

Report from the Field

AMERICANS WRITE TO TOLSTOY: A REPORT ON THE TOLSTOY-USA PROJECT

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Although this project emphasizes the West and Tolstoy more than the reverse, it still offers new information on the writer's views of the West and of the United States in particular. Initiated in 1987 by IREX and IMLI under a joint agreement between ACLS and the Soviet Academy of Sciences, the project continues despite wholesale *perestroika*. Its principal focus is the collection of over 1700 letters written by Americans to Tolstoy from the 1870s to 1910. Although there is no longer any major institutional funding on the American side, IMLI continues to provide formal (if not material) support in the form of invitations and local research support (especially for translation and editing). The original plan was to publish two volumes of the most interesting American letters, Tolstoy's responses, all with Russian translation, together with a complete inventory of the letters and a bibliography of US publications by and about Tolstoy through 1910. This ambitious plan scheduled the volumes for publication by Nauka in 1994. Recent events suggest that this plan will be significantly scaled down, and uncertainties at Nauka raise questions about a publisher.

Nonetheless, work continues. Over 500 of the American letters have been transcribed: after preliminary examination, these appear to have the most significant texts and therefore seem most suited for publication. The largest category (almost half) include Tolstoy's most significant two-sided correspondences (with Bernstein, Bryan, Creelman, Crosby, Dole, and Hapgood, for example). Large segments of these 500 letters concern American assistance to Russia during the famine of 1891-92 (80 letters), letters on social and political topics (like nonresistance and the single tax, 80 letters), on matters of faith and religion (70 letters), on philosophy, aesthetics, education (35 letters), and on publishing, literary questions, and specific works, e.g. *Kreutzer Sonata*, *Resurrection* (60 letters). Editing of these texts, in some cases, has already begun.

Work has begun on identifying, transcribing, and editing Tolstoy's letters. Part of the project has been devoted to locating the author's letters, both known and unknown, in US archives, and this effort has brought modest success. Also, the process of inventorying the remaining 1200 American letters continues: however, it appears that a very large proportion of these are either requests for an autograph or notes accompanying published materials sent to Tolstoy.

According to plan, the inventory process should be finished early in 1993. Editing and annotating the texts has begun, as has the translating, and this process will continue

into 1994. If the project gets adequate assistance from American and Russian scholars, principally in editing and annotating, the completed texts should be ready for submission by the end of 1994.

This is a report and an appeal. The project is in need of American scholarly help - Slavists interested and willing to participate in editing American letters. In particular we need editors for the letters on social and political topics and on philosophy, aesthetics, and education. For scholars unable to participate, but working on topics on Tolstoy's relations with the US, the project has developed a valuable data base of the American letters and bibliographical information. We have been able to supply colleagues with names of Tolstoy's correspondents on certain topics, and we have been able on occasion to supply texts of letters. I invite colleagues whom we might assist to write to me at my home address: 121 Alexander Ave., Hartsdale, NY 10530.