

interpretation of Tolstoy's works, this study will serve as a useful and provocative introduction to Tolstoy. I do not know what kind of editorial intervention the book received, but I believe its positive aspects could have been strengthened had it received more.

As I read the closing lines of Williams' Afterword I am baffled anew: "It may be that his book is the record of the effects produced by Tolstoy's work only on one reader, that is, the author of this study. It would be surprising, however, if this were the case, since the author has no reason to suppose that his reactions to the works of Tolstoy are markedly different from those of most men." Would the author have reason to suppose that his reactions might be markedly different from those of most *women*? Why would a person choose to use "men" in the sense of "men and women" when it clearly would have been just as easy to say "most people"?

Like Pasternak and like Williams, I, too, have been impressed by the ineluctable power of Tolstoy to enchant me with his vision. At the very least, Williams' study reminded me of how difficult it is to describe Tolstoy's achievement.

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***Memoirs of Peasant Tolstoyans in Soviet Russia.* Translated, edited, and with an introduction by William Edgerton. Bloomington, Ill.: Indiana University Press, 1993.**

The memoirs included in this volume document the lives of those who attempted to live out Tolstoy's moral ideas during the first two decades of Soviet power. These memoirs describe pre-revolutionary village ways, the battles of World War I, the famine of 1921-22, the relative prosperity of the NEP period, and the brutal years of collectivization and Terror from a unique perspective. Boris Mazurin, an organizer of the Tolstoyan Life and Labor Commune and one of the few Tolstoyans still alive at the time of this collection's publication, describes the ideals that animated the movement and conveys the spirit that sustained it:

Often in frank discussions we would hear such statements as this from Communists--highly placed figures, ordinary members, and investigators, as well as simple working people: "It's all well and good, what you Tolstoyans say. That will all come about--a stateless society without violence and without frontiers, sober and industrious, and without private property. But this is not the right time for it--right now it is even harmful." But we did not understand that. The "Kingdom of God" that lived within us kept nudging us toward carrying out our ideals immediately, without delay. Putting off the fulfillment of our ideals until some indefinite time in the future seemed to us amazingly similar to the teachings of the church people, who urged us to be patient and endure our poverty and deprivation so that we would acquire the blessings we longed for in some future life beyond the grave."(97)

Because they resisted military service, and because they refused to profess the Communist creed and teach it to their children, the Tolstoyans quickly became targets for harassment. Forced collectivization almost destroyed the movement in 1929, but its leaders--backed by the influential Vladimir Chertkov--petitioned the authorities for the resettlement of the Tolstoyan Life and Labor Commune from the Moscow region to Western Siberia. Permission was granted, and in 1931 the Commune began new life in the Altai region, on the river Tom. All but one of the memoirists who speak to us in this book lived and worked on that commune, which attracted hundreds of farmers from all over Russia.

The fate of the Tolstoyans in the Soviet Union has received scant attention both there and abroad. The historian Mark Popovskii remembers his surprise when towards the end of the 1970's he learned that his writing on ethics and science had attracted the attention of the Tolstoyans: "Where could Tolstoyans be coming from, in the sixth decade of Soviet rule?," he wondered. He soon began corresponding with them and the result was the first history of the subject, his *Russkie muzhiki rasskazyvajut: Posledovateli L.N. Tolstogo v Sovetskom Sojuze 1918-1977* (London: Overseas Publications Interchange Ltd., 1983). Popovskii discovered that after the February Revolution, the Tolstoyans, far from losing momentum, gained followers and set about establishing a number of agricultural communes. These collectives went on to flourish thanks to the hard work and ingenuity of their members, many of them peasants or used to working the land. The communes were held together by the relative harmoniousness of their members' shared beliefs and practices (no one consumed meat, smoked, drank, or used vulgar language), although differences arose concerning childrearing practices and questions of economic management.

The surviving Tolstoyans had an acute sense of history; they preserved letters, papers, documents, and photographs and recorded their recollections for posterity. However, it was not until the advent of *glasnost'* that their story began receiving some attention in the Soviet press. *Vospominanija krest'jan-tolstovtsev, 1910-1930-e gody*, compiled by the historian Arsenii Roginskii, appeared in 1989. It is from this compilation that William Edgerton has drawn his selection, accompanying his excellent translation with an informative, readable introduction, useful annotations, and evocative photographs. Edgerton's edition provides the necessary context for the English-speaking reader. His abridgment of the Russian original does not diminish the material's impact; the volume may even gain in concision. And Edgerton's recalculation of the traditional Russian weights and measures into pounds, feet, yards, acres, etc. adds to the text's immediacy.

The volume will prove an excellent source for students of Soviet history and culture. In making available the memoirs of peasant-intellectuals, it supplements the more widely-known memoir literature written by intellectuals. In addition to "many grim pages about the harassment, persecution, arrests, torture, and years of confinement in labor

camps suffered by the Tolstoyans," as Edgerton notes in his introduction, the memoirs contain a wealth of other details:

descriptions of...the traditional matchmaking and wedding of one of the authors; scenes of the beautiful Siberian landscape in which the Tolstoyans relocated their Life and Labor Commune; a fascinating account of the initiative and ingenuity they showed in developing a new type of farming in the region.... (xviii-xix)

Some of the peasant Tolstoyans record the transforming effect of Tolstoy's writing on their lives. In the sinister days of 1936, Yakov Dragunovsky--the only one of the authors in this volume to perish in the camps--bravely submitted a statement protesting the mass arrests that had taken place at the commune. Dragunovsky continued to speak freely about his beliefs and, until his execution in 1938, to urge the authorities to heed reason and conscience. His papers and his story bear moving witness to the moral power of Tolstoy's ideas. His and the other memoirs in this volume can enrich our appreciation of the historical and cultural influence of Tolstoy's art and thought.

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