

THE ARTISTIC VISION OF RUSSIA IN "PETER I"
BY A.N. TOLSTOY

by Anna Clarke

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CURRICULUM STUDIORUM

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INTRODUCTION

Although "Peter I" has long been recognized as an outstanding Russian novel, it has so far received very little attention in English-written literary criticism.¹ Consequently, the following remark, quoted here at some length, is all the more noteworthy:

"The war has given a resounding impetus to Soviet patriotism... which combines pride in the October Revolution... with pride... in the achievements of the Russian past. The revival... represented a deliberate reaction... against what had been the prevailing trend in Soviet schools and education ever since the early days of the Revolution (when)... the times of Peter the Great were too often represented in terms of Pokrovsky's theory of the rise and triumph of "trading capitalism". .. and Peter himself like any historical personage, more or less disappeared... In various popular editions... Peter and his reign are now duly prominent, and the film on him and Alexis Tolstoy's remarkable novel have still further served towards his reinstatement." 2

This evaluation of Tolstoy's book by Sumner is a remarkable testimony and one which generated in the present writer the desire to study the book in depth. B.H. Sumner is probably, indeed almost certainly, the leading Western scholar and historian of the Petrine era. Yet here he is, vouchsafing with his professional authority the worth of a historical novel on Peter written by a Soviet writer in the times

1 Hence the scarcity of any English sources used throughout this paper.

2 Readings in Russian History, Edited by Sidney Harcave, Harpur College, New York, 1962, v. I, p. 248.

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of Stalin and one which has often been criticized even by Soviet writers for being a thinly disguised defense and transposition of the presence into the past. This is the more remarkable since any discussion on Peter's reign among Russian intellectuals and writers is a declaration of faith on two fundamental questions of Russian civilization 1) what is the nature of Russia and what her future and 2) can a centralized, dictatorial regime impose a revolution from above, especially at high speed and by violent means. An attitude then that a writer takes towards Peter the ruler and Peter the man amounts to his exposition of a world-view. For this reason, chapter two of this paper traces the development of the concept of Peter I in the creativity of A. Tolstoy. The words of Sumner, surprisingly, seem to endorse the conclusions to which Tolstoy came.

Further, to a student of Russian literature the depth study of Tolstoy's book is of interest since it evokes the question on the nature, scope and limitations of the historical novel, and the Russian historical novel in particular. Chapter one endeavours to trace and analyze the genre in its development and to place "Peter I" accordingly.

The historical novel, however, and its particular issues are part and parcel of much broader issues posed by literature in general and perhaps best summarized by George Orwell, quoted by MacAndrew in Yuri Olesha.

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"The imaginative writer is unfree when he has to falsify his subjective feelings, which from his point of view are facts. He may distort and caricature reality in order to make his meaning clearer but he cannot misrepresent the scenery of his mind: he cannot say with conviction that he likes what he dislikes or believes what he disbelieves. If he is forced to do so, the only result is that his creative faculties dry up." 3

What this means when reduced to simplest English is this: a writer may be free to say what he wants to say and can then, always depending on his talent, produce works of artistic value. Or, he may be forced by circumstances to lie and distort the objective or subjective reality, which he can only do at the expense of his artistic vision. That neither Tolstoy nor any Soviet author writing under the conditions of Stalin's regime was free to say freely all that he wanted to say would seem self-evident. What is not self-evident but might vary from writer to writer is to what degree any of them, in this case Tolstoy, was in fact writing truthfully and to what extent was his artistic creativity crippled by the inability to speak the total truth as he perceived it. Chapter III and IV of this paper attempt to measure the means, scope and impact of Tolstoy's very considerable artistic means as^{he} displayed them in "Peter I". To what extent

3 Yuri Olesha, Envy and Other Works, Translated, with an Introduction, by Andrew R. MacAndrew, New York, 1967, p. xviii.

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would his vision have been enhanced by conditions of complete freedom of expression is a question which can probably never be answered.

CHAPTER I

A BRIEF OUTLINE OF THE RUSSIAN HISTORICAL NOVEL

("Peter I" by Aleksey Nikolayevich Tolstoy
against the background of Soviet literature)

Historical subject matter takes a prominent place in world literature. The greatest works of the literature on that subject - from the "Iliad" to "War and Peace"-are devoted to depicting the past and to the transmission of its artistic vision.

The historical novel has played and continues to play an important role in the development of the historical subject matter in literature (besides memoirs, a variety of journals, reminiscences etc.).

To define this type of novel as a literary genre is not an easy task. Requirements for the inclusion of a specific literary work into the framework of the genre of historical novel,^{and} the definition of the scope and characteristics of the historical novel are two of the most controversial questions in the history and theory of literature. Obviously, however, the historical novel as a genre, while possessing some features common with contemporary novel, has some

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additional qualities peculiarly and specifically its own. It is, first and foremost, a novel on the past and, moreover, on a past now firmly gone by and so distant that it makes it a period of time qualitatively different from the present. Another necessary condition of the genre is a high degree of documentary veracity of the events and figures described by the author, in other words historical authenticity.

Two periods may be distinguished in the development of the historical novel. To the first and the older of the two, initiated by Walter Scott and continued by, among others V. Hugo, L.N. Tolstoy and H. Sienkiewicz, belong works in which fictional protagonists act against real historical events. The second is centered around the fate of authentic historical figures; this type of historical novel, which came to prominence and popularity for the first time in our own century, has many characteristics of a biographical novel or a chronicle. The best known representatives of this genre are among others Heinrich Mann, S. Zweig, L. Feuchtwanger and, in the Soviet Union Tynyanov (Kyukhlya, Pushkin) and Aleksey Tolstoy. The latter's "Peter I" - the subject of this paper - is a typical example of a work created in the second phase of the development of the historical novel as defined above.

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The genesis of the historical novel is seen by scholars in the beginning of the XIX century, at about the time of the end of the Napoleonic rule.¹ (In 1814 appeared the first historical novel by Walter Scott, Waverley). There have of course been novels with a historical background written before (in the XVII and XVIII centuries) but in fact they were at best pseudo-historical; historical was the background, the costume and the accessories but absent was - as Lukacs says - the most important mark of a historical approach: the deduction of the specific traits of the protagonists from the specific traits of the era in which they lived.²

The question arises of why it was that the period of the Napoleonic wars should have evoked an interest in historical subject matter. Perhaps the most comprehensive interpretation of the question comes from the above quoted prominent Marxist scholar, G. Lukacs, Lukacs writes of course from a chosen point of view and he may be accused of an oversimplification of the very complex phenomenon of the origin of modern nationalism in politics and the birth of the romantic trend in literature. In Lukacs's opinion, only the French revolution, the revolutionary wars, the triumph, the conquests

1 G. Lukacs, "Od Goethego do Balsaca", Klasyczna postać powieści historycznej, Warszawa, 1958, p. 239.

2 G. Lukacs, op. cit., p. 239.

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and the downfall of Napoleon have made history a mass experience on an all-European scale.³ During the short span of a few decades (from 1780 to 1814) the nations of Europe went through more changes than they did before in the course of centuries. After the French Revolution - when the previous mercenary was replaced by the modern conscripted army, an army recruited from the broadest masses of the population - the battlefield became in fact all Europe and the civilian population felt the results of the war directly through their lives. As a reaction against and in response to the Napoleonic conquest, a series of national revolutions broke out all over Europe - with the consequent awakening of a feeling of piety for the national past, of an interest in the history of the national histories and of, as well, an awareness of the interrelationship of the fate of the individual with that of the whole nation.

These changes (the complete transformation of the existence and outlook of the population of Europe) were the economic and ideological basis of the origin of the first historical novels, which - as already mentioned - came from under the pen of Walter Scott.

Walter Scott attempted to portray the national specifics of the historical existence of the state, an important

3 G. Lukacs, op. cit., p. 245.

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step forward in the development of world literature. His historical novels portrayed the landmarks of English history, the epic pictures contained in them showed the life of the whole nation (of both the ruling class and the lower classes of the English society of a given era). Scott, who wrote during the most stormy period of romanticism, rejected the typical prototype of the "romantic hero", the lonely individual in revolt against the world and full of hatred towards it (the "Byronic" type) - as his protagonists he chose instead the average man, often prosaic (f.i. representatives of lower gentry like Waverley, Chorton, and even the medieval knight Ivanhoe) who nevertheless were representative and typical of social currents and historical forces. His novels recreated with great thoroughness the so-called local colour; they are full of detailed archeological and ethnographical descriptions. The English countryside is faithfully reproduced and, above everything else, the mores and characters of the people of the era are portrayed. The creative method of the writer can thus be defined as realistic.

Fiction plays nevertheless an important role in Scott's works. The romantic plot and the love adventures of his fictional protagonists are interwoven in his novels with historical events. The composition of a typical work of Scott's is characterized by the fact that it is centred

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around a fictional hero; his fate and adventures are tied with opposing camps in their struggle, indeed they provide the connecting link between the opposing parties. Historical figures, on the other hand, appear in Scott's novels only episodically, most often at the decisive moment of the events described in the plot. From the point of view of the composition they take a secondary place.

The novels of Scott have their weak points too; the most important of those is the limited ability of the author to create a psychologically convincing picture of his heroes. Many of the figures from across his works are alike, the characters repeat themselves. Balzac, an admirer and a continuator of the Scott tradition noticed that, with a few exceptions, all his heroines represent the same type of a typically correct English lady, that there is no room in his novels for interesting and intricate tragedies and comedies of love and intrigue.⁴ In turn such heroes as Ivanhoe, Waverley or Quentin Durward present the epitomy of a well brought-up English gentleman of the era of the writer and their characters are not shown in development, they undergo no change. Love complications and romantic adventures in Scott's novels almost always have a happy ending.

A decade later than in the West the historical novel came into being in Russia. The origin and appearance of the

⁴ G. Lukacs, op. cit., p. 265.

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genre in Russian literature has also its sources in a concrete socio-historical situation which generated an interest in the past. The stormy events of the beginning of the century, the war with Napoleon, the failure of the Decembrist movement, all contrived to make the historical problems prominent in the development of the Russian social thought of the end of the twenties and the beginning of the thirties. It seemed imperative for the understanding of any of the current problems besetting the society to understand the historical experience, to work out a historical perspective of the process of events. With increasing interest historical novels were read, particularly the works by Scott. The first translations of his works started to appear from the twenties onwards and became immensely popular.

"Действия Вальтер Скотта ощутительны во всех отраслях ему современной словесности" - wrote Pushkin.⁵

Against this background of interest for Scott's novels in Russia it is easy to understand what great impact the first native novels on Russian history had on Russian readers.

One of the first ones to devote his creative energy to the subject of the past was Alexander Pushkin.

Quoted in:

5 M. Serebryanskiy, "Sovetskiy istoricheskiy roman", Gos. izd. Khudozhestvennoy literatury, Moskva, 1936, p. 20.

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"Pushkin's first attempt in prose, "The Negro of Peter the Great" (1828), was inspired by the Waverley Novels. ... his finished prose work "The Captain's Daughter" (1836) ... he also wrote under Scott's stimulus... 6

According to Pushkin Scott, like Shakespeare and Goethe, had no slavish adoration for kings and heroes.⁷ In a similar vein Pushkin sketched in the "Negro of Peter the Great" a human, simple and at the same time unusual figure of the tsar-reformer. Peter I was shown not during moments of historical action but in his everyday, private life: in his family circle, while playing chess, as a match-maker in the home of Rzhevskiy, and finally as godfather attentive to the family affairs of his pupil.

The Petrine era is shown by Pushkin fragmentarily - from the side of customs and mores, governmental structure and Russian culture of the times. The figure of the tsar himself was idealized. Peter I seemed to the poet at the time to be the ideal of an enlightened monarch, introducing wise laws, respectful of science and art and loving his people. Some time later, in a work with more historical emphasis "Istoriya Petra" (1834-1836), Pushkin evaluated the figure and activity of the ruler with a considerable dose of criticism.

6 J. Lavrin, "An Introduction to the Russian novel", London, Methuen & C. Ltd., 1947, p. 14.

7 A.S. Pushkin, Polnoye sobraniye sochineniy v 10 to-makh, t. 7, "Kritika i publitsistika", Moscow, 1949, p. 535.

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"Arap Petra Velikogo", the first attempt of a Russian historical novel, was never finished. Only two chapters appeared "Assamblee pri Petre I" and "Obed u russkogo boyarina". In them, those features found an expression which later were to become the hall marks for the genre of the historical novel: an accurate recreation of the national past, the ability to draw characters and figures typical for the era at hand and the representation of reality in its dialectical process. Not surprisingly, when analyzing "Arap Petra Velikogo" against the background of historical literature of the thirties Belinskiy, the most authoritative Russian critic of that period maintained:

"Будь этот роман кончен так же хорошо, как начат, мы имели бы превосходный исторический русский роман, изображающий нравы величайшей эпохи русской истории..."⁸

In the course of the next few years Russian literature saw the appearance of a vast number of historical novels, among which should be noted the works of Michail Zagoskin ("Yuriy Miloslavskiy", 1829 and "Roslavlev", 1831), Fadyey Bulgarin ("Lzhedimitriy", 1820) and Ivan Lazhechnikov ("Posledniy Novik", 1821-33, "Ledyanoy Dom", 1835 and "Bassurman", 1838). In 1835 appeared "Taras Bulba" by Gogol and in 1836 - "Kapitanskaya Dochka" by Pushkin. Inside the body of Russian literary criticism of the thirties there takes place a sharp

Quoted in
8 S.M. Petrov, "Istoricheski roman v russkoy literature", Moscow, 1961, p. 13.

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polemic on the character, aims and tasks of the historical novel.⁹

S.M. Petrov distinguishes three trends in the development of the Russian historical novel of the first quarter of the 19th century: didactic, romantic and realistic.¹⁰

The first, originating from the traditions of the historical prose of Nicolas Karamzin and his sentimental novels on historical subjects, is represented by Zagoskin and Bulganin. The romantic trend was characteristic of the novels of Nicolas Plevoy and Lazhechnikov; the trend was shaped by the influence of French romanticism and also by the prose of Aleksander Bestuzhev-Marlinskiy. The creator of the first historical novel written under the conventions of realism became A. Pushkin. It was published in 1836 in Sovremennik, (edited at the time by the poet himself) under the title "Kapitanskaya dochka".

"Kapitanskaya dochka", written in the genre of a family chronicle (the narrator is Peter Andreyevich Grinev; the compositional form consists of the reminiscences of this fictional hero, whose youthful years became intertwined with historical events) turned out to be a novel of a very wide subject matter. Before the eyes of the reader spreads the

9 S.M. Petrov, op. cit., p. 13-15.

10 op. cit., p. 14-33.

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picture of the era, the times of Catherine II; the existence of the gentry both in the capital and in the country, the world of the military, of the court of the tsaritsa, the uprising of peasants and cossacks under the leadership of Yemelyan Pugachev - all are shown. The heroes represent various layers of that society. In the "Kapitanskaya dochka" the author's striving for historical authenticity, already apparent in "Boris Godunov", becomes even more forceful. Pushkin collected materials for this work through a number of years; in order to recreate the era of the peasant revolts of the second half of the seventies of the XVIIIth century, he visited the Orenburg steppes and the Povolzhye - i.e. the places where the action described by him took place - he visited the battle fields, talked to the surviving witnesses of the revolt, collected folk tales and legends and collected valuable material from sources and archives, all of which allowed him, on the eve of the publication of the book (in the years 1833-34), to publish an almost scientific work under the title "Istoriya Pugacheva".

The plot of "Kapitanskaya dochka", in comparison with the novels of Scott and with the Russian historical prose of the thirties, contained many new elements. Pushkin avoided unusual, sensational and exotic motives (which often appeared in the works of Lazhechnikov, the author of "Posledniy Novik")

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the action in "Kapitanskaya dochka" evokes interest not through fictional intrigue but through an artistic narration of the life of a common man mixed up in historic events. Pugachev who, besides the second-plan silhouette of Catherine II, is the main historical figure of the novel appears not, as he would in the stories by Scott, at the peripheries of the novel, he is not an episodic hero. He takes a direct part in all of the most important moments of the novel, on his actions depends the fate of the captain's daughter, Masha Mironov, Grinev meets him in every-day life. It should be noted that Pushkin's concept of Pugachev was in complete contrast with the official historiography of the day- which saw in the rebel a criminal, almost a demon, and a symbol of all evil. Nor did his concept meet with an approval of the romantic writers who saw him as a romantic rebel. From under Pushkin's pen there arose an interesting, complex figure of a leader of peasant uprisings perhaps somewhat idealized in the spirit of the Russian folklore. With an equal originality the silhouettes of the fictional heroes (Grinev, Shvabrin, captain Mironov) have been drawn; nor are they, as was sometimes the case with Scott, static- Pushkin possessed a talent for creating psychological portraits of his heroes.

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As already noted, the time of the flourishing and popularity of the historical novel in Russia was in the thirties of the XIX century. The literature of the forties was increasingly geared towards contemporary subjects; Nicolas Gogol wrote his "Dead Souls", Dostoyevskiy made his debut with "Poor People", the representatives of the so-called "naturalistic" school, Goncharov, Turgenev and Nekrasov entered their creative paths. The popularity of historical subjects was on the wane, In 1852 Turgenev stated the fall of the genre of the historical novel in Russia:¹¹

"Исторический вальтер-скоттовский роман - это пространное, солидное здание, со своим незыблемым фундаментом, врытым в почву народную, со своими обширными вступлениями в виде портиков, со своими парадными комнатами и темными коридорами для удобства сообщения, - этот роман в наше время почти невозможен, он отжил свой век, он несовременен... У нас, может быть, его пора еще не пришла, - во всяком случае он к нам не привился - даже под пером Лажечникова. Романы à la Dumas с количеством томов ad libitum у нас существуют, точно; но читатель нам позволит перейти их молчанием. Они, пожалуй, факт, но не все факты что-нибудь значат." II

The Russian historical novel had a rebirth in the sixties of the XIX century - this was the time of the arrival of "War and Peace" - the Russian national epic and the culminating point of achievement of the genre in both the Russian and in world literature.

¹¹ Quoted from "Istoriya russkogo romana" in 2 vol.-s, vol. 1, Moscow-Leningrad, 1962, p. 249-250. Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk, A.S. Bushmin, editor.

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This is no place for a detailed analysis of "War and Peace" - the subject is too wide and too complex; the world's literary criticism has a multitude of perceptive monographs on the subject. A few words on the work have to be said nevertheless in connection with the genre of historical novel.

The historical concept of "War and Peace" took shape against Tolstoy's reflections on contemporary events. The work was created in the years 1863-1869, i.e. a few years after the Russian defeat in the Crimean war. Perceiving an analogy between contemporary events and the times of the Napoleon's campaign of 1812, the author became interested in historical problems, and particularly interested in the role of the nation and the role of the individual in the historical process. "War and Peace" is not only a historical novel on the war of Russia with Napoleon, on the patriotic effort of the Russians in their fight against the invasion. It is also a "family chronicle" of the gentry (the story of the Bolkonskiys and the Rostovs), and the story of the youth of a Decembrist (the young Nikolenka Bolkonskiy), Tolstoy's work deals also with a number of social, philosophical and moral questions.

The method of historical interpretation used by Leo Tolstoy in "War and Peace" differs diametrically both from that of previous practice of historical novel writing and from that of the contemporary historical science. The book is

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an exposition of the concept of the decisive role of the masses of population on the course of the historical process which is, according to the writer, in its turn shaped by the fatalistic laws of providence. The real content of history is then, according to Tolstoy, made up by millions of human fates in their correlation and interconnection. Historical events, therefore, may be an object of neither historical nor artistic interpretation. They are only the external, directly felt but passing elements of the total historical process which contains the lives of all the people of a given era. In accordance with this concept "War and Peace" was to have been a novel-history (Tolstoy protested against calling it an "epic", "novel" or a "poema") and history - art, in which, as Kupreyanova writes,-

"... в отличие от исторического романа сняты все границы между историческим бытием и частной жизнью людей, а тем самым и между собственно историческим и художественным повествованием." 12

This concept had an influence on the choice of the specific composition of the novel. The reality of the described era is made up mainly of the individual fates, strivings, thoughts and actions of the heroes both fictional and historical. The writer is mainly interested in the development of

12 .N. Kupreyanova, "Voyna i mir" i Anna Karenina L'va Tolstogo", Istoriya russkogo romana in 2 volumes, v. 2, chapter VII, p. 282, Moscow-Leningrad, 1964.

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the individual figures, the motives of their actions. But Tolstoy does not follow the day-by-day lives of his heroes. Instead he gives the reader the most important episodes in their lives, and each of the episodes is conceived of as an integral part of the general historical process. By a similar method the writer by means of a few isolated episodes considers the fate not only of his fictional individual heroes but of the course of historical events, as for instance campaigns or individual battles, for instance Austerlitz or Borodino. The already quoted Lukacs evaluates this compositional methods of Tolstoy as follows:

"The genius of Tolstoy as an author of a historical novel consists in his ability to so choose and shape such episodes that the reader obtains a clear picture of the mood reigning in the army - and through the army - among the Russian "narod". And as soon as Tolstoy abandons this method and attempts to directly concern himself with the giant political-strategic problem of the war, as for instance in the characteristic of Napoleon, he at once boggs down in historico-philosophical lengthy discourses, which is a defeat of the writer quite apart from the fact that his attitude towards Napoleon was wrong, that he, Tolstoy, did not understand the historic Napoleon. Tolstoy was too great an artist to be capable of creating pseudo-art. And so where his object extended the area which can be recreated by literature he ruthlessly rejects the literary means of expression and attacks the problem by intellectual means" 13

This of course is again written from a chosen point of view. Tolstoy's approach to history is seen by many as the

13 G. Lukacs, "Od Goethego do Balsaka", Klasyczna powieść historycznej, Warsaw, 1958, p. 281-282. Translation mine.

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great asset of the book. This controversy, though, lies outside the scope of this paper.

With "War and Peace" ends the classical period of the Russian historical novel. The historical novels of the second part of the 19th century, popular among the Russian readers, i.e. the works of Aleksey K. Tolstoy (Knyaz' Serebryanyi, 1862), G. Danilevskiy's ("Mirovicz", 1879; "Knyazhna Tarakanova", 1883; "Sozhzhennaya Moskva", 1886) D. Mordovtsev's ("Solovetskoye sideniye", 1880; "Velikiy Rasskol", 1880; "Zachyi grekhi", 1890), were not equal to Tolstoy's great work, but represented medium class literature. Some of the tradition of Scott's writing survived in the poetical tone of the works; also a tendency arose for a naturalistic representation of the historical background. But the characters ceased to be typical, and adaptation of the language left much to be desired.

In the prose of the symbolists - the historical novels of Dimitriy Merezhkovskiy must be mentioned first. (The trilogy - "Khristos i Antikhrisť": part I - "Otverzheniye", "Smert' bogov", "Yulyan Otstupnik", 1896; part II - "Voskresshiye bogi" (Leonardo da Vinci, 1901); part III - "Antikhrisť" (Petr i Aleksey, 1905), and also the play "Tsarovich Aleksey", 1920). In the works of this writer the

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historicity of the scenery is emphasized; the era forms the background against which the writer presents the conflicts of human passions. The historic figures (e.g. Peter I) are predominantly symbols of certain moral attitudes (e.g. Peter I is the Antichrist, the incorporation of evil; his son Aleksey represents the Christian truth). Merezhkovskiy was a man of great erudition and with an excellent knowledge of historical documents. His works are of lasting value to literature and are, besides, an example of the creative method of the symbolists; in time they exercised an influence on the creativity of such well known Soviet novelists as Yuriy Tynyanov and Aleksey Tolstoy.

After the October Revolution the historical novel came to life again. In this decisive period of Russian history the need for the genre was reborn. Maksim Gorkiy, perfectly aware of the gaps in the new literature, wrote on the necessity of studying the native history and endeavoured to interest writers in historical subjects. Soviet writers of that time had considerable creative opportunities: the changes in ideology, the revaluation of previous values and hence the new outlook on history allowed them to draw from subjects never attempted before, and frequently considered "tabu" in tsarist Russia. The change or rather the widening of the scope of the subject matter led to a search for new forms

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and the gradual replacement of the old ones.

At the source of the Soviet historical novel stand three writers, three very different creative individualities: Olga Forsh, Yuriy Tynyanov and Aleksey Chapygin. Their first historical novels appeared almost simultaneously. The novel by Olga Forsh "Odety kamnem" (on Michael Bejdeman, a revolutionary imprisoned in the Petropavlovsk fortress) came out in the years 1924-25 in the periodical "Rossiya". It appeared in book form in 1925 together with the novel by Tynyanov "Kyukhlya", a biography of William Kuchelbecker, the Decembrist and friend of Pushkin. In the same year 1925, in "Byloye", the printing started of the book by Chapygin "Razin Stepan". Russian literary critics and scholars consider the simultaneous debut of three writers, authors of historical novels, more than a coincidence, and regard the year 1925 as the year of the birth of the genre in post-revolutionary literature.¹⁴

S.M. Petrov recognized two trends of development of the Soviet historical novel.¹⁵ The first, of which the most typical representative is Chapygin, continued the traditions of the writing of Semen Podyachev, Aleksandr Nevèrov and even Sergey Yesenin i.e. authors of peasant origin who wrote on

¹⁴ Akademiya Nauk SSSR, "Istoriya russkogo sovetskogo romana", kniga 1, Moscow, 1965, p. 339.

¹⁵ S.M. Petrov, "Istoricheskiy roman v russkoy literature", Moscow, 1961, p. 115-116.

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peasant themes. The favourite subjects of writers of this trend were novels-biographies of figures of popular peasant rebels of the past like Stepan Razin or Pugachev. Such heroes (f.e. Razin in the novel by Chapygin) were poetized in a romantic vein; particularly the strength of their rebellion was glorified, a strength comparable in the eyes of the authors to the elementary force of the revolution. Both the descriptions of historical reality and the linguistic adaptation in the works of the writers of this trend are characterized by naturalistic tendencies.

Another trend was represented by the novels of Olga Forsh and Yuriy Tynyanov, both of whom attempted to reconstruct the fate of the Russian intelligentsia. There was an obvious similarity between that topic and the contemporary reflections of the attitude of the intelligentsia towards the revolution (as in the novel "Calvary" by A. Tolstoy or the "Cities and Years" by N. Fedin). In their analysis of the Russian revolutionary movement the writers were mainly interested in the moral, psychological and cultural problems. Their novels were the first attempt to reconstruct and explain the spiritual tragedy of such outstanding representatives of Russian culture as Aleksandr Griboyedov (Tynyanov's novel "Smert' Vazyr Mukhtara", 1927-28), Gogol or the painter A. Ivanov ("Sovremenniki" by Olga Forsh, 1926).

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A characteristic feature of the Soviet historical novel became its striving for epic qualities and polyphony. Particularly popular became the biographical novel - here Yuriy Tynyanov is considered the father of the genre. But the biographical novel was not reduced to an account of the life of the main protagonist. The authors try to show the protagonist against the background of the era, explain the reasons for the appearance of a great man, throw light on his interrelation with the surrounding world in which he lives and acts. A new and increasingly strong tendency appeared in the Soviet historical novel - the writers avoided fictional plots and endeavoured to replace them by authentic events. One of the Soviet critics says:

"Если и есть в историческом романе вымышленная фабульная линия, то она остается на втором плане, ступаясь перед историей, которая становится главным героем романа".¹⁶

with the consequent result of the document and historical source as opposed to the Scott's classic fictional plot gaining first class importance.

A vital question for the Soviet historical novel in its initial stages was language adaptation. Various writers solved it in different ways. Chapygin served for a time as

16 S.M. Petrov, op. cit., p. 120.

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an example worth following. In his book on Razin he introduced the language of the street of the XVIII century both for the dialogue and for the narrative. He thus solved the problem of the discrepancy between the language of the protagonists and the language of the author-narrator. This proved to be a none too fortunate solution- the language became the ballast of the book. The multitude of archaisms made the language difficult to understand for many a reader. Only Aleksey Tolstoy in his "Peter I" succeeded in solving this difficulty by an approach discussed later in this paper.

Yet another trend appears in the Soviet historical prose and it is within that trend that the novel of Tolstoy falls. This trend is more traditional in its aims than the preceeding ones: the glorification of the efforts towards the strengthening of the Russian state, of the patriotic spirit and of military courage. The emphasis is on war and battle; epic war frescoes appear (f.e. "Tsusima" by Aleksey Novikov-Priboy, 1932-35; "Sevastopolskaya Strada" by S.S. Senskiy, 1937-1940) portraits of famous leaders and statesmen. Works on Dmitriy Donskoy, Aleksandr Nevskiy, Ivan the Terrible, Kutuzov, Suvorov, Bagration and on such decisive moments of the history of the Russian military as the defense of Sevastopol', the battle of Tsusima and the defense of Port Arthur appeared as a result of the need for the creation of a body of tradi-

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tion, popular and socially useful but absent, due to the rejection by the revolution of all tradition. As the Polish scholar Andrzej Drawicz writes:

Jest to konsekwencja programu budowy socjalizmu w jednym kraju, w warunkach zaostrzających się napięcie międzynarodowych, przy coraz bardziej odczuwalnej ingerencji elementów kultu jednostki, która wyciska na całym procesie specyficzne piętno; w postaci zabarwiania akcentów elementami wielkoruskiego szowinizmu, bezkrytycznej ewokacji nawet wyraźnie wstecznych fragmentów tradycji, a zwłaszcza idealizacji poczynąń mężów silnej ręki. 17

"Peter I", in spite of much traditionalism of its foundations exercised a decisive influence on the further development of the Soviet historical novel. Its lasting and increasing popularity sanctioned those features of the genre which the author realized in his work. These consisted of a very high degree of historical authenticity in the recreation of events and figures, plastic suggestive imagery of the past, the specifics of psychological analysis of the protagonists and the advantages of the adaptation of the language. Thanks to "Peter I" the attention of the Soviet critics in the thirties concentrated on the genre of historical novel, although it should be noted that the opinion on the merit of the work itself differed sharply.

17 Andrzej Drawicz, Literatura radziecka 1917-1967, pisarze rosyjscy, Warszawa, 1968.

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Some attention should be drawn to this controversy.¹⁸

The main focus of the discussion were ideological problems such as the concept of Peter himself, the attitude of the author towards the question of "Russia and Europe" at the end of the XVII and the beginning of the XVIII centuries with the accompanying accusations of the writer's idealization of the West, and, lastly, the modernization of history in the novel. In contrast to Gorkiy - who appraised Tolstoy's novel as one of the greatest achievements of the Soviet literature - many critics negated both the ideological and the formal values of the book. The bone of contentions proved to have been mainly the nature of the literary genre; the question was even posed of whether or not "Peter I" belongs to the category of historical novel. The charge was made that Tolstoy^{had} made no use of the achievements of the Western historical novel, mainly of Scott's, and that instead he created a biographical novel in which "Peter not only overshadows the era, but... creates the world surrounding him".¹⁹ In the writer's departure from the traditional plot a tendency was seen towards

¹⁸ A detailed summary of the polemic is to be found in the work: I.S. Rozhdestvenskaya, A.G. Khodnik, A.N. Tolstoy, Seminariy, Leningrad, 1962, p. 34-53.

¹⁹ Quoted from I.S. Rozhdestvenskaya, A.G. Khodnik, op. cit., p. 39.

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chronicallity and fact, a would-be result of his research of historical documents. Tolstoy defended himself against these accusations explaining that "Peter I" is not a historical chronicle. In his opinion -

"Исторический роман не может писаться в виде хроники, в виде истории... Нужна прежде всего, как и во всяком художественном полотне, композиция, архитектура произведения".²⁰

The author of "Peter I" could not of course ignore the chronological sequence of events, in spite of some minor inaccuracies and transpositions in time, but the composition of the work is determined not by chronology but by the general historical concept of the writer, "заключается в том, что петровская эпоха, ее противоречия составляют основные коллизии романа и личность Петра I является лишь наиболее ярким историческим персонажем этой эпохи"²¹ - wrote in 1935 the critic Eventov in defense of the author. This opinion seems valid. Although the heart of the plot in Tolstoy's novel is indeed the life and the activity of Peter I, the book is not a biography. The composition of the novel in its appropriation of space between the life of an outstanding person and the life of the whole of the nation is one of the original contributions of the writer. The figure of Peter drawn in its psychological dynamism (a feature lacking f.e. in the

²⁰ S.M. Petrov, "Sovetskiy istoricheskiy roman", Moscow, 1958, p. 137.

²¹ S.M. Petrov, "Sovetskiy istoricheskiy roman", Moscow, 1958, p. 137.

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description of Kutuzov in "War and Peace") does not overshadow compositionally the lives of the fictional heroes. The fate of Peter is very important to the lives of the fictional family Brovkin, which illustrates the various sides of the activity of the tsar-reformer. Unlike e.g. Zweig in his "Marie Antoinette", Tolstoy did not limit himself to the main historical figures but made full use of his liberty to use literary fiction, retaining at the same time full control over the typicality of the fictional figures and events.

The contemporary Soviet literary criticism describes "Peter I" by A. Tolstoy as a novel-epic of a literary genre where content is the life and the struggle of a nation at the time of a great upheaval. The time of argument is over. "Peter I" has survived the test of time and continues to enjoy uninterrupted popularity. Up to now no other work of the kind has appeared in Soviet literature to rival Tolstoy's book.

CHAPTER II

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONCEPT OF THE FIGURE OF PETER I IN THE CREATIVITY OF ALEKSEY NIKOLAYEVICH TOLSTOY (A comparison)

The era and figure of Peter I were of special interest to Tolstoy for the best part of his creative years. Around the figure of Peter he centered not only his great novel but also a series of short stories, plays and even poetry. Through the years the author's concept of Peter underwent a considerable change.

The young Aleksey Nikolayevich Tolstoy wrote his first work about Peter in 1909 - a poem called "Chernyi vsadnik". Next the subject of Peter appears in stories "Pervyye terroristy" (1918), "Navazhdeniye (1918), "Den' Petra" (1918), "Marta Rabe" (1931) and in three variations of the play on Peter "Na dybe" (1928) later re-named "Peter I" (1934 and 1938), in two versions of the film scenario on Peter I and, finally, in the novel. The stories and plays on Peter I and his era are preparatory to the novel about him, yet both the figure of the tsar and its interpretation are different in the preparatory works and in the novel respectively. they undergo a marked evolution.

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In his youthful poem "Chernyi vsadnik" (with its obvious reminiscences of A.S. Pushkin) Aleksey Tolstoy, using the traditional Pushkiniān stanzas, presents Peter as a great reformer, almost a sorcerer whose activity transformed Russia, brought her might and fame.

Плугом ты ратал долину
Грузным буйволом топтал
Горсти злата, медь и глину
Мерным взмахом рассеивал.
В час, когда рассвет багровый
Разорвал над морем плат,
Ты окончил сев суровый
Был убит болотный гад.
Ты взлетел тугой уздой
На скалу вздыбив коня
За ночь поднятый водою
Встал посев глухого дня ... I

This early, immature poem never published by Tolstoy himself, and an apotheosis of Peter, is diametrically different from the stories written in the years 1917-1918: "Pervyye terroristy" and "Navazhdeniye". These are short stories built not so much around the figure of Peter himself as about his era; Peter the man does not appear in them. Tolstoy himself considered these works as creative exercise, as^a/search for style and language.

¹ quoted from L.M. Polyak, Aleksey Tolstoy—khudozhnik, Proza, Moscow, 1964, p. 408.

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"Я начал изучать народный язык по сказкам и песням, по записям "Слова и дела" 2/, то есть судебным актам XVII века, по сочинениям Аввакума. Я начал слушать его в жизни. Я начал понимать в чем секрет языка." 3,-

this is how he explained later the genesis of his works. In the story "Pervyye terroristy", on the basis of authentic court documents of the Petrine era, an interesting account is given of an unsuccessful attempt on the life of the tsar. He was to have been destroyed with the help of magic, but the conspirators were denounced, caught and imprisoned. They are tortured and finally killed. Much more illustrative of Peter's era is the story "Navazhdeniye". Here side by side with fictional characters appear also historical figures: Kochubey, his daughter Matryena and the hetman Mazeppa. Also described are pictures and features characteristic of the times: tramps caught on the road are forcibly drafted into the army, all suspects are cruelly beaten in dungeons, people are constantly flogged but have, on the other hand, the opportunity to learn and advance. Possibilities for promotion exist for lowborn people: "В то время можно было из простых

2 The author refers here to the book by N. Novomberskiy, Slovo i delo gosudarevy, published in Tomsk in 1909.

3 A.N. Tolstoy, Polnoye sobranie sochineniy, vol. 13, Moscow, 1949, p. 413.

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В ЛЮДИ ВЫХОДИТЬ",⁴ - says the hero of "Navazhdeniye", the poor monk Trefiliy. The basis of the story, however, is a fictional plot - the love of Trefiliy for the daughter of Kochubey, Matryena, and Matryena's love for Mazeppa; neither Peter the man nor the most important events of the era are as yet of interest to the author.

The actual figure of Peter appears for the first time in Tolstoy's prose in the story "Den' Petra". The whole attention of the author is centred around the person of the tsar-reformer, who by his terrible energy introduces new European customs and mores into Russia. Peter of the story is a tragic figure doomed to loneliness; his efforts are constantly destroyed by the hostility and obstinacy of the masses who hate him and see him as the incorporation of evil and as anti-Christ. The tsar is opposed by the whole of Russia. Naturally, a ruler, who attempts to overcome single-handedly and with almost no help the resistance of the whole country, had to be endowed by the author with almost supernatural, exceptional qualities. These are noticeable even in the description of the appearance of the tsar, designed to be demonic in character - his black eyes are burning with madness:

⁴ A.N. Tolstoy, Den' Petra i drugiye rasskazy, Moscow, 1963, p. 28.

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"Взгляд впитывал, постигал, проникал пронзительно, мог быть насмешливым и гневным. /.../ Но еще никто и никогда не видел взора его спокойным и тихим, отражающим дно души. И народ, хорошо помнивший в Москве его глаза, говорил, что Петр - антихрист, а не человек".⁵

Peter's face is permanently distorted in a grimace, in anger (and the tsar is almost constantly angry), his body is subject to epileptic convulsions. In his portraiture of Peter Tolstoy spares the reader no naturalistic detail ; they are especially numerous when he describes the cruelty of the tsar. For instance, the first scene of the story which contains the conversation of Peter with his favourite, the notorious prince Menshikov who is busily robbing the state treasury, ends this way:

"Храни Никола кого-нибудь шевельнуться! Голову Петра пригнуло к плечу. Рот, щеку, даже глаз перекосило. Князь неосмотрительно, охраняя холное свое лицо, норовил повернуться спиной, хоть плечиком, но не успел: сорвавшись со стола, огромный царский кулак ударил ему в рот, разбил губы и из сладких глаз светлейшего брызнувшие слезы смешались с кровью. Он дрожал, не вытираясь. И у всех отлегло от сердца. Толстой завертел даже табакерку в костлявых пальцах. Шаховской издал некий звук губами. Грозу пронесло пустяком." ⁶

However, not only the cruel despotism of Peter is shown in the story. Tolstoy brings out also some other characteristics of the ruler, such as his directness, simplicity,

⁵ op. cit., p. 31.

⁶ op. cit., p. 38.

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incredible industry, broad horizons, his subordination to the interests of the state. Indeed, "Den' Petra" describes one day and what a day "Peter's Day" is. At dawn Peter holds council with his dignitaries of the state, he then makes the decisions on state matters alone, proceeds to control personally the building of the new city - Petersburg, where he finds the time for a moment's chat with a simple sailor, goes next to the Secret Council where he tortures a conspirator and in the evening participates in an orgy at an assembly; in the course of the story the tsar is angry, the tsar is drunk and at the end of the play the tsar is finally exhausted, huge and good natured.

Tolstoy tries to penetrate the psychological make-up of the tsar. He describes him as possessed by an almost supernatural, diabolical energy. "Есть нечто мистическое в этом описании безграничной, неутоляемой жажды"⁷ - writes Mikhail Charnyy, the Soviet scholar who devoted much of his attention to the writings of Tolstoy, about "Den' Petra". Peter's soul is:

"жадная, лихая, неуспокоенная, голодная. Никаким вином не оглушить ее, ни едой, ни веселием, ни бабьей сытостью. Ни покоя, ни отдыха." ⁸

⁷ M. Charnyy, Put' Aleksey Tolstogo. Ocherk tvorchestva, Moscow, 1961, p. 137.

⁸ A.N. Tolstoy, Den' Petra i drugiye rasskazy, Moscow 1963, p. 52.

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He is proud and jealous; the reforms he introduces are a result of his despotism, whim and energy. They were caused by the tsar's jealous rage.

"Как это - двор его и скот, батраки и все хозяйство хуже, глупее соседского?" 9

The profound change which took place in Russia during Peter's reign was brought about, in Tolstoy's opinion of his early works, solely as a result of the efforts of the tsar, of his tenacity and strong will. He writes:

"Царь Петр, сидя на пустошах и болотах, одной своей страшной волей укреплял государство, перестраивал землю!" 10

The end of the story contains the proposition that the task which Peter undertook was too big even for his powerful shoulders.

"И бремя этого дня и всех дней прошедших и будущих свинцовой тягой легло на плечи ему, взявшему непосильную человеку тяжесть: одного за всех." 11

Everybody in "Peter's Day" is opposed to the reforms, all are against Peter. The conspirator Varlaam, tortured on the rack in the "Taynaya Kantselyariya" says to the tsar with conviction and hatred:

9 op. cit., p. 34.

10 op. cit., p. 34.

11 op. cit., p. 54.

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"Отвечаю за весь народ православный. /.../ Тело мое возьмешь, а уйду от тебя, царь. На лапах на четырех заставишь ходить, в рот мне удила вложишь, и язык мой отнимешь, и землю не моей назовешь, а я уйду от тебя. Высоко сидишь и корона твоя, как солнце и не прельстишь. Я знаю тебя. Век твой недолгий. Корону твою сорву, и вся прелесть твоя объявится дымом смрадным". 12

The presentation of Peter as a diabolical figure and his reform activities as the whim of despot-"pomeshchik" was bound to introduce a motive of doubt in the effectiveness of the reforms, which have caused such widespread and inhuman sufferings to the Russian population.

Россия не вошла, нарядная и сильная, на пир великих держав. А поднятая им за волосы, окровавленная и обезумевшая от ужаса и отчаяния, предстала новым родственникам в жалком и неравном виде - рабой. И сколько бы ни гремели русские пушки, повелось, что рабской и униженной была перед всем миром великая страна, раскинувшаяся от Вислы до Китайской стены. 13

It is, nevertheless, difficult to agree with Krestinskiy, who maintains that in "Peter's Day" the author judges wholly negatively Peter's activities, since "утверждал не только бесплодность, но и вред деятельности Петра /.../ видел в ней лишь ненужную попытку напаялить на старую Русь европейский кафтан". 14

12 op. cit., p. 47

13 op. cit., p. 36

14 Yu.A. Krestinskiy, A.N. Tolstoy, Zhizn' i Tvorchestvo, Moscow, 1960, p. 172.

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While painting a diabolical figure of Peter, Tolstoy at the same time gives a picture of a dynamic new state which the tsar creates (f.e. in the scenes of the building of Petersburg). He also mentions people who, although undoubtedly at the price of the greatest sacrifice, were forced, under Peter's leadership and together with him to "делать общее государственное дело".¹⁵

This first attempt of presenting Peter as a statesman and of an appraisal of his activity as such contained in the story "Peter's Day" did not satisfy Aleksey Tolstoy. The author considered this work as one of his weaker ones and pointed out that it was written under the influence of symbolists, particularly of Dimitriy Merezhkovskiy and his concept of Peter in "Peter and Aleksey" (1905). He left the subject and did not go back to it until eleven years later, this time to be presented in the form of a play - the play "On the rack" written in 1928.

The figure of the tsar in the tragedy "On the rack" differs only slightly from the portrait of him in "Peter's Day".¹⁶ Peter continues to be a tragic figure - lonely,

¹⁵ A.N. Tolstoy, Den' Petra i drugiye rasskazy, Moscow, 1936, p. 36.

¹⁶ Some Soviet critics see the play only as a dramatic version of the story. See Y.A. Krestinskiy, op. cit., p. 178.

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understood by nobody and in opposition to the whole of Russia. He has against himself all layers of society - the boyars, the merchants, the clergy, the peasantry. Even in his immediate circle he is surrounded by treachery. Peter has to fight with his wife and his own son, Aleksey. As in the story, there appears here, too, the theme of the insufficiency of his strength for the inhuman burden that he undertook. The old prince Romadanovskiy says to him in the play as well as in "Peter's Day":

Ты на гору один сам - десят тянешь, а под гору
миллионы тянут... непомерный труд взял на себя, сынок!¹⁷

Tolstoy concentrates on the barbarism and despotism of Peter, on the denunciations, slander and tortures which hallmarked the period. The tsar is feared by the people, he is again pictured as a despotical bloodthirsty tyrant, the antichrist of popular imagination. The descriptions of torture, drastic in their naturalism, such as the scene of the tortures of the streltsi, during which the tsar personally cuts their heads off, compels the reader to see Peter not so much as a statesman and a reformer but as a revolting, pathological figure of a sadist. Here again, as in the story, the theme appears of doubt in the statesmanship of Peter. Petersburg, the city he

¹⁷ M. Charnyy, "Put' Alekseya Tolstogo, Ocherk tvorchestva," Moscow, 1961, p. 138.

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built is described as "gorod bedstvennyy" repeatedly such warnings appear as "gibel' vsemu narodu", "konets, konets Peterburgu", "byt' zemle pusto", etc. The play ends with the dramatic scene of flood in Petersburg, a symbol of the loneliness of Peter and of his failure. The last words of the tsar, which are also the last words of the play are:

"Сердце мое жестокое и друга мне в сей жизни быть не может... Да. Вода прибывает. Страшен конец". 18

The author severely judges the tsar's activity from a moral and ethical point of view, but, by comparison with "Peter's Day" he devotes much more attention to his activities as a reformer. In the play the tortures of the streltsy and the murder of his son are not only illustrations of the cruelty of the tsar but are also reflections of the struggle of new Russia with the old. Here for the first time, Tolstoy notices in Peter's reform "historical necessity", he sees in them as pointed out by Krestinskiy¹⁹ a specific case of "revolution from above" (this scholar draws attention to the preliminary drafts to the tragedy "On the rack" where the scenes of the original act II come under the title "counterrevolution").²⁰

18 quoted from M. Charnyy, op. cit., p. 138.

19 Y.A. Krestinskiy, op. cit., p. 179.

20 Y.A. Krestinskiy, op. cit., p. 179

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Peter is a patriot, he demands sacrifices in the name of the good of the state, he makes speeches like "za otechestvo, za lyudi - ya zhivota ne zhalel", etc. The main conflict of the play lies in the incomprehension of the people for the reason of the sacrifices, which the tsar demands of them and of the unwillingness of the people to submit their interest to the state building activities of the tsar.

The premier performance of the play "On the rack" produced by the famous MKHAT (Moskovskiy Khudozhestvennyy Akademicheskij Teatr) took place on the 23 February, 1930. The title, significantly, was changed to "Peter the First". Shortly before the performance the author introduced certain changes, such as the elimination of the scene of the battle of Poltava, a symbol of the military triumphs of Peter, where- by he contrived to add to the already pessimistic tone of the play. Not surprisingly, perhaps, although the play had a continuous run for four years, critics, especially the RAPP (Rossiyskaya Associatsiya Proletarskikh Pisateley) critics made Tolstoy a target of fierce attacks maintaining that the drama about Peter was nothing but a well disguised attack against the Soviet Union. The critics claimed that the writer turned to history to draw attention to its similarity with the contemporary Soviet reality and thus to criticise and slander that reality. Tolstoy often defended himself against

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these attacks maintaining that he aimed in the play not at a projection of the present - this would be anti-historical and therefore untrue - but at a presentation of an era, stormy and creative, one which particularly strongly influenced the shaping of the Russian character.²¹

In 1935 appeared the second version of the play, again under the title "Peter the First". It was printed in the journal "Novyy Mir", where the two parts of the novel "Peter I" appeared previously. Tolstoy wrote the following note to the second version of the drama:

"Предлагая возобновить в этом году постановку "Петра I", Второй Художественный театр предложил мне пересмотреть пьесу. Она была написана до обоих романов о Петре, - в год начала первой пятилетки.

Стиль и манера этой пьесы не соответствовали моим теперешним взглядам на историческую пьесу. Исправлять в ней было нечего, - пришлось написать пьесу заново, заимствовав из старой некоторые сюжетные положения, дополнив некоторые положениями из обеих частей романа".²²

Similarly, in the article "Roman, P'esa, Stsenariy" Tolstoy comments on the difference between the two versions of the play:

"Вторая редакция пишется в ином, чисто реалистическом стиле, по-новому даются характеры действующих лиц, по-новому дается прежде всего фигура самого Петра. Теперь это человек реального действия. В первом варианте "Петр" пахнул Мережковским. Сейчас я изображаю его как огромную фигуру, выдвинутую эпохой. Новая пьеса полна оптимизма - старая - сверху и донизу насыщена пессимизмом".²³

21 Quoted after J.A. Krestinskiy, op. cit., p. 133.

22 Quoted after L.M. Polyak, op. cit., p. 409.

23 Quoted from L.M. Polyak, op. cit., p. 409.

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Indeed, in the second version of the play on Peter the theme of the tragic isolation of the tsar, of the treachery which surrounds him on all sides and the opposition to his reforms appear in a much lesser degree or they disappear altogether. Tolstoy eliminated the final scene of the flood in Petersburg, the symbol of Peter's defeat and instead introduced the scene on the shipyard in Voronezh (this scene appears in the novel, too) where Peter learns the smith's trade from master Zhomov. Zhomov is unafraid to scold the tsar for his awkwardness and mistakes at work, an indication of Peter's democratism and his direct contact with the people. Some traces of the original concept are left, such as the gloomy prophecies of the yurodivyy Varlaam and the epilogue of the play with its gloomy country-side, with the funeral wailings from outside the door of the old "tserkov'" and with the distant fires.

The third and final version of the play "Peter I" was finished in 1938. From the opening scene of this version, which shows the shipyard in Voronezh (as noted, this appeared also in the second version), through the building of new ships, warehouses, the smithy at the seaside, the attention of the viewer is directed to the state-building activity of Peter. Almost totally absent are episodes showing the cruelty and despotism of the tsar. From the first version the

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description of his appearance, too, undergoes an almost complete change. The stage direction for the first appearance of Peter ran as follows:

"Круглое лицо... перекошено судорогой. Свернув голову к плечу, он преодолевает судорогу." 24

The second version has no comments on the subject, whereas the third version provides for a decidedly positive description of his looks:

"Взгляд его пронизывающий, впитывающий - взгляд человека никогда не привыкшего к новизне впечатлений".25

One of the opponents of Peter, the boyar Buynosov (one of the characters of the novel, too) violently attacks the tsar who differs so radically from all the previous rulers of Russia in this way:

"Царь... от византийских императоров... Взглянуть, бывало, страшно, как на бога. Этот - в саже вымазан..."26

This remark written in the conditions of Soviet reality is of course meant as a praise.

In the third version Peter is above all an outstanding statesman, a man who builds the fleet, sends young Russians to study in Europe, cuts the beards of the boyars, introduces "politesse" (i.e. courtly manners and seemly behaviour) forces the backward boyars and their wives, secluded

24 L.M. Polyak, op. cit., p. 410.

25 A.N. Tolstoy, Sobraniye sochineniy in 10 volumes, Moscow, 1958-1961, p. 476, v. 9.

26 A.N. Tolstoy, op. cit., p. 476.

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in "terems," to participate in gatherings etc. The document read by the prince Romodanovskiy bears witness to the great achievements of Russia under Peter's rule:

"Известно, сколько положено несносных трудов для устройства государства нашего. Вернули мы наши древние вотчины на балтийском побережье. Укрепили Азов и Таганрог. Построены флоты в трех морях. В заботах о процветании торговли и разных мануфактур повелено торговым людям для ведения своих дел учредить бурмистерскую палату и городские ратуши. Начало положено и тому, чтобы русское государство не одной византийской спесью стало сильно, но было могучим и процветающим в ратном деле, в мануфактурах и в горном промысле, в науках и в искусствах!"

27

The last version of the play develops also the theme of Peter as a ruler and a patriot. This is evident particularly in the scene of the play (pyataya kartina) showing the battle of Poltava and the victory over the Swedes. The tsar personally leads the attack, exposes himself to all the dangers of the common soldier and commands general admiration. This is how he warms his soldiers up before a battle

"Сыны России, сей час должен решить судьбу отечества. Не помышляйте, что сражаетесь за Петра, но за государство. Петру врученное, за род свой, за отечество... Порадейте, товарищи. Отечество вас не забудет..." 28

The last version of the play, in contrast to the previous ones, is decidedly optimistic in tone. Peter here is

27 A.N. Tolstoy, op. cit., p. 502.

28 A.N. Tolstoy, op. cit., p. 506.

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no longer a tragic figure, lonely and forlorn, incapable of carrying so heavy a burden on his shoulders. The elements of old Russia which he opposes are represented mainly by the boyars and by the clergy (among others by the already mentioned Buynosov, Taratarin and Vyazemskiy). He is supported by merchants and the broad masses of the Russian people. Only the "yurodivyy" calls him "antichrist". The last scene of the play depicts the military triumph of Peter and the celebrations in the new capital - Petersburg, on the occasion of the victory over the Swedes. The last soliloquy of the tsar is in fact a summary of the triumphs of the Russian army and an appraisal of his part in the strengthening of the Russian state.

"Моими и вашими трудами увенчали мы наше отечество славой. И корабли 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/. 29

Attention should be drawn to the fact that although in the third version of the play Tolstoy is free from the elements of naturalism and freed himself from the influences of the concept of a demonic Peter characteristic of symbolists, mainly Merezhkovskiy, he falls into the other extreme and apotheosizes Peter. Peter is shown as an almost ideal ruler, who represents goodness and who hates evil, a man

29 A.N. Tolstoy, op. cit., p. 507.

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severe but just. His path is rather smooth and he encounters no great difficulties in his struggle with the opposition. Peter's opponents, for instance his son Aleksey, are sketched in a simplicistic schematic way, in the conventional manner and pattern of black characters. The scenes from the previous versions picturing the cruelty of the tsar are eliminated and instead others have been created to illustrate the good nature of the tsar, such as the two little girls, his daughters with whom he is shown in a lyrical scene of love and affection (scene seven). No less falsely sentimental is the episode from the tenth scene (kartina desyataya) showing the fraternization of Peter with the people, where the tsar, addressing them almost justifies his cruelty by making an open remark:

"Суров я был с вами, дети мои; дорога мне была Россия". 30

This justification of the despotism of the tsar by "historical necessity" in the third version of the play is a result of the prevailing tendency of the Soviet literature of the mid-thirties of idealising statesmen and rulers in their struggle with society (Peter, Ivan the Terrible etc.). This tendency was of course the result of Stalin's demands. Tolstoy pays here a tribute to the cult of personality in general.

30 A.N. Tolstoy, op. cit., p. 536.

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and to a harsh personality in particular.

Aleksey Tolstoy started his work on the novel "Peter I"- next to his trilogy the greatest work of his life- in 1929. He never finished it - his work on it was interrupted by his death in 1945. Nevertheless, the three parts of the monumental work on tsar Peter and his era considered by Soviet and Western critics as an epos comprise a work of the very first order by any standards. Maxim Gorkiy, an authority for Soviet readers and literary critics called it "первым в нашей литературе настоящим историческим романом, книгой - надолго". 31

In spite of the fact that the first part of the novel was written almost simultaneously with the play "On the rack" the concept of Peter of the novel is radically different from the concept of him in the play. In the novel no trace of doubt of the rationale of Peter's work is discernible, no disbelief in the success of his endeavours is expressed. Tsar Peter of the novel is no anti-Christ and no sadistic despot, but a great reformer of a clear mind and a strong will. He clearly understands the danger of the backwardness of old Russia for the interest of the new state he is building and, having learned to hate the "Domostroy" and all it stands for, he pro-

31 Maxim Gorkiy, Sobraniye sochineniy in 30 volumes, Moscow, 1955, p. 280.

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ceeds to destroy it by all the force of his indomitable will and in complete disregard of the cost it incurs to the society.

Peter of the novel is humanized and even humane after a fashion, as when he orders the woman murderess to be shot instead of allowing her to die a slow death of suffocation through being buried alive. His penetrating glance continues to terrify people. But the rage of the tsar has a reasonable basis, it is directed often towards the savagery of the Russian boyars. The scene comes to mind of the wedding of Peter and Yevdokiya, a forced union of two people who never saw one another or loved another before. The wedding ceremony is a carry over of tradition, an anachronism which revolts Peter. When the drunken wedding guests lead the young couple to their bedroom, the tsar outraged by the ceremony turns violently against them

"Петр взял Евдокию за плечи - она зажмурилась, откинулась, упираясь - толкнул ее в сенник и резко обернулся к гостям: у них пропал смех, когда они увидели его глаза, попятились. Он захлопнул за собой дверь и глядя на жену, стоящую с прижатыми к груди кулачками у постели, принялся грызть заусенец. Черт знает, как было неприятно, нехорошо, - досада так и кипела... Свадьба проклятая! Потешились старым обычаем!" 32

32 A.N. Tolstoy, Izbrannyye sochineniya v shesti tomakh, Moscow, 1952, t. 5. p. 132.

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Tolstoy based his descriptions of Peter's looks, habits, gestures and behaviour on historical documents. Nevertheless, in the first part of the book the image of the tsar is still reminiscent of the Peter from "Peter's Day" - he still possesses many pathological features, such as epileptic convulsions, vacant glassy eyes with glimpses of madness in them, a distorted face. In the second part of the book such features become rare, in the third part they disappear altogether.

In the unpublished notes on the novel Tolstoy clearly explained his views on Peter, emphasising the contradictions in the character and psychology of the ruler.

"Каким был Петр? Прежде всего волевой тип. Вспыльчивый до бешенства. Добрый, веселый, смешливый, когда касалось житейских отношений. Непреклонный - без жалости /без сентиментальности/, когда касалось дел государственных. Тут он не останавливался перед /любой жестокостью/ самыми страшными пытками. Но, например, обеим своим женам, изменившим ему, он не пако/мстил/. Он любил людей, особенно простых, людей дела, людей таланта". 33

An interesting analogy could be made between his views and those of Pushkin who, like Tolstoy, also emphasized the ambivalent schizophrenic nature of Peter. Such analogy, however, is outside the scope of this paper.

33 Quoted from L.M. Polyak, Aleksey Tolstoy-khudozhnik, Proza, p. 420.

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The personality of Peter, his passions and thoughts, his faults and valour find an expression in the novel mainly through his activities as a statesman. But the tsar is also shown outside the range of that activity, in his childhood and youth, full of sharp dramatic conflicts and struggle for the seizure of power. He is shown in his private and family life - his unhappy marriage to Yevdokiya, his feelings towards Anna Mons, and then towards Catherine. Tolstoy introduces Catherine for the first time in the short story "Marta Raabe" (incorporated almost with no alterations into the third part of the novel). The childhood games of Peter are shown (such as e.g. when Aleksashka Menshikov teaches him to puncture a cheek with a needle) then his drunken orgies at parties. The picture of Peter as painted by Tolstoy is alive and convincing since the author depicts his character in totality, not only his qualities of strength, strong intellect and iron will. Peter in the novel is not free from the failings of ordinary mortals - sometimes he is given to hysterical outbursts, perhaps the result of the traumatic shocks experienced in childhood. He first appears in the novel as a terrified child during the streltsi uprising when the boyar Matveyev is murdered in full view of him. Although Peter is courageous, he is not completely free from fear, as during the famous flight from the Preobrazhensky castle in his underwear.

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This hero of Tolstoy has little in common with the schematic "positive" heroes of the Soviet literature of the thirties to fifties, those monotonous figures who spent their entire lives from the cradle to the grave performing and putting into practice unshakeable, almost inherent ideals. The character of Peter develops and his activity is determined both by objective reasons of the state and by subjective reasons of his personality. This personality is surprisingly ambivalent. On the one hand and he is capable of penetrations and perspicacity in forecasting events, he issues edicts which are farseeing and fundamental to the development of Russia. On the other hand he is a tyrant who "writes with the knut" to use the well known description of Pushkin. Even the fashionable European manners and the so called politesse are introduced by him into the court and among the boyars by barbaric, savage means such as the well known practice of cutting the boyars beards, the participation in bawdy parades in the streets of Moscow and the continuous habit of humiliating people.

Tolstoy is fond of showing his Peter at construction, in an atmosphere of work, on the docks or in a smithery. As in the second and third version of "On the rack" Peter works in a smithery in Voronezh, and he humbly listens to and accepts the scaldings of Zhemov when his tasks are badly performed.

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During the siege at Narva Peter personally loads a cannon, aims and hits the wall of the fortress. He attempts to be an example for others and in military expertise evokes the admiration of a foreign gunner.

Almost with each consecutive chapter of the novel the figure of Peter gains in versatility. He gradually changes from a nervous, ambitious youngster to an experienced politician and statesman. In the third part of the novel the nervousness, angularity and violence of Peter disappear. The thirty year old tsar is a mature man enriched by the experiences of the past. He behaves with quiet dignity, fully conscious of the responsibility he carries. Advisedly, Tolstoy calls him now by his full patronymic Peter Alekseyevich instead of the simple Peter of the first two parts of the book. More and more often Peter is engaged in thoughtful analysis and reflection. Even his appearance changes. Tolstoy repeatedly emphasises in the third volume the drawn and peaceful expression of Peter's face. Peter speaks seriously now in a quiet bass. This is how he is shown when he visits Menshikov:

"Петр говорил мало, слушал внимательно, выпуклые глаза его были строгие, страшноватые; когда же, набивая трубку, или по какой иной причине, он опускал их - круглое лицо его с коротким носом, с улыбающимся небольшим ртом, казалось добродушным..." 34

34 A.N. Tolstoy, op. cit., vol. 5, p. 677.

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Yet another change occurs in the third part. The historical development of Russia is presented (in contrast to the former works) as caused not only through the reforms of the tsar, but as the result of the efforts of the whole nation. This doesn't at all mean that the relationship between the tsar and the people are shown here as idyllic, the way they were shown in the third version of the play. Far from it. The ruined peasants are in revolt, they run away South towards the Don, seek shelter with the "raskol'niks" and organize in robber bands. Old cossacks often recall the name of the legendary ataman, leader of peasant revolt Sten'ka Razin. Tolstoy shows Peter in direct contact with people who are dissatisfied with the reforms and are full of resentment against the burdens imposed on them by his rule. A characteristic example of such an encounter is the scene from the third part of the book, one which attains almost symbolical significance in its portent. The encounter takes place in the construction workers hut in Petersburg, where Peter is brought in by the painter Golikov. The tsar talks to one of the workers who complains about the hard and hungry existence, heavy labour and inedible bread. And when the tsar challenges him directly to answer whether the fault is all his:

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" -Я виноват, всех обобрал, так?- Бородатый поднял, опустил голые плечи, поднялся, опустил медный крест на его тощей груди, - с усмешкой качнул головой:

- Пытаешь правду?... Чтож, 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... Платили прежде с дыму, с сохи, большей частью - круговой порукой, можно было договориться поослобонить, - удобство было... Ныне ты велел платить всем подушно, все души переписал, около каждой души комисар крутится, земский целовальник плати. А последние годы еще, - сюда, в Питербурх, тебе ставь в лето три смены, сорок тысяч земских людей... Легко это? /.../ Сыновей моих ты взял в драгуны, дома - старуха да четыре девчонки - мал мала меньше... Конечно, государь, тебе виднее, что к чему...

- Это верно, что мне виднее! - жестко проговорил Петр Алексеевич." 35

The mature Peter knows himself to be a great ruler, he is aware of the weight of his position. He endeavours to overcome his uncouth manners, his previous lack of consideration for people and ^{his} boorishness. In the first volume he is seen asleep with dirty feet at the bottom of a boat, sleeping the carefree slumber of the innocent. In the third volume Peter, on board ship while his fleet approaches Narva, throws off his jacket under the burning rays of the sun but stops there. "In previous years Peter would have undressed himself" ³⁶ "В прежние годы Петр бы еще разулся" / says the author and

35 A.N. Tolstoy, op. cit., vol. 5, p. 682.

36 A.N. Tolstoy, op. cit., vol. 5, p. 777

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this incidental remark speaks volume of the change in Peter. Similarly, he expects such a change of behaviour from his subordinates. When Aleksey Menshikov, the tsar's favourite, allows himself a display of unnecessary and dangerous defiance under the walls of the besieged fortress, Peter punishes him by a severe reprimand and deprives him of promotion.

"Запомни, Данилыч,- сказал он,- истинный бог, увижу еще раз твое дурацкое щегольство, шкуру спущу плеткой. Молчи, не отвечай. Сегодня ты сам себе выбрал долю. Я думал: кому дать начало над осадным войском,- тебе или фельдмаршалу Огильви? Хотелось в таком деле предпочесть своего перед иностранцем... Сам все напортил, друг сердешный, - плясал, как скоморох, на коне перед генералом Горном. Срамота. Все шутить хочешь, как у меня за столом. А на тебя Европа смотрит, дурак". 37

In the last chapters of the novel and especially in some episodes during the siege of Narva Peter begins to be almost devoid of human characteristics, he becomes a monumental figure, full of strength and vigour, a symbol of the strength of the Russian state. A certain amount of glorification of the tsar is evident in the third volume of the novel, similar to the idealization which Tolstoy did not avoid in the third version of "On the rack". It should be remembered that the third version of the play and the third volume of the novel were written almost simultaneously in the years 1938-1941. The idealization of Peter in the third part of the

37 A.N. Tolstoy, op. cit., v. 5, p. 711.

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book is evident particularly in those parts where he is contrasted with the two contemporaneous monarchs - the Polish king August and the Swedish king Charles XII. Both as rulers and statesmen, Charles and August suffer by comparison with the Russian tsar. All three rulers in Tolstoy's interpretation are singleminded fanatics, men ruled by one single passion. But whereas all the efforts of Peter are concentrated towards the building of a strong Russian state, August, a hedonist, squanders vast sums of public money on wine and women and Charles is obsessed by an almost pathological craving for personal glory on the battlefield. Consequently, the fanaticism of the Russian ruler could be said to be creative whereas by contrast the single-mindedness of the two other rulers leads to disastrous results for all. Both Charles and August lead their respective countries to waste and ruin.

A summary view over the work of Tolstoy on the figure of Peter I discloses a considerable change which the concept of the ruler underwent in his works over the years. The stories and plays about Peter, undoubtedly weaker both from an ideological and artistic point of view than the novel can be considered as preliminary to the great work. They were an important stage on the way to the creation of the novel, which became the summit of his creativity. In it the figure

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONCEPT OF THE FIGURE OF PETER I of Peter is presented not only most fully but also most satisfactorily from an artistic point of view. An attempt to analyze the literary impact of the characters of the protagonists of "Peter I" will be made in the next chapter of this paper.

CHAPTER III

THE PROTAGONISTS

(Technique and aim of characterization)

As though arguing with himself as the author of "Peter's Day" and "On the reack" Tolstoy negates in the novel the idea of the isolation of Peter. Indeed, in the novel he is surrounded by supporters, among whom are representatives of both old princely and boyar families (Fedor Romodanovskiy, Boris Golitsyn, the Appraksins, Golovins, etc.) representatives of the bureaucracy (Andrey Vinyus, Yemelyan Ukraintsev) and a large group of the so-called "new people" or "Peter's men" of the lower class (iz podloy sredy) among whom are Aleksashka Menshikov, Nikita Denisov, the fictional family Brovkin and a host of others, both Russians and foreigners (Lefort, Gordon, Ogilvy and others).

An exceptional, colourful personality is Alexander Menshikov, the closest collaborator of the tsar, his confidant and favourite. Through cunning, energy combined with good humor, and a dog-like devotion to his master he became the favourite of Peter. The son of a groom, frequently beaten by his cruel, drunken father he ran away from home to sell pies in the market place, then found employment with Lefort, by whom he was recommended to Peter where his extraordinary

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career began. He started by being the tsar's playmate, then a lieutenant in the Preobrazhenskiy regiment, then governor-general of Ingria, Karelia and Estonia, and finally he received the title of prince. Menshikov is one of the more interesting figures in Russian history, and a monograph in English on his life is long overdue. Aleksey Tolstoy is full of admiration for Alexander, for his "joie de vivre" and his many talents.

Ловок был, бес, проворен, угадывал мысли: только кудри отлетали,- повернется, кинется и - сделано. Непо-
нятно, когда спал, - проведет ладонью по роже и, как вы-
мытый, - веселый, ясноглазый, смешливый. Ростом почти с
Петра, но шире в плечах, тонкий в поясе. Куда Петр, ту-
да и он. Бить ли на барабане, стрелять из мушкета, ру-
бить саблей хворостину - ему ни почем. Начнет потешать -
умора.../.../ Петр от смеха плакал, глядя - ну, прямо,-
влюбленно на Алексашку. Поначалу все думали, что быть
ему царским шутком, все шуточки, прибауточки, но иной
раз соберутся генералы, инженеры, думают как сделать
то-то или то-то, уставятся в планы, Петр от нетерпения
грызет заусеницы, Алексашка тянется из-за чьего-нибудь
плеча и - скороговоркой, чтобы не прогнали:

- Так это же надо вот как делать, проще простого.

- О-о-о-о-о-о-о! - скажут генералы.

У Петра вспыхнут глаза:

- Верно!" I

Aleksashka is wholeheartedly devoted to Peter: he
spares neither his time nor his efforts nor even his life

1 A.N. Tolstoy, Izbrannyye sochineniya v shesti to-
makh, t. 5, Moscow, 1952, p. 102.

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in the service of the tsar. Shown initially as a thoughtless scamp he obtains an ever increasing insight into the politics of the state and becomes one of Peter's mainstays and helpers. Menshikov compels the reader's sympathy through his vitality, carefree gaiety, courage, cunning and exceptional gaiety. He is shown also to have some negative features: greedy from his youth, he demands presents (at the beginning of his career he parades wearing the hats of his master, Lefort); and at the height of his career he will, - trasting in Peter's tolerance, - mercilessly plunder and waste public goods. Some of the effects of his activities are shown in the novel: soldiers obtain uniforms from cloth less durable than paper, construction workers in Petersburg - to whom he delivers bread unfit for consumption - fall sick & s.o. On several occasions Peter is seen breaking many a stick on his back.

Also in a number of other situations Menshikov, although undoubtedly treated sympathetically by the author, is not the typical virtuous positive hero of a Soviet novel. He is as cruel as Peter - together with him he beheads the rioting "streltsy", like him he revels in drunken orgies. It is a figure both attractive and repellent and as such its presentation from the artistic point of view is a considerable achievement.

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Nevertheless, the presentation of Menshikov is as good an example as any of the treatment that historical figures obtain in the very capable hands of Tolstoy. What he does say about Menshikov is essentially true. It is what he omits to say that softens the truth to a degree which it is very difficult to distinguish from untruth. The real, historical Aleksashka Menshikov was not just a merry scoundrel guilty of small but on the whole excusable mischief. He was a² traitor to the state who sold military secrets to the Swedes, an extortionist and a blackmailer on a truly colossal scale, and a man whose misdeeds could only go unpunished under an autocratic rule. If he is perhaps an extreme example of "Peter's men", he is by no means the only one of the sort. In fact, to quote the leading Western historian B.H. Sumner on the subject:

Almost all his leading men failed him (Peter). He could not prevent extortion, corruption, and embezzlement, often on a gigantic scale. The new men that he raised from nothing were often as bad as, or in the case of Menshikov worse than, the old types of magnates or gentry.

Partly, the creation of such men was due to Peter's own despotic nature.

2 Variousy quoted by S.M. Solovyev, Istoriya Rossiya, Izd. Sotsial'noy literatury, vol. 9 & 10, Moscow, 1962.

3 B.H. Sumner, Peter the Great and the Emergence of Russia, The English University Press Ltd., London, 1966, p. 133.

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Peter acted in all spheres of his unbounded energy through compulsion, the compulsion of his wholly exceptional will-power in alliance with the traditional power of the tsar. He required his servants at one and the same time to be his slaves and to be free men acting for themselves. The combination of despotism and freedom, enlightenment and serfdom, was a circle that could not be squared.⁴

But to a large extent the existence of Menshikovs is inherent in any system, Peter's autocracy or the absolute rule of the Communist party under Stalin, which is based on compulsion. The will of an autocrat may convert a Menshikov from a stable boy to a governor-general but it cannot imbue him with a sense of civic responsibility, something only a tradition-based society with an ingrained respect for law and order can do. This is understood and frequently stressed by the Russian historian Solovyev, a source available and well known to Tolstoy. Yet for Tolstoy to say this in the times in which he lived was an obvious impossibility. Hence the presentation of Menshikov, the embodiment of evil caused by unbridled power bestowed by favouritism, as an erring, but on the whole good and likeable man, and a definite improvement on all previous dignitaries.

No less interesting if also controversial is the presentation of Franz Lefort, a Swiss by origin, another favourite of the tsar and also a historical figure. Tolstoy

⁴ op. cit., p. 135.

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ascribes to him an exceptional role. Educated, clever, gay and cunning Lefort quickly gains the confidence of young Peter and becomes his adviser in even the most important matters of state. This is all the more understandable since Peter, surrounded as he was by treachery of Russians in his youth, is full of admiration for all foreigners. In the Kukuy suburb where Peter first met Lefort (in to-day's Moscow there is a street in the area called "Lefortovskiy val") the youthful ruler is enchanted by the cleanliness, friendliness and affluence of the foreigners, and their gaiety and freedom. From the foreigners Peter learns the art of shipbuilding, through them he introduces into Russia the newest achievements in technique and science, and he attempts, by taking them as an example, to adapt to Russia their forms of social behaviour and polish, the so called politesse. Hence Franz Lefort becomes an embodiment of his dreams.

Петр любил в Лефортe свои сладкие думы о заморских землях, прекрасных городах и гаванях с кораблями и отважными капитанами, пропахшими табаком и ромом, - все, что с детства мерещилось ему на картинках и печатных листах, привозимых из-за границы. Даже запах от платья Лефорта был не русский, иной, весьма приятный... 5

Lefort guesses the unspoken thoughts of the tsar, becomes indispensable to Peter. He first suggests to Peter

5 A.N. Tolstoy, Izbrannyye sochineniya v shesti tomakh, t. 5, Moscow, 1952, p. 194.

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the idea of the necessity of a struggle for an access to the Baltic Sea, at first received with much trepidation by the tsar himself.

- Со шведами воевать? С ума сошел! Смеешься, что-ли? Никто в свете их одолеть не может, а ты?- 6

Like Menshikov, Lefort is close to Peter emotionally; not only is he a wise advisor in matters of state and a gay companion for parties, but he can also help in the most intimate personal matters. After the death of Peter's mother, the tsaritsa Nataliya Kirillovna, when the beraved Peter finds no compassion from his own wife, Lefort is capable of offering him tactful consolation.

The death of Lefort, who in the course of his career reached the rank of admiral, caused joy among the enemies of Peter, and among opponents to his reforms. They saw the deceased as almost a supernatural power, a satan who provoked the tsar to sin.

"Конец теперь иноземной власти - Кукуй-слободе. Сдох проклятый советчик. Все знали, все видели: притворным зельем опаивал он царя Петра,- да сказать-то ничего нельзя было. ... Навек загложнет антихристово гнездо - Лефортов дворец." 7

6 p. 193.

7 p. 238.

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Peter, on the other hand, heart broken after the death of his friend, immediately returns from Voronezh for his funeral and straight from the journey, without rest and without even stopping to change his clothes, goes to say good-bye to the body of his friend and to console his relatives.

"Другого такого друга не будет,- сказал он. (Схватился за глаза, затряс темными, слежавшимися за дорогу, кудреватými волосами). Радость - вместе и заботы - вместе. Думали одним умом..." 8

This concept of the figure of Lefort (Tolstoy ascribes to him in the novel almost the part of providence, not only the advisor of the tsar but the initiator of many of his reforms) encountered many objections from Soviet critics. The question arose whether the importance of Lefort was really as great as it was seen by Tolstoy. Mikhail Charnyy expresses these doubts in connection with the above question:

"Лефорт пользовался при Петре, несомненно, значительным влиянием, но до такой ли степени? "Как умная мать ребенка". Не преувеличение ли это, противоречащее таким выявленным в романе чертам Петра, как самостоятельность, власть, ум? Если на этом преувеличении настаивать, то оно ослабляет историческую обусловленность и закономерность фигуры Петра, появление которого подготовлено всем предшествующим экономическим и политическим развитием России." 9

8 op. cit., p. 379.

9 M.A. Charnyy, "Put' Alekseya Tolstogo. Ocherk tvorchestva", Moscow, 1961, p. 149.

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Such remarks, which imply that Tolstoy idealized the foreigners surrounding Peter, are debatable. There is plenty of evidence to show that it was not the author, but his youthful and enthusiastic protagonist, consumed by his desire to destroy all that was old/outdated in Russia, who looked at Europe uncritically and saw only the positive side of the West. As the novel unfolds and Peter in the course of time becomes a seasoned politician and a more mature man, he is less and less inclined to avail himself of the help of foreigners, disagrees more frequently with their opinion, prefers more the company of Russians and tends more to assign to them, rather than to foreigners, the more prominent positions of the state. As already noted, this corresponds with the actual behaviour of the historical Peter. In all, the point indicated (i.e. the relationship of Peter to foreigners with Lefort as an example) is a part of a much larger and much more essential question i.e. the presentation by Tolstoy in his novel of the interrelation of Russia and the West. This question, which is almost as old as Russian civilization in its continuity, became a most acute one in Tolstoy's own time in the land of "socialism in one country". In the course of the struggle for power with Stalin, Trotskiy, the ideologist of the "permanent revolution" to originate in the West, perished together with thousands of others as suspect of

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"leanings towards the West". Again the question of relationships with the West came to the forefront in the time of W.W. 2 during the lend-lease period, when national pride had to be modified by dire need and necessity. The question of "Russia and the West" in "Peter I", however, lies outside the scope of this paper and can only be noted in passing. Also, it borders on the question of the general restriction of fact and fiction in the historical novel, which is dealt with later and which is a question wide enough for a separate essay.

Among the faithful supporters of Peter can be counted prince Fedor Yuryevich Romodanovskiy, also a historical figure and one of the more powerful ones in the novel. Romodanovskiy is a wise, farseeing and prudent man. He is the first among the boyars who, during the regency of Sophia, expresses the idea during a dispute with the allpowerful Vasilii Golitsyn that the Russians should build a fleet of their own and should not sell land with its revenues to foreigners. He is also the first to notice the potentiality of Peter's play-army and realizes the future in store for the young tsar. In appearance he differs completely from the elegant Lefort or the fop Menshikov - the young dandy in European attire and a red wig. Romodanovskiy, too, shaves his beard, the symbol of backwardness, and sports a moustache Polish style, but he looks like a typical Scythian: heavily built

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and short legged, with a broad neck and slanted asiatic dark eyes. Romodanovskiy is reminiscent of a bear both in his appearance- the whole characterization of his is based on this comparison- and his character: he is slow, awkward in movement, but also full of knowledge and cunning, wisdom and animal cruelty. For the time of his absence from Moscow during the Azov campaign Peter appoints Romodanovskiy to be in charge of the capital since he is the only man who can be trusted.

"На одного человека можно было положиться без раздумья, один был верен без лукавства, один только мог пугать народ - Федор Юрьевич Ромодановский..." 10

Again during the famous "great embassy" abroad Romodanovskiy stays in Russia, from where he informs the tsar on all that is happening in the country, while at the same time he keeps a close watch on any signs of a revolt against Peter.

Ромодановский зазывал к себе пировать бояр и больших дворян, вина не жалел. Ставили к дверям мушкетеров, чтобы гости сидели крепко, и так пировали по суткам и более. Карлы и шуты ползали под столами, слушая разговоры, ходил меж пьяными ученый медведь, протягивал в лапах кубок с вином, чтобы гость пил, а кто пить не хотел, - медведь, бросив кубок, драл его и, наваливаясь, норовил сосать лицо. Князь-кесарь, тучный, усталый, дремал сполупьяна на троне, чутко слушая, остро видя, но и гости во хмелю не говорили лишнего. 11

10 A.N. Tolstoy, Izbrannyye sochineniya v shesti tomakh, t. 5, Moscow, 1952, p. 271.

11 op. cit., p. 327.

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The prince then plays in the novel the part of the "eyes and the ears of the tsar", he is his closest helper in the torturing of suspects, in the execution of the "streltsy" in revolt, in the persecution and discovery of the enemies of the state. Not without reason does his appearance create general terror.

"Когда его тень, видна сквозь мутноватые стекла крытого крыльца, медленно спускалась по лестнице, все люди, случившиеся поблизости на дворе, кидались кто куда. /.../ Шея у него была толстая и головой поворачивать было ему трудно, все-таки углом выпученного глаза он все замечал: кто куда побежал, куда спрятался, где какие мелкие неполадки. Все запоминал." 12

And yet undoubtedly the figure of the prince, the prototype of Beriia and Yagoda, is one of the more memorable ones in the novel and one with which, one the whole, the reader finds it easy to identify himself, as he is of course meant to do. The question arises of how the author achieved this reaction. The answer is to be found in the writer's technique, comparable perhaps to the technique of "close up" in photography. The "close up" of Tolstoy is never focussed on the object of Romodanovskiy's cruelty - they remain objects, anonymous criminals. The focus is on Romodanovskiy, the man, in his personal relations with people the reader likes and identifies with. More than that, in relations with them he is shown as

12 op. cit., p. 754.

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an old family friend and relative, one whom Peter calls by the affectionate term "dyadya". Even if the reader's reason, then, compels him to recognize in the prince the prototype of the modern all-powerful policeman and the dreaded head of the secret security service, which of course he is, the reader's emotions overcome his reason and he thinks of the prince as the somewhat severe but on the whole good-natured, benevolent and trusted "dyadya" of Peter and Nataliya, for whom he is trying to find a singing bird for the cage. 13

Besides historical figures a number of fictional protagonists appear in the novel "Peter I". As stated before, "Peter I" is a departure from the traditional historical novel in which the main plot emanates from fictional figures and historical personages appear mainly in episodes, although these episodes determine the fate of fictional protagonists - as is the case in the classical historical novels by Walter Scott or "War and Peace" by L. Tolstoy. But the departure is not complete. In "Peter I" historical fact and fiction, authentic and imaginary figures are intrinsically bound together. This stems from the fact that the fictional figures and the plot of their actions fulfill in the novel the role of lively and colourful illustrations of historical events.

13 op. cit., p. 760.

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These illustrations are accurate and credible in that the figures are typical and characteristic of the era. An example of such a historically probable fiction is the story of the Brovkin family, equal in its importance in the novel to the story of Peter himself. All members of the family are faithful supporters of the tsar.- "God tied us with one thread, Petr Alekseyevich, where you go we go too"- the father Brovkin says to Peter. The family, shown initially as poor, reaches an undreamt-of success thanks to Peter, and is an illustration of the results of the manifold activities of the tsar. In the field of economics, old Brovkin changes from a poor serf to a wealthy merchant and a court supplier. In the field of science and culture, the young Brovkins are representatives of the new intelligentsia: Aleksey - the energetic colonel, Yakov - an engineer-shipbuilder, Gavrilla - sent to Holland to learn navigation, and finally, Sanka, the daughter,- breaking out of the terem and becoming a European lady of the world.

Among the heroes of the novel Sanka is a particularly endearing figure. A simple country girl, terrified at the sight of each passerby during her first visit to Moscow, she rapidly learns and overcomes the intricacies of politesse, the courtly manners, polish and behaviour promoted by Peter

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in Russia, and just as swiftly changes into a great lady, the boyar's wife Aleksandra Volkova. Together with her husband, who in complete contrast with herself is lazy and hostile to all novelties, they go abroad, stay at the court of the Polish king August - and even that conquerer of women tries to win her favours without much success. A somewhat simplistic and naive attempt is made here by Tolstoy to present her almost as a prototype of Pushkin's Tatyana, the "good" and "strong" country-bred girl, whose native goodness and principles inherited from mother rebel against the final act of marital infidelity.

Что ей было делать? Могла плясать хоть сутки, не присаживаясь, выламываясь под какую угодно греческую богиню, в ночь прочесть книжку, наизусть заучить вирши... но чего-то из себя не в силах выдрать, будто маменькины страшные глаза стерегут заветное, стержень какой-то. 14

Unfortunately, "mother" is shown only fleetingly at the very beginning of the book, as a half-human creature, full of dark superstitions and living in deadly fear of her husband - the idea of her endowing her daughter with principles strong enough to help her overcome the temptations of a king is none too convincing. However, Sanka is quite convincing in her gradual broadening of ambitions, she finally dreams of success in Versailles and she becomes the cause of a number of duels. The previously shy girl in time shocks her

14 op. cit., p. 555.

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relatives - she sends a portrait of herself from Holland to her father and the old man lacks the courage to hang it on the wall.

Живописец изобразил Александру Ивановну посреди утреннего моря, на волне, на спине дельфина, лежала она в чем мать родила, только прикрывалась ручкой с жемчужными ноготками, в другой руке держала чашу, полную винограда, на краю ее два голубя клевали этот виноград. 15

Only after her marriage does Sanka master the art of reading and writing. She achieves results truly astounding - she masters three languages, writes poetry, reads Julius Caesar. Besides that she is brave, too - in a dangerous situation she uses a gun and frightens a robber away. All in all, she is a lively and obviously a symbolic, if not always a completely credible, figure - even allowing for the possibilities of the "broad Russian nature".

From among the feminine figures in "Peter I" Nataliya Alekseyevna, the beloved sister of Peter, also deserves attention. She represents in the novel, particularly in the third volume, the theme of Russian culture. Nataliya is a passionate supporter of the new culture, which Peter attempts to popularize in Russia, she fights with energy and enthusiasm against backwardness and antiquated tradition. In her conversation with Menshikov's sister she complains:

15 op. cit., p. 752.

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"Обидно видеть наше невежество. Слава богу - мы других народов не глупее, девы наши статны и красивы, как никакие другие,- это все иностранцы говорят,- способны к учению и политесу. Братец. который год бьется,- силой тащит людей из теремов, из затхлости... Упираются..."¹⁶

She is involved in the creation of a theater, modelled on the French pattern and where she herself has to do most of the work for the first performance.

"А здесь - я одна, я и трагедии перекладывай с французского на русский, я и сочиняй - чего недостает, я и с комедиантами возись..."¹⁷

The theater is a complete novelty in Russia, so much so that the tsarevna expects to have to drag the public in by force, with the help of soldiers! Even the 20th century "cultural revolution" cannot better that.

Nataliya is in many respects very much like her brother - just as lively, impulsive, full of temperament, energy and vitality. All his characteristics are there, only modified by feminine charm, goodness and joy and soften by her tragic and hidden feeling for Gavril Brovkin, the ex-serf.

The theme of Russian culture is connected in the novel with a host of talented and industrious personalities, among whom Kondratiy Vorob'yev, the master-smith of Volday shown at his work in the smithy, could be cited or the talented painter Golikov, whose dream of further study in

¹⁶ op. cit., p. 652.

¹⁷ op. cit., p. 653.

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painting is fulfilled in the end,- when Peter decides to send him abroad. For sheer artistic impact Golikov, is perhaps the highest achievement in portraiture in the novel. His sufferings and passions are universal and universally understood - such as for instance his longing for solitude and for escape from the world and his burning passion for self-expression as an artist. Nor is there any attempt made by the author to show him as a politically desirable element - he is an intensely religious, other-worldly boy filled with a desire for a better, more just world and the pages describing his experience with the mad starets in the forest belong to the best in the book. His emotions, unconnected as they are with time or place, are also understandable anywhere and at any place. Yet another artist is briefly shown - in the 5th chapter of the book appears briefly the sister of the smith Vorobyev, Mashutka, with a passion for clay, as her brother says:

"Намнет синей глины, сделает кошку верхом на собаке, или старуху с клюкой, как живую, истинно. Налепит птиц, зверей, каких не бывает. Полна светелка этой чепухи..."¹⁸

It is perhaps a coincidence that all the artists in the book belong to the visual arts, none is shown having the more expected talent for song or play or dance or rhyme.

¹⁸ op. cit., p. 744.

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This concludes a brief survey of some of the protagonists in the novel and their characteristics. No attempt is made here of a full analysis of all the protagonists of either the supporters or the enemies of Peter. The book covers over 30 years of Russian history and the number of prime and secondary figures that pass through its pages exceeds 200. The period described is a stormy one in a crucial moment for Russia, the upheaval and turmoil involves all classes and layers of society, the big boyars, landowners, merchants, peasants, soldiers, the religious schismatics. All the protagonists, no matter how sketchily drawn by Tolstoy, appear to live a life of their own and hence make an impact on the reader. This is achieved by Tolstoy by the means of a novel technique specifically his own. He does not use the usual method of first describing his protagonist's appearance and "inner life" - according to him a portrait should transpire from the dynamics of movement and behaviour, from the clash of conflicts. He attempts to show a figure through a gesture, his behaviour in a variety of circumstances, abstains from the author's commentary and leaves it to the other actors in the novel.

His people change in the current of events, Peter, Golitsyn, Sophia, the Brovkins all change, depending on the situation in which they find themselves. On the whole, the

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technique lacks in the area of the author's own analysis of thought and psychological insight, it depends rather on a visual analysis. To make a somewhat broad comparison it is a technique reminiscent of Chekhov's fleeting imagery rather than, say, L. Tolstoy's "dialectic of the soul". This "mastery of seeing" evoked some protest of Soviet critics - a.o. Antony Makarenko accused Tolstoy of an insufficient analysis of the inner life of Peter. This accusation seems justified, if it is an accusation. It may be argued, that to the modern reader, saturated as he is with an abundance of lengthy psychological "stream of conscience" Joyce-like technique, Tolstoy's approach may well be the novel's great asset.

In another chapter of this paper attention will be given to the question of literary technique and particularly to the question of the language of the novel.

CHAPTER IV

FACT AND FICTION IN "PETER I"

/Artistic technique/

"Peter I" by A. Tolstoy describes the periods of the Petrine era and its most significant conflicts. The first volume depicts the old Russia, the struggle for the retention of power of the boyars and the first steps of the inexperienced tsar Peter in his search for support for the execution of his reforms, the rebellion of the streltsy and its cruel subjugation.

The second volume, according to the writer himself, is "more monumental, more psychological"¹. The struggle of the old with the new encompasses all Russia; a new strong state comes into existence; the obstacles on the road of Peter, the reforming tsar, are shown. The decisive and consequent result of the struggle is the obtainment of access to the Baltic Sea and the creation of the new capital, St. Petersburg.

The third volume, wrote Tolstoy, is devoted to the most interesting period in the biography of Peter. Here to be shown are:

1 M. Petrov, "Sovetskiy istoricheskiy roman", Moscow, 1958, o. 100.

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... законодательная деятельность Петра I, его новаторство в области изменения уклада русской жизни, поездки царя за границу, его окружение, общество того времени. В третьей части будут даны картины не только русской жизни, но и Запада того времени - Франции, Польши, Голландии.²

Tolstoy never ended his novel; to judge by his commentaries and drafts, the third volume was to have ended with the battle of Poltava, the symbol of victory for the newly created Russian state in its struggle for international stature. Also, the author makes it quite clear that it was his intention to show his main figures only up to the time of the height of their strength and fame.

In a letter to the well known critic and writer, V. Shklovskiy, Tolstoy wrote:

"Роман хочу довести только до Полтавы, может быть до прутского похода, еще не знаю. Не хочется, чтобы люди в нем состарились, что мне с ними, со старыми, делать?"³

The theme for Tolstoy's novel on Peter is based on facts well known both from history text-books and dozens of fiction books. It remains to be shown, and it is the purpose of this chapter to trace, the contribution made to the presentation of these facts by the artistic interpretation of Tolstoy and to analyze to what degree his originality in this

2 A. Tolstoy, Sobraniye sochineniy v 10 tomakh, t. 10, "O svoey rabote", p. 587.

3 A. Tolstoy, op. quoted, Pis'mo V.B. Shklovskomu, p. 588.

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presentation enriches the reader both esthetically and intellectually.

Very influential in the creation of a suggestive, lively picture of the era were doubtlessly the personal experiences of the writer himself, his profound knowledge of all shades of the life of Russia, his existential bond with the typical expression of Russian reality. Tolstoy himself wrote in his article "К молодым писателям":

"... если бы я родился в городе, а не в деревне, не знал бы с детства тысячи вещей, - эту зимнюю вьюгу в степях, в заброшенных деревнях, святки, избы, гадания, сказки, лучину, овины, которые особым образом пахнут, я, наверное, не мог бы так описать старую Москву. Картины старой Москвы звучали во мне глубокими детскими воспоминаниями. И отсюда появлялось ощущение эпохи, ее вещественность.

Этих людей, эти типы я потом проверял по историческим документам. Документы давали мне развитие романа, но вкусовое, зрительное восприятие, идущее от глубоких детских впечатлений, те тонкие, едва уловимые вещи, о которых трудно рассказать, давали вещественность тому, что я описывал. Национальное искусство - именно в этом, в запахах родной земли, в родном языке, в котором слова как бы имеют двойной художественный смысл - и сегодняшний, и тот, впитанный с детских лет, эмоциональный, в словах, которые на вкус, на взгляд и на запах - родные. Они-то и рожают подлинное искусство." ⁴

Another factor which may have been influential in creating his empathy towards the tragedy of the doomed ruling class in Peter's time was his own aristocratic origin.

⁴ A. Tolstoy, op. cit. "K molodym pisatelyam", p. 414.

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However, more than purely subjective reasons explain the impact and the veracity of the novel. It is founded on a solid bulk of historical research. Arseniy Alpatov, the scholar who examined the genesis of "Peter I" compared its text with a series of historical novels on Peter and his era and showed that the writer made use of a very wide range of primary sources and historical documents. To these belonged both works written by historians and original notes written by contemporaries of Peter - Russians and foreigners alike, memoirs, letters, instruction and legislature, diplomatic documents, military reports, court documents and literary sources of the time.⁵ Of these, of special interest were authentic documents and reports of eye-witnesses.

Tolstoy drew documentary material indispensable for the presentation of the background of events from the essays of Ivan Golikov - Деяния Петра Великого, мудрого преобразователя России, собрание из достоверных источников и расположенные по годам, т. I, Mikhail Ustryalov - История царствования Петра Великого and Sergey Solovyev - История России с древнейших времен, т. I3-I4. He studied thoroughly "Письма и бумаги Петра Великого" (vol. I-VII, published in 1879-1918) and also memoirs of contemporaries of Peter, such

⁵ A. Alpatov, *Kommentariy k romanu A. Tolstogo "Petr I"*, in A. Tolstoy - Petr Pervyi, Moscow, 1947, p. 786.

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as Patrick Gordon (A diary kept during his stay in Russia between 1661 and 1699), I. Zhelabuzhynskiy - Записки с 1682 по 1709 год, prince Boris Kurakin - Путевые записки и дневники, and Johannes Korb - Diarium itineris in Moscoviam perillustris. These last were a source for variagated information on the mores, way of life and mentality of the contemporaries i.e. of all that which creates the so called local colour in description of the era under study.

Naturally, not all the authors and not all the sources were utilized by the author in the same degree. V. Solovyev, perhaps the best historian of the period, provided him with valuable material on diplomatic relations and the foreign policy of Russia at the turn of the XVII and the XVIII centuries (such parts of the novel as the negotiations of prince Vasiliy Golitsyn with the Ukrainian hetman Samoilëvich or the nomination of the new hetman Mazeppa in book I, chapter III were based on Solovyev's "History"). The work of Ustralov provided the writer not only with a detailed description of historical events but also with much previously unknown archival material. The diary of Korb, the secretary of the Austrian Embassy, and an eye-witness to Peter's inhuman treatment of the "streltsy" in 1698, is utilized in the last chapter of the 1st volume of "Peter I" (Alpatov maintains that Tolstoy emphasized the fact that Korb "was an

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eye-witness to the torture of the streltsy". Zhelabushynsky's⁶ notes described the mock wedding and the wedding parade of the tsar's clown Turgenev and provided material for the chapter on the strengthening of the fortress of Novgorod after the defeat at Narva.

Tolstoy made also full use of visual, pictorial material - he studied portraits, pictures, plans and maps of Peter's era and antique clothes, furniture and architecture of the XVII/XVIII centuries - all indispensable for the recreation of a plastic picture of a bygone era.

The volume of sources used by Tolstoy in the course of his work on the book (which lasted, as noted before, over 15 years) was enormous. Already in December 1929 Tolstoy wrote:

"Из Академии Наук и Публичной библиотеки мне несут такие книжищи, что волосы встают ежом".⁷

While making use of such a variety of sources, he constantly emphasized the fact that documents must be treated advisedly, that they must be checked and recreated, with only the most typical material chosen. He rejected the mechanical injection of whole documentary sources into the author's narrative, a technique previously widely practiced in the writing of his-

6 A. Alpatov, op. cit., p. 789.

7 Yu. Krestinskiy, A.N. Tolstoy, Zhizn' i tvorchestvo. Kratkii ocherk, Moscow, 1960, p. 188.

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torical novels. In the course of discussion with the members of the journal "Smena" he said:

"К каждому документу нужно относиться критически, искать где в нем правда, где ложь. Эту неправду нужно уловить; нужно выработать историческое чутье, которое несомненно развивается практикой. Нужно сличать документы. Одни из важнейших - это, несомненно, письма".⁸

Whereas he described his technique of working with historical sources as follows:

"Нужно найти в этом материале основное, то есть то, что подтверждает воззрение на ту эпоху, которой занимаешься."⁹

The author of a historical novel ought not, however, compete with the historical scholar. His objective is different; art differs from historical science in that it is dominated by fantasy, creative imagination. A novelist may and should describe also that which he has not found in documents, but which he could have found in them. This is what he himself says on the subject:

"Чем больше вымысла, тем лучше. Это и есть настоящее творчество. Но вымысел должен быть такой, чтобы у вас получилось впечатление абсолютной правды. Писать без вымысла нельзя. Вся литература - это вымысел, потому что жизнь разбросана по плоскости, по поверхности, по пространству, по времени."¹⁰

8 A. Tolstoy, op. cit., p. 208.

9 A. Tolstoy, O literature, Moscow, p. 207.

10 A. Tolstoy, op. cit., t. 10, p. 247.

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The source material is so organized as to be only vaguely perceived by the reader - historical documents are integrated with the fictional plot and background. How complete and successful the integration is may be shown by the fact that some soviet critics of the thirties accused Tolstoy of completely neglecting historical material.¹¹

In spite of this overall impression, however, a good number of straight historical sources are in fact introduced into the novel, particularly into its first part, mainly letters written by Peter or to Peter; the writer selected them from the point of view of liveliness and interest. What he did often do, for artistic purposes, was to combine fragments of different documents into one, to select and eliminate unimportant or uncharacteristic details. As one such example may serve Peter's letter to prince Romodanovskiy (part one, chapter VII) which consists of three different documents:

Мин хер кениг... Которые навигаторы посланы по вашему указу учиться, - розданы все по местам... Иван Головин, Плещеев, Крапоткин, Василий Волков, Верещагин, Александр Меньшиков, Алексей Бровкин, по вся дни пьяный поп Битка, при которых и я обретаюсь, отданы - одни в Саардаме, другие на Остиндский двор к корабельному делу... Александр Кикин, Степан Васильев - машты делать; Яким маляр да посольский дьякон Кривосыхин - всяким водяным мельницам; Борисов, Уверов - к ботовому делу; Лукин и Кобылин - блоки делать; Коншин, Скворцов, Петелин, Муханов и Синявин - пошли на корабли в разные места, в матрозы; Арчилов поехал в Гагу бомбардирству учиться...

11 Yu.A. Krestinskiy, op. cit., p. 190.

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А стольники, которые прежде нас посланы сюда, выуча один компас, хотели в Москву ехать, чаяли, что - все тут... Но мы намерение их переменили, велели им итти в чернорабочие на оstadскую верфь - еще и ртом посрать...

Господин Яков Брюс приехал сюда и отдал от вашей пресветлости письмо. Показывал раны, кои до сих пор не зажили, жаловался, что получил их у вашей пресветлости на пиру... Зверь! Долго ль тебе людей жечь? И сюды раненные от вас приехали. Перестань знаться с Ивашкою Хмельницким... Быть от него роже драной... Питер."¹²

According to Alpatov,¹³ the first part of the letter (on navigators) is taken from the letter to Romodanovskiy of 31 December 1697, the middle part from Peter's letter to Vinius of 17 August of the same year and the third (on Brius) from the letter to Romodanovskiy of 22 December 1697).

Such a method is of course subject to criticism of being not only unscholarly but simply dishonest. To discuss the degree of permissibility in using and bending historical facts for the achievement of an artistic wholeness of a historical novel is to discuss the very nature of the genre. The question remains to be answered for each historical novel in particular whether in fact it is only for artistic purposes that such changes are made and, if not, for what other purposes have they been made. To trace all the historical material in "Peter I" by Tolstoy and to establish for

¹² A.N. Tolstoy, *Izbrannyye sochineniya v shesti tomakh*, tom V, "Petr Pervyi" (roman), Moscow, 1952, p. 320.

¹³ A. Alpatov, *op. cit.*, p. 790.

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what purpose, and with what results, were such facts changed would be an interesting subject for a separate paper and one which would require a better access to primary archival sources than that available to the present writer.

As well as combing several documents into one, Tolstoy used yet another technique in his treatment of documents - that of elimination and shortening - when quoting historical documents he leaves out superfluous detail, repetitious trivia and builds new episodes short and concise, understandable to the reader, often full of humour. As an illustration of this method (apart from the already quoted method where the language, too, has been modernized) a fragment of the first chapter of the second part of the novel may serve. It is an editorial alteration of a secret report written by the official Yemelyan Ukraintsev, sent by Peter to Constantinople for the purpose of negotiating a peace treaty with Turkey. The long document from the archives of the Poselskiy prikaz (appr. 7-8 pages in folio) is here transformed into a short, colourful epistle, free of elements too archaic for the reader. At the same time Tolstoy left without alterations a characteristic and hilarious fragment of Ukraintsev's report - the description of the stratagems of captain Pamburg, who, drunk as a lord, ordered his men to shoot at the windows of the sultan's palace; as a result -

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"... некоторые жены его султанского величества преждевременно младенцев выкинули, а сам султан выскочил в чем был."¹⁴

Conversely, Tolstoy often created scenes or fictional figures typical and probable for the era, on the basis of a short laconic mention in a historical document. As an illustration of such a method may serve the episode, mentioned already, of the woman buried alive for the murder of her husband. The scene is based on a short reference in Korb's diary, who notes under the date of 28 December a conversation which took place at a reception at colonel Bluberg's on the practice of cruel torturing of women in Russia. Tsar Peter said at the time:

... ему самому известно, как одна женщина была не так еще давно приговорена к подобному наказанию и не прежде как по истечении 12 дней умерла с голоду."

Further Korb writes:

"Говорят, что сам царь ходил к ней в глубокую полночь и расспрашивал ее, думая, что, может быть, найдет возможность простить ее."

He then adds in the way of a moral admonition:

"Но преступление ее было так велико, что прощение могло бы послужить дурным примером для других".¹⁵

¹⁴ A.N. Tolstoy, op. cit., vol. 5, p. 420.

¹⁵ A. Alpatov, op. cit., p. 791.

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This short, casual remark of Korb about the woman who met such horrible punishment for the murder of her brutal husband is much enlarged in "Peter I"; the episode obtains a symbolic meaning - it becomes an indictment of the tragic fate of the Russian woman in general, tortured, maltreated and without recourse to law. It also serves the purpose of humanizing Peter at a time when Tolstoy was determined to humanize him.

Sometimes Tolstoy introduces historical sources almost without editorial change. This is especially the case in the part dealing with Peter's journey abroad, where he appeared incognito as bombardier Petr Mikhailov. (The journey is described in the first part of "Peter I", where insertions from historical sources appear most often - the second part contains fewer of them, the third has almost none). And so, for example, Peter is seen through the eyes of the Dutchman, Jacob Nemen who notes in his diary the following:

Это - человек высокого роста, статный, крепкого телосложения, подвижной и ловкий. Лицо у него круглое, со строгим выражением, брови темные, волосы короткие, кудрявые и темноватые. На нем был саржевый кафтан, красная рубашка и войлочная шляпа. Таким его видели сотни людей, собиравшихся на улице, а также моя жена и дочь..."¹⁶

¹⁶ Aleksey Tolstoy, op. cit., vol. V, p. 325.

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This is clearly the voice of Peter's contemporary, the voice of a man who, like so many others, is amazed at the sight of the incredible figure of the tsar-apprentice.

Aleksey Tolstoy does not endeavour to recreate all the facts, events and people connected with Peter I and his era which are indicated by historical sources. He is not a historian and is not trying to describe facts in all their complexity. His aim is the creation of an artistic vision of the time. This may explain the omission of the description in "Peter I" of the second campaign to Azov (the author may have thought it unnecessary to dwell on Russian victories of secondary importance; and he may have wanted first of all to show Peter in his struggle with overwhelming difficulties and preparing for his triumphs). Nor is there any mention made in the novel of the second journey to Arkhangelsk, in 1694, probably because it introduces no new elements into the story. On the other hand an episode only of secondary importance from the point of view of Russian history, i.e. the taking of the fortress of Magdeburg is given a prominent place in the book. This is necessary for the plot, since it was there that Peter's second wife Catherine I, the future Empress of

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All-Russia appears for the first time on the scene. ¹⁷

A very important tool for the creation of the so called colour-of-the-time in Tolstoy's "Peter I" is the description of the background, a description full of dynamism and clarity. We encounter here a technique of almost painting with words; the richness of colour is an outstanding feature. The descriptions of clothes, everyday objects, and of the appearance of the protagonists architecture, landscape, battlescenes etc. are not used simply for dead theatrical decoration; they do not become an end in themselves. This in spite of the fact that in no previous work has the author of "Peter I" given such a detailed description of accessories. We see powdered wigs of the foreign guests and the gold-embroidered heavy dress of the tsarevna Sophia, the French costume of Vasilij Golitsyn.

"... в чулках и красных башмачках, в коротких бархатных штанах с лентами, - на животе и с боков из-под бархатной куртки выбивалось тонкое белье в кружевах."¹⁸

¹⁷ A. Alpatov describes these problems fully in his monograph "Aleksey Tolstoy - master istoricheskogo romana", Moscow, 1958, unavailable to the present writer. The arguments used in this paragraph are based on the textbook for historians by L.P. Aleksandrova - Russkaya sovetskaya literatura, Kiyev, 1964. Aleksandrova based her information (pages 147-148) on the work of Alpatov.

¹⁸ A.N. Tolstoy, op. cit., vol. 5, p. 75.

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These details, as well as the description of other objects of everyday use, furniture and dishes, are not only historically authentic and serve not only for the recreation of the colour and feeling of the era but are generally connected with some concrete socio-historical feature of the protagonist.¹⁹ For instance, the heavy and awkward clothes of the boyars arguing in the Duma serve to emphasize the oneness of the boyars with the backward, patriarchal class; similarly, the Dutch costume of Peter or the French costume of Golitsyn concretize, emphasize the oneness of these historical figures with the new currents in Russian mores and customs. Another such example: in Golitsyn's house there are large, wide open windows, - in sharp contrast to the narrow, dark, small windows in the boyars' terems - the yard of his house is covered by colourful tiles, there is a copper atlas in the room and a barometer of English workmanship - all characterising the owner of the house as a propagator of modern progressive ideas and a new outlook.

A very important element in the technique used by Tolstoy in "Peter I" is his use of the language. The writer was not in favour of linguistic ornamentation and of a pronounced archaization of language in a historical novel (although this was the predominant trend of Soviet historical

¹⁹ This observation is made by L.M. Polyak in her monograph "Aleksey Tolstoy-khudozhnik", Moscow, 1964, p. 426.

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prose of the thirties f.e. for the works of Aleksandr Chapygin, the author of "Stepan Razin"). Consequently, he attempted the simplest means for the creation of a right linguistic style with the orientation toward everyday speech of Peter's era, and used for its attainment the following techniques.

The key for the understanding of the language in which "Peter I" is written is provided by Tolstoy himself in numerous articles, during his discussions with young writers, in interviews, etc. The first time such an explanation was given in his article of 1929 - Kak my pishem. He wrote then that he was helped in his understanding of everyday speech of Russia by court minutes of the XVII century (edited by prof. Novomberskiy under the title "Slovo i delo gosudarevy" from which already in 1917 he drew facts for his first stories on the Petrine era ("Pervyye terroristy", "Navazhdeniye"). The acts contain written statements of the tortured "criminals":

"Дьяки и подьячие Московской Руси искусно записывали показания; их задачей было сжато и точно, сохраняя все особенности речи пытаемого, передать его рассказ. Задача в своем роде литературная. И здесь я видел во всей чистоте русский язык, не испорченный ни мертвой, церковно-славянской формой, ни усилиями превратить его в переводную /с польского, с немецкого, с французского/ ложно-литературную речь. Это был язык, на котором говорили русские лет уже тысячу, но никто никогда не писал /за исключением гениального "Слова о полку Игореве"/ 20

explained Tolstoy, and emphasized that it was due to his stu-

20 A. Tolstoy, Sobraniye sochineniy v 10 tomakh, tom 10, p. 141.

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dy on the structure of the language of the people that he was able to write "Peter I". Also, he drew attention to the fact that the language of the upper classes of society of the XVIII century was completely different from that of the everyday speech of the people, which was considered common and vulgar.

"Наверно, боярам казалось, что, читая книгу, или разговаривая по книжному, они беседуют как ангелы на византийских небесах". 21

The language of the court documents was a different matter altogether.

"... там не гнушались подлой речью, там рассказывала, стонала, лгала, вопила от боли и страха народная Русь. Язык чистый, простой, точный, образный, гибкий, будто нарочно созданный для великого искусства." 22

The archaic style of the official documents and literature, based as it was mainly on O.C.S. was a kind of Russian Latin, the language of the initiated, of the chosen few. The previous authors of historical novels, unaware of this dichotomy of everyday speech from the official and literary language, were guilty of a mistaken judgement when they made their protagonists speak the dead language of the documents. Tolstoy's novel is different - its language is live, not tiresome to the reader, very near to modern Russian. In contrast to so many historical novels provided with a glossary of old expressions, "Peter I" has none, nor are the pages

21 & 22 - p. 142.

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interspersed with footnotes explaining the vocabulary and content. Nevertheless, the reader feels an archaisation both lexical and syntactical.

Tolstoy uses archaic lexical expressions with tact²³ and measure; those which he uses are indispensable since, as a rule, they describe such realities of the age as were already old-fashioned at the time. Their meaning is very often explained by the content; in the case of a very old expression, it is followed by an explanatory text f.i.

"Она сидела золотая, тучная, нарумяненная на отцовском троне, украшенном рыбьим зубом. Четыре рынды, по уставу, - блаженно-тихие отроки, в белом, в горностаевых шапках, с серебряными топориками, стояли позади." 24

or:

"За женихом шел ясельничий, Никита Зотов, кому было поручено охранять свадьбу от порчи колдовства и держать чин." 25

Semantical archaisms appear very often in "Peter I".

These are words used in modern Russian language but in a

23 There are relatively few works on the language of "Peter I". The present analysis is based in the main on: L.M. Polyak, Aleksey Tolstoy-Khudozhnik, Moscow, 1962, and on the articles: A.V. Alpatov, O tretey knige romana A.N. Tolstogo "Petr Pervyj" and A.I. Pautkin, O iazyke romana A.N. Tolstogo "Petr Pervyj" contained in the collection of articles "Tvorchestvo A.N. Tolstogo", Sbornik statey, Pod redaktsiyey A.V. Alpatova i L.M. Polyak, Moscow, 1957.

24 A.N. Tolstoy, Izbrannyye sochineniya v shesti tomakh, t. 5, "Petr Pervyj", Moscow, 1952, p. 114.

25 op. cit., p. 129.

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different sense, with a different meaning than that which they had in Peter's time. Tolstoy advisedly uses such vocabulary in its primary, outdated meaning. So f.i. "vorovstvo" (now-theft) is used as cheating and lying, "gosti" (now-guests) - as merchants, "prelest'" (now-charm, beauty) - temptation, "rozysk" (now-search) trial, investigation, "sakharnitsa" (now-sugar-basin) - a sugar vendor, "skazka" (now- a tale) - statement, etc. The writer often uses idioms which are compound of modern words in a manner different than the modern usage and so have an archaic sound, like f.i. "Кликнуть Софию на царство", "воевать хана", "сказывать нового царя", "напиться до изумления", "выдать в свет книгу".

Of wide application in the novel is lexicology which is considered vulgar in modern Russian, full of half-obscene, telling pungent turns and phrases. Such expressions as: "брюхо", "пузо", "задастые кучера", "полезла из кареты", "худощавый зад вихлялся" were stylistically neutral in Peter's time, the language of which, like its mores, was simpler, less sophisticated than ours. Therefore, they, too, add an archaic flavour to the novel. The same function is performed by the usage of common, everyday phraseology as f.i. "Он опять наострил лапти", "лежала она в чем мать родила".

The usage of old-fashioned morphological and syntactical form is much less frequent, and even rarer are phonetical oddities applied.

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From time to time we find in the novel (particularly in the author's voice) the imperfect tense, characteristic of the time and used for the creation of an impressional effect:

"Сколько их тут - царевен - крикивало по ночам";

"... и страшно сверкивал глазами на Петра";

"Так высоко Бровкин еще не хаживал".

Among the archaic forms often appear constructions with the pronominal adjectives instead of genitive such as: "братиков тулуп", "невестина родня", "царевнин дядя", "царицына спаленка", "петров собутыльник".

Every now and again archaic flexive nominal forms appear

"четырьмя полки стрельцы на Москву идут", "ждут, когда под Петром с товарищи земля зашатается", "в скиты едет офицер с товарищи."

and old syntactical forms, particularly those which in time obtained an idiomatic usage as:

"В тот же день поскакал в Москву о дву конь", "На Москве бунт поднялся".

Sometimes, in dialogues, the author reproduces phonetical oddities of the speech of his protagonists, particularly of those who would, because of their origin, speak incorrectly, or because their speech is based on dialect f.i.

"кажное утро", "пондравился", "пужали", "мово", etc.

Also based on dialect are such frequently used flexive terms as "бомбов", "делов", "рублев" or the "y" ending "на остреву" "поручик Преображенского полку", etc.

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Very few archaisms are used in the everyday speech of the common people (soldiers, peasants, etc.). The common people speak a language not much different from modern Russian, although understandably less developed, less sophisticated, more primitive. Into the common speech are introduced expressions describing the realities of the time and no doubt widely used at the time:

"Третью шкуру с мужика дерут. Оброчные - плати, кормовые боярину - дай, повытошные в казну - плати, мостовые - плати, на базар выехал - плати".

The literary and official language of the time is dealt with in a different way.

As mentioned before, Tolstoy as a rule modernized the archaic language of the official documents. Nevertheless, he had to introduce it in full when relevant - this being of course in fact the language of the tsar's regulations, the works of prince Golitsyn, the petitions to the tsar, Peter's letters and other documents quoted in the novel. Also, the representatives of the clergy use an archaic, flowery, complicated style full of Old Church Slavonic expressions (f.i. the speech of the patriarch in the first volume of the book)

"Не тищитесь тем, что, изведя крамолу, привели в мир люди и веси", etc.

The same style is used by old believers like the starets Nektarij, Andrey Denisov or Vasilij Revakin. A number

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of O.C.S. expressions can be found in the language of Andrey Golikov, the painter already mentioned, who, as an ikon painter, had links with church circles and culture. His contacts with old believers and the terrifying experience with the "starets" had shaped his views- and his artistic temperament and sensibility exposes him to lofty feelings and outbursts. Consequently, both the direct language that he uses and the author's narrative on him employ O.C.S. expressions which are fully justifiable artistically and psychologically. As stated before, the language in the novel serves as a means for the characterization of the protagonists.

As commonly known, an enormous number of foreign borrowings penetrated into the Russian language in Peter's era. Many such words and expressions were borrowed from necessity, from lack of terminology in the Russian language for new ideas about culture, economics, politics, the military etc., but often also for reasons of snobbery and fashion. The latter became the reason for the deformation of the language and its contamination with unnecessary borrowings, a fashion prevailing mainly among the "dvorianstvo", among people who admired and often slavishly imitated western secular customs.

Tolstoy did not neglect this phenomenon. Hence the frequent "politesse", "reveranse", "amour" used by his protagonists, mainly by females. A characteristic example of the

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language of the era is that employed by Stolitsyn, the diplomat who spent many years abroad. He speaks a drawing room language, somewhat heavy, if courteous, and interspersed with foreign expressions - in effect his utterances are reminiscent of a bad translation from French.²⁶

"- С прибытием к войску генерала Карловича военные действия, слава богу, получили начало.../.../ ... Но Венус и Бахус, увы, - неглиже на свист пулек: генерал Флеминг ищет битв более жарких. Вместо подступов к шведам, храбро подступает к фортеции прекрасной польки, - уже увез ее в Дрезден, и там скоро свадьба..."

This drawing room jargon is of course characteristic only for the upper layers of the gentry, a fact which Tolstoy makes quite clear to the reader, but even here the writer is consistent in his principle of individualization of the language of the protagonists. And so the language of prince Fedor Romodanovskiy, who preserved his latent and beloved patriarchal customs in his everyday life, is far from this inclination to fashionable neologisms- he speaks a simple language, near to the language of the people. The upstart Aleksashka Menshikov, on the other hand, brought up under the personal influence of the tsar, uses them with a comical zest.

A most colourful effect in "Peter I" is produced by a unique combination of expressions, characteristic for the contradictions of an era in which European "novosti" penetra-

26 A. Tolstoy, op. cit., vol. 5, p. 526.

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ted into a patriarchal background. Consequently, the protagonists of the novel frequently speak a language of the proverbial Babel tower; a fashionable European "mot" is often followed by archaic latent Russian words and phrases, some of which are felt by the reader as somewhat simple and vulgar: "Фигура первая! Дамы наступают и отступают, кавалеры крутят дам!" 27 calls Lefort, admittedly a foreigner himself, during a party. Or as another example: -Бонжур принцесс!- the boyarynia Volkova greets her hostesses whereupon: "Буйносовы девы, заваливаясь на зады в свой черед, так и ели гостью глазами".28

Such a mixture of European drawing room jargon with the lexicology of Russian everyday speech, not free from vulgarisms and dialectical denizens, is to be found in the language of Sanka Brovkin, a simple country girl-turned-lady, and in the dialogues of the misses Buynosov with their father, the defender of old, pre-Petrine customs. Here is an example of a conversation between Avdotya Buynosova and her father:

- Чего-то кофей не хочу сегодня. Прохватило на крыльце, что ли... Мать, поднеси крепкого.

- У вас, фатер, один разговор каждое утро - водки,- сказала Антонида, - когда вы только приучитесь...

- Молчи, кобылица, - закричал Роман Борисович, - ай плетку возьму... 29

27 A.N. Tolstoy, op. cit., t. V, p. 90.

28 A.N. Tolstoy, op. cit., t. V, p. 367.

29 A.N. Tolstoy, op. cit., t. V, p. 366.

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And this is what the other daughter of the boyar, Olga, says about her brother:

- Мишка все с мужиками да с мужиками. Вчерась опять в конюшне на балалайке куртаже делал и в карты по носам бился...

Such a mixture of the old and the new produces a comical effect- the protagonists in their endeavour to master the polished manners of the new culture have only acquired its superficial forms. Behind the drawing room game of fashionable words lurks an absence of an understanding of its content.

Such is not the case of the tsarevna Nataliya, an educated, well-read, and intelligent woman, who together with her brother tries to introduce into Russia new European cultural achievements, the theater among them. The new words have a natural sound in her mouth, are an expression of her mastery not only of the new language, but of the inner content of the new civilization f.i.

"Туалет вчера мне привезли, прислала из Гааги Санька Александра Ивановна Волкова..." 30

31

"Кавалеры из-за нее на шпагах бьются и есть убитые."

"Ты инженер, говорят. Тебе-то я и велю перестроить одну палату, - ее присмотрела под театр..." 32

30 a.a.p. 649.

31 a.a.p. 653.

32 a.a.p. 666.

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Tolstoy's interest in Russian folklore also found an expression in the language of the novel. Folk proverbs and sayings, motives of folk songs, byliny and tales are present; so is the traditional, fairy-tale-like number of the three sons of Brovkin who all made good; the love of a peasant for the tsar's daughter is made use of in the lightly traced romance of the young Brovkin and Natalia. Folk rites are introduced (the wedding of the tsar and Yevdokya, the arrival of the match-makers to Brovkin). Of interest is an episode where the "streltsy" inform the young tsar of the intended plot on his life. Into their conversation, full of horror and fear, the writer brings in traditional folk turns of phraseology, which give a natural emphasis to their equally natural emotions.

"Стрельцы с порога повалились - бородами в кошму и закликали, истово, как можно страшнее:

- О-ой, о-ой, государь батюшка, пропала твоя голова, о-ой, о-ой... И что же над тобой умышляют, отцом родимым, собирается сила несметная, точат ножи булатные. Гудит набат на Спасской башне, бежит народ со всех концов..." 33

This rhythmical fragment is of course written in the conventional "byliny" manner.

The problem of the author's narrative voice has been solved in "Peter I" in an interesting way. A form prevails

33 A.N. Tolstoy, op. cit., vol. 7, p. 165.

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which resembles the everyday speech directly spoken - the so called "skaz". There exists, in effect, no difference between the language of the protagonists and that of the author-narrator. The author himself seems to be a participant in the events which he narrates. Here are some examples:

"... пошел слух по войску, что ночью-де к избе князя Голицына, в сени, подкинули гроб. /.../ Василий Васильевич, говорят, в тот день напился пьян... Недобрые были знамения... В мартовскую ветреную ночь в обозе полковой козел, - многие слышали, - закричал человеческим голосом: "Быть беде". 34

"Рассказывали: помирая Лефорт приказал музыкантам играть, шутам скакать". 35

Thus, the narration quoted seems to belong not to an author of the XX century, who looks at the events from the distance of centuries, but to a contemporary of Peter who, observing events in which he himself is involved, refers to rumours, to what people are saying, what some have heard, some have thought and still other repeated. Author's digressions, direct author's comments and judgements are absent. As noted by L. Polak,³⁶ one of the more important means of creating narration in the novel is speech not in the name of

34 A.N. Tolstoy, vol. 7, p. 93.

35 A.N. Tolstoy, op. cit., vol. 5, p. 378.

36 L.M. Polak, "A. Tolstoy-khudozhnik", Prosa, 1964, p. 440.

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the author, but through the protagonists. Tolstoy looks through their eyes at the world, nature and people in it; and they themselves judge the events in which they participate. As an illustration of this technique may serve the characteristic and the evaluation of Peter himself. The narrator sees him now through the eyes of the inhabitants of the Kukujs sloboda- and then Peter is referred to as the "tsar varvarov", now through the eyes of the boyars, when he is called "kukuyskiy kutilka", here again through the eyes of Sophia, who calls him "volchonok" or his mother who uses the affectionate "Petinka, Petrusha" or Anna Mons, who gives him the German name Pejter.

Tolstoy's ability to identify himself with figures of a past long gone by is one more proof of his large-scale artistry. Here is what the critic Alexander Drozdov says about it:

"О петровском времени Толстой пишет так, как будто сам чокался с Петром Алексеевичем, и качался вместе с ним на невиской волне, в утлом болоте, и вгонял сваи в мокрую чухонскую землю, и был под стенами Нарвы, и беседовал с горемыкой Голиковым, потягивая из трубки заморское зелье." 37

This concludes a brief summary of some of the artistic means used by A. Tolstoy for the creation of the colour

37 L.M. Poljak, op. cit., p. 442.

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and mood of the historical past. As stated before, the relationship between complete historical truthfulness and fiction in a historical novel can only be touched upon here and lends itself for a separate paper. On the strength of what has been established here, though, it can be stated that the colour of the era has been reproduced realistically, in keeping with the historic reality of the era, and that Tolstoy was able to reproduce it so because of his knowledge of the time, drawn from a variety of documents, books, the oral statements of the people, etc. The method of creating a linguistic veracity and accuracy in "Peter I" is a new contribution of the author - before the arrival of Tolstoy's "Peter I" Soviet literature did not know of such a simple yet effective way of solving a complicated problem.

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ABSTRACT

This paper is an attempt to analyze in depth the artistic vision of Russia presented in the Russian historical novel "Peter I" by Aleksey Tolstoy. This is done in the hope of broadening the extent of knowledge among the professionals on a subject which has so far been given very little attention in the English language. To that end the paper has been divided into four chapters plus an introduction explaining the origin of the interest in the subject and the justification for the study undertaken. The first chapter traces the origin of the genre of the historical novel in Western literature, beginning with the works of Walter Scott. It then traces the almost parallel development of the Russian historical novel, in broad terms, throughout the 19th century to the Soviet period. Chapter II traces the development of the concept of Peter the man and the ruler in the creativity of A. Tolstoy from his early concept of Peter as an arbitrary ruler to the final recognition of the "historical necessity" of Peter's reforms. Chapter III analyzes the characterization of the protagonists of the novel in technique and content. The emphasis in Tolstoy's technique on movement and action rather than on depth psychology is shown

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and, for content, the author's reliance on omission for the achievement of his aim is demonstrated. In chapter IV the writer's use of documents is discussed and the relationship he maintains between fact and fiction. Also, attention is given to his method of the adaptation of language and the novelty of his solution for such an adaptation for Russian literature.