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TOLSTOY
AND
HIS TIME

By V. I. LENIN



INTERNATIONAL PUBLISHERS
381 FOURTH AVENUE • NEW YORK

TOLSTOY

and His Time

Essays by V. I. LENIN



NEW YORK

INTERNATIONAL PUBLISHERS

TOLSTOY
and His Times
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INTERNATIONAL PUBLISHERS
PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

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LEO TOLSTOY AS THE MIRROR OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

To identify the name of a great artist with the revolution, which he has obviously failed to understand and from which he has obviously alienated himself, may at first sight seem strange and artificial. How, indeed, can one describe as a mirror that which does not reflect things correctly? But our revolution is an extremely complex thing. Among the mass of those who are directly making and participating in it, there are numerous social elements who have obviously failed to understand what is taking place and have also alienated themselves from the real historical tasks with which the course of events has confronted them. And if the artist we are discussing is really a great artist, he must have reflected at least some important aspects of the revolution in his works.

The censored Russian press, the pages of which teem with articles, letters, and comments on Tolstoy's eightieth birthday,¹ is least of all interested in analyzing his works from the standpoint of the character of the Russian Revolution and its motive forces. The whole of this press is replete to nausea with hypocrisy, hypocrisy of a double kind: official and liberal. The former is the crude hypocrisy of the venal hack who yesterday was ordered to hound Leo Tolstoy, and today to show that Tolstoy is a patriot, and to try to observe the rules of convention before Europe. That hacks of this kind have been paid for their screeds is common knowledge, and they cannot deceive anybody. Much more refined and, therefore, much more pernicious and dangerous is liberal hypocrisy. To listen to the Cadet Balalaikins² of *Ryech*,³ one would think that their sympathy for Tolstoy is complete and most ardent. Actually, their calculated declamations and pompous phrases about the "great God-seeker" are false from beginning to end, for the Russian liberal does not believe in Tolstoy's God, and does not sympathize with Tolstoy's criticism of the present social order. He associates himself with a popular name in order to increase his political capital, in order to play the role of a leader of the nation-wide opposition; he

strives with the thunder of rattling phrases to *drown* the demand for a straight and clear answer to the question: To what are the crying contradictions of "Tolstoyism" due, and what defects and weaknesses of our revolution do they express?

The contradictions in Tolstoy's works, views, doctrines, in his school, are indeed crying. On the one hand, we have the great artist, the genius who has not only drawn incomparable pen pictures of Russian life, but has made first-class contributions to world literature. On the other hand, we have the crazy landlord obsessed with Christ. On the one hand, we have his remarkably powerful, forthright, and sincere protest against social falsehood and hypocrisy. And on the other hand, we have the "Tolstoyan," *i.e.*, the jaded, hysterical sniveler called the Russian intellectual, who publicly beats his breast and wails: "I am a dreadful, wicked sinner, but I am engaging in moral self-perfection; I don't eat meat any more, I now eat rice pudding."

On the one hand, we hear ruthless criticism of capitalist exploitation, denunciation of governmental violence, the farcical courts, and the state administration, and utter exposure of the profound contradiction between the growth of wealth and the achievements of civilization and the growth of poverty, degradation, and misery among the toiling masses. On the other hand, we have the crazy preaching of "resist not evil" with violence. On the one hand, we have the most sober realism, the tearing down of all and sundry masks; on the other, we have the preaching of one of the most odious things on earth, namely, religion, the striving to replace the government-official priests by priests who will serve from moral conviction, *i.e.*, to cultivate the most refined and, therefore, particularly disgusting clericalism. Verily:

*Thou art wretched, thou art abundant,
Thou art mighty, thou art impotent—
Mother Russia!*⁴

It goes without saying that owing to these contradictions, Tolstoy could not possibly understand either the working class movement and its role in the struggle for socialism, or the Russian Revolution. But the contradictions in Tolstoy's views and doctrines are not fortuitous; they express the contradictory conditions of Russian life in the last third of the nineteenth century. The patriarchal countryside,

only recently emancipated from serfdom, was literally given over to rapacious capital and the tax collector to be sacked and looted. The ancient foundations of peasant economy and peasant life, foundations that had really held for centuries, were scrapped with extraordinary rapidity. And so the contradictions in Tolstoy's views must be appraised not from the standpoint of the present-day working class movement and present-day socialism (such an appraisal is, of course, needed, but it is not enough), but from the standpoint of that protest against approaching capitalism, against the ruination of the masses and their divorce from the land, which had to arise from the patriarchal Russian countryside.

Tolstoy looks ridiculous as a prophet who has discovered new prescriptions for the salvation of mankind—and therefore, utterly wretched are the foreign and Russian "Tolstoyans" who wanted to convert into a dogma precisely the weakest side of his doctrine. Tolstoy is great as the expresser of the ideas and sentiments that took shape among the millions of Russian peasants at the time when the bourgeois revolution was approaching in Russia. Tolstoy is original, because the sum total of his views, taken as a whole, expresses what are precisely the specific features of our revolution as a *peasant* bourgeois revolution. From this point of view, the contradictions in Tolstoy's views are indeed a mirror of those contradictory conditions under which the peasantry had to play their historical part in our revolution. On the one hand, centuries of feudal oppression and decades of accelerated post-reform⁵ ruination piled up mountains of hate, anger, and desperate determination. The striving to sweep away completely the official church, the landlords, and the landlord government, to destroy all the old forms of land ownership and land tenure, to clear the ground, to replace the police-class state by a community of free and equal small peasants—this striving runs like a red thread through every historical step the peasantry have taken in our revolution; and, undoubtedly, the ideological content of Tolstoy's writings conforms to these peasant strivings far more than it does to abstract "Christian anarchism," as his "system" of views is sometimes appraised.

On the other hand, the peasantry, while striving toward new forms of social intercourse, had a naive, patriarchal, religious idea of what kind of intercourse this should be, of what struggle they must wage to

win freedom for themselves, of what leaders they can count on in this struggle, of the attitude the bourgeoisie and the bourgeois intelligentsia take toward the interests of the peasant revolution, of why the forcible overthrow of tsarist rule is needed in order to abolish landlordism. The whole past has taught the peasantry to hate the landlords and the government officials, but it has not taught, and could not teach them where to find an answer to all these questions.

In our revolution a minor part of the peasantry really did fight, did organize to some extent for this purpose; and a very small part rose in arms to exterminate their enemies, to destroy the tsar's servants and protectors of the landlords. The major part of the peasantry wept and prayed, moralized and dreamed, wrote petitions and sent "solicitors"—quite in the spirit of Leo Tolstoy! And, as always happens in such cases, the effect of this Tolstoyan abstention from politics, this Tolstoyan renunciation of politics, this lack of interest in and understanding of politics was that only the minority followed the class-conscious, revolutionary proletariat, whereas the majority became the prey of the unprincipled, servile, bourgeois intellectuals who under the name of Cadets⁶ hastened from a meeting of Trudoviks⁷ to Stolypin's⁸ anteroom and begged, haggled, reconciled and promised to reconcile—until they were kicked out with a military jackboot. Tolstoy's ideas are a mirror of the weakness, the shortcomings of our peasant revolt, a reflection of the flabbiness of the patriarchal countryside and of the hidebound cowardice of the "thrifty muzhik."

Take the mutinies among the armed forces in 1905-06. In social composition these men who fought in our revolution were partly peasants and partly proletarians. The proletarians were in the minority; therefore, the movement among the armed forces does not even approximately show the same nation-wide solidarity, the same party consciousness, as was displayed by the proletariat, which became Social-Democratic as if by the wave of a hand. On the other hand, there is nothing more mistaken than the opinion that the mutinies among the armed forces failed because no officers led them. On the contrary, the enormous progress the revolution had made since the time of the People's Will Party⁹ was shown precisely by the fact that the "ignorant brutes" independently rose in arms against their superiors, and it was this independence that so frightened the liberal landlords

and the liberal officers. The common soldier fully sympathized with the peasants' cause; his eyes sparkled at the very mention of land. There was more than one case when authority among the armed forces passed to the mass of the rank and file, but determined use of this authority was scarcely made. The men wavered; after a couple of days, in some cases after a few hours, after killing some hated superior, they released the rest of the arrested officers, opened negotiations with the authorities, and then some faced the firing squad, others bared their backs for the birch, and then put on the yoke again—quite in the spirit of Leo Tolstoy!

Tolstoy reflected seething hatred, a mature striving for a better lot, a desire to get rid of the past—and also immature dreaming, political ignorance, and revolutionary flabbiness. Historical and economic conditions explain both the necessary rise of the revolutionary struggle of the masses and their unpreparedness for the struggle, their Tolstoyan non-resistance to evil, which was a very serious cause of the defeat of the first revolutionary campaign.

It is said that beaten armies learn well. Of course, revolutionary classes can be compared with armies only in a very limited sense. The development of capitalism is hourly changing and intensifying the conditions which roused the millions of peasants—united by their hatred for the feudal landlords and their government—for the revolutionary-democratic struggle. Among the peasantry themselves, the growth of exchange, of the rule of the market and the power of money, is more and more ousting ancient patriarchalism and the patriarchal Tolstoyan ideology. But there is one gain from the first years of the revolution and the first reverses in the mass revolutionary struggle about which there can be no doubt, namely, the mortal blow that was struck at the erstwhile softness and flabbiness of the masses. The lines of demarcation have become more distinct. Classes and parties have defined their positions. The hammer of Stolypin's lessons and the undeviating and consistent agitation of the revolutionary Social-Democrats will inevitably bring to the forefront, not only among the socialist proletariat, but also among the democratic masses of the peasantry, more and more steeled fighters who will be less and less capable of falling into our historical sin of Tolstoyism!

September 24, 1908

L. N. TOLSTOY

Leo Tolstoy is dead.¹⁰ His world significance as an artist and his world fame as a thinker and preacher, each in its own way, reflect the world significance of the Russian Revolution.

Tolstoy already stood out as a great artist in the period of serfdom. In the series of masterly works he wrote in the course of over half a century of literary activity, he depicted mainly old, pre-revolutionary Russia, which even after 1861 remained in a state of semi-serfdom, rural Russia, landlord and peasant Russia. In depicting this period in the historical life of Russia, Tolstoy was able to raise so many great questions in his works, was able to attain such heights of artistic power, that his works occupied a place in the front rank of world fiction. Thanks to the light thrown upon it by Tolstoy's genius, the epoch of preparation for the revolution in one of the countries groaning under the yoke of the feudal landlords presented itself as a step forward in the artistic development of the whole of mankind.

Tolstoy the artist is known to an insignificant minority even in Russia. To make his great works really accessible to *all*, it is necessary to fight and fight against the social system which has condemned millions and tens of millions to ignorance, oppression, slavish toil, and poverty; a socialist revolution is needed.

And Tolstoy not only wrote works of fiction which will always be prized and read by the masses when they have created human conditions of life for themselves after throwing off the yoke of the landlords and capitalists; but he was able with remarkable power to convey the sentiments of the broad masses who are oppressed under the present order, to describe their conditions, to express their spontaneous feelings of protest and indignation. Belonging mainly to the epoch of 1861-1904, Tolstoy, in his works, brought out in amazing relief—as an artist and as a thinker and preacher—the specific historical features of the whole of the first Russian Revolution [1905], its strength and its weakness.

One of the chief distinguishing features of our revolution was that it was a *peasant* bourgeois revolution in the epoch when capitalism was very highly developed all over the world and relatively highly developed in Russia. It was a bourgeois revolution because its immediate aim was to overthrow the tsarist autocracy, the tsarist monarchy, and to abolish landlordism, but not to overthrow the rule of the bourgeoisie. The peasantry in particular were unconscious of this latter aim, they failed to see where it differed from the more immediate and direct aims of the struggle. And it was a peasant bourgeois revolution because the objective conditions had brought into the forefront the question of changing the peasants' fundamental conditions of life, of smashing the old medieval system of land ownership, of "clearing the ground" for capitalism; the objective conditions had brought the peasant masses into the arena of more or less independent historical action.

Tolstoy expressed in his works the strength and weakness, the might and the limitations of precisely the peasant mass movement. His ardent, passionate, and often ruthlessly sharp protest against the state and the police-official church conveys the sentiments of primitive peasant democracy in which centuries of serfdom, bureaucratic tyranny, and robbery, the Jesuitism, deception, and knavery of the church had piled up mountains of anger and hatred. His unswerving repudiation of the private ownership of land conveys the mentality of the peasant masses at the historical moment when the old, medieval system of land ownership, both the landlord estates and the official "allotments," has definitely become an intolerable hindrance to the country's further development, and when the old system of land ownership must inevitably be thoroughly and ruthlessly shattered.

His unceasing denunciation of capitalism, prompted by the most deeply felt sentiments and most passionate anger, conveys all the horror felt by the patriarchal peasant, against whom a new invisible and mysterious enemy was advancing from somewhere in town, or from somewhere abroad, smashing all the "foundations" of rural life, bringing unprecedented ruin, poverty, death from starvation, degradation, prostitution, and syphilis—all the evils of the "epoch of primitive accumulation" intensified a hundredfold by the transplanting to Russian soil of the very latest methods of robbery devised by Mr. Coupon.¹¹

But at the same time, the ardent protestant, passionate denunciator, and great critic revealed in his works a failure to understand the causes of the crisis and the means of escape from the crisis that was advancing on Russia, such as is characteristic only of the patriarchal, naive peasant and not of the European-educated writer. For him, the struggle against the feudal and police state, against the monarchy, became the repudiation of politics, led to the doctrine of "resist not evil," and resulted in complete divorce from the revolutionary struggle of the masses in 1905-07. He combined the struggle against the official church with the preaching of a new purified religion, that is, a new refined and more subtle poison for the oppressed masses. His repudiation of the private ownership of land led not to the concentration of the entire struggle on the real enemy, on landlordism and its political instrument of power, *i.e.*, the monarchy, but to dreamy, vague, and impotent longing. He combined denunciation of capitalism and the misery it caused the masses with utter apathy toward the world struggle for emancipation waged by the international socialist proletariat.

The contradictions in Tolstoy's views are not only the contradictions in his own thinking; they are a reflection of those extremely complex, contradictory conditions, social influences, and historic traditions which had molded the mentality of the different classes and different strata of Russian society in the *post*-reform but *pre*-revolutionary epoch.

Consequently, a correct appraisal of Tolstoy can be made only from the standpoint of that class which, by the political role it played, and by the struggle it waged at the time of the first denouement of these contradictions, during the revolution, proved that its mission was to be the leader of the struggle for the people's freedom and for the emancipation of the masses from exploitation. Such an appraisal can be made only from the standpoint of the Social-Democratic proletariat, which proved its selfless devotion to the cause of democracy and its ability to combat the narrowness and inconsistency of bourgeois (including peasant) democracy.

Look at the appraisal of Tolstoy presented in the governmental newspapers. They shed crocodile tears and vow respect for the "great writer" and at the same time defend the "Holy" Synod. But the "holy fathers" have only just played the exceptionally loathsome and abominable trick of sending priests to a dying man in order to fool the

people and say that Tolstoy had "repented." The Holy Synod excommunicated Tolstoy.¹² All the better. This deed will be charged to its account on the people's day of reckoning with these government officials in cassocks, these gendarmes in Christ, these black inquisitors who encouraged the anti-Jewish pogroms and other deeds of the tsarist Black Hundred gang.

Look at the appraisal of Tolstoy presented in the liberal newspapers. They make shift with very vapid, official-liberal, threadbare academic phrases like "the voice of civilized mankind," "the unanimous opinion of the world," "the ideas of truth and virtue," etc., for which Tolstoy so fiercely castigated—and rightly castigated—bourgeois learning. They *cannot* frankly and clearly express their opinion of Tolstoy's views on the state, on the church, on the private ownership of land, and on capitalism, but it is not because of the censorship; on the contrary, the censorship helps them out of their difficulty! They cannot do so because every thesis in Tolstoy's criticism is a slap in the face of bourgeois liberalism; because the fearless, open, and ruthlessly sharp *presentation* by Tolstoy of the most burning, of the most vexed questions of the present day is in itself a *glaring exposure* of the stock phrases, the threadbare rhetoric and the evasive "civilized" falsehood of our liberal (and liberal Populist) journalism. The liberals staunchly support Tolstoy, they are staunchly opposed to the Synod—but at the same time they are for . . . the *Vekhi*-ists,¹³ with whom one "may enter into dispute," but with whom one "must" get along within one party, "must" collaborate in literature and in politics. And yet the *Vekhi*-ists receive the blessing of Antonius of Volhynia.¹⁴

The liberals put to the fore the idea that Tolstoy was the "great conscience." Is this not an empty phrase which is also repeated in a thousand keys by *Novoye Vremya*¹⁵ and by all of that ilk? Is this not an evasion of all the *concrete* questions of democracy and socialism which Tolstoy *raised*? Does this not put to the fore that which expresses Tolstoy's prejudices and not his reason; that about him which belongs to the past and not to the future; his repudiation of politics and preaching of moral self-perfection and not his impassioned protest against all class rule?

Tolstoy has passed away, and pre-revolutionary Russia, whose weakness and impotence are expressed in the philosophy and depicted in

the works of the artistic genius, has retreated into the past. But the heritage he has left us contains something which has not retreated into the past, which belongs to the future. This heritage is accepted and is being worked on by the Russian proletariat. The proletariat will explain to the toiling and exploited masses the significance of Tolstoy's criticism of the state, of the church, of private ownership of the land, not in order that the masses restrict themselves to self-perfection and to sighing for a righteous life, but so that they will rise to strike a new blow at the tsarist monarchy and landlordism which were only slightly shaken in 1905, but which must be entirely swept away. It will explain Tolstoy's criticism of capitalism to the masses not in order that they restrict themselves to cursing capital and the money power, but so that they will learn at every step they take in their life and struggle to lean on capitalism's technical and social achievements, learn to unite in a single, millions-strong army of socialist fighters who will overthrow capitalism and create a new society in which there will be no poverty among the people and no exploitation of man by man.

November 29, 1910

LEO TOLSTOY AND THE WORKING CLASS MOVEMENT

The Russian workers in nearly all the big cities of Russia have already reacted to the death of Leo Tolstoy and in one way or another have expressed their attitude toward the writer who produced the finest works of fiction that placed him among the great writers of the world—toward the thinker who with tremendous power, conviction, and sincerity *raised* a number of questions concerning the fundamental features of the present political and social order. On the whole, this attitude is expressed in the telegram of the workers' deputies in the Third Duma¹⁶ published in the newspapers.

Tolstoy began his literary activities when serfdom still existed, but at the time when it was already obviously living its last days. Tolstoy carried on his activities mainly in that period of Russia's history which lies between two of its turning points, between 1861 and 1905. During this period the vestiges of serfdom, direct survivals of it, thoroughly permeated the whole of the economic (particularly rural) and the whole of the political life of the country. At the same time, it was precisely this period that witnessed the rapid growth of capitalism from below and the promotion of its development from above.

In what way did the survivals of serfdom make themselves felt? Most of all, and most clearly of all, in that during this period, agriculture in Russia, mainly an agricultural country, was in the hands of ruined and impoverished peasants who practiced an obsolete and primitive husbandry on the former serf allotments which had been curtailed for the benefit of the landlords in 1861. On the other hand, agriculture was in the hands of the landlords who, in Central Russia, had their land cultivated by the peasants, working with peasant wooden plows and peasant horses, in payment for the use of the "enclosed lands," meadowland, watering places for cattle, etc. Actually this was the old serf system of husbandry. The political system in Russia was also thoroughly permeated with serfdom during this period. This was evi-

dent from the structure of the state until the first steps to alter it were taken in 1905, from the predominating influence on state affairs exercised by the landed nobility, and from the omnipotence of the bureaucracy, which also, particularly the higher ranks, consisted mainly of the landed nobility.

After 1861, this old patriarchal Russia began to break up rapidly as a result of the influence of world capitalism. The peasants starved, died, were reduced to ruin as they had never been before, and, abandoning the land, they fled to the towns. There was an acceleration in the building of railways, factories, and works thanks to the "cheap labor" of the ruined peasants. In Russia big finance capital, large-scale trade and industry developed.

It was this rapid, painful, and abrupt collapse of all the old "foundations" of old Russia that found reflection in the works of Tolstoy the artist, in the views of Tolstoy the thinker.

Tolstoy knew perfectly rural Russia, the life of the landlords and peasants. The pictures of this life that he drew in his works of fiction belong to the best productions of world literature. The abrupt breakdown of all the "old foundations" of rural Russia sharpened his power of observation, intensified his interest in what was going on around him, and caused a change in his whole world outlook. By birth and education, Tolstoy belonged to the higher landed nobility of Russia, but he abandoned the habitual outlook of this milieu and in his last works hurled impassioned criticism at the whole of the present-day state, ecclesiastical, social, and economic order based on the enslavement of the masses, on their poverty, on the ruin of the peasants and of small proprietors generally, on the violence and hypocrisy which permeate the whole of present-day social life from top to bottom.

There was nothing new in Tolstoy's criticism. He did not say anything that had not been said long before him in both European and Russian literature by those who were on the side of the toilers. But the peculiar feature of Tolstoy's criticism and its historical significance was that it expressed with an artistic power of which only a genius is capable the drastic change in the outlook of the broadest masses of the people of Russia in the period we are discussing, namely, rural peasant Russia. For Tolstoy's criticism of the present order differs from the criticism of the same order by the representatives of the present-

day working class movement precisely in that Tolstoy took the standpoint of the patriarchal, naive peasant; he incorporated this peasant's mentality in his criticism, in his doctrines.

Tolstoy's criticism was distinguished for its power of feeling, passion, conviction, freshness, sincerity, and fearlessness in striving to "get down to the roots," to find the real cause of the misery of the masses, precisely because this criticism really reflected the change in the outlook of millions of peasants who had only recently been emancipated from serfdom and who saw that this emancipation meant new horrors of ruin, death from starvation, a homeless life in the "doss houses" in the towns, etc. Tolstoy reflected their sentiments so faithfully that he incorporated in his doctrine their naiveté, their divorce from politics, their mysticism, their striving to escape from the everyday world, their "non-resistance to evil," the impotent imprecations they hurl at capitalism and at the "power of money." The protest of millions of peasants and their despair—this is what merged in Tolstoy's doctrine.

The representatives of the present-day working class movement are of the opinion that they have something to protest against, but that there is no reason for despair. Despair is characteristic of moribund classes, but the wage-working class inevitably grows, develops, and gains strength in every capitalist society, including Russia. Despair is characteristic of those who fail to understand the causes of evil, who see no way out, who are incapable of fighting. The present-day industrial proletariat is not one of these classes.

November 28, 1910

TOLSTOY AND THE PROLETARIAN STRUGGLE

With tremendous vigor and earnestness, Tolstoy castigated the ruling classes and glaringly exposed the intrinsic falsity of all the institutions which help to maintain present-day society: the church, the courts, militarism, "lawful" marriage, and bourgeois learning. But his doctrine totally contradicted the life, labor, and struggle of the gravedigger of the present system, namely, the proletariat. Whose outlook, then, is reflected in Tolstoy's preaching? He was the spokesman for that vast mass of the Russian people who *already* hate the masters of present-day society, but have *not yet* realized the necessity of waging a consistent, uncompromising fight to the finish against them.

The history and outcome of the great Russian Revolution have shown that such indeed was the mentality of that mass of the people found *between* the class-conscious socialist proletariat and the resolute defenders of the old regime. This mass—consisting mainly of the peasantry—showed during the revolution how deeply it hated the old order, how sensitive it was to all the hardships inflicted by the present regime, and how great was its spontaneous striving to escape from them and to find a better way of life.

At the same time, this mass showed during the revolution that it was not sufficiently conscious in its hatred, not consistent in its struggle, and that it confined itself to narrow limits in its quest for a better way of life.

A vast ocean of humanity, stirred to its very depths, with all its weak and all its strong sides, was reflected in Tolstoy's doctrines.

By studying Leo Tolstoy's works of fiction, the Russian working class will learn to know its enemies better; and by studying Tolstoy's *doctrine*, the entire Russian people must learn wherein lay their own weakness, which prevented them from consummating the cause of their emancipation. This must be learned in order to make progress.

This progress is hindered by all those who proclaim Tolstoy as the

"common conscience," the "teacher of life." This is a lie, deliberately broadcast by the liberals who want to exploit the anti-revolutionary aspect of Tolstoy's doctrines. And this lie about Tolstoy being the "teacher of life" is repeated after the liberals by certain ex-Social-Democrats.

The Russian people will achieve their emancipation only when they realize that they must learn how to secure a better way of life not from Tolstoy, but from the class whose significance Tolstoy did not understand, and who alone is capable of destroying the old world that Tolstoy hated, namely, from the proletariat.

December 21, 1910

HEROES WITH "RESERVATIONS"

The tenth issue of Mr. Potresov and Co.'s magazine, *Nasha Zarya*,¹⁷ which we have just received, presents such amazing examples of carelessness, or rather lack of principle, in appraising Leo Tolstoy that they must be dealt with immediately, if briefly.

Here is an article by that new warrior in Potresov's army, V. Bazarov. The editors disagree with "some of the theses" in this article, but they do not, of course, indicate which. It is much easier in this way to cover up mental confusion! We, however, find it difficult to point to any theses in this article that would not rouse the indignation of anyone who has the least respect for Marxism.

"Our intelligentsia," writes V. Bazarov, "broken-spirited and dejected, reduced to a sort of amorphous mental and moral slush, and hovering on the extreme border of spiritual dissolution, have unanimously recognized Tolstoy—the *whole* of Tolstoy—as their conscience." This is not true. It is mere phrase-mongering. Our intelligentsia in general, and the *Nasha Zarya* intelligentsia in particular, do indeed look very "dejected," but they have not displayed any "unanimity" whatever in appraising Tolstoy, nor could they do so; they never correctly appraised the *whole* of Tolstoy and could not do so. And it is precisely the absence of unanimity that is covered up by that utterly hypocritical word—quite worthy of *Novoye Vremya*—"conscience." Bazarov does not combat "slush," he encourages it.

Bazarov "would like to mention certain injustices [!!] toward Tolstoy, of which Russian intellectuals in general and we radicals of different persuasions in particular have been guilty." The only thing true about this is that Bazarov, Potresov and Co. are precisely the "radicals of different persuasions" who are so dependent upon the general "slush" that amid this most unpardonable hushing up of the fundamental inconsistencies and weaknesses of Tolstoy's world outlook they trot behind "everybody" shouting about "injustices" toward Tolstoy. They

do not wish to intoxicate themselves "with the narcotic that is so widespread among us, and which Tolstoy called 'acrimonious dispute'"—this is just the kind of talk, just the kind of refrain, that is needed by philistines who turn away with supreme contempt from disputes about any wholeheartedly and consistently defended principles.

"Tolstoy's main strength lay in that, having passed through all the stages typical of the analytical educated people of the present day, he found the synthesis. . . ." Not true. It was precisely a synthesis that Tolstoy did not, or rather could not, find either in the philosophical principles of his world outlook or in his social-political doctrine. "Tolstoy was the first [!] to objectivize, *i.e.*, to create not only for himself but for others too, that *purely human* [all the italics are Bazarov's] religion of which Comte,¹⁸ Feuerbach,¹⁹ and the other representatives of modern culture could only subjectively [!] dream," and so on and so forth.

Such talk is worse than that of the ordinary philistine. It is the embellishment of "slush" with artificial flowers, which can only mislead people. More than half a century ago Feuerbach, unable to "find a synthesis" in his world outlook which in many respects represented the "last word" of German classical philosophy, became entangled in those "subjective dreams" the harmfulness of which was indicated long ago by the genuinely progressive "representatives of modern culture." To proclaim now that Tolstoy was "the first to objectivize" these "subjective dreams" means passing into the camp of those who are turning back, it means pandering to philistinism, it means singing in harmony with *Vekhi*-ism.

"It goes without saying that the movement [!?] which Tolstoy founded must undergo profound changes if it is really destined to play a great world-historical role: The idealization of the peasant-patriarchal way of life, gravitation toward natural economy, and many other utopian features of Tolstoyism which protrude [!] into the forefront at the present time and seem to be the most important are, in reality, precisely the subjective elements, not necessarily connected with the principles of Tolstoyan 'religion.'"

Thus, Tolstoy "objectivized" Feuerbach's "subjective dreams," and the fact that in his masterly works of fiction and in his utterly contra-

dictory doctrines Tolstoy reflected the specific economic features of the Russia of the last century mentioned by Bazarov forms "precisely the subjective elements" of his doctrine. This is exactly what is called "shooting wide of the mark." Still, for the "intelligentsia, broken-spirited and dejected" (and so forth, as quoted above), there is nothing more pleasing, more desirable, and more lovable, there is nothing that indulges their dejection more than this exaltation of Feuerbach's "subjective dreams" as "objectivized" by Tolstoy, and this *distraction* of attention from those concrete historico-economic and political problems which "protrude into the forefront at the present time"!

Naturally, Bazarov is particularly displeased with the "sharp criticism" which the doctrine of non-resistance to evil has called forth "on the part of the radical intelligentsia." To Bazarov "it is clear that this doctrine does not mean passivity and quietism." Explaining what he means, Bazarov refers to the well-known tale about "Ivan the Fool" and invites his readers "to imagine that the soldiers are sent against the fools not by the Tsar of Cockroachia, but by their own, now wiser ruler Ivan, that with the aid of these soldiers, recruited from among the fools themselves and therefore akin to them in the whole of their spiritual make-up, Ivan wants to force his subjects to yield to unrighteous demands. It is perfectly obvious that it is useless for the fools, practically unarmed and lacking military training, even to dream of achieving a physical victory over Ivan's troops. Even with the most vigorous 'resistance with violence' the fools can vanquish Ivan not by physical but only by moral means, *i.e.*, only by what is called 'demoralizing' Ivan's men. . . ." "The fools' resistance with violence achieves the same result (but by worse means, and involving more victims) as that achieved without resistance. . . ." "Non-resistance to evil with violence, or, to put it more generally, the harmony of means and ends [!!] is by no means an idea characteristic only of non-social moral preachers. This idea is a necessary component of every integral world outlook."

Such is the reasoning of the new warrior in Potresov's army. We cannot examine this reasoning here, and besides, perhaps it is sufficient for a beginning merely to reproduce its chief points and to add the words: It is *Vekhi*-ism of the purest water.

The following is from the final chords of the cantata on the theme,

"the ears never grow higher than the forehead": "It is wrong to depict our weakness as strength, as something superior to Tolstoy's 'quietism' and 'narrow rationalism.'" (But what about inconsistent reasoning?) "It is wrong to do so not only because it is contrary to the truth, but also because it hinders us from learning from the greatest man of our times."

Yes. Yes. Only, you must not get angry, gentlemen, and retort with ridiculous bravado and abuse (as Mr. Potresov does in Nos. 8-9 of *Nasha Zarya*), when you receive the blessings, approval and embraces of the Izgoyevs. Neither the old nor the new warriors in Potresov's army will succeed in wiping out the ignominy of these embraces.

The general staff of this army appended to Bazarov's article a "diplomatic" reservation. But Mr. Nevedomsky's leading article, which is published without any reservations, is not much better. "Having absorbed," writes this troubadour of the present-day intelligentsia, "and embodied in completed shape the chief aspirations and strivings of the great epoch of the fall of slavery in Russia, Leo Tolstoy was also found to be the purest and most complete incarnation of the universal ideological principle—the *principle of conscience*."

Boom, boom, boom. . . . Having absorbed and embodied in completed shape the chief rhetorical flourishes characteristic of liberal-bourgeois journalism, M. Nevedomsky is found to be the purest and most complete incarnation of the universal ideological principle—the principle of phrase-mongering.

And here yet one more tale, the last, must I unfold:

"All these European admirers of Tolstoy, all these Anatole Frances with different names, and Chambers of Deputies which recently voted with enormous majorities against the abolition of capital punishment and now rise in honor of the great man of *integrity*, the whole of this realm of betwixt and between, half-heartedness and reservations—how majestic, how mighty, a figure cast in a single piece of pure metal, stands this Tolstoy before them, this living incarnation of the integral principle."

Uph! Eloquent talk—but it is all untrue. The figure of Tolstoy is cast neither in a single piece, nor in a pure piece, nor even in metal.

And it was *not* for his "integrity," but precisely *because* of his departure from integrity that "all these" bourgeois admirers "rose in honor" of his memory.

Mr. Nevedomsky, however, did accidentally drop one good little word. That little word—reservations—characterizes the gentlemen of *Nasha Zarya* as aptly as *they* are characterized by V. Bazarov's above-quoted description of the intelligentsia. Before us, one and all, are heroes with "reservations." Potresov makes the reservation that he disagrees with the Machists,²⁰ although he defends them. The editors make the reservation that they disagree with "some of the theses" in Bazarov's article, although it is clear to everybody that it is not a matter of individual theses. Potresov makes the reservation that he was maligned by Izgoyev. Martov makes the reservation that he does not fully agree with Potresov and Levitsky, although he renders *them* faithful political service. All of them collectively make the reservation that they disagree with Cherevanin, although they prefer his *second* liquidationist screed, which intensifies the "spirit" of his first offspring. Cherevanin makes the reservation that he disagrees with Maslov. Maslov makes the reservation that he disagrees with Kautsky.

They all agree with one another only in that they disagree with Plekhanov, and in that he slanderously accuses them of being liquidators and cannot, as they say, explain his present rapprochement with his quondam opponents.

Nothing can be simpler than the explanation of this rapprochement which is incomprehensible to the people with reservations. When we had a locomotive, we thoroughly disagreed on the point of whether the power of this locomotive, its stock of fuel, etc., were adequate for a speed of, say, twenty-five or fifty versts an hour. The dispute around this question, as on any other exciting question, was heated and often acrimonious. This dispute—on absolutely every question in connection with which it arose—was conducted in the sight of all, was open to all, was argued out to the end, was not glossed over by any "reservations." And none of us even thought of withdrawing anything, or of whining about "acrimonious disputes." But now that the locomotive has broken down, is lying in a marsh surrounded by "reservation" intellectuals who are sniggering maliciously about there being "nothing to liquidate" because we no longer have a locomotive, we who engaged in "acri-

monious dispute" yesterday are drawn together by a common cause. Without renouncing anything, without forgetting anything, giving no promise that disagreements will vanish among us, we are jointly serving this common cause. We are concentrating all our attention and efforts on the task of raising the locomotive, of repairing it, of strengthening it, of reinforcing it, of putting it on the rails—as for the speed at which it is to run and the turns at different switches, we will be able to argue about those at the proper time. The task of the day in these difficult times is to create something that will be capable of rebuffing the "reservation" people and "dejected intellectuals" who, directly or indirectly, are supporting the reigning "slush." The task of the day is to dig the ore even under the most arduous conditions, melt the iron and cast the steel of the Marxist world outlook and of the superstructures that correspond to this world outlook.

December 1910

TOLSTOY AND HIS EPOCH

The epoch to which Tolstoy belonged, and which is reflected in such remarkable relief in his masterly works of fiction and in his doctrine, is the epoch that set in after 1861 and lasted until 1905. True, Tolstoy began his literary activities before and ended them after this period began and ended, but he developed fully as an artist and thinker precisely in this period, the transitional character of which gave rise to *all* the distinguishing features of Tolstoy's works and of "Tolstoyism."

The words Tolstoy put in the mouth of Levin in *Anna Karenina*²¹ very vividly express the nature of the turn in Russia's history that took place during this half-century.

"It was particularly interesting for him just now to hear and take part in those rural conversations concerning crops, laborers' wages, and so on, which, he was aware, are conventionally regarded as something very low, but which seemed to him just now to constitute the one subject of importance. 'It was not, perhaps, of importance in the days of serfdom, and it may not be of importance in England. In both cases the conditions of agriculture are firmly established; but among us now, when everything has been turned upside down and is only just taking shape, the question what form these conditions will take is the one question of importance in Russia,' thought Levin."

"But among us now everything has been turned upside down and is only just taking shape"—it is difficult to imagine a more apt characterization of the period of 1861-1905. What was "turned upside down" is familiar, or at least well known, to every Russian. It was serfdom, and the whole of the "old order" that corresponded to it. What is "just taking shape" is totally unknown, alien, and incomprehensible to the broad masses of the population. Tolstoy conceived this bourgeois order which was "only just taking shape" vaguely in the form of a bugbear—England. Precisely a bugbear, because Tolstoy rejected, on principle, so to speak, every attempt to investigate the

chief features of the social system in this "England," the connection between this system and the domination of capital, the role played by money, the rise and development of exchange. Like the Populists, he refused to see, shut his eyes to, dismissed the thought that it was none other than the bourgeois system that was "taking shape" in Russia.

It is true that if not the "only important" question then certainly one of the most important from the standpoint of the immediate aims of all social-political activities in Russia in the period of 1861-1905 (and in our times too) was the question of "what shape" would be taken by this order, the bourgeois order which had assumed extremely diverse forms in "England," Germany, America, France, and so forth. But such a definite concrete-historical presentation of the question was something entirely alien to Tolstoy. He reasoned in the abstract, he recognized only the standpoint of the "eternal" principles of morality, the eternal truths of religion, failing to realize that this standpoint is merely the ideological reflection of the old ("overturned") order, the feudal order, the order of the life of Oriental nations.

In *Lucerne* (written in 1857), Tolstoy declares that to regard "civilization" as a boon is "imaginary knowledge" which "destroys the instinctive, most blissful primitive requirement of good in human nature." "We have only one infallible guide," exclaims Tolstoy, "the Universal Spirit that permeates us."

In *The Slavery of Our Times* (written in 1900), repeating still more zealously these appeals to the Universal Spirit, Tolstoy declares that political economy is a "pseudo-science" because it takes as the "pattern" "little England, where conditions are most exceptional," instead of taking as a pattern "the conditions of men in the whole world throughout all historical time." What this "whole world" is like is revealed to us in the article, "Progress and the Definition of Education" (1862). Tolstoy counters the opinion of the "historians" that progress is "a general law for mankind" by referring to "the whole of the so-called Orient." "There is no general law of human progress," says Tolstoy, "and this is proved by the quiescence of the Oriental nations."

It is precisely the ideology of the Oriental order, the Asian order, that is the real historical content of Tolstoyism. Hence, asceticism, non-violent resistance to evil, that deep note of pessimism, and the conviction that "everything is nothing, all that is material is nothing" ("On The

Meaning Of Life"), and belief in the "Spirit," "the beginning of everything," in relation to which man is merely a "laborer" "appointed for the work of saving his soul," and so forth. Tolstoy is faithful to this ideology also in his *Kreutzer Sonata*, when he says: "The emancipation of woman lies not in colleges and not in parliaments, but in the bedroom," and in the article written in 1862 in which he says that universities train only "irritable, debilitated liberals" for whom "the people have no use at all," who are "uselessly torn from their former environment," "find no place in life," and so forth.

Pessimism, non-resistance, appeals to the "Spirit" form the ideology that inevitably appears in an epoch when the whole of the old order is "turned upside down," and when the masses who have been brought up under this old order, who imbibed with their mother's milk the principles, the habits, the traditions and beliefs of this order, do not and cannot see *what kind* of a new order is "taking shape," *what* social forces are "shaping" it, and how they are doing it, what social forces are *capable* of bringing release from the incalculable and exceptionally acute distress characteristic of epochs of "upheaval."

The period of 1862-1904 was precisely such a period of upheaval in Russia, when, in the sight of all, the old order collapsed, never to be restored, whereas the new order was only just taking shape, and the social forces that were shaping it manifested themselves for the first time on a broad, nationwide scale in mass public action in the most diverse fields only in 1905. And the 1905 events in Russia were followed by analogous events in a number of countries in that very "Orient" to the "quiescence" of which Tolstoy referred in 1862. 1905 marked the beginning of the end of "Oriental" quiescence. Precisely for this reason that year brought with it the historical end of Tolstoyism, the end of the epoch which could and had to give rise to Tolstoy's doctrine, not as something individual, not as a caprice or a fad, but as the ideology of the conditions of life under which millions and millions actually found themselves for a certain period of time.

Tolstoy's doctrine is certainly utopian and is reactionary in content in the most precise and profound sense of the term. But this does not mean in the least that this doctrine was not socialistic or that it did not contain critical elements capable of providing valuable material for the enlightenment of the advanced classes.

There is socialism and socialism. In all countries where the capitalist mode of production prevails, there is socialism which expresses the ideology of the class that is going to take the place of the bourgeoisie, and there is socialism that expresses the ideology of the classes whose place the bourgeoisie is going to take. Feudal socialism, for example, is socialism of the latter type, and the character of *this* socialism was appraised long ago, over sixty years ago, by Marx, simultaneously with his appraisal of other types of socialism.²²

Further. Critical elements are characteristic of Tolstoy's utopian doctrine, just as they are of many utopian systems. But we must not forget Marx's profound observation that the significance of the critical elements in utopian socialism "bears an inverse relation to historical development." The more the activities of the social forces which are "shaping" the new Russia and bringing release from present-day social evils develop and assume a definite character, the more rapidly is critical-utopian socialism "losing all practical value and all theoretical justification."

A quarter of a century ago, the critical elements in Tolstoy's doctrine might have been of practical value sometimes for some strata of the population *in spite of* the reactionary and utopian features of Tolstoyism. This could not have been the case during the last decade, say, because historical development had made no little progress from the 1880's to the end of the last century. And in our day, *after* the series of events mentioned above has put an end to "Oriental" quiescence; in our day, when the consciously reactionary ideas of the *Vekhi*-ists—reactionary in the narrow class, selfishly class sense—have become so enormously widespread among the liberal bourgeoisie, when these ideas have infected even a section of the quasi-Marxists and have created a "liquidationist" trend; in our day, every attempt to idealize Tolstoy's doctrine, to justify or to mitigate his "non-resistance," his appeals to the "Spirit," his exhortations for "moral self-perfection," his doctrine of "conscience" and universal "love," his preaching of asceticism and quietism, and so forth, causes the most direct and profound harm.

January 22, 1911

EXPLANATORY NOTES

1. L. N. Tolstoy was born September 9, 1828, in Yasnaya Polyana, Province of Tula.
2. *Balalaikin*—a character in *A Modern Idyl* by M. E. Saltykov-Shchedrin, the great Russian satirist, typifying the liberal phrase-monger, adventurer and liar.
3. *Ryech*—a daily newspaper, central organ of the Constitutional-Democratic Party (see Note 6); published in St. Petersburg from 1906 to 1917.
4. From the poet N. A. Nekrasov, *Who Lives Happily in Russia*.
5. *Post-reform*—the period following the abolition of serfdom in Russia in 1861.
6. *Cadets*—after the letters *Ka* and *De*, the initials of the Constitutional-Democratic Party, the party of the bourgeoisie. Formed in October 1905, the Cadets tried to compromise with tsarism, advocating a constitutional monarchy. After the Socialist Revolution of 1917, the Cadets organized counter-revolutionary conspiracies and revolts against the Soviet Republic.
7. *Trudoviks* ("Group of Toil")—a group of petty-bourgeois democrats formed in April 1906, consisting principally of rich peasant (kulak) deputies in the First State Duma, headed by Socialist-Revolutionary intellectuals.
8. *P. A. Stolypin* (1862-1911)—large landowner, tsarist Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior after 1906, who rode to power on the defeat of the Revolution of 1905-07. He disbanded the Second State Duma in 1907 and devised a new electoral law which assured domination of the Duma by the large landowners and the big bourgeoisie. His agrarian policy was directed toward creating a strong kulak class among the peasants as the main support of the government in the villages. He was assassinated in September 1911.
9. *The People's Will*—a secret Populist (*Narodnik*) society formed in 1879 to wage a revolutionary struggle against the tsarist autocracy. Shortly after the assassination of Tsar Alexander II by members of the People's Will on March 13, 1881, the society was broken up by the government. For an appraisal of the People's Will, see Chapter 1 of *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, New York, 1939.

10. Having left his home, Tolstoy died on November 20, 1910, in Astapovo (a station on the Ryazan-Ural railroad).
11. *Mr. Coupon*—i.e., coupon-clipper, a term used in Russian literature in the 1880's and 1890's to personify capital and the capitalists. It was first employed by Gleb Uspensky in his sketches, *Grievous Sims*.
12. Tolstoy was excommunicated from the Russian church in 1901. After the 1880's his social, political and moral essays had to pass not only the government censor but also the church censorship, which either castrated his writings or banned them entirely. A complete edition of Tolstoy's works did not become possible until after the foundation of the Soviet government. The persecutions by the church and government had an inverse effect, increasing the popularity of Tolstoy. The Church therefore felt impelled to bring Tolstoy back into the fold, but without effect. When the writer was on his deathbed, the Metropolitan Antonius sent him a telegram begging him to return to the church, and other dignitaries sought to visit him at his bedside, but their efforts were without success.
13. *Vekhi-ists*—the contributors to a Cadet symposium entitled *Vekhi (Landmarks)*, published in Moscow in the spring of 1909, containing articles by N. Berdyaev, S. Bulgakov, P. Struve, M. Gershenson and other representatives of the counter-revolutionary liberal bourgeoisie. In essays on the Russian intelligentsia these writers tried to discredit the revolutionary-democratic traditions of the best representatives of the Russian people like the great social and literary critics V. G. Belinsky and N. G. Chernyshevsky, vilified the revolutionary movement of 1905, and thanked the tsarist government for having, "with its bayonets and jails," saved the bourgeoisie from "the ire of the people." The writers called upon the intelligentsia to serve the autocracy. Lenin compared the philosophy and politics of the *Vekhi* program with that of the anti-Semitic and terrorist Black Hundred newspaper, *Moskovkiye Vedomosti*, and called the volume of essays an "encyclopedia of liberal renegacy," and "nothing but a flood of reactionary mud turned on democracy."
14. *Antonius of Volhynia*—Metropolitan, an extreme reactionary.
15. *Novoye Vremya (New Times)*—the nationally known newspaper published in St. Petersburg from 1868 to 1917, organ of the reactionary nobility and tsarist bureaucracy.
16. This refers to the following telegram sent by the Social-Democratic deputies in the Third Duma to Tolstoy's intimate friend and disciple, V. G. Chertkov, in Astapovo: "The Social-Democratic group in the State Duma, expressing the feelings of the Russian and of the entire international proletariat, deeply mourns the loss of the artist of genius, uncompromis-

- ing and indomitable fighter against the official church, the enemy of tyranny and slavery, who loudly raised his voice against capital punishment, and was the friend of the persecuted.”
17. *Nasba Zarya (Our Dawn)*—a monthly magazine published legally in St. Petersburg from 1910 to 1914 by the Mensheviks who favored the liquidation of the Party organization. The magazine served as the rallying center for the Liquidator-Mensheviks in Russia.
 18. *Auguste Comte* (1798-1857)—French philosopher, founder of positivism as the characteristic ideology of the liberal-democratic bourgeoisie. His philosophy is basically idealist and non-scientific.
 19. *Ludwig Feuerbach* (1804-1872)—German philosopher, a materialist. See Frederick Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy*, New York, 1941.
 20. *Machists*—followers of Ernst Mach (1838-1916), a famous Austrian physicist, who was also active in the field of philosophy. Together with the German philosopher Avenarius, he founded the subjectivist-idealist school known as Machism or empirio-criticism, which attempted to present itself as “neutral” between idealism and materialism. For a critique of this philosophy see V. I. Lenin, *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, in *Selected Works*, Vol. XI, New York, 1943.
 21. *Anna Karenina*—the great novel by Tolstoy, written in 1874. Levin is one of the principal characters in the book.
 22. The reference here is to the *Communist Manifesto* by Marx and Engels, from which the subsequent quotations are taken.

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