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CAUCASIAN WAR IN THE WORKS OF L.N. TOLSTOY

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Abstract

The article analyzes the Caucasian war and the Caucasian reality in the works of L.N. Tolstoy. The authors note that the Caucasus played a huge role in the development of Russian culture of the 19–20th centuries, especially in the development of literature. Tolstoy's acquaintance with the Caucasus begins with the Grebensky Cossacks. The history of the Terek-Grebensky Cossacks, this unique phenomenon in the history of Russia, really fascinated the young officer. The article emphasizes that L.N. Tolstoy, faced with the horrors of the Russian-Highland confrontation in the first half of the 19th century, began to deny murder in general, war as a way to solve any problems. While watching the horrors of the Caucasian war, L.N. Tolstoy conceived of ideas of non-violence. The interesting fact is that certain elements of this theory coincided with religious teachings of Sheikh Mansur, the leader of the national liberation movement in Chechnya and in the North Caucasus at the end of the 18th century. The text of the story "Hadji Murad" clearly shows that L.N. Tolstoy was familiar with this teaching. The article convincingly showed that L.N. Tolstoy supported the policy of joining the Caucasus to Russia but not by violent means. In the story "Hadji Murad" he shows that it was the cruelty of the Russian troops that pushed the highlanders into armed resistance to the Russian authorities. The main note is vitality, the glorification of the beauty and power of life, the admiration of a rebellious, proud and freedom-loving man.

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1. Introduction

The theme of the Caucasus has a long tradition in Russian literature. It was one of the most attractive issues for Russian writers of the first half of the 20th century. It is still relevant now. The attractiveness of the Caucasus has not bypassed the feelings of one of the Great Russian writers, who spent the most significant part of his life in these extraordinarily beautiful places and who, like no other, managed to assess the advantages and disadvantages of this beautiful land. Tolstoy (1969) was a direct participant in the Russian-Highland drama of the 19th century, which went down in history as the Caucasian War. The greatest artist of the word, a deeply conscientious person, Lev Nikolayevich first paid attention to the grief and suffering of people who accompanied this war, he sought to comprehend its causes, to explain why it happened, while simultaneously sympathizing with those suffering. The Caucasian war in this regard, alas, gave a lot of “food for thought”. During the 18–19th centuries Russia has annexed vast territories: the Baltic States, Central Asia, the Far East, Siberia and the Caucasus. The Great Russian Empire was being created. This process took place in different ways: either by military force or by the conclusion of various agreements with local feudal lords or political entities. But the accession of the North Caucasus to Russia was the most difficult, multifaceted and long-lasting.

2. Problem Statement

The research problem is the analysis of the positions of the progressive part of Russian society in relation to the violent methods of implementing the process of incorporating the Caucasus into the Russian state, namely the works of Tolstoy (1969) on the Caucasus and the Caucasian War.

3. Research Questions

The article attempts to show the role and importance of the Caucasus and the Caucasian War in Russian poetry of the 19–20th centuries, namely of Tolstoy (1969). The article also describes the attitude of the young officer to the highlanders.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to analyze the works of Tolstoy (1969) on the Caucasus and the Caucasian War and the influence of the Caucasus on his life and work.

5. Research Methods

In their study, the authors applied the principles of objectivity and historicism, providing for the analysis of historical phenomena from the standpoint of mutual causation, consistency, causal connection of events and historical phenomena, their consideration in dialectical unity. The principle of objectivity implies the findings and logical conclusions based on a comprehensive analysis of various sources characterizing the influence of the Caucasus on the creative activity of Tolstoy (1969). The principle of historicism has established a logical relationship of individual events and facts that make up the history of

the current understanding of the role of the Caucasus in the creative work of Tolstoy (1969). The Caucasus was a school of writing skills, a source of the writer's deep thinking of the key problems of human existence.

6. Findings

Understanding of the Caucasus in Russian society in the first half of the 19th century was rather vague. It was a distant suburb, “warm Siberia”, where blood always flowed and military actions proceeded, without ceasing, for more than half a century. It was hardly possible to talk about any sympathy for the “non-peaceful Circassians” in Russian society in such conditions. The enlightened part of society knew more about the Caucasus from the works of Pushkin, Bestuzhev-Marlinskiy, Lermontov. And the young Tolstoy’s ideas about the Caucasus were the same as Bestuzhev-Marlinskiy had (Volkonsky, 1879). Some Russian officers and “volunteers” traveled to the Caucasus for romance, exotic, ranks, with very little interest in the country itself, its inhabitants, their problems. They very quickly lost their romanticism in heavy unsettled Caucasian everyday life, constant military clashes. “In the Cutting of the forest”, in a conversation with Captain Rosencrantz, Tolstoy (1969) describes this “rebirth” of “romantics” into embittered, confused people: “Why did you go to the Caucasus to serve, if the Caucasus is so displeasing to you?” I said.

“Do you know why?” he replied, with absolute frankness. “By tradition. In Russia, you know, there exists an exceedingly strange tradition about the Caucasus, as though it were a promised land for all kinds of unhappy people.”

“Yes, that is almost true,” I said, “the greater part of us”.

“But what is best of all,” he interrupted me, is, that all of us who come to the Caucasus make dreadful mistakes in our calculations. Really, I cannot see why, because of an unfortunate love-affair or disorder in money matters, one should hasten to serve in the Caucasus rather than in Kazan or Kaluga. In Russia they imagine the Caucasus as something majestic, with eternal virgin snows, torrents, daggers, cloaks, Circassian maidens, — all this is terrifying, but, really, there is nothing jolly in it...”

“Yes,” I said, laughing, “in Russia we take an entirely different view of the Caucasus from what we do here. Have you not experienced this? When you read poetry in a language that you do not know very well, you imagine it to be much better than it really is.”

Because, in the first place, it has deceived me. All that from which I had come away to be cured in the Caucasus, as the tradition has it, has followed me up here, but with this difference. Formerly I was led to it on a large staircase, and now it is a small, dirty staircase, at each step of which I find millions of petty annoyances, meanness, insults; in the second place, because I feel that I am every day falling morally lower and lower... (Tolstoy, 1969, p. 88)

But the young “volunteer” Tolstoy was from that galaxy of the Russian intelligentsia, which sought to understand the essence of the Caucasian events, referring to the Caucasus and Caucasians themselves without initial prejudice. Lev Nikolayevich arrived in the Caucasus to get to know it, but not for the sake of ranks and amusements. The Caucasus played a huge role in the development of Russian culture of the 19–20th centuries, especially in the development of literature. The Caucasus is destined to be the cradle of

our poetic talents, the inspiration of their muse, their poetic homeland! Pushkin devoted one of his first poems to the Caucasus – “The Caucasian Captive”, and one of his last poems “Galub” is also devoted to the Caucasus. Griboyedov created his “Woe from Wit” in the Caucasus. And here is a new talent (it is about M. Iu. Lermontov. – Auth) - and the Caucasus is made his poetic homeland, ardently beloved by him; on inaccessible peaks of the Caucasus, crowned with eternal snow, he finds his Parnassus; in his fierce Terek, in its mountain streams, in its healing springs, he finds his Kastal key, his Hippocrene ...”. This directly applies to Tolstoy. It is in the Caucasus, in the village of Starogladvoskaia, in 1852, he will write his first novel (Literature of the Peoples of the North Caucasus. Stavropol, 2004).

Tolstoy’s acquaintance with the Caucasus begins with the Grebensky Cossacks. The history of the Terek-Grebensky Cossacks, this unique phenomenon in the history of Russia, really fascinated the young officer. For Tolstoy, the Cossacks became a product of interaction and mutual influence of two cultures - Russian and Caucasian. Tolstoy became deeply interested in the Terek Cossacks and became their real ethnographer. It is particularly interesting that, according to the writer, runaway Russian people settled on the Chechen land, lived, in a neighborly way, with the Chechens, adopted their traditions and customs. “On this fertile, wooded and rich vegetation strip, a warlike, beautiful and rich Old Believer Russian population, called the Greben Cossacks, has been living since time immemorial,” writes Tolstoy (1969, p. 87).

Very, very long ago, their ancestors, the Old Believers, fled from Russia and settled behind the Terek, between Chechens on the Crest, the first ridge of the wooded mountains of Great Chechnya. Living between the Chechens, the Cossacks were reborn with them and assimilated the way of life and customs of the highlanders; but they also kept the Russian language and the old faith there in all their previous purity. (Tolstoy, 1969, p. 106)

I would very much like the Cossacks (Kuban, Terek) and all other residents of today's North Caucasus to read L.N. Tolstoy, so as not to forget the history of the relationship of their ancestors with the mountaineers.

The overwhelming majority of the Russian intelligentsia, the officer corps, and the bureaucracy supported the government’s plans regarding the accession of the Caucasus to Russia. There were practically no doubts. But the progressive part of Russian society was against violent methods of implementing this process, believing that this should be done through the education of the Highlanders, their familiarization with Russian culture, through the widespread use of economic methods. Representatives of this part of Russian society believed that the highlanders needed to show in practice the advantages of being part of the Russian state. It is quite clear that they were against the bloody realities of the Caucasian War. L.N. Tolstoy, as is known, faced with the horrors of the Russian-Mountain confrontation in the first half of the 19th century, began to deny murder in general, war as a way to solve any problems (Kutsenko, 1995).

Some researchers note that in his works, L.N. Tolstoy did not determine who was responsible for the Caucasian War and on which side, Russian or mountainous, the truth was, who waged a fair struggle in this war. Yes, indeed, Lev Nikolayevich has neither a direct condemnation of the tsarist government for the war against the highlanders, nor direct support for the highlanders who led the liberation struggle. Tolstoy is very cautious in his assessments. After all, the writer believed that the side that suffers more than the

other is always right. It is unlikely that anyone may have doubts that the most suffering side, which suffered great losses in the Caucasian War, was Gorsky side. The losses of the civilian population among the mountaineers were enormous: from hunger, diseases, from the need to constantly hide in the forests, especially in winter.

It is true that in “Hadji Murad” Tolstoy has a very dramatic passage about the actions of Russian soldiers in the destroyed mountain village. In this passage, Tolstoy clearly and unambiguously places accents: his sympathies are on the side of the highlanders. He sympathizes with them and condemns the royal soldiers for cruelty. There is no such sharp condemnation of the policy of the Russian government in the Caucasus in Tolstoy’s early “Caucasian” works – “The Cutting of the forest”, “The Cossacks”, “The Raid”. “Late” Tolstoy wrote the story “Hadji Murad” in the last decade of his life, at the beginning of the 20th century, when the writer was very critical of government policy in general. It affected his judgments on the Caucasian War.

In “Hadji Murad” L.N. Tolstoy acts as a researcher of the Caucasian War. He shows that by the beginning of the 50s of the 19th century The Chechen population was immensely tired of endless war and sought ways to reconcile with the Russian authorities. Another question is that this government did not particularly meet these aspirations of the Highlanders, demanding unconditional obedience. “... Lots of Chechen auls were burned and ravaged, and changeable, frivolous people, Chechens (Tolstoy conveys Shamil's reflections. – Auth.) hesitate, and some are ready to go to the Russians ...” (Tolstoy, 1969, p. 67).

Indeed, by the beginning of the 1850s, a certain part of the Chechen population, placed in an extremely difficult position and did not believe in Shamil's victory, began to lean toward an end to resistance and recognition of the Russian authorities. Their “chief officers” began to enter negotiations with General Commander of the Left Flank of the Caucasian Line A.I. Baryatinsky on the conditions of acceptance of Russian citizenship. Shamil could not allow the development of this trend: it was extremely dangerous for the Imamate. In March, the imam convened a meeting of Chechen elders. “A cunning diplomat” was able to convince them of the need and the possibility of continuing the struggle with Russia” (Egorov, 1895, p. 92). Such actions exacerbated the Chechens' discontent with the power of Shamil. To some extent, they could delay the death of the Imamate in time, but they could no longer prevent it. In general, they only increased the suffering and sacrifices of the Chechen population.

It would seem that the Crimean War, which diverted the military forces and the attention of St. Petersburg from the Caucasian front, should have contributed to the restoration and even strengthening of Shamil’s positions in the North-Eastern Caucasus. However, this did not happen. Chechnya and Dagestan, utterly exhausted and weakened by a long-term war, were no longer capable of a new surge in military activity. Pokrovsky (2000) emphasized on this occasion: “Neither the Crimean War, nor the bold Shamilian invasions of Georgia or, finally, the Imam’s enterprises in Chechnya itself could save the latter (the Imamate. – Auth.) From the slowly but surely approaching fall of its defense capability. For the Imamate, this was a sad omen” (p. 45). Fadeev (2003a) also noted in his time: “... The determination of the societies over which our attacks most erupted has already hesitated, especially in Chechnya, less fanatical than other tribes” (p. 12).

Tolstoy (1969) shows in “Hadji-Murad” that Shamil understood perfectly well what danger to his state, the Imamate, is the emerging tendency of the Chechens to go to the Russian side, “it was all hard,

measures had to be taken” (p. 118). As one of the measures was the appeal of Shamil to the Chechens, which Tolstoy (1969) gives: “I wish you had eternal peace with God Almighty. I hear that the Russians caress you and call for submission. Do not believe them and do not submit, but bear. If you are not rewarded for it in this life, you will receive an award in the future” (p. 118). However, no appeals and even punishment from Shamil could stop the outlined process of withdrawal of the mountaineers who were tired of the war from the imam. A manifestation of this process was the transition of Hadji- Murad to the Russian side (Druzhinina, 1997).

Hadji-Murad, the famous Naib Shamil, had enormous prestige in Dagestan and in Chechnya. Naib Shamil Tashu-Hadji and Yusuf-Hadji, who were unreasonably removed from their posts by the Imam, did not begin to confront Shamil so as not to harm the people's struggle for the Highlanders, not to split their ranks. It was better and safer to solve the issue of the fate of the famous Dagestani surrounded by Chechens. Any attempt to justify Hadji-Murad here would have been stopped without question, while in Dagestan Shamil could not count on unanimity in resolving this issue (Vachagaev, 2003).

The Imam accused the rebellious Naib in complicity with the Russians and in an attempt to seize power in the Imamate (in modern terms, in an attempt at a coup d'état). The delegates of the meeting, with whom the relevant “preliminary work” was certainly carried out, were handed down (at Shamil’s insistence) to the death sentence of Hadji Murad (Druzhinina, 1997). That is, the Imam literally forced Haji-Murad to seek salvation on the Russian side. On November 25, 1851, this naib, one of the most authoritative in the mountain environment, goes over to the side of the Russian command. The split in the Shamil camp is deepening more and more.

In the story of L.N. Tolstoy Hadji Murad is a man with surprising vitality, endowed with all the qualities of a national fighter with violence. At the same time, the writer also speaks of the negative qualities of Hadji Murad. While fighting against the Russians, he showed himself as a person who possesses exorbitant ambition, thirst for blood feuds, even humiliating self-interest. But Tolstoy, this life-giving artist, is interested in something completely different in Hadji Murad - courage and inflexibility, initiative and resourcefulness, indomitable will and proud self-esteem. He also has such attractive features as spontaneity, turning into childish naivety, benevolence and trustfulness; he loves his family, and attaches to people.

The main note, sounding throughout the story, from the first line to the last, is the vitality, chanting of the beauty and power of life, admiring a recalcitrant, proud and freedom-loving person (Tolstoy, 1969).

7. Conclusion

Thus, L.N. Tolstoy, a contemporary and participant in the Caucasian War, in his “Caucasian” works touched upon a number of important aspects of this tragedy, speaking not only as a writer, but also as an ethnographer and historian.

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