HISTORICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF THE PROSE AND DRAMATIC WORKS OF A. N. TOLSTOI

by

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ABSTRACT

In large measure the literary reputation of Aleksei Nikolaevich Tolstoi (1883-1945) rests on the historical novel Peter the First. Before the novel and during its writing, he also wrote stories and plays set in the past. However, literature written in the Soviet Union very often needs to be considered against the background of current events, and historical fiction especially cannot be regarded apart from state ideology or the fluctuations in the political climate. Between 1917 and 1945, Soviet interpretation of the Russian past changed from contentious class-consciousness and dialectical rejection, to a determined rehabilitation of select personalities whose life and accomplishments were supposed to inculcate Soviet patriotism.

With his heightened sense of history, Tolstoi often sought to rationalize contemporary conditions through representations of analogous periods in Russian history, and in this manner some of the works which are discussed in this study may be viewed as reflections of current events. On the other hand, altered political perspectives of the Russian past required him to make radical modifications in works written a few years earlier, and to make some distortions of history in works he was about to write. But in addition to historical, cultural and political considerations, the
discussion of Tolstoi's separate works will demand as well that some attention be paid to the writer's use of the Russian language as an instrument for creating a sense of the past.

To facilitate the discussion of Tolstoi's historical fiction in this study, the works are grouped by genre and then arranged in chronological order. Chapter I, however, offers a biographical sketch of A. N. Tolstoi. This is important for the thesis because the writer's views and attitudes provide a key for a better understanding of the extra-literary influences which affected his work. In the second chapter, short stories are discussed, beginning with the anecdotes from 1909, in which there is little history save for the description of costumes and manners. But stories written during and immediately after the Russian revolution reflect Tolstoi's initial hostility to the Bolsheviks, then his apparent loss of interest in the political antagonisms between the White émigrés and the Reds, and finally his gradual acceptance of the Soviet regime. After his return to Soviet Russia, the stories assume an almost belligerent, Marxist tone.

Tolstoi's *magnum opus* is discussed in the third chapter. *Peter the First* is presented in context of the historical novel in general, the contemporary Soviet historical novel, and finally in context of contemporary criticism.
A glimpse into the Petrine theme in Russian literature is also offered as a further contrast to Tolstoy's novel. Historical plays are reviewed in the fourth chapter, offering the best illustration of that political fluctuation that so blatantly forced the writer to change his work and to alter history as well. Chapter V concludes the study with a general and chronological summation of the works discussed; it demonstrates that in spite of the various extra-literary influences, Aleksei Tolstoy remains a major and talented figure among twentieth-century Russian writers.
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INTRODUCTION

When a student scans a list of Soviet writers he will certainly take note of the name Aleksei Nikolaevich Tolstoi (1883-1945). Who was this Soviet Tolstoi, this so-called "third Tolstoi"? Described by the Soviets as a link in Russian literature that joined the old order to the new, he has also been damned with faint praise by such émigré writers as Zinaida Gippius, Ivan Bunin, Razumnik Ivanov-Razumnik, and Gleb Struve. The study that follows will not presume to end the controversy that surrounds his name or to rehabilitate him completely in the eyes of scholars of Russian literature in the West, but it will endeavour at least to present Aleksei Tolstoi in a more objective light, for the fact remains that he has made a substantial and, it is generally agreed, a very respectable contribution to Russian literature of the Soviet period.

In his long literary career which began in 1907 and continued without interruption until his death, Tolstoi wrote poetry, folk-tales, children's stories, short narratives, plays, science fiction, and novels from contemporary life. His reputation, however, rests primarily on a book that has since become a classic, the historical novel Petr Pervyi (Peter the First). Indeed, had Tolstoi written nothing else, he would still be listed among the best writers in Soviet literature. Of course, he is also well known for another
Soviet classic, *Khozhdenie po mukam* (The Road to Calvary), but though this trilogy deals with the Russian revolution and civil war, strictly speaking it cannot be considered a historical novel.

But what exactly constitutes a historical novel? One scholar, H. Butterfield, defines the genre in these words:

Like a song, in which music and poetry are interlocked, and become one harmony, the historical novel is a fusion. It is one of the arts that are born of the marriage of different arts. A historical event is "put to fiction" as a poem is put to music: it is turned into a story as words are turned into a song.¹

A. T. Sheppard offers a more concise definition: "An historical novel must of necessity be a story of the past in which imagination comes to the aid of fact."² Aleksei Tolstoi's own definition of historical fiction echoes Sheppard's views but he carefully distinguishes the writer from the historian.

"In every literary work," stated Tolstoi in 1938,

including the historical novel and the historical short story, we value above all else the author's fantasy which can reconstruct a living picture, which can think out an epoch from only a fragment of a surviving document. Herein lies the fundamental difference between a writer and a historian or researcher. A scholar requires a chain of sequential facts to tell the truth. A writer has the daring or audacity to speak boldly and convincingly about an epoch based on just a fragment of some insignificant information, and his fantasy and intuition.³

Sheppard also mentions the definition of a historical novel given by Jonathan Nield. "A novel is rendered historical,"
wrote Nield, "by the introduction of dates, personages, or events, to which identification can be readily given." But were this so, then what happened five minutes ago or yesterday, or last year to a well-known figure could be considered to belong to history. From this point of view a novel like Khozhdenie po mukam could certainly be considered historical. However, although such a view seems to fit the phrasing of the definition, it does not really agree with its intent. To avoid such complications, it is best to agree with John Buchan, another writer mentioned by Sheppard, who explained that "an historical novel is simply a novel which attempts to reconstruct the life, and recapture the atmosphere, of an age other than that of the writer." Khozhdenie po mukam, therefore, will not be discussed in this study.

But Petr Pervyi was not Tolstoi's only work of historical fiction and this study will also consider his stories as well as his plays which deal with the historical past. "What attracted me to the epic Peter the First?" wrote Tolstoi in 1943. "Probably I chose that epoch because I could make a conjecture about the present," he explained.

For the same reason I am drawn to the depiction of four epochs: the epoch of Ivan the Terrible, Peter the Great, the civil war of 1918-1920, and the present war, unheard of in scope and significance. This study will illustrate how current events through which Tolstoi's life passed found their reflection in his choice
of historical topics.

In discussing these various works, several factors will be considered. First of all we must note the writer's ability to recapture and reconstruct the atmosphere of a past era. Not only the external environment, that is the dress and furnishing, but also the spiritual conditioning of the personages appearing in the work in question must correspond with the historical period, and the reader must be convinced of the realism of the description. Helen Cam, in an address to the British Historical Association, explained the importance of atmosphere in historical fiction in these words:

The historical novelist with a proper respect for history has a very stiff task before him; not only must his facts and his concrete details be consistent with those established by research; but the atmosphere of belief, the attitudes and assumptions of society that he conveys, must be in accordance with what is known of the mental and emotional climate of the place and period.

A good illustration of a writer's successful conveyance of historical atmosphere may be found in Henryk Sienkiewicz. As his historical trilogy was originally published in installments, Sienkiewicz often received letters from readers beseeching him to spare one or another of his endangered characters. Sometimes even mass was served for those who were killed in the narrative. To achieve such a degree of verisimilitude, the writer must possess an intimate
knowledge of the social customs, political and economic history, as well as a fine insight into the spirit of the period about which he writes.

Second, attention must be given to the language which contributes so much to that atmosphere. To create the effect of a past epoch the writer may be tempted to use too much archaic language. Though appropriate to the period, the language would be hard to understand and the reader would quickly tire of the effort. If the writer, however, chose to use the modern idiom, the reader would easily understand the text but the illusion of a historical atmosphere would be lost. An appropriate balance must be struck between archaic and contemporary language; an obvious requirement is that the writer must take care to keep neologisms out of the speech of his characters and archaisms out of his own narrative.

Finally, consideration must be given to the political climate in which Tolstoi was writing, especially since his historical works are very often a reflection of currents in the contemporary milieu. Literature published in the Soviet Union, and in particular historical fiction, cannot be regarded apart from state ideology or the fluctuations in the political atmosphere. The Soviet view of Russian history in the decade following the revolution was a vacillation that appeared as tolerance of non-Marxist historians. But this
situation came to an end in 1928, when every segment of Soviet life was subordinated to communist supervision and was harnessed to support the implementation of the first five-year plan. It was at this time that M. N. Pokrovskii, whose views could be reduced to his well-known proclamation — history is politics immersed in the past — emerged as the head of Soviet historiography. By 1936, however, the needs of the Soviet regime had shifted away from Pokrovskii's dialectical rejection of Russia's past to a determined rehabilitation of select personalities whose life and achievements were supposed to cultivate Soviet patriotism. These extra-literary aspects, which Tolstoi understood and heeded, will be discussed in this study. Consequently, the investigation into the short stories, the novel Petr Pervyi, and the plays has necessitated modest ventures into allied disciplines such as the history of Russia as well as that of its political and cultural changes.
This study begins with a biographical sketch for two main reasons. First, this is the "third Tolstoi," the most recent member of that illustrious family of writers, but one whose life so far is little known in the West. Therefore, it should prove useful to glimpse into the life of a man whose works are considered to be classics of Soviet Russian literature. And second, Tolstoi's life, and some of his views and attitudes are especially important for a discussion of works of historical fiction.

A. Tolstoi's Early Years.

Born on January 10, 1883 (December 29, 1882 by the old calendar), Count Aleksei Nikolaevich Tolstoi was distantly related to two famous families, the Tolstoi's and the Turgenevs. His father, Nikolai Aleksandrovich Tolstoi (whose great-great-grandfather was a brother to the great-grandfather of both Lev Nikolaevich and Aleksei Konstantinovich
Tolstoi), was a boor and a misfit who was forcibly retired from the army. In fact, he was so offensive as to be forbidden to live in either St. Petersburg or Moscow. A. N. Tolstoi's mother, née Aleksandra Leontevna Turgenev, was the niece of Nikolai Ivanovich Turgenev, the Decembrist émigré. A fine and sensitive woman, her marriage to Count Tolstoi was a cruel probation which lasted ten years, and when she discovered that she was pregnant with Aleksei, she decided to make a complete and final break with her husband. When she left him, she left as well her three children, Elizaveta aged eight, Aleksandr aged three, and Mstislav aged two. It was an enormously difficult step to take, considering the rigidity of social standards of the time, and even members of her own family would not forgive her. But Aleksandra Leontevna Tolstoi now went to the man with whom she had fallen in love, Aleksei Apollonovich Bostrom, and the future writer was born in the home of his step-father. Unhappily, because of her apparent desertion, the ecclesiastical court which divorced the Tolstois ruled in favour of the Count, and this decision prevented Aleksandra Leontevna from being legally married to Bostrom.

Tolstoi's early childhood was spent at Sosnovka, Bostrom's rather rundown estate, some two days' ride from Samara (now called Kuibyshev). Sosnovka provided that rustic material which Tolstoi later successfully incorporated
into his autobiographical novella *Detstvo Nikity*. At the same time, the family circle provided a cultivated background that moulded the future writer's outlook. In that circle the progressive thinkers of the 1860's were held in respect and Russian classics were read aloud in the living room, often leading to heated discussions. Tolstoi's mother, herself an authoress, hoped that her son would also take up literature. In her lifetime, however, he showed little promise of becoming a writer.

Until the age of nine, Tolstoi's education was conducted by his mother. After that the family moved to Samara, where he was enrolled in a private school, and Sosnovka was used thereafter only as a summer home. Then, since his parents wished him to enter a technical school instead of a classical gymnasium, a tutor was engaged to prepare him for entrance to the third grade. But after two years, the unfortunate but kindly tutor was dismissed: Bostrom complained to Tolstoi's mother that his language tutoring "... is simply blunting Lelia's [Tolstoi's pet name] more or less innate literary abilities, as well as those he acquired from you and from reading." After failing the entrance examinations in Samara in May 1897, Tolstoi studied all summer and gained admission to a similar school in Syzran', a nearby town on the Volga, where he and his mother lived for a year. Having successfully completed the fourth grade in Syzran', he finally
obtained permission to continue his technical education back in Samara. By this time, Bostrom, who had tried to run his estate according to Marxian theories, had been forced to sell it; and the family's permanent home was situated henceforth in Samara.

It was in the Samara public library that the young Tolstoi was first introduced to the fantastic and adventurous worlds of Jules Verne and Fenimore Cooper. His first introduction to history occurred at this time with his reading of Hugo's famous novel about the Notre Dame Cathedral. "The Hunchback of Notre Dame," he wrote, "was my first lesson in French mediaeval history; probably that's how I got my taste for history." An anecdote related by Alpatov also tells of such an early interest in history. One of Tolstoi's classmates recalled that when their teacher asked what the students would like to write about, young Aleksei Tolstoi replied, "I want to write about Peter the Great." It is interesting to note here that his first short story mentions Peter I, and the stories written immediately after are also set in eighteenth-century Russia.

It was in Samara, too, that Tolstoi began writing as a hobby. At first it was only verses jotted in the albums of friends, but soon he was writing regularly in his own notebooks. By 1899 he had ventured into prose, and even took to writing small plays. During his year in Syzran', he
had joined an amateur theatre group, and now in Samara he continued to participate in amateur productions.

When his father died in 1900, young Tolstoi received thirty thousand roubles, and this sum made it possible for him to study at the St. Petersburg Technological Institute. But first he had to prepare for yet another set of entrance examinations. This he did at a preparatory school near St. Petersburg, which specialized in tutoring provincials in mathematics, physics, and the Russian language. It is significant that in Tolstoi's notebook for the Russian language there were many essays composed on historical themes, some in the form of literary sketches, others as meditations, with such titles as "Consequences of the Tatar Rule," and "A Country's Influence on the Character and Life of Its Inhabitants." There was also a plan for an essay on the fall of the Roman Empire.

In 1902, at the end of his first year at the Institute, Aleksei Tolstoi married Iulia Vasilevna Rozhanskaia, whom he had met in Samara. A year later a son was born to them. Tolstoi's interest in his studies soon waned, and when the schools were closed because of the events of 1905, the young family moved to Kazan' to be with the elder Rozhanskiis. It was in a Kazan' paper that Tolstoi first appeared in print, with the publication of three poems. During the next several years he continued to write poetry, and in April
1907 he published (at his own expense) a collection of his verse under the title *Lirika*. However, his growing interest in art and literature led to a rift between him and his wife. A few months later, while travelling in Europe, the couple quarrelled seriously, and Tolstoi returned to St. Petersburg alone.

On his return he enrolled in an art school, which was also attended by Sof'ia Isaakovna Dymshits, the woman who was at least partly responsible for his divorce. Their life together allowed her to witness Tolstoi's first steps into what he described as "the murky waters of literature." According to her, it was L. Bakst, the famous painter and their painting instructor, who suggested that Tolstoi give up the easel for the pen, which held greater promise of success for him. This explanation seems more plausible than the reason offered by Tolstoi in his last autobiographical sketch. There he suggested that he plunged into literature because he had only one hundred roubles, and, with his formal studies unfinished, he had no other profession.

Although he had destroyed all the copies of *Lirika* he could find, Tolstoi continued to write mainly poetry for the next few years. In a letter from Paris, he explained to his stepfather, "For the time being, I have stopped writing prose. It is too early for me to write that which demands solitary contemplation and reasoning." Another letter,
also to Bostrom, indicates that Tolstoi's poetry was well received by the Russian poets who were then living in the French capital; he writes:

In the last two weeks there was a series of triumphs. Vošoshin, Bal'mont, Val. Briusov, Minskii, Vilkina, Vengerov, Ol'shtein all said that I have an original and major talent. Imam not boasting, because a talent is something contained within us, something about which we may speak objectively. They are sending my things to several journals... If you could hear my things then you and mother would take pride in the knowledge that you protected against bad influences, and guarded and nourished that tender flower which I now possess.

The "triumphs" to which he referred were his successful readings in the cafés of Montmartre, and the fairly regular publication of his works in a wide variety of periodicals: Luch, Obrazovanie, Zhizn', Niva, Apollon, Satirikon, Vesy.

In 1909 he finished writing his second — and last — book of verse, Za sihaimi rekami.

In 1909 Voloshin invited him to spend some time at his dacha in the Crimea. It was there, wrote Sof'ia Dymshits in her memoirs, that Tolstoi began to experiment with historical fiction:

Using Voloshin's library, he first began testing his ability in the historical genre by studying the epoch of Catherine II and the linguistic culture of that period.

This is confirmed by the following excerpt from Tolstoi's last autobiographical sketch, written in 1943:
To my association with the poet and translator M.M. Voloshin I am indebted for the start of my work in novellas. . . . I was struck by the relief quality of the images [in his translations]. The Symbolists, with their search for form, and such aesthetes as Régnier provided me with a beginning, with that which I did not have then, and without which there can be no creativity: form and technique.13

Voloshin recognized Tolstoi's talent for narration, and urged him to direct his efforts towards prose instead of poetry. He suggested that some stories by Henri Régnier might serve as models, adding, "You are probably the last in literature still carrying the old traditions of noblemen's nests."14 This counsel resulted in Tolstoi's first historical anecdotes.

From 1909 until the Great War, however, most of his stories, plays, and novels were based not on history but on familial stories, most of which were provided by his aunt, Mar'ia Leontievna Turgeneva. "A Week in Turenevo," perhaps the most famous of his stories from that period, belongs to that group of family chronicles which together comprised the "Zavolzh'e" cycle. In these stories Tolstoi described the dismal existence of that vanishing class, the provincial gentry. In contrast to Ivan Bunin, who wrote on such themes with nostalgia, Tolstoi often injected a satirical tone into his narratives. One critic observed, for example:

The reality and ruthlessness of the exposure of the degenerating nobility sharply contrasted Tolstoi with his contemporary writers, who drew the estates in elegiac tones. The reasons for the decline of
the land-owning class Tolstoi finds in its moral-ethical decomposition... That is why all efforts of his heroes to occupy themselves with any sort of practical activity appear foolish and end in failure.15

Another critic saw in Tolstoi's writing a Slavophile's evaluation of contemporary Russia:

Young Tolstoi's criticism of the pre-revolutionary order reflected his impressions of life and the best traditions of Russian realist literature, as well as a Slavophile rejection of capitalism and the capitalist culture.16

In 1912 Tolstoi moved to Moscow and began to concentrate on writing plays which were, in fact, dramatizations of the Zavolzh'e stories. The director of MKhAT, V. I. Nemirovich-Danchenko, was very cordial and encouraged Tolstoi in his writing, although he never accepted any of Tolstoi's plays. He fared better with A. I. Iuzhin, the director of the Malyi Theatre, who accepted the play which was to become Tolstoi's first big success: Nasil'niki. Its première was on September 30, 1913. Aleksandr Blok wrote of it: "A good idea, good language, traditions, but all is spoiled by hooliganism, by immature attitudes towards life, and the absence of the artistic mean."17 The exposure of the samodurs (petty tyrants) of the provincial gentry on the stage of the Malyi caused such regular uproars that the play was banned from the stages of all Imperial theatres after only ten performances. Occasionally, police authorities felt obliged to ban it from provincial theatres as well.
By 1914 his stories, novels (Khromoi barin, Chudaki) and plays had almost exhausted Tolstoi's literary resources of personal observations and family anecdotes. This so worried him that he considered abandoning literature. With the declaration of war, however, he set off for the front as a reporter for the Moscow paper Russkie Vedomosti. This turn in his life was of importance both in personal and in literary terms.

The war brought Tolstoi in contact with the Russian masses. "I saw real life," he wrote, "I began to participate in it, having torn off my tightly buttoned, black symbolist jacket. I saw the Russian people." What Tolstoi wrote of the war, say Soviet critics, was patriotic, even truthful, but limited:

Class restrictions did not allow Tolstoi to comprehend the anti-national essence of the war, or see the caste difference, the divisions between the noble-officer part and the common line part of the tsarist army. . . . But along with this highly erroneous appraisal of the essence and meaning of the imperialist war, Tolstoi was still able to say a truthful word about the high patriotism and the self-sacrifice of the Russian soldier, to show the fortitude, manliness and heroism of the Russian people who "went to war not for glory, not from hatred, but for the common cause." Tolstoi's "erroneous" belief was that in the fire of battle all social inequalities were being erased, and that somehow the spirit of the alienated intelligentsia was being cleansed. For example, in his stories "Obyknovennyi chelovek" (An
Ordinary Man), "Na Kavkaze" (In the Caucasus), "Na gore" (On the Hill), "Sharlota" (Charlotte), Tolstoi drew a rather idyllic picture of the Russian soldier whose simplicity and moral superiority were admired by fashionably liberal intellectuals. After the purifying experience of the war, he believed, a new Russian society would emerge, and Russia would thus fulfill her Slavophile mission in the world.

B. The Revolutions of 1917.

The fall of the monarchy in February 1917 was greeted enthusiastically by the intelligentsia. Tolstoi wrote:

A new era of ultimate liberation, of complete freedom has arrived, when not only heaven and earth will become equal for all, but when the very soul of man will finally leave its dark, stuffy confinement.  

In March, Tolstoi was appointed commissar for the registry of the press in Moscow. It was at this time, wrote Natal'ia Vasil'evna Krandievskia in her memoirs, that he became keenly interested in Russian history. He began to read S. M. Solov'ev's famous multi-volumed history, and to meet Professor V. V. Kallash, who provided him with a valuable piece of historical material:

At the head of the divan on which Tolstoi slept was a night table on which lay Professor Novombergskii's book, "Slovo i delo" (notes made during interrogations by scribes at the end of the seventeenth century). Tolstoi was reading that book and making notes. In this way "Dën' Petra" and "Navazhdenie" were prepared.
The summer of 1917 was a time of depressing news from the front, of noisy meetings, and of growing anxiety that Russian honour would be stained if a separate peace were made with Germany. Then the Bolshevik coup in Petrograd was followed by six days of fighting in the streets of Moscow. At the entrance to the house in which Tolstoi lived, the tenants kept a samovar heated for the convenience of cold and tired cadets, for around the Arbat where Tolstoi lived, the population was mostly opposed to the Bolsheviks. When the fighting ceased and the Tolstoi family ventured out into the streets, there occurred a scene which Tolstoi long remembered. A crowd had gathered to read a proclamation issued by the victors. An elderly gentleman read the poster and sighed, "Russia is finished." A young man standing nearby responded joyfully, "For you, dad, it's finished. For us it's just beginning." 22

* * *

Tolstoi's life in Russia during the period 1917-1919 is not very well documented. On the one hand, Soviet biographers generally choose to pass over this period in his life, saying only that he was evidently under "the influence of hostile literary elements" who affected his decision to leave Moscow for the "white" territories, and finally to go into exile. On the other hand, there are conflicting records which, if they can be held to show anything at all,
simply show Tolstoi's ambivalent attitude towards the new order.

One night in Moscow during the winter of 1917-1918, Tolstoi and some friends were returning home from a literary evening. At one intersection a group of people stood around a fire, listening to someone declaiming poetry. "Ah, Count!" a voice called out, and Tolstoi recognized Maiakovskii. "Please, come to the proletarian fire, your excellency! Make yourself at home." After a pause, Maiakovskyi pointed at Tolstoi and then delivered this impromptu ditty:

Я слабость к титялам питаю,  
И этот граф мне по нутру,  
Но всех сиятельств уступаю  
Его сиятельству — костру! 23

When the laughter had died down, Andrei Sobol', who was with Tolstoi, said, "It doesn't look good for you, Aleksei. Let's get away from here." Continuing home, Tolstoi was silent for a long time, but at last he muttered, "That Maiakovskii is a talented fellow, but somehow he's unpleasant. Like a lumbering horse in a room." 24 Certainly Tolstoi had very little in common with such zealous supporters of the Bolshevik coup as Maiakovskii.

A different viewpoint appears in Ivan Bunin's caustic account of a literary evening at which he and Tolstoi quarreled, in which the latter is portrayed as a fashionably revolutionary aristocrat:
The Moscow writers organized an evening at which "The Twelve" was read and discussed, and I went to it. The reading was done by somebody, I do not remember who, sitting between Ilya Ehrenburg and Tolstoi: and as by that time the reputation of that piece of writing, which for some reason was referred to as a poem, was quite above dispute, when the reading was over a reverent silence fell for some time in the room, followed by a few muffled exclamations, "Wonderful!" "Amazing!" I picked up the text of "The Twelve" and, turning over the pages, said approximately the following:

Here Bunin quoted his virulent attack, occupying nearly four pages, and ending as follows:

"'The Twelve' is a collection of short rhymes, some pseudo-tragic, some written in the rhythm of a popular dance, and as a whole pretending to be something Russian and popular in the extreme. . . . Blok's intention was to reproduce in this 'poem' of his the language and the feelings of the people, but what came out is clumsy and vulgar beyond measure. And as a 'curtain line' he flings out a pathological blasphemy: Christ dangling a bloody banner, with a crown of white roses on His head, in front of all those beasts, robbers and murderers:

'They march with sovereign tread, a hungry dog behind them and Jesus Christ ahead, a blood-red banner in his hands, white roses on his head.'"

With this I finished my speech. And it was then that Tolstoi kicked up a row. He turned on me like a fighting cock and yelled in theatrical tones that he would never forgive me that speech: that he, Tolstoi, was a Bolshevik heart and soul, whereas I was a retrograde, a counter-revolutionary, and so forth. 25

Like the Bolsheviks, Tolstoi was unscrupulous, suggested Bunin. When they met some months later in Odessa, Tolstoi explained that he had defended "The Twelve" to deceive the Moscow authorities so that he could flee to the south. But
Bunin continued to be suspicious, even claiming that Tolstoi was connected with a sinister gambling den in Odessa.

However, Tolstoi's literary works were the best indicator of his feelings during those years. They reflected a man whose naïveté and idealism clashed with the bloody reality of the time. From his fervently patriotic writings about the war, he now turned to anxious tales of contemporary Russia undergoing a ruinous upheaval. A frequently cited story, "Rasskaz proezhogo cheloveka" (Story of a Passerby), expresses clearly his concern for Russia, but also his belief that no war, no revolution could destroy her. Professor Novombergskii's *Slovo i delo gosudarevy* prompted him at this time to write three historical stories set in the period of the Petrine revolution. These stories, "Pervye terroristy" (The First Terrorists), "Navazhdenie" (Delusion), and "Den' Petra" (Peter's Day), express in some degree Tolstoi's hostility toward the Bolsheviks.

In Odessa, the subject of the Russian revolution occupied a much smaller place in Tolstoi's writings. The one work which reiterated his anti-Bolshevik sentiments (indeed, it expressed regret for the passing of the monarchy) was *Smert' Dantona* (The Death of Danton). Other works, set in the historical past, were a comedy, *Ljubov'— kniga zolotaia* (Love Is a Golden Book), and "Graf Kaliostro" (Count Cagliostro), a short story of mystery and romance.
Both of these were set in the period of Catherine the Great. Another story, "Sinitsa" (The Titmouse), was set in ancient Rus' and reflected Tolstoi's interest in folklore.

His writing thus far can be said to have prepared the author for his future literary monuments. During his exile, his historical concepts had to be modified in order to accommodate his optimistic patriotism.


Tolstoi and his family sailed from Odessa in mid-April 1919. After some ten days aboard ship, they were finally allowed to disembark on an island near Constantinople, to await the next development in their fate. A month later, they were permitted to immigrate to France, and settled at the outskirts of Paris, in the latter half of June. In just a fortnight Tolstoi began work on what was to become the great trilogy, Khozhdenie po mukam. It was a sense of moral obligation to work that made him begin writing immediately. To do nothing, he said, was almost criminal.

Khozhdenie po mukam was planned initially as a history of the "raspylenie natsii" or the scattering of the Russian nationa. It became, in fact, an examination of the relation between the intelligentsia and the revolution. In this way, Tolstoi's desire to razionalizëethe recent upheaval produced what V. R. Shcherbina has called a "roman ispoved", that is,
a novel of confession, and not merely an account of the events leading up to the revolution. However, what is pertinent here is Tolstoi's changing viewpoint.

Russia, past and present, had been at the centre of attention in all of Tolstoi's writings since the first revolution in 1917. As governmental authority eroded, and as Russian statehood seemed to crumble, he asked himself, "What is happening to Russia?" Having fled from Moscow to Odessa, and thence to Paris, he discovered that he was still tormented by the same question, only now he had nowhere to go. At this point it is important to stress the fact that Tolstoi's opposition to the Bolsheviks did not stem from any support of another political faction, but rather from his belief that the Bolshevik theorists were bent on conducting a social experiment, an experiment which was destroying Russia. He believed that, for the Bolsheviks,

the most important thing was to test their theories by experiment, and they regarded all of Russia as their laboratory. "A man, an individual, people, the happiness of these same Ivanovs and Petrovs is of no interest or concern to them."27

Two months earlier the Treaty of Versailles had been signed, and the hopes of the Russian émigrés were raised with the expectation that the Allies would now direct their forces towards terminating the Bolshevik "experiment." Their hopes, of course, came to naught.

Tolstoi's professional needs as an established writer,
and even more particularly his unremitting love for Russia, edged him towards a reconciliation. His literary talents could not be nourished and sustained in an alien environment such as Paris. Undoubtedly, too, there was some anxiety concerning his future. As one scholar observed,

A writer, with a place in the literary life of his native land, finds it more difficult to adjust himself to exile than, let us say, an engineer or a chemist. Enamored with the very sound of his native language, the writer draws his emotional sustenance from his nation's culture and is unable to face the future with the same composure as exiled members of other professions or occupations. He is more sensitive to transplantation to a foreign soil, because he anticipates his doom as a creative artist and the extinction of his social and cultural role in an alien environment.\(^{28}\)

Years later, referring to his autobiographical novella Detstvo Nikity, which was written in 1920, Tolstoi expressed the importance of the language, and its part in his life during the émigré period with these words:

It is a Russian book and it is written in the Russian language. . . . It is the Russian language which is spoken in the Samara countryside. That Russian language was luring me home to the Bolsheviks.\(^{29}\)

By 1920 Tolstoi's articles, which were appearing in émigré papers, had noticeably altered in tone. For example, in Poslednie novosti (The Latest News) for 20 September 1920, Tolstoi no longer mentions the wicked Bolshevik experiments, but speaks instead of the need for reconciliation between the Whites and the Reds. "On the contrary," wrote Tolstoi,
If we shall believe that in every Red Army man's cap, that underneath every muzhik's soiled shirt there is a robber and a scoundrel, or that everyone wearing a cockade of the White Guard was involved in pogroms, or is a reactionary, or that underneath every worn jacket of an Russian intellectual there beats a flabby rabbit's heart, then I ask, how can there be any good anywhere?  

In another article, written only nine days later, Tolstoi's feelings were expressed more bluntly than ever before. With respect to Russia there could be only two attitudes, he suggested: either its total annihilation and obliteration from the pages of history, or a passionate faith in its ability to survive.  

This was a major step away from the position which Tolstoi had held in the summer of 1919. About a year later, in August 1921, he finished writing the original version of *Khozhdenie pomumak*, that is, "Sestry." What is noteworthy about its ending is the apparent reference to the defeat of Baron Wrangel and the implied ideology of *Smena vekh* or "change of landmarks." "See what happened. ... So even now we shall not be lost ..." says Telegin, one of the heroes of the novel, "Great Russia was lost! But the grandsons of these same ragged muzhiks, who with pitchforks went to rescue Moscow, defeated Charles XII, drove the Tartars over the Perekop, brought Lithuania to heel, strolled in bast shoes on the shores of the Pacific Ocean. ... And the grandson of that boy who was forcibly brought to Moscow in a sleigh, built Petersburg! ... Great Russia is lost! If one county is left to us, then even from that will arise the Russian land.  

For Tolstoi's readers in 1921, the reference to Perekop,
Lithuania and the Pacific was a clear but unhappy reminder of the recent events of the civil war. But the last sentence — that Russia could be raised from the smallest patch of land — reiterated the appeal made by the "change of landmarks" group to come to the assistance of the Bolsheviks in rebuilding the Russian state.

D. _Smena vekh._

An important literary event took place in 1921 which was to exert a powerful influence upon Tolstoi and many of his contemporaries. This was the appearance of _Smena vekh_, a book of essays by diverse hands. Although it appeared in July 1921, it is probable that Tolstoi became acquainted with it before he finished writing the concluding chapter of _Khozhdenie po mukam_. His wife recalled the nervous irritation that Tolstoi expressed at the time. When he was going to the publisher with the completed manuscript he exclaimed: "Understand, ... Europe is a cemetery. ... Not only can I not work here, I can't breathe here. ... We must flee from here." Then, only two weeks later, he sent his family a letter clearly stating his desire to return:

"Life has shifted from dead centre. It has caused a great commotion in our friends' salons. That's exciting. I'm burning all my bridges, I must be born anew. My work demands immediate decision. Do you understand the categorical meaning of these words? Come back. Give up our apartment. We are going to Berlin, and if you wish, then even further."
The cause of the commotion to which Tolstoi referred was the sensational publication in Prague, the academic centre of the émigrés, of Smena vekh. The contributors to this book did not constitute a politically unified group although, as Gleb Struve observes in Russkaia literatura v izgnanii (Russian Literature in Exile; 1956), they were from the right wing of the political spectrum. They advocated a unified attitude towards Russia, an approach that offered Tolstoi a most gratifying release for his own sentiments. Essentially the Smena vekh group proposed that the Russians who had fled during the revolution resign themselves to the fact that the civil war had been lost and that they must go to the assistance of the only real government in Russia. For example, S. S. Chakhotkin, one of the group, described two important tasks that a repentant émigré could perform on his return to Russia:

1) With every effort assist in the enlightenment of the common masses, and support with every possible means all that the new Russia undertakes in this endeavour; yourself show the most intensive, the broadest initiative;

2) Most actively participate in the economic restoration of our Fatherland.35

Among some émigrés Smena vekh was interpreted as a desperately nationalist document, but as such it offered Aleksei Tolstoi a reply to the constantly-nagging question: What is happening to Russia? In October 1921 he moved to Berlin, the literary centre of the émigrés, and soon after
joined the editorial staff of the *Smena vekh* paper, *Nakanune* (On the Eve).

To elucidate further that sentiment which attracted Tolstoi to the "change of landmarks" movement, it may be helpful to mention at this point the article by the historian N. V. Ustrialov, which appeared in the first issue of *Nakanune* in March 1922:

> The speaking-trumpet of the revolution was the Bolshevik party, also without doubt the Russian intelligentsia, who were, as we have already seen, the most orthodox, the most Russian by their cast of mind and temperament. . . . In the Bolsheviks and through Bolshevism the Russian intelligentsia surmounts its historical estrangement from the people and its psychological estrangement from the government.  

Such a statement appealed to Tolstoi's patriotism, and it made his decision to return to Soviet Russia seem more like a natural, historical development in the evolution of the intelligentsia. Under a Bolshevik government, it seemed to the "change of landmarks" group, the Russian intelligentsia could end its paradoxical condition of being at once isolated from the people and in opposition to the government. Moreover, by joining the "change of landmarks" group, Aleksei Tolstoi was joining an exceptional company of men who continued to look at Russia through the eyes of nineteenth-century Slavophiles, which explained at least in part their discomfort in Europe and their wish to return. "A small minority of émigrés," writes Maurice Friedberg,
these people appear to have been driven to their decision by the tribulations of refugee existence, by homesickness, and in the case of a handful of intellectuals linked with the change of landmarks group (Smena Vekh), by a belief in the Messianic role of Russia, regardless of the ideology of its present rulers.37

Another contributor to the Smena vekh ideology, A. V. Bobrishchev-Pushkin, explained Russia's leading role, for example, in these passionate words which echo Blok's Bolshevik patriotism:

From a national Russian point of view we can say: "We are now the most revolutionary country in Europe. So we will lead the revolution." . . . Faith, but not orthodoxy. Firm authority, but not autocracy. Nationalism, but not in opposition to other nations, but fusing with them, leading them. Blok's Christ leads the Red Army men with a bloody banner — the only Christ in which one can still believe is the new Rus', if one can still believe in Christ at all.38

It will be shown in the next chapter that Tolstoi's initial opposition to the Bolsheviks was based on his view of them as an annihilating force which was destroying Russia and all things Russian. But this view had changed completely and he now regarded them as guardians of the national heritage; Soviet Russia appeared as a cultural counterweight to a Europe which he, as a nationalist, also disliked.

Understandably, the majority of émigré writers continued to express hostility towards the new regime; but it is significant to observe how Gorkii's views differed at this time from those of Tolstoi. While the latter's thoughts
were occupied with abstractions such as statehood, the superpower nature of Russia, its national traditions, its culture, Gorkii's thoughts were concentrated on human problems and questions of everyday life. A short time before his departure from Russia, for example, Gorkii expressed his apprehension that the revolution had turned rural Russia against urban centres, and he feared for the lives of the remaining nine thousand intellectuals. After conceding that the Soviets represented the only force capable of overpowering Russian inertia, he added, "Mais toute ma structure mentale fait que je ne puis être d'accord avec l'attitude du pouvoir soviétique envers l'intelligencija." Then, writing from Berlin in June, 1922, Gorkii expressed the same anxiety for the fate of the intelligentsia in a letter to the American, Jane Addams:

They are the best brains of the country, the creators of Russian science and culture, people more needed in Russia than in any other country. Without them it is impossible to live, as it is impossible to live without a soul. These people are a precious thing on a worldwide, general and human scale.

In all Russia there are only 9,000 of them — an insignificant number for so huge a land and for the cultural work needed in Russia. These 9,000 most precious people are gradually dying, without having succeeded in creating those who should replace them.

The differing concerns of the two writers at this juncture have been incisively stated by Guy Verret:

Gorkij avait quitté la Russie, malade et pessimiste, Alexis Tolstoj s'apprêtait à y retourner avec une
ardeur de converti, pour y dépenser ses forces bouillonnantes; Gorkij pensait au sort des intellectuels, Alexis Tolstoj à sa terre natale. 41

This clearly explains the sentiment that drove Tolstoi towards early repatriation. Unfortunately, Verret proceeds to conclude, from this difference there followed a definite cooling in their relation, and perhaps even outright hostility. Soviet sources claim just the opposite. Boris Leonov, in an article published in 1973, refers to an unpublished autobiographical sketch by Aleksei Tolstoi in which he specifically says that his meeting with Gorkii in the spring of 1922 decided his fate. His crossing "to the other shore" was apparently encouraged by Gorkii. 42

In Paris, the political centre of the émigrés, Count Tolstoi's crossing "to the other shore," that is, his collaboration with the smenavekovtsy, his involvement in their pro-Bolshevik paper Nakanune (Tolstoi edited the literary supplement), and finally the Soviet government's favourable response to the Smena vekh movement, caused a derisive reaction. (Incidentally, the Soviet government understood very well that the "change of landmarks" movement did not constitute a force capable of functioning as a political ally, but since the movement had expressed a desire to participate in the post-war reconstruction of the country, the new regime was prepared to reap any benefits that these repentant émigrés could offer.) An example of the hostility
of the Paris émigrés is the following diatribe in verse which appeared in Poslednie Novosti on April 13, 1922:

Их немного... но есть в их-кругу
Человек, у которого-имя! —
И ему я простить не могу,
Что и он очутился меж ними.
Окунулся в болото... К чему?
За советский серебренник, что ли,
Бросил славное имя во тьму
Лицемерия, обмана, неволи?
Неужели писатель, "творец"
В день грядущий проникнуть не может, —
И не видит, что близок конец
И что Генуя "им" не поможет?43

Writing his memoirs in his eighty-second year, Ivan Bunin restated this same unforgiving attitude. "He [Tolstoi] was remarkable in many respects," wrote Bunin,

but what made him a truly astonishing figure was his exceptional lack of moral sense (which after his return to Russia made him an equal of his immoral colleagues, who, like himself, had taken up the profitable career of service to the Soviet Kremlin) .. .44

It is interesting to contrast Tolstoi's feelings with regard to Bunin and Kuprin. In an interview published in the Moscow magazine Zhizn' Iskusstva (The Life of Art) in May 1923, Tolstoi expressed the opinion that these two writers were being held captive by Merezhkovskii, whose negative influence was keeping them out of Russian literature.45 For political reasons, suggested Tolstoi, the two writers had stopped working.46

But in addition to criticisms of Tolstoi's collaboration
which were pouring out of the émigré press in Paris, there was also a demand for an explanation from the émigré establishment. N. V. Chaikovskii, the former supreme commander of the northern government during the British intervention in Murmansk, and P. N. Miliukov, the former foreign minister under Kerenskii, wrote to Tolstoi asking how they were to understand his collaboration with the blatantly pro-Bolshevik paper, *Nakanune*. Tolstoi's response was contained in his "Open letter to N. V. Chaikovskii" which was first printed in *Nakanune* on April 14, 1922, and then in *Izvestiia* on April 25, 1922. For the purposes of this study, the importance of the letter to Chaikovskii lies in its unambiguous testimony to Tolstoi's change of heart towards the Bolsheviks and the new Soviet Russia.

The aim of the paper *Nakanune*, explained Tolstoi, was not to split the émigrés, but to defend Russian *gosudarstvennost'*, (statehood). Further, as members of the *Smena vekh* group, the contributors worked for the restoration of the economy and the reassertion of Russia's *velikoderzhavie* (imperial greatness). The civil war had ended, continued Tolstoi, the Whites had lost, and it was the Bolsheviks who now formed the actual government that protected Russian frontiers, supported Russian interests in Genoa, and guarded Russian unity. In contrast to this reality, the émigrés continued to live under the inertia of past combat, they
persisted in waiting for the collapse of the Bolsheviks, but
time after time the date of that collapse was postponed
until their hopes had degenerated into fantasy. For Tolstoi,
the decision to collaborate with Nakanune was a painful and
difficult one, for he had been on the side of the Whites.
"I hated the Bolsheviks physically," he wrote,

I considered them the destroyers of the Russian
state, the cause of all woe. In those years my two
brothers died; one was cut down, the other died of
wounds. Two uncles were shot, eight relatives died
of disease and famine. My family and I suffered
terribly. I had reason to hate.48

But now violence and terror were in the past and what Russia
needed was rest and quiet, like a patient recovering from a
serious operation. In the process of healing, as NEP was
beginning to show, coarse and radical theoretics was being
replaced with simple empiricism. Blood-letting and vivisec-
tion would stop, concluded Tolstoi, and the form of govern-
ment would reflect the wisdom and the will of the Russian
people. This optimism was the element that formed the core
of Tolstoi's political explanation for joining the Smena
vekh movement.

But Tolstoi offered as well two other reasons for
"changing landmarks." These were, first, the war with
Poland, and next, the famine:

I was among the many, many others who could not
sympathize with the Poles, who had conquered
Russian land; I could not wish for the return of
the boundaries of 1772 nor for the surrender of

48
the boundaries of 1772 nor for the surrender of Smolensk to the Poles. Four hundred years ago in exactly the same situation Smolensk was defended by Shein while a Polish army, also called in by Russians, lay seige to the city. With all my being I wished the Reds victory. What a paradox...

Clearly Tolstoi's change of sentiment with respect to the Bolsheviks was generated by a feeling of the inviolability of Russian borders. Thus, at a time of war between Poland and Soviet Russia, Tolstoi's patriotism drew him towards a reconciliation with the new regime.

Famine was the other consideration which swayed Tolstoi to join the Smena vekh and Nakanune. "The time is ripe for another trial," he wrote,

These are the times of the apocalyptical Russian famine. Russia is dying out. Who is to blame? What does it matter who is to blame, when children's corpses are piled up like stacks of wood at railway stations, or when human flesh is eaten. All, all of us together, collectively share in the blame since long ago. But, of course, some irreconcilables are to be found. The famine is terrible, they say, but we will not reconcile ourselves to the bandits who have usurped power in Russia. We will not allow a single carload of grain to enter Russia if that carload will extend the Bolsheviks' power by a single day. Happily such persons are few. Grain was brought into Russia, and the starving were fed.

A natural and understandable sense of pity for his own people, therefore, also contributed to Tolstoi's decision to return. And since he had now come round to the view that the Russian state had not perished, and the population of Russia was not at all concerned with the question of whether
or not some political group outside of Russia agreed or disagreed with the government in Russia, the émigrés had only three ways, he said, to achieve a common aim: "the preservation and assertion of Russian statehood."

The first was to enlist the aid of a foreign government and invade Russia to force the Bolsheviks out of power. But, Tolstoi, objected, neither is there such a government, nor could further fighting and dying be tolerated by any conscientious Russian. The second choice was an economic boycott of Russia. However, Tolstoi pointed out, that would cause the starving people even greater suffering while the rulers of the country would remain unaffected. The last choice, which would preserve Russian statehood, was simple recognition and resignation to the fact that Russia was ruled by the Bolsheviks. This simple but far-reaching decision offered the émigrés the opportunity to participate in their country's affairs and in some way influence the future course of its development. Therefore, Tolstoi advised the émigrés,

Having recognized this fact, do everything to assist the last phase of the Russian revolution to go in the direction of enrichment of Russian life, in the direction of extraction from the revolution all that is good and just, and to assert that good; to go in the direction of destroying all that is evil and unjust which was also brought in by the same revolution; and finally, to go in the direction of preserving our qualities of a mighty state. I choose this third way.51
Having himself selected the third way, Tolstoi called upon the émigrés not to hide in their Parisian cellars, but to come to terms with political realities, and to come to the aid of the new Russia. He concluded,

And my conscience bids me not to descend into the cellar, but to go to Russia and drive at least one nail into the splintered ship of state. Just as Peter did.\textsuperscript{52}

Of course, the Soviet government was pleased to see such a pronouncement, especially since it came from an established literary figure. When the letter was reprinted in \textit{Izvestiia} it was accompanied by an article entitled "Raskol emigratsii" (A Split Among the Emigrés) which clearly reflected governmental satisfaction.\textsuperscript{53} Tolstoi's letter to Chaikovskii was, in fact, his passport to Soviet Russia. In the spring of 1923, he went alone to Moscow and Petrograd in order to settle personal affairs; then on August 1, 1923, he and his family stepped off the ship in Petrograd to begin once again their life in Russia.

E. Return to Soviet Russia

"The years from 1924 to 1929 were for Aleksei Tolstoi years of formation of a new outlook."\textsuperscript{54} A writer with an established reputation, Tolstoi held great promise for Soviet literature. But these first years were not easy. A former émigré, a follower of the dubious \textit{Smena vekh}, an admirer of the apolitical Serapion Brotherhood, and settling comfortably,
A. N. Tolstoi was quickly noticed, labelled a fellow traveller, and persistently criticized by many enemies. Attacks on him gradually subsided after the dissolution of RAPP, his acquaintance with I. V. Stalin, and his election to the Supreme Soviet as a deputy from Staraia Russa.

Shortly after his return, Tolstoi stated in an interview that he would begin work immediately on two projects: first an adaptation of K. Čapek's play *R. U. R.*, and second, a sequel to the novel he had written in Paris, *Khozhdenie po mukam*. The play, *Bunt mashin* (The Revolt of the Machines) was completed shortly, but the continuation of the epic novel was delayed almost four years because the Soviet authorities found the author's views unacceptable. First of all, Tolstoi still regarded the revolution as a chaotic whirlwind which was indiscriminate in its destruction. But in addition to this, Tolstoi's patriotism, which often reached passionate heights, was completely out of step with the times. Perhaps the best illustration of the sentiment with which he returned to Russia is found in the preface to the 1922, Berlin edition of *Khozhdenie po mukam*:

Blessed be thy name, Russian Land. Great suffering gives birth to great good. Those who have walked the road to Calvary know that life is lived not through evil, but through good: through a will to life, a will to freedom, and a will to charity. Neither for death, nor for destruction is the great Slavic expanse, but for life, for the happiness of a free people.
No, Tolstoi could not write like that in the 1920's. Instead he travelled about European Russia, speaking of the decadent West, of the capitalist world's hatred for the new Russia, and of the demoralized White émigrés. His writings in the first years after his return deal with these same topics and can be found in such stories as "Rukopis naidennaia pod krovat'iu" (A Manuscript Found Under the Bed), and "Ubiistvo Antuana Ribo" (The Murder of Antoine Ribeau), "Chernaiapiatnitsa" (Black Friday), "Mirazh" (Mirage), "Pokhozhdenie Nevzorova ili Ibikus" (The Adventures of Nevzorov or Ibikus), "Soiuz piati" (The Union of Five).

It is tempting to jump to the conclusion that Tolstoi wrote such stories in order to ingratiate himself with the Soviet authorities. But were that the case, then the importance of the Smena vekh sentiments that were so crucial to Tolstoi's reasoning would be completely ignored. To ignore those sentiments would be to insist on suspecting Tolstoi's change of heart with no definite objective support for such a suspicion. We have seen earlier that his emigration and his return were based upon his love for Russia, and while after his return he could not express his often extreme feelings toward his native land, he certainly could continue to express his dislike of the West, in which he was neither alone nor prompted by his pro-Soviet stand. As R. C. Williams has observed, to the Russian émigrés in general the
West, meaning England, France and Germany, was in a moral and cultural decline. Being a Slavophile, Tolstoi felt that Russia, having passed through purifying fires of war and revolution, was morally superior to the West; and the same feelings had always nourished his preference for Russian culture. Thus, any appraisal of his writings must also take into account his strong feelings of nationalism. To a man like Tolstoi, the West had appeared to be "rotten" even before the Bolsheviks came to power and framed an anti-western policy.

But while Tolstoi was writing stories about contemporary conditions abroad, he was also making small jaunts into the recent past. The Russian revolution was reflected in several works before 1928, the year that he completed "1918" — the second part of Khozhdenie po mukam. One of the earliest works in which a great deal of historical documentation was utilized was a play written together with P. E. Shchegolev, Zagovor imperatritsy (The Conspiracy of the Empress). Because the manuscript of the play has been lost, biographers have not been able to determine how much of the play was written by Tolstoi and how much by Shchegolev, but it is generally believed that Tolstoi took the material which his friend provided and then dramatized it. Shchegolev was a historian, and after the February revolution, a member of the Extraordinary Investigating Commission which met to
look into the criminal machinations committed at the Imperial Court. He edited the transcripts of the investigation, which were published in seven volumes entitled Padenie tsarskogo rezhima (The Fall of the Tsarist Regime). At the time of the writing of the play, however, only three volumes of Padenie had been published.

The play had its première in Moscow in January 1925, and it is still staged today. However, this is not to say that it is a good play; rather Zagovor imperatritsyy fulfilled an instructional need by exposing the corruption which surrounded Nicholas II. The playwright received two percent of the receipts from every performance, and since the play was staged in most cities of the USSR, Tolstoi received, to use Alpatov's expression, "sacks of money."

The revolution also serves as the focal point in the stories, "Drevnii put!" (The Ancient Route), written in 1927, and "Gobelen Marii Antuanetty" (The Tapestry of Marie Antoinette), written in 1928.

While gathering material for "1918" in southern Russia, Tolstoi came across some documents and ruins dating back to the period of Peter the Great. This rekindled his interest in Tsar Peter, and in the fall of 1928, just after the completion of the second part of Khozhdenie po mukam, Tolstoi began writing the play Na dybe (On the Rack). Completed in December of that year, the play became the first
of three versions of the play subsequently titled Petr I. Despite the most severe criticism, this first variant of the play remained on the stage until 1934, when Tolstoi replaced Na dybe with a modified version. How did Na dybe survive if it was so severely criticized? "The MKhAT-II production of the first variant of Peter," wrote Tolstoi, "was greeted with bayonets by RAPP critics, but it was saved by comrade Stalin. . ." 57 Indeed, according to R. Ivanov-Razumnik, Stalin was present at the dress rehearsal of Na dybe, and contrary to everyone's expectation he expressed great satisfaction with the play. 58 It may be presumed that Stalin took a liking to Tolstoi from that time. In 1930, for example, when plans were being made for writing a history of the civil war in Russia, Stalin wrote to Gorkii and specifically asked that Aleksei Tolstoi be included among its authors. 59 Then a few years later, as a member of official delegations that had travelled abroad, Tolstoi had the opportunity to meet Stalin at social gatherings. At one such meeting Stalin and Tolstoi exchanged pipes.

As a head of state, Stalin was flattered by any comparison between him and Peter the Great. This may be gleaned from the interview Stalin gave Emile Ludwig. That is why, no doubt, Stalin liked Tolstoi, and allowed Na dybe to play in spite of persistent accusations that Tolstoi was a Russian chauvinist and even a monarchist.
Early in 1929, Tolstoi began writing the novel that was to become one of the classics of twentieth-century Russian literature, *Petr Pervyi* (Peter the First). However, the first installment, which appeared in the July issue of *Novyi mir*, introduced the work as a *povest'*, or story, and no one, not even the author himself, then expected *Petr Pervyi* to expand as it did. Book One was finished in May 1930. In March 1932, Tolstoi made his first jaunt into Europe since his return to Soviet Russia. The purpose of the trip was to visit Gorkii in Sorrento and to make a start on the second volume of *Peter the First*. Correspondence at this time between the two writers reveals nothing but the most cordial relations, and although they were never close friends, Tolstoi appears to have sought Gorkii's professional opinion on several occasions. In any case, Tolstoi did not begin his second volume in Sorrento, but instead rested for three weeks at Gorkii's, and then returned to Russia. However, in his plans for the second volume of the novel, which he began only toward the end of 1932, Tolstoi used some impressions obtained during the trip to contrast a Europe racked by severe economic depression and a Soviet Russia rushing toward industrialization. The second volume of *Petr Pervyi* was completed in April 1934. With the completion of the second part of the novel, however, Tolstoi did not put aside the subject of Peter the Great. By the
end of the year he had produced a new variant of the play
Petr I, and at the same time he had begun work on a scenario
for a film version of Peter the First. In 1935, Tolstoi
wrote the libretto for Iu. A. Shaporin's opera Dekabristy
(The Decembrists).

Tolstoi now faced the problem of the unfinished
trilogy, Khozhdenie po mukam. The epic of the revolution
began to appear as a problem because, in his own words,
"certain historical errors" had crept into the first two
parts. The "errors" to which Tolstoi was referring were
his failure to take note of the role played by K. E. Voroshilov and Stalin in the defense of Tsaritsyn during the
Civil war. The plans for the continuation of Khozhdenie po
mukam at this time show uncertainty and indecision as to how
the novel should proceed. At one point, Tolstoi thought
that the third part would consist of four sections: "Oborona
Tsaritsyna" (The Defense of Tsaritsyn), "Respublika v opas-
nosti" (The Republic in Danger), "Plan Stalina" (Stalin's
Plan), and "Nachalo pobed" (The Beginning of Victories).
Together these four parts would comprise the third volume of
the trilogy, which would be titled "Po koniam!" (Mount Your
Horses!). All these plans came to naught, and having
promised a book dedicated to the twentieth anniversary of
the October Revolution, Tolstoi described the defense of
Tsaritsyn in the book that came to be titled Khleb (Bread),
and which was finished in October 1937.

In addition to his literary work, Tolstoi was active in public affairs as well. At first he was elected to the Soviet of Detskoe Selo in 1933, and a year later he was elected to the Leningrad Soviet. In December 1937 he was elected to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR as a deputy representing Staraia Russa. At the first conference of the Union of Soviet Writers in 1934, he was one of the delegates from Leningrad, and when the conference closed, he was elected to the presidium of the Union.

Between 1935 and 1937 Tolstoi made several trips to Europe to attend international anti-fascist congresses. In the summer of 1935, for example, he was among the delegates to a writers' conference for the defense of culture. He remained abroad for two months, and in addition to attending the conference in Paris, he also visited London, Hamburg and the Netherlands.

That autumn Tolstoi was also among Soviet writers who visited Czechoslovakia. Having seen in Prague Smetana's comic opera The Bartered Bride, he asked a Czech journalist friend to make a Russian translation of the libretto. The translation did not satisfy Tolstoi completely, so in Leningrad he approached V. Rozhdestvenskii and together they rewrote the libretto. The opera had its première on May 31, 1937 in the Leningrad Malyi Theatre.

In 1936 Tolstoi went to another peace congress in
Brussels. Afterwards he visited Paris again and it was on this occasion that he met briefly with Bunin. In his memoirs Bunin mentioned that Tolstoi had asked him to return to Russia, but of course nothing came of it at the time. During that same visit to Paris, Tolstoi also saw A. I. Kuprin and helped to arrange his return to Soviet Russia. After Paris, Tolstoi stopped off in London where he spoke about contemporary Russian literature, and it was on this occasion that he met H. G. Wells and Aldous Huxley. Early in 1937 he was invited to London again, to attend a meeting for "Peace and Friendship with the USSR." On this occasion he met Beatrice and Sidney Webb, George Bernard Shaw, and H. G. Wells again. In the summer of 1937 Tolstoi was off to the second international writers' conference for the defense of culture, hosted this time by republican Spain. The conference met in Valencia and Madrid, but because of the deteriorating military situation it was forced to conclude its session in Paris. This was Tolstoi's last journey abroad.

Tolstoi received several honours in recognition of his literary and cultural services. One of the first awards, presented to him in 1938, was the Order of Lenin for the scenario for the film *Petr I*. In 1939 he was admitted to the Academy of Sciences of the USSR. He received the Stalin Prize (now called the State Prize) for the novel *Petr Pervyi*.
in 1941, and in 1943 for the trilogy *Khozhdenie po mukam*. On his sixtieth birthday, Tolstoi received the Order of the Red Banner.

During the Second World War, Tolstoi had very little time for his own literary work. Just two months after the German invasion, when the first All-Slavic Congress met in Moscow in August 1941, he acted as chairman, and in subsequent meetings of the Congress he was the president of the Russian section. In 1942 he assumed his last governmental appointment as a member of the standing committee investigating Nazi war crimes. Perhaps it is not too surprising that it was during these difficult years of the war that Tolstoi gained his greatest readership. A publicist whose articles appeared in every paper of the Soviet Union, Tolstoi strove in his writings to expand the spirit of patriotism with numerous historical asides. This, his contribution to the war effort, necessarily cut into his literary plans. As a result he managed only to write a two-part play about Ivan the Terrible, and barely to make a start on the third volume of *Peter the First*. In 1944 it became known that he was dying of cancer, and he passed away on February 23, 1945.
CHAPTER II

SHORT STORIES

Before he began his epic about Peter the Great in 1929, Tolstoi had published in the preceding two decades a number of short stories on historical themes. But what influenced him to write as he did and, equally important, what was his purpose in writing these stories? At first he had little seriousness of purpose for his chief motive was, as we shall see presently, one of curiosity about manners rather than historical causes and processes. Then, as we have seen in the preceding chapter, the revolution of 1917 supplanted this superficial interest in the past with a more serious concern about Russia and her future.

By 1919 Tolstoi sought to escape from the gloomy themes engendered by the revolution and the civil war by writing stories of fantasy and the power of love. But this was a period of rapid change, as much for the nation as for the individual, and it was at this time that Tolstoi began to re-examine the social realities he had so far taken for granted. When he resumed his literary career in Soviet
Russia, his pessimistic view of Russian history was replaced with an affirmative one. But, no matter how his views or extraneous influences changed, there remained always one distinguishing feature which was evident from the beginning, and that was his gift for narration. In a letter to the Ukrainian writer M. M. Kotsubinskii in 1910, Gorkii praised Tolstoi's first book of short stories. "I am drawing to your attention," wrote Gorkii, "Aleksei Tolstoi's book in which many of his stories have a winning quality. He promises to become a first rate writer; really."¹

A. Historical Fiction Before 1917.

As has been noted in the preceding chapter, Tolstoi marked the beginning of his prose writing from the summer spent in 1909 at Voloshin's dacha. When Tolstoi arrived there, his host was translating novellas written by the French symbolist, Henri de Régnier. How much Voloshin admired Régnier may be gleaned from the article he wrote in the January, 1910 issue of Apollon in which he heralded the appearance of a new literary synthesis between symbolism and impressionism. The result of such a union Voloshin called neo-realism, and its master craftsman was Henri de Régnier. But, Voloshin added, there were already neo-realist among Russian writers:

In novels and stories by Andrei Belyi, Kuzmin, Remizov, Aleksei Tolstoi, we have already the beginnings of neo-realism, and Henri de Régnier's example will help to orient ourselves.²
Further, Voloshin explained that the most suitable mode of expression in neo-realism is the anecdote, because in just a single stroke it can give the full characteristic of a personality; the anecdote is, he wrote, an instrument of the new realism. Finally, Voloshin pointed out that Régnier's favourite topic is the eighteenth-century French aristocracy with its delicate culture, sad elegance, pastoral gentility, and evening melancholia. In the majority of such writings, however, Voloshin observed that there is little mention of historical or political events; instead the "historical centre" rests on persons whose intimate lives characterized the France of the ancien régime.

Tolstoi, of course, had heard this expounded in the previous summer, and he acknowledged his debt to Voloshin on more than one occasion. For example, in one of his earliest autobiographical sketches, written in 1916, Tolstoi relates:

He was translating novellas written by Henri de Régnier; I was so astounded by them that I wrote three small novellas set in the eighteenth century, stylizing the language and the images. From the start I had found my own style.  

Tolstoi considered his start in prose to be the stories "Sorevnovatel'" (The Rival), and "Iashmovaia tetrad" (The Jasper Notebook). These two stories he wrote at Voloshin's dacha, while the third, initially titled "Poet zloschastnyi" (The Unfortunate Poet), was written a month or two later in St. Petersburg. The influence of Voloshin's
translations of Régnier in these first historical anecdotes is evident from their general eighteenth-century settings; another fact to note is that the title of Régnier's first collection of stories was La canne jaspe or, as it translates into Russian, "Iashmovaia trost'." However, the similarities between Régnier and Tolstoi end here, for whereas the French author wrote in a tone full of hopeless longing for the graceful past, young Tolstoi made a parody of this by inserting amusing twists into his narratives.

Being designed as anecdotes, these short pieces have no elaborate plots, since each describes only a single incident; there is no development of character, and certainly no expression of historical concepts. In fact, Tolstoi offers in his earliest pieces only costume history, and in this respect they may be considered only partially historical fiction.

"Sorevnovatel'" and "Iashmovaia tetrad'" were published together in the almanac Liubov' (Love), in 1909, under the joint title, "Two anecdotes about the same thing." In addition, there was a dedication to K. A. Somov, the painter who drew idyllic scenes from eighteenth-century life. This fact also may explain the satirical humour in Tolstoi's first historical anecdotes, since Somov, who belonged to the Mir iskusstva group, especially liked to idealize in his paintings the life-style of eighteenth-century gentry.
In "Sorevnovatel'" Tolstoi's humour is reminiscent of Gogol', particularly in some passages of lengthy, peripheral information. Consider the following example:

— Я брат, дурак, а ты, брат, вдвоем, но не горю — в люди выведу.

And много значительно помахал трубкой, которая, как и все в дядюшкином дому, была крепка и двусмысленна: ею бивал он бурмистра, осенью однажды расправился на проселочной дороге с тремя мужчинами, и однажды заезжий живописец изобразил его держащим эту трубку, как копье, придав всему виду его отвагу и высокое чувство.4

There is humour as well in the very situation that Tolstoi has set up for his protagonists. Narcissus, a nephew who would like to seduce the pretty Nasten'ka, has airâšâ½val. in his stout uncle Kobelev, a charactonym meaning a He-dog. Bows, sighs, heads carried with a slight tilt to the shoulder, costumes, all reflect the grace in Régnier's stories or in Somov's paintings. Tolstoi, however, adds to this exterior similarity some elements which simply ruin that elegant atmosphere. After an embrace, for example, a guest takes out his handkerchief to dry his cheek; Kobelev twists his moustache and croaks; to demonstrate his agility the uncle rolls up his sleeves to wave a sword at his Narcissus; then he lumbers on his horse, but instead of leaping over a fence, he manages only to knock it down. Then to show his marksman-ship, the pudgy man shoots at a cat sitting on a gatepost, and finally, being at a loss how else to entertain his guests,
Kobelev fires a small brass cannon. But Kobelev loses Nasten'ka to Narcissus anyway.

In "Iashmovaiattetrad": there is a pointed contrast between the strained and artificial melancholia of the nobleman strolling about his well-groomed lawn, and the peasants frolicking naturally in the hay across the pond. In the comical meeting between the saddened gentleman and the simple, gay baba, Tolstoi creates an excellent parody of the pastoral love which was so often depicted in art and literature:

— Верно ли я в загробную жизнь? — воодушевляясь заговорил дворянин. — Ах, никто не знает, что с нами станет после печальной жизни.

Покинув низкое кресло, он заходил по паркету и говорил горячо и много, как никогда, а баба слушала.."

— Давай умрем, умрем вместе, случайная мой подруга, — воскликнул он, наконец, и положил на ее плечи холеные руки.

Баба всплеснулась и заголосила:

— Жалостный ты мой, соколик, ягодка малиновая, сиротка бесталанная.

Брови ее подпрыгивали; лицо расстроилось, один нос не участвовал в общей скорби, вздернувшись как будто еще веселее.

— Умрем, умрем! — лепетал дворянин, и неудер- жимо потянуло его на участливую грудь.

Tolstoi's familiarity with the Russian peasants' language, which later became one of his much-lauded artistic distinctions, is clearly evident in this early anecdote. Not only is there humour in the contrast between the nobleman's artificiality and the baba's naturalness, but their dialogue
is the chief instrument of that contrast. In addition, this dialogue characterizes the two figures perfectly. This second anecdote "about the same thing" concludes with the peasant woman seducing the nobleman, and this too becomes a parody of the works by Régnier and Somov.

"Zloschastnyi" was also written in 1909, but was published in 1910 in a literary supplement to the paper Kopeika. This anecdote is related to the preceding two in that it too parodies Régnier's sad heroes, but without contrasting them with anyone else. The narrative device in "Zloschastnyi" is similar to Gogol's "Nos." An officer, who dabbles in poetry — thus suggesting the original title, "Poet zloschastnyi" — dozes off into a dream. On waking he is relieved to discover that what has happened was only a dream. At the end, the reader is led to understand that the officer only saw a hallucination and that was because the poor fellow had not eaten for three days. The exaggerated feeling of a sad and futile love is abruptly dashed in the concluding sentence with the officer's petition to his father asking for thirty-five roubles.

"Katen'ka," written in 1910, is another love story and in this respect may be considered thematically related to the preceding anecdotes. It was conceived about the same time as the others, that is, in the summer of 1909. In Voloshin's library Tolstoi discovered the memoirs of a P. S.
Runich entitled "Pugachevskii bunt" (The Pugachev Revolt), published in an 1870 copy of Russkaia starina. Tolstoi borrowed from the account Runich's journey to a small and distant fort somewhere in the steppe and his encounter with the fort's commandant. His interest in this account led Tolstoi to borrow also from Kapitanskaia dochka. Somewhat like Grinev in Pushkin's novel, Tolstoi's hero drives into the open fort to find an old veteran soldier knitting a sock; in Grinev's case, the old soldier was sewing a patch on his jacket. There is a further similarity with Pushkin in that the subtitle "From an officer's notes," enabled Tolstoi to narrate his story in the first person. But this is not to suggest that Aleksei Tolstoi wrote like Alexander Pushkin. These are merely external similarities, but they mark a shift away from parodying Régnier to emulating Russian master narrators such as Pushkin. The satiric humour of the previous anecdotes is also absent when mention is made of the joyful anguish of the heart, it is not a comical exclamation, but rather an integral part of the narrator's character.

Although it has been said above that "Katen'ka" is closely related to the preceding anecdotes, this judgment must be limited to their themes. In contrast to the three anecdotes, "Katen'ka," as a short story, has a broader scope and is not confined to a single incident or to one episode.
Moreover, since it is written as a memoir composed by one of the participants in the action of the story, "Katen'ka" marks a further step in Tolstoi's developing narrative technique in historical fiction.

As an excerpt from a memoir, the narrative begins with the date May 18, 1781. But as an adventurous story of how the officer found a faithful wife, "Katen'ka" has few indications of the historical past save references to costumes and manners contemporary to the narrator. Here is one small excerpt from the story:

There follows an intrigue against the poor commandant, a clash of swords, and the winning of the lady's hand. And according to the narrator, they lived happily ever after.

The material for "Portret" (The Portrait), published in 1912, is once more a borrowing from Gogol'. Employing here the first-person style of narration, Tolstoi, however, adds a new twist. First, the author explains to the reader how, while browsing in the private library of the once well-to-do Count Ostaf'ev, he found a serf's diary containing, he discovered, an interesting history of the Count's portrait.
After this introduction, Tolstoi proceeds to read directly from the diary, and in this way the reader has now a story within a story. Such a device, similar to the introduction to Pushkin's "Tales of Belkin," encourages the reader to think that the diary is an authentic historical document. There is dramatic irony in the serf's description of a stranger, in whom the reader recognizes Gogol'. This too adds to the atmosphere of authenticity.

Unlike the memoir "Katen'ka," where a happy past is recalled, the artist's diary reveals his anguish which springs from the knowledge that upon completion of his work in St. Petersburg he must return to his previous bondage. In this way Tolstoi has given a new dimension to his story by unveiling, even though briefly, the inner world of his artist-serf:

Я заснул головой на тетради. Свеча нагорела грибом... В полночь я проснулся, снял со свечи, задул ее и лег, зная, что до утра будут мучить сны. Ведь сколько угодно я могу видеть себя во сне свободным, видеть себя славным другом самого Иванова... Тем хуже будет пробуждение...

On the other hand, a sense of real history is created with the appearance of Gogol'. After he becomes acquainted with the artist's situation, he promises to come again, as he does. Earlier, the reader might have thought that Tolstoi's stranger was rather like Gogol', but after his second visit this becomes perfectly clear. The diarist
continues:

By reproducing the first lines of the original "Portret," Tolstoi identifies the stranger as Nikolai Vasil'evich Gogol' without having to actually name him. But this dramatic irony does not continue for long, and the serf soon discovers his visitor's identity. By means of a clever introduction to the diary, and such a seemingly accidental revelation of a historical personage, Tolstoi offers his readers an imaginary history of how Gogol' came to write his "Portret."

B. The Revolution and Peter the Great.

After "Portret," historical fiction as a part of Tolstoi's writing was put aside temporarily, for having found what he considered to be his own theme, Tolstoi began to concentrate on the Zavolzh'e stories, and similar plays and novels. These are merciless portrayals of contemporary samodur (petty tyrant) types who still populated the Russian provinces. By the time Tolstoi began to exhaust his Zavolzh'e theme, the first World War broke out. Tolstoi saw
battle as a newspaper correspondent, and this experience offered him a temporary topic for his literary sketches. These short pieces reveal a man who admired and sympathized with the front-line soldiers. Moreover, he hoped that the suffering of the war would regenerate Russian society and that this in turn would allow Russia to fulfill at last its Slavophile mission. The inept tsarist regime disappointed Tolstoi in this respect and that is why he welcomed the collapse of the monarchy and hailed the Provisional Government. But the ensuing anarchy and revolution drew Tolstoi to history, and specifically to the topic of Peter the Great. He explained that he was attracted to Peter instinctively rather than consciously because he was seeking at the time "an answer to the puzzle of the Russian people, and Russian statehood."^9

On different occasions Tolstoi gave different dates for the birth of his interest in Tsar Peter. For example, in his last autobiographical sketch, written in 1943, he informed the reader that "In the first months following the February revolution I turned to the theme of Peter the Great."^10 In 1929, however, he gave a different time. "At the end of 1916," he wrote in an article, "Kak my pishem" (How we write);

the late historian V. V. Kallash, having learned of my plans to write about Peter I, provided me with a book. This was Professor Novombergskii's compilations
of notes taken during tortures in the seventeenth century, the so-called "Slova i dela."  

It is interesting to note that Tolstoi said in this article that in 1916 he planned to write a novel about Peter, whereas what he started to write in 1929 was in fact a povest' or novella. With respect to Novombergskii's book, however, it is difficult to underestimate its value to Tolstoi. In recording the exact, or nearly exact, utterances of a poor wretch suspended from a rack, the scribes performed, in a manner of speaking, a major literary task:  

In the transcripts of trials (tortures), the language was precise; there they did not shy away from "lowly" speech. There the popular Rus' told its stories, groaned, lied, howled from pain and fear. The language was clear, simple, exact, picturesque, supple, as if purposely created for great art. I was excited by the discovery of this treasure, and so I decided to try an experiment, and I wrote the story "Navazhdenie" (Delusion).  

Unfortunately, Aleksei Tolstoi frequently neglected to date his manuscripts and this has resulted in a measure of uncertainty as to the exact time of their writing. While both Iu. A. Krestinskii and A. V. Alpatov agree on the order in which the first stories on the Petrine theme were written, they cannot give any specific dates. The accepted order in which the stories are supposed to have been written has been established as "Pervye terroristy," "Navazhdenie," and "Den' Petra." This sequence is suggested by the progressive complexity of each story, "Pervye terroristy" being described
by Alpatov as almost a raw document, and "Den' Petra" as an example of the subtlest literary treatment. Then, judging from the information given in N. V. Krandievskiaia's memoirs, Tolstoi probably wrote "Pervye terroristy" either in the summer or in the fall of 1917. The time of writing of "Navazhdenie" and "Den' Petra," however, is much more difficult to determine.

From what has been established, one must conclude that Tolstoi was in error when he claimed that "Navazhdenie" was his first story since his reading of Novombergskii's book of transcripts. This conclusion is further supported by the account he offered concerning the history of "Navazhdenie":

This story I read at public lectures during my travels about cities in the fall of 1918. But the manuscript was lost and two months later, when preparing a book of stories for publication in Odessa, I recalled the story completely (leaving out just one part of a few lines).13

It may very well be that Tolstoi forgot all about his first "experiment," "Pervye terroristy" since it was published only once during the writer's lifetime. Its second publication occurred only in 1957 in a book dedicated to the works of A. N. Tolstoi.14 "Pervye terroristy" was first published in the Moscow paper Vecherniaia Zhizn' on April 16, 1918. "Navazhdenie," say the editors of the book A. N. Tolstoi: seminarii, was originally published in the magazine
Vozrozhdenie, No. 6, on June 8, 1918. For some reason, though, other Russian scholars ignore this information and state that the first publication of "Navazhdenie" was indeed in the Odessa book of Tolstoi's stories whose title was, incidentally, Navazhdenie: rasskazy 1917-1918 gg. "Den' Petra" was originally published in the Petrograd almanac Skrizhal', No. 1, in July 1918, although it too was included in the book, Navazhdenie: rasskazy 1917-1918 gg.

"Pervye terroristy" carries the subtitle "Izvlecheniia iz del Preobrazhenskogo prikaza" (Excerpts from cases of the Preobrazhensk Office), which reveals at once that the source for this story was Novombergskii's book, Slovo i delo gosudarevy. Although the content of this story is similar to a case found in Slovo i delo it shows, nevertheless, Tolstoi's judicious use of the language. Taking examples of idiomatic speech from a few case histories, he was able to modify the language in such a way that it echoes the historical past, but at the same time remains comprehensible to the contemporary reader. Further, Tolstoi retained to a high degree that impersonal, official style and tone that characterizes the transcripts of the Tsar's secret chancellery:

К приказному дьяку Фокину в Преображенский приказ, что на Любянской, явился садовник Ганка Рябшин, крикнул за собой слово и дело государево, и подал письмо, серой бумаги, подмоченное и помятное.
The letter, which was circulated by a wandering priest, instructed how to rid the country of the Tsar and his Tsarevich, explaining:

Ныне нужно государя извести, а то все будем его холопами, и вольных людей не будет, а вольные люди будут немецкие и голландские, и все мы пропадем.17

After the possessors of the letter were brought to the chancellery, and after the proper tortures were applied to the accused, as well as to the informer, the case was closed:

Братьев Тельных казнить смертью — отрубить головы, а именье их и животы взять в казну. Федосью бить кнутом нещадно и сослать в женский монастырь на год. Изветчика, Ганку Рябишина, наградить и выдать ему пачпорт на все четыре стороны.

Вышеупомянутого же бродячего попа Алексея разыскать, и, найдя законать в кандалы и вести с великим бережением в Преображенский приказ, на коей розыск выдано казенных денег пять рублей и три гривны.18

It is an indication of the author's keen sense of language that "Pervye terroristy" reads like an authentic document. The dated syntax, frequent conjunctions which lengthen sentences, and expressions such as, казнить смертью, животы взять в казну, изветчика . . . наградить и выдать ему пачпорт на все четыре стороны, пять рублей и три гривны, create, by their obsolescence, an atmosphere of a distant past. But it must be stressed that this was not achieved by simply copying from Novombergskii, but rather by carefully blending contemporary Russian with the official style of the
eighteenth-century chancellery.

In Novombergskii's book, the case headed "Delo ob ieromonakhe Sevskogo monastyria Nikadore, prislannom iz Monastyrskogo v Preobrazhenskii Prikaz, vsledstvie ob'iav-leniiia im za soboiu gosudareva dela" (The Case of the monk Nikador from the Sevskii monastery who was brought to the Preobrazhensk office because he had some information concerning the Tsar) was the source for Tolstoi's second story of this period, "Navazhdenie." But unlike "The First Terrorists," this story is narrated in the first person, thus allowing Tolstoi to employ an easy, conversational style. The first-person style of narration also allows him to use the language contained in the transcript, but without that official, impersonal tone. In this manner, the narrator not only relates a story, but also reveals something of himself:

The narrator, a novice monk, relates how once by chance he had met Kochubei, and had become momentarily infatuated with his daughter, Matrena. But although in the narrative there appear such historical personages as hetman Mazepa, Kochubei,
his wife and his daughter, and although they may remind the reader of Pushkin's "Poltava," the historical events associated with these people are moved to the background in Tolstoi's story. By pivoting the plot around the young monk's attraction to Matrena, Tolstoi shifts the emphasis in the document and gives an entirely different treatment to the historical material at his disposal. The following extracts will serve to illustrate how the writer's imagination enhances the "raw document." The first is taken from the actual testimony of the monk in *Slovo i delo gosudarevy*:

... и пришед в Батурина, сели на базаре, на площади, за городом, возле Земляного валу, на скамьях, которые были в торговое время в шинках; и увидя их черкашеник батуринский казак, а имени и прозвища не знает, а узнает в лицо, и пришед к ним спросил: кто они таковы и откуда? И они ему сказались из Севска Спасского монастыря, были в Киеве. И тот де казак позвал их к наказному гетману к Василью Кучубею, а говорил им, что он гетман Кучубей, к странным и прохожим людям миистив и подает подаяние милостыню. И они, по тем словам пришел к Васильеву дому Кучубею, ... 20

Tolstoi takes this material, this simple testimony, and through dialogue converts it into vivid drama:

... чего только нет в Батурине! Век бы так просидел на лавке.

Подходит к нам казак небольшого роста, худощавый: сел рядом на лавку, глядит, ус начал жевать. А вина у нас в склянке еще половина осталась.

—Вы, — спрашивает казак, — не здешние, москали?

Я ему отвечаю тонким голосом, вежливо:

— Совершенно верно; мы из Великой России, странные люди, идем в пещеры, к святителям.
— А вино, — спрашивает казак, — вы почем у шинкаря брали?
Тут ему Никадор отвечает еще слаще:
— На копейку брали, сынок. А ты не токайсь, откушай с нами.
И подает ему вино и рыбью голову пожевать.
Казак до донышка склянку вытянул, стряхнул капли в траву, рыбью голову пожевал и подсел ближе:
— Вижу я, — доподлинно вы люди духовные, обычай у вас не воровской, не тяжелый. Надо бы вам к нашему атаману зайти. Он до странных людей милостив и подает милостыню.
— Что же, если милостив, можно и зайти к атаману, — говорит Никадор. — Собирай, Рубанка, крошки в мешок.21

"Navazhdenie" was hardly altered since its first writing. The title Tolstoi used originally was "Lunnyi svet" (Moonlight), a suggestion perhaps of the story's romantic atmosphere. But in 1918 the author crossed out "Lunnyi svet" and gave the story its present title. In Slovo i delo the two monks delivered Kochubei's denunciation of Mazepa to Moscow, and from Moscow they were transferred for further interrogation to Smolensk. In his manuscript, however, Tolstoi has the monks taken from Moscow to St. Petersburg. Choosing St. Petersburg may mean that Tolstoi was already planning his next story, which was set in the new capital. In any event, when it came to publication, he again changed the locale for the interrogation of the monks to Smolensk.

It has been noted that Tolstoi said that he was drawn to the Petrine period because he saw in it a key to understanding the present, to understanding the Russian people
and Russian statehood. The question then arises: What can be discerned from these two stories: The answer is, as far as "First terrorists" and "Delusion" are concerned, very little, because the two stories represent Tolstoi's interest in the language of the period rather than its history in a broader sense. Nevertheless, the reader can find signs in the stories that point to the author's antipathy to the Bolsheviks. First of all, the very appearance of a story in a paper in April 1918, with a headline reading "First terrorists" must have seemed to many as an obvious allusion to the contemporary situation. There was a further parallel suggested by the reference to the disappearance of freedom for Russians while German and Dutch intruders would become masters. In the spring of 1918, when so much Russian territory was under German occupation, "Pervye terroristy" must have seemed like a close parallel indeed.

In "Navazhdenie" the narrator's personal experiences reveal the dangers and hardships in the time of Peter I. But though he was pressed into the army and cruelly beaten for desertion, he still managed to gain literacy. "В то время можно было из простых в люди выходить, я первую нашивку получил в баталли, когда мы были генерала Левенгаупта," he adds.22 This last admission reflects in a small way the egalitarian element that was present in Peter's reign as well. In the next story, "Den' Petra," Tolstoi paints on a
broader historical canvas with a more clearly expressed parallel with current events.

In an interview given in 1933, Tolstoi explained that his first story about Tsar Peter was patterned after D. S. Merezhkovskii's book, Antikrist (Petr i Aleksei), reminding his audience that there was in "Peter's Day" a heavy concentration on the Tsar's negative traits. It should be pointed out, however, that while Merezhkovskii drew attention to Peter's bad qualities, he did not really deny Peter his attributes as a historical personage. For Tolstoi, though, Merezhkovskii's concept of history was more important, and that was that history moved in cycles and repeated itself. This notion of history repeating itself suited Tolstoi's literary purpose.

To accomplish this purpose Tolstoi could not limit himself to the depiction of the Tsar as, for example, Boris Pilniak did in his story "Ego velichestvo, Kneeb Piter Komondor" which was published in 1919. In his story, Tolstoi broadened the background by raising the pro and contra of the polemic surrounding Peter the Great. This may be seen in the duality of the chief protagonist. On the one hand, Peter is depicted as a cruel and coarse man, but on the other hand, there is a discernible sense of inevitability and even a feeling of historical progress brought to Russia through the efforts of this same Peter.
"Den' Petra," as the title suggests, describes a single day in the life of the Tsar, but the general impression created by Tolstoi is not so much one of a working monarch, but rather one of a selfish and solitary tyrant. Tolstoi frequently interjects into his narrative historical commentaries which generally tend to support the negative image of Peter. And yet there is a substantial difference between Tolstoi's Peter and Pilniak's. That difference is found in the fact that Pilniak refused to concede anything to his central figure, stressing exclusively the Tsar's extremes:

Tolstoi, on the other hand, never goes to the limits reached by Pilniak:

In the dim and low room was heard a snore, hoarse, labored, with groans, with cackling.

The smoke of tobacco, the cold fume and the hard, hot smoke.

Suddenly the snore became lower, grunting, and he stamping, making a snore, and he took a cold, tobacco, fiery and fiery. Fainted, spitting. And the Sleeping beauty lay on the bed in the middle of the bed.

Yet, in the fading light, through the window,


Император, больше всего любивший дебош, женившийся на проститутке, наложнице Меньшикова, — человек с идеалами казарм. Тело было огромным, нечистым, очень потливым, некладным, косолапым, тонконогим, проеденным алкоголем, табаком и сифилисом. С годами на круглом, красном, бабьем лице обвисли щеки, одряхли красивые губы, свисли красные — в сифилисе — тверди, незакрывались плотно, и из-за них глядели безумные, пьяные, дикие, детские глаза, такие же, какими глядит ребенок на кошку, касаясь в нее иглу . . . 23

Толстый, on the other hand, never goes to the limits reached by Pilniak:

В темной и низкой комнате был слышен храп, густой, трудный, с присвистами, с клюкотанием.

Пахло табаком, винным перегаром и жарко натопленной печью.

Внезапно храпевший стал забирать ниже, хрипче и оборвал; захмокал губами, заборматал, и начался кашель, табачный, перепойный. Откашлявшись, плюнуть. И на заскрипевшей кровати сел человек.

В едва забрезжившем свете, сквозь длинное
This introduction to Peter, followed by the obsequious behaviour of his ministers, tends to evoke an unsympathetic impression of the Tsar. But from such a beginning in which Peter's personal qualities appear coarse and unattractive, Tolstoi proceeds to mitigate that impression by listing the many tasks that Peter had to attend to personally. The variety of these tasks suggests to the reader that Peter is the single driving force behind the transformation of Russia. Thus, while Pilniak concentrates his criticism on the Tsar's senseless life, his "playing at Europe," Tolstoi's criticism is much less subjective.

Tolstoi found Peter's motives for reforming Russia questionable, and claimed that he was jealous of the European monarchs whom he had visited. However, Tolstoi also hints at the historical necessity for the changes that Peter introduced:

[Да полно быть в навождении — хотел ли добра России царь Петр?] Что была Россия ему, царю, хозяину, загоревшемуся досадой и ревностью: как это — двор его и скот, батраки и все хозяйство хуже, глупее соседского? [Одобре ли думал хозяин, когда] с перекошенным от гнева и нетерпения лицом прискакал хозяин из Голландии в Москву, в старый, ленивый, православный город, с колокольным тихим звоном, с повалившимися заборами, с калинами и девками у ворот, с китайками, индийскими, персидские купцами у кремлевской стены, с коровами и дранными попами на площадях, с премудрыми боярами,
The picture that Tolstoi conjures up is such that the reader feels some sympathy for Peter's desire to convert his old, Orthodox, ragged Russia into a neat, clean, and civilized Holland. But by posing such rhetorical questions as, "Did Peter wish Russia well?" and "What was Russia to him, the tsar, the master?" Tolstoi also suggests that Peter did not love the country whose lot it was to fall into his hands. It is worthy of note that the published version of the passage quoted above has deleted several of the phrases which tended to make Peter appear in a grimmer light. Thus the question of whether or not Peter loved the country he ruled is made less poignant without affecting the central issue: did Peter's revolution accomplish any good? Tolstoi answers in the negative. Using Pushkin's metaphor, "The axe of the tsar cut a window onto Europe," he adds that it was cut "through the very bones and flesh of the people," thus sacrificing their welfare to the interests of the state. But Peter's efforts resulted in failure:

но все же случилось не то, чего хотел гордый Петр; Россия не вошла, нарядная и сильная, наперсницей великих держав. А подтянутая им за волосы, окровавленная и обезумевшая от ужаса и отчаяния, представила новым родственникам в жалком и неравном виде — рабою́
It was a noble effort, concludes Tolstoi, but it was doomed to failure because Peter had assumed "a superhuman task: one for all." The Tsar's opposition to the people is highlighted by the scene of Varlaam's interrogation in the Secret Chancellery. The old-believer, who was telling the people that Peter was an impostor and the Antichrist, when asked by the Tsar to name his friends, could only reply, "All Russia is my friend."

Here again, language is an important means for recreating the historical past. By manipulating language, particularly the direct speech of peasant labourers, Tolstoi is able to demonstrate the hostility of the people toward Peter:

Толстой provides another sample of linguistic history by inserting a couple of Peter's own proclamations:

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И сколько бы не гремели грозно русские пушки, повелось, что рабской и униженной была перед всем миром великая страна, раскинувшаяся от Вислы до Китайской стены. [Во главу империи легли ненависть, кровь, и рабство.]28

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Толстой provides another sample of linguistic history by inserting a couple of Peter's own proclamations:
This invitation to a ball and an ordinance concerning behaviour in the presence of the sovereign may be at once recognized as written in the official, bureaucratic language of the Petrine period.

Although Tolstoi presents Peter's strength of will and tremendous energy as commendable qualities, his final judgment in "Peter's Day" remains critical and accusatory. Peter's sweeping reforms appear in the story as iconoclastic policies with anti-national features. The people, as they are presented in Tolstoi's interjections, appear practically as guardians of those national characteristics that the Tsar wishes to destroy.

In this story Tolstoi did much more than simply relate a day's activity in the life of Tsar Peter. By choosing St. Petersburg at the time of its construction, he succeeded in emphasizing the extreme hardships that had become the lot of the Russian people. In trying to explain the background and the cause of these hardships and sufferings, Tolstoi attempted a broad generalization of life during the reign of Peter the Great. He addressed the reader directly by means of a series of rhetorical and often emotionally-charged questions which could just as easily be applied to what was happening in Russia in 1918. In this
fashion, Tolstoi drew a parallel between Peter's destruction of Muscovite Rus' and the Bolshevik destruction of the Russian state.

C. Stories of Fantasy:

"Sinitsa" (The Titmouse) is another story that was written about the same time as the preceding one. Dedicated to his wife, "Grafine N. V. Tolstoi" (she had recently given birth to a son, Nikita), "The Titmouse" is a story of a mother's love and sacrifice for her beloved son. It was published for the first time in 1918, in book one of the magazine Epokha.

This is unusual as a piece of historical fiction for two reasons. It is the only one Tolstoi wrote in which the story takes place in Kievan Rus', and it is told in a style reminiscent of an oral folk tale, or skazka, as it is called in Russian:

В тереме зачала Наталья и родила хозяину сына Заряслава. Было ему ныне три зимы и три лунных месяца. Любил князь жену и сына и шумного слова им не сказал во всю бытность.

The architectural description, with words such as "terem." "svetlitsa," the names of the prince and the boy, and the
manner in which his age is given, all suggest the Kievan period. But as in a fairy tale, historical elements recede and elements of the _Skazka_ dominate in "Sinitza." The narration is terse, interspersed with bits of dialogue. Tolstoi also weaves elements of the supernatural into the realistic fabric of the story. As a loving mother, Princess Natal'ia suffers three deaths for the sake of her son. First she dies in an attack on the town by the Chud'. Then, in order to bring Prince Churil back from the hunt quickly so that he may rescue their son, the Princess' spirit is transformed into a deer, and the animal sacrifices itself to Prince Churil. Finally, to be near her son, the spirit enters a titmouse, but the bird too is accidentally killed, and by her own Zariaslav, much to his grief.

In Odessa, where he had fled in the summer of 1918, Tolstoi returned to the theme of revolution only in the play _Smert' Dantona_ (The Death of Danton). He also wrote the play _Liubov'—— kniga zolotaia_ (Love Is a Golden Book), the plot of which is based on an anecdote taken from the time of Catherine the Great. During the same period, Tolstoi made a start on another play which was to be titled "Graf Kaliostro" (Count Cagliostro), but it was completed as a short story in Paris, in 1921. Initially titled "Lunnaia syrost'" (Moonlit Dampness), it was first published in Berlin in 1922. Like the play _Liubov'—— kniga zolotaia_, this story is built upon
an anecdote taken from the latter half of the eighteenth
century, and reflects once more the social and costume
history of that period. It is possible that the source for
this story was again the magazine Русская старина, which
had already been used by Tolstoi for "Katen'ka." In this
case, the account of the Italian charlatan's success among
the aristocracy of St. Petersburg was related in issue No.
12 for 1875. The satiric humour found in Tolstoi's first
anecdotes re-emerges in this story. Like the earlier anec-
dotes, it has an idyllic setting: the estate of the young
Aleksei Alekseevich Fediashev, which has a park, a pond with
islands, fountains, and peasant girls dancing. But the
deliberately inept descriptions of the estate reveal a
mocking attitude towards such un-Russian surroundings:
Кроме того, в различных уголках парка можно было наткнуться на
каменную женщину со стрелой. Толстой deliberately uses
such unsophisticated expressions to reflect the provincial,
or stock Russian's incomprehension of these foreign adorn-
ments. Similarly, the mansion appears every bit as comfort-
able and stately as anything existing in France, but when
Fediashev looks out the window of his library he sees a
typically domestic scene:

За окном, куда он смотрел со скукой, на дворе,
поросшим кудрявой травой, стоял рыжий теленок
и сосал у другого теленка ухо.

The contrasts; the general tone; and the choice of
words all suggest the author's preference for native Russian simplicity over affected Gallic pretensions. For example, Fediashev's aunt addresses him by his French name "Aleksis," even though she speaks no French. For this reason, too, she does not understand at first who their guest is. Fediashev then proceeds to explain:

— В том-то и дело, что не Фенин, а граф Феникс, — сам Калиостро.

Федосья Ивановна широко раскрыла глаза и всплеснула пухлыми руками. Но Федосья Ивановна была русская женщина, и поэтому известие, что в доме их — знаменитый колдун, поразило ее с иной стороны: тетушка вдруг плонула.

— Бусурман, нехристь, прости господи, — сказала она с омерзением, — всю посуду теперь святой водой мыть придется и комнаты святить заново... Вот, не было заботы...34

"Graf Kaliostro," as may be observed from the above excerpt, is full of dramatic elements which add greatly to characterization. The scope of historical descriptions, however, is limited to costumes and manners, and the mention of a few contemporary historical figures. Cagliostro, though himself a real historical personage, is endowed with supernatural powers, and this mixture of reality and fantasy further relegates history to the background.

D. "Povest' smutnogo vremeni"

In the next story, first published by Gelikon (Moscow-Berlin) in 1922, Tolstoi returned to broad historical depictions. Originally titled "Kratkoe zhizneopisanie blazhennogo
Nifonta" (Brief Biography of the Blessed Nifont), it was renamed "Povest' smutnogo vremeni (Iz rukopisnoi knigi kniazia Tureneva)" (A Story of the Time of Troubles: From the Notebook of Prince Turenev). The first title was deemed inappropriate because the story is only partially a zhitie, or vita, of the "Blessed Nifont," while the greater portion is devoted to Turenev's descriptions of the Time of Troubles, or the smuta. By using Prince Turenev in this manner, Tolstoi reverts to the first-person style of narration, and the proximity of the narrator to the events described helps to create what Gorkii called "the psychology of the epoch."  

In his seventies, Prince Turenev resolved to put down in writing all that he had heard and seen of the smuta as a boy. As the personal account of a fictitious nobleman, the "Povest'" moves within a restricted perimeter, but from the beginning of the smuta to the enthronement of the first Romanov, that perimeter is frequently penetrated by Naum (Nifont's name before he became a monk), and by well-known events of the period: the appearance of the first False-Dimitrii, the death of Boris Godunov, the second False-Dimitrii, the Polish occupation of Moscow, and finally the end of the smuta and the election of Tsar Mikhail. Much of that history unfolds in the background, but Prince Turenev gives concise and dramatic summaries of events as they had occurred. In addition, such summaries give a sense of the
Although there is no difficulty in understanding the vocabulary used in the narrative, there is nonetheless a definite feeling that the narrator is from the distant past. Short sentences, uncommon syntax, together with grammatically obsolete expressions like царевичевы тайные послы, dated expressions such as со всем войском передался, as well as such vernacular phrases as сулили великие милости, удалили в набат, and скинули царя help to create a convincing atmosphere from the past.

Historical personages are, however, confined to the background because they are not in the social circle which would have been accessible to the boy Turenev. Historical commentary, on the other hand, is offered as hindsight by the narrator and is interesting because it reveals the spiritual despondency and subsequent regeneration of Russia in the first decade of the seventeenth century.
What is also interesting about this excerpt is that it seems to be reiterating the *sмена век* belief that despite catastrophes Russia can survive. There is, too, a direct link between "Povest' smutnogo vremeni" and the ending of the first volume of *Khozhdenie po mukam*. There Telegin opens at random S. M. Solov'ev's history of Russia and reads a passage that coincides with the events described by Prince Turenev. It is worth noting here that Tolstoi's friend, the historian V. V. Kallash, who had recently edited a six-volume history of Russia from the Time of Troubles to the twentieth century, also believed that the *smuta* was a kind of watershed dividing old "Asiatic" Rus' from the new "European" Russia. This was very much the view of Tolstoi too, who believed at that time — that is, when he was living in Berlin — that the revolution marked the end of old tsarist Russia and the beginning of a new one.

Tolstoi's source materials were not only histories of Russia. He also drew from the folk-lore repertoire of the
skomorokhi or peasant minstrels. Tolstoi's rendition of a ditty is taken from I. Zabelin's _Domashnii byt russkikh tsarei_ (Domestic Life of the Russian Tsars). The rendition displays the writer's ability to use language for added historical colouring. Naum, who had joined the skomorokhi, gives the newly-elected Tsar Mikhail a summation, a commoner's view of the devastation wrought in the preceding years. Speaking as if he were an eligible bride, the skomorokh Naum lists what remains of his dowry:

Rhyme and the repetition of words and sounds creates a musical quality reminiscent of the poems often sung during the late Middle Ages by the skomorokhi.

Although Tolstoi draws a general picture of the turbulent first decade of the seventeenth century, the story about Naum gives the narrative unity and cohesion. At the beginning of his notes, Prince Turenev explains:

Положил я все же начать труд грешный и начинаю неторопливым рассказом о необыкновенном житии блаженного Нифонта.
In the body of the narrative Naum surfaces periodically in a variety of roles. At first he appears to the reader as a wandering priest from Kolomna, then as an agitator supporting the False-Dimitrii, and later as a cossack opposing him. When the Time of Troubles passes, Naum joins the skomorokhi. "Povest'" concludes with Naum being sent to a monastery where his spirit is completely transformed, and the former village priest, the rabble-rouser, the patriotic cossack, the peasant buffoon becomes a monk, the blessed Nifont, whose tranquil, tall, thin and icon-like image resembles very much the picture of Russian spirituality as portrayed in the paintings of M. V. Nesterov:

In 1927, "Povest' smutnogo vremeni" was mentioned again in Gorkii's correspondence. Writing to A. P. Chapygin in May of that year, Gorkii praised Tolstoi's story by contrasting it with historical fiction written by such émigrés as M. A. Aldanov, D. S. Merezhkovskii, and S. R. Mintslov:

But the little thing by Aleksei Tolstoi, "The Life of the Blessed Nifont" contains more artistry and
Gorkii did not remember the correct title of Tolstoi's story, but he did retain, it appears, a general impression that could not be matched by the writings of the émigrés. He also noted in the same letter that in Merezhkovskii's book about ancient Egypt and the pharaoh Tutankhamon the characters speak as if they had just stepped out of the Arbat quarter of Moscow. In contrast, Tolstoi's story maintains historical atmosphere through a unity between historical background and the language of the past. The descriptions and comments, as they are presented by Tolstoi's narrator, Prince Turenev, reveal the historical past in a physical as well as a spiritual context. This is accomplished by means of an impartial narrator whose viewpoint remains throughout the story that of an observer rather than a participant. "Povest' smutnogo vremeni" remains a good example of the proper balance between content and language which makes it, as Gorkii suggested, an exemplary historical short story.

E. Stories Written in Soviet Russia.

It is all the more surprising, therefore, that in the next two stories this delicate balance is upset. Written in 1927 and 1928, "Drevnii put" (The Ancient Route), and especially "Gobelen Marii Antuanetty" (The Tapestry of Marie Antoinette), strive to express a Marxist view of the
historical process. 

"Drevnii put!" is based in part on Tolstoi's recollections of his sailing from Constantinople to Marseilles. The story describes visions from ancient history seen by a French officer, Paul Taurain, as he sailed from Odessa to Marseilles. Wounded and gravely ill after serving with the French forces sent to intervene in the Russian Civil War, Taurain begins to ponder on the futility and foolishness of wars which, it seems to him, have been the scourge of western man ever since the beginning of civilization. By following his thoughts, Tolstoi is able to switch easily from scenes aboard the Carcovado to scenes in Paul Taurain's mind without disrupting the natural flow of the story. As the ship glides past Asia Minor, Taurain gets up from his couch and gazes at the low shore, the mountains of Phrygia, the mounds where Hector and Patrocles perhaps lie buried, and the shore where once the Achaean ships drew up. On that plain, thinks Taurain, stood Troy. Having pointed out the landscape that the Frenchman saw, Tolstoi then proceeds to construct the vision that appeared in the officer's mind:
Here Tolstoi draws a lively colourful scene full of sounds, the scene of a market outside the walls of ancient Troy. The feeling of the past is suggested by the many names of people and places from the ancient world: the Sclavs, Phracia, Hittites, Byzacium, Phrygians, Lydians, Phoenicians. These names and such objects as chariots and slaves do not, however, convey a deep feeling of the past because the central figure of the story proceeds to give the history of Troy an ideological rather than a Homeric interpretation. The impoverished Greeks were envious of the wealth that went to Troy and so for economic reasons they decided to raze the city. As everyone knows, thinks Taurain, there is nothing easier than to find a pretext for war, and so Helen was dragged in, Achilles was promised half of the booty, and thus began the chronicle in hexameters of three thousand years of European history. There is a note of cynicism as well in the observation that the ancients at least were not hampered by the hypocrisy found in contemporary books about humanism.

Tolstoi aimed some cynical remarks at the émigré passengers as well, among whom were singled out prostitutes,
White Guard criminals, a Polish card shark, the family of a
former sugar magnate, and a man who was previously involved
in public affairs:

BbinOJI3
H3
HpiOMa  pycCKHH  OSlHeCTBeHHblH
 fleHTeJTB,
 aHrjio

B
neHCHe,
cpacipenaHHOH.
SoponoH, r,n.e

3acejia.  cojiMa,
—
CTaji HaBOflHTb naHHKy, flOKa3bi-
Bafl
, ^TO
cpeflH 3yaBbB.— nepeoneTbie. areHTbi leKa
H
He MHHOBaib.  norpoMa.  HHTexuiHreHTiiHH  Ha. nKapKOBano" .43

The man who "crept" out of the hold could be at once known
as an anglophile, Tolstoi suggests, by the mere fact that he
had a place in public life, and was thus an anglophile by
definition, as it were. The straw in his beard, which is
repeatedly used as an identifying feature, also reveals the
author's contemptuous attitude toward such superfluous
intellectuals with apparent narodnik, or populist, leanings.

The presence of these émigrés on board is used by
Tolstoi to link the present with the recent past. Calling
to mind his own experiences in Russia during the interven-
tion, Paul Taurain comes around to the view that somewhere
along the way history made a wrong turn and from there it
has continued to follow a path which leads to an abyss; and
he has been an unwitting servant to those who are leading
Europe to destruction. Paul remembers being asked by a
Bolshevik:

— Зачем же ты на их стороне . . . ? Они отправили
тебя газом, заразили лихорадкой, пронзили твою
грудь. . . . Они растопили все святыни. . . .
Проведи рукой по глазам, сними паутину веков. . . .
Pроснись... Проснись, Поль...44
The new social order introduced in Russia will break the vicious circle in which European history has been confined; such is the moral of this story where the dark past and the promise of a bright future are juxtaposed.

"Gobelen Marii Antuanetty"," written in 1928, follows the structural pattern of the preceding story; that is, its beginning and its end are set in the present while the central portion of the narrative is set in the past. This central part concerns the history of the tapestry, which originates in France on the eve of the revolution in 1789 and eventually came to a museum in Detskoe Selo. Once more the story is told in the first person, but this time Tolstoi chooses to make the narrator an inanimate object, the tapestry itself.

Though the tapestry is decorated with a portrait of Marie Antoinette, it does not speak with the queen's voice, nor in the style of any past age. Perhaps because it has been looking upon people dressed in sheepskin coats, felt boots, and kaftans, the narrator's account sounds very much like a pamphlet prepared for proletarian visitors to the museum. The discrepancy between the speaker and its language forms the major flaw in this story.

The tapestry recalls how on the eve of the French revolution Marie Antoinette was "noyatiablonxorxaxa" in playing a milkmaid on her toy farm in Versailles. Louis XVI
prayed that an "удачная война вернет истраченные богатства." The narrator also remembers the revolution, Robespierre, and the Reign of Terror but, adds the speaker woven into the tapestry, "буржуа автоматились, хуже редкой им надоели революции!" A century later, when presenting the tapestry to the Empress Alexandra, the French president shuffled about, "поскрывайтесь в буржузным сапожках." From the wall in the Aleksandrovskii palace, the narrator could observe the dull life of the Tsar and his family and their occasional visitors:

Кроме как по делу, у них мало кто бывал: придет любимая фрейлина, поцелует ручку; или позвонит по телефону, попросится приехать один бродяга из бывших конокрадов, духовный мужичок: явится — в поддевке, в лаковых сапогах, — поцелуется со щеки на щеку, сядет и врет, что в голову влезет, щуря продувные зенки, а царь и царица молитвенно глядят ему на масленую бороду, не смеют моргнуть.

By using such a tone, which reminds us very much of the skaz technique, Tolstoi wishes to convey the history that the portrait had witnessed, but the link between the portrait of Marie Antoinette and its message remains unconvincing. The moral of the story, contained in the last sentence, is, according to present-day Soviet critics, to show a revolutionary continuity in the historical process. In the words of a museum guide as she leads a group to the tapestry:

„А это образец продукта крепостного производства,
But Tolstoi's narrator is inexplicably class-conscious and omniscient, a fact that creates, in addition to the incongruity between the language and the speaker, a further imbalance between realism and fantasy.

In another story, Tolstoi returned once more to the theme of Peter the Great. In the summer of 1928 he began writing Na dybe (On the Rack), which was to become the first of three variants of the play about Peter. One scene taken from the play was reproduced as a separate work and was published in 1931 in a volume of Tolstoi's short stories. But this story, "Marta Rabbe," was probably written before Tolstoi began writing the novel Petr Pervyi in February 1929.

The author's fantasy coupled with his skillful use of language creates a sense of the past and provides the reader with a plausible account of how Menshikov's mistress, Marta Rabbe, became the first empress of Russia, Catherine I.

Although the story is free of the rhetorical style of "Deni' Petra," the description of the Tsar reminds one of the characterization attempted in 1918:

Петр подселовал Меньщикова в губы крепко, и как был в нагольном растегнутом кожане поверх каftана, в финской морской шапке, сел к столу. Светлые чулки и башмаки его в грязи, руки — в смоле. Круглое лицо, с маленьким твердым носом, с очень маленьким ртом и выдающимися желваками с боков рта, обветренно и шершаво. Он сейчас же налил стакан вина, не разбирая какого, выпил, кривнул и обернулся.
As in the earlier story, here too the Tsar is portrayed as a dirty and coarse man. But Tolstoi is interested not so much in Peter or his reign as in describing one incident in his private life. Since this story was lifted directly from a play, a large portion of it is given in dialogue, which becomes an important means of characterization. For example, just before Peter makes his appearance, Menshikov, his unscrupulous confidant, instructs his mistress to flirt with the Tsar:

— Царю хотите подсунуть?
— А хотя бы так... Что в этом худого?

У Марты руки вылетели из-под передничика. Уперлась в кругое бедро.

— Господин граф, быть вашей роже битой... Как-никак, а уж этого стерпеть невозможно: маршала быть по роже, победителя шведов и лифляндцев, первого российского графа!

— Быть моей роже битой? Уж не тобой ли?

(Педошеловплотворваорал.) — в подполье посажу не цепь!

— Иного от вас и ждать нечего, — и ждать нечего от того, кто пирогами торговал...

Marta's provocative stance and the coarse language used by both reveal their callous and self-indulgent personalities. Menshikov's machinations succeed to a large extent, for Peter becomes attracted to Marta. Returning from the bedroom where she has left the Tsar, Marta walks up to Menshikov and slaps him hard across the face. Menshikov at first turns red with rage, but quickly understands; bowing
low he takes Marta's hand and kisses it,

как будто перед ним стояла уже не Марта Рабе, а Екатерина Алексеевна, императрица всероссийская.49

The entire story is built around this one incident: it concludes with the above tableau. Although there are no historical problems posed in "Marta Rabbe" as there are in "Den' Petra," this story has value as an étude which stands as a bridge joining the theme of Peter I in drama to Peter I in the novel.

* * * * * * *

Tolstoi began writing historical fiction at a time when he was making a transition from poetry to prose. He was encouraged in this move by his friend M. Voloshin, who offered him Henri de Régnier as a writer to emulate. Régnier's stories revealed to Tolstoi a form which led him to use language in such a way that it reflected the period, setting and character. He also used language to contrast the stilted speech of the provincial gentry of the eighteenth century with the natural simplicity of the speech of peasants. In this way Tolstoi's first anecdotes were in fact parodies of the depiction by Régnier and K. A. Somov of the pastoral life of the nobility. Tolstoi was able to reproduce the outward appearance of that idyllic life, but by contrasting it with the simplicity of the stock Russian character, he made a parody of Régnier's and Somov's portrayals.
The use of first-person narration in "Katen'ka" and "Portret" allowed Tolstoi to reflect the viewpoint of the narrators. Writing as if he were reproducing extracts from memoirs and diaries, he was able to add, to the external descriptions of the past, elements which also revealed the mental state of the narrators.

The events of 1917 with which the Russian Empire ended made Tolstoi seek in the historical past analogous situations which could tell him something about the people and the Russian state. In the enormous changes, indeed, in the revolution forged by Peter the Great, he saw a parallel to the contemporary revolution. At the time of his writings on Peter, Tolstoi relied heavily upon the records of the Secret Chancellery which were compiled by Professor Novombergskii in his book *Slovo i delo gosudarevy*. Thus, the circumstances that motivated him to write, plus his chief source of material, combined to leave a negative impression of Peter. On the other hand, *Slovo i delo gosudarevy* further aided Tolstoi in his use of the Russian language as an instrument for conveying a sense of the past.

In "Den' Petra," Tolstoi expanded the historical scope by interjecting rhetorical questions throughout the narrative. Together with the portrayal, these questions served to strengthen the negative impressions of the Tsar and of his reign. In "Povest' smutnogo vremeni" he reverted
to the first-person style of narration. As a witness to the events described, the narrator makes the reader see and feel all his hardships and sufferings without direct commentary by the author. As an excerpt from a notebook written by a man who had lived through the Time of Troubles, the story is presented in a language which evokes that period. Descriptions of crowds and individuals as well as the narrator's personal remarks are all expressed in a manner that reflects the confusion and chaos and, as Gorkii so aptly put it, "the psychology of the epoch."

Tolstoi also introduced elements of the fantastic into some historical stories. Styling "Sinitsa" as an oral folk tale, the events of which take place in the Kievan Rus' period, he successfully reproduced a skazka with a mixture of realism and supernatural. A mother's spirit which enters a titmouse in order to be close to her son is perfectly acceptable in this genre.

"Graf Kâliostro," like the earliest stories, is built around an elaborate anecdote. Though the Count was a real person, this story too contains an element of the supernatural. Nonetheless, the narrative remains within the framework of the period, thus creating an impression of Russia in the time of Catherine the Great. In "Gobelen Marii Antuanetty," Tolstoi, perhaps to appease his RAPP critics, abandoned all restraints of historical fiction, and
made an inanimate object created in the past speak in the direct, conversational manner of an omniscient narrator of the twentieth century. Moreover, the skaz technique of narration seems wholly inappropriate for the French queen's portrait, thus only adding to the incongruity of the situation in the story. Far more successful is "Drevnii put'" in which Tolstoi tried to create a politically-oriented attitude. Using a disillusioned French officer as his central figure, Tolstoi followed his stream of consciousness to illustrate the view that economic greed in western civilization was bringing Europe ever closer to the brink of disaster. It could be averted, on the other hand, by following the example set by the Bolsheviks in Russia.

Tolstoi's historical fiction shows a discernible progression from simple anecdotes to more sophisticated narratives such as "Povest' smutnogo vremeni." By 1928, he felt that he had gained sufficient experience in conveying a convincing feeling of the past and that he could embark upon a historical novel. As Maksimilian Voloshin had described Régnier's La Canne jaspe as a musical overture to the novels that followed, so these stories by A. N. Tolstoi may be also regarded as an overture to what was to appear in a major genre.
CHAPTER III

THE NOVEL PETR PERVYI

Роман Алексея Толстого "Петр Первый" бесспорно является не только одним из крупнейших литературно-художественных достижений советского периода, но и одним из замечательных созданий всей русской художественно-исторической литературы вообще.

— Д. Д. Благой.

A. The Hero in a Historical Novel.

In this chapter some qualities that make the novel Petr Pervyi an outstanding piece of Soviet historical fiction will be discussed. The general features of a historical novel have been mentioned earlier, but since historical novels also involve historical personalities, we need to say a few words about their role in the novel.

As Georg Lukacs has observed, before Sir Walter Scott there existed literature which cannot be considered truly historical fiction but rather a literature of romantic hero worship in which history served only as an external theme and dress. The manners, psychology of the characters, the general atmosphere reflected more the writer's period than anything from the past. The standards for a modern historical novel have been established by Scott, in whose works the
central character has been assigned a special role.

History is comprised of a series of critical periods that find their resolution in compromise or a middle way, explains Lukacs, and Scott uses these select periods in history to demonstrate that compromise. Ivanhoe, for example, is a device for reconciliation between the Saxon and Norman elements that populated England in the Middle Ages. Historical atmosphere is achieved through a description of Ivanhoe's sympathies as they fluctuate between one and then another antagonistic element. Thus, in the pattern for a historical novel that Scott had established, the middle way can be best illustrated by a fictional hero. The fluctuations must end, however, and produce a general movement which is concentrated within a historical personality which plays the role of standard bearer. For this reason Sir Walter Scott reduces a historical personality to a secondary character in the novel. Lukacs explains it in this way:

The broad and many-sided picture of an epoch, its very essence can only be extracted from the depths of life, and its external appearance may be drawn only through portrayals of everyday life of a people, through the joy and grief, the fluctuation and stormy experience of "average" people. An outstanding and historically leading personality who expresses the mainstream of social thinking, of necessity must be expressed as an abstraction.

Another obvious reason why a novelist would choose a fictitious character for his hero is that the reader is usually acquainted with the historical events described in
the book. Therefore, to make the plot more absorbing for the reader, the writer makes the chief protagonist an unknown entity whose fate depends entirely upon the author's imagination.

In contrast to such a scheme, Aleksei Tolstoi's *Petr Pervyi* is a historical novel in which the main character is the monumental figure of Peter the Great. And whereas Scott's formula prescribes that a historical personality play a passive role, Tolstoi gives Tsar Peter an active part to play in the unfolding historical events. In part, of course, Tolstoi was in agreement with Scott's principle when he expressed the view that a historical personality acts as an instrument of an epoch. The Russian novelist believed that certain qualities of a person appear in response to special demands posed by a particular period in history. However, and here lies the chief difference from the general historical novel, Aleksei Tolstoi dares to assume "A tremendous venture to write of the intimate thoughts and experiences of the great... to guess at the motives of their actions." This is accomplished in *Petr Pervyi* by building on a skeletal structure of facts detailed but fabricated episodes that actually complement the historical facts. "Can one 'invent' a biography for a historical person?" asked Tolstoi. "Absolutely," he proceeded to reply. "But it must be done credibly so that if in fact it did not happen,
then it should have happened."⁵ For this reason, in *Petr Pervyi* Tolstoi pays much more attention to the Tsar as an individual than as a statesman. In addition, the reforms which most attract Tolstoi's notice are far more important for their dramatic effect than for their historical significance. Thus, decrees governing changes in the fashion of dress, civil manners, and shaving beards become more important than any other reforms. In this respect *Petr Pervyi* must stand out as a historical novel because the Tsar occupies the central position in the narrative. There is, of course, another famous novel where Peter also occupies a leading role and that is D. S. Merezhkovskii's *Antikhrist (Petr i Aleksei)* about which more will be said shortly.

B. Peter the Great in Russian Literature.

Peter the Great occupies such an important place in Russian history because he played so decisive a role in transforming mediaeval Muscovy into Russia, a modern state that has continued, ever since his time, to play a part of the first consequence in world affairs. "Certainly no historical theme is for us more significant," wrote B. H. Sumner in *Peter the Great and the Emergence of Russia*, than the double transformation that has taken place — of Muscovy into Russia and of Russia into the Soviet Union, a transformation linked indissolubly both by contemporaries and by posterity with the names of Peter the Great and Lenin.⁶
Indeed, Peter's reforms were so radical, they brought about such irreversible changes to Russia and Russian life in general, that they may be justly considered a revolution from above. This period of enormous change, some three decades of Peter's reign, has attracted men of literature from Peter's time to our own. However, in the three centuries that separate us from Peter, only two authors, D. S. Merezhkovskii and A. N. Tolstoi, have made the Tsar the central figure of their respective novels. Other novelists introduce Peter into their works only as a secondary character, albeit an important one.

Furthermore, literary attitudes towards Peter the Great fluctuate between monarchist idealizations and post-revolutionary class-conscious ridicule. Only Aleksandr Pushkin's Istoria Petra I stands as an exception to these two extreme views of Peter, and the writer whose portrayal of Peter I is closest to Pushkin's is Aleksei Tolstoi himself.

Peter's contemporary, Feofan Prokopovich, was the first man of letters to support the Tsar in his efforts to bring change to Russia. In his drama Vladimir, Prokopovich seemed to suggest a parallel between Kiev's Prince Vladimir, who by introducing Byzantine Christianity to Russia had brought progress and learning to his realm, and Tsar Peter, who by introducing European industry and science to Russia
brought the country into the mainstream of European life. In the same vein, the writer of the heroic epic of "Petr Velikii," M. V. Lomonosov, enhanced the central figure by giving Peter titanic features, positive personal qualities such as love of work, modest tastes and needs, and the wisdom to introduce far-sighted reforms that brought western culture to a dark and savage land.

In contrast to these admirers of Peter, Aleksandr Nikolaevich Radishchev, the father of the Russian intelligentsia as a class, was the first man who dared to offer some cautious criticism of Peter the Great. Writing in his "Letter to a friend residing in Tobolsk" on the day following the unveiling of Falconet's monument "The Bronze Horseman," Radishchev observed that while there were justifications for the appellation "the Great," Peter deserved to be rebuked for mercilessly intensifying the bondage of the serfs. But these were only general comments that were amplified a few years later in his Journey from Petersburg to Moscow; the first serious criticism aimed at Peter the Great was made in 1811 by Nikolai Mikhailovich Karamzin in the work titled Zapiska o drevnei i novoii Rossii (Memoir on Ancient and Modern Russia).

(i) N. M. Karamzin

Karamzin's historical tract, which he submitted to Alexander I, inaugurated the conservative reaction against
the liberalizing — and seemingly un-Russian — direction in which the country was heading. And the turn in the wrong direction, Karamzin believed, was forced on Russia by Peter I.

Karamzin's evaluation of Peter the Great and of his reign formed the basis for the Slavophile view of Russia that was to make its appearance some years later. Since the establishment of Romanov rule in Russia, a gradual introduction to a European life-style had been in progress. Peter the Great, charged Karamzin, became determined to transform Russia overnight into another Holland. Moreover, the Tsar was completely indiscriminate in choosing the aspects of Europeanization to be adopted in Russia. "The Russian dress, food, and beards did not interfere with the founding of schools," objected Karamzin. And he continued,

Two states may stand on the same level of civil enlightenment although their customs differ. One state may borrow from another useful knowledge without borrowing its manners. These manners may change naturally, but to prescribe statutes for them is an act of violence, which is illegal also for an autocratic monarch. . . . In this realm, the sovereign may equitably act only by example, not by decree.  

In addition, the greatest disservice that Peter did for Russia, Karamzin suggested, was the splitting of national unity. The Tsar's wicked campaign ridiculing ancient customs and traditions, and obligatory adoption of western ones made the upper crust of Russian society feel ashamed of their
un-European manners. As they strove to acquire European politesse and to absorb western culture, they discarded their own cultural heritage, leaving it to the common people. Furthermore, Karamzin detected a moral decline in the onrush of Russian society toward westernization. He wrote:

Russian women ceased to blush at the indiscreet glances of men, and European freedom supplanted Asiatic constraint. . . . As we progressed in the acquisition of social virtues and graces, our families moved into the background; for when we have many acquaintances we feel less need of friends, and sacrifice family ties to social obligations. . . . It must be admitted that what we gained in social virtues we lost in civic virtues. . . . Our ancestors, while assimilating many advantages which were to be found in foreign customs, never lost the conviction that an Orthodox Russian was the most perfect citizen and Holy Rus' the foremost state in the world. Let this be called a delusion. Yet how much it did to strengthen patriotism and the moral fibre of the country! Would we have today the audacity, after having spent over a century in the school of foreigners, to boast of our civic pride? Once upon a time we used to call all other Europeans infidels; now we call them brothers.  

Peter's celebrated reforms, concluded Karamzin, were very often harmful to national interests, but they succeeded because of their ruthless execution and the pitiless character of the Tsar. St. Petersburg, Karamzin reminded Alexander I, was literally built on the bodies and bones of serfs who were driven there in chains. The chief issue of Peter's transformation of Russia, was that "Autocracy became more essential than ever for the preservation of order."

Thereafter, the theme of Peter the Great acquired
polemical qualities which soon led to the formation of two opposing camps, the Slavophiles and the Westerners. The former followed the line of criticism initiated by Karamzin, while the latter defended Peter's innovations and even wished Russia to follow the European model still more closely. Ultimately, it began to be felt that all major questions in nineteenth-century Russia could be reduced to their relation to Peter I and his impact on Russian life.

(ii) AВsРūshkin

Pushkin's interpretation of Peter the Great, as he appears in the poet's literary works, differs considerably from the image of the Tsar that emerges from his preparatory notes for a history of Peter's reign, Иstorія Петра I. In his literary treatment of Peter, Pushkin speaks mainly of the Tsar's noble ambitions as the ruler of a country, and his successes as a military commander. But in the History of Peter I, Pushkin added to these positive qualities another characteristic which was not so complimentary. Concerning Peter's place in Russian history, Pushkin found that he must be regarded on two levels, and the poet wrote in his notebook:

It is worth wondering at the difference between the state institutions of Peter the Great and his short-term decrees. The first are fruits of a broad mind, filled with good will and intelligence, the second are cruel, capricious and written, it seems, with a knout. The first were written for eternity, or at least for the future, the second spilled out from an impatient and self-willed landlord.
Pushkin considered such a duality in Peter to be comparable to personages involved in the French revolution, namely Robespierre and Napoleon. By dividing the reign of Peter the Great into two periods, Pushkin explained how the need for reforms became evident, and how the reforms were then secured. The initial part of Peter's reign was indeed bloody and cruel and could be compared to the Reign of Terror under Robespierre. With regard to the period that followed, however, the Tsar might be compared to Napoleon, who institutionalized all the benefits gained in the preceding period. Thus, Pushkin developed the view in his Istoria that the people suffered severely during Peter's "revolutionary" period and to many of them he was truly the Antichrist. However, with the first fruits of the new reforms, explained Pushkin, the people reconciled themselves to Peter and the new Russia. In the final analysis, Pushkin concluded, the creation of a new Russian empire was a necessary and beneficial development.

But the criticism expressed in Pushkin's history was unacceptable to Nicholas I, and the History of Peter I was withheld from publication. After his death, friends of the poet tried to expurgate the offensive passages from the manuscript, but somehow the work was lost, and was published for the first time only in 1938. The portrayal of Peter as wicked in a personal sense and wise in matters of state was
to re-emerge nearly a century after Pushkin, in Aleksei Tolstoi's novel.\textsuperscript{12}

The new, and — in comparison with the earlier characterization — improved image of Peter in Tolstoi's novel can be appreciated only from an overall view of the work. This is because the author now describes an evolving character. In some eight hundred pages Tolstoi follows his main hero only from the year 1682 to 1704, or the years of Peter's youth and early adulthood. And while it is true that Tolstoi's untimely death prevented him from portraying Peter in his "Napoleonic" period, he succeeded nonetheless in showing the Tsar in considerably more historical detail; that is, Tolstoi described the historical circumstances which demanded the appearance of a resolute man, and this fact alone put the Tsar in a more favourable light. Then, that man emerged from the historical background, his own strength of will, his own force of character began to affect the development of future events. This matter of an individual's influence on historical events was successfully resolved in \textit{Petr Pervyi}. When he was asked to explain how Tsar Peter could have succeeded if he was acting alone, Aleksei Tolstoi replied:

Peter's personality was extraordinary and it began to influence the epoch, . . . The epoch required a man, he was sought, and the man in his turn was seeking an outlet for his energies; there was an interdependence between the two.\textsuperscript{13}
At this point it is essential to contrast Aleksei Tolstoi's views on the role of the individual in history with those held by Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoi. The latter made over twenty starts on a novel about Peter the Great, but an unwillingness to alter his concepts of history forced him to abandon the project completely. In his extensive essay on Lev Tolstoi's views of history, I. Berlin explained how Tolstoi denied the individual any decisive role in the unfurling of history. "Tolstoy's central thesis," wrote Berlin in *The Hedgehog and the Fox*,

is that there is a natural law whereby the lives of human beings no less than those of nature are determined; but that men, unable to face this inexorable process, seek to represent it as a succession of free choices, to fix responsibility for what occurs upon persons endowed by them with heroic virtues or heroic vices, all called by them "great men." What are great men? they are ordinary human beings, who are ignorant and vain enough to accept responsibility for the life of society, individuals who would rather take the blame for all the cruelties, injustices, disasters justified in their name, than recognize their own insignificance and impotence in the cosmic flow which pursues its course irrespective of their wills and ideals.14

Thus, when such a concept of the historical process was applied to Peter I, a contradiction arose which Lev Tolstoi was not able to resolve. L. M. Poliak wrote, for example:

The active and volitional work of the tsar-reformer entered into contradiction with L. Tolstoi's idea
of historical fatalism, with his understanding of the role of the individual in history, with his philosophical concepts. Inevitability, the predestination of historical events simply did not tie with the image of Peter, the mover of history, the man who actively interfered in life.\(^{15}\)

Initially, however, Lev Tolstoi, who began trying to write about Peter in 1872, had been tremendously interested in the period and very favourably disposed toward the Tsar. In his notebooks, for example, one may find expressions which point unequivocally to his positive evaluation of Peter I:

He was the instrument of the time, \ldots{} he was selected by fate to draw Russia into contact with the European world. \ldots{} In Peter's time power and truth were on the side of the reformers, and the defenders of ancient customs were froth, they were a mirage.\(^{16}\)

Then later, in December 1872, though still maintaining an interest in Peter, he began to express his inability to make a proper start on the novel. "I am surrounded by books on Peter I," he wrote to N. I. Strakhov,

I read, I take notes, I want to write, but I cannot. But what an epoch for an artist! Wherever you look, there is a problem, a puzzle, the solution for which may be gained only through poetry. The whole secret of Russian life is sitting right there.\(^{17}\)

But very soon Lev Tolstoi began to grow more and more hostile toward Peter. The author of \textit{War and Peace} came to believe that the Tsar's celebrated reforms were not motivated by a desire to improve conditions in Russia, but rather by a
general attraction to western decadence. At the same time a Tsar who literally imposed his pleasure on matters pertaining to social behaviour, state institutions, national religion, simply could not be made to fit Tolstoi's concept of historical fatalism.

And finally, Lev Tolstoi's change in attitude toward Peter the Great may be explained, at least in part, by his growing idealization of the peasantry; and since they had borne most of the weight of Peter's reforms, Tolstoi's bias naturally turned against the Tsar. This new attitude on the part of the famous writer, as A. V. Alpatov suggests, steered the projected historical novel on Peter I more in the direction of moral and ethical questions and consequently forced history into the background.¹⁸

Very soon, Lev Tolstoi abandoned all efforts to write about Peter, and instead busied himself with the writing of Anna Karenina. However, his last impression of Peter the Great never mellowed. When D. S. Merezhkovskii's book Antikhrist (Petr i Aleksei) appeared in 1905, N. N. Gusev discussed it with Lev Tolstoi who, responding to the comment that Merezhkovskii had portrayed Peter in all his cruelty, retorted, "In my opinion, he was not only cruel, but he was a drunken fool as well. He visited the Germans and he liked how they drink there."¹⁹
D. S. Merezhkovskii's novel *Antikhrist (Petr i Aleksei)* has already been mentioned in connection with Aleksei Tolstoi's story "Den' Petra." The novel by Merezhkovskii deserves some attention, especially so because its influence on Tolstoi still continued into the 1920's.

Briefly, it may be said that Merezhkovskii tries to illustrate his own peculiar view of the world through examples of certain periods in history. He believes not only that history repeats itself, but that at the same time it progresses toward a period which he calls the third kingdom, that is, a kingdom of the Holy Spirit. The preceding two kingdoms were, Merezhkovskii believes, the kingdom of paganism, and the kingdom of Christianity. Furthermore, Merezhkovskii divides mankind into two categories: flesh and spirit, or good and evil, Christ and Antichrist. Thus, in the trilogy *Christ and Antichrist*, which comprises *Death of the Gods (Julian the Apostate)*, 1895, *The Resurrected Gods (Leonardo da Vinci)*, 1901, and *Antichrist (Peter and Aleksei)*, 1905, Merezhkovskii wishes to demonstrate the conflict between these two opposites. As far as Peter the Great is concerned, Merezhkovskii very simply believes that the Tsar was the Antichrist who deformed the spirit of the Russian people and in the end would bring ruin to Russia. However, the clash between the old and the new, between Holy Rus' and
Russia, between Peter and Aleksei, is not posed as a historical question, but rather as a mystical abstraction meant to illustrate the writer's philosophical concept. The following excerpt may serve to show how Merezhkovskii envelops his novel about the Tsar in mystical and symbolic language:

Suddenly, at the very edge of the sky, the sun flashed through the clouds as if blood had spurted from a wound. And the steel clouds, the steel waves became stained with blood, and that bloody sea became both wondrous and frightening.

"Blood! Blood!" thought Peter, and he remembered his son's prophecy.

"The blood of a son, the blood of Russian tsars will be spilled upon the block by you first. That blood shall pass from head to head, to the last of the tsars, and our family will perish in blood. And because of you, God will punish Russia."

"No, Lord!" prayed Peter again as he did then when he prayed before the old icon with a darkened face, when Peter prayed past the Son, addressing himself to the Father who was sacrificing His Son. "Do not let that be! His blood is on me, on me alone! Punish me, God, but spare Russia!"

"There'll be a storm!" the old skipper repeated, thinking that the Tsar had not heard him. "I told Your Highness some time ago. It's better to turn back."

"Fear not," responded Peter with a smile. "Our ship is new and strong: it will ride out the storm. God is with us."

In his attempt to make history fit his preconceived notions, Merezhkovskii uses a method which has been described as "metaphysical hindsight." The centre of the author's attention is occupied by the struggle between the father and the son, or as Merezhkovskii would have the reader believe,
between secular and spiritual forces, or between Christ and Antichrist. As the Antichrist, Peter is weighed down with negative characteristics; for example, he sadistically whips Aleksei to death; but his contributions in matters of state receive little attention from Merezhkovskii.

C. The Soviet Historical Novel.

The historical novel took on new importance after the Bolshevik revolution. As it was felt that historical fiction written in pre-revolutionary Russia expressed the ideology of the ruling class, novels written in the Soviet period were supposed to reveal the suppressed history of the downtrodden, with particular emphasis on the class struggle. In this way, the October Revolution was to be justified through a presentation of Russian history as a series of rebellions and uprisings which finally culminated in a Socialist victory in 1917.

In such a schematic literature, historical figures who had led in the struggle against the tsars clearly had to appear as central characters. One of the earliest and very successful historical novels of this sort was Aleksei Chapygin's Razin Stepan (1927). Razin, a seventeenth-century historical figure celebrated in Russian folklore, in the treatment of Chapygin illogically embraces republicanism, atheism, and twentieth-century revolutionary class-consciousness. This kind of modernization of a seventeenth-century
Cossack, together with a burdensome number of archaic words and references to ancient unfamiliar objects, makes for serious flaws in *Razin Stepan*.

Iurii Tynianov's *Kiukhlia* (1925) is another type of historical fiction that appeared in the early years of the Soviet regime. However, in this sort of novel, the author follows historical documents so closely that the story of the December uprising of 1825 in Tynianov's book resembles a montage of memoirs and historical records. The writer's imagination has little scope amid the overwhelming amount of documentation, so that the novel appears to be merely a re-telling of history.

The work of Aleksei Tolstoi, in contrast to such examples of Soviet historical novels, shows a proper balance in all the essentials of the historical novel. Although a monarch is offered as a hero, and one who is fairly guarded against expressing modern sentiments, the language is at once both contemporary and appropriate to the characters, and finally, Tolstoi is very careful to keep actual documents to the bare minimum. Unencumbered by detailed accounts of public events, the writer's imagination is free to soar, and *Petr Pervyi* offers the reader a panoramic view of life in Russia at the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth centuries,
a view that spans the social and spatial distances between the Kremlin palaces in Moscow and the decrepit izbas in remote corners of the country. Such breadth of description, as well as depictions of a whole gallery of characters, helps to explain those circumstances that were pressing for the Europeanization of Russia. But at the same time, the characterization of Peter is calculated to demonstrate how the strength of his personality was able to influence events to such a degree that the epoch now bears his name.

D. Petr Pervyi and Contemporary Criticism.

On many occasions Tolstoi expressed his views on the question of how to write. To begin with, he never prepared a detailed plan for any projected literary work. The most that he would jot down before actual writing began would be a general statement of purpose. The characters that he would introduce came to life and acted almost independently of the author's wishes. Characterization was accomplished through experiences gained as a playwright, explained Tolstoi in an interview with Smena. Of course, in addition to dialogue, what he was referring to here was the language of gesture which, as he explained it, acted as a physical link between thought and articulation. Such a language of gesture becomes more the language of the character than of the writer; by this means Tolstoi draws the reader into the narrative and relies on his imagination to complete the
picture. "My task is to create a world," wrote Tolstoi, and let the reader into it. There he will associate with the characters on his own, not through my words, but through those unwritten, inaudible words which he will understand through the language of gestures.

To the Petrine theme Tolstoi returned in 1928 with Na dybe, the first of three plays about Peter I, which was followed immediately by the story "Marta Rabbe." While he was still writing Na dybe in the fall of 1928, he wrote a letter to V. P. Polonskii, the editor of Novyi Mir, stating that he expected to finish the play by December, and that soon after he wanted to start on a novel about Tsar Peter which he would like to offer the magazine for publication. The novel that was to become Petr Pervyi was started in February 1929, but in subsequent letters to Polonskii, Tolstoi referred to his work not as a novel, but as a povest', or story. When the first installment of Petr Pervyi appeared in the July 1929 issue of Novyi Mir it carried the subtitle povest'. Judging from Tolstoi's letters written in the early part of 1929, he expected to write several independent and finished stories for each issue of the magazine. Soon, however, the quantity of material that he had amassed forced him to alter his plans and concentrate on writing a full novel. "All June and half of July," he wrote to Polonskii in May of 1929,

I shall be working on Peter, and in all probability
I shall send you the end of the first volume (the third chapter), that is "Peter's Youth." In it (the third chapter) there will be Holland, the execution of the streltsy, the story with Mons, the beginning of the Northern War, and the founding of St. Petersburg.

But Tolstoi was very much mistaken, for what he thought would comprise only the first book occupied in fact the entire trilogy. The novel Petr Pervyi extends from 1682, when Peter was ten, to 1704, the year following the founding of St. Petersburg. Book I, completed in May 1930, concludes with the suppression and execution of the streltsy; Book II, started at the end of November 1932, was completed in April 1934 and it concludes with the construction of the first wharfs at the mouth of the Neva River. The last volume, which Tolstoi did not finish, was begun on December 31, 1943 and it ends with the capture of the Swedish fortress Narva in 1704.

Such is the general outline of the novel in its completed version. The reason why events in the novel progressed in such slow chronological sequence is that Tolstoi always underestimated the amount of detail that he would incorporate in his narrative. In 1933, when he was writing the second book, for example, he anticipated bringing the story forward to the year 1718, and concluding the trilogy with the life of M. V. Lomonosov. In other words, he planned at one time to extend Petr Pervyi well into the
middle of the eighteenth century. But, when he was writing the third book, he revealed in an interview given in February 1944 that he wanted to dwell on Peter's legislative activities (his "Napoleonic" period, as Pushkin had called it), his innovations in Russian life-style, and his other visits to western Europe. Later, in November 1944, when he was already gravely ill, Tolstoi wrote to V. B. Shklovskii about his greatly modified plans:

I shall take the novel only as far as Poltava, maybe to the Prut campaign, I do not know yet. I do not wish the characters to age. What am I to do with the old people?

But even this was not fulfilled, for every page was written in ever-growing pain. As it happened, _Petr Pervyi_ ends with the year 1704, some four years before the Bulavin cossack uprising. The confrontation between the Tsar, who Tolstoi had built up as a progressive and national hero, and the leader of a popular revolt against the boyars and upper classes presented Tolstoi with a problem which he was not prepared to resolve.

For reasons not entirely clear, explained A. V. Alpatov in another conversation, Tolstoi had many enemies. Some were simply envious of his success and the material comfort that he had achieved. Look, an émigré returned, they would complain, and now he is living better than we are. Others attacked him for his strong feelings of nationalism.
In every country, continued Alpatov, there are people who are indifferent to the past, or even hate it. These elements were particularly critical of any sympathetic writing about the past, and by making Peter a national hero Tolstoi was moving against the current ideology. At first, political and ideological considerations formed a large part of the criticism of Petr Pervyi, and Gorkii was among the very few who praised the novel from the date of its first publication.

In the first reviews and discussions of Petr Pervyi, Tolstoi was taken to task most often for his un-Marxian interpretation of Russian history, for his unfavourable comparison of Russia vis-à-vis Europe, and for his heroic depiction of the Tsar, a depiction that was considered similar to that made by the historian of the old regime, V. O. Kliuchevskii. One RAPP satirist, for example, composed a ditty suggesting that the novel was like the play Na dybe, but instead of Merezhkovskii, Tolstoi was now under the influence of Kliuchevskii:

... Прощи года. Во всех красах
Показан вновь властитель Невский.
Старался тот же Алексей,
Но красками снабжал Ключевский.29

Another critic, writing in RAPP's Na literaturnom postu, recalled how the academician S. F. Platonov had complained about Tolstoi's earlier depiction of the Tsar in "Den' Petra." It now appeared that the author of Petr Pervyi had
heeded Platonov's remarks and had changed the image of the Tsar accordingly. As if fulfilling the social command of the bourgeoisie, Tolstoi was following the teachings of the idealistic, pre-revolutionary historians instead of the correct Marxist historiography. N. Iesuitov, the author of the article "Peter, the Europeanizer of Rus'," noted that the whole concept in Petr Pervyi was erroneous, that it was reactionary, and that the role of a personality in the historical process was depicted as if Tolstoi had never heard of the class struggle, or historical and dialectical materialism. 

Kornelii Zelenskii, writing in Krasnaia Nov', criticized Tolstoi for similar shortcomings. He added, however, that Tolstoi's portrayal of Peter and his justification of the Tsar's cruelty revealed the persistent Smena vekh attitude of resignation to the revolution. Tolstoi, continued Zelenskii, reduced Peter's reforms to the Europeanization of Russia, and in depicting the Tsar as a man filled with hatred for his backward and uncultured country, the author of Petr Pervyi was merely exposing his bourgeois origins and his own discontent with the new Soviet Russia. G. Gorbachev in his review of Petr Pervyi also criticized Tolstoi for his incorrect depiction of the Petrine epoch, and in particular for his disregard of M. N. Pokrovskii's teachings.
After 1932, when RAPP and other literary groupings were disbanded, ideological attacks against Tolstoi might have been expected to cease. Yet this did not happen. The reason why such attacks persisted for some time was that the so-called "Pokrovskii school" continued to advance the only acceptable interpretation of history, whose maxim was that "history is politics immersed in the past." And although Pokrovskii's interpretations were attacked even during his lifetime, they were not officially proscribed until January 1936.33

Tolstoi's notes for the second book of Petr Pervyi reveal that his understanding of the economic and social background emerged out of an effort to reflect Pokrovskii's views, but this made Tolstoi vulnerable to more criticism after the historian was found to be in error. "Feudal Russia of the seventeenth century," wrote Tolstoi in 1932, was a pathetic sight: backward agrarian economy, and a near total absence of manufacture, : : :

This was literally a country of paupers, where old, sleepy boyars sat safe behind strong fences among loafers and holy fools, where church bells rang gloomily in the glory of poverty and passivity. But Russia was tremendously rich in resources. The growing power of European capital in the seventeenth century was seeking resources and markets. Russia was both the one and the other. European capital aimed at the conquest of the second India, as they called Russia in the West. . . . In Russia there appeared creative but conflicting forces. These were the young Russian bourgeoisie, Russian commercial capital, manufacturers of all kinds, and a group of talented, energetic people who rallied around Peter.34
Alpatov's criticisms, however, served to minimize Tolstoi's alleged errors. In a review of the two volumes of PetrePervyi published in a 1934 issue of Khudozhestvennaia Literatura, Alpatov conceded that in the first book there was "a slight overemphasis of the role of commercial capital which stemmed from Pokrovskii." But this was not so much a conscious following of Pokrovskii, he suggested, as it was a tendency to overstress the contrast between a backward Russia and a developed West. In another article Alpatov commended Tolstoi's characterization of Peter because it reflected Stalin's conception of the Tsar. What Alpatov was referring to in this instance was the interview that Stalin gave to Emile Ludwig in December 1931. In response to a question put to him by the German interviewer, Stalin denied that there was any parallel between Peter and himself. Nevertheless, the reply was given in such a manner that the suggested parallel between the two persisted. "Yes, of course," said Stalin,

Peter the Great did much to raise the class of landlords and the emerging merchant class. . . . The problem to which I am dedicating my life is the raising of another class, and that is the working class. . . . You see then, your parallel does not fit.

After 1934 Tolstoi was still criticized for his allegedly incorrect historical conceptions even though he was no longer accused of ignoring Pokrovskii. Instead, he
was either accused of following Pokrovskii, or else censured for writing what was taken to be a history of the Petrine epoch. In a report by Iak. Eidel'man in Literaturnyi Kritik, it was observed that the historians Fridliand and Zel'tser had found that Aleksei Tolstoi had failed to depict the peasant revolutionary movement, that he had neglected the contradictions of that period, that he had not explained what circumstances had led to Peter's appearance, and finally that his depiction of the Tsar was a mere reproduction of the traditional image as presented by Kliuchevskii, Solov'ev and Platonov.38

In the seventh issue of Oktiabr' for 1934, there was an extensive report on a group which met to discuss historical fiction, particularly the historical novel, with a great deal of attention focused on A. Tolstoi and the two books of Petr Pervyi. Critics were quick to upbraid Tolstoi for adhering to the old historians in the first book, and for adhering to Pokrovskii in the second. Only D. S. Mirsky ignored the trend and criticized him for not following the historical concepts of Pokrovskii.

Ts. Fridliand, who acted as chairman of the group, opened the discussion by reminding the audience that historical fiction must serve as an instrument in the class struggle and, therefore, it places great responsibility upon the writer. He must use the historical novel to cast off
the dead weight of tradition and reveal to the reader perspectives for a bright future. When he came to *Petr Pervyi*, Fridliand expressed his displeasure with the large number of pages devoted to the monarch and the disproportionately small number devoted to the masses; the plebeians remain anonymous figures who make only casual appearances and in general serve only as pedestals for Peter. Moreover, he added, Tolstoi was idealizing Russian *gosudarstvennost*', or statehood, and this was contrary to Marxist ideology.

Similar comments and criticisms were repeated by E. Veisman, E. Lann, I. Tatarov, V. Vaganian, and others. Vaganian, for example, began with a statement claiming that nine-tenths of the blame for incorrect historical depictions in literature must be placed with historians and not writers. He then proceeded to attack Pokrovskii for corrupting Marx and Lenin, and for the "commercial capital" that had found its way into Tolstoi's *Petr Pervyi*. He then criticized Tolstoi for something not mentioned by any of the preceding speakers, and that was the contemporaneity achieved by the novel. Vaganian objected to any parallel with the past, on the grounds that the sacrifices made during the Betrine period resulted in the creation of a "bourgeois-absolutist monarchy," whereas those made during the revolution and the years of the first five-year plan were made for the establishment of socialism. Moreover, if *Petr Pervyi* is intended
to be a reflection of the current industrial development of the country, then there is no difference between it and Gladkov's *Energiia*, a novel about the building of the dam at Dnepropetrovsk. In other words, he concluded, a historical novel does not exist "unless we wish to view the world through the prism of nationalist ideas, or unless the nationalist past is an object of our idealization." Thus, concluded Vaganian, Tolstoi makes an improper parallel with contemporary conditions, and, in addition, his interpretation of history appears to be founded on an outdated nationalism.

In contrast to this, D. S. Mirsky argued, using Sir Walter Scott to support his position, that contemporary issues and problems may be legitimately mirrored in historical novels. But the former Prince added this qualification:

> For a historical novel to be truly historical in the Marxist sense of the word "historical," the novelist must be not only an artist, but also a historian, and I would even say that he must first be a historian and only then an artist.

Therefore, he argued, the novel *Petr Pervyi* is not a good novel because Tolstoi is still wavering between Kliuchevskii and Pokrovskii. Finally, the attempted parallel between Peter's time and the present, concluded Mirsky, is nothing less than "an expectoration of his Smena vekh period."

But Tolstoi did not mean to suggest a direct parallel. In 1932 he wrote in a notebook about his plans for the novel:
The first decades of the eighteenth century presented an amazing picture of exploding, creative forces, of energy and enterprise. The old world was creaking and crumbling. Europe, which was expecting something completely different, gazed upon the emerging Russia with surprise and fear. . . . Despite the difference in aims, the Petrine period and our own have a similarity in turbulence, outburst of human energy and purpose directed toward freedom from dependence on foreigners.42

This parallel should not be taken too far. In 1933 Tolstoi wrote that Petr Pervyi is not a novel about the present with characters dressed in eighteenth-century costumes; rather is it about an epoch which can be understood now, that is, after the experience of "socialist construction."43

Criticism of Petr Pervyi, based as it was on ideological and political considerations, ceased in the latter half of the 1930's. Thereafter Tolstoi was praised for properly depicting Peter as a progressive reformer who expanded and strengthened the Russian state. Most recent monographs on Aleksei Tolstoi, those written in the past two decades, have extended his adroitness to include a near-linear development toward socialist realism, and correct historical conceptions of the Petrine period.

E. The Novel Petr Pervyi.

Tolstoi's novel is indeed a whole world taken from seventeenth and eighteenth-century Russia. And although on this broad canvas Peter always occupies the centre, the actual narrative proceeds from a variety of viewpoints. The
reader becomes acquainted with the thinking of peasants, boiars, soldiers, foreigners and, of course, Peter himself, and altogether they produce a feeling of historical movement. These diverse sources of narration also combine to create that sense of atmosphere from the past, but despite the many sources there is in *Petr Pervyi* a discernible unity, for the entire narrative is stylized to maintain a sense of the past.

This singular feeling of the past which Tolstoi maintains through the full length of the novel was a result of experience gained previously in writing short stories in historical fiction, and the revelation found in the language that he discovered in Novombergskii's *Slovo i delo*. Tolstoi's reading of this book convinced him that there is no substantial difference between the spoken language of the Petrine period and the vernacular, the *narodnyi iazyk*, of the twentieth century. This observation is duly confirmed by the following quotation taken from Tolstoi's address to young writers delivered in December 1938:

> I began to study the vernacular [narodnyi] Russian language through fairy tales, songs, *Slovo i delo*, that is, transcripts of trials from the seventeenth century, and the writings of Avvakum.

Thus, even though in *Petr Pervyi* the language is contemporary Russian, Tolstoi employs several devices to give it a spirit of the past. For example, semantic differences make certain contemporary words assume their original meaning, and syntax
which is uncommon in the literary standard of today contributes to the feeling of the past. On the other hand, Tolstoi uses only a few archaisms and these appear mostly in some documents whose style differed considerably from the spoken language. Diffuse, and containing some Slavonicisms, these documents were meant to reflect a stateliness of language that was absent from the spoken, vernacular Russian. The excerpts taken from the novel will serve to illustrate some of these devices.

Tolstoi begins the novel with a series of perspectives, all of which combine to produce the one message, that stagnation, backwardness and isolation must be ended. These descriptions of life in Russia on the eve of Peter's reign are arranged in ascending order, from the hut of the lowest of serfs to the seat of power in Sof'ia's Kremlin:

Ивашка и Цыган стоя в сумерках на дворе, думали. Спешить некуда. Хорошего ждать неоткуда. Конечно, старик рассказывают, прежде легче было: не понравилось, ушел к другому помещнику. Ныне это заказано, — где велено, там и живи. Велено кормить Волкова, — как хочешь, так и корми. Все стали холопами. И ждать надо: еще труднее будет...46

In these short, laconic expressions of the peasants' thoughts, Tolstoi draws a picture of their gloomy life in 1682. The syntax re-creates the vernacular; and though the semantic value of such phrases as "nyne eto zakazano" has changed, they are clearly understood by contemporary readers. Taken together, they help to produce a strong sense of the past.
But dissatisfaction with life is also voiced by the master of the two peasants, the middling boiar Vasilii Volkov. He complains:

— Все народы живут в богатстве, в довольстве, одни мы нищие. Был недавно в Москве, искал оружейника, послали меня на Кукуй-слободу, к немцам... Ну, что ж, они не православные, — их бог рассудит... А как вошел я за ограду, — улицы подметены, избы чистые, веселые, в огородах цветы... Люди приветливые и ведь тут же, рядом с нами живут. И богатство! Один Кукуй богаче всей Москвы е пригородами... [14]

While the docile peasants reason simply — "ne tvoego i ne moego uma delo" — Volkov, who has seen how the Europeans in the foreign quarter of Moscow live, is struck by the difference in life-styles and by the wealth in the "German suburb." The only thing that Volkov could say against the "Germans," it would seem, is that they are not Orthodox. But Tolstoi in this way explains how some members of the old nobility came to support Peter and the radical reforms that he was to introduce.

Likewise, contrasts were observed by the foreigners, who wondered at the Russian custom of attending church three times a day, of eating four meals a day, and, for the sake of dignity and health, of sleeping in the afternoons. Truly they lived like bears.

The fact that Russia was economically impoverished and under-developed is revealed indirectly. Tolstoi uses the plaintive talk of tradesmen, merchants and boiars to
suggest the country's dilapidated condition. This is further illustrated by contrasting a boiar's life with that of a western nobleman, and what had sufficed two generations ago with what was expected now. The following excerpt is a direct address to the reader:

"Tugo, ves'ma tugo" emphasizes the conversational tone of this paragraph. The vernacular quality is conveyed by such expressions as "porotaia zadnitsa" and "urozhai sam-tri — slava tebe gospodi." In this paragraph, without discussing commerce or history, Tolstoi draws a picture of feudal Muscovy. One senses that there was, as Karamzin first noted, a certain cohesive quality in pre-Petrine times; at home the boiar slurped cabbage soup with salt pork just like the
wretched peasant with the whipped behind. Significantly though, it is the boiars who now express jealousy of their European counterparts and no longer is the wish to follow the west a jealous whim of the Tsar, as it was suggested in the 1918 story, "Den' Petra." Instead, this passage shows that the established nobility, who in the past were content to guard their honour and to pray, were now beginning to envy the wealth of their western peers.

The kuptsy, or merchants, were also grumbling because of the steady decline in their trade:

Торговлишка плохая. Своему много не продашь, свой — гол. За границу не повезешь, — ёе на чем. Моря чужие. Все торг с заграницей прибрали к рукам иноземцы. А послушаешь, как торгуют в иных землях, — голову бы разбил с досады. Что за Россия, заклятая страна, — когда же ты с места сдвинёшься? [58]

With this rhetorical question Tolstoi prepares the main task for the central figure of the novel. He has shown that there existed a near-universal dissatisfaction with the status quo, and it is at this point that he introduces the view that all that was required was a man who could satisfy the common wish for a change. Having prepared the background in this manner, Tolstoi next proceeds to portray a man wielding enormous political power, a man of great intellect, a man with a prepared treatise for literally revolutionary changes, but at the same time a man completely unable to cope with the realities which reduce this man, Prince Vasilii
Vasilevich Golitsyn, to impotency. Dressed in fine French lace, breeches, and buckle shoes, Golitsyn, speaking in Latin, explains to a foreign visitor how he would free the serfs, give them land, while with the gentry he would fill government posts and create a regular army. He would also send the youth from the nobility abroad to study, he would establish an academy of sciences, and in general work for the enrichment and enlightenment of both the people and the country.

But Prince Golitsyn, a historical character, is most graphically portrayed by Tolstoi in an imaginary private conference with the regent Sof'ia, Peter's elder-halvesister. Golitsyn's character is not equal to the challenge posed by the existing conditions in Russia, and though he is in many respects far more progressive in his schemes than Peter, he lacks Peter's simplicity and strength of will, and especially his ruthlessness. Golitsyn's weakness is best conveyed to the reader through the eyes of his mistress, Sof'ia:

Василий Васильевич потрогал пальцем усы, ... 
Софья покосилась на земля: ох, красив, ох, мука моя... Да — слаб, жилы — женские... В кружева вырядился...

— Так-то, батюшка мой... Книги ты читать горазд и писать горазд, мысли светлые, — знаю сама... А вчера после вечерни дядяшка Иван Михайлович про тебя говорил: "Читал, мол, мне Василий Васильевич из тетради про смердов, про мужиков, — подивился я: уж здоров ли головкой князьшка-то?" И бояре смеялись...

Как девушка, вспыхнул Василий Васильевич, ...
The dialogue reveals Golitsyn's passive nature as well. The use of diminutives and the very fact that Sof'ia regards him as rather effeminate stress all the more the Prince's inability to change anything in the country's condition. Furthermore, Golitsyn's incompetence in practical matters, his meek acceptance of a commission to lead a futile campaign against the Turks in the Crimea, his indecision during the confrontation between Sof'ia and Peter, and finally his superstitious belief in predestination result in his being merely dragged along and finally just swept aside by historical circumstances.

Meanwhile, in contrast to the Muscovite splendour of Sof'ia's Kremlin palaces, the banished Tsar Peter grows into manhood in the nearby village of Preobrazhensk. Excluded from court affairs and denied the attention that his station would warrant, Peter, with only meagre tutelage from the drunkard Nikita Zotov, develops into an independent and strong-willed youth. Playing at war with the village muzhiks and boys of his own age, Peter first uses wooden cannons
firing only steamed vegetables and apples. But gradually he demands and receives real weapons for his games. Such a picture of the young Tsar easily coincides with the common impression of Peter's youth in Preobrazhensk. What Tolstoi does to enhance the picture of isolation and to show how Peter has changed since the reader first saw him as a frightened "kitten" with the Hat of Monomakh sliding over his ear, is to add at this point a small historical document which contributes to the general impression of the past and which characterizes both Peter and his mother:

Царица от скуки взяла почитать Петрушину учебную тетрадь. Арифметика. Тетрадь — в чернильных пятнах, написано — вкривь и вкось, неразборчиво: "Пример арифметики... Долгу много, а денег у меня меньше тово долгу, и надобает вычесть — много ли езчо платить. И то ставися так: долг выше, а под ним денги, и выненяют всякое исподнее слово ис верхнева..."

Царица зевнула, — не то есть хочется, не то еще чего-то...

Adapting a document found in a collection titled *Pis'ma i bumagi Petra Velikogo* (Letters and Papers of Peter the Great), Tolstoi uses its bespattered appearance and crooked writing with its misspelled words to complete a picture in the reader's mind of Peter's nervous and impetuous nature. In addition, the document illustrates how the written language differed from the spoken Russian. The diffuse style in which the arithmetic function is described reflects the prescribed formality of the written language in the past.
Finally, to demonstrate further the barren quality of the court at Preobrazhensk, the passage ends with the Tsarina's yawn.

On the other hand, the reader is offered a different perception as viewed from the Kremlin. The regent Sof'ia, complaining to Prince Golitsyn, notes that Peter is no longer a harmless "kitten": "Vytianulsia v kolomenskuiu verstiu," she adds. Moreover, it has not escaped her notice that Peter is now using real weapons in his war games, and she confesses to her lover that she has been thinking about what happened to Dimitrâi at Uglich. Thus, without dwelling on the matter, Tolstoi shows how Peter, banished though he is, grows in power and comes to pose a threat to Sof'ia's regency. This is also a way of explaining Peter's pathological fear and hatred for the rebellious strrel'tsy who had killed his maternal uncle, and who now formed Sof'is'a chief support.

What compensates for Peter's lack of a formal education is his close association and friendship with some members of the "German" colony in Moscow. They capture the young Tsar's imagination with their vast knowledge, especially in naval and military matters, and this early acquaintance with the West engenders his desire to modernize Muscovy. Among the foreigners, it is Franz Lefort, Peter's drinking companion, who proves to be the most influential to whom offers the Tsar.
and who offers the Tsar the best counsel:

Петр дивился разумности сердечного друга Франца. "По французски называется политик — знать свои выгоды, — объяснял Лефорт."

[177]

Listening to Lefort in this way, Peter also reveals his own perception of the foreigner who is teaching him the fine art of politics with examples, it should be added, from French history. It is also Lefort who teaches Peter to be concerned with affairs of state, and it is Lefort again who advises the Tsar to seek an outlet to the Baltic Sea, an outlet which would bring commerce and prosperity to Russia.

Tolstoi, it should be noted as well, introduces foreign words such as "politique" in a conversational manner; that is, a new word is at once explained in terms comprehensible to Russians of that period. Other words are similarly introduced and explained; for example, the old word диак is supplanted by a new foreign word without interrupting the flow of the text and without disturbing the feeling of the past: thus, д"иаки becomes "новые министры, — так начали называть их тогда иноzemцы,..."

When at last Peter emerges victorious from his confrontation with Sof'ia, all those elements in the population who want changes that would improve conditions in Russia pin their hopes on the new Tsar. In this way Tolstoi prepares the reader for the active role to be played by Peter in bringing about the transfiguration of mediaeval Muscovy
into a modern European state. In other words, the author draws a picture of Russia as a country in which historical circumstances have ripened to the point where it is evident to many that things must change. And yet there remain so many formidable and fundamental obstacles on the road to change that require an extraordinary personality to surmount them. Peter is such a man, whose ruthless character is equal to the challenge posed by conditions in Russia. In a short time his particular qualities enable him not only to set in motion the changes that were anticipated by some, but also to influence future developments in Russian history.

One of the first examples of Peter's strength is given in the interview between the Tsar and the Patriarch Ioakim. The growing presence of Europeans is noted by the Patriarch and cited as the cause of moral decline among the Russian people. "We were the Third Rome," says he, "but now we have become the second Sodom and Gomorrah." Even the recent failure of Golitsyn's campaigns against the Crimean Tatars Ioakim attributes to the presence of foreigners:

Запретить, чтобы в полках проклятые еретики были начальниками... Какая от них православному войску может быть польза? Только божий гнев наводят...

As befits the head of the church in Russia, the Patriarch's speech contains Biblical references and Old Church Slavonicisms, which help to create the atmosphere and to identify
the speaker. The reference to the negative moral influence of the westerners upon the Orthodox population also calls to mind the criticism first expressed by Karamzin in his *Zapiska*.

What Peter learns from Lefort concerning the proper conduct of politics serves him well in his first encounter with the determined opposition of the church. As a concession to the Patriarch's ecclesiastical demands, he permits him to burn at the stake the Dutch heretic Kuhlman. But because he needs the foreigners he categorically refuses to banish them or to close their churches. In this conference between Peter and Ioakim, there is a clear indication that the Tsar is now seeking to model Russia on western countries not from a selfish caprice — as Tolstoi had implied in "Den' Petra" — but from a desire, worthy of a true leader, to raise his country to the economic level of Europe. Here too he displays an ability to follow his own course, with small compromises where necessary, but without losing sight of his main goal.

The Tsar's obstinate character enables him to achieve his first military success. After the initial failure to take the Turkish fortress at Azov, he appears to be no more competent to lead an army than the unfortunate Golitsyn. And yet, unlike the Prince, Peter refuses to retreat. Once more Tolstoi describes the furious state of the Tsar in indirect terms:
Peter's crooked writing, misspelled words, and splattered ink serve once more to reinforce the impression of his turbulent character. Having retreated up the Don to Voronezh, he begins to prepare for another attack on Azov. In this case the description is reminiscent of Tolstoi's picture of the hardships that the people suffered in "Den' Petra":

Azov is taken in the second assault. Peter's ruthlessness has paid off, explains Tolstoi, and this victory has special significance, for "Kukui has won over Moscow."

But this is not to suggest that the Peter in the novel is the same iconoclast as portrayed in the story of 1918. Now Tolstoi takes care to demonstrate the Tsar's sensitivity to
the European view of Russia. In Arkhangelsk, for example, the foreigners are not "svoi, ruchnye" or the tame sort that he had encountered in the German quarter of Moscow. From their huge ocean-going vessels these Dutch, German and English seamen disdainfully regarded Peter as if he were no better than "someone from Madagascar," "a tsar of barbarians." Glancing at Lefort at that moment it seems to Peter that even he remains essentially a scornful European:

Лефорт, нарядный, как всегда, постукивал тросточкой, — под усиками — сладкая улыбочка, в припухших веках — улыбочка, на напудренной щеке — ямочка... Доволен, весел, счастлив... Петр засопел, — до того вдруг захотелось дать в морду сердечному другу Францу...

The diminutives — "usiki," "ulybochka," "iamochka," "troсточkä" — all reveal how Peter's feelings are aroused by the self-satisfied delicacy of posture of his Swiss friend. But Peter's innate intelligence and his "aziatskaia khitrost'" (Asiatic cunning) enables him to turn the situation in his favour by surprising the sneering Europeans. With exaggerated glee he gazes at their ships, stamps his feet in excitement, slaps the foreigners on the back, and loudly proclaims that he will personally build a ship and that his boyars will hammer the nails. His feigned enthusiasm and apparent simplicity amaze the visiting merchants; truly they have never before met such a monarch.

At this point it may be noted that in Petr Pervyi all
the Europeans who come in contact with the Tsar serve to demonstrate the need for modernizing Russia. But at the same time, they also serve to illustrate Peter's sensitivity to their frequently unsympathetic and sometimes coarse criticisms. Having asked for candid impressions of life in Moscow, for example, Peter listens to what Sidney, the British merchant has to say, and then shouts in reply:

Further, Petr Pervyi concludes with the Russian victory at Narva, in 1704; a victory achieved in large measure through the execution of a strategy devised by Field Marshal Ogilvie. In planning his campaign, however, Ogilvie had arranged to lay a three-month siege to Narva because, as he explains it, the Russian muzhik in the army cannot be considered to be a real soldier:

For all his hatred of the Russian past, Peter remains always
sensitive to the pompous superiority displayed by some Europeans. Incidentally, in view of the fact that this excerpt was written in 1944, it is a likely conjecture that Tolstoi could not resist the temptation to draw attention to the German officer's ideal of a soldier who behaves exactly like a de-humanized automaton. Following Ogilvie's lengthy but eloquent disquisition, which serves to identify the speaker as a European, Tolstoi gives one of his most graphic portraits of Peter when his ire is raised in defense of the Russian muzhik:

Огильви с удовольствием слушал самого себя, как птица, прикрывая глаза веками. Шафир перевел на разумную русскую речь его многосложно дидактические построения. Когда же Огильви, окончив, взглянул на Петра Алексеевича, то несравненно со своим достоинством быстро подобдали ноги под стул, убрав живот и опустил руку с тростью, Лицо Петра было страшное, — шея будто вдвое вытянулась, вздулись свирепые жеватки с боков рта, из расширенных глаз готовы были — не дай боже, не дай боже — вырваться фурии... Он тяжело дышал. Большая жилистая рука с коротким рукавом, лежавшая среди дохлых карамор, искала что-то... нашула гусиное перо, сломала...

— Вот как, вот как, русский солдат — мужик с ружьем! — проговорил он сдавленным горлом. — Плохого не вижу... Русский мужик — умен, смешен, смел... А с ружьем — страшен врагу... За все сие палкой не бьют! Порядка не знает? Знает он порядок. А когда не знает — не он плох, офицер плох... А когда мое солдата надо палкой бить, — так бить его буду я, а ты его бить не будешь...

[824-825]

The short sentences in Peter's reply reveal his anger. But the change in Ogilvie's posture from one showing complacency
to one showing timidity or even fear (dropping his hand which was resting on a cane, drawing his feet under the chair, and pulling in his stomach), plus the change in Peter's facial expression, and his groping hand give an even clearer indication of his barely-controlled rage.

But though Peter takes offense at Ogilvie's remarks, the Field Marshal is retained as one of the Tsar's chief military advisors. That Peter values what he has learned from the Europeans around him is demonstrated by the restraint he shows in the scene immediately following the storming of Narva. Here he consciously strives to behave in a manner befitting a European monarch. Peter's thoughts, his majestic posture, all reveal how much he has learned about proper behaviour from such foreigners as Lefort and Ogilvie, and also how he has changed from his youth when he freely gave vent to every impulse.

To learn first-hand about western life, Peter joins the great embassy to Europe. The journey through "staraia dobraia Germaniia" (old, good Germany) once again points to the backwardness of Russia, not only in economy, but also in civil culture. By describing things that surprise the travellers, Tolstoi, indirectly but effectively, reveals everyday life in Russia in greater detail. For example, here is a description of the embassy's first look at western Europe:
Въехали в Кенигсберг в сумерках, колеса загремели по чистой мостовой. Ни заборов, ни частоколов, — что за диво! Дома прямо — лицом на улицу, рукой подать от земли — длинные окна с мелкими стеклами. Повсюду приветливый свет. Двери открыты. Люди ходят без опаски... Хотелось спросить — да как же вы грабежа не боитесь? Неужто и разбойников у вас нет?

В купеческом доме, где стали,— опять — ничего не спрятано, хорошие вещи лежат открыто. Дурак не унесет. Петр, оглядывая темного дуба столовую, богато убранную картинами, посудой, турьими рогами, тихо сказал Алексашке:

— Прикажи всем настрою, если кто хоть на мелочь позарится,— повешу на воротах...

— И правильно, мин херц, мне и то боязно стало... Покуда не привыкнут, я велю карманы всем зашить... Ну, не дай бог с пьяных-то глаз...

The short sentences mirror what they see from the passing carriage and what first strikes the eye in the merchant's dining room. Clean streets, orderliness and security are not qualities of life to be found in Russia, it appears. Moreover, the conversational tone of this passage suggests how members of the party react to these sights. Idiomatic parlance, for example, "neuzhto i razboinikov u vas net," or "durak ne uneset" serves to emphasize to what degree the Russians are impressed by what they see in Koenigsberg. These impressions are further confirmed by the exchange between Peter and Menshikov; and what the Tsar says serves as another example of his imperious character.

The dainty homes and gardens of Holland, clean and well-kept, are noted with special interest by the Russians. Sailing along a canal, Peter turns to lecture those in his
What is important to note in the above paragraph are examples of old and new words used with vernacular expressions, a mixture which represents the changes in the language that were occurring at the time. For example, "zelo" is an obsolete adverb meaning "very," while the word "paradiz" represents the recent borrowing from European languages which entered the Russian language as part of the cultural westernization. "Skhodit' do vetru," on the other hand, is a purely Russian vernacular idiom of which the Tsar, it seems, could not rid himself.

Earlier, while visiting the Elector of Hanover and her daughter, Peter had voiced a similar complaint against Russian laziness, laxity, and obstinacy. But in making this statement, he inadvertantly displays once more his imperious nature. "They say of me that I spill much blood," he exclaims during dinner.

Так вы этому не верьте... Больше всего люблю... строить корабли... Галера "Принципиум" от мачты...
Again short and disjointed sentences, punctuated by gestures and facial expressions, reveal Peter's excitement and at the same time contribute to his characterization. His calloused hands and his reference to whipping with a knout expose graphically that duality in the Tsar's character which was mentioned earlier.

From such passages it becomes evident that Tolstoi attempts in this novel to demonstrate both the need for radical changes in all spheres of Russian life, and the belief that a strong individual was required to accomplish those changes. Prince Golitsyn's sophisticated solutions for the country's problems are shown to be ill-suited even for the task of stirring Russia in the direction of change. Moreover, his genteel nature prevents him from doing anything beyond writing a treatise aimed at raising Russia's economic and cultural level. Peter's strong, forceful and tempestuous personality, exacting obedience sternly as it did, when contrasted with that of the ineffectual Golitsyn, appears both appealing and the sort that could force the country to submit to change. But at the same time Tolstoi does not
ignore Peter's negative traits, which are best revealed through his passion for coarse, Bacchic amusements. His drunken revelries appear incomprehensible and cruel. His parades of cows, yelping dogs, and squealing pigs drawing wagons and sleighs filled with drunk and unconscious boiars who are forced to play the fool and accompany the young Tsar, only encourage the belief among the people that he is not an Orthodox tsar, but the Antichrist. The wretched host whose misfortune it is to receive Peter prepares for the event as if for his own funeral, for many do not survive the Tsar's social call:

Князя Белосельского за строптивость раздели нагишом и голым его гузном были куринные яйца в лохани. Боборыкина, в смех над тучностью его, протаскивали сквозь стулья, где невозможно и худому пролезть. Князю Волконскому свечу забили в проход и, зажиг, пели вокруг его ирмосы, покуда все не повалились со смеха. . . . Дворянин Иван Акакиевича Мясного надували мехом в задний проход, от чего он вскоре и помер. [242]

Then, citing notes from a diary kept by the Dutchman Jacob Noeman, who recorded Peter's visit to Holland, Tolstoi gives further examples of the Tsar's character, showing him to be not only cruel but often spiteful:

Когда Ройш снял простыню с разнятого для анатомии другого трупа, — царь заметил отвращение на лицах своих спутников и, гневно закричав на них, приказал им зубами брать и разрывать мускулы трупа... [339]

By using historical documents, such as the diary, and by describing how Peter caroused about Moscow, Tolstoi gives
ample evidence of the Tsar's negative qualities. But it is also important to note how the two foregoing excerpts differ, although both deal with the same aspect of Peter's character. The first, an integral part of the narrative, has syntax which is uncommon, by today's literary standard. By beginning most sentences with the direct object, Tolstoi reproduces the vernacular tone which once more is used to create the illusion of the past. The words "nagishom" and "golym... guznom" and "on vskolre i pomer" are well-suited to the coarse actions described in the paragraph. On the other hand, whenever Tolstoi incorporates in his narrative a speech or a written account given by a European, the syntax follows the common pattern, that is the sequence of subject, predicate and object, and the vocabulary is free of archaisms or substandard expressions.

From Europe Peter sends to Moscow more and more foreigners, who appear impudent to the Russians, and all sorts of jars and crates containing freaks of nature, stuffed birds, crocodiles, pieces of steel, wood, marble...

Народ перебивается с хлеба на квас, нииш полна Москва, разбойники — и те с голоду пухнут, а тут везут!.. А тут гладкие, дерзкие иноzemцы насакивают... Да уж не зашел ли у царя ум за разум? [341]

The mood of popular protest is expressed in simple language but with added folk sayings, "perebivat'sia s khleba na kvas" and "zashel um za razum," the hunger and the doubts about
the Tsar's sanity are made to appear widespread among the people.

When the revolt of the strel'tsy breaks out, they read aloud some of their grievances against Peter. They blame his friend Franz Lefort first for the initial defeat and then for the Pyrrhic victory at Azov. Tolstoi employs their written petition to add further to the historic atmosphere:

"Его ж, Франчишеки, умышленем всему народу чинится наглость, и брадобритие, и курение табаку во всесовершенное ниспровержение древнего благочестия..."

The long sentence, containing such a pompous phrase as "vsesovershennoe nisproverzhenie drevnego blagochestiiia," the Slavonicism "bradobritie" and the obsolete verb "chinit'sia," is meant to re-create the literary style of the period, a style sharply contrasting with the spoken language.

The Viennese ambassador to Moscow, Johann Korb, was witness to protracted executions, and Tolstoi quotes passages from Korb's diary for two reasons. First, as an eye-witness account of events viewed through the eyes of a western diplomat, it serves to emphasize the horror of the tortures and executions. Second, using excerpts from diaries is a convenient way of advancing the narrative by condensing events, and offering possible explanations and motives for
the Tsar's actions:

...27 октября... Эта казнь резко отличается от предыдущей. Она совершена различными способами и почти невероятными... Триста тридцать человек зараз обагрили кровью Красную площадь. Эта громадная казнь могла быть исполнена только потому, что все бояре, сенаторы царской Думы, дьяки — по повелению царя — должны были взяться за работу палача. Мнительность его крайне обострена; кажется, он подозревает всех в сочувствии к казненным мятежникам. Он придумал связать кровавой порукой всех бояр... Все эти высокородные господа явились на площадь, заранее дрожа от предстоящего испытания. Перед каждым из них поставили по преступнику. Каждый должен был произнести приговор стоящему перед ним и после исполнить оный, собственноручно обезглавив осужденного..."

The above paragraph is made to reflect the non-Russian memoirist. This is achieved principally through the use of contemporary literary language without any vernacular colouring. There is only a slight trace of affected diction, for example, "zaraz obagrili krov'iu," or "mnitel'nost' ego kraine obostrena," and "sviazat' krovavoj porukoij," which may be another method of identifying the author of the diary as a European. Thus, while a speech or a document composed by a Russian is given in the vernacular with occasional archaic Slavonicisms, the literary language of today is reserved for the non-Russians.

The novel contains just one exception to this practice, and that exception is meant to illustrate just how Europeanization was beginning to permeate the speech of some highly-placed Russians. The author's distant ancestor, Petr
Andreevich Tolstoi, was a successful courtier who travelled much in Europe and wholeheartedly embraced western culture. This is exhibited in his Russian speech, which now reflects the wordy and ornate style of the member of a European court:

The mention of Venus and Bacchus, and the references to General Fleming's approach to the fortifications of the Polish lady have none of the crude qualities of vernacular Russian, but rather echo the gracious and cultured speech of a European. Moreover, the subject matter and the manner of pausing over words suggest a deliberate imitation of salon conversation. Thus, P. A. Tolstoi is the only Russian character whose speech is stylized to sound like that of a foreigner.

In the first volume of the novel, Tolstoi traces the early life of Peter the Great, showing the milieu in which his character was moulded. While the Tsar is not glorified, he is depicted as an instrument by which the essential reforms in Russia would be accomplished. The last sentences of Book I already hint at the dawning of a new, Petrine Russia:
Unlike a historian, Tolstoi does not deal with the many separate reforms that Peter introduced. Instead, the remaining two books of Petr Pervyi deal more with the spiritual effect of Peter's actions on Russian society. As a consequence, fictitious characters occupy an important place in the novel, but by no means do they infringe upon Peter's central position. "In my novel the central figure is Peter I," wrote Tolstoi. "The other figures who accompany Peter in the novel, depending on their relative importance, are depicted in lesser detail and clarity." The greatest amount of detail is devoted to two fictitious families, the Brovkins and the Buinosovs, but even they act primarily as a foil to the Tsar.

The peasant Ivashka Brovkin and his family serve as a symbol of the merging of the old and the new in Peter's Russia. His son Aleshka, who as a boy sold piroshki in the streets of Moscow with Menshikov, later rises in the ranks of the Preobrazhensk regiment and in this way helps to raise his entire family in the social scale. In addition, Peter, acting as a matchmaker, comes to the Brovkin household and on behalf of their former master, Vasilii Volkov, arranges his marriage to San'ka Brovkina. This is one of several
examples of Tolstoi's narrative skill by which historical and fictional characters are brought together. Moreover, such episodes vividly present the secondary figure while they also add to the impression of Peter developing in the mind of the reader:

In this dramatic scene Tolstoi illustrates Peter's free association with persons drawn from every social stratum, as well as his adherence to the ancient tradition of bartering for a bride. His brusque manner of speaking gives us yet another example of his vociferous character. Brovkin's wetting his pants is also a graphic illustration of a muzhik's fear of the Tsar. But by the fact that he is
prevented from kneeling before Peter, the reader is informed of the new ordinance forbidding the Byzantine custom of prostrating oneself before a sovereign.

Gradually the peasant Brovkin rises, first as a supplier of hay for the Preobrazhensk regiment, and then as the owner of a textile mill. After Peter's initial defeat at Narva, Brovkin is found among the wealthy купцы who finance the formation of a new army. His daughter San'ka is transformed into Aleksandra Ivanovna, the боярыня Volkova, a nobelman's wife who eagerly accepts the western life-style. Though ultimately she becomes a great success in the highest European circles — so much so that Tolstoi even planned to devote a whole chapter to her visit to Paris — she also exemplifies the amusing effect produced by the decreed adoption of western culture:

— Это мужик, с коровьими ногами — сатир... Вы, Ольга, напрасно косоротитесь: у него — лист фиговый, — так всегда пишут. Купидон хочет колоть ее стрелой... Она, несчастная, плачет, — свет не мил. Сердечный друг сделал ей амуру и уплыл — видите — парус... Называется — "Ариадна брошенная"... Надо бы вам это все заучить. Кавалеры постоянно теперь стали спрашивать про греческих-то богов. Это — не прошлый год. [467]

The reader can understand from the topic of conversation that already some changes have taken effect. But there is humour in this scene which is achieved through the vernacular language used in a gawky way to describe such terms from classical antiquity as "satyr" and "cupid," and to render
gentle melancholy as "svet ne mil." In contrast, to explain the painting of "Ariadne Forsaken" with the words "serdechnyi drug sdelal ei amur i upyl" creates a feeling that this is a recitation of a lesson, and the French word "amour" is used to raise the quality of the speaker's language. Similarly, social manners which have been equally brusquely forced upon higher society appear in Tolstoi's depiction as clumsy movements still lacking the graceful ease and gentility that they had been intended to demonstrate. Says San'ka to the boiarystšrn@Bułnosevs:

— Презанте мово младшего брата Артамошу.

Девы лениво покивали высокими напудренными прическами. Артамон по всей науке понялся, потопал ногой, помахал рукой, будто полоскал белье. Санька представляла: "Княжна Антонина, княжна Олька, княжна Наталья". Каждая дева, поднявшись, присела, — перед каждой. Артамон пополоскал рукой. Осторожно сел к столу. Зажал руки между коленями. На скаках загорелись пятна. С тоской поднял глаза на сестру. Санька угрожающе сдвинула брови.

— Как часто делаете плеций? — запинаясь, спросил он Наталью. Она, невнятно прошептала. Ольга бойко ответила:

—Третьего дня танцевала у Нарышкиных, три раза платье меняла. Такой сюжет, такая жара была. А вас отчего никогда не видно?

— Молод еще.

Санька сказала:

— Батюшка боится — забалуется. Вот женим, тогда пускай... Но танцевать он ужасно ловкий... Не глядите, что робеет... Ему по-французски заговорить, — не знаешь, куда глаза девать. [467-468]

It is evident from the fact that these movements are accomplished "po vsei nauke" that they are still quite
deliberate actions, lacking the spontaneity of the Europeans. Movements described by such words as "potopol nogoi" and "popoloskal rukoi" call to mind movements and actions totally unrelated to elegant gestures, and this makes the entire scene comical. The awkward mixture of French with Russian idiomatic speech adds to the comedy of the situation, as do the grumblings of the parents who are looking on: "воля царская! — тянуться за Европой, а добра большого не жди таскать по домам девок." This brief reference to a transgression against the ancient Domostroi (household order) segregation of the sexes reminds the reader once again of Karamzin's criticisms that have been mentioned earlier in the present study in connection with the changes in Russian social customs as decreed by Peter. However, Tolstoi's comical descriptions of the traditional customs and manners suggest a clear vindication of the Tsar's social reforms.

Representative of the old established nobility — of whom the majority followed Peter's various decrees only reluctantly — is the boiar Roman Buinosov. With his first appearance, Tolstoi shows some of the cultural changes that have entered a boiar's life in Peter's Russia. What follows is perhaps one of the finest passages in the novel, one which exemplifies Tolstoi's graphic language, and one which characterizes very well the attitudes of the old nobility toward the new reforms. The excerpt given below can be
divided into three sections. The first describes the boiar just after he has awakened, as he is sitting on the edge of his bed and staring out the window. From this point Tolstoi departs into the past to describe how Buinosov's day would have begun in the pre-Petrine period. Finally, the third paragraph reveals Buinosov's thoughts as they occur to him, and the reader is thus able to look into the boiar's mind. The choice of words too, and for example, the object of his disdain — a Dutch painting of a scantily-dressed woman — are calculated to make the reader laugh at the coarse past, and once more to justify the Tsar's Europeanization of Russian society. The informal tone of the language creates an atmosphere suggestive of the past.
In general it must be observed that although the Brovkins and Buinosovs receive approximately the same amount of attention from Tolstoi, they serve different purposes in Petr Pervyi. The Brovkins exemplify the rapid rise, through service to the state and through education, from the lowest social level to one of the most powerful. Buinosov, on the other hand, who has all the fine qualities of an Oblomov, finds that in the new order his influence and importance have been greatly reduced. While Brovkin's fortunes continue to rise, Buinosov suffers the humiliation of playing the Tsar's fool, and their respective attitudes toward the new order are also transmitted to their sons. The contrast between the young men shows best the modernization of Russia where hereditary, unearned power and prestige are replaced by the achievement of social status through the power of learning. The youngest Brovkin, Artamosha (who marries Natal'ia Buinosova, incidentally), surprises Peter with the many foreign languages he has learned, causing the Tsar to exclaim, "I shall grant titles for intelligence." By
contrast, the Buinosov's youngest son prefers playing the balalaika with the muzhiks in the stables to studying mathematics, which his mother fears will only hurt his head. Like Fonvizin's Mitrofanushka, Mishka Buinosov is not encouraged to study. Growls the old Prince Buinosov:

Все равно маво Мишку математке не научишь, поставлена Москва без математики, жили, слава богу, пятьсот лет без математики — лучше нынешнего. [669]

Buinosov's appearances throughout the novel serve to mark the progress of various cultural changes. To supplant Russian customs, Peter issues decrees governing the most minute details of everyday life. Not only does Buinosov suffer the discomfort of western dress, but he is obliged to brush his teeth in the mornings, drink coffee for breakfast, put up with a German major-domo, and finally travel with the entire family beyond Moscow's city limits to distant Voronezh, a feat unprecedented in the family's history.

Understandably, the established nobility, jealously guarding their privileged social positions, bemoan the appearance in their midst of some parvenu intruder. One such person whose meteoric rise is the cause of much envy — and fear as well — is Aleksashka or, as he comes to be known, Aleksandr Danilovich Menshikov. But although he is Peter's constant companion, he receives considerably less attention from Tolstoi than do either the Brovkins or the
Buinosovs. More is seen of Menshikov in the first book — where he is a homeless urchin selling piroshki in Moscow — than in the rest of the novel, where he becomes a mere adjunct to Peter. Their first meeting, described as an informal exchange between two boys, serves to characterize the entire history of the relationship between Menshikov and the Tsar. Aleksashka brashly demands:

— Я смотрю, — ты не наш ли царь. А? и ё.
— Ну — царь. А тебе что?
— Как что... А вот ты взял бы да и принес нам сахарных пряников... Ей богу, сбегай, принесешь — одну хитрость тебе покажу. — Алексашка снял шапку, из-за подкладки выташил иглу. Гляди — игла али нет? Хочешь — иглу сквозь щеку протащить с ниткой, и ничего не будет...
— Еще бы тебе царь бегал за пряниками, — ворчливо сказал он, — А за деньги иглу протащишь?
— За серебряную денегу три раза протащу, и ничего не будет. [63]

Throughout the novel Menshikov continues to use his position vis-à-vis Peter for personal advantage. Through graft and profitable partnerships he accumulates wealth and power. But even though he shares Peter's desire for reforming and westernizing Russia, in their personal relations Menshikov is not above spying on the Tsar. The beginning of the Marta Rabbe affair can serve to illustrate how little he has changed in some six hundred pages, or twenty years after their first meeting on the Iauza river:

Меньшиков видел, что мин херя весьма нуждается в
That Peter has changed, has matured toward the end of the novel, has developed a sense of responsibility, is demonstrated through a contrast with the same Menshikov, who is presented as still very much the happy-go-lucky rascal. At the siege of Narva, for example, Menshikov loses the honour of leading the first attack against the Swedish fortress through his foolhardy behaviour. Says Peter angrily:

— Запомни, Данилыч, истинный бог — увижу еще твоё дурацкое щегольство, шкуру спушу плеткой, .. Срамота! Все еще не можешь забыть базары московские! Все шутить хочешь, как у меня за столом! А на тебя Европа смотрит, дурак! Молчи, не отвечай.

The tendentious descriptions of two other monarchs, Augustus II of Poland and Charles XII of Sweden, provide another contrast to Peter. In this respect, Tolstoi may be faulted for drawing these historical personages almost as caricatures, devoid of any redeeming qualities. Essentially,
he portrays the king of Poland as a mindless popinjay, and
the king of Sweden as an obsessed war-monger. The reader
sees Augustus as a king more concerned with his own appear-
ance, more interested in attractive ladies, in good food and
fine wine, than in the exhausting business of war against
Sweden. Obliged to lead his troops into Courland, he
suffers from the discomforts of provincial life, the dreary
weather, the plain provincial women and the boring provincial
gentry. In short, Augustus is on the verge of melancholia.
Writing in a satiric tone, Tolstoi characterizes Augustus
through his speech and mannerisms:

The silence of the barons and the rise and fall of the
"Slavic spread" of the baronesses, contrasted with the eloquent
speech and gestures of the king, in the best French fashion,
speech is conveyed by an elevated and literary tone in the contemporary Russian. In each of his appearances, Augustus is portrayed as a man with great savoir-faire which is, nonetheless, somehow out of place in the immediate milieu. He would have been better suited as a patron of the arts, a king whose court could have been no less cultivated than the courts at Versailles or Vienna, were it not for Charles XII, whom Augustus contemptuously describes as "that ferocious urchin in a dusty frock-coat."

But it is the figure of the Swedish king that is the main target of Tolstoi's rather pointed satire. Believing himself to be a military genius, an equal of Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar, Charles follows an extremely Spartan routine, and any deviation from that order, or any insubordination to his will, drives him into a rage:

Such a lengthy explanation of the word berserk and the suggested parallel between Charles and some frenzied Norsemen
from the Middle Ages is hardly designed to be complimentary
to the king. After his victory over Peter at Narva in 1700,
Charles turns against Augustus, not because it is a sound
strategic move, but simply because there is more glory in
battling against Saxon troops than in pursuing Peter's
"flea-bitten" army.

Whereas Augustus is ridiculed as a somewhat precious
person who suffered from uncouth company, cheap wine, and
the similar deprivations of a military campaign, Charles is
satirized as a man literally enamoured with everything that
has to do with war. The following excerpt illustrates his
militaristic nature. Awakened by the crowing of a cock,
Charles continues to lie on his cot listening to the
thrilling sounds of a waking military camp. Suddenly,
The terse notations made by Charles, the appearance of some miserable lapdog in his camp, and finally the decision to castrate Neptune, all point to the disdain in which the Swedish king holds everyone and everything which distracts his men (or his horses) from military affairs.

Finally, Charles, as described by one of his own generals, is portrayed as absolutely indifferent to the way his troops are fed, and completely unmoved by the death of any of his men. But such an extreme portrayal is far from giving an accurate picture of a King who was, in fact, a great military strategist. It is obvious that Tolstoi characterizes Augustus and Charles in such a deliberately distorted manner in order to enhance the image of Peter as a monarch who involved himself in almost every aspect of civilian and military life. For example, on the eve of the Swedish victory at Narva in 1700, it appears that Peter knows that he will lose the battle. He confesses to Menshikov:

— Не с того конца взялись... Никуда это дело еще не годится. Чтоб здесь пушка выстрелила, ее надо в Москве зарядить. . . .

— Сказать со шпагой — последнее дело... [599]

Foreseeing the rout at Narva, Peter flees to Novgorod where at once he begins to prepare a new army. To replace
his lost cannons, the Tsar brazenly order that church bells be hauled down and melted into new artillery. Then with the main enemy force somewhere in Poland, his new army receives training in actual combat during small raids against Swedish positions.

How much the times have changed since Peter's reign began may be observed by comparing the descriptions of Moscow streets at the beginning of the novel and toward the end. The first excerpt is reminiscent of the Moscow described by Tolstoy in the story "Povest' smutnogo vremeni." The streets are noisy and dirty, filled with pushing, shoving, quarrelling, fighting people, and frightened, rearing horses:

Peter's various reforms and military levies emptied
Moscow of much of its population, and the new description of the old capital is exactly opposite to the one above. The contrast is all the more evident since Tolstoi specifically draws attention to the absence of those noisy and colourful elements which he had described originally. Instead of a market square where waves of people stream past, we now have deserted streets where only homeless dogs wander sniffing here and there the garbage strewn about:

But while there is a contrast in the descriptions of the two Moscows, it is important to draw attention yet again to the general unity of linguistic style in the novel. Both
passages contain examples of vernacular speech (for example, глядел по сторонам: ох ты!, продрались за Любянку, выбросили за ненадобностью за ворота, царь Петр, за отъездом, не неволит его..., скобить бороду), which maintain a flavour of the past. The depiction of the two scenes above also contains humour. It is created at the expense of the disorderly, even chaotic, life of the past, and in the second excerpt at the expense of the momentary quiet enjoyed by the boyar who dreads the establishment of a western life-style.

In this new Russia, the Brovkins and Menshikov are representatives of common folk who have been able to grasp the opportunities offered by Peter's reforms and rise from their lowly positions. But what of the masses? How does Tolstoi deal with them?

In the 1920's and 1930's, Soviet writers of historical fiction were expected to illustrate the leading role of the people in the historical process. This was to be in contrast to pre-revolutionary writers, who were referred to as "dvorianski-burzhuzanye," or writers from the bourgeoisie-nobility, who, it was said, reduced historical fiction to stories about tsars, princes and military heroes. In such works the real movers of history, that is the people, were all but ignored. But in this very matter of depicting the people as movers of history, Petr Pervyi must stand apart from other historical novels of that period because the
mover of history remains the monarch. Post-war monographs on A. Tolstoi concede to the critics of the 1930's that he does not write much about the oppression of the people, but at the same time they now add that he does not misrepresent the relation between the people and the Tsar. But it is important to add that instead of a heroic struggle of the people against tsarism, Tolstoi describes their opposition to Peter and his reforms in such a way that it often seems comical, and serves as yet another illustration of Russia's backwardness. In fact, the two expressions of massive resistance to Peter in the novel, namely, the revolt of the strel'tsy and of the self-immolating Old Believers who call Peter the Antichrist, are shown to be politically reactionary actions.

How Tolstoi would have written about the Bulavin uprising, which was to have appeared in the unfinished third volume, is difficult to say. But a conjecture can be made on the basis of an important discovery by A. V. Alpatov. In Tolstoi's notebook Alpatov found a list of names that the author was preparing to use for cossack characters who were to appear in that uprising. Among the names was a certain Bludov, which also happens to be the surname of the dragoon who was, as Peter discovers in the last pages, the soldier who captured and later sold Marta Rabbe to Sheremet'ev! Perhaps by introducing such a personal link between the Tsar
and the Bulavin cossack uprising, Tolstoi meant to blunt the political significance of that popular revolt against autocracy.

Be that as it may, the fact remains that the resistance of the people to Peter's reforms does not indicate, as it did in some earlier works (such as the first of Tolstoi's plays about Peter), a national resistance against capricious Europeanization. Instead, Tolstoi draws a picture of general discontent but shows no direct confrontation between the people and the Tsar. Furthermore, the people's opposition to Peter and his innovations is depicted only through examples which cannot evoke the reader's sympathy. For instance, the Russian merchants cannot understand and are therefore suspicious of the new wares that they must carry in their shops:

— А табак? В каких книгах читано — человеку глотать дым? У кого дым-то из пасти? Чаво? За сорок за восемь тысяч рублей все города и Сибирь вся отданы на откуп англичанину Кармартенову — продавать табак. И указ, чтобы эту адскую траву-никотиану курили... Чьих рук это дело? А чай, а кофей? А картовъ, — тьфу, будь она проклята! Похоть антихристова, — картовъ! Все это зелье — из-за моря, и торгуют им у нас лютеране и католики... Чай кто пьет — отчается... Кто кофей пьет — у того на душе ков... Да — тьфу! — сдохну лучше, чем в лавку себе возьму такое... [370]

Ukaz follows and the people's grumbling continues.

Peter decrees, for example, that all Russians must now celebrate the New Year not on the first of September, but as the
Europeans do, on January first. In addition, the years are to be counted since the birth of Christ, and not since the creation of the world, and therefore, starting with January first next, the year shall be 1700. Moreover, following the European custom, each New Year shall be greeted with merry-making, the exchange of visits and of gifts. As if these changes were not enough, Peter decrees a new fashion in dress:

Although in these two excerpts Tolstoi reveals the people's ignorance, their deep-rooted suspicion and a fear bordering on xenophobia, he does so in a way that satirizes the ancient views and beliefs. The last sentence, "How could one not believe such words," emphasizes the satiric quality of this tableau. The vernacular language with which
European staples that Peter introduces to Russia — tobacco, tea, coffee, and potatoes — are cursed adds to the humour since they appear to the Russians as fruits of carnal degradation offered by the Antichrist. Furthermore, the depiction of an awe-struck crowd gaping at the newly prescribed fashion of dress, and even the tone of the decree, "kogda stanet ot morozov legche," creates a comical picture. The whispered rumour passing through the crowd, together with the soldier's explanation of how Russian women will soon have to wear whale-bones underneath their strange German dresses, further adds to the comedy of the whole situation.

In slightly more serious vein, Tolstoi writes about two men, Andriushka Golikov and Fed'ka Umoisia Griaz'iu, who symbolize those peasants who bear the full burden of Peter's reforms. Golikov, an icon-painter from Palekh, is a sensitive seeker after beauty, truth, and the meaning of life. He flees to the north to the Old Believers, but fasts, beatings, and burnings soon drive him back to Petrine Russia. There he is pressed into the army; but after deserting he is sentenced to work on the construction of St. Petersburg. Fortunately he is able to attract the Tsar's attention to his artistic talent, and earns his freedom and a promise to be sent abroad to study.

How Fed'ka Umoisia Griaz'iu differs from his friend
may be gathered from the following exchange. Says Golikov:

— Федя, вот что я тебе скажу один раз... Живет во мне сила, ну такая сила — больше человеческой... Слушаю — ветер свистит по стеблям и — понимаю, так понимаю все, — грудь разрывает... Гляжу — заря вечерняя, сумрак, и — все понимаю, так бы и разлился по небу с этой зарей, такая во мне печаль и радость...

— У нас в деревне был дурачок, гусиный пастух, — сказал Федька, ковыряя стебелем в рассыпающихся углях, — такое же нес, бывало, понять ничего нельзя...

While Golikov is a dreamer who by sheer chance has been able to escape his miserable condition, the sombre Fed'ka, formerly a monastery serf, a muzhik already whipped and broken, is destined for an equally unhappy future. The last time he is mentioned is on the festive occasion of choosing a name for the future capital. Fed'ka is seen shackled and freshly branded on the forehead, driving piles into the soggy banks of the Neva. From the way in which Tolstoi finishes his second volume of Petr Pervyi one may presume that Fed'ka did nor survive the works at St. Petersburg.

However, Fed'ka Umoisia Griaz'iu fulfills another function in Petr Pervyi. Tolstoi employs elements of folklore which are contained in many sayings, songs, and customs. For example, the marriage ceremony which unites Peter and his first wife Evdokiiia demonstrates how common were such traditions at all social levels before westernization removed the domostroi practices from the life of the upper classes. Thus, the marriage of a tsar included a symbolic custom that
was also shared by the people:

Наталья Кирилловна и Ромодановский, Ларион и Евстиняя подняли образа. Петр и Евдокия, стоя рядом, кланялись до полу. Благословив, Ларион Лопухин отстегнул от пояса плеть и ударил дочь по спине три раза — больно.

— Ты, дочь моя, знала отцовскую плеть передаю тебя мужу, ныне не я за ослушенье — быть тебе будет муж сей плетью...

И, поклоняясь, передал плеть Петру. [135-136]

But what is probably one of the best examples of Tolstoi's artistry in reproducing the feeling of the past can be found in the following reproduction of oral folklore. After the Swedish victory at Narva, Andriushka and Fed'ka desert from the retreating Russian army. Being a wily muzhik, Fed'ka, dragging poor Andriushka along, is able to secure food and shelter by giving a captivating account of the Russian defeat:

— Утрась прямо айда на усадьбу, наврем боярину — сколько он хочет, глядь и покормят на людской, — хрипит Федька. На богатых дворах он всегда начинал рассказы про нарвскую беду, — врал, что было и чего не было, и в особенности до слез доводил слушателей (бывало, и сам помещик зайдет от скуки в людскую и пригорюнится, подперев щеку) — до слез доводил рассказом про то, как король Карл, побив неисчислимые тысячи православного воинства, ехал по полю битвы...

"...Лицом светел, в левой ручке — держава, в правой ручке — вострая сабля, сам — в золоте, серебре, конь под ним — сивый, горячий, по брюху в человечьей крови, коня под узды ведут два мужественных генерала... И наезжает король на меня... А я лежу, конечно, в груди у меня пуля... Около меня шведы как мешки накиданы — убитые. Наехал на меня король, остановился и спрашивает генералов: "Что за
In Fed'ka's fabrication, Tolstoi reproduces some features of a folk-tale. The king is dressed in gold and silver, and is mounted on a fiery steed stepping over mounds of dead combatants. The narrator, Fed'ka, has fought bravely for his Orthodox faith, suffered a wound in his breast, but since he has killed so many of the enemy the king rewards him, and sends him off with a typical moral ending: "Quarrel not with God, sue not a rich man, and war not against the Swedes."

Peter's embryonic industry receives much less attention in the novel, and its accompanying cruelty and evil are mentioned by Tolstoi only in passing. With help from Menshikov, for example, the old man Brovkin becomes the owner of one of the Moscow mills where, because of the shortage of men, workers are obtained from prisons of the Secret Chancellerly. And, continues Tolstoi,
Толстой could not wholly ignore this side of Peter's reforms, but at the same time he could not dwell too much upon the evils that went hand in hand with early industrialization without diminishing the importance of the enforced westernization. That is why the above description is so brief and general. While the reader is able to sense the savage determination by which people were kept at work, Tолстой deliberately keeps all the characters away from these centres of activity, so that the reader cannot be distracted by calls upon his sympathy for any character in particular. On the contrary, Tолстой gives a rather extensive description of Golikov's miserable life among the Old Believers who preferred to be burned alive rather than suffer damnation by submitting to Peter's reforms. Indeed,
Golikov fled from Peter's opponents in the north and through his talent as an artist earned freedom and the Tsar's praise. Moreover, when the Tsar meets with peasants who are building the new capital, he is shown to be paternalistic in his concern for their well-being, and in his interest in how they are fed, clothed, and treated when ill! Thus, the final impression of the Tsar in his relation to the people comes close to the image of what may be considered a benevolent despot. Asks one muzhik of the Tsar:

— Пытаешь правду?.. Что ж, правду говорить не боимся, мы ломаные... Конечно, в старопрежние годы народ жил много легче. Даней и поборов таких не было... А ныне — все деньги да деньги давай... . . . А последние года еще, — щедра, в Петербург, тебе стать в лето три смены, сорок тысяч земских людей... Легко это? У нас с каждого десятого двора берут человека, — с топором, с лопатой, с поперечной пилой. С остальных девяти дворов собирают ему кормовые деньги — с каждого двора по тринадцати алтын и две денежки... А их надо найти... . . . Сыновей моих ты взял в драгуны, дома — старуха да четыре девчонки — мал мала меньше... Конечно, государь, тебе виднее — к чему...

— Это верно, что мне виднее! — жестко проговорил Петр Алексеевич. [706-707]

"Eto verno, chto mne vidnee," or as it may be loosely translated, "I know better," adequately summarizes Peter's position vis-à-vis the people. There is an obvious suggestion here that even though the people do not understand the why or wherefore of his various decrees, he is confidently working for their good and that of the country. That is why Tolstoi does not show the masses suffering directly from his
rule, and the terrible conditions in the textile mills and foundries and at the construction site of the new capital are only briefly sketched. On the other hand, all those who come into direct contact with Peter:— the Brovkin family, Andriushka Golikov, and of course Menshikov — receive much more attention. These are peasants who have succeeded in rising to high positions through service to the state, a situation that would have been almost impossible before Peter's time. But it is important to keep in mind that their work is not a conscious effort to improve Russia. In fact, Tolstoi uses all his characters in _Petr Pervyi_ as a foil to Peter, who is always the driving force behind the policy of reform. In this respect, the reader may regard the people as playing a passive role, while the central figure plays an active one. That is, Peter assigns and directs the work performed by these various individuals, inspects it and, as in the case of Menshikov, personally administers punishment for dishonesty. Thus, in the final analysis, the mover of history is Peter the Great.

* * *

"I know better" can be considered the central thesis in _Petr Pervyi_. Everything and everyone is deployed around the figure of Peter I who, accepting the challenge as one whose time has come, works to change a mediaeval Muscovy into a European state. The gulf which separated pre-Petrine
Rus' and Europe was evident to many people before Peter embarked on his policy of westernization. But while changes were desired by many, none could ever turn the country to face in the direction of the necessary reforms. Peter's character, which developed outside the constraining Byzantine pomp and ceremony of the tsarist court, proved to be exactly the sort that could break the resistance entrenched in long-established customs, and force the country to submit to his will. That is, to accomplish the changes which were demanded by historical circumstances, an exceptionally strong personality was required. The emphasis here must be on force of character, on will-power, rather than on goodwill or intelligence. The career of Prince Golitsyn illustrates the case of a highly-educated man full of noble purpose, who recognizes the difficulties which have beset Muscovy, who has excellent proposals for correcting them, and yet is ineffective and powerless against the existing order because he has none of the strength of personality, the consuming urge to bend all to his will that forms Peter's chief trait. Peter succeeded, as Karamzin had noted, only because of his tyrannical subordination of everyone and everything to the needs of the state, and his dogged resolve to transform Muscovite Rus' assured the success of what might well be termed a revolution. In these circumstances, the Tsar's personal faults, while neither denied nor concealed in the novel, can
be tolerated in view of the fact that he saved Russia from ruin. Furthermore, the contrast between Peter's life of service on the one hand, and the dandyism of Augustus and Charles' selfish pursuit of military glory on the other, serves to mitigate Karamzin's criticism and to brighten the image of the Tsar.

Moreover, Tolstoi's conception of Peter does not correspond with the Slavophile view that the Tsar stood in direct opposition to the people's national traditions. Nor does the Peter in the novel have much in common with Boris Pilniak's Tsar, who is depicted as blindly and chaotically following the west. And certainly Tolstoi's Peter is far from resembling D. Merezhkovskii's Tsar-Antichrist. In contrast to such portrayals of Peter I, Tolstoi paints a figure thrown up by the currents of history, in response to demands of the period, and yet one whose strength of character very soon began to affect the course of history. Essentially, then, in Tolstoi's view, Peter was not only an agent of historical forces, he was one of those rare individuals at whose hands history takes shape.

As D. D. Blagoi wrote, the novel Petr Pervyi is one of the finest examples of historical fiction in all Russian literature. This position of the novel may be attributed largely to Tolstoi's graphic language, which conveys so easily and so well the feeling of a past era. Having learnt
from Novombergskii's *Slovo i delo gosudarevy* to reduce the Russian language to its basic, vernacular level, that is, freeing it from both Church Slavonicisms and European borrowings; and by altering the syntax, by frequently inserting dialogues, Tolstoi keeps alive a sense of the past throughout the novel. With appropriate costumes and furnishings added to the language, Tolstoi prepares the stage for the appearance of characters. He is always careful to control their behaviour, their thinking and their speech so that everything should correspond to the Petrine period. All these elements together create that oftentimes elusive historical atmosphere. For this success, it is ultimately Tolstoi's personal experiences and his sensitivity toward them that are responsible. Wrote Aleksei Tolstoi:

I think that if I had been born in a city and not in the country, and did not know from my childhood a thousand things, that wintry blizzard in the steppes, in the decrepit villages, the yuletide, the izbas, fortune-telling, skazki, the lighted splinters, the storage sheds with their special odour, then probably I could not have described old Moscow. Pictures of old Moscow lived in me with my childhood memories. And from this appeared the sensation of the epoch, its materialization.51

This is why the novel succeeds so notably in relating the image of the country with the image of its central character. All the secondary characters, both imaginary and real, serve essentially to add to the characterization of Peter at the same time as they make Peter's Russia living and real. It
is the creation of a world of fiction that has full historic authenticity, inhabited by people among whom towers one of the most remarkable historical personalities of the world, that makes this novel a great work of historical fiction. On the occasion of Tolstoi's twenty-fifth anniversary as a writer, in 1933, Maksim Gorkii said of the novel, "Petr is the first real historical novel in our literature."
CHAPTER IV

THE PLAYS

It is natural that a prolific writer such as Tolstoi, with his heightened interest in history, should have explored the dramatic genre as a literary medium. He had gained a considerable reputation as a playwright even before the revolution, but his first historical drama was inspired by his original hostility to the coup in October 1917. Written in Odessa in 1918, Smert' Dantona (The Death of Danton) was Tolstoi's most poignant expression of revulsion against the direction taken by the Bolshevik leadership. Soon after this, he wrote a comedy, Liubov' — kniga zolotaia (Love is a Golden Book), which, though this too was written in Odessa, dealt not with contemporary issues, but instead with the gay and carefree life of the eighteenth-century Russian gentry.

The theme of Peter the Great occupies perhaps the major portion of Tolstoi's complete works. After the first stories were written at the time of the revolution, almost a whole decade passed before he returned to the Petrine theme, this time dealing with it in a historical drama entitled Na
dybe (On the Rack). This was immediately followed by Volumes I and II of the novel Petr Pervyi, and then in 1935 there appeared a second version of Na dybe, now called Petr I. For reasons peculiar to that decade in Soviet Russian literary history, Tolstoi re-wrote the play again in 1938. Finally, during the years of the second world war, he wrote a play which he described as a personal response to the sufferings of his country at the hands of the invading Nazis. This was a two-part drama about Ivan the Terrible. It is a reflection of the changing political climate that the plays were written at that time.

The task confronting a writer of historical fiction becomes more difficult in the dramatic genre than in the novel. The reason for this difficulty, as Tolstoi explained, is that in a novel or any other major piece of prose, characters have time to develop, to come to life as it were, and, following the logic of their own development, to act almost independently of the author's wishes. This is an effect difficult to achieve in a play, where physical limitations of time and space force the writer to compress development, climax and resolution of the story into a single performance. In an article, "How I Write," Tolstoi noted the difference between a novel and a play:

It is different in the theatre. We have here the consideration of time. The tragedy of life, world events, the broadest canvas must unfold in one hour
and forty-five minutes of reading. It is essential to work your brains decisively. First, the playwright must know in advance the beginning of the first act, and the ending of the last, the finale. He must know precisely what is the pivot of the intrigue, the interrelations of the characters, and the fate of the person (or group of persons) who expresses the author's will, passion, and purpose.  

We must therefore see how Tolstoi himself "works his brains decisively."

A. Smert' Dantona.

As noted in preceding chapters, Aleksei Tolstoi greeted the February revolution enthusiastically. But growing disorders in the summer of 1917 aroused in him a feeling of apprehension, and it was at this time that a parallel between the French revolution and the current events occurred to him. For example, he had attended a meeting in the Bolshoi Theatre at which Kerensky had given a speech threatening the use of brute force to protect the Provisional Government. Tolstoi responded to Kerensky's speech with an article published in Russkoe Slovo on August 20, 1917, in which he wrote:

Exactly one hundred and twenty years ago these same words, guarding the republic from the guns of kings and the daggers of underground assassins, were pronounced in the Tuileries theatre. And then, just as now, the threat of terror came not from the person of the dictator, but only through him the people growled, tormented by treason, hunger and blood.

It may be stretching the parallel too far to suggest that
Tolstoi thought Kerensky to be the Danton of the Russian revolution. But it is certainly very clear that his thinking was moving in the direction of constructing some kind of parallel between the two revolutions.

At the request of the Korsh Theatre in Moscow, he began to re-work Dantons Tod (Danton's Death), a play by the German dramatist Georg Buchner (1813-1837). Tolstoi's play, Smert' Dantona was completed in Odessa on September 25, 1918. Though it remained in essence Dantons Tod, the Russian playwright shifted the emphasis slightly so that the overall impression had a more direct significance for the Moscow viewer in 1918. In the brief introduction to Smert' Dantona he wrote:

In the writing of this play I used, in addition to historical material, Buchner's play of the same name. From it I took the plans for the first three scenes and the concluding words of Camille's wife. The stimulus and then the pathos for my play was seeing in the characters of the distant past our own revolution, but more bloody and more terrible.4

Smert' Dantona was staged briefly in October 1918, but its anti-revolutionary tenor was not tolerated by the new authorities and the play was taken off the stage. In an unsigned article entitled "K sniatiiu 'Smerti Dantona'" (For the Removal of The Death of Danton), Izvestiia for October 20, 1918 fumed:

Either supporting or arousing among the complacent population antipathetic feelings toward the
proletariat, which is gathering all its strength for the struggle, is considered an anti-revolutionary act. In this sense, A. Tolstoi's rendition of the play *The Death of Danton* and its performance by the Korsh theatre group is to be considered an anti-revolutionary act. . . . An anniversary date is approaching. The Russian proletariat is preparing to immortalize one of its forebears in the struggle, Robespierre. But the Korsh theatre offers Moscow workers a Robespierre as found in *The Death of Danton*. This consideration alone ought to be sufficient for the theatre to remove this play before it is ordered to do so. 5

Although Robespierre is no longer presented as a hero, Soviet commentary to the play, some half a century later, remains fundamentally unchanged, as can be gleaned from any monograph on A. N. Tolstoi. The prime objection to *Smert' Dantona* is based on ideological grounds. It is considered to lack historical verisimilitude simply because Tolstoi has tried to draw in it a direct analogy between the French and the Russian revolutions. This is a political *faux pas* since by Soviet standards the two revolutions are ideologically incompatible. Furthermore, what Tolstoi has done with this play is to reduce the entire significance of the revolution to a futile and chaotic whirlwind. As he wrote in 1917:

*The revolution only begins by toppling tyranny. Its further development is a series of popular waves, one sweeping aside another... From philosophical heights, the Revolution drops to city squares.*

6

In this respect only a cursory acquaintance with Georg Buchner and his *Dantons Tod* will suffice to establish the difference between the original and Tolstoi's *Smert'*
Buchner's play, written in 1835, seeks to demonstrate the tragedy of political idealism, and in this sense, it too may be interpreted as a strongly anti-revolutionary drama. G. Lukacs, the Marxist critic whose view concerning this play is echoed in the USSR, euphemistically explains, for example, that Danton lacked the proper understanding of the revolutionary process and that is why he was swept away. But though Dantons Tod can be easily accepted as a straight political drama, there is reason to interpret it as something more than just that, especially if one were to take into consideration Buchner's concepts of history and historical fiction. As he wrote to his parents:

In my eyes the dramatic poet is more than a writer of history. But he stands above the latter in that he recreates history and instead of giving a bald narration transplants us directly into the life of another age. He gives us characters, not characteristics; human figures, not description. His highest task is to get as close as he can to history as it actually happened.

In other words, the dramatist, like the historian, must be impartial and must faithfully reproduce those personalities and events which comprise his play. But while in actual fact the conflict between Danton and Robespierre was founded on political grounds, Buchner tries to emphasize a clash of personalities in the struggle between a moderate who wanted to stop the revolutionary process and an extremist who wanted the revolution to advance still further. By this, expressed
belief in historical fatalism, Buchner further strays from his dictum, thus casting serious doubt on his objectivity. His personal concept of history, which is similar to that held by L. N. Tolstoi, Buchner revealed in a private letter to the woman he loved but never lived to marry:

But I find it impossible to write a single word. I was studying the history of the Revolution. I felt as though I had been destroyed by the horrible fatalism of history. I am finding a terrible uniformity in human nature, an unavoidable power in human relations which is given to everyone and to no one. A single man is only the foam upon a wave, greatness is pure coincidence, rule of genius is only puppet play, to fight against this iron law is ridiculous, to acknowledge it is the highest achievement, to dominate it is impossible. It would not occur to me anymoretobb before these parading horses and paragons of history. My eyes have become accustomed to blood. But I am not the blade of the guillotine. "Must" is a word of condemnation, the word with which a man is baptized. With the utterance of that word, there has to come a calamity, but woe to the one through whom it comes. What makes us lie, murder or steal? I do not wish these thoughts to develop further. Oh, if I could rest my cold tortured heart upon your breast.9

There is an apparent contradiction expressed in this and the previous letter. On the one hand, Buchner believed that his objective as a dramatist was absolute fidelity to history, but on the other hand, he expressed a belief in the complete futility of human efforts to direct the course of history. This latter supposition must of necessity, then, give a biased tinge to his re-creation of historical events. To a large degree, both of these aspects of Buchner's Weltansicht are evident in Dantons Tod. For example, all the
speeches made by Robespierre and Danton before the Convention and the Tribunal were taken from historical sources. However, the private conversations between the chief protagonists were created specifically to expound Buchner's view of historic fatalism.

The notion of historical fatalism is easy to discern in Dantons Tod. "We didn't make the revolution, the revolution made us," muses Danton. As the German playwright presents him, Danton resembles an introspective Hamlet in his reluctance to take any action to save himself from Robespierre. "The man on the Cross took the easy way out: 'It must needs be that offenses come, but woe to the man by whom the offense cometh!'' broods Danton. And he continues:

Who will curse the hand on which the curse of must has fallen? Who spoke that must? What is it in us that lies, whores, steals, and murders? We are puppets and unknown powers pull the strings. In ourselves, nothing, the swords with which spirits fight — only the hands are invisible, as in fairy tales...10

As previously stated, Tolstoi's version shifts the emphasis so as to make a closer tie with the revolution in Russia. This shift is most evident in the encounter between Danton and Robespierre. In the original play, Buchner stresses not so much the political differences between the two men as the differences in their respective moral and ethical values:

ROBESPIERRE. The social revolution is not yet accomplished.
To carry out a revolution by halves is to dig your own grave. The society of the privileged is not yet dead. The robust strength of the people must replace this utterly effete class. Vice must be punished, virtue must rule through Terror.

DANTON. I don't understand the word 'punished.' You and your virtue, Robespierre! You've taken no money, you've run up no debts, you've slept with no women, you've always worn a decent coat and never got drunk. Robespierre, your are infuriatingly righteous. I would be ashamed to wander between heaven and earth for thirty years with such a priggish face, for the miserable pleasure of finding others less virtuous than myself. Is there no small, secret voice in you whispering just occasionally: 'You are a fraud'?

ROBESPIERRE. My conscience is clear.

DANTON. ... You aim to turn the guillotine into a washtub for other people's stained linen, to use human heads as soap-cakes for dirty clothes — now have you any right to do that just because your own coat is brushed and clean? ... Are you God's policeman?

ROBESPIERRE. You deny the existence of virtue?

DANTON. And of vice. There are only Epicureans, coarse ones and fine ones. Christ was the finest. That's the only difference between men that I've been able to discover. Everyone acts according to his own nature...

ROBESPIERRE. Danton, there are periods when vice is high treason.

There is a strong undercurrent, hidden beneath political references to the revolution and the Reign of Terror, which suggests that Robespierre, called the Incorruptible, is perhaps slightly envious and yet feels prudish revulsion at Danton's pursuit of Epicurean pleasure and sensual gratification.

In contrast, Tolstoi's depiction of this very same
scene practically ignores Danton's sensuality, although it appears elsewhere in Smert' Dantona. Rather, the two men disagree on the necessity to continue the Terror:

ДАНТОН. Покуда гильотина работает, враги будут пло-
диться. Это самообман, кровавый мираж — враги! Уничто-
жение все население Франции и последний остави-
щийся человек покажется тебе самым страшным врагом. Террор должен кончиться, он не уничтожает,
а паолсидитаврагов.

РОБЕСПЬЕР. ... Мы не можем не только прекратить, но даже на один день ослабить тerrors — Революция еще не кончена.

ДАНТОН. Ложь! Когда пали жирондисты и федераты — рево-
люция окончилась. Сейчас сидят борьба баба-завлес.

РОБЕСПЬЕР. Кончилась революция политическая и нача"асла социальная революция. Ты этого никогда не мог понять, Дантон. Ты был вершиной уже давно окон-
ченной нижежитой политической революции! Ты так и осталялся далеко позади.

ДАНТОН. Народу нужен мир и успокоение. Он стонет от твоих теоретических выкладок.

РОБЕСПЬЕР. Народу нужно изжить всю толщу тысячелетней несправедливости, осуществить все возделания до конца. Когда через залу Конвента пройдет последний жалобщик, неграмотный батрак, и скажет: я доволен, — тогда революция кончится. Настанет золотой век справедливости и добродетели.

ДАНТОН. (Захохотал) И ты еще веришь в то, что вот этими руками держишь возж сознаиальной революци
и направляешь одну человеческую волну за другой через залу Конвента, где эти словеч утоляет свои классовые вожделения. Ты постиг исторические законы, выводишь формулы, пером на бумаге вычисляешь сроки и ставишь точки. Математика, логика, философия. Да чего самонадеян-человеческий разум. . .

РОБЕСПЬЕР. Может быть я ошибусь и заплачу за это головой, но мной руководит нравственная чистота, справедливость и разум. . . . Из нещ народа поднимаются волна один за другим и разбиваются о твердый гооущественной власти. . . . Только высокий разум, постичнув, может овладеть этой
Tolstoi's version echoes the gist of the original, but in his play there is considerably more relevance for the Moscow viewer of 1918. For example, he makes clearer the distinction between the political revolution and the social revolution, or, as it may be easily interpreted, between the February and the October revolutions. This distinction is less evident in the German play. And whereas Buchner attempts to give the dialogue a philosophical tone, Tolstoi makes it much more of a direct political confrontation between a moderate and a demagogue. Tolstoi's Robespierre makes a passionate appeal for complete satisfaction of each particular hatred nursed by the common man that has accumulated in the thousands of years of oppression. Only when the last victim of the oppressors has been avenged — only then may the revolution be considered completed, he believes. It is possible that for Tolstoi this was a reference to Lenin's call to turn the war against the Kaiser's Germany into a war against the Russian privileged classes. But in both plays, Danton sees in Robespierre's scheme for the creation of a golden age of total equality only a demagoge's craving for power. In both plays too, the Paris mob, which
is loyal to Danton at first, is shown as being manipulated easily by Robespierre, who equates wealth and Epicurean morality with political treachery. However, Tolstoi stresses not only the mob's fickle and erratic character, but also its anarchic quality. These elements reflect Tolstoi's own view of the path traced by the progression of events in a revolution.

The anti-revolutionary element in both plays is strongly emphasized, particularly in the curtain line, "Long live the King." This reinforces the conclusion at which the reader must arrive, and that is that bloody revolutions, terror, and class antagonisms cannot bring the people material well-being, that they continue to go cold and hungry no matter who is executed. In this respect Tolstoi followed Buchner very closely; however, the Russian playwright intensified the anti-revolutionary tone of his play by still another variation on the theme.

Tolstoi's Smert' Dantona differs from Buchner's original in respect of the character sketches attached to the dramatis personae, descriptions not found in Dantons Tod. This is an important difference since, for the reader at least, it reveals the moral bias of the play even before it actually begins. Thus, Tolstoi introduces the main protagonist with this accompanying commentary:

ДАНТОН — вождь монтаньяров, министр юстиции, член Комитета Общественного Спасения, вдохновитель
This was the only version to be performed in a theatre. It is interesting to note, however, that some time after his return to Soviet Russia, Tolstoi re-wrote his version of Buchner's play to make it at least readable for the Soviet citizenry. Predictably, in the second version he made Danton the unmistakable villain of the French revolution whose romantic illusions are condemned by Robespierre, the revolution's saviour. The concluding scene was altered so that the curtain line was neither spoken nor even implied by anyone. The extent of the change made in the second variant may be gleaned from this short excerpt taken from the exchange between Danton and Robespierre:

ROBESPIERRE. . . . Вот именно — такие люди, как ты, жадные до наслаждения, любят революцию, как любовницу, и, когда пресытились, отшвыривают ее пинком. Такие, как ты, ненавидят в революции логику и нравственную чистоту. Да, может быть, я ошибусь и погибну, но я до конца буду бороться за справедливость, я не перестану верить в высший разум революции. Мы с тобою люди разных эпох. Ты был нужен вначале. Мирабо поджег, Дантон раздун пламя революции. Тогда были нужны герои, безумцы и романтики. Но сейчас герои — народ. . .

As a drama that tries to weigh the right and the wrong of the Reign of Terror, *Smert' Dantona* was making a
strong anti-revolutionary comment to the small audience that say the play in October of 1918. Political upheavals are needlessly cruel and of no fundamental consequence to the masses, Tolstoi concluded. He turned away from such weighty problems with an undisguised sense of revulsion and, while still in Odessa, he wrote a merry play about love in the carefree society surrounding Catherine the Great.

B. Liubov' — kniga zolotaia.

At about the same time, gentle and tender-hearted women began to appear in Tolstoi's works. This was the case in the story "Graf Kaliostro" (1921), and also in the first book of Khozhdenie po mukam. One of the heroes of that novel, Roshchin, addresses these words to his beloved:

Пройдут года, утихнут войны, отшумят революции, и нетленным останется одно только — краткое, нежное, любимое сердце ваше.15

Similarly, turning away from wars and revolutions, in 1919 Tolstoi wrote the play Liubov' — kniga zolotaia (Love Is a Golden Book). As a farcical comedy about love, it contains little history, save in the language and in its portrayal of the social mores of the late eighteenth century. The source of the play, as well as the title, is a book by Gleb Gromov, Liubov' — knizhka zolotaia (Love Is a Little Golden Book).16

Published in St. Petersburg in 1798, this book comprises a calendar of sorts with homely advice for wives and lovers,
husbands and mistresses. For example, it contains such chapter headings as the following:

"Сокращенный супружеский календарь", "Новый любов-ничий и супружеский словарь, по азбучному порядку разложенный", "Домашние средства от разных непри-ятностей в любви и браке".17

Tolstoi took Gromov's book and made it the pivotal point of his comedy. As a gift from Catherine II to Princess Dar'ia, the Empress' god-child, the Golden Book's instructions and remedies are naive, but they are applied with ultimate success. But for the Prince, Dar'ia's husband, the book becomes a source of tribulation which finally reduces the old man to wearing horns. Resheto, the fool, asks the Prince if the Golden Book is for spiritual needs. The Prince opens it at random and reads:

И вотъ, которую ты мнешь любовницей, спрашивает тебя, князь Эраст: что такое канапэ? Ответ: канапэ - общий зал супружеских предложений, видимо, диван, только посудисте, и двое, в близком хотя соотношении, но могут удобно на нем сидеть, и многие в том удобный для разных шалостей и забав случай находить; любовникам сия вещь предпочтитель-нее постели, — коль скоро постель сминается когда с нея встают, канапэ не сминается, но выпрямляется, охраняя тайны резвых любовников". Нет, это книга не духовная.18

In this definition of the word "canopy" the audience could easily sense the past by the bookish syntax and such names as "Erast," so reminiscent of the sentimental literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

But in addition to giving a feeling of the past by
means of the uncommon syntax, there is also represented in this farce the collision between the ancient Russian culture, as adhered to by the Prince, and the new European culture as adopted by the young Princess. Thus, when she announces that she must have a lover, the reaction of the Prince is in complete accord with what is prescribed in the Domostroi. As he explains to Resheto, and then to his wife:

Я за жену перед Богом должен отвечать. Коль скоро жена не повинуется мужу, — бери жезл свой и по спине оным ударяй ее томко не причиняя сокрушительного членовреждения.

Принеси вишневую трость. (Шут скрывается.) Сей трость дед мой бабку учил, и матушка не раз оной учена в разсуждении добротолюбной жизни. Так уж ты не осуди, княгинушка, — горько и обидно, но долг выполнить обязан, а там — что Бог пошлет.¹⁹

As in the early anecdotes and stories, Tolstoy mocks the artificiality of the Russian nobility through contrasts. Unlike those earlier writings, however, where the peasants' simplicity was juxtaposed with the gentry's affectations, in this play it is the husband's native Russian simplicity that is placed in apposition to the wife's pretentious Europeanization. Much of the humour in Liubov'— kniga zolotaia lies precisely in Princess Dar'ia's inept efforts to create on her Russian estate something resembling Mount Olympus. For example, her complaints against the muzhik Mikita for not playing the satyr to her satisfaction appear all the more comical when considered in context with the response
made by her well-intentioned husband:

"Go to the stable, brother, and ask to be whipped" is what the Prince says to Mikita. This hardly sounds like the command of a tyrannical master, but rather like a well-wishing recommendation. The humour in this scene is extended as well by the Princess' detailed instructions to Mikita, by her pretentiousness in calling her peasant girl San'ka by a French name, and by the apparent indifference of the "nymphs" to their mistress' caprice and their "unpoetic" flight from mosquitoes. The Princess orders Mikita:

There is additional humour in the difference between the language used by the Princess Dar'ia and by the peasant girl
San'ka. In an effort to acquire the graceful manners of a western noblewoman, the Princess tries to use refined language. Thus, "бежать за нинфой, ловить, сладострастно взирая на прелести оной" tries to reproduce a literal but cultured depiction of a satyr frolicking with a nymph. However, that these are plain Russian peasants and not mythological beings is brought into sharp focus by San'ka's curt explanation about the Princess' nymphs: "в баню забились ... не выгоним. Комары заели."

The arrival of a handsome young officer, who announces that Catherine will arrive shortly, allows the Princess to commence her affair as recommended in the Golden Book. The situation is made more complicated, however, when it is discovered the next day that the officer, Valer'ian, is also Catherine's lover. But when the Empress sees that he and the Princess have fallen in love, she graciously withdraws and further facilitates her god-child's love affair by sending the old Prince off to the Crimea. Omnia vincit amor, the moral of this light comedy, is drawn from Catherine's final speech. Says the Empress to the young officer:

А все же, Валерьян, вы не испортили мне счастливого дня. (Берет княгиню за подбородок.) Мне лишь удалось сделать открытие, что вот такая сорока оказывается посильнее короны Российской Империи. 22

Tolstoi read Liubov' — kniga zolotaia to the actors and actresses of the Moscow Art Theatre in 1922 when the
troupe was visiting Berlin. According to Serafima Birman, a leading actress of the company, everyone loved it from the first reading. It was decided to admit it into the theatre's repertoire, and the play had its première on January 3, 1924. Even though it enjoyed immense popularity at the box office and, according to Birman, played to a full house for sixty performances, the official critics succeeded in their demand that the play be banned for its ideological culpability. It was deemed unacceptable because of its idealization of the past. As I. Trainin put it, in a review in Pravda:

This work by A. Tolstoi from beginning to end simply drools with sentimentality, and is so completely without substance that by comparison other plays which are analogous in content or theme may be considered masterpieces and revolutionary creations.

Specifically, what was resented in the comedy was the portrayal of the peasants' uncomplicated life, as well as the implication of tranquil and harmonious relations between masters and serfs, and the portrayal of Catherine II as an amiable and loving godmother. Trainin was further offended by the actual production of the play which, he felt, "drew the Theatre down by its excessive naturalism." Thus, in addition to ideological considerations, Liubov' — kniga zolotaia was regarded as being rather exceedingly suggestive of improper behaviour. Though the lyrical thread in the
play was dominant, explained Birman, there was some "coarse humour." In the fall of 1936, Tolstoi re-wrote the comedy making several appropriate adjustments.

The complete alteration of Catherine's character was one of the radical changes that he introduced in the new version. Instead of surrendering Valer'ian to her god-child, Tolstoi now has the Empress command the officer to remain with her. She explains to the Princess:

From the kind and amiable relative that she was in the original, Catherine is transformed into a calculating woman who is conscious of her autocratic power and does not hesitate to use it to satisfy her personal appetite. In this fashion Tolstoi shifts the centre of the comedy away from love and cuckoldry, and directs it more toward the
revelation of Catherine's Machiavellian nature. Apart from the alteration that renders Catherine unattractive, another basic change made in the play is to remove the semblance of good, patriarchal relations between the peasants and their masters. This can be observed particularly with regard to the peasant Fedor, who is ordered by his mistress to play a role in this fatuous game of romance. "The Princess had ordered you to be the goblin," San'ka explains to him. Fedor's response is a reminder of the feudal conditions under which the peasantry lived in eighteenth-century Russia:

Саня, ну какой я леший?.. Вот крест, гляди....
Господи!.. Да за что? На барщину часу не запаздываю.... Порубка в лесу чисится за мной? Нет.
Куренка на гospодскую землю не выпущу.......
Саня, я и в ладоши-то бить не умею, я и хотобать-то не могу....

To put still greater distance between the peasants and their mistress, Tolstoi introduced in the second version his own verses, whose rhythm is very much like Russian folk songs rather than the Greek hymns that are demanded by the Princess. Through such songs Tolstoi satirizes the gentry's posing as Europeans. The Russian girls cannot help but stray back to their peasant style of singing: "на деревенский лад сбиваются," San'ka explains half-apologetically, as they sing:
The sentimental tinge which coloured the first variant of *Liubov' — kniga zolotaia* is almost totally absent from the 1936 version. Here the peasants are set apart from the main personalities in order to draw attention to the injustices of serfdom. Catherine is now portrayed as an autocrat who is made unappealing not only in a political sense but also as an individual. Finally, love does not conquer all in this comedy, but is miserably crushed by an exposition of reality in its revolutionary development. Despite corrections made by Tolstoi, neither *Liubov' — kniga zolotaia* nor *Smert' Dantona* was staged again. Only the originals, that is, the versions written before his return to Soviet Russia, ever saw production. Since the reason for this is clearly their ideological slant, it is instructive to examine those dramatic works by Tolstoi in which ideology is more obviously
the central concern, namely, the historical plays on Peter the Great.

C. Three Versions of Petr I.

In writing about the Tsar, a Soviet writer faces a serious quandary: what constitutes the correct Marxist interpretation of Peter? Since Karl Marx made only a fleeting remark about him, which was that Peter the Great conquered Russian barbarism with barbarism, Soviet historians have built on this generalization several successive interpretations, compelling writers to make changes appropriate to the ideological modification. Wrote C. E. Black:

In considering the evolution of Soviet historiography on this subject, it is interesting to note that in the field of literature the pressure of the party line was also conspicuous. The best example of this is the work of Alexey Tolstoy on Peter. 30

As stated earlier, Tolstoi first wrote about Peter I in 1918, and then returned to this subject in 1928 with the play Na dybe. Though a complete decade separates the story "Den' Petra" from Na dybe, and though the writer of the play no longer espoused the sentiments which prompted him to write the story, the two works reveal essentially identical perceptions of the Tsar. The single major difference between the two works is that the 1918 Slavophile notion of the superiority of pre-Petrine Rus' is not recreated in the play. In other aspects, Tolstoi had very little to alter, since
his original aversion to Peter now seemed to coincide with Mikhail Pokrovskii's stand and the current Marxist view. In Pokrovskii's opinion,

The bankruptcy of Peter's system lay not in the fact that "at the price of the ruin of the country Russia was raised to the rank of a European power" but in the fact that, regardless of the ruin of the country, this goal was not attained.\(^{31}\)

This ideological coincidence acts as a link joining the story with the first play *Na dybe*. But it is misleading to claim, as R. Ivanov-Razumnik does, that *Petr Pervyi* preceded the writing of the play, and it is deceptively simple to suggest that Tolstoi fell from the artistry of the novel to the mediocrity of the plays.\(^{32}\)

As in "Den' Petra" so in the first version of the play about Peter, the Tsar is shown to be impatient to Europeanize his realm, isolated and alone in his endeavours, and cruelly oppressive. The twelve tableaux which comprise *Na dybe* all contribute to the generally bleak picture of the period, and the dark image of Peter reminds one very much of Pokrovskii's characterization. In her book on Tolstoi and Soviet theatre, P. A. Borozdina strives to minimize Pokrovskii's influence on the play.\(^{33}\) But the fact remains that the negative portrayal of Peter in this version reiterates the gist of Pokrovskii's popular edition of Russian history which offered only "a four-sentence biographical sketch of Peter concerned exclusively with lust, torture and syphilis."\(^{34}\)
Tolstoi prepares his audience for Peter's first appearance on stage with sounds and cries of the execution of the streltsy. Then the Tsar enters, but before he can even utter a sound, he suffers a convulsion:

Peter's appearance at precisely that moment, together with his facial contortions, is deliberately calculated to create a frightening effect on the viewer. From such an entrance, his repulsive qualities are variously illustrated.

In scene four, which depicts St. Petersburg in the early stages of construction, Tolstoi shows the unbearable hardships and cruelty that the people suffered. During a Swedish attack on the city, for example, Peter appeals to the labourers, many of whom are wearing shackles, to fight and die for the salvation of the state. But the appeal only provokes an opposite reaction:

КУЗНЕЦ. Царю любо кричать: помирайте за государство...
   А мы и так на этой работе ободрались, килу надорвали...
   Хлеб с навозом выдавать стали... Не едим — блюем. Тело пухнет.

АНТОН. По всем пустырям — покойники валяются...
Волков человечиной кормите... Народ, это место гиблое...

ПЛОТНИК. Царь всю Рассею в болото загнал...

КУЗНЕЦ. Какой он царь, — враг, оморок людской...

ПЛОТНИК. Мироед он... Весь мир переел... На него, кутилку, перевода нет... Только народ зря переводит...

Лучше под шведа пойдем...

The peasant Anton, the carpenter, and the smith represent the masses of people through whose sufferings Peter European-ized Russia. The hard work, the bread mixed with manure, the demoralizing sight of corpses being fed to wolves understandably drove the people into opposing the Tsar. With the appearance of Varlaam, who, as in the story "Den' Petra," preaches that Peter is the Antichrist, the people's opposition turns to dread.

The resistance of the бояры, in contrast with the antagonism of the common people, is enveloped in a comical atmosphere. Lopukhin, the descendant of an ancient family, is Tolstoi's chief representative of that resistance. But his complaints, as expressed to his wife Sof'ia, are comic by comparison with what the peasants endured from Peter:

ЛОПУХИН. Государь дяя на месте не поседит, и мы за ним скачи... Султану лучше служить турецкому... Где на свете видано — дворянству такие муки прини- мать?

СОФЬЯ. Не томись после бании-то... Надень та, баааа-тюшка, штаны православные. В немецких тебе тесно.

ЛОПУХИН. Опять — дура: при алонжевом парике, при
The contrast between Lopukhin's European dress and Sofia's traditional Russian dress, coupled with their unsophisticated vernacular speech, symbolizes the beginning of that loss of national unity which Karamzin attributed to Peter's hurtling westernization of the upper classes. The same incongruity between the stylish dress and the simple speech of the boyar couple creates the humour in this scene.

To the Tsarevich Aleksei, Lopukhin continues to complain about the difficulty of life since the introduction of European industry, lamenting:

Да, жили, пили... А теперь, как холопы, служим, ради царского войска да флота — мы все на каторге... Мало еще горя — нынешние железные заводы строят, да полотняные, поташные, стекольные, да еще шут их знает какие... Только народ зря калечат, мужика от дела отрывают... Жрать стало нечего, — стекло дуем... Кораблики строим. Тьфу!38

From Lopukhin's complaints the audience learns of the establishment of an army and a navy, and of the introduction of
various industries. But though he is aggrieved by Peter's innovations, he does not evoke any sympathy. On the contrary, since it is only his slumbering existence that has been disturbed — "Yes, we used to live, drink, but now we work like slaves" — the bojär's vexation merely adds humour to the play.

With such a ludicrous opposition rallying about him, the Tsarevich Aleksei appears in Nadybe more as a frightened son than as a serious political opponent to Peter. By minimizing the threat from this quarter, Tolstoi makes Aleksei's execution appear all the more dastardly. The manner in which the Tsarevich is killed reminds one of Merezhkovskii's novel in which the mystic novelist drew a parallel between the Tsar and the Antichrist. In Nadybe, Peter enters the cell to ask forgiveness, kisses his son on the forehead, and then walks out. Menshikov, Petr Tolstoi, and the guard Pospelov lunge at the Tsarevich. In this manner Tolstoi makes the death of Aleksei resemble a common murder rather than a political execution, and this serves to blacken Peter's image still further.

The severity and impulsive nature of the reforms introduced by Peter alienate him from both the plebeian and the patrician segments of the population. Furthermore, Tolstoi suggests that the Tsar is alienated from all the people by his tyrannical nature. Accompanied by his
"All-Drunken Synod," for example, Peter visits homes of the nobility and plays cruel tricks on them. On one occasion, dressed as a physician, he gleefully yanks his host's teeth. On another occasion, before a Moscow crowd, he forces his ministers to kiss the bare buttocks of the All-Drunken Synod's "prince pope." By this exhibition Tolstoi shows yet another example of the Tsar's brutish disregard for his subjects. It is only too apparent that Peter is insensitive to the feelings of his subjects, who see a mortal insult in this irreverent display. A shout rises from the crowd:

Сына убил!.. Зачем шутишь... Угомону на тебя нет, кутилка... Братцы, с голоду умираем, а у них пузе от жранья лопнуло. Грабители...
Кроволийцы...39

Thus, Peter is hated not only because of the hardships that his reforms have brought, but also because of his personal coarseness which so often degenerates into cruelty.

But Peter in Tolstoi's first variant of the play is not merely cruel, he is tragic as well. Alienated from the nobles and commoners, who either do not support him or else actively resist him, Peter is spiritually isolated even from members of his entourage. Menshikov, his favourite, in addition to being a thief, is already plotting to form a triumvirate with Catherine and Mons as soon as the Tsar dies. Catherine, who is deliberately paired off with Peter exactly as in the story "Marta Rabbe," commits the inevitable
infidelity. Peter's total isolation in the play calls to mind the general tone of the story "Den' Petra," in which the last sentence states that the Tsar had assumed "a superhuman task: one for all." Exactly the same thought is pronounced by the Tsar's uncle in _Na dybe_: 

ны на гору один-сам тянеешь, а под гору —
миллионы тянут... Непомерный труд взял на себя, сынок...40

_Na dybe_ concludes with the "superhuman task" which Peter had assumed apparently unfulfilled. In the last scene, as if to emphasize the failure and the suggestion that fate had not intended him to succeed, Tolstoi introduces a devastating storm. "Сие выше сил человеческих," laments one admiral. Left alone, Peter can bequeath his new Empire only to a few inimical individuals, and he chooses his unfaithful Catherine. "Все тебе отдам," says he in the curtain speech, 

и государство и сей город бедственный... Всю несносную тяготу жизни моей... И более —
говорить с тобой не хочу. Уйди... Умирать буду — тебя не позову. Никого не позову.
Сердце мое жестокое, и друга мне в сей жизни быть не может... (Целует ее лоб, запиряет за неё дверь. Садится к столу, глядит в окно.)
Да. Вода прибывает. Страшен конец.41

Reviews of the play, which had its première on 23 February, 1930 under the title _Petr I_, were most unfavourable. To suggest, as does Spencer E. Roberts, that the negative reviews were generated only by the criticism implied in Stalin's comment that the Tsar had not been portrayed in a
heroic light, is to overestimate the weight of the personality cult in 1930, and to give too much credence to the testimony of Ivanov-Razumnik.\textsuperscript{42} If his recollections are accurate, then Stalin's remark was made at a dress rehearsal of the play. One would expect that, if the cult of personality was indeed so strong in 1930, the leader's comments would have been immediately taken into consideration and all necessary alterations made before any public performance. But while some reviewers did criticize Tolstoi for characterizing Peter only as "a despot, bully, and syphilitic [which is] superfluous because Soviet audiences know the true worth of personality in history," still many others appear to have ignored Stalin's expressed opinion.\textsuperscript{43} For example, V. Mlechin, writing in \textit{Vecherniaia Moskva}, accused Tolstoi of portraying Tsar Peter just as he had been characterized by pre-revolutionary bourgeois idealists:

\begin{quote}
Tolstoi is still captivated by the bourgeois idealistic conceptions which regard the historical process mainly from the point of view of deeds accomplished by tsars and "heroes." This leads the playwright to a "heroic" portrayal of Peter which shows how completely alien to the writer is the dialectical essence of the historical process.\textsuperscript{44}
\end{quote}

Another indication of the apparent disregard for Stalin's caveat is the mere fact that the MKhAT production of \textit{Nadybe} omitted the Poltava scene. Peter's greatest military victory, which could have uplifted the inglorious figure of the Tsar, was left out entirely, in spite of
Stalin's ominous hints as reported by Ivanov-Razumnik!

Moreover, Krestinskii noted that the actor who played Peter followed Pokrovskii's interpretation rather than Tolstoi's, thereby darkening all the more an already unappealing image. 45

Ideological criticisms were also hurled at Tolstoi. In the Pravda article by L. Cherniavskii, it was noted that the playwright completely ignored any mention of "the spirit of commercial capital which enveloped the reforms of Peter and whose influence was the driving force behind his reforms." 46 Far more pointed was the attack on Tolstoi which appeared in Komsomol'skaia Pravda. Its author, I. Bachelis, reminded readers that the playwright, as a former count, was the eulogist for the defunct Russian gentry, and Na dybe he interpreted as a tacit incitement to counter-revolution far more dangerous than M. Bulgakov's Dni Turbinykh or Bagrovyi ostrov. 47 Furthermore, Bachelis was irritated by the apparent parallel drawn between the Petrine era and Soviet Russia. In the words of Roberts, commenting on this review:

Audiences were to take home with them the impression that the sacrifices of millions of well-to-do peasants under the First Five-Year Plan was a historical necessity, just as were the harsh measures taken by Peter. 48

Indeed, it was impossible to miss the parallel between the two epochs, says A. V. Alpatov, particularly since the raised curtain revealed a second, gauze-like curtain.
depicting St. Petersburg covered with scaffolding. To the 1930 viewer this was a most obvious reference to their own rush toward civic construction.

\textit{Na dybe} remained in the repertoire of the Soviet theatre from 1930 until 1934, when Tolstoi re-wrote the play. Thus, despite the generally hostile response from the press, the first version continued to be staged because, as Tolstoi put it, in his autobiographical sketch of 1943, "the play was saved by Comrade Stalin." In explaining why he was writing it anew in 1934, he said, "The first version of 'Petr' smells of Merezhkovskii." What this clearly implied was that a new and improved image of Tsar Peter was to be expected in the second version. Pokrovskii's interpretation of Peter's character had begun to be challenged while \textit{Na dybe} was being written, and it is evident that Tolstoi's own understanding of his central character soon began to change substantially. Although his detractors, such as Ivanov-Razumnik accuse him of rushing with the new play to flatter Stalin, one ought not to ignore the very important fact that Tolstoi had completed the second volume of the novel \textit{Petr Pervyi} in April 1934, while his reconditioning of \textit{Na dybe} began only in the fall of that year. And the characterization of Peter in the novel, it is generally agreed, is quite a balanced one. Besides, Tolstoi's re-working of \textit{Na dybe} is not quite the brazen about-face that his critics would have
us believe. Although he said that he was writing an entirely new play, *Petr I* (1935) closely resembles the preceding version, and the changes that were introduced serve to soften the Tsar's image rather than to manufacture a new one. The new play, also containing twelve scenes, is divided into four acts, of which the first three span Peter's life and are concerned with his reforms, the resistance of the nobles, and the degeneration of the new aristocracy. The fourth act is a sort of epilogue designed to create a sense of perspective.

Once more the play opens with the execution of the *strel'tsy*, but Peter is kept out of this scene. His first appearance is made only in the second scene, where he is depicted working as an apprentice in a blacksmith's shop. With such an introduction, Tolstoi successfully erases the dark impression made with the Tsar's first entrance in *Nadybe*. In fact, the sight of the Tsar engaged in manual labour helps bring him closer to the people, and his first appearance prepares the viewer for a more sympathetic characterization. Another significant difference is that Peter is no longer directly linked to the suffering of the people even though the oppression that comes with industrialization is not removed in the second version.

Мы с голодом пухнем... Хуже скотины едим... 
Всем тут сдохнуть на твоей работе... . . . 
Город пропал, ему первому пропасть...
However similar these protestations may seem to those made in Na dybe, it is important to note that these cries are no longer directed at the Tsar, but at the owner of a private factory, so that the responsibility for the people's suffering may be shifted away from the central figure to a secondary one. In this fashion the Tsar's oppression of the people is relegated to the background. The opposition to Peter, which now includes such lowbrows as the boiар Buinosov (who is called Lopukhin in Na dybe, and is taken from the novel), is now focused primarily on the old nobility which is again gathered about the Tsarevich Aleksei. In this version of the play, in contrast to the previous one, Aleksei appears as an evil force bent on destroying all the gains made by his father. He promises the boiars:

Придет мой час. Все вам будет. Отцовским министрам головы отрублю... Буду жить на Москве, тихо, благочинно, с колокольным перезвоном... Воевать не стану, солдат разпущу, корабли сожгу... Петербург пускай шведы берут, — место проклятое ... (Схватил Еварлакова.) Еварлаков, не выдашь? Крестись... Тебе одному скажу... Смерти его хочу...52

Coupled with this more substantial danger from Aleksei is Peter's increased devotion to the state. Tolstoi illustrates this quality by expanding considerably the Tsar's explanation for executing Aleksei, and although it again resembles a simple murder, it carries in Petr I clear political motives.
While the Tsar's contribution toward strengthening the state's military and economic power now receives greater attention, Tolstoi does not reverse himself to paint him all white. Peter behaves less violently toward members of his entourage and, as Roberts has observed, consumes smaller quantities of vodka. The All-Drunken Synod is much more subdued as well. But in this version too, Peter's reign is deemed to have been a failure. The new society, which at first comically embraces the decreed westernization, begins toward the end of the play to shun things Russian just because they are un-European. As in Na dybe, Menshikov and Peter's other intimates are shown to be greedy, corrupt, and spiritually alienated from him. Finally, with Catherine's
adultery, the Tsar is once more totally isolated. Says Menshikov gloomily:

Захочешь розыск чинить, плетей не хватит...
Судить хочешь — суди всех... Казнишь — с одними черными людьми останешься. Один...

In this excerpt from Menshikov's speech Tolstoi gives yet another example of how the distance between the common people — chernye liudi — and Peter has been lessened.

Petri (1935) ends, as did the first version of the play, with Peter bequeathing the new state to his unfaithful Catherine. However, the pessimism which, in Nadybe, was reinforced by the destructive flooding of St. Petersburg, is clearly missing in this variant. In fact, the ultimate success or failure of Peter's reign is not determined conclusively. This ambivalence is detected in the Tsar's last exchange with Catherine:


Decidedly, there can be no answer to these rhetorical questions, and Tolstoi uses them to avoid a final verdict. As
far as his characterization of Peter is concerned, Tolstoi portrays in *Petr I* (1935) a balanced figure by reducing the Tsar's personal flaws while making his concern for Russia's well-being more evident.

The second variant was staged by Leningrad's Pushkin Academic Theatre of Drama. It had its première on May 25, 1935 and was also performed at the Leningrad International Drama Festival in June. The Soviet press gave this second version of the play polite reviews, lauding especially the performance of the actors.56

In 1938, Tolstoi wrote a third — and this time radically different — version of *Petr I*. Developments in European politics were by this time making it clear that war was imminent. Perhaps because of this situation abroad, there took place a sharp turn in the USSR toward a nationalistic and patriotic interpretation of pre-revolutionary Russian history. As one essayist wrote:

> It was now necessary to acclaim all manifestations of successes and strengthening of the Russian state, and the significance of defense as a cause of unification was emphasized. At the same time, the elements of "class struggle" in this period were not particularly stressed.57

Indeed, in a review of the new play's première, *Pravda* purred, "In the play those feelings which are dear to us, feelings of patriotism and hatred for enemies and traitors of the motherland, are intensified."58 On the other hand,
the new play's simplistic presentation of Peter, hailed then, is now regarded as Tolstoi's due paid to the "cult of personality." In discussing the three versions in 1938, I. Oksenov praised Tolstoi's characterization of Peter as it appears in the last play because "Peter is the personification of state wisdom and national will which will stop at nothing in guarding the interests of the people and the state." 59

Aleksandr Dymshits, writing in Molodaia Gvardiia, saw in Tolstoi's portrayal of Peter a head of state who was "a military leader of genius," "a leader of the people," and even "a beloved commander of the people." The third version, continued Dymshits, following as it did Tolstoi's film scenario of Peter the First, incorporates all the didactic qualities viewed on the screen:

The successes of the scenario permitted the creation, in the best meaning of the words, of a historically patriotic, greatly popular film which inspired in our viewers heroic feelings of pathos, great love for the motherland, and national pride. These feelings have been multiplied in the new variant for the theatre. 60

In the post-Stalinist period, understandably, Tolstoi has not been praised for his last variant of the play. In a 1960 monograph, L. M. Poliak wrote:

In the final variant of his play (1938) A. N. Tolstoi, in portraying the personality of Peter undoubtedly paid his dues to the cult of personality... As a result of the pervading atmosphere of "the cult," there appeared in the final redaction a discernible smoothing over of
conflicts and removal of sharp contradictions in Peter's work, and a portrayal of Peter as almost a people's tsar.61

An immaculate characterization of the Tsar does make this version of the play the least convincing. Shortened to ten scenes, it illustrates a near total harmony between Peter and his surrounding company. His minister, Menshikov, and Catherine, are in all instances his loyal friends who share his devotion to the state. Concerning Catherine, for example, Tolstoi no longer suggests, as he did in the two preceding versions, that she is sent to Peter with Menshikov's connivance. Then the matter of the oppressed labourers is also completely reversed. They suffer neither from Peter, as in Na dybe, nor from capitalist factory owners, as in Petr I (1935). Instead, the contented workers on the Neva embankment receive from Peter a round of vodka with pickles, for which they cheerfully shout, "Thank you, Petr Aleksee-vich"!

What opposition there is to Peter among the Russian people is finally reduced to the boiar Buinosov, the familiar and comical nobleman who complains about the new decrees for brushing teeth, brewing "odourous" coffee, and dressing in non-Orthodox and uncomfortable breeches. Tsarevich Aleksei, however, is made still more sinister since he is now portrayed as seeking foreign assistance to return Russia to her former backward condition. At his son's trial for treason,
Peter declaims:

Господа сенат! Нам довелось достоверно узнать о противных замыслах некоторых европейских госу-
дарей. Нас чут за варваров, коим не место за
трапезой народов европейских. Наше стремление к
процветанию мануфактур, к торговле, к всяким
наукам считают противным естеству. . . . (Рас-
крывает книгу, читает.) "Не токмо шведы, но и
другие народы европейские имеют ненависть на
нард русский и тщаться оньи содержить в прежнем
рабстве и неискустве, особливо ж в воинских и
морских делах, дабы сию каналью не токмо оружием,
но и плетями со всего света выгонять.... и
государство российское разделить на малые княже-
ства и воеводства". (Бросает книгу на стол.)
. . . Сын мой Алексей хочет того же. Есть сви-
детельство, что писал он к римскому императору,
прося войско, дабы завоевать отчий престол —
ценой нашего умаления и разорения. Дабы государ-
ство российское вернуть к невежеству и старине...
Ибо даром войско ему не дадут... Сын мой Алексей
готовился предать отечество, . . . Он подлежит
суду. Сам я не берусь лечить сию смертельную
болезнь. Вручаю Алексея Петровича вам, господа
сенат. Судите и приговорите, и быть по сему...62

While no doubt appealing to the national pride of the Russian
audiences, this passage may also be interpreted as anti-
fascist propaganda because of its allusion to the proposed
dissolution of the Russian state in Hitler's Mein Kampf. In
any case, this piece of oratory presents Peter as a benevo-
lent leader concerned with cultural and industrial progress,
while opposition is reduced to plain treason. Significantly,
Aleksei is turned over to the senate for sentencing, whereas
in the two earlier variants he is quite literally murdered
by members of the Tsar's entourage. The senate's trial of
Aleksei in effect removes from Peter the responsibility for
his son's death.

In the final scene Tolstoi reduces his play to a vaudeville skit. Before a lowered curtain stand a pair of heralds who alternate in reading an invitation for the public to celebrate the conclusion of the war with Sweden by coming to the Tsar's feast in Troitski Square. The curtain then rises revealing a chorus of soldiers who burst into song. Peter strolls to centre stage accompanied by his merry wife Catherine and his gay confrère Menshikof, who immediately grabs a tray of piroshki and proceeds to kick up his heels in the style of a Russian folk dance. Peter, mingling with the people, is introduced to a centenarian who, when the Tsar asks about life in the reign of Tsar Mikhail, responds, "Ох, плохо жили." And how was life under Tsar Aleksei? "Ох, плохо жили," the old man repeats, and Peter embraces him.

In the curtain speech; Peter proclaims:

В сей счастливый день окончания войны, Сенат
dаровал мне звание отца отечества. Суров я был
с вами, дети мои. Не для себя я был суров, но
donога была мне - Россия. Моими и вашими трудами
увенчали мы наше отчество славой. Иккорабли
русские плывут уже по всем морям. Не напрасны
были наши труды, и поколениям нашим надлежит
славу и богатство отечества нашего беречь и
множить. Виват!

Пушки, трубы, крики.

З А Н А В Е С 63

Tolstoi in Petr. I (1938) portrayed the chief protago-
nist as if he were indeed a "people's tsar," as if he ruled
over a country whose population understood and supported all his endeavours. The transference of opposition to Europe, and the appearance of Aleksei as an instrument of some foreign power led one to interpret the play as a vindication of Stalin's purges and trials of "traitors." A Tsar surrounded by a loyal cadre of sober and sombre ministers, a Tsar playing with his daughter Elizabeth and loved by his Catherine, a Tsar who is a successful military commander, a man without personal flaws and accorded the epithet "father of the fatherland," could not but appear to Soviet audiences in the late 1930's as a mirror image of their own leader. One may well wonder what further concessions to the cult of personality might have been forthcoming in the fourth version of Petro I, commissioned in 1940. This, however, never materialized.

In Tolstoi's three versions of the play about Peter, the Tsar's characterization goes from one extreme to another. In Nadybe, Tolstoi continues to stress the Tsar's personal faults much as he did in "Den' Petra," Peter is portrayed as a wicked, even sadistic tyrant surrounded by selfish and greedy individuals. The people are shown resisting Peter's schemes because the schemes only bring more suffering. The Tsar, isolated from every segment of Russian society, deservedly suffers ruin and defeat. In Petro I (1935) there is a more agreeable characterization of Peter. There are fewer
examples to show him as an oppressive despot, and more to show him as a statesman. More blame is placed on the emerging capitalist class for the people's suffering than on the Tsar. In general it may be said that in this second play Peter's characterization is the most balanced. The final version appears to be just a required contribution from Tolstoi to the growing fund of literature falsifying history which appeared in the USSR on the eve of World War II. Peter is depicted as a beloved leader who rules for the undisputed betterment of the state, in which task the unswerving support of the masses assures his success. This last play about Peter, and the next one about Ivan the Terrible were written in that special period when every artistic genre was subordinated to a dual purpose, and that was to express loyalty to Stalin and to nurture a sense of patriotism for the Soviet Union. Such a prescribed task could not fail to result in severe distortion of history. The call upon writers to bend their powers to the service of the state is further demonstrated by Tolstoi's treatment of that other towering figure from Russia's past, Ivan the Terrible.

D. Ivan Groznyi.

_Ivan Groznyi_, a two-part "dramatic narrative," as Tolstoi called it, was his last work written for the stage. The two parts, "Orel i orlitsa" (The Eagle and His Mate) and
"Trudnye gody" (The Difficult Years), were written between 1941 and 1943 in a spirit of \textit{la patrie en danger}, and ought to be regarded primarily as Tolstoi's contribution to the war effort.

It is difficult to determine exactly when Tolstoi first thought of writing about Ivan the Terrible. The earliest known mention was made by V. D. Bonch-Bruevich in 1935. While gathering material on Peter the Great, remarked Bonch-Bruevich in a letter to Gorkii, Tolstoi came upon the notion that Peter's spiritual predecessor was Ivan. In 1940 Tolstoi made an agreement with the ministry of culture to write a play about that Tsar, but the actual writing did not begin until October 1941. "I believed in our victory even in the darkest days of October-November 1941," he wrote at the end of 1942.

And then, in Zimenki (not far from the city of Gorkii, on the banks of the Volga) I began the dramatic narrative \textit{Ivan the Terrible}. It was my response to the humiliation to which my country was subjected by the Germans. From non-existence I called back to life the great and passionately Russian soul of Ivan the Terrible, $^6$.5

The circumstances in which the play was written, as well as the purpose for which it was written, make it very contrived and simplistic.

When the first part was completed early in 1942, Tolstoi offered it to the Institute of History at the Academy of Sciences of the USSR for their perusal. Whatever were
the comments made by the historians, Tolstoi appears to have heeded the counsel given by Stalin, who also read the manuscript. The advice that Stalin passed on to Tolstoi was presumably the same as that given to the director of the film *Ivan Groznyi*, Sergei Eisenstein, in 1947. Nikolai Cherkasov, the actor who played the title role in the film, paraphrased Stalin's comments in these words:

Comrade Stalin made a series of extremely interesting and valuable remarks concerning the epoch of Ivan the Terrible. He called Ivan "a great and wise ruler," who guarded the country against foreign penetration and influence, and who worked to unify Rus'. I. V. Stalin noted as well the progressive role of the oprichnina, adding that its leader was a major military commander who died a hero's death in the war against Livonia. Touching upon Ivan's errors, I. V. Stalin observed that they lay in the fact that Ivan was unable to liquidate the five remaining large feudal families, that he did not bring to a conclusion the struggle against the feudal lords, and that had he succeeded in this, there would not have been a Time of Troubles in Russia... Ivan should have acted more decisively.

To accommodate such views Tolstoi decided, in the spring of 1942, to expand the play into a trilogy. When the second part was completed early in 1943, however, he came to feel that the concluding third part should not be written while the war was still raging. Once victory had been achieved, it could then be shown how Ivan's efforts to gain access to the Baltic Sea had failed, but for the time being the dramatization of his failure was deemed inopportune. Though "Orel i orlitsa" underwent three revisions and
"Trudnye gody" four, not all the changes were made in direct response to Stalin's remarks. After the first part was staged briefly at the Malyi Theatre in October 1944, L. Il'ichev, writing in Pravda, pointed with dissatisfaction to the rather comical portrayal of the boiar opposition and to the fact that Prince Andrei Kurbskii was not expressly shown to be the traitor that he was supposed to be. Tolstoi agreed with this criticism, and in the final versions the opposition is made more sinister, while Kurbskii is now a villainous traitor. The corrected redaction of the first part was again staged at the Malyi in March 1945; the second had its première only in June 1946 at the Moscow Art Theatre.

The play as it remains now spans the years between 1553 and 1571, or the time from Ivan's illness to the burning of Moscow by the Crimean Tatars. Several historical inaccuracies can be observed and, though they may not be serious in themselves, taken in context they gain importance because they contribute to the distortion of Ivan. For example, that the Zemskii Sobor met in 1572, that is, outside the chronological frame of the play, is in itself insignificant. But that Tolstoi makes the clergy and boiars in the Zemskii Sobor oppose the Tsar in his decision to reject the Lithuanian terms for peace is a blatant falsification of history designed to make Ivan appear as the only one with patriotic feelings. In fact, history shows that the boiars with
Metropolitan Pimen asked the Tsar to refuse what they considered to be shameful terms proposed by the Lithuanians, and press on with the war.

Since Tolstoi wished to convey an image of Ivan as a progressive tsar with good intentions, it became necessary to show his alliance with the common people against the reactionary nobility. The people's support of Ivan is well exemplified in the Tsar's first appearance in "Orel i orlitsa." Vasilii, the holy fool, is ushered into Ivan's chambers in the Kremlin, where he hands the Tsar a coin explaining, "Мне люди велели... Потаён, сказали, царю денежку — мимо бояр." This symbolic gesture, Tolstoi would have the viewers believe, demonstrates unity between Ivan and the people, while at the same time suggesting the boiars' malevolence both toward the Tsar personally and toward his rule of Russia. Their reactionary and treacherous position vis-à-vis Ivan is further illustrated by the Tsar's announcement of his decision to leave Moscow for Aleksandrovskaja Sloboda. Standing at Lobnoe mesto in Red Square, with the boiars deliberately pushed off to the Tsar's left and the common people on his right, Ivan, as it were, unmasks the treasonous intentions of the boiars and other members of the nobility:
нам, обо всем православном христианстве радеть не захотели... Попирают благочестие души своих ради сребролюбия, ради сладости мира сего, мимотекущего. А захочу я кого казнить, — милые мои! Да крик-та, да шум-та! Епископы да попы, сложась с боярами да с князьями, начнут печаловаться о воре-то. Уж я для них — лев-кровожадец, я для них — дьявол злопыхающий... Твердых адфадов — им самодержавное государство наше...

Хотят жить по-старому, — каждому сидеть на своей вотчине, с войском своим, как при татарамм иге, да друг у друга уезды оттягивать... Разума нет у них и ответа нет перед землей русской... Государству нашему враги суть, ибо, согласись мы жить по старине, и Литва, и Польша, и немцы орденские, и крымские татары, и султан кинулись бы на нас черезо все украины, разорвали бы тело наше, души наши погубили... Того хотят князья и бояре, чтоб погибло царство русское...71

It is interesting to note the similarity in the content of the above extract and Peter's address to the senate in the preceding play. In both cases the tsars warn of dire consequences if the country returns to its former condition, a warning that implies the progressive character of both reigns; and in both cases opposition is directly linked with treason and the partition of Russia. This is, of course, crass oversimplification.

In "Трудные годы" Tolstoi makes the sacking of Novgorod appear as a popular rebellion of the masses against the boiars and the clergy who were intending to surrender the city to Sigismund. As if to underline the popular support that the "rebellion" enjoyed among the people, Tolstoi introduces into his play a Russian folk hero, Vasilii Buslaev. Scaling the walls of the Novgorod Kremlin, this bogatyry
accosts Metropolitan Pimen and demands to know: "чертышка! Зачем Новгород продаешь?" 72

The antagonism between the Tsar and the boiar opposition culminates in an attempted assassination of Ivan. Significantly, the boiars hire a German assassin for the deed, but the attempt fails when the holy fool Vasilii shields Ivan from the deadly shaft! Such a crude device to make the boiars seem all the more treacherous is an example of how Tolstoi altered the initially comical opposition to one of a decidedly sinister character. Captured German knights, on the other hand, are treated lightly and are shown to be frivolous adventurers rather than serious military adversaries.

In a historical play, one does not necessarily expect an absolutely accurate reconstruction of historical facts, but rather a plausible and a convincing rendition of the spirit of the epoch and its characters. In his effort to make Ivan IV appear primarily as a political and military leader concerned only with Russia's sovereignty, Tolstoi falsifies history in order to give a well-varnished image of the Tsar. Designed to raise the spirits of the viewing public during the war years, and coincidentally fitting very nicely into the precepts of socialist realism, Ivan Groznyi concludes with the burning of Moscow, but nonetheless it concludes optimistically. The last speech of the play
belongs to Ivan, who gazes upon the burning "Third Rome," but assures the audience:

Горит, горит Третий Рим... Сказано — четвертому не быть... Горит и не сгорает, костер нетленный и огонь неугасаемый... Се — правда русская, рода человека.

In an article dated Leningrad Front, May 1944, Aleksandr Dymshits wrote of the play's inspirational qualities. The wars pursued by Ivan were, he wrote:

... wars of liberation aimed at clearing Russian lands from foreign occupiers... The enemies of Ivan IV, the enemies of Russia are correctly portrayed as rapacious occupiers who conduct bandit-like and unjust wars. Such are the Tartar khans, such are the Livonian knight-curs, the ancestors of contemporary German fascists."

Ivan Groznyi is a play firmly planted in Soviet Russian war literature. But though there are many serious transgressions against history, there is one good feature in the play that may be pointed out, and that is the language, which helps to create a feeling of Russia in Ivan's time. If the two passages quoted above can serve as illustrations, then it becomes evident how archaisms contribute to create that feeling of the past. For example, such words as недоброхоты, радеть, попирать, свободолюбие, сложась с боярами are very seldom found in contemporary Russian. Furthermore, expressions associated with religion, such as мира сего мимотекущего, дьявол элопыхающий, твердья ада ва seem to suit Ivan very well since he revealed himself inclined to such
expressions in his famous correspondence with Prince Kurbskii. Finally, the grammatically obsolete враги суть, огонь, and \textit{человеки} contribute convincingly to create an illusion of that distant past.

But the idealized portrayal of Ivan and the crass inversion of historical evidence detract from the quality of this work. Taken as a whole, \textit{Ivan Groznyi} resembles something like a morality play in which Ivan IV is transformed by Tolstoi into an allegorical national hero. Since the cult of personality was denounced, the play has been removed from the Soviet stage. Spencer Roberts mentions, however, that the production of Ivan Groznyi was rather spectacular:

In it, Russian history (seen through rosy glasses, but dramatically presented) and early Muscovite life are set in a strikingly colourful atmosphere and acted by three-dimensional characters. . . . Costumes, painstakingly reproduced from museum pieces and executed in magnificently rich cloth, innumerable complex, full-stage, heavy settings on which no expense was spared, and brilliant acting (a bit melodramatic at times, yes, but then that is part of the Russian style) all united to make a production of which the Soviets could truly be proud.75

Roberts, or anyone else who had seen the play, may have been distracted by the elaborate production. Judging by what is available to the reader, \textit{Ivan Groznyi} can be ranked high among those plays that were adapted to the spiritual needs of Soviet war-time audiences.

It is fair to conclude in general that the content of
Tolstoi's plays, in their various editions and productions, gives a fairly accurate reflection of the changing political environment in Soviet Russia between 1918 and 1945. Beginning with Smert' Dantona, which had the shortest stage life, and ending with Ivan Groznyi, which had one of the longest, the historical plays mentioned here also give an indication of Tolstoi's response to contemporary events, as well as to the varying Soviet interpretations of pre-revolutionary history.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

This thesis endeavours to draw attention to the interrelation between writings on historical topics and the varying extraneous factors which have been largely ignored in past studies. But Soviet literature in general, and Soviet historical fiction in particular, cannot be separated from political considerations, and for this reason, an unbiased assessment of the stories, the novel and the plays on historical topics, all of which have made the greatest contribution toward Tolstoi's literary reputation, must be viewed against the political background in which he was enmeshed.

Tolstoi's biography shows how, with his sense of history, he often drew an association between the past and the present. His earliest prose, his anecdotes and short stories, were modelled after the French neo-realist of the fin de siècle, Henri de Régnier. But unlike Régnier, who wrote with nostalgia about the graceful and melancholic French aristocracy of the ancien régime, Tolstoi satirized the affected speech and inept posturing of the rural Russian gentry of Catherine's time. A comic effect was achieved by contrasting the simplicity of speech and manners of the
Russian peasants with the awkward artificiality of the nobility.

During the first world war, Tolstoi worked as a correspondent for Russkie Vedomosti. His articles and stories about the common front-line fighting revealed merely patriotic but also Slavophile leanings. He accepted the February revolution as the answer to Russia's faltering conduct of the war, and, like so many intellectuals, he placed great hopes in the Provisional Government for a speedy victory and a bright egalitarian future. The October revolution he rejected at first because he saw in the Bolsheviks a subversive faction that betrayed those hopes and a regime that was more concerned with a social experiment than with national honour. In such a gloomy frame of mind, Tolstoi turned to the past to express his anxiety for Russian statehood.

He saw in the radical changes made by Peter I a parallel with the current upheaval. Moreover, since his primary source for the stories "Pervye terroristy," "Navazhdenie" and "Den' Petra" was Slovo i delo gosudarevy, Professor Novombergskii's compilations of the wicked interrogations and tortures conducted in the Tsar's secret chancellery, Tolstoi's depictions of the Petrine era, and indeed of Peter himself, were dark and ominous. Particularly in the story "Den' Petra" his rhetorical questions — for
example, "Did Peter wish Russia well?" — reveal his antipathy toward the Bolshevik reforms that were changing contemporary Russia.

The hostility that Tolstoi felt towards the violence of the October revolution and the subsequent civil war in Russia was most clearly expressed in his adaptation of Georg Buchner's play *Dantons Tod*. Tolstoi's *Smert' Dantona* was staged only briefly in the Korsh Theatre in Moscow in October 1918, to be quickly suppressed by the new authorities because of its alleged bias against revolutionary zealots.

Perhaps agreeing with Buchner's belief in historical fatalism and the utter helplessness of individuals to affect the course of events, Tolstoi turned away from contemporary issues and, in 1919, while living in White-held Odessa, wrote a comedy, *Liubov' — kniga golotaia*, and a short story, "Graf Kaliostro." The content of the play and the story deals with courtship, love and cuckoldry among the rural gentry of eighteenth-century Russia and, as in the first anecdotes, he pokes fun at the efforts of some nobles to assume the airs and customs of European nobility. The play was first staged in French by a Parisian theatre group, and in 1924, after Tolstoi's return to Soviet Russia, it was accepted by MKhAT. Although it was a popular success, it too was forced off the stage for political reasons. In a period of sensitive class-consciousness and at a time when
the authorities were trying very hard to break all ties with the capitalist past, the portrayal of a kind and gracious Empress Catherine the Great was completely out of step with the times. Similarly, the peasants in the comedy were not depicted as oppressed serfs, and this too offended the proletarian reviewers. This play, as well as Smert' Dantona, Tolstoi re-wrote, making the changes that were demanded of him; however, no effort was made to stage the corrected versions. Thus, Smert' Dantona and Liubov'—kniga zolotaia were performed only in their original versions.

His period of voluntary exile, which lasted from 1919 to 1923, is important because it holds the key to understanding his subsequent writings on historical topics. His concern for Russian statehood, which he initially feared was threatened by the Bolsheviks, was gradually dissipated by the war with Poland, the famine, and by the partial diplomatic recognition gained by the Soviets. The ship of state, Tolstoi declared in an open letter to a leader of the Russian émigrés in Paris, was again on course with the Bolsheviks at the helm and, "following the example set by Peter," the émigrés should return and assist in its navigation. He was encouraged in this belief by the smena vekh (change of landmarks) group which advocated the notion that now — their book of essays appeared in 1921 — the Russian intelligentsia was confronted with a unique opportunity to end its historic
isolation from the people and the government by coming to
the assistance of the Bolsheviks and working for the economic
and cultural recovery of Russia. Enveloped in this idealist-
ic spirit, Tolstoi quit his association with the White
émigrés in Paris and moved to Berlin, where he could meet
with Russians from "the other shore." In Berlin he renewed
his acquaintance with Maiakovskii, and for the first time he
met Maksim Gorkii.

Reflecting this optimistic turn of mind, Tolstoi
published "Povest' smutnogo vremeni" (A Story of the Time of
Troubles), in 1922 in Berlin. It is a story of Boris
Godunov, the two False Dmitrii, the Polish occupation of
Moscow, and the enthronement of the first Romanov tsar.
This story clearly reveals Tolstoi's faith in Russia's
ability to survive.

In 1928 Tolstoi returned to historical topics and
particularly to Peter I in the play Na dybe (On the Rack).
In many respects this play follows the negative portrayal of
the Tsar that was already established in "Den' Petra" a
decade earlier. As Tolstoi admitted some time later, both
works followed Merezhkovskii's concentration on the coarse
personal qualities of Peter the Great. In addition, Peter's
reforms were presented as inconsequential and assumed to
have produced nothing but widespread suffering and ruin.
The opposition headed by the Tsarevich Aleksei is more
comical than dangerous, and Peter's reaction, especially the murder of his son, serves further to blacken the Tsar. But Soviet historiography at the time of the writing of this play maintained a universally disparaging regard for the tsars and emphasized strongly their oppression of the people. Na dybe, therefore, coincided with the current interpretation of Russian history as it was taught by the so-called school of Pokrovskii.

Immediately following the composition of the play, Tolstoi started to write the novel Petr Pervyi. In contrast to Na dybe, which spans practically all of Peter's life, the depth and detail of the unfinished trilogy, which could ultimately span only the years from his minority to 1704, combine to present a balanced characterization of Peter. The panoramic setting in which the spectacle of the epoch was played out is presented convincingly by Tolstoi. His graphic descriptions also serve to bring forth a gallery of characters representing every stratum of society in Muscovite Rus'. The reader is led inside a muzhik's decrepit izba, across a nobleman's yard, he is jostled in the crowded, noisy, winding streets of old Moscow, ushered into the closeted abode of a boiar, and finally guided through the vast chambers of the Kremlin. The result is that the reader is directed toward the conclusion that someone with all of Peter's ruthless qualities and his merciless subordination
of everyone and everything to the resuscitation of a stagnating Russia was not a manifestation of personal cruelty, but the embodiment of a historic necessity. The parallel between Peter's general Europeanization and the contemporary rush to industrialization under the Soviet five-year plans is inescapable. But Tolstoi insisted that *Petr Pervyi* is not a novel about the present dressed in eighteenth-century costume. The similarity is to be limited only to a general outburst of human energy coupled with a general wish to become self-sufficient and independent of foreigners.

The second variant of the play was written just a few months after Tolstoi had completed the second volume of *Petr Pervyi*. Therefore, the new and — in comparison to *Na dybe* — improved image of Peter is achieved in the new play *Petr I* (1935) through greater concentration on the Tsar's efforts on behalf of the state and correspondingly less concentration on his personal flaws. The oppression of the people in this version of the play is deflected away from Peter to the rising capitalist class, while Tsarevich Aleksei is presented as a more serious opponent of Peter's innovations. Such modifications make the second variant of the plays about Peter the Great the most convincing.

The last two plays were written in extraordinary conditions which greatly reduced their artistic value and led to their falsification of history. In the first place,
the cult of Stalin had reached truly monumental proportions by the late thirties, so that every artistic medium was directed toward an ever-rising glorification of the leader. Second, in view of the deterioration in international relations, the Soviet government had now begun to tone down or even to eliminate the class struggle from the arts, while at the same time indulging in a massive restoration of national "heroes" in order to bolster patriotism and a sense of continuity between the old and the new Russia.

Thus, in Petr I (1938) absolutely no flaws are revealed in the Tsar's character; nothing is said or shown to blemish his private life, and patriarchal relations between the autocrat and the people assure Russia a victorious and prosperous future. Significantly, opposition to Peter is moved outside the borders of Russia, and Tsarevich Aleksei is made to appear, in the final variant of the play, as an agent for the European powers that aspire to dismember Russia and return it to a weak and backward condition.

The last play was written during the war years and, as may be expected, historical accuracy was once more sacrificed. However, the author did not conceal the fact that the immediate impulse for writing Ivan Groznyi was the humiliating success of the Nazi war machine against Russia in the winter of 1941-42. Commendable as this effort for the cause of victory may be, its narrow purpose resulted in
a crude whitewash of Ivan IV and a generally false presentation of sixteenth-century Russia. As in *Petr I* (1938), so in *Ivan Groznyi*, the Tsar is the personification of patriotism, a head of state loved by the people, but feared and hated by the reactionary *boiars*. In both these plays it is evident that Tolstoi was not so much trying to present a historical setting as to foster a feeling of patriotism and boost the sagging morale of his audiences.

In the last year of his life he resumed the writing of the novel *Petr Pervyi*, but illness was rapidly draining his strength and he completed barely six chapters of the third volume.

A. N. Tolstoi's literary reputation rests chiefly on his works of historical fiction. The breadth of his interest in this field of literature includes short stories and plays as well as the novel *Petr Pervyi*. In these writings he often sought to rationalize the present through representations of analogous periods from Russian history. As this study has attempted to show, these representations took shape in response to changes in both the personal concepts of the author and the political environment in which he worked. While the validity of his ideology may well call forth conflicting critical judgments, there can be no doubt that in Russian Soviet literature Aleksei Tolstoi deservedly occupies a place of honour for his gift as a raconteur and his masterly use of the Russian language.
NOTES TO INTRODUCTION


3 A. N. Tolstoi, O literature: stat'i, vystupleniia, pis'ma (Moskva, Sovetskii pisatel', 1956), p. 323.

4 Sheppard, p. 15.

5 Sheppard, p. 15.

6 Tolstoi, O literature, p. 408.


3
NOTES TO CHAPTER I


2. Iu. A. Krestinskii's A. N. Tolstoi: zhizn' i tvorchestvo remains the only comprehensive biography of the writer. Additional information may be found in this book.

3. In 1882 she published a novel, Neugomonnoe serdtse, but she was best known for her children's stories Podruzhka, which were published under the pseudonym Aleksandra Bostrom.


7. A. N. Tolstoi's archive No. 4/3, at the A. M. Gorkii Institute of World Literature — IMLI. Hereinafter IMLI.


11. Ibid.


13. Tolstoi, Sobranie sochinenii, I, 56. In her book, Dmitrii Merezhkovskii, Z. Gippius mentions that in 1920, or 1921, she, her husband and A. Tolstoi attended a dinner at the International Club in Paris. She mentions, among the Frenchmen present, the symbolist writer Henri de Régnier. It is not known, however, whether Tolstoi and Régnier became acquainted.


18. Tolstoi, Sobranie sochinenii, I, 57.


20. Tolstoi, Sobranie sochinenii, X, 201.


22. Ibid., p. 119.

23. Ibid., p. 121.

24. Ibid.


27. V. Baranov, Revoliutsiia i sud'ba khudozhnika: A. Tolstoi i ego put' k sotsialisticheskomu realismu (Moskva: Sovetskii pisatel', 1967), p. 94. The quotation is from an article by Tolstoi in the émigré paper Obshchee Delo, Paris, August 20, 1919.


30. Ibid., p. 102.


33. Nikitina, Tolstaia, p. 123; my italics.

34. Ibid., pp. 124-125; my italics.


41 Verret, 149.

42 "Весной 22-го года, ... встреча с Максимом Горьким решила мой выбор: я перешел на этот берег, ..." B. Leonov, "Oktiabr'skaia revoliutsiia mne dala vse ; ...," *Oktiabr',* No. 1, 1973, 196.

43 Baranov, p. 114.

44 Bunin, p. 148.

45 Tolstoi, *O literature*, p. 35.

46 This is not entirely true. B. Leonov, in *Oktiabr',* No. 1, 1973, gives Kuprin's explanation for his inability to write in France:

Прекрасный народ, ... но не говорит по-русски, в лавочке и в пивной — всюду не по-нашему... А значит это вот что — поживешь, поживешь да и писать перестанешь. Есть, конечно, писатели такие, что их хоть на Мадагаскар посылают на вечное поселение — они и там будут писать роман за романом. А мне все надо родное, всякое — хорошее, плохое — только родное.

47 Chaikovskii and Miliukov headed the Executive Committee for Assistance to Emigre Writers, and The Union of Russian Writers and Journalists, respectively.
48 Tolstoi, *Sobranie sochinenii*, X, 34.

49 Ibid., 35.

50 Ibid.

51 Ibid., 37.

52 Ibid., 38.

53 P. S. Kogan, the author of the article, predicted that Tolstoi's letter to Chaikovskii would be remembered in the same way as Belinskii's letter to Gogol'.


60 IMLI, Archive 57.


62 Krestinskii, Tolstoi's secretary, said in a private conversation that, just on the eve of the war, Tolstoi received a postcard from Bunin with the words "Khochu domoi." Tolstoi then wrote a letter on Bunin's behalf and Krestinskii personally took it to the Kremlin. After the war, Bunin changed his mind.
NOTES TO CHAPTER II


3. IMLI, Archive 6237.

4. Tolstoi, Sobranie sochinenii, I, 76.

5. Ibid., 85.

6. Ibid., 290-291.

7. Ibid., II, 11.

8. Ibid., 12.

9. Ibid., I, 58.

10. Ibid.

11. Tolstoi, O Literature, p. 112.

12. Ibid., p. 113.

13. Ibid.


15. Rozhdestvenskaia, Khodiuk, p. 141.


17. Ibid., p. 219.

18. Ibid., p. 220.


21 Tolstoi, Sobranie sochinenii, III, 67.

22 Ibid., 75-76.


24 Tolstoi, Sobranie sochinenii, III, 77.

25 Pilniak explains that everything that Peter had undertaken was done only by chance:

Во имя случайно начатой (как и все, что делал Петр) войны со шведами, случайно заброшенный под Ниеншанц, Петр случайно заложил — на болоте невской дельты, на острове Енисари, — Петропавловскую фортёцию, совершенно не думая о парадизе.

pp. 73-74.

26 IMLI, Archive 7021. The passages in brackets do not appear in the published versions.

(Tolstoi, Sobranie sochinenii, III, 82.)

27 Tolstoi, Sobranie sochinenii, III, 84.

28 IMLI, Archive 7021. Tolstoi, Sobranie sochinenii, III, 84.

29 Tolstoi, Sobranie sochinenii, III, 91.

30 Ibid., 80 and 85.

31 Ibid., VIII, 112.

32 Ibid., III, 115.

33 Ibid., 117.

34 Ibid., 131.


36 Tolstoi, Sobranie sochinenii, III, 280.

37 Ibid., 291-292.

38 Ibid., 293.
39 Ibid., 275. The general outline of Naum's biography Tolstoi also borrowed from Slovo i delo.

40 Ibid., 295.

41 M. Gorkii, Sobranie sochinenii v tridtsati tomakh, XXX (Moskva: GIKhL, 1956), 25.

42 Tolstoi, Sobranie sochinenii, IV, 143.

43 Ibid., 148-149.

44 Ibid., 176.

45 Ibid., 179.

46 Tolstoi, Polnoe sobranie, VI, 407.

47 Ibid.

48 Ibid., 413.
NOTES TO CHAPTER III


5. Tolstoi, O literature, pp. 323-324.


7. For a detailed background to the writing of Zapiska, see Richard Pipes' lengthy introduction to his translation of the tract.


9. Ibid., p. 123.

10. Ibid., p. 127.


16. A. Alpatov, "O nekotorykh osobennostiakh raboty L. N. Tolstogo i A. N. Tolstogo nad istoricheskimi obrazami..."

17 L. N. Tolstoi, Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v 90 tomakh, LXI (Moskva, GIKhL, 1953), 249.

18 Alpatov, Vestnik Moskovskogo Universiteta, 17.

19 Poliak, Izvestiia AN SSSR, XIII, 8.

20 A. V. Alpatov, lecture delivered for the course, "Russkii istoricheskii roman," Department of Russian Literature, Moscow State University, 14 April 1975.


23 Tolstoi, O literature, p. 115.

24 Krestinskii, p. 187.

25 Tolstoi, O literature, p. 411.

26 Ibid., p. 412.


28 Conversation with A. V. Alpatov, Moscow, February 1975.

29 Krestinskii, p. 192.


32 G. Gorbachev, "Mezhdu ob'ektivizmom i idealizmom (o Petre Pervom A. N. Tolstogo)," Leningrad, No. 2, 1931, 120-124.

34 IMLI, Archive 57.

35 Ars. Alpatov, "Obraz 'kak by vyrezannyi na medi' (O 'Petre I' A. Tolstogo)," Khudozhestvennaia Literatura, No. 10, 1934, 6.

36 A. Alpatov, "Retserziia na knigu A. Tolstogo 'Petr Pervyi' i Iu. Tynianova 'Voskovaia figura'," Kniga i Proletarskaia Revoliutsiia, Nos. 405, 1933, 164.


41 Ibid., 223.

42 IMLI, Archive 57.

43 Tolstoi, O literature, p. 172.


45 Tolstoi, O literature, p. 330.

46 Tolstoi, Sobranie sochinenii, VII, 12. Further excerpts taken from this volume will be indicated only by page number.

47 A reference to Dimitrii's murder allegedly committed by Boris Godunov.

48 Tolstoi, O literature, p. 209.

49 Poliak, A. Tolstoi — khudozhnik, p. 412.

50 A. V. Alpatov, "O tret'ei knige romana A. N. Tolstogo 'Petr Pervyi'," in Tvorchestvo A. N. Tolstogo: sbornik statei, p. 120.
51 Tolstoi, O literature, p. 332.
52 Gorkii, Pis'ma o literature, p. 441.
53
NOTES TO CHAPTER IV

1 Tolstoi, O literature, p. 105

2 Kerensky was not altogether a distant celebrity as far as Tolstoi was concerned. Tolstoi was Natal'ia Vasilevna Krandievskaja's second husband. Her first husband was a good friend of A. Kerensky.

3 Borozdina, A. N. Tolstoi i teatr, p. 53.


5 "K sniatiiu 'Smerti Dantona'," Izvestiia, October 20, 1918.


10 Price, p. 37.

11 Ibid., pp. 22-23.

12 Tolstoi, Smert' Dantona, pp. 33-38.

13 Ibid., p. 1.

14 Tolstoi, Polnoe sobranie, XI, 203.


17 Ibid.

255

19 Ibid., pp. 14, 22.

20 Ibid., p. 17.

21 Ibid., pp. 17-18.

22 Ibid., p. 90.


25 Ibid.


27 Толстой, *Sobranie sochinenii*, IX, 328.

28 Ibid., 304.

29 Ibid., 292, 295.


32 Иванов-Разумник, *Pisatel'skie sud'by*, p. 40. After mentioning his own imprisonment, Ivanov-Razumnik continues:

... переожожу к самому роману Алексея Толстого, и, вернее, к его авторской переработке в пьесу, ... Впрочем, речь должна идти не о переработке, а о переработках, так как таких было целых три — и в них автор последовательно опускался все ниже и ниже по ступенькам лакейства, ...


Влияние М. Н. Покровского на А. Толстого в период работы над трагедией было не очень значительным.

34 Black, p. 240.
36. Ibid., 605-606.
37. Ibid., 609-610.
38. Ibid., 613.
39. Ibid., 642.
40. Ibid., 645.
41. Ibid., 653.

Прекрасная пьеса. Жаль только, что Петр выведен недостаточно героически. Писательские судьбы, p. 42.

43. L. Cherniavskii, "Restavratsiia merezhkovshchiny (Petr I vo 2 MKhAt-e)," *Pravda*, 11 March 1930.
45. Krestinskii, p. 181.
47. Krestinskii, p. 182.
52. Ibid., pp. 37-38.
53. Ibid., p. 54.
54. Ibid., p. 66.
55. Ibid., p. 67.


58 "Prim'era 'Petra I' v Akademicheskom teatre dramy im. A. S. Pushkina," Pravda, 12 April 1938.


61 Poliak, A. Tolstoi — khudozhnik, p. 411.

62 Tolstoi, Sobranie sochinenii, IX, 533-534.

63 Ibid., 537. Comical and far-fetched as this final scene may seem to the reader today, it was rather typical of the Soviet theatre of the late 1930's. But Ivanov-Razumnik's prejudicial feelings led him to factual errors. Concerning this play he wrote in Pisatel'skie sud'by:

Пришлось заняться третьей редакцией, ... В этой редакции финальная сцена — заседание Сената и речь Петра к сенаторам на тему о том, что "дело петрово" — не пропадет: "Знайте, товарищи [], что хотя и не скоро, а придёт человек, который будет по своему, по новому, но продолжать дело Петра"... До имени Сталина дело не дошло, но ведь и без того всякому имеющему уши, чтобы слышать, было понятно, на кого намекает — не Петр а лакеистующий автор.

Nothing resembling this appears anywhere in the play!

64 Krestinskii, p. 221.

65 Tolstoi, O literature, p. 410.


67 Ibid.

It is interesting to note that Aleksei Konstantinovich Tolstoi condemns Tsar Ivan IV for his tyranny and personal cruelty in ballads, in the novel Kniaz' Serebrianyi (Prince Serebrianyi), and of course in the drama Smert' Ioanna Groznogo (The Death of Ivan the Terrible). As the title suggests, A. K. Tolstoi's play deals with the Tsar's last year of life, the humiliating defeat he suffered at the hands of the Polish king Stefan Batory, and the failure of his reign in general. Written in verse, Smert' Ioanna Groznogo shows the evil consequence of unrestrained power. Ivan's chief aim in life, explained A. K. Tolstoi in his extensive directions for the production of the play, was the preservation of his absolute power. Ultimately it corrupted the Tsar both as a political figure and as an individual. This "human truth," as A. K. Tolstoi called it, is of greater importance than the "historical truth," and if the two truths can coincide in an artistic work, so much the better.

70 Tolstoi, Sobranie sochinenii, IX, 604.
71 Ibid., 648-649.
72 Ibid., 704.
73 Ibid., 743.
75 Roberts, p. 150.
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" " 4/3 exercise book in Russian language: essays written in the summer of 1901.
" " 47 a typescript of "Navazhdenie," dated 1918.
" " 57 notes for the novel "Petr I," dated 1932.
" " 143/107 notes about the visit to Paris, dated 1908.
" " 6234 reminiscences by S. I. Dymshits.
" " 6235 reminiscences by N. V. Krandievskaia.
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" " 7022021 typescript of "Den' Petra."

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