FICTION AS THE «SOFT POWER» FOR RUSSIA. VISITS AND CONVERSATIONS OF FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS TO LEO TOLSTOY

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Abstract: This article raises the problem of studying fiction as a «soft power» in diplomacy. There are such figures in the history of world literature whose works contributed to the spread of the influence of a certain culture or country as a whole to other countries. In Russia, such a figure was Leo Tolstoy. The material of the article were the reports of European and American correspondents on visits to Tolstoy in the late 1890-1900 years. Thus, personal meetings of foreigners with Leo Tolstoy were the most important factor that led foreigners to the interest in Russia. The article raises methodological questions of how a country can identify those of its writers who will become arguments of «soft power».

Key words: international relations, soft power in diplomacy, fiction, culture, reception, Leo Tolstoy.

1 Introduction

Soft power is one of the most important tools of world politics. Formulated by American political scientist Joseph Nye, the idea of the effectiveness of «soft power» in the foreign policy of States is particularly relevant in the field of culture: «Soft power», as the researcher said, is the ability to attract, and attraction often leads to mutual understanding [Nye 2004].

For example, for Italy the main tool of «Soft power» is tourism, for the United States – education, for Russia – literature, especially classical literature of the XIX century. According to Nye, it is language and culture that is a «soft power» that plays a key role in international relations, influencing world politics directly or indirectly. In an interview with a Russian newspaper Nye said: «The soft power of a country depends directly on its attractiveness, which is based on its culture, values and their implementation, as well as on the state's policy — how much it is perceived as legitimate in the world. <...> You have a very attractive traditional culture: let's remember at least Russian literature, music, and fine art — in the eyes of other peoples, this looks very bright. And in general, we can say that culture is the main source of Russian soft power» [Nye 2019].

One of the most striking figures in Russian literature is Leo Tolstoy, author of great novels, religious thinker, and author of political and ethical treatises. It was thanks to Leo Tolstoy that at the end of the nineteenth century Russia's influence in Europe and America expanded as a country where the most important issues for humanity are raised and discussed. Tolstoy's influence continued in the twentieth century and is very strong in the twenty-first century.

The problem of Fiction as a soft power of world politics was practically not considered in the study of «soft power». Of course, we can talk about the influence and role of literature primarily in connection with the era of literary centrism, i.e. the dominance of literature among other forms of art, which is characteristic of the culture from the XVII to the first half of the XX centuries. Today, visual arts have taken the first place: if in the 1960s the Soviet people's fascination with American culture was associated with the name of Ernest Hemingway, then today it is associated with American cinema. Nevertheless, the influence of literature persists.

Our study examines the role of Leo Tolstoy and his perception in Western culture as a soft power of Russian influence.

At the end of the XIX century and the beginning of the XX century, the world's attention to Tolstoy was shown in the publication of his works (for example, the novel «War and peace» was published in New York in 1886 and 1889, «Anna

Karenina» in 1886, «the Death of Ivan Ilyich» in 1887, «Confession» in 1887, «So what should we do?» in 1887, and so on, in three years the American reader has become familiar with all the main works of Tolstoy), especially religious and ethical treatises. Translations of Tolstoy's novels «Anna Karenina» and «Resurrection» caused many critical articles and letters to Tolstoy from European and American readers. The authors of the letters say: before meeting Tolstoy, no writer had ever stirred them with the same force, did not deliver such a high spiritual joy: «I am not able to convey in a letter the delight with which the English public met your works. Whatever words I choose, they cannot express my admiration for your books» (Stanley Withers. Britain, in 1889); «...Only twelve months ago I got acquainted with your works, read «Resurrection» and «Confession». I've got all your books translated into English. What a divine joy! I could hardly think or talk about anything other than Tolstoy and his works», wrote worker Victor Lungrem from Scotland in 1902 (all the letters are in the collections of the Department of manuscripts of the State Museum of L. Tolstov in Moscow).

This followed the correspondence, which is associated with the appearance of many of his publications - the response letter became a separate article. L. Tolstoy's letter to R. Rolland appeared in the newspaper in 1888 under the title «About manual labor». The article «Non-Doing» was prompted by the Telegraph query «What does humanity expect? » from the editor of the magazine «Revue de revues». And so on. We have a lot of articles devoted to that situation.

However, one crucial aspect was completely left out. From all this arises an interest in Tolstoy's personality. Tolstoy himself did not go abroad in his mature years. Therefore, correspondents of foreign Newspapers came to his estate Yasnaya Polyana, interviewed and told about their visit in numerous Newspapers and magazines.

Russian writer S. Stepnyak-Kravchinsky recalled: «A wellknown American journalist and art critic, with whom I once talked about Tolstoy, said that for the pleasure of shaking hands with this wonderful Russian writer, he would be ready to take a trip to Russia» [Stepnyak-Kravchinsky]. And many Americans did cross the ocean to see and hear the great man. Among Tolstoy's American guests were political and public figures, writers, journalists, translators, and priests. Here is an incomplete list of Americans who visited the writer at various times: Eugene Schuyler (1840-1890), translator and diplomat (1868); George Kennan (1845-1924), journalist and traveler (1886); Thomas Van Ness (1859-1931), Unitarian Minister (1888); Andrew Wyatt (1832-1918), U.S. Ambassador to Russia (1894); Ernest Crosby (1856-1907), writer, lawyer, and politician (1894); Jane Addams (1860-1935), suffragist, pacifist (1896); Josiah flint Willard (1869-1907), author (1896); Peter McQueen (1865-1924), pastor (1901); William Jennings Bryan (1860-1925), leader of the Democratic party of the United States (1903); Kellogg Darland (1881-1911), sociologist and author (1906); Herman Bernstein (1876-1935), writer, translator, journalist and diplomat (1908); Henry George Jr. (1862-1916), journalist, legislator and economist (1909).

In fact, they turned out to be diplomats, ambassadors of «soft power» diplomacy. Many of the publications in which their stories were published are now inaccessible. However, these publications became a source of information about Russia and Russian culture for European and American readers. These publications became the material of our research, they analyze Tolstoy as a creative person, as a symbol of Russia.

Some of these publications have been the subject of research by literary scholars. We are not interested in the factual side of the issue, not in finding out new names or texts, but in the General cultural characteristics of this phenomenon and its significance for Russia and the world.

2 Methods

We have studied articles about visits to Tolstoy by correspondents of foreign Newspapers and magazines as a way to spread information about Russian culture, mechanisms of understanding Russian culture, the creation of a symbolic image of the Russian writer, and the understanding of the writer as simultaneously «strange» for Western culture and at the same time «universal».

Research methods are determined by the goals and objectives of the work. This study examines the problems of sociology of culture. The author's text often unconsciously reflects the fundamental features of collective ideas and collective fantasies; great writers «symbolically embody the ideologies of their contemporaries». Literature reflects the values, and it is necessary to identify the nature of these values, ideas about man and the meaning of life. «Talking about values» is the basis of the relationship between the writer and his audience [Laurenson; Jameson]

3 Results and Discussion

In 1891, the critic N. Strakhov wrote: «The slightest news about how to write and how to live in Yasnaya Polyana Newspapers place on a par with the best treats they treat their readers, i.e. on a par with political news, with fires and earthquakes, scandals and suicides» [Strakhov]

However, the tradition of pilgrimage to Yasnaya Polyana began not with the Russian public, but with foreigners, and only in the 1900s many representatives of the Russian intelligentsia began to consider it their duty to «go to Tolstoy».

In 1886 the writer G. Danilevsky complained: «An express train of the Kursk road, before reaching Tula, stopped for two minutes at the Yasenki station. I got out of the car and got into the tarantass. Anyone who cares about the name of the most beloved of Russian writers, the Creator of "War and peace" and "Anna Karenina", will understand with what feeling, having received an invitation telegram on the way, I went to visit the owner of Yasnaya Polyana. Foreigners, and especially Englishmen, are especially fond of receiving in print descriptions of the homes and domestic conditions of their writers, artists, public and statesmen. The Grafic, the Ilustrated London News, and other publications have long contained excellent photographic engravings and descriptions of the country homes of Tennyson, Dickens, Gladstone, Walter Scott, Collins, and others. It shows not only the «offices», «reception rooms», and «dining rooms» of the best servants in England, but also the places where they take their usual rural walks, benches under their favorite trees, views of fields and ponds, and so on. It is a pity that we have not yet introduced the views of the estates of Gogol, Aksakov, Ostrovsky, Khomyakov, Grigorovich, FET, Leo Tolstoy and others to the Russian society. This especially comes to mind when visiting Yasnaya Polyana». And so he spoke in detail about the «structure». It is significant that the very interest in the personality came to Russia primarily from European culture. [Danilevsky].

Indeed, in Russia it was not customary to show the interest in the biography and personality of the author, while in Europe it was a fact of culture.

For Russians the world of Yasnaya Polyana was a mythologized sacred space of Utopia, where the righteous man lived, it was opposed to St. Petersburg, the world of civilization. A guest comes to Yasnaya Polyana from the world of evil to the world of nature, from the world of evil to the world of good. On the opposite, a foreigner comes from the world of civilization, which has its own problems, but it is not a world of evil. He goes in a world strange for him, illogical, unreasonable, so the attitude of foreign guests was full of curiosity and attention to detail, but more rational. Russia first of all strikes the foreigner with its poverty, misery, and strange organization of life. An od man with a big beard and strangely dressed comes out to meet the

guest. And with this perception of «strangeness» begins the comprehension of Tolstoy's figure.

They formed the «formula» of the narration about the visit to Tolstov

Part one. Most often, the morning at the entrance to Yasnaya Polyana. The world is full of chaos, filth, and horror. The weather is often bad. The narrator is usually confused and afraid of meeting a great man, but it is necessary to go.

French journalist Octaves Goudaille wrote: «To go from Petersburg to Yasnaya Polyana, where Count Tolstoy lives, is a sharp transition. To leave the huge city, still full of echoes of the Kronstadt demonstrations <...> and find yourself in the secluded retreat of the great Russian writer - it should make a striking contrast and make a strange, special impression. And I experienced it during our recent trip to Russia, when, in the company of Charles Richet and Professor Grote, I had the good fortune to spend a whole day under the hospitable roof of Count Tolstoy»[Goudaille]. Pianist Wanda Landowska said: «On Christmas eve, we arrived at Shchekino station. The sledge that had been sent for us was already waiting for us. It was a ten-mile drive to the manor. The weather was terrible, a real Russian winter: a frosty blizzard and snowstorm in all its charm. My harpsichord was placed on one of the sledges, and we sat on the other. We were wrapped up in fur coats sent by the Count and Countess; but in spite of this, thanks to the 30-degree frost, we arrived at the manor quite frozen. As we set off from the station, a blizzard swirled so that the sleigh was driven not by the driver, but by horses who knew the road well. After several hours of wandering, they finally brought us to the house of the great writer. The desire to see the great man was so powerful, and the charming reception that met us was so captivatingly charming, that the impression of a dangerous journey was quickly dispelled» [Landowska].

The road looks like a road to a magic castle: «A terrible snowstorm raged all day after my arrival at the Count's Chateau. The chateau bell was kept ringing. Nevertheless two wayfarers were discovered next morning frozen to death in the snow not far from the house. Snow was still falling upon tomorrow...» [Steven]

Part two. First impression of the estate. The weather is getting better. The soul comes to rest. And the owner of the estate appears. His appearance is always unexpected and causes a shock. The famous German playwright, theater Director Dr. Oskar Blumenthal took advantage of his stay in Moscow to see Count Leo Tolstoy: «After going through a series of long corridors, I finally found myself face to face with this remarkable man. Tolstoy is exactly as the famous portrait showing him to the European audience: in a broad peasant's shirt tied with a single-color belt, with a long white beard, melancholy blue eyes and gray hair, with a forehead pitted with deep wrinkles - a worker of thought and rough, with hands used to hard work, which he willingly puts into his belt in conversation. The deep, soul-grabbing earnestness that seems to flow from his face gives the impression of meeting a biblical figure. Count Tolstoy seems to have suddenly come to life as the Apostle of Leonardo da Vinci, but to this impression is added the pleasure of civilized taste, which does not have the slightest trace of deliberate originality. His aloofness from society and its prejudices harmonizes so perfectly with Tolstoy's reclusive figure that even his oddities seem quite natural. The monastic simplicity of the room corresponds to the quiet grandeur of its occupant. White walls without any decoration, black leather chairs, a shelf with a small number of books and a birch table littered with freshly written quarters of white paper - this is the secular cell of this monk by conviction» [Blumenthal].

Part three. Conversations with Tolstoy. Here expectations and reality collide: an ordinary old man (and household details are specially emphasized) and an unprecedented strongman in spirit. The visitors give an attempt to convey conversations with Tolstoy - they are shocking, make you think, open your eyes,

seem strange, paradoxical – but Tolstoy has the right to do this, so the narrator accepts that they should be recorded and transmitted to the audience.

For a foreign visitor, the world of Leo Tolstoy is the world of a particular great man and, above all, of a social thinker. Tolstoy's social ideas caused heated debates in Russia and were often condemned even by fans of his artistic talent. A characteristic phrase found in many articles about him by his contemporaries: «Tolstoy is a great writer, but unfortunately a bad thinker».

Thomas Stevens wrote: «I had previously heard about this article of Tolstoi's. A week before, when I arrived in Samara from Patroffka, I found that the townsfolk were discussing it with some vehemence and excitement. The prevailing opinion appeared to be that the author of the article was mad, and ought to be shut up in a lunatic asylum.

A tchinovnik's wife exclaimed in my hearing, "He ought to be sent to Siberia, for he is stirring up the people!" To this Samara an old friend of mine, who has been exerting himself to the utmost on behalf of the peasantry, replied "Well if they did cut my throat it would not surprise me although I have helped them as well as I could. They are unable to distinguish friends from enemies" Thereupon an official of high rank who overheard the conversation said , with a frankness which I did not expect to find in one of his class, "I believe that every word Count Tolstoi written is perfectly true; nevertheless, he has no riffit to let the common people know the truth». [Steven]

In the late 1890s and early 1900s in Europe and America social processes and disputes were very important, and Tolstoy's ideas about a just society without a revolution enjoyed much more attention there than in Russia, where even attempts to liberalize society were severely suppressed. It was thanks to foreign correspondents that Tolstoy's views became known in the West, and through them they came back to Russia.

Paul Boyer (1864-1949), French Slavist, editor of the «Revue des etudes Slaves» introduced readers with his conversation with Tolstoy. Tolstoy said: «I am considered an old chatterbox. But what should I do? I can't say I'm wrong when I'm sure I'm right! The question, as a matter of fact, is solved very simply. Where is the source of the evil that afflicts Russia and which, according to some (of which I am not one), leads it to death? The evil is that in Russia there is neither power, nor authority. But we must decide: what is meant by the word power? There are two types of power. External power, supported by force, not approved by conscience, is a power that relies on soldiers, gendarmes, and constables. Internal power, based on the free consent of citizens, and therefore moral and good, is a power conditioned by universal obedience to the law. Unfortunately, in our time in Russia, we do not have either one or the other power. I am one of those who think that no society can exist without power. The inner power I am telling you about is possible only with a moral connection. And the socialists? The anarchists? However, their negative criticism is fair and deeply true. But how pitiful their constructions are, how barren they are, how they are based on sand! Take, for example, an 8-hour working day! What if I work 15 hours today and only one hour tomorrow?! Anyway, Russia is now facing two main issues: the transfer of all land to farmers, i.e. direct producers, and the introduction of a single tax under the George system. With the resolution of these two questions, the working question will also be resolved. Rural youth will no longer leave the wide fields where life is free and free, and will no longer exhaust their strength in factories and factories. Civilization will lose nothing if people are convinced that 90% of factory products are useless. They will tell me that they are all chimeras. This would be true if we were talking about England, where there are ten peasants for every hundred inhabitants, but not here, where the peasants make up 99% of the population. We cannot, in fact, demand that we, the Russians, make a revolution on the Prussian model. We will act in our own way, and leave the discussion of draft constitutions "made in France, in Englande or in Germany" to the Duma speakers. Their recipes tell me nothing: I am Russian and I want to have Russian dishes» [Boyer].

Part four, the final. Day is coming to the end - the time cycle is completed. The fear has disappeared - the guest feels like at home thanks to the goodwill of the host, the guest has a sense of his own importance: as a person who will tell the world about Tolstoy. And no matter what the weather was, no matter how dirty and difficult life was, the life of the narrator has changed forever, his world was transformed.

The French journalist and writer Octave Goudaille saw in Tolstoy a man who all the time thinks about human sufferings: «And just the day before we were looking at an art gallery in Moscow, and I was still under a heavy, almost overwhelming impression of it. There is no naked nature, no cheerful, full of bliss and passion images, nowhere even a light color and light play of colors - everywhere is death and human suffering, which the artist studies and paints from all sides and points of view with a cruel insistence. <...> When we spoke to Tolstoy about this desire of Russian artists to precisely flaunt the gloom of their subjects, depicting only death and suffering, he told us: "Death is ugly and terrible only on the canvases of our artists. Here, in our villages, it has majestic simplicity and is almost joyous." Surprised, we looked at him. <...> And Tolstoy spoke of suffering. In his opinion, it is necessary. It is not only a property of our nature; there is something shining in it. This is a mystical law that cannot be destroyed; there won't be any benefit from its destruction». For a Frenchman with a completely different way of thinking (his comments about the exhibition are not accidental), it was a kind of insight: «I retired to the library, turned into a bedroom. But I couldn't sleep. Large black flies, probably lured by the warmth of the day, buzzed around me. I got up and sat down by the window. I listened to the monotonous chirping of the grasshoppers in the park, and inhaled with avidity the delicate fragrance of the flowers that streamed through the window. I stared out into the night, which merged with the halflight of the moonlight that shone through it, and thought. The breeze touched the tops of the old trees, making a slight flutter and rustle in them, and in these vague sounds I seemed to distinguish quiet lamentations, in them I heard the voice of all the human sorrows that the author of "Anna Karenina" had mourned in this lonely corner, during the thirty years of life that had passed under these silent trees, among this friendly nature. And I thought of what Tolstoy had said, of humanity plunged into an inexhaustible misery, enclosed in a dark circle of calamities. I saw this philosopher, who loves people so much that fame could not comfort him and close his eyes to their sufferings, now preaching the necessity of these sufferings, whose works of genius represent a fervent protest against the sorrow and insignificance of earthly existence» [Goudaille] Although Tolstoy wrote in his diary about the guests of thas day «of little interest», for the visitor the shock was the same as for other guests, and the space of Yasnaya Polyana was mystical, filled with voices, thoughts of suffering humanity, and majestic nature.

Let's remember Steven's words again:: «In parting from Count Tolstoy, he gave utterance to the following remarkable and sad words: «I do not know whether what I am doing is for best. Or weather I ought to tear myself away from this occupation. All I know is that I cannot leave this work. Perhaps it is weakness; perhaps it is my duty which keeps me here. But I cannot leave it up, even if I should like to. Moses on Mount Horeb, I shall never see the fruit of my labours. I shall never know whether I have been acting for the best or not. My fear is what I am doing is only a palliative. Surely, when the historian comes to cover the canvas of the latter half of the 19 century, he will find no more pathetic figure for his painting than that of the great genius Tolstoi, battling with famine and fever, and striving with all he might and main to bring about the universal brotherhood of mankind and yet pursued by doubts as to whether, after all, there is not some better way which he does not see» [Steven].

So the narration of the visit to Yasnaya Polyana is based on the formula: the world is plunged into chaos, the narrator makes a

difficult way and gets into the space of utopia, almost paradise, where he communicates with a celestial who changes his consciousness, and returns to a life full of chaos, but now he has a power to live.

Note that this story is not so much a story about Tolstoy, but about... himself. The impression that Tolstoy makes on a guest is more important than Tolstoy himself: the person who has been there will find meaning in life, his chaos will be momentarily transformed and become a cosmos, and the memory of it will remain forever. Moreover, the guest is influenced not only by Tolstoy's personally, but by the entire situation – from the beginning of the trip to its final.

For the European guest, it is a discovery that Tolstoy as a Russian thinks about all mankind, that the thoughts of an old man in the middle of Russia are interesting to everyone, even in distant countries. There is also an intuitive comprehension of the illogical Tolstoy and the illogical Russian life, which is given by the author as a shock, an insight, as a overcoming of his traditional Western rationality.

4 Summary and Conclusions

Tolstoy is a symbol of Russian culture, he has a universal (the dream of social justice for every person) and Russian (the ability to see the highest, the meaning of life in the private and everyday, illogical understanding of the world) sense.

Symbols of «soft power» are an element of culture, and their use in politics depends on a large extent on the types and levels of development of political culture. Political culture uses the role of various symbols in ensuring the legitimacy and political influence of state power – therefore, in order to implement «soft power», it is necessary for the country to choose a writer who could become a symbolic figure, who could talk about what makes general sense for people, connect the national, global and private interests of ordinary people [Shahidani, Penkovtsev].

The more successfully a political culture uses a set of symbols, the more effectively it can use «soft power» for national interests.

In this regard, Russia's activities are not always effective. The poet Alexander Pushkin, a Russian European, has been nominated as a national symbol — a Westerner does not feel Russian specifics in this figure, on the one hand, and does not understand his European origin, on the other hand, since it is difficult to translate his poetry adequately to other languages. At the same time, despite the popularity of Leo Tolstoy in Russia, the authorities feel his hostility to them and do not fully use the opportunities associated with the «use» of Tolstoy as a soft power: «Tolstoy, of course, is deeply disgusting to me», said at a meeting in the Public Chamber in May 2014 Vladimir Krupin, Secretary of the Russian writers' Union.

But the desire for a fair way of life for the hole humanity - that could make Tolstoy a symbol for soft power politics [Krupin].

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