
უცხოელი ემიგრანტი მწერლები და კულტურულ-ლიტერატურული კავშირები
სხვადასხვა ეპოქათა კონტექსტში
Emigrant Writers and Cultural-Literary Connections in Various Historical Contexts

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**The Doukhobors, Leo Tolstoy, and his Daughter Aleksandra Tolstaya –
Two Stories of Escape from Russia**

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Tolstoy actively supported the Doukhobors, corresponding with their leader P.V. Verigin and following events in the Caucasus. His financial aid helped fund their emigration to Canada: he organized donations and gave royalties from the first edition of *Resurrection*. Later, Russian-American writer Maurice Hindus described Canadian Doukhobors and the radical “Svobodniki” (“Sons of Freedom”), assuming Tolstoy’s ideas influenced them. Surprisingly, many sectarians did not even know Tolstoy’s name. Another telling episode involves Tolstoy’s daughter Alexandra, who, while in Japan and refusing to return to the USSR, asked the Doukhobors for help moving to Canada—only to receive a courteous refusal.

Key words: The Doukhobors, Leo Tolstoy, Aleksandra Tolstaya, emigration, radical movement

The topic “Tolstoy and emigration” is very comprehensive, although Tolstoy himself wasn’t the emigrant. It is better to say: Tolstoy didn’t become an emigrant, although he could have been one. Russian government was afraid of Tolstoy’s power, but, fortunately for the rulers, the writer, along with anti-government statements, preached the law of non-resistance to evil.

Prof. Edward Steiner, who spent much of last year with Tolstoy, wrote: “Power of fame and the harmlessness of the non-resistant have saved him from the exile into which have been sent countless numbers who have provoked the authorities far less than has he” (Non-Resistance to Evil, p. 91).

Scientists and publicists often call Tolstoy the predecessor of Russian Revolution. Sometimes they speak in a positive sense, often in a negative one. For instance, doctor and priest Mark Andronnikov, who lives in France, believes that asking the question “Why this power?”, Tolstoy encouraged the fight against the regime of the “people’s oppressors”, leading to the inevitability and necessity of terror.

But it is difficult to agree with Mark Andronnikov. Tolstoy, in the wright words of V.V. Stasov, became “the lawyer of a hundred million agricultural people”. Exaggerations in Tolstoy’s denial were caused by necessary changes and fundamental transformations in Russian society. Tolstoy never called for violence, his principle of non-resistance to evil was connected with the soft power, with the education of people, with the proposal to reject not civilization, but the using of peasants. The rulers feared Tolstoy as the most important national leader.

It is appropriate to cite the remark of P.D. Boborykin, who called Tolstoy an “emigrant,” recalling “the entirety of his activities over the last twenty years of his life, his propaganda, his credo of a pure neo-

Christian anarchist.” P.D. Boborykin wrote: “And if he wasn’t tried or exiled without trial, it was only because the authorities were afraid of his popularity and didn’t directly persecute him, but nevertheless he died officially excommunicated from the state-police Orthodox Church” (Boborykin, p. 507).

At the second part of his life Tolstoy lived only in Russia, but at the beginning of 20th century the writer himself and his estate Yasnaya Polyana were well known all around the world. And Tolstoy became cosmopolitan. As in his youth Tolstoy paid great attention to Western Civilization, with his assistants (V.G. Chertkov, P.I. Biryukov, P.A. Boulanger) Tolstoy wrote about East culture. He translated folklore from Eastern countries, introducing it to domestic readers and at the same time gaining loyal followers in Asia. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Tolstoy thought a lot about the Caucasus: the writer recalled his youth, during which time he was working on Hadji Murat, and noted key moments in the lives of the freedom-loving mountain dwellers.

One of the main difficulties that the writer carried throughout his life was the need to fit with his family, to maintain his beloved and inherited estate, Yasnaya Polyana, while constantly trying to avoid excessive spending and burdening others.

Tolstoy gave great deal of his own experiences to Dmitry Nekhlyudov, the protagonist of the novel “Resurrection”. Nekhlyudov understands that abandoning his position will prevent him from continuing to fight for another people, defend their rights. It's noteworthy that in the novel's drafts, Nekhlyudov emigrated, moving with Katyusha, who became his wife, to London. For Tolstoy's later writings, the idea of serving the Motherland evolves into the idea of serving humanity.

In the situation of fierce struggle for human rights Tolstoy was glad for his supporters and supported them with all his might. It is important to mention the relationship between Tolstoy and Dmitry Alexandrovich Khilkov, a guards officer, who refused his estates, lived in Transcaucasia and his estate of Pavlovka, and supported the Doukhobors for ideological reasons. In December 1887, Tolstoy wrote to D.A. Khilkov: “Dzhunkovsky read me your two letters and, at my request, left them with me. I have just reread them and again experienced the same feeling as the first time I read them, only with greater intensity: I have known you for a long time, I admire you, I rejoice for you... sensing a fellow worker who facilitates and accelerates the work of my life...” (Tolstoy L.N., vol. 64, p. 133).

Tolstoy and his family provided free assistance to people who defended their beliefs and often went against the government's opinion. Let's turn to a significant story – of Tolstoy's assistance to the Doukhobors. Tolstoy corresponded with their leader, P.V. Verigin, and followed events unfolding in the Caucasus, where the Doukhobors had been sent to live. In August 1895, Tolstoy wrote “Letter to Foreign Newspapers Regarding the Persecution of the Caucasian Doukhobors”, in which he described the blessed life of the Doukhobors in the Caucasus until they decided to refuse military service and burn their weapons.

In 1897, a pamphlet by Tolstoy's assistants, P.I. Biryukov and V.G. Chertkov, was published in London about the situation of the Doukhobors in the Caucasus in 1896. Tolstoy also expressed his views on the Doukhobors' situation in a letter-article to the editor of a Stockholm newspaper, which was published in many Swedish newspapers in October 1897 and then published in Geneva in November 1899 under the title “Regarding Nobel's Will”. Norwegian parliament was considering possible candidates for the Peace Prize. Tolstoy noted that the correct decision would be to give the prize for peace to the Caucasian Doukhobors and their families in need.

Tolstoy became a pacifist, and the idea of peace and a peaceful, harmonious life among states became a key theme in his later works. In his article “On the Peace Congress”, Tolstoy even recalls his colleague and friend, Prince S.S. Urusov, a brave officer and one of the best chess players of his time. Urusov approached General Saken with a proposal to “challenge the British to a game of chess at the front trench in front of the 5th Bastion, which had changed hands several times and had already cost several hundred lives” (Tolstoy L.N., vol. 90, p. 61–62). Tolstoy emphasizes the value of human life, reminding us of the need for peace agreements: “If this trust exists, then no troops are needed at all. If there are troops, then it is clear that this trust does not exist...” (Tolstoy L.N., vol. 90, p. 62).

The writer's son, Sergei traveled to England and France in September 1898 with mission to help the Doukhobors to mediate goal for the Doukhobors. Canada was chosen as the destination for the Doukhobors' emigration, and their resettlement was largely thanks to Tolstoy. The writer called for donations and donated money from the first edition of his novel "Resurrection" and the story "Father Sergius" to the sectarians' relocation.

Georgia became the key destination for the Doukhobors' resettlement, and the port of Batumi, formerly known as Batum, became the departure point for the ships.

On November 9, 1898, Sergei Tolstoy and Sulerzhitsky went for Georgia: "After a day and a half of travel by rail and two days on the Georgian Military Highway, we arrived in Tiflis" (Tolstoy S.L., p. 54). In Tiflis, Tolstoy met with the commander-in-chief of the Caucasus, G.S. Golitsyn, and gave him a letter written by Tolstoy. "According to Your Excellency's permission, – Tolstoy wrote, – Mr. Sulerzhitsky was in charge of the deportation of the Doukhobors abroad in Batumi. Quite unexpectedly, however, in the middle of his work sending a second group of 2,000 souls to Canada, members of the gendarmerie department informed him that he had no right to handle this matter..." (Tolstoy L.N., vol. 71, p. 482). Tolstoy supported this emigration of the Doukhobors not only financially but also actively, he was very famous and can influence to the power. In a letter to Prince Golitsyn, Tolstoy asks that Sullerzhitsky be allowed to carry out the work he has begun, and that Sergei Tolstoy, who was supposed to be in charge of sending the third batch of Doukhobors to Canada.

Prince Golitsyn approved the escort of the Doukhobors. On November 18, Sergei Tolstoy and Sulerzhitsky arrived in Batumi and stayed at a hotel overlooking the sea. "All the steamships are passing us on their way to the port, and we'll see when ours arrive. The weather is fine", – wrote Sergei Tolstoy (Tolstoy S.L., p. 59). In Georgia, Tolstoy and Sulerzhitsky done tremendous amount of work gathering and transporting the displaced people. Tolstoy wrote that at that time, the exiled Doukhobors lived very closely together in Georgian villages – near the stations of the Transcaucasian Railway, spending their last money and ready to leave at the first opportunity.

S. Tolstoy and Sulerzhitsky handled all aspects of the legal and practical support for the emigrants. Tolstoy regularly resolved the Doukhobors' problems with the authorities. Here's a short quote from Tolstoy's notes: "A sunny, warm day. The magnificent imperial yacht Derzhava has been stood in the port for several days. Empress Maria Feodorovna passed through Batumi this morning. Prince Golitsyn had come to see her off. I took advantage of this opportunity and, after he saw the Empress off, went to see him... I came on the matter of passports for the Elizavetpol Doukhobors..." (Tolstoy S.L., p. 81).

Ships were chartered, and Tolstoy and Sulerzhitsky traveled with the settlers to Canada. Tolstoy left a fascinating diary of the journey, during which everyone endured many difficulties and challenges. On December 23, 1899, the steamship carrying 2,000 Doukhobors, on which S. Tolstoy was also traveling, departed from the shores of Georgia. "Walking to the stern of the steamship, I couldn't help but admire the view of the Caucasus Mountains, from which we were departing", – wrote Tolstoy (Tolstoy S.L., p. 101). On January 15 (27), 1899, the steamship Lake Superior, after 24 days and 5,350 miles, arrived in Halifax, where the emigrants still had to endure vaccinations and quarantine before departing for their new home.

The Tolstoy family provided the most active assistance to the Doukhobors. At first, the sectarians were very grateful. It is appropriate to mention S. Tolstoy's correspondence with the Doukhobor N.F. Khudyakov. The latter wrote to S. Tolstoy from Nelson on December 27, 1911: "Only your kind relations with me remain constant in my memories. Perhaps you have forgotten me, just as I have forgotten your address, but I hope this short letter will remind you of me. Traveling from the Yakutsk region, I stopped in Moscow, visited your mother's house, then in Yasnaya Polyana, saw your late father, and finally came to you, stayed with you for three days, then to the Caucasus and from there to Canada" (Tolstoy S.L., p. 283).

However in future the Doukhobors were unable to repay Tolstoy's descendants in kind. Gradually, various changes occurred within the community in Canada, which did not contribute to the memory of Tolstoy's behavior or of him.

Fifteen years after his resettlement, the Russian-American writer M. Hindus described the Doukhobors of Canada and their radical “Svobodniki” movement. The members of this movement opposed themselves to the outside world and the rest of the Doukhobors, shocking people around them with naked professions. Knowing of Tolstoy’s assistance to the Doukhobors, Hindus supposed a connection between the writer’s beliefs and those of his fanatical followers. “Listening to their speeches”, Hindus noted, “I couldn’t forget about L. Tolstoy. How this majestic champion of primitivism would be glad to see such a fierce rejection of Western civilization! The lifestyle of the Svobodniki clearly reflected Tolstoyan ideas”. When Hindus directly asked the community leader if they were followers of L.N. Tolstoy, “one of the greatest writers who ever lived”, it turned out they didn’t even know his name (Hindus, p. 299). This was the first serious fact illustrating the complete break of the Doukhobors with Tolstoy and his ideas.

The situation with Alexandra Tolstaya, the youngest daughter and ally of her great father, is noteworthy. A.L. Tolstaya was in Japan and didn’t want return to the USSR. She was stalling for time, contemplating her emigration, and choosing a country to move to. At A.L. Tolstaya’s own request, the Soviet Union extended her stay in Japan until March 1. Officially, the writer’s daughter said that she needed to complete her work on a book for Tokyo publisher. But in reality, she was preparing to move to Canada, trying to keep her intentions to emigrate a secret from the USSR.

Tatiana Tolstaya asked for help from Doukhobors, she wanted to have invitation to Canada. In response, the Doukhobors sent a letter with refusal: they would not help Tolstoy’s daughter, who had expended so much effort to improve their situation. The Doukhobors wrote of formal, serious issues preventing them from helping Tolstoy’s daughter. This is a part of letter addressed to her in Tokyo on April 13, 1931, sent from Verigino, Saskatchewan, on behalf of the Central Executive Committee of the “Named Doukhobors”. They said that they “discussed the question of helping Tatiana to go from Japan to Canada, but in the current state this is not so easy: it will soon be a year since Canada has had a Conservative government, which has passed a law barring anyone from Europe and Asia from entering the country”. But if Tatiana “manages to get to the United States for at least six months, and from there, it will be much easier to arrange her entry into Canada” (Mikhnovets, p. 773).

While Tolstoy spent effort and resources to resettle the Doukhobors in Canada, the Doukhobors made no significant efforts in return. This was the second serious instance in which the Doukhobors failed to repay Tolstoy and his family.

Alexandra Tolstaya emigrated to the United States and organized a foundation named after her father. Initially, she immersed herself into the history and problems of the Doukhobors, as reported by correspondents. But when she confronted with the extremes of the free people, she called them madness, whose stubbornness could only be stopped by the government. However, these were no longer the same Doukhobors who had once left Batumi – emigration and internal changes within the community had profoundly changed the sectarians.

The efforts of Tolstoy and his family to resettle the Doukhobors were not in vain: thanks to the organized relocation, the sectarians were saved and spared persecution. However, most members of the community almost immediately forgot about Tolstoy, spiritually disassociating themselves from him and his ideas. Unlike the sectarians, Alexandra Tolstaya received no assistance: the writer’s daughter planned her own emigration and accomplished it without outside help. The Doukhobors could have helped her, but decided not to.

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