

In Exchange

A REPORT ON THE THIRD SEMINAR ON TOLSTOY AND AMERICA

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On Wednesday, 6 September, the Third Seminar on L.N. Tolstoy and America convened at Iasnaia Poliana, with representatives from both the American and Soviet sides of the project in attendance. Organized by Edward Kasinec, Chief of the Slavic and Baltic Division and Astor Fellow (1989-90) of The New York Public Library and Lidiia Gromova-Opulskaia, Senior Researcher of the Institute of World Literatures (IMLI), the Seminar was sponsored by the USSR Academy of Sciences, and by IREX. The Seminar represents an important opportunity for the direct discussion of discoveries in American and Russian archives, the provision of prosopographical data on Tolstoy's lesser-known American correspondents, and the development of agendas for work on the next stage of research into the numerous trans-Atlantic relationships carried on between Tolstoy and his American correspondents.

Although unable to attend, co-chair Edward Kasinec's opening remarks were distributed to the conferees. Mr. Kasinec reported that since the last meeting of the Seminar in New York in January, 1988, the individuals on the American side of the Tolstoy project had been concerned with three basic problems: first, the identification and localization of Tolstoy manuscripts and correspondence in repositories beyond the New York Metropolitan area; second, the compilation of a machine-readable listing of Tolstoy's American correspondents and visitors, based on the inventory created by Soviet participant Natalia Petrovna Velikanova of IMLI; the assemblage of biographical information on these individuals; and the compilation of bibliographical information on American publications of Tolstoy's works and writings about him.

Mr. Kasinec pointed out recent positive developments in several areas that should enhance, and broaden the work of joint scholarly projects along the lines of the Tolstoy and America group. The appearance of several new archival guides to American and United Kingdom literary manuscripts, and the further development of the Archives and Manuscripts database (AMC) of RLIN, making the retrieval of information on Russian manuscripts in American repositories increasingly easy, while a major generational change in the circles of the Russian emigration has led to the deposit of the archival collections of a number of literary figures and bibliophiles in major institutions, or in responsible private collections. Given the present climate, the activities of this group might serve as a paradigm for other Soviet-American literary projects, namely, the publication of Russian, and Russian emigre literary manuscripts held

in American repositories, and the compilation by American scholars of bibliographies of the translations of Russian literature into English, and of critical literature written by Western scholars and dealing with Russian and Soviet literature. Several initiatives along these lines are already being implemented by a number of American bibliographers.

Four members of the delegation from the United States presented papers. Robert T. Whittaker of Lehman College, CUNY (who also served as co-chair of the Seminar), reported that thus far the search of archives outside New York had produced strikingly little material, as there are few listings in other American archival repositories under the name of Tolstoy. Dr. Whittaker suggested that the search for additional Tolstoy materials must of necessity turn to the individual names of Tolstoy's correspondents.

In a second report, Dr. Whittaker spoke on his examination of correspondence between Tolstoy and Judge Ernest Howard Crosby (1856-1907), who, with some 65 items located to date, was one of Tolstoy's most active American correspondents. Following his first encounter with Tolstoy's philosophy in 1891, Crosby became one of the most energetic and devoted disciples of Tolstoyanism in America, attacking manifestations of militarism, imperialism (especially the Spanish-American and Russo-Japanese Wars), and social injustice, all in the name of Christian ideals. Crosby followed Tolstoy's publications and defended his literary interests, providing him with material from the American press, urged him to write in support of various causes and individuals, and shared his own writings with his teacher, including his satiric anti-militaristic novel, "Captain Junks, Hero" (currently on exhibit at Iasnaia Poliana). Inspired by the turn of events in Russia at the turn of the century, Crosby expressed his wish to return to Russia to visit with Tolstoy after the expected revolution (his first and only visit took place in 1894), to which Tolstoy responded skeptically that he should not wait. An untimely death prevented Crosby from returning to visit his teacher.

William B. Edgerton, professor emeritus at Indiana University, reported that the starting point for his research was the references to Leo Tolstoy in American guides to archival collections, and the spravka prepared by L.D. Opul'skaia, and V.A. Aleksandrov. In Canada, Dr. Edgerton located Tolstoy material that prompted him to suggest broadening the name of the research project from "Tolstoy and the USA" to "Tolstoy and North America." Noting as one example the autobiography by Professor James Mavor (1854-1925), of the University of Toronto, My Windows on the Street of The World (NY: E.P. Dutton, 1923), Dr. Edgerton reported that an entire chapter concerning Mavor's two visits to Tolstoy in 1899 and 1910, is apparently unknown in Tolstoy scholarship, as is a letter to Mavor from Sofia Andreevna, located in Mavor's archives. In addition, Dr. Edgerton stated that his work on the project had also focused on exploring Tolstoy's influence upon social reformists, most of whom called themselves Christian socialists. Among them were the leaders of the Christian Commonwealth, an agricultural colony

of interest to Tolstoy that lasted from 1896 to 1900. In The Social Gospel, a periodical published by this group from 1898 to 1900, Dr. Edgerton has located one letter each from Chertkov and Tolstoy to the co-editor, George Howard Gibson, and one letter from Tolstoy to E.H. Crosby, all three of which appear to be unknown to Tolstoy scholars. Dr. Edgerton is also working on information concerning the letters of such Tolstoy correspondents as Jane Addams, Havelock Ellis, George Davis Herron, Samuel M. ("Golden Rule") Jones, John Harvey Kellogg, and Mme. John Telfer, among others.

Dr. Antonia B. Glasse, of Ithaca, New York, discussed the methodology of identification employed in her efforts to root out information on Tolstoy's 1,290-odd American correspondents. Using the list provided by Natalia Velikanova and the Tolstoy Museum, an attempt was made to arrange the great body of correspondence into a systematic pattern that would help identify individual writers. Once in machine-readable form, the alphabetical master lists organized by years and dates, and by states and cities (with separate lists for Boston, New York, and Chicago). The master list was also divided into individual correspondents and organizations, with appropriate subdivisions — societies, press, publishing houses, educational institutions, etc. Dr. Glasse reported that the letter abstracts have suggested further useful divisions, according to specific issues and problems discussed in the letters. Dr. Glasse stated that this preliminary organization of available material laid the groundwork for the identification process. More narrowly defined lists were created, such as famous American correspondents, and well-known organizations, journals and newspapers. The search for individuals with a known connection to Tolstoy was made in library card catalogues, biographical dictionaries, and directories, while prosopographical information on correspondents, selected at random, was solicited from local and regional archives and historical societies.

The final paper presented by an American representative was by Robert H. Davis, Jr., Librarian at the Slavic and Baltic Division, The New York Public Library. The topic of Mr. Davis's research was a bibliographic survey of the translations of Tolstoy's works, reviews, and the critical literature which appeared about him in America, from the late 1870s (the appearance of the first American translation of his work) to the time of his death in 1910. In addition to making some generalizations about the "bibliographical topography" of the critical translations and the literature, the presentation contained brief comments on some of the lesser-known translators and commentators, and what may possibly be some new research materials in the archives of American publishing houses. Mr. Davis concluded by stating that before any concrete conclusions on such questions as to how the life and works of Tolstoy were perceived, and received by the American people in his own lifetime, via the American press and publishing, much work remains to be done, including a de visu review of the works cited in the bibliography, extensive prosopographical research on the American personalities

active in the translation and criticism of Tolstoy's work, and extensive readership studies. Mr. Davis expressed the hope that his bibliography would provide a practical tool for such future research.

Also in attendance from the United States were Tatiana I. Whittaker, Professor of Russian, Manhattanville College, Purchase, New York, who assisted the work of the delegation in innumerable ways; and A. Joseph Hollander, of the Modern Language Association.

Seminar participants from the Soviet Union were led by Lydia Gromova-Opulskaia, who served as chair, and chief commentator for the conference. Like their American counterparts, in the past year the three paper givers from the Russian side of the Tolstoy and America project have focused their research attention on the question of who was writing to Tolstoy, what the letters contained, and further outlining an agenda for future work on both sides of the project.

Valery Aleksandrovic Aleksandrov of IMLI has had a longstanding interest in the question of Tolstoy and America, having authored articles on such noted American correspondents as Andrew Dickson White of Cornell University. Dr. Aleksandrov presented the prosopographical background of one of Tolstoy's most remarkable correspondents, the translator Isabel Hapgood. Employing in his research xeroxes of original letters supplied by the Slavic and Baltic Division of The New York Public Library, Dr. Aleksandrov provided a fascinating glimpse of the highly productive relationship that existed between Tolstoy and Hapgood; a relationship that Dr. Aleksandrov plans to research further in the coming months.

Elena Nikolaevna Shchelkova discussed a stage production of Anna Karenina in New York City which was based on a French translation and production of the novel. Examining both reviews and contemporary correspondence relating to, or discussing this stage adaptation, Ms. Shchelkova pieced together both the details of the production, and how it was received by both American audiences and critics. In addition to employing a variety of materials to explore the American reception of this particular theatrical performance, Ms. Shchelkova has suggested yet another area for joint research as part of the Tolstoy and America project, namely the question of Tolstoy and the American stage.

Natalia Petrovna Velikanova's ongoing work has centered on providing synoptic precis of the letters from American correspondents held by the Tolstoy Museum, and listed in her inventory. In her presentation to the Seminar, Ms. Velikanova reviewed some of her abstracts from these letters, and from these postulated several preliminary subject categories into which most of the American letters may be placed, echoing a point raised by Dr. Glasse. A large amount of correspondence concerns relief efforts for victims of the Russian famine. (See: Richard G. Robbins, Famine in Russia, 1891-1892 [NY: Columbia UP, 1975]). Among the examples offered, Ms. Velikanova cited three letters

to Tolstoy by one Abraham Gideon, of Ithaca, New York, who stated that he had read an article by Sofia Andreevna on the great hunger, and offered a financial contribution. The topic of religion in general, and Tolstoy's beliefs and excommunication in particular, was also raised by Ms. Velikanova as a frequent topic for American letters, as was the subject matter of the Kreutzer Sonata. Ms. Velikanova also noted that in a number of cases, correspondence from Americans requesting such things as the great novelist's autograph often went unanswered, thus eliminating the need to search for the papers of certain names on her list.

In addition to their work on Tolstoy's American correspondents, members of the Russian side of the project are presently assembling an enhanced edition of the collected works of Tolstoy.

Conference participants received a 201-page program and abstracts prepared for the use of the seminar by Robert Davis and Edward Kasiniec of The New York Public Library. In a ceremony before the formal opening of the new exhibit "Tolstoy and America," a copy was presented to the Tolstoy Library at Iasnaia Poliana by Robert Whittaker. The booklet also contained the actual text of several of the presentation made by the American side, and a description of the 1989 issue of the Tolstoy Studies Journal by Dr. Kathleen Parthé with an invitation to Soviet colleagues to participate in future issues.

The balance of the booklet contained extensive appendices relevant to the work of the commission, prepared by Robert Whittaker and Robert Davis. Dr. Whittaker supplied lists providing the names, date, and place of origin of letter sent by Americans to Tolstoy, as well as a separate listing chronicling the correspondence between Crosby and Tolstoy. The three draft bibliographies upon which Mr. Davis based his presentation were also included, divided into three subsections: (1) Articles, critical reviews, and writings appearing in the American periodical press, circa 1872-Dec. 1910; (2) translations of Tolstoy's works published in the United States during his lifetime; and (3) secondary works published about Tolstoy up to 1910.

In addition to the direct conference participants, more than thirty persons from among the staff of Iasnaia Poliana, as well Tula learned institutes were among the audience for the two-day meeting. There was a unanimity of opinion that the conference was a productive experience, and an important signpost along the road to a better understanding of Russo-American literary and cultural relations in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

