

DCCD 2020**Dialogue of Cultures - Culture of Dialogue: from Conflicting to Understanding****L.N. TOLSTOY AND THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING JOURNALISTS
ELABORATING ON THE CRISIS OF 1891–1892**

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Abstract

The article analyzes the memoirs of the journalists covering the aspects of 1891–1892 crisis in Russia in the world media. The papers of the British D.V.B. Steveni and E.A.B. Hodgetts, an American F.V. Reeves, who communicated with Tolstoy, represent an example of humanitarian cooperation and international communication, worthy of further reflection. Of primary relevance is the historical fact, demonstrating development of intercultural communication and sympathy towards people affected by the disaster. Memoirs not translated into Russian are introduced into the literary discourse, while the contents of the latter have not yet been involved as cultural and historical material. Foreigners' attention was drawn to those areas, events, affairs, phenomena and people who were directly related to Count Tolstoy or his activities. Arriving in the struggling areas, reporters urged to meet him and further dwell on his work "on hunger". The authors of the article conclude that trying to get to know another country foreigners largely relied on L. Tolstoy's opinions expressed in his journalistic articles, which echoed in foreigners' memoirs of Russia. The research focuses on D.V.B. Steveni's biography as well as the current findings. The judgments of E.A.B. Hodgetts about Russia and the Russian people are provided. The article regards memoirs of the American businessman and public figure F. Reeves, who accompanied ships with grain sent as material assistance from America. The memoirs of the representatives of different countries all concerning communication with Tolstoy reflected on bonds of understanding and friendship that added to official cooperation.

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1. Introduction

The famine that struck a number of regions in Russia in 1891–1893 led to irreversible consequences for the country as well as contributed to the manifestation of the conflict between the government and the society, implicit till then. Without dwelling on the reasons for the famine and impoverishment of the peasants at that time, we note that the charitable activities of Leo Tolstoy's who had already been recognized as a credible writer and thinker, were aimed not only at improving the plight of peasants in the affected provinces, but also at maintaining international assistance. The events of that time were covered in many English-language publications (Romanova, 2015), which contributed to clarifying the situation and collecting donations. London correspondents Edward Arthur Brayley Hodgetts, James William Barnes Steveni together with American entrepreneur Francis Reeves, meeting the Russian writer, personally witnessing the lives of Russian peasants and helping them financially, mediated between different cultures. This fact remains the subject of modern research (Kelly, 2017).

2. Problem Statement

The position of Tolstoy, explicit in his actions “on hunger” (about 70 canteens were opened for starving people) and expressed through journalistic works tackling the national disaster, proved extremely relevant, still was assessed controversially by the contemporaries: some considered it exceptionally beneficial, others found it equally harmful. The recollections of the meetings and conversations with the outstanding Russian writer and public figure, of his charity work on the hunger, cast a new light upon not only his activities, but also philosophical and moral conceptions. Tolstoy was trusted as the most authoritative, fair and objective representative of the Russian world. Artistic works, philosophical, socio-political, religious views of the writer were perceived as a valuable part of the Pan-European culture. Trying to get to know an unfamiliar country, foreigners largely relied on the ideas of Tolstoy's, therefore, a number of the certain journalists' materials reveal the traces of the influence of his judgments, which in some cases contributed to clarifying the position of the writer himself, expressed in the journalistic articles about the famine of 1891 – 1892.

3. Research Questions

The research questions involve the one related to the fact that the above-mentioned journalists' memoirs of Russia and Tolstoy, popular in Britain and America at the beginning of the 20th century, over time have been shunned from the reading interests and have not been translated into Russian.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to return these materials into the focus of scholarly discourse, as well as to clarify some of the biographical facts of their authors.

5. Research Methods

Russian literary studies have scrutinized the publication history of these articles by Tolstoy which implied rigorous textual work. The twenty-ninth volume of the writer's Complete Works provides detailed comments on these articles. Still, the interpretation proposed in the 1950s (the volume was published in 1954), is given from the standpoints typical of research of that period when criticism against the political system of the pre-revolutionary Russia was an essential component of literary and historical work. Vladimir Lenin's distillation concerning the inevitability of disasters under the imperialist type of economic management, as well as statements made in his critical articles on L. Tolstoy form the methodological basis for understanding Tolstoy's articles. Accordingly, the verbal attacks against the tsarist administration expressed in Tolstoy's articles were emphasized and acquired the status of the key message: "The main meaning and vigor of these articles is mercilessly sharp exposure of all the orders of Tsarist Russia" (Tolstoy, 1928–1964, v. 29, p. XIV). The author's position was enthused with the spirit of his "utopian and reactionary religious and moral teachings", together with the hope that "as soon as it's enough to write or do something that could "touch the hearts of the rich", and the miracle will happen: giving up their privileges, the fed up, feeling repentance and love, will they come to their hungry "brothers" (Tolstoy, 1928–1964, v. 29, p. VIII). In other words, the idea that the writer's naive dreams would not come true was emphasized.

The changed world of the 21st century features some historical events appearing in a new light and requiring further understanding from the perspective of a **broader culture-historical method**. What is of particular relevance is, naming a few, the fact of intercultural communication being advanced, the response, sympathy and assistance that were provided to the victims of the disaster, an example of international humanitarian cooperation.

6. Findings

Tolstoy and his associates' activities not only aroused criticism of powers that be (Moss, 2017), but also in some cases failed to find gratitude in the victims themselves. The witness of the events E. Raevskaya recalled what attitude the charitable work sometimes aroused: "Everywhere there is displeasure, abuse, of course, behind the back, and vile slander! Rich and wealthy peasants envy the beggars who are fed, they try to get into the free canteens, and when upon the discovery of their tricks and deceit they are refused, they get angry, scold the count and his daughters, gossip about them. Shame on humanity!" (Romanova, 2015, p. 147). There were also curious cases when rumors were circulating among the poor that Tolstoy was "freckled and Beelzebub, and the visiting student brothers were his servants, smaller demons," so the peasants were afraid to accept their help, and when they received flour from the volunteers, they sold it as "unclean" and with the revenue they bought "good" flour. The ideologically neutral testimonies of foreign observers about Tolstoy's activity "on hunger" to a large extent counterbalance the biased reviews and assessments given to this phenomenon, which remains relevant for historians and philologists (Bayard, 2017; Gorbyleva, 2017; Tamke, 2015; Vassena, 2017).

Tolstoy's journalistic articles "On Hunger", "The Terrible Question", "On Means of Assisting the Population Affected by Crop Failure" (1891) have long remained relevant. The repetitive nature of the

disaster, on the one hand, and the authority of the writer, only increasing in the late period of his life, on the other, explain constant interest in these materials, as well as in Tolstoy's activities "on hunger" in general.

In 1891–1892 journalists from different countries were sent to Russia to get to know the situation as it actually was. Many of them spoke Russian, talked to the representatives of different strata of Russian society, and left vivid pictures of Russian life in their reports and memoirs (written in English). They keep their significance both for understanding the disastrous situation in Russia at the end of the 19th century as the result of crop failures and epidemics of typhoid and plague, and for shedding light on the activities of Tolstoy's, with whom they spoke personally.

The data about the journalists who visited Russia within this period is constantly growing bigger, a number of sources are becoming available, which makes it possible to clarify the information found in the old and new studies, including the Russian ones. This applies, for example, to a Briton James William Barnes Stevani (1859–1944), a writer and journalist who had been living in St. Petersburg since 1887 teaching English. Between 1892 and 1917, he stayed in Russia as a correspondent for the London newspaper "Daily Chronicle". He met Tolstoy in March and October 1892. He wrote several books about Russia, in particular, on the disaster of 1892: "Through Famine-Stricken Russia" (Stevani, 1892), *Europe's Great Calamity: The Russian Famine, An Appeal for the Russian Peasant* (1922). In one of Tolstoy's letters he was mistakenly called an "American" (Tolstoy, 1928–1964, vol. 66. p. 426), which is repeated in the comments (Tolstoy, 1953) and in the encyclopedia "Leo Tolstoy and his Contemporaries". In the XXI century it became possible to clarify not only the nationality, but also the place and dates of birth and death (earlier the date of death was given with a question mark (Lev Tolstoy i ego sovremenniki, 2016, p. 531).

The book "In the track of the Russian famine: the personal narrative of Journey through the famine districts of Russia" (1892) ("Following the trail of hunger in Russia: a story about a trip to regions of Russia that suffered from hunger") by Edward Arthur Brayley Hodgetts (1859 – 1932) relies on his letters from Russia, published in British editions in 1891 that claimed for the public attention. The author addressing the reader in the preface stated, this was a truthful account of what he saw while collecting information about the famine on assignment from the news agency Reuters. Brayley Hodgetts spent twelve years of his youth in Russia (he returned to England in 1879), thus, we can say that he gets to know the country really well. His command of Russian was especially beneficial, as it was a rare case in the second half of the 19th century. Russian language studies had just started being systematic: the Department of Slavic Philology was established in Oxford in 1900, in Liverpool in 1905. As G. Stone emphasized "In 1904 Russian became a full degree subject at Oxford ..." (Stone, 2005). Earlier a number of journalists and researchers, including famous V. Rolston (1829–1889), could never claim for official support. Russian language studies gained encouragement with the business community of Britain interested in developing economic ties with Russia only at the end of the nineteenth century. Hodgetts wrote that he was glad to accept the offer, which made it possible to visit old friends at the expense of the agency (Russian State Literature and Arts Archive stores his letters in English to O. Novikova – fund 345 series 1 item 875).

Hodgetts published several books about Russia and its history, starting with a translation of the book by Vasily Nemirovich-Danchenko "Skobelev. Lichnye vospominaniya i vpechatleniya" (1884) ("Personal Reminiscences of General Skobelev", 1884); "Polevoj cvetok Rossii, ili Istoriya zhenshchiny v poiskah

zhizni” (1897) (“The wild flower of Russia, or the History of a woman in search of life”). Later there were published “The Court of Russia in the nineteenth century”, “The life of Catherine the Great of Russia” (1914), “Glorious Russia: its life, people and destiny” (1916), etc.

Arriving in Moscow, Russia in 1892, he hastened to meet the famous Russian writer, who was in the focus of M. Arnold’s attention in his article “Count Leo Tolstoy” (1887), as well as of C. Turner’s in the book “Modern Russian Romanists” (1890) which contained a chapter on Tolstoy. In the preface to his book, Hodgetts wrote: “When I arrived in Moscow, I was lucky enough to meet Tolstoy in person and indulge in long talks with him” (Hodgetts, 1892, p. 6). “This eccentric genius laid the blame for the current decline in the economic condition of the peasantry on the development of railways. As a means of first necessity, he proposed “to encourage the manufacture of basket-shoes, and of village industries generally” (Hodgetts, 1892, p. 4). Indeed, the export of grain had made a more lucrative market with the advent of railways. Tolstoy added to that: “In all the preceding years, more than 7, actually, there was enough bread, prices were low, but the need for money was growing, as it is growing evenly among us now, as well as the comfortable selling, threshers, railways and agents, buyers encouraged them to sell and resulted in the whole stock of bread sold out by the autumn” (Tolstoy, 1928–1964, v. 29, p. 119). The need to export grain abroad was recognized as a state necessity. According to a modern researcher, the country was “exacerbated by the policy to finance industrialization by borrowing, which in turn had to be paid for by selling grain abroad” (Montefiore, 2016).

The Briton did not stay long in Moscow, he immediately went on. He travelled through the areas affected by hunger, stopping in the cities of Tula, Voronezh, Tambov, Saratov, Nizhny Novgorod, Kazan. Seeing the life of the peasants, he wrote that their condition was “indeed deplorable, and what makes their case worse, is, that with most of them starvation is chronic” (Hodgetts, 1892, p. 4-5). Here you can also hear the echo of Tolstoy’s thoughts who wrote: “If we mean hunger, undernourishment, not one from which people die immediately, but the one in which people live, but live poorly, dying prematurely, mutilating, not reproducing and degenerating, then such a hunger has existed for about 20 years for the majority of the Chernozemic center and this year it is especially devastating” (Tolstoy, 1928–1964, v. 29, p. 221).

The Briton’s judgments about the peasants’ nature also resemble Tolstoy’s descriptions: “A Russian peasant is a charming, amiable, good-natured little man who does not have any vicious inclinations, except for the justifiable in such a climate proclivity for drinking It is difficult to say whether he is now starving more than usual – so bad his usual position is. The question is whether one can help him without changing the situation as a whole” (Hodgetts, 1892, p. 5). “A Russian man is honest, he can steal, but rarely robs” (Hodgetts, 1892, p. 62). The Briton was struck by the naivety of Russian peasants. A peasant woman, showing her hut, said that Tolstoy helped her cover the roof, which she had dismantled for fuel (Hodgetts, 1892, p. 73). This incident showed “touching childishness and simplicity of the Russian peasantry”, as well as, according to Brayley Hodgetts, a beautiful childlike faith in the future. “Avos” (roughly translated into English as “mayhap”) is the constant comfort of millions of subjects of the Tsar” (Hodgetts, 1892, p. 73). Meeting peasant children who were returning with books from the village school founded by the count aroused philosophical thoughts in the Briton: “From all that I saw, this was the most obvious evidence that Count Tolstoy with his affirmation of Christian love and patience has got the strongest influence on these simple people” (Hodgetts, 1892, p. 74).

The travel conditions were far from comfortable. The Briton, in spite of the hospitality of the landowners, sometimes had to spend the night at train stations, in small shabby provincial hotels. Everything that is even slightly interrelated with the name of Count Tolstoy attracts the traveler's attention in the first place. Thus, according to Hodgetts, Tula province is in a better position than the others, because there are such rich and cultural landowners as, for example, Rafail Pisarev, a friend to Count Leo Tolstoy, a member of the Red Cross society. He did much to improve the condition of peasants in the area. However, the foreigner also noted the complexity of the relationship between the needy and the volunteers: "Public-spirited unselfishness is very rare, and rarely finds understanding", writes Brayley Hodgetts (1892, p. 12). Also, there is a thorough description of a meeting with the young Tolstoyans, the count's followers. While he emphasized their outer resemblance, he stressed the difference in the characters and inclinations: there were those who looked at the foreigner in an unfriendly way, but there were also people pleasant and interesting to talk to.

A separate chapter is dedicated to the activities of L. Tolstoy: "Kitchens of Count Tolstoy". In the village, the Briton watched the work of the writer's assistants, who refined the lists of peasants who needed help. The case was accompanied by disputes: "You allowed my wife and children to go to the dining room, but they were refused there. These were Count Tolstoy's free dinners" (Hodgetts, 1892, p. 68). In Raevsky's estate, he was shown Tolstoy's simply furnished bedroom, in which he stayed on his arrivals. During his absence one of his assistants lived there.

According to the traveller, his diet consisted mainly of bread made from rye and potato flour, sometimes a piece of frozen meat that was washed down with vodka (Hodgetts, 1892, p. 22). He travelled in poor sledges drawn by horses, resembling pantomime donkeys, in an uncomfortable position along the snowy deserts, where the coachman easily lost his way (Hodgetts, 1892, p. 25). The Central Russian landscape struck him with "almost complete absence of trees. The huge oak forests that this land was famous for have all disappeared" (Hodgetts, 1892, p. 27). This naturally changed the climate, the land turned into a desert. One landowner said that the same thing was happening in Oryol province, and the coniferous forests celebrated by Turgenev had been cut down (Hodgetts, 1892, p. 27). Hodgetts writes that he left the country in a state even sadder than when he arrived. The rivers were shallow, the forests were cut down, the climate had changed, there was a lack of understanding between social groups as if they were two different nations. The nihilists took advantage of the frustrations caused by hunger to spread their propaganda. Practical reformers, on the other hand, were divided. Some reassured themselves by hope for a zemstvo, others considered Henry George's system the only way out (the latter was set forth in the book "Progress and Poverty by Henry George", St. Petersburg, 1884). Here you can find similarity with Tolstoy's thoughts that were reflected in his artistic, journalistic works and letters. The article "On Hunger", in particular, dwells on the following: "I am not writing now about hunger, but about our sin of separation from brothers. And the article is expanding, it engages me a lot and even is growing obscene" (Tolstoy, 1953, v. 66, p. 52).

America at the end of the 19th century saw Tolstoy as the most famous and renowned Russian writer. His involvement greatly contributed to the activity of benefactors during the famine. The USA provided great help: 5 ships with flour were sent for the starving accompanied with financial assistance. The gift was presented by members of the public, entrepreneurs. These were, in particular, C. Mac Reeve, Rudolph

Blankenburg, William Grundy, Francis Reeves and others. Some of them left memoirs of the trip to Russia. Tolstoy greatly appreciated their work. In his letter to the American ambassador in St. Petersburg, S. Emery Smith, dated March 1892, he wrote about his feelings of “gratitude for the ardent sympathy for our national misfortune, wh[ich] in this case, as in many others, is expressed by your compatriot[s]. I ask you on occasion to convey my sincere gratitude for their help, and for the expressed trust and sympathy for us” (Tolstoy, 1928–1964, v. 66, p. 187).

The memoirs of Francis Brewster (Reeves, Francis Brewster), an American entrepreneur and public figure who accompanied ships with grain from America, prove relevant: “Russia then and now. 1892–1917: my mission to Russia during the famine of 1891–1892, with data bearing upon Russia of to-day (1917)”. Nowadays, this book is available in print-on-demand, it is recognized as an important part of knowledge about the civilization, but its content has not yet been treated as cultural and historical material that makes up the context of L. N. Tolstoy’s artistic and charitable work.

Reeves (1917) writes about how he arrived in Riga, then traveled across Russia, visiting Moscow, St. Petersburg, Tula and Kursk provinces. In Begichevka, he met the writer, that became the central character in the eighth chapter, entitled “With Count Tolstoy”. After giving a brief biography of the writer, Reeves dwells on their conversations with him, which were mainly about the sad state of the peasantry, as well as about religion. Tolstoy considered the fact of assistance provided by the American side as the evidence of the progress of Christianity. “The time seems to have come,” he said, “when the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of people are universally recognized” (Reeves, 1917, p. 69). Having visited several villages, the American and his companions stopped in one of them, where half of the houses were burnt a few days ago. Three people knelt, asking for alms to repair their homes. After hunger and pestilence, fire is the worst enemy to these people. In dry times, when flames light up among thatched roofs, many houses burn together” (Reeves, 1917, p. 74). Reeves telegraphed to Riga so that a wagon of flour loaded in Philadelphia would be sent to Tolstoy. Upon his return to America, Reeves (1917) received a letter from Tolstoy confirming receiving the flour (p. 69). He gives a photocopy of the letter from the great writer in his book of memoirs (p. 70). This letter was introduced into the scholarly discourse only in 2004.

In response to Tolstoy’s question regarding his stay in Russia, Reeves (1917) answered that it was coming to an end, because affairs of certain relevance were awaiting for him in Liverpool in the early June, reinforcing the answer with the American proverb “Time is money.” “No,” said Tolstoy, “time is not money; it is too low an estimate of the value of time” (p. 70).

The relations that Tolstoy (1954) purposefully built with his surroundings were based on his religious and philosophical views. Tolstoy considered “brotherly communication with people” to be the most valuable: “The need and suffering of people come not so much from the adverse climatic conditions as from the absence of brotherly love in them. And the absence of this cannot be filled with any major donations. The words “I want mercy, not sacrifice,” remain the same divine truth and make a sensitive person think more deeply and look deeper for the causes of social evils” (v. 29, p. 204).

7. Conclusion

The study of the sources related to the tragic events of 1891–1893 reveals the specific features that characterize the perception of Russia by the British journalists and an American entrepreneur, whose memoirs of the journey to Tolstoy’s homeland were considered.

Obviously, the literary, artistic, journalistic and social activities of the Russian writer formed the basis for the spiritual unity of the representatives of different countries. The memoirists cite the opinions of the outstanding Russian writer expressed in personal conversations and in letters. Compared with Tolstoy's journalism, they show that in many ways the authors of the memoirs were influenced by his views on the historical roots of what was going on, on social relations, on the meaning of human communication and mutual assistance. The personal relations of representatives of different countries show how thin threads of understanding and friendship emerge, that added to official work, which is especially important in hard times. The context of the materials about the intelligentsia from other countries helping Russia (through communication with Tolstoy and his family) not only corrects the assessment of the past events, but also helps to identify some features of intercultural communication and interaction against the hard conditions of a humanitarian disaster.

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