.T.], decided to remember him in a "Tolstoyan," or rather in an old-Russian way. She went around her hometown collecting donations, which she used to purchase groceries, and organized a funeral repast in the local jail, hostel, and orphanage, and fed the poor and beggars, reminding everyone to remember in their prayers the departed servant of God Lev.

Such were Tolstoy's ties and relations to many "non-Tolstoyans" surrounding Iasnaia Poliana. If even they could have been regarded as Tolstoyans, it was in a different and unusual way, which still needs to be accurately explained.

But let me return to my story. Two instances from my adolescence clearly demonstrate Tolstoy's impetuosity and, at the same time, his mercurial changes of mood. I remember visiting Iasnaia Poliana in May, when not even lilies-of-the-valley were in bloom, but Tolstoy's favourite yellow campanula, with its delicate smell, was found everywhere in the meadows. An elderly lady asked me to collect a bouquet of these flowers. As soon as I brought them, she presented them to Tolstoy, who accepted the flowers and thanked her.

"Would you kindly return the bouquet to me?" she asked.

"Why?" he answered, surprised.

"I simply wanted you to hold the flowers in your hands, so that I can take them to a friend of

mine, a teacher, who is a great admirer of you and asked for this favour."

Tolstoy became visibly angry.

"What for? What is the matter—is she sick and hopes to be healed? It is but a game of miracles! I don't work wonders and do not believe in them."

Of course, the lady was offended.

"Why do you have to be so stern and offensive? You know, I do believe in miracles and, by the way, my friend is not ill. Is it so difficult for you to do something nice?"

"Please forgive me, I was wrong. There you go, take them, and don't be angry," Tolstoy replied quickly.

Another time, my older brother²⁶ was at fault. Lev Nikolaevich was visiting his son Il'ia L'vovich at Grinevka. Father and I were sitting on the porch together with Sergei L'vovich in his estate Nikolo-Viazemskoe, which was not far from Grinevka. All of a sudden we saw Lev Nikolaevich approaching on the horizon, wearing a round hat and blouse, as usual stooping, but sitting firmly in the saddle. He approached the porch boldly, but with special elegance, showing himself as a skilled horseman. Since none of the coachmen was near, Father told my brother to get Lev Nikolaevich's horse. I don't remember exactly whether the Kabardian horse tore itself away from him or came untied, but within a couple of minutes the horse galloped past us with the bridle hanging down followed by my confused brother.

"You are not too swift, are you," Tolstoy remarked, irritated. "Now he will tear the bridle, start to roll and break the saddle."

"Go immediately, and find the horse and don't dare return without it," Father told my brother quietly and angrily, and so he ran after the horse.

But Tolstoy quickly changed. Obviously he was ashamed for his momentary irritation as well as for offending my brother.

"Don't be angry with him," he pleaded calmly with my father. "It is not his fault. It's quite a restive breed, if you don't pay attention for a second, it's all over. I know these horses from the Caucasus. It is my own fault for not warning him."

It was around the same time that I witnessed a very long and interesting argument of a religious-philosophical and gnosiological nature

between Tolstoy and my uncle S. A. Tsurikov.²⁷ While my uncle was visiting us during summer time, Tolstoy was at Grinevka with Il'ia L'vovich.

"Well, you wanted to meet Tolstoy, shall we go?" offered father.

"Let's."

The next morning we left for Grinevka. After lunch, everyone went for a walk, including the abundance of guests who always gathered around Tolstoy. My uncle and Tolstoy immediately started to argue. Unfortunately, since the subject matter was too complicated for me at the time, my only interest was to see who would win. The conversation centred around principles of religion and the priority of faith to reason, which Tolstoy vehemently denied, while my uncle maintained the contrary. Both were so involved in their argument that they neglected to notice that the rest of their party fell far behind. We managed to follow the conversation, even though my brother and I could barely keep up, since Lev Nikolaevich always walked fast. Within an hour the four of us had lost the rest. Somewhere behind us one could make out white dresses and umbrellas. Another hour passed, and M. A. Stakhovich's²⁸ carriage caught up with us. Stakhovich attempted, without any success, to convince all to return home.

"Maybe you are tired?" Tolstoy asked my uncle with a hint of irony.

"Not at all!" was the reply.

Stakhovich's repeated suggestions that each had tired the other out did not bear any fruit. We too refused to join him in his carriage and, discouraged, he returned by himself. Meanwhile we continued to move away further and further from the estate. The formal and courteous debate between the two began to turn more and more into a heated argument, including several severe polemical blows delivered by each to the other. As far as I recall, my uncle gained the upper hand in their dispute, since Tolstoy seemed increasingly more irritated and out of arguments, while my uncle continued to push his views. By the time we returned home, taking a short cut through the fields, we must have covered fifteen versts. Toward the end, the discussion seemed less like a dispute and more like the pursuit of a retreating adversary. Tolstoy jumped over ditches and took big steps through the plowed fields while my uncle, who

was much shorter, ran after him continuing to argue.

"The notion of faith, which you keep bringing up, has no real content. It is a specific and exclusively ecclesiastical term," Tolstoy said, to the best of my recollection.

"Faith is the foundation of religion, and carries, therefore, a deep meaning. The Apostle Paul gave a very fine definition of faith—I do hope you are familiar with it."

"Is that from Philaret's Catechism? The assurance of things hoped for? Some sort of announcement from heaven to the chosen ones?"

"Yes, if you see it that way, and it is from Philaret's Catechism, but the meaning is completely different. *Izveshchenie* [assurance] means *materialized* and not *news*, from the word *thing*, and *upovaemykh*—*what is expected*, and not of the chosen."

"But in the Slavonic text, it is written with a *iat*' and not an *e*, is it not?"²⁹

"I am no philologist, and that does not prove anything. Why don't you check the Greek or Hebrew text?"

We started to approach the house, forcing them to discontinue the dispute.

"In any case, it was a pleasure to make your acquaintance," Tolstoy concluded cordially.

Five hours and fifteen versts did not seem to be enough, however, because they resumed their conversation after checking the passage in question in the New Testament. I don't know whether or not my uncle was correct in his commentary on the Apostle Paul, but I do remember that he always insisted on this particular interpretation. Finally everyone retreated to their rooms.

"So, how did you like Tolstoy," asked my father.

"He is an interesting, but malevolent old man."

When asked by his son Il'ia L'vovich about my uncle, Tolstoy's reply was very similar.

"He is a short but malevolent old man."

Both no doubt heard about these mutual characterizations, because both seemed quietly merry at dinner, and laughed continuously. One of Tolstoy's sons recounted Stakhovich's failure to lure the debaters into the carriage, and mentioned Sofya Andreevna's poor disposition toward my

uncle as the culprit of the prolonged walk. He remembered how Tolstoy, trying to rid himself of the importunate polemicist, purposely led my uncle through all sorts of gullies, not knowing that my uncle too was a hunter.

The debaters themselves laughed the loudest at this.



N. A. Tsurikov, left corner, with a group at Iasnaia Poliana, 1909.

Note Tolstoy and his wife on the right side.

As I have already mentioned, the last time that I saw Tolstoy was as a student in 1909. My stay in Iasnaia Poliana was not as a guest this time. I was engaged as a teacher of one of Tolstoy's grandsons,³⁰ which, on the one hand, tore me away from Tolstoy in some of the most interesting instances, and, on the other, allowed me to remain largely unnoticed in my observations. One of my objectives during that stay was to leave with an abundance of impressions, in order to answer the question for myself: who was Lev Tolstoy? Even before I arrived at Iasnaia Poliana, I had been warned that he was very nervous, that he easily picked a fight, and did not tolerate any contradictions. In those cases, when he was nonetheless confronted with an objection, arguments often culminated in a tearful Tolstoy. Far from being a Tolstoyan, I resolved not to agree enthusiastically with his teachings, but to keep quiet, answering only when absolutely necessary. As it turned out, this was not always easy.

My impression of Iasnaia Poliana during those days was far from positive. The house was divided

into two halves. While both sides coexisted physically, they still led a separate existence. Tolstoy, visibly suffering from old age, was losing his memory. He frequently would not recognize even people close to him, he forgot names, and he exhibited those familiar traits of helplessness so often found in the elderly. He had long forgotten about his great works of fiction (while in the past he would have pretended to have forgotten about them). Once he quizzed me at length about the duties of a marshal of the nobility, which previously had been so familiar to him.

At the same time, some of his followers, who constantly surrounded him, managed to exercise a constant and aggressive pressure on him. Of course, this was done with sincerity, yet often I was left with the following impression. Tolstoy was an artist through and through in everything he touched. This was also true for his philosophical remarks, which, just as Tolstoy himself, were foreign to logic or consistency. As soon as he would utter an opinion, which was always very original, his followers would immediately proceed to conserve this new idea and include it in his teachings. Losing the natural charm of its impetuous form and originality, it was molded into a dogma, influencing in retrospect Tolstoy himself, thereby limiting his own freedom.

His followers even would go as far as suggesting to him conclusions, which they attributed to him, to certain sayings of his. "Well, Lev Nikolaevich, once you said this. That means, that now you have to say that." And I truly doubt that in those moments Tolstoy spoke fully with his own voice and of his own free will, yet maybe this was the kind of consistency his teachings dictated. The dreadful and intense days of his *Confession* had long passed. Iasnaia Poliana resembled a rationalistic monastery, with a brotherhood of non-doubting, self-assured, omniscient non-seekers, who concerned themselves primarily with sermonizing and exposing sinners. The process of exposing sinners, one should add, was carried out in the most offensive, harsh, and intolerable ways—not at all in a spirit of mutual love.

In my opinion, this negative atmosphere, so prevalent at Iasnaia Poliana, can be explained primarily by Tolstoy's age. My stay there coincided with the opening of the relics of Anna

Kashinskaia,³¹ and for almost the entire two weeks I heard on a daily basis, including from Tolstoy himself, about the bones of this poor old woman, which were being moved for some reason, in order to deceive someone. It was also stated repeatedly how sad it was that we lived during such a time, when such terrible and ridiculous things happen. I was mainly disturbed by the recurring and persistent references to the relics, since members of Tolstoy's religious sect were living among a great number of people with opposite views. Their preaching was characterized by an ultra-militant spirit, rather than a polemical/defending one. All this made the sect appear weak and helpless.

The day I arrived, I immediately came under fire.

"You are a student?" asked Lev Nikolaevich.

"Yes," I replied.

"That is really too bad. What is your major?"

"Law."

"You could not have chosen a worse one. They are all bad, but this one is the worst. You probably did it under your father's influence, or by your own conviction?"

"No, I am a believer in the civil service [*ubezhdennyi gosudarstvennik*]," I answered unrestrainedly.

Lev Nikolaevich only shook his head at this response. However, as little attention as Lev Nikolaevich, busy all day with his work, paid me, it was still noticeable that this passionate man was disturbed by the presence of disagreement, even silent. Once a whole crowd of us were playing *gorodki*.³² Lev Nikolaevich, not able to play himself anymore, but an admirer of the game, was merely observing. After my having landed a good hit, he affectionately put his hand on my shoulder and remarked:

"Look, how well you play. And I saw how you broke Sasha's³³ [Aleksandra L'vovna, - N. T.] stallion, all that is so much better than your studies."

He had frequent mood swings. In the mornings I would witness how he would give out alms to the poor under the famous tree. All received, as usual, five rubles. At the same time, he would lecture them harshly on the harm of money in general, and of idleness. Regardless of his rejection of music, he enjoyed listening to A. B. Gol-

denweizer³⁴ play his favourite piece by Chopin, and would leave the room afterward with a radiant and lucid expression on his face, and his eyes filled with tears. This was the extent to which he felt and experienced the power of music.

In his entry of February 14, 1905, Makovitskii quotes Tolstoy: "Our friend, the musician (Goldenweizer) was supposed to arrive yesterday, and I am rather glad that he did not come. Music touches me in a special way, and brings tears to my eyes and contracts my heart" (Vol. I. 176). Judging by both Goldenweizer's memoirs and my own recollection, Tolstoy was very fond of Goldenweizer, so that the problem was not with Goldenweizer, but rather with musicians in a broader sense. Tolstoy's passion for music did not, however, keep him from a theoretical rejection of music in general. Although this did not accord to his philosophical beliefs, Tolstoy was frequently seen to play a rather passionate game of chess with Goldenweizer.

Only with children did Tolstoy become entirely transformed. When he was surrounded by them, one understood that all of his heavy polemic was not his essence. While it did originate in his personality, it was part of a tragic distortion of it. His old age, along with the general aura surrounding him, ought to have been enough to frighten children; yet, they flocked to him without any shyness at all. It was during those moments that he exhibited so much of that special blessed childlikeness, without which true humaneness is unthinkable.

Approximately a week after my arrival at Iasnaia Poliana, a telegram was received from Mechnikov,³⁵ who was at that time on a triumphant tour of Russia. Mechnikov inquired about the possibility of paying Tolstoy a visit. Since he is no longer alive, I shall mention that Tolstoy, in giving his consent, was, nevertheless, unhappy about it. After all, Mechnikov was ideologically Tolstoy's bitter opponent.

Mechnikov's visit to Iasnaia Poliana was so fascinating that it would warrant a separate essay devoted exclusively to the topic. Although elderly, he was still extremely sharp, exhibiting extraordinary encyclopedic erudition and, at the same time, a lively interest in all that surrounded him. During his short stay at Iasnaia Poliana he managed to

raise and develop so many intriguing questions that I continuously revisit them. The ideological contrast of these two men was such that on meeting face to face, each of them acted completely in character toward the other.

Mechnikov was entirely foreign in his thinking and actions to Tolstoy, who could not agree with anything he said. Nonetheless, his refined and cordial hospitality, which he owed largely to his upbringing, forced him to restrain himself. While not agreeing on a single issue, Tolstoy managed throughout the conversation not to argue once with his guest, whose purpose was to introduce himself and to control the flow of the conversation. All day long, a continuous flow of anti-Tolstoyan statements kept pouring out of Mechnikov, and yet, the conversation did not result in any roughness or awkwardness, since Mechnikov greatly admired Tolstoy the philosopher and exhibited the general respect so often found in Europeans for all things of importance. Only twice did Tolstoy frown—once, when Mechnikov acknowledged the great role that his wife, who was present and for whom he displayed affection, played in his life, and, hence, also in his scientific work. Such candid revelations were, of course, rather unusual for Russians. Tolstoy's second frown was caused by Mechnikov's attempt to pay Sofya Andreevna, as usual an extremely hospitable hostess, an ideological compliment. He did so by offering a synopsis of his psychophysiological theory of the significance of one's personal intimate love life for one's creative energies, substantiating this claim with examples of Goethe, Ibsen, Sofya Kovalevskaja,³⁶ and others.

At that point, Tolstoy could not contain himself any more.

"Eroticism, of course, plays a great role in that harmful activity (fueled by it), which you refer to as artistic work, and probably also in the so-called sciences. A real and true understanding of life and God, however, cannot be achieved in such a way."

At another part in their conversation, Mechnikov offered the following insight.

"You know, in the beginning, man was not a carnivorous animal, which is evidenced by the appendix."

Tolstoy was very interested: "Is that so?"

"Since then, of course, much time has passed,

and doctors, instead of preaching vegetarianism, simply surgically remove the appendix."

That comment was followed by a lively, fascinating, and at the same time scientific, short, but colourful explanation of the need for moderation in one's diet, even vegetarianism, as well as the harms of tobacco usage.

Witnessing the conversation of these remarkable men, I compared them, and found that they were quite alike. As a genuine scientist, Mechnikov exhibited traits of stoicism and spiritual loftiness, which were also characteristic of Tolstoy. Nevertheless, Tolstoy, having had, for reasons of courtesy, to endure Mechnikov's outspoken comments all day long, could not but repay him with very subtle revenge.

Mechnikov was a cheerful natural philosopher, a physician, who not only bowed down before the earth (maybe not as much as Tolstoy), but also preached faithfulness to her. This was entirely foreign to Tolstoy, who believed in the idea of sin and denounced modern medicine altogether (at least in theory). Tolstoy called upon his followers to lift themselves above the sinful earth, which was secretly admired by him, to the heavens. In the evening, Mechnikov and his wife left for the train station and, as usual, the recently departed guests were discussed by all present. Sofya Andreevna was delighted by them. Tolstoy stepped out of his study, and said, with an indescribable irony, more or less the following:

"Of course, he is quite intelligent. How sad, though, that he spent such a long time in Paris—this subtle French style just nauseates Us."

One had to have seen and experienced Mechnikov to understand the accuracy, subtlety, and wittiness of this remark. It perceptively identified that certain foreign element in Mechnikov which most of his listeners had noticed.

Before moving on to my conversations with some of the Tolstoyans, as well as a rather substantial argument which I had with Tolstoy due to my own negligence and the involvement of some of his followers, I would like to recall Tolstoy's late physician and dedicated friend, Dushan Petrovich Makovitskii. I will refrain from mentioning by name the other Tolstoyans whom I saw, since I have little positive to say about them. Dushan Petrovich did not resemble any of the other Tolstoyans, however,

and I cannot help but single him out from the rest. I am not sure if there exists a biography of his life, but I imagine that it would be of particular interest to Czechs to study how Makovitskii, having been educated and brought up on Czech national philosophy and traditional Czech religiosity, came to be a follower of Tolstoy.

He made a wonderful impression, was modest, quiet, reserved, and foreign to any affectation. This is the only real and true Tolstoyan, and not even Russian: such were my thoughts when I saw him. Dushan Petrovich worshipped Tolstoy and was extremely dedicated to him. I saw this myself and it is also reflected in his memoirs on Tolstoy, which unfortunately are somewhat marred by it. I cannot judge whether or not he was a good physician, but I also thought that his relationship with Tolstoy was not good for the patient. Tolstoy's ironic remarks and comments on medicine were quietly tolerated by Makovitskii, even as Tolstoy was undergoing treatment. I doubt that Tolstoy meekly and readily accepted Makovitskii's medical advice.

For me, Makovitskii was more than a mere passing acquaintance. I had the opportunity to get to know him rather well in circumstances quite typical for him. Being both quite busy each with his own responsibilities, we merely nodded to each other in the mornings, and had lunch and dinner at the same table. On the third day, however, a village woman with a broken leg was brought to Tolstoy. Dushan Petrovich had already returned from his daily office hours. I do not remember exactly whether I was the only one he turned to for help, or whether everyone else declined their help to preserve their nerves. I ended up aiding him, and thus we met. Next morning, I had a sore throat and asked him for some medicine. In the evening he stopped by my room, and we started talking.

"Are you Czech?" I asked.

"Well, I am really Slovak."

"I visited your capital – Prague."

"You were in Prague? Were you passing through?"

"No, I was a delegate at the Slav student convention last summer."³⁷

Usually reserved and quiet, Makovitskii transformed instantly.

"Who would have thought! That means that you are interested in Slav issues and not opposed to nationalism?"

"Very much indeed, and not opposed at all."

"Well in that case, we do have a lot to talk about."

Not expecting it, I discovered a passionate Czechoslovak patriot and not a "citizen of the universe."

"Russian progressive society cares for neither nationalism nor the Slav question. I am a Tolstoyan, and Lev Nikolaevich is already interested in our philosophers. But how can I refrain from distinguishing Czechs from Germans, Slovaks from Magyars. I love my country and my people. You know how opposed Tolstoy is to the political direction of *Novoe Vremia* [New Time],³⁸ but it is the only thing I read. It is the only newspaper that addresses the Slav question."

I resolved not to point out the contradiction between being a nationalist and a Tolstoyan to him, and so we continued to talk almost every evening about Prague and my impressions of his country. A little later, he approached me with a request.

"I noticed that you listen attentively to Lev Nikolaevich during meals" (usually the time for gatherings and discussions). "Could you help me? I am trying to record his words. I feel uncomfortable doing it openly, however, and I have problems, because I fail to catch everything, especially when the conversation carries on quickly in Russian and several people are talking at the same time."

I readily agreed. He produced his diary, and we began our recollection of Tolstoy's words. Makovitskii was so pleased that he returned to me with the same request several times afterwards. We parted as good friends. Despite his admiration for Tolstoy, I had the feeling that Dushan Petrovich Makovitskii was very lonely at Iasnaia Poliana since, in a metaphorical sense, the songs of his homeland did not reach the ears of his surrounding community. I noticed, incidentally, that Sofya Andreevna liked him. Despite the fact that he was the only true Tolstoyan (or maybe that was the reason) who was able to grasp the positive side of Tolstoy's teachings, rather than taking a stern doctrinaire attitude, Dushan Petrovich never

lectured me. This could not be said about the rest of Tolstoy's followers.

I never cared about Tolstoy's and his followers' inconsistency, but what surprised me was the fact that this lack of consistency failed to instill in them a natural and logical sense of humility. A certain lady, close to our family, offered us the following anecdote about V. G. Chertkov, illustrating very well the Tolstoyan way of life.³⁹

Being very wealthy, Chertkov, nevertheless, abstained from using money *himself*, leaving it to others to conduct his shopping for him. Abroad he would find himself in awkward situations (possibly provoking them on purpose). He would enter a store and ask for certain goods. Once they were packed, he inquired.

"How should I pay you for these goods?"

The salesperson, visibly confused, replies.

"What do you mean? With money!"

"But I reject money, since money is a manifestation of sin. Maybe you would be so kind, and accept some form of labour from me?"

"No, Sir, I have no need for your labour. I have no land, water gets to me through plumbing, coal is delivered to me, and I purchase my groceries myself. I believe in general that money seems to be convenient in such cases."

The goods would be unpacked and returned to the shelves.

However, soon, a "modus vivendi" was found to the satisfaction of all involved. The merchants decided to allow Chertkov to obtain his goods free of charge. The reason, however, lay not in the successful re-education of the merchants, but in their commercial resourcefulness. Seeing him approach, they would remark:

"Look, there is the wealthy Russian eccentric, who does not recognize money and takes everything for free. But his wife repays us double."

During summer time after completing "farm work," Chertkov would send his son abroad to participate at certain sports events, claiming that "Lev Nikolaevich tolerates peaceful games."

Twice during this last stay at Iasnaia Poliana I also visited Chertkov's estate Teliatniki, which was roughly four versts from Iasnaia Poliana. I do not recall if it was during that summer that I was told about the "Tolstoyan community" at the estate. They were a company of stray young people of different

"races, dialects, fortunes," half-Tolstoyans, half-revolutionaries, half-sectarians, and lazy spoiled loafers, who were being wined and dined.

During the day, they played skittles, and sometimes listened to Tolstoy's discussions when he visited, as he frequently did, on horseback. Evenings were spent in the village, where a loud horde carrying accordions engaged in "peaceful" entertainment. They then rose from bed the next day around noon. An old poor widow asking for alms in order to build a house with a brick oven received help in a different way than she was hoping for. Since money was considered sinful, she was sent this horde of halfwit loafers instead. The oven was erected and the house was built, but it was not livable. If one tried to fire the oven, the entire house filled up with smoke, wasting both wood and heat in abundance. The poor woman was bitterly offended by the help she received.

Disregarding the Tolstoyan call to political indifference, certain members of this commune could, nevertheless, not help but continue displaying their previously left-wing political convictions. Once I was witness to Gusev's attempts to influence Tolstoy to admit that, while being Tolstoyan, it was not out of line to support left wing causes rather than right-wing causes. Tolstoy did indeed agree.

As I have mentioned, all this was quite upsetting for me. Still, I kept quiet and devoted all my time to my pupil. Probably the only visible difference between the surrounding community of the "righteous" and myself were my meat-eating and smoking habits. Several attempts were made to convert me. Once someone remarked that it is impossible to find truth while pleasing Mammon, to which I replied that the best way to fight your passions is not to resist them. In order not to think about food, one should eat well, not overeat, but to be full; otherwise, the only thing on one's mind would be food. As it turned out, this was taken as a "clue," and from that moment I was regarded as deep-rooted sinner.

Once, however, I lost my temper. Once during breakfast chicken was served. Sofya Andreevna was sitting next to me when one of the vegetarian ladies addressed me with following question:

"Are you not ashamed consuming these cadavers?"

I was still controlling myself, and Lev Nikolaevich was not in the room at that time. In order to stop her nagging I replied with some nonsense along the lines that these chicken cannot be considered cadavers, since Sofya Andreevna is an excellent hostess and always insures the freshness of all groceries. Sofya Andreevna's smile seemed to have helped escalate the situation further. I do not remember the exact course of the confrontation, but the lady was visibly offended by my insensitivity, which indicated my immorality. I began to argue, first jokingly but then more seriously. A. B. Goldenweizer recounts this argument in a rather uncomplimentary light for me. Delicate as he was, however, he refers to me simply as Z.

The teacher of little Seriozha, Sergei L'vovich's son, had an argument with L. D. Nikolaeva about vegetarianism. If one does not kill animals, he argued, they will reproduce too quickly, filling the entire planet and, anyways, with every breath we destroy millions of living organisms etc. Lev Nikolaevich listened quietly, and finally could not bear it, and remarked, "Pardon me, but this is the usual and lame argument. If one is unable to reach the ideal, let us give up entirely!" (Goldenweizer 267)

It is not my desire to defend myself for what I said many years ago. It is quite possible that I did indeed talk a lot of nonsense. Goldenweizer's notes are usually impeccable, as I was able to convince myself by reading his entry about Mechnikov. Even though he acted as a witness and my role was the one of the defendant, however, for him this instance was merely a small episode. Not so for me. This being the only time in my life that I fell into an argument with Tolstoy himself, I was understandably anxious, and this significant event imprinted itself on my memory forever.

While in general Goldenweizer is correct in his recollection, let me recount the details of the conversation.

"What exactly are you criticizing? The fact that I consume killed livestock, or that livestock is being killed?"

"Well, both. If you were not consuming beef, livestock would not be killed."

"Are you certain? Do you know that in the

Caucasus wild boars were destroying the crops of a Tolstoyan commune, leaving it no other alternative than to kill the boars, while leaving it to others to consume them?"

"That is an exception! Those were wild animals!"

"Well, apart from wild beasts—what do you suggest?"

"Domestic animals should not be killed."

"If man does not kill domestic animals, then he will not feed them either. If he stops feeding them, they will become extinct. That may not be a convincing argument, but have you given this any thought?"

"They can be fed for their milk."

"Who?"

"Cows, goats, even horses can be milked."

"What about pigs?"

"What nonsense! Pigs should be set free."

"How so? Should we designate a separate province entirely to pigs? Again, either they will become extinct, or reproduce to the point when they will fill the entire planet."

"You are obviously not willing to engage in an argument seriously, since your goal is to excuse your immorality."

"You would like to have a serious argument?"

No problem! I have great respect for vegetarians, but I don't understand how one can attempt to polemicize without first filling all logical and practical gaps. Go ahead—preach, if you are without sin; expose, if you are yourself consistent. Don't you wear shoes made of leather, while you could easily use lapti made of bast? Do you not step on ants and kill thousands of live organisms daily—after all, the size of the animal should not matter. And so, let the one who eats not judge the one who abstains, and vice versa, but you refuse to understand that. After all, I do not judge you for wearing shoes, so you don't judge me for eating poultry. One should be a little more modest."

The door to Tolstoy's study was open throughout the entire argument, and he appeared. Obviously, he had heard everything that had been said. Very embarrassed, I ceased speaking immediately. I had accepted the challenge thinking that Tolstoy was not present. After two weeks I had broken my vow of silence in such an impermissible and rude way.

Lev Nikolaevich attacked me instantly. It is difficult to reconstruct his exact words, but I remember well, that he compared me to proponents of the death penalty, even though I was not one. Upset, I attempted to dispute his argument, defending myself, and this led to Tolstoy's extreme agitation and an attack on me. A. B. Goldenweizer's account of Tolstoy's words is correct, but not complete. Tolstoy did not simply respond with a short polemical remark, but delivered an extensive argument.

Suddenly, his voice changed, and he began speaking differently, without deliberate simplicity, and about something unrelated. Human malice, blood thirst, and mutual hatred—his voice was filled with genuine suffering to such a degree that I was deeply shaken. He fell into a monologue, and, albeit short, the beginning and end of it represented the two different guiding principles of Tolstoy. Having begun with his usual stern and disembodied doctrinaire attitude, toward the end I could not but recognize those numerous fairy tales, with deep religious motives, filled with the warmth of love and wisdom, with which I had grown up. This happened a couple of days before my departure, and was the last time I spoke to Tolstoy.

I must make some comments about Tolstoy's departure [from Iasnaia Poliana – V.T.] as well. This event could not but stun all of his contemporaries. We still remember the impression it created both in Russia and in Europe.

From newspaper accounts of that time, it seems as if a huge rock had been tossed into still water. "The one thing needful" became, while not for long, a central theme in public discourse.

Another image also comes to mind. It felt as if the continuous noise and thunder of universal ordinariness was suddenly silenced for a moment by a strong and harsh sound cutting across.

As I have said, it is quite possible that I am describing Tolstoy in my own way. In this case, however, I cannot renounce my impressions. For a wider, especially European audience, Tolstoy's departure was an unusual and inexplicable event. Goethe, Ibsen, or even Victor Hugo were all able to write masterpieces on the level of *King Lear*, but none of them was capable of incarnating the events of their novels in their own lives, e. g., acting in accordance with *King Lear*. In Russian

circumstances, Tolstoy's departure can be viewed differently.

Russian literature in general is filled with works on monasteries and hermitages, but separate works dealing exclusively with the phenomenon of wanderers are missing. For personal reasons, I was quite familiar with the single wanderer as well as with this occurrence as a whole. These phenomena are interwoven. A wanderer might make a single pilgrimage to a holy place, returning home afterward to continue his previous life as usual, as Efim does in Tolstoy's *The Two Old Men*.⁴⁰ On the other hand, there were those "eternal wanderers," who would never return anywhere, and who, while walking, never reached their destination. Their departure was not simply from their homes; they were leaving life altogether. The desire of many elderly to leave their domestic lives with its ordinariness in search of seclusion and a place to rest themselves for a last time was not limited to peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie. I was acquainted with this attraction, as were others from Tolstoy's milieu.

I knew several older landowners who, were it not for their families, would have left to take monastic vows. Others dreamt of exiting their lives, and leading a wanderer's existence. Tolstoy's tragedy was that he had nowhere to go. While huge efforts were needed for Tolstoy to leave Iasnaia Poliana and Sofya Andreevna, he was able to leave for somewhere, but had no destination. Therefore, feeling the need to enter a monastery, he failed to do so, merely wandering around the vicinity of Optina Pustyn', a monastery which obviously attracted him. Everything he thought and that went through his head at that time remains hidden from us. I am not trying to hint that he yearned for the Orthodox Church again. No, but it seems to me that he was drawn to the monastic way of life. Were he able to find a Tolstoyan monastery, just as one can find Buddhist or Muslim ones, he would have entered it.

The calling of a wanderer did not fit him either, since even those who simply leave, not necessarily to arrive somewhere but in order to depart from a certain existence, still experience the need psychologically for a landmark of a distant, while not central, goal. Such a landmark is often chosen by the individual himself, who then walks

toward it pretending that it was there all along. And this was unthinkable for Tolstoy. His tragedy was that his departure was of a negative nature, making it an event of social and socio-historical significance. A nobleman and count, Tolstoy not only exhibited the traits of a "gentleman" and "lord" but also of a "muzhik." I mean this literally, disregarding of course the usual meaning of quotation marks associated with these terms.

I am not certain whether I have been able to achieve the goals I set myself in my reminiscences. Has my account helped to dispel any bewilderment and myths which so often make Tolstoy repulsive to the observer? Have I, in the end, succeeded in aiding the reader in the comprehension of the great mystery of Tolstoy's works and the connection between the creator and his creation?

Tolstoy as I saw him was stern but deeply moral, far from having attained a blissful state of tranquility but rather continuously seeking with constant ups and downs, and sudden attacks of a cleansing conscience. I never felt that his works were a miracle or a purely mechanical literary trick separated from him as a person. (I am not certain that such "tricks" are possible at all.) It has always been clear to me that Natasha's image, as well as Tolstoy's remarkable tales with religious motives, his *Childhood* as well as his autobiographical story about a "green stick," were all created by Tolstoy-the-man. The divine works of literature belong to a very earthly Tolstoy.

And, finally, it seems to me, that his story about the "green stick," which is connected to the search for the Kingdom of Heaven by the Tolstoy children, is a most typical Tolstoyan work. Nothing else can be compared to the beauty of the image of children playing and engaging in a search of truth. Another such story known to us, while not of biographical nature, is *Blue Bird*. And is it not symbolic, that Metterlink's bird was of a heavenly colour, while Tolstoy painted his stick green, the color of the earth, sinful and fallen, yet so dear to him.

Notes

1. This essay originally appeared in Russian in *Vozrozhdenie* in 1926 (N. Tsurikov, "Vstrechi s Tolstym," *Vozrozhdenie. La Renaissance* 321-325, 356, 359 [1926]) and was reprinted, with substantial editorial changes implemented by the author himself, in 1959 (N. A. Tsurikov, "Vstrechi s Tolstym," *Mosty: Literaturno-Khudozhestvennyi i Obshchestvenno-Politicheskii Almanakh* 2 [1959], 435-460.), two years after Tsurikov passed away. We have noted only significant changes between the two essays and have used the second edited version for this translation. Excerpts of this essay have also appeared in Russian in *Canadian-American Slavic Studies*. Special issue: "Russian Cultural Life in Exile" 37. 1-2 (2003): 142-149.

2. V. A. Tsurikov, the translator and editor of this essay, is the author's grandson. The mostly unpublished diary of N. A. Tsurikov's father, Alexander Alexandrovich (1849-1912), with its accounts of frequent visits, meetings, and discussions between the years 1888 and 1901, sheds more light on the relationship of both families. A. A. Tsurikov served as member of the circuit court of Tula, and helped Tolstoy with certain passages about courts for his novel *Resurrection*. According to N. A. Tsurikov, his father agreed with Tolstoy on many pedagogical as well as social issues, and used his textbooks for the education of his children. For a more detailed account of Tolstoy's relationship with the Tsurikov family, see V. Novikov, "L. N. Tolstoy i semia Tsurikovykh," *Bezhin lug* 6 (1995) 138-145.

3. Il'ia L'vovich Tolstoy (1866-1933), pen name Dubrovskii. Writer and lecturer, Il'ia L'vovich left an account of his father's life first published in 1913. For a short biography see Irina Shevelenko, *Materialy o russkoi emigratsii 1920-1930-kh gg. v sobranii baronessy M. D. Vrangeli* (Stanford, 1995), 172-173.

4. Tolstoy visited the Tsurikovs in their neighbouring estate Ognichnoe. The Afremovy were landowners in the Tula province (Gremiachevo estate). Ivan Feodorovich Afremov (1794-1866) was a historian and folklorist. In 1858, together with L. N. Tolstoy, I. S. Turgenev, and other landowners of the Tula province, Afremov signed a document concerning details for mandatory provisions for farmers leaving feudal dependency. The Levitskiis were landowners in the Chern uezd (Aleksievskoe estate). Pavel Ivanovich Levitskii (1842-1920), was author of "Pis'ma iz sela Alekseevskogo," *Zemle-delcheskaia Gazeta* and *Khoziain*, married to Varvara Aleksandrovna Levitskaia, née Svehina (1846-1916).

5. *Vozrozhdenie – La Renaissance* was published in Paris from 1925 to 1940 by A. O. Gukasov and edited by P. B. Struve until 1927. After Struve's departure from *Vozrozhdenie*, Iu. F. Semenov acted as the editor until it closed down its operation in 1940. From 1949 on *Vozrozhdenie* began to appear on a regular basis again.

6. Ivan Alekseevich Bunin (1870-1953) prose émigré writer and the first Russian writer to be awarded the Nobel Prize, in 1933. In 1937 Bunin published his own memoirs on Tolstoy. See Ivan Bunin, *The Liberation of Tolstoy. A Tale of Two Writers*, edited, translated, and with an introduction and notes by Thomas Gaiton Marullo and Vladimir T. Khmelkov (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2001).

7. Citing Bunin's praise, Tsurikov fails to mention Bunin's motivation for complimenting him. In his article, Bunin disputes Brodsky's notion about Tolstoy's linguistic peculiarities (Brodskii 4), and uses Tsurikov's statements to substantiate his own argument.

8. Dushan Petrovich Makovitskii (1866-1921), friend and personal physician of Tolstoy and of the Iasnaja Poliana peasants, translated several of Tolstoy's works into Slovak. Makovitskii was present at Tolstoy's death, caring for him to the last minute.

9. Dushan P. Makovitskii, *Iasnopolianskii Zapiski*, 4 vols. (Moskva [Moscow], 1922-1923).

10. Sergei L'vovich Tolstoy (1863-1947), was the eldest son of Tolstoy, a writer, musician, and professor at the Moscow Conservatory. He played an essential part in the transfer of the Dukhobors to Canada. Sergei L'vovich has written several memoirs about his family and was one of the founders of the Tolstoy museum in Moscow. Mikhail Sergeevich Sukhotin (1850-1926) was married to Tatiana L'vovna Tolstaya (1864-1950). Sukhotin was a landowner in the Tula province and member of the First State Duma.

11. Vladimir Grigorovich Chertkov (1854-1936), was a friend of Tolstoy, who edited and published Tolstoy's works abroad. Nikolai Nikolaevich Gusev (1882-1967) was Tolstoy's personal secretary (1907-1909), and during Soviet times became his main biographer.

12. A verst equals 3500 English feet or 1.06 kilometers.

13. Spasskoe Lutovinovo was the name of I. S. Turgenev's estate and the village associated with it.

14. N. A. Tsurikov's first memory of Tolstoy probably

dates to 1892, as his father's diary has the following entry under September 8, 1892: "[. . .] Read to the children Tolstoy's *Okhota pushche nevoli* in the evening [. . .] (A. A. Tsurikov 227). However, Tsurikov errs in his recollection of the exact time of Tolstoy's visit, as his father's diary does not mention L. N. Tolstoy visiting on the following day.

15. Nikolai Sergeevich Kashkin (1829-1914) member of the Petrashevskii circle, son of the Decembrist S. N. Kashkin and N. A. Tsurikov's grandfather. He knew L. N. Tolstoy since the 1850s. After returning from his exile in the Caucasus, Kashkin settled in his family's estate, Nizhnie Pryski, in the Kaluga province. A more detailed account of N. S. Kashkin is found in N. A. Tsurikov's memoirs *Proshloe*.

16. Konstantin Nikolaevich Boborykin (1829-1904) fought at Sebastopol, was ataman of the Orenburg Cossack troops, and governor of Orel.

17. In the first publication of his memoirs, Tsurikov offered a lengthy description of N. S. Kashkin, which he later removed and included in a separate chapter of his memoirs, *Proshloe*.

18. The members of the Petrashevskii circle were arrested on the night of April 22, 1849. Among others, they included F. M. Dostoevsky.

19. Tsurikov does not cite Makovitskii correctly. D. P. recounts: "Remembered N. S. Kashkin. L. N. told us, why he serves as judge. He is 70 years old, rich, a friend of Dostoevsky, Petrashevskii (Fourier, Phalanstere)" (Makovitskii Vol. I, 181).

20. Dmitri Alekseevich Miliutin (1816-1912)—general field-marshal, Minister of War.

21. A journal published in St. Petersburg, 1836-1866.

22. The following account is given in A. A. Tsurikov's diary on May 27, 1898.

[. . .] Lev Nikolaevich and countess S. N. Tolstaya arrived in the evening. They had tea and stayed for dinner and then the four of us rode to Gremiatchevo to stay with the Afremovs. The old man was cheerful, charming, kind, and amiable. Were it not for the constant swarm of admirers with their spinsters' mentality, he could be extraordinarily charming. (A. A. Tsurikov 723-724)

He continues on May 28, 1898:

[. . .] Lev Nikolaevich and I rose early. He was rested and unusually cheerful. We discussed the brothers Kireevskii and also Liaskovskii, both of whom he knew. He talked about elders, Paissii Velichikovskii, shared his impressions of Amvrosii of Optina, Iuvenalii Polovets, Leonid Kavelin and Zederholm. He was rather well disposed. Mentioned his article on famine, sent to journals. Will they print it? [. . .] Lev Nikolaevich shared a lot of interesting and valuable insights about horses and dogs, so vivid, sharp, and wisely. Watched the horses during exercise. What an expert he is, indeed! Spoke of various professors, about Marxism, Russian liberalism, all with such humour [. . .] He says that our simple people are more educated than our intelligentsia, that not a single professor knows as much as a regular muzhik and all of their science is limited to arriving at pompous and incomprehensible names for the simplest phenomena (724-725).

23. Nadezhda Timofeevna was, as usual, gracious, cordial, affectionate, but in the evening remarked to me ironically that she was visited by the famous Ivan Iakovlevich (a Moscow fool-for-Christ and prophet in former times) (A. A. Tsurikov 724).

24. Tsurikov omits the following passage found in his original text.

My father had a good relationship with the local clergy, and therefore, whenever the dean of the diocese would visit us for an inspection (*reviziia*), he would warn us ahead of time, and we would remove all of Tolstoy's books, which were officially not allowed in the school, from the shelves, then return them after the priests' departure (N. A. Tsurikov 1927).

25. *Razvit'* to develop, to unwind, to untwist.

26. Lev Aleksandrovich Tsurikov (1883-1942)—officer of the Tchernigov Hussar regiment, fought in the Russo-Japanese War, World War I, and the Civil War. He emigrated to France after the revolution and died in Grenoble.

27. Sergei Aleksandrovich Tsurikov (1849-1921), former naval officer. He served as the President of the Zemsvstvo of Orel and as Deputy Marshal of the Nobility.

28. M. A. Stakhovich (1861-1923), member of the Gosudarstvennyi sovet from 1907, left Russia with the retreat of the White Army.

29. Here Tolstoy's last words are correct, which proves that he probably understood the true meaning of the quote better than he was willing to admit. In this case, his defence has an element of provocation. The letter *iat'* does make a difference, causing the word to mean assurance in Slavonic. Had the spelling been with an *e*, the meaning could indeed have been understood as announcement. However S. A. Tsurikov understands the passage more in a Russian context and assigns the quote the meaning of the materialization (or substance, as in the Authorized Version) of things expected. Both Tolstoy and S. A. Tsurikov misinterpret the quote. However, Tolstoy's understanding intentionally ridicules the passage, while Tsurikov's is slightly incorrect. The essence of the quote about faith is from St. Paul, Hebrews 11:1 and should be understood as "the assurance of things hoped for." Philaret Drozdov's catechism quotes accordingly.

30. N. A. Tsurikov was engaged as teacher of Sergei Sergeevich Tolstoy (1897-1974), son of Sergei L'vovich Tolstoy.

31. The event to which Tsurikov refers is not the actual opening, but rather the transfer of the relics of Anna Kashinskaia, also known as the re-canonization of the saint, on June 12, 1909, in Kashin. Anna Kashinskaia was originally canonized in 1650; however, as early as 1678 the Church Council removed her from the ranks of Orthodox saints. The event of 1909 marks the only time that the Russian Orthodox Church re-canonized a saint.

32. Game similar to skittles.

33. Alexandra L'vovna Tolstaia (1884-1979), Tolstoy's third and youngest daughter. A. Tolstaya left the Soviet Union in 1929; in 1931 she moved to the United States, where she founded the Tolstoy Foundation in 1939.

34. Aleksandr Borisovich Goldenweizer (1875-1961), pianist and friend of Leo Tolstoy, left detailed memoirs on him. Goldenweizer first met Tolstoy in 1896, at the age of 21. He was a renowned teacher and professor at the Moscow Conservatory.

35. Ilia Il'ich Mechnikov (1845-1916), scientist and biologist, married to the artist Olga Nikolaevna Belokopytova (1858-1944). At the time of his visit to Iasnaia Poliana, Mechnikov was the director of the Institute of Louis Pasteur in Paris. He described his meeting with Tolstoy in 1912 in "Den' u Tolstogo v Iasnoi Poliane" (*Russkoe Slovo*, 225). See also O. N. Mechnikova's account of her husband's life, *O. N.*

Mechnikova, Zhizn' I. I. Mechnikova (Moskva: GIZ, 1926), 161-165.

36. Sofia Vasilievna Kovalevskaia (1850-1891), scientist and writer.

37. For a detailed account of Tsurikov's involvement in the Slav student convention of 1908 see N. Tsurikov "Dvadtsat' piat' let tomu nazad. Iz vospominanii o slavianskom s"ezde v Prage v 1908 g." *Rossia i Slaviansstvo* 227 (1933)3, 6 and 228 (1933)2.

38. A daily newspaper published in St. Petersburg between 1868 and 1917.

39. In the original essay, Chertkov is not mentioned by name, but referred to as a certain very prominent and consistent Tolstoyan living abroad, in a large European city (1927: 321).

40. *Dva Starika*, 1885.

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