

The L. L. Tolstoy Archives, Carolina Rediviva Library, University of Uppsala

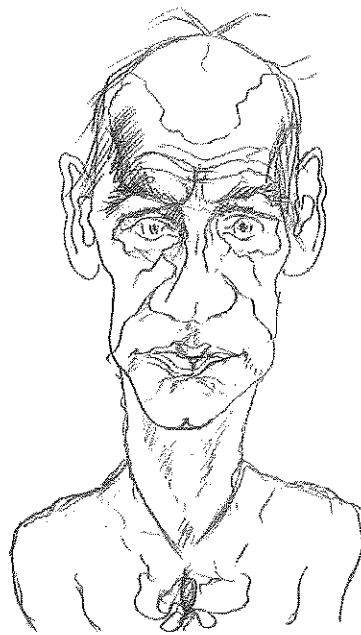
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In 1997, I received an invitation to Sweden's Uppsala University. While there, I decided to look into the Tolstoy family. As most people know, the descendents of Lev Nikolaevich—aside from the few that lived in the Moscow area and some who resided at the family's ancestral Yasnaya Polyana estate—fled to all the ends of the emigrant world after the 1917 Revolution. Many of the direct heirs of Lev Nikolaevich settled in Sweden, and most of these were the offspring of Tolstoy's third (legitimate) son, Lev L'vovich, who, in 1896, married a Swedish woman named Dora (Fedorovna) Westerlund.

Lev L'vovich, whom his father once called "Leo Tolstoy, Junior," was himself a fairly well-known and respected belletristic author and playwright in pre-Revolutionary Russia. Although he had enjoyed good relations with his parents, by the 1890s Lev L'vovich had come to doubt his father's religious and moral teachings, eventually becoming an ardent monarchist and Russian patriot. While living in exile after the Revolution in Sweden he became a vocal and sometimes harsh critic of his father's teachings. He continued to write there, but also received attention as an artist and sculptor: He participated in numerous exhibits, where his busts of his father, Mussolini and Hoover all brought renown. He died in Helsingborg, Sweden on October 18, 1945.

When I asked around the university community about Lev L'vovich's descendants, the only response that I got was that, indeed, there were

people with that last name, but, who they were and what they were up to, no one seemed to know. Finally I managed to track down and make



L. L. Tolstoy. Self portrait from the 1930s.

the acquaintance of Lev L'vovich's grandson, Johan Tolstoy, child of Pavel Tolstoy, Lev L'vovich's second child.

In 2004, in part as a result of my efforts, Johan Tolstoy donated six large boxes of Lev L'vovich's documents to Carolina Rediviva, the library at Uppsala University.

In September of this year, I returned from a research trip sponsored by the Swedish Institute in Stockholm. The goal of my trip was to provide

descriptions and attributions in Russian for the letters, personal documents, and manuscripts that belonged to L. L. Tolstoy.

The collection contains more than a thousand documents that date to the period between 1916 and 1944, including business letters; decades of correspondence with family and friends in the Soviet Union and elsewhere; artistic works by Lev L'vovich that include three novels, shorts stories, travelogues, and philosophical tracts in Swedish, French and Russian; notes to a lecture entitled "On the Teaching of L. N. Tolstoy"; and drafts and notes to a book on his mother and father. None of this material has been published, and, given the quality and quantity, it would not be unfair to say that nearly any biographical work written heretofore on L. N. Tolstoy is incomplete and unreliable. This is particularly true for the period of 1900-1910, since the archive contains considerable material related to Tolstoy's relationship with his wife and children during this troubled time, his views on the 1905 Revolution, his last will and testament, and his "departure" in 1910.



From: L. L. Tolstoy,
To: S. L. Tolstoy¹ (Moscow)
 August 16, 1936
 Uppsala

Dear Brother,

These days I want to chat with you and to answer your kind letter. I'm glad to hear that they gave you a new apartment where, I hope, you'll be more comfortable and at home than in the first... I'm working a lot here. I'm thinking of the big questions of spirit, education, heredity, happiness.

Mother's diary is very painful. Indeed, in it I find many painful notes from Father, but nonetheless they are good for me. The poor thing, he was so mentally weak that he didn't understand what he was doing—he was so unfair towards me

and Andryusha.² And most of all towards Mother. Everything was machinated by Chertkov, whom Father obeyed like a son. In the description of my life, I spoke little of Father.

That's the way I understood him, and about both his delusions and his positive traits there is nothing new to add. I believe that, in a positive sense, he was a great artist of the word, and that is it. He was an intelligent man, but a limitlessly vain and domineering one, and that affected him as it affects all intelligent people.

I consider first Rousseau, and then after him Father, to be the most harmful writers of our "civilization," for they both were insincere and said things that they did not think in the depths of their souls.

What explains his influence and use? I'll tell you. To be exact, he could do everything vividly, and could make you cry over Andrei's affair with Natasha.³ No...

Dear Seryozha, don't be mad at this letter. You're the good son, and I'm the bad one, ever since Father understood it so...



From: L. L. Tolstoy
To: S. L. Tolstoy (Moscow)
 January 10, 1941
 Uppsala

Good day, Seryozha, how are you? How's life, family, music—write me, I haven't heard from you for a long while, nor about your theory of the transition of life, which is quite true. Yes, yes, we need to get ready for the distant voyage, we need to hope for a less stormy one than we've had on earth.

The heart seeks peace—the heart, the body, and the soul. A little stronger grows the ardor, a little weaker goes the heart, and farewell life, until the next go. But in what form? How to marry the spiritual and intellectual sphere with that of the physical? Is there any connection in them? Where and when did the heat of the flame, burning in

me during life, dissipate? And what is the nature of that flame? All that is a secret. It's not reality, but the unintelligible and dissolute that becomes nearer and nearer after death.

Don't be surprised if, on some beautiful spring or fall day, I fly into Moscow. I've wanted to have a look at Russia before the end and breathe it into my old chest. I'd like to hear my own native tongue and look once more at my native sky. But, I've come to the conclusion that all governmental systems are equally stupid and imperfect, and therefore the most extreme of them might well be the best because it might have the chance to infuse its forms with all the best that exists in the realm of knowledge of how to govern people, most importantly the spiritual element and the moral bases. I'd like for Stalin to read this idea, for humankind is headed towards it and will unavoidably arrive this time.

I embrace you, Seryozha and Anichka. Tell her to write me.

Your brother,

Lev

From: David Burliuk

To: L. L. Tolstoy

August 30, 1928

New York

Most Respected Count Lev L'vovich,

From the attached form letter you'll see what brought me to call upon you. For the organizers of the evening, it was extremely gratifying to see you in their midst on the platform—one of the closest in blood and in spirit to the great Lev Nikolaevich, who now is the center of attention of the entire world, during these days dedicated to his great memory. Please let me know, by letter to the newspaper *Russian Voice* (*Русский голос*), where you can receive me for personal conversations.

Awaiting your response to the exploratory group's request, I remain, Lev L'vovich,

Respectfully yours,

David Burliuk

From: P. I. Biriukov⁵

To: L. L. Tolstoy

January 2, 1931

Prague

Dear Lyova,

I was very happy to get your letter. Sorry that I haven't responded – I was ill. I'm beginning the New Year with your letter. First, about Verigin:⁶ He's now traveling. In Mexico, he's taking a look at some land for resettling the Doukhobors⁷ from Russia and Canada. [...]

You write that your affairs are going poorly. I, though, simply have no affairs. Do you know that paralysis has destroyed me, and that I walk on one foot, dragging the other with great difficulty, and my right arm aches for no reason. I have no money. My property is pawned, and I have to pay interest on it, but I have no way to do so. Local friends chip in to support me. But I don't complain. I feel fine. [...]

And how are you? Still working in art? I somehow read your article about your father. Do you see Tanya? It seems her daughter has moved in. I'm very happy for her. I've corresponded some with Seryozha—he has sent me his very interesting notes about his trip to Canada. As much as my weak strength allows me, I'm writing a history of the Dukhobor movement. I'd love to hear more about you. [...]

From the notebooks of L. L. Tolstoy

February 1, 1942

"I know within me my brilliant mind, one that is the equal to those of the best thinkers of mankind, and I regret that I must light stoves, and live in noisiness and among ordinary mortals. [...] Yes, I am a genius, for I understand and

know what the crowd does not know and does not understand, nor will it ever. I was reading Biriukov's biography of my father and I saw clearly that half of his preaching was false posturing, that it was poisoned by empty rhetoric [пустословие]. He wrote to him [to Biriukov]: "I fear that I love fame more than I love truth..." I was reading Kant—I believed it all completely. The elk hunt. Churchill's speech in Edinburgh.⁴ The Germans are in the Caucuses. When will it all end?..."

Notes

1. Sergei L'vovich, the eldest child of L. N. Tolstoy and S. A. Tolstaya.
2. Andrei L'vovich, the Tolstoy's ninth-born child, who, after the Revolution, declared that had Tolstoy not been his father, he would have liked to have seen him hanged for sedition.
3. Andrei had a longtime and fairly open affair with the wife of the governor of Tula.
4. Given in October of 1942, Churchill's speech in Edinburgh recounted in glowing terms the Russians' battles against the Hitler's armies, including the defense of Stalingrad.
5. Pavel Ivanovich Biriukov, Tolstoy's first biographer and director of Tolstoy's and Chertkov's publishing firm, The Intermediary.
6. Petr Petrovich Chistiakov-Verigin, the son of P. V. Verigin, the charismatic and controversial leader of the Dukhobors until his death in 1924. See below.
7. A Russian religious sect that was persecuted during the nineteenth century. Their anti-government, anti-property and pacifistic beliefs attracted Tolstoy, who sent Biriukov to investigate the group in 1895. Tolstoy, along with the Tolstoyans and the Quakers, funded the Dukhobors' emigration to Canada in 1899.

(Translated and annotated by Michael Denner)