



Leo Tolstoy

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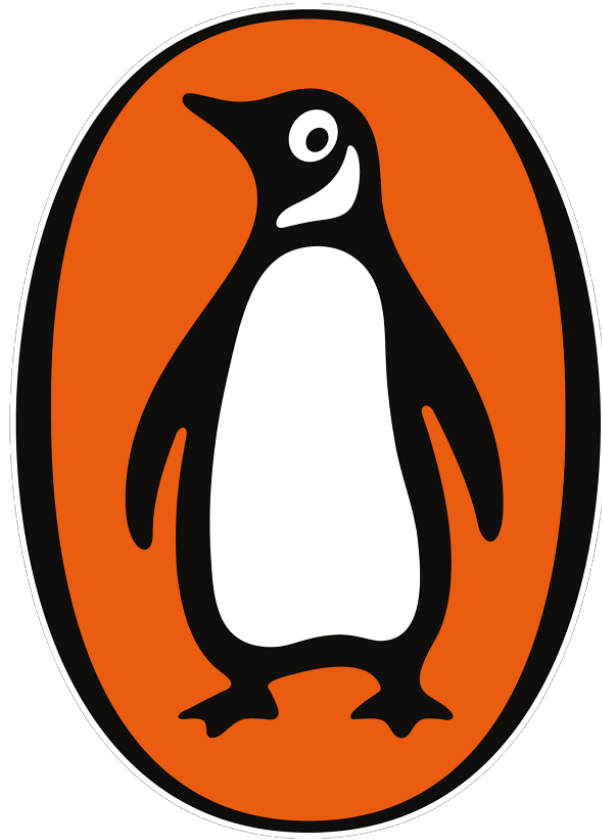


WAR AND PEACE

A New Translation by Anthony Briggs

Introduction by Orlando Figes





Leo Tolstoy

WAR AND PEACE

Translation by Anthony Briggs
With an Afterword by Orlando Figes



Contents

Chronology

Translator's Note

Volume I

Part I

Chapter 1

Chapter 2

Chapter 3

Chapter 4

Chapter 5

Chapter 6

Chapter 7

Chapter 8

Chapter 9

Chapter 10

Chapter 11

Chapter 12

Chapter 13

Chapter 14

Chapter 15

Chapter 16

Chapter 17

Chapter 18

Chapter 19

Chapter 20

Chapter 21

Chapter 22

Chapter 23

Chapter 24

Chapter 25

Part II

Chapter 1

Chapter 2

Chapter 3

Chapter 4

Chapter 5

Chapter 6

Chapter 7

Chapter 8

Chapter 9

Chapter 10

Chapter 11

Chapter 12

Chapter 13

Chapter 14

Chapter 15

Chapter 16

Chapter 17

Chapter 18

Chapter 19

Chapter 20

Chapter 21

Part III

Chapter 1

Chapter 2

Chapter 3

Chapter 4

Chapter 5

Chapter 6

Chapter 7

Chapter 8

Chapter 9

Chapter 10

Chapter 11

Chapter 12

Chapter 13

Chapter 14

Chapter 15

Chapter 16

Chapter 17

Chapter 18

Chapter 19

Volume II

Part I

Chapter 1

Chapter 2

Chapter 3

Chapter 4

Chapter 5

Chapter 6

Chapter 7

Chapter 8

Chapter 9

Chapter 10

Chapter 11

Chapter 12

Chapter 13

Chapter 14

Chapter 15

Chapter 16

Part II

Chapter 1

Chapter 2

Chapter 3

Chapter 4

Chapter 5

Chapter 6

Chapter 7

Chapter 8

Chapter 9

Chapter 10

Chapter 11

Chapter 12

Chapter 13

Chapter 14

Chapter 15

Chapter 16

Chapter 17

Chapter 18

Chapter 19

Chapter 20

Chapter 21

Part III

Chapter 1

Chapter 2

Chapter 3

Chapter 4

Chapter 5

Chapter 6

Chapter 7

Chapter 8

Chapter 9

Chapter 10

Chapter 11

Chapter 12

Chapter 13

Chapter 14

Chapter 15

Chapter 16

Chapter 17

Chapter 18

Chapter 19

Chapter 20

Chapter 21

Chapter 22

Chapter 23

Chapter 24

Chapter 25

Chapter 26

Part IV

Chapter 1

Chapter 2

Chapter 3

Chapter 4

Chapter 5

Chapter 6

Chapter 7

Chapter 8

Chapter 9

Chapter 10

Chapter 11

Chapter 12

Chapter 13

Part V

Chapter 1

Chapter 2

Chapter 3

Chapter 4

Chapter 5

Chapter 6

Chapter 7

Chapter 8

Chapter 9

Chapter 10

Chapter 11

Chapter 12

Chapter 13

Chapter 14

Chapter 15

Chapter 16

Chapter 17

Chapter 18

Chapter 19

Chapter 20

Chapter 21

Chapter 22

Volume III

Part I

Chapter 1

Chapter 2

Chapter 3

Chapter 4

Chapter 5

Chapter 6

Chapter 7

Chapter 8

Chapter 9

Chapter 10

Chapter 11

Chapter 12

Chapter 13

Chapter 14

Chapter 15

Chapter 16

Chapter 17

Chapter 18

Chapter 19

Chapter 20

Chapter 21

Chapter 22

Chapter 23

Part II

Chapter 1

Chapter 2

Chapter 3

Chapter 4

Chapter 5

Chapter 6

Chapter 7

Chapter 8

Chapter 9

Chapter 10

Chapter 11

Chapter 12

Chapter 13

Chapter 14

Chapter 15

Chapter 16

Chapter 17

Chapter 18

Chapter 19

Chapter 20

Chapter 21

Chapter 22

Chapter 23

Chapter 24

Chapter 25

Chapter 26

Chapter 27

Chapter 28

Chapter 29

Chapter 30

Chapter 31

Chapter 32

Chapter 33

Chapter 34

Chapter 35

Chapter 36

Chapter 37

Chapter 38

Chapter 39

Part III

Chapter 1

Chapter 2

Chapter 3

Chapter 4

Chapter 5

Chapter 6

Chapter 7

Chapter 8

Chapter 9

Chapter 10

Chapter 11

Chapter 12

Chapter 13

Chapter 14

Chapter 15

Chapter 16

Chapter 17

Chapter 18

Chapter 19

Chapter 20

Chapter 21

Chapter 22

Chapter 23

Chapter 24

Chapter 25

Chapter 26

Chapter 27

Chapter 28

Chapter 29

Chapter 30

Chapter 31

Chapter 32

Chapter 33

Chapter 34

Volume IV

Part I

Chapter 1

Chapter 2

Chapter 3

Chapter 4

Chapter 5

Chapter 6

Chapter 7

Chapter 8

Chapter 9

Chapter 10

Chapter 11

Chapter 12

Chapter 13

Chapter 14

Chapter 15

Chapter 16

Part II

Chapter 1

Chapter 2

Chapter 3

Chapter 4

Chapter 5

Chapter 6

Chapter 7

Chapter 8

Chapter 9

Chapter 10

Chapter 11

Chapter 12

Chapter 13

Chapter 14

Chapter 15

Chapter 16

Chapter 17

Chapter 18

Chapter 19

Part III

Chapter 1

Chapter 2

Chapter 3

Chapter 4

Chapter 5

Chapter 6

Chapter 7

Chapter 8

Chapter 9

Chapter 10

Chapter 11

Chapter 12

Chapter 13

Chapter 14

Chapter 15

Chapter 16

Chapter 17

Chapter 18

Chapter 19

Part IV

Chapter 1

Chapter 2

Chapter 3

Chapter 4

Chapter 5

Chapter 6

Chapter 7

Chapter 8

Chapter 9

Chapter 10

Chapter 11

Chapter 12

Chapter 13

Chapter 14

Chapter 15

Chapter 16

Chapter 17

Chapter 18

Chapter 19

Chapter 20

Epilogue

Part I

Chapter 1

Chapter 2

Chapter 3

Chapter 4

Chapter 5

Chapter 6

Chapter 7

Chapter 8

Chapter 9

Chapter 10

Chapter 11

Chapter 12

Chapter 13

Chapter 14

Chapter 15

Chapter 16

Part II

Chapter 1

Chapter 2

Chapter 3

Chapter 4

Chapter 5

Chapter 6

Chapter 7

Chapter 8

Chapter 9

Chapter 10

Chapter 11

Chapter 12

The Characters

Maps

Summary of Chapters

Afterword

Notes

Follow Penguin

PENGUIN BOOKS

WAR AND PEACE

LEO TOLSTOY was born in central Russia in 1828. He studied Oriental languages and law (though failed to earn a degree in the latter) at the University of Kazan, and after a dissolute youth eventually joined an artillery regiment in the Caucasus in 1852. He took part in the Crimean War, and the *Sebastopol Sketches* that emerged from it established his reputation. After living for some time in St Petersburg and abroad, he married Sofya Behrs in 1862 and they had thirteen children. The happiness this brought gave him the creative impulse for his two greatest novels, *War and Peace* (1869) and *Anna Karenina* (1877). Later in life his views became increasingly radical as he gave up his possessions in order to live a simple peasant life. After a quarrel with his wife he fled home secretly one night to seek refuge in a monastery. He became ill during this dramatic flight and died at the small railway station of Astapovo in 1910.

ANTHONY BRIGGS has written, translated or edited twenty books in the field of Russian and English Literature, including volumes on Tolstoy and Pushkin. He has edited five volumes of English poetry and translated three books by the former Russian dissident Roy Medvedev.

ORLANDO FIGES is the author of the acclaimed *A People's Tragedy* and *Natasha's Dance: A Cultural History of Russia*.

Chronology

- 1724** Pyotr Tolstoy (great-great-great grandfather) given hereditary title of Count by Tsar Peter the Great
- 1821** Death of Prince Nikolay Volkonsky, Tolstoy's grandfather, at Yasnaya Polyana, Tula Province, 130 miles south-west of Moscow
- 1822** Marriage of Count Nikolay Tolstoy and Princess Marya Volkonskaya
- 1828** 28 August (Old Style) Birth of fourth son, Leo Nikolayevich Tolstoy, at Yasnaya Polyana
- 1830** Death of mother
- 1832** The eldest, Nikolay, informs his brothers that the secret of earthly happiness is inscribed on a green stick, buried at Yasnaya Polyana (Tolstoy later buried there)
- 1836** Nikolay Gogol's *Government Inspector*
- 1837** Death of Alexander Pushkin in duel
Death of father
- 1840** Mikhail Lermontov's *A Hero of Our Time*
- 1841** Death of Lermontov in duel
Death of first guardian Alexandra Osten-Saken, an aunt. The Tolstoy children move to Kazan to live with another aunt, Pelageya Yushkova
- 1842** Gogol's *Dead Souls*
- 1844** Enters Kazan University, reads Oriental languages
- 1845** Transfers to Law after failing examinations. Dissolute lifestyle: drinking, visits to prostitutes
- 1846** Fyodor Dostoyevsky's 'Poor Folk'
- 1847** Inherits estate of Yasnaya Polyana. Recovering from gonorrhoea, compiles scheme for self-perfection. Leaves university without completing studies, 'on grounds of ill health and domestic circumstances'
- 1848–50** In Moscow and St Petersburg, debauchery and gambling, large debts. Studies music
- 1850** Ivan Turgenev's *A Month in the Country*
- 1851** Travels to the Caucasus with Nikolay, who is serving in the army there. Reads Laurence Sterne: starts translating his *Sentimental Journey* (not completed). Writes 'A History of Yesterday' (unfinished, first evidence of his powers of psychological analysis). Begins writing *Childhood*

- 1852** Enters the army as a cadet (junkier); based mainly in the Cossack station of Starograd Kovskaya. Sees action against the Chechens, and narrowly escapes capture
Death of Gogol. Turgenev's *Sketches from a Hunter's Album*
Childhood
- 1853** Turkey declares war on Russia
'The Raid'
- 1854** France and England declare war on Russia. Crimean War starts Commissioned, serves on Danube front. November: transferred at own request to Sevastopol, then under siege by allied forces
Boyhood
- 1855** Death of Nicholas I; accession of Alexander II
In action until the fall of Sevastopol in August. Gains celebrity with 'Sevastopol in December' and the following sketches 'Sevastopol in May', 'Sevastopol in August' (1856), 'Memoirs of a Billiard Marker', 'The Woodfelling'
- 1856** Peace signed between Russia, Turkey, France and England Turgenev's *Rudin*
In St Petersburg, moves in literary circles; associates with Turgenev, Ivan Goncharov, Nikolay Nekrasov, Afanasy Fet and others. Leaves army due to illness.
Death of brother Dmitry
'The Snowstorm', 'Two Hussars', 'A Landowner's Morning'
- 1857** February–August First trip abroad, to Paris (lasting impression of witnessing an execution by guillotine), Geneva and Baden-Baden
Youth, 'Lucerne'
- 1858** Long-term relationship with peasant woman on estate, Aksinya Bazykina, begins
'Albert'
- 1859** Goncharov's *Oblomov*; Turgenev's *Home of the Gentry* Finds primary school at Yasanaya Polyana
'Three Deaths', *Family Happiness*
- 1860** Death of Nikolay from tuberculosis at Hyeres (France)
Dostoyevsky's *Notes from the House of the Dead* (1860–61) Turgenev's *On the Eve*
- 1860–61** Emancipation of serfs (1861). Formation of revolutionary Land and Liberty movement. Commencement of intensive industrialization; spread of railways. Elective District Councils (*zemstvos*) set up; judicial reform
Serves as Arbiter of the Peace, dealing with post-Emancipation land settlements. Quarrels with Turgenev and challenges him (no duel). Travels in France, Germany, Italy and England. Loses great deal of money through gambling. Meets Proudhon in Brussels
- 1862** Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons*
Starts a magazine at Yasnaya Polyana on education for the peasants; abandoned after less than a year. Police raid on Yasnaya Polyana. Considers emigrating to England and writes protest to the Tsar. Marries Sofya Andreyevna Behrs (b. 1844)
- 1863** Polish rebellion

- Birth of first child, Sergey (Tolstoy and his wife were to have thirteen children – nine boys and four girls – of whom five died in childhood). Begins work on a novel ‘The Decembrists’, which was later abandoned, but developed into *War and Peace*
- ‘Polikushka’, *The Cossacks*
- 1865** Nikolay Leskov’s ‘Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District’
First part of *War and Peace* (titled *1805*)
- 1866** Attempted assassination of Tsar Alexander II
Dostoyevsky’s *Crime and Punishment*
- 1867** Turgenev’s *Smoke*
Visits Borodino in search of material for battle scene in *War and Peace*
- 1868** Dostoyevsky’s *The Idiot*
- 1869** Publication of *War and Peace* completed
- 1870–71** Franco–Prussian War. Municipal Government reform Dostoyevsky’s *Devils*
Studies ancient Greek. Illness; convalesces in Samara (Bashkiriya). Begins work on primer for children. First mention of *Anna Karenina*. Reads Arthur Schopenhauer and other philosophers. Starts work on novel about Peter the Great (later abandoned)
- 1872** ‘God Sees the Truth But Waits’, ‘A Prisoner of the Caucasus’
- 1873** Begins *Anna Karenina*. Raises funds during famine in Bashkiriya, where he has bought an estate. Growing obsession with problems of death and religion; temptation to commit suicide
- 1874** Much occupied with educational theory
- 1875** Beginning of active revolutionary movement
- 1875–7** Instalments of *Anna Karenina* published (in book form in 1878)
- 1877** Turgenev’s *Virgin Soil*
Journal publication of *Anna Karenina* completed
- 1877–8** Russo–Turkish War
- 1878** Reconciliation with Turgenev, who visits him at Yasnaya Polyana. Works on ‘The Decembrists’ and again abandons it. Works on *Confession* (completed 1882, but banned by the religious censor and published in Geneva in 1884)
- 1879** Dostoyevsky’s *Brothers Karamazov*
- 1880** Works on *Critique of Dogmatic Theology*
- 1881** Assassination of Tsar Alexander II. With ascension of Alexander III, the government returns to reactionary policies Death of Dostoyevsky
Writes to Tsar Alexander III asking him to pardon his father’s assassins
- 1882** Student riots in St Petersburg and Kazan universities. Jewish pogroms and repressive measures against minorities
Religious works, including new translation of the Gospels. Begins ‘Death of Ivan Ilyich’ and *What Then Must We Do?*. Studies Hebrew
- 1883** Deathbed letter from Turgenev urging Tolstoy not to abandon his art
- 1884** Family relations strained, first attempt to leave home. ‘What I Believe’ banned
Collected works published by his wife

- 1885** Tension with his wife over new beliefs. Works closely with Vladimir Chertkov, with whom (and others) he founds a publishing house, The Intermediary, to produce edifying literature for the common folk. Many popular stories written 1885–6, including ‘What Men Live By’, ‘Where Love Is, God Is’, ‘Strider’
- 1886** Walks from Moscow to Yasnaya Polyana in five days. Works on land during the summer. Denounced as a heretic by Archbishop of Kherson
Death of Ivan Ilyich, ‘How Much Land Does a Man Need?’, *What Then Must We Do?*
- 1887** Meets Leskov
‘On Life’
- 1888** Chekhov’s *The Steppe*
Renounces meat, alcohol and tobacco. Growing friction between his wife and Chertkov. *The Power of Darkness*, banned in 1886, performed in Paris
- 1889** Finishes ‘Kreutzer Sonata’. Begins *Resurrection* (works on it for ten years)
- 1890** ‘Kreutzer Sonata’ banned, though on appeal by his wife to the Tsar publication was permitted in Collected Works
- 1891** Convinced that personal profits from writing are immoral, renounces copyright on all works published after 1881 and all future works. His family thus suffers financially, though his wife retains copyright in all the earlier works. Helps to organize famine relief in Ryazan province. Attacks smoking and alcohol in ‘Why Do Men Stupefy Themselves?’
- 1892** Organizes famine relief. *Fruits of Enlightenment* (published 1891) produced in Maly Theatre, Moscow
- 1893** Finishes ‘Kingdom of God Is Within You’
- 1894** Accession of Tsar Nicholas II. Strikes in St Petersburg Writes preface to Maupassant collection of stories. Criticizes *Crime and Punishment*
- 1895** Meets Chekhov. *Power of Darkness* produced in Maly Theatre, Moscow
‘Master and Man’
- 1896** Chekhov’s *The Seagull*
Sees production of *Hamlet* and *King Lear* at Hermitage Theatre, severely critical of Shakespeare
- 1897** Appeals to authorities on behalf of Dukhobors, a pacifist religious sect, to whom permission is granted to emigrate to Canada
What is Art?
- 1898** Formation of Social Democratic Party. Dreyfus Affair Works for famine relief
- 1899** Widespread student riots
Serial publication of *Resurrection* (in book form in 1900)
- 1900** Meets Maxim Gorky, whom he calls a ‘real man of the people’
- 1901** Foundation of Socialist Revolutionary Party
Excommunicated from Orthodox Church for writing works ‘repugnant to Christ and the Church’. Seriously ill, convalesces in Crimea; visitors include Chekhov and Gorky

- 1902** Finishes 'What is Religion?'. Writes to Tsar Nicholas II on evils of autocracy and ownership of property
- 1903** Protests against Jewish pogroms in Kishinev
'After the Ball'
- 1904** Russian fleet destroyed in Tsushima Straits. Assassination of V. K. Plehve, Minister of the Interior
Death of Chekhov
Death of second-eldest brother Sergey. Pamphlet on Russo-Japanese war published in England
'Shakespeare and the Drama'
- 1905** Attempted revolution in Russia (attacks all sides involved). *Potemkin* mutiny. S.Y. Witte becomes Prime Minister
Anarchical publicist pamphlets
Introduction to Chekhov's 'Darling'
- 1908** Tolstoy's secretary N. N. Gusev exiled
'I Cannot Be Silent', a protest against capital punishment
- 1909** Increased animosity between his wife and Chertkov, she threatens suicide
- 1910** Corresponds with Mahatma Gandhi concerning latter's doctrine of non-violent resistance to evil. His wife threatens suicide; demands all Tolstoy's diaries for past ten years, but Tolstoy puts them in bank vault. Final breakdown of relationship with her. 28 October: leaves home. 7 November: dies at Astapovo railway station. Buried at Yasnaya Polyana
- 1911** 'The Devil', 'Father Sergius', 'Hadji Murat', 'The Forged Coupon'

Translator's Note

This novel has been well served by its several translators into English. Only the very first attempt suffers from serious shortcomings, but it was a brave undertaking by Clara Bell, less than twenty years after publication (1885–6). She worked from a French text created by a woman identified only as 'Une Russe', and her version is surprisingly effective, though much of the original has been omitted and what survives is nearer to paraphrase than translation. The early translations by N. H. Dole (1889) and Leo Wiener (1904) were more accurate, though they still contain plenty of small slips, and their American phrasing now has an archaic ring. Constance Garnett, the admirable early doyenne of Russian literature in English translation, produced a sensitive version in 1904; she had a delicate feel for language, though there are some errors. Then, in 1923, came the masters, Louise and Aylmer Maude, who lived in Russia and had the advantage of being able to consult Tolstoy himself. He gave their work his personal endorsement, even claiming that 'better translators ... could not be invented'.¹ Their version of *War and Peace*, now fast approaching its centenary, is still read as a classic in its own right, and the errors that it contains are so few as to be negligible. It has been succeeded by Rosemary Edmonds's equally reliable (at times derivative) translation (1957), which Penguin has used for nearly half a century, (updated in 1978); and then by a sound American version, by Ann Dunnigan, in 1968.

So why do we need another translation?

It is not unusual for the great classics to be retranslated every couple of generations. Language changes and, without worshipping modernity for its own sake, publishers recognize the need to accommodate new readers by using phrasing more closely attuned to their way of speaking. Infelicities will be edited out, such as 'Andrey spent the evening with a few gay friends', 'Natasha went about the house flushing', 'he exposed himself on the parade ground' or 'he ejaculated with a grimace'; we cannot read

phrases like these without raising an inappropriate smile. On the other hand, it is most important not to over-modernize. Tempting though it may be, I cannot use popularized phrases like ‘buzzword’, ‘oddball’ or ‘hooliganism’.

Secondly, a translator hopes to squeeze out one or two errors or ambiguities that still linger. Previous translators have missed the fact that an object referred to in a famous Tolstoyan metaphor about things colliding and recoiling is not a ball in flight but a billiard ball on the table; and they all translated the phrase ‘smotret’ ispodlob’ya’ as ‘to look at from under the brows’ when it means to look sullenly or furtively.

But these reasons are hardly enough on their own to justify a new translation. There is one way in which all the existing versions fall short: from Constance Garnett onwards they have been produced by women of a particular social and cultural background (Louise having contributed more than Aylmer to the Maudes’ version), with some resulting flatness and implausibility in the dialogue, especially that between soldiers, peasants and all the lower orders. A specialist critic puts it well, speaking of the Maudes, who are the most highly regarded translators: ‘Their work can always be counted on for ... negative virtues: sobriety, explicitness, a firm hold on the argument. However, their resources are limited in range of tone. They have little sense of colloquial idiom...’²

To take a specific example: Pierre, watching as a cannonball crashes down into the Rayevsky redoubt and takes a man’s leg off, hears another soldier call out in response: ‘Ekh! Neskladnaya!’ (III, II, 31). The English versions of this are: ‘Ekh! You beastly thing!’ (Dole); ‘Oh, awkward one!’ (Weiner); ‘Hey, awkward hussy!’ (Garnett); ‘Awkward baggage!’ (Maude); ‘Oh you hussy!’ (Edmonds); ‘Ah, you’re a bungler!’ (Dunnigan). Curiously enough the best in terms of natural speech is Clara Bell’s: ‘Ah, you brute!’ The original, with connotations of both awkwardness and femininity, is rather difficult to translate, but one thing is certain: no soldier in the heat of battle ever said anything like most of the phrases we have been offered so far.

The previous translations also have an excess of niceness and exactitude that can sound jarring to today’s readers. Natasha looks in the mirror and says: ‘Can this be I?’ Lavrushka is sent off ‘in quest of fowls’. More than once we hear that ‘Pierre fell to musing’. Elsewhere someone says: ‘Ay, listen what folks are prating of’. Similarly, there must be better ways of saying: ‘The crushing weight of his arm fell impotent as though

spellbound’, or ‘the resolute moment of battle had come’. Non-existent English exclamations like ‘Ay!’, ‘Ey!’, ‘Ekh!’ or the misused ‘Eh!’ still abound. In such old-fashioned phrasing I have tried to make improvements.

This is not to denigrate the translations that have been enjoyed by millions; it is merely to indicate that this version follows a translation strategy that is slightly different from what has gone before.

In the introduction to his *Don Quixote*, John Rutherford divides translators into cavaliers and puritans. The cavalier takes some liberties; the puritan is a stickler for exactitude. Rutherford’s intention was to combine the virtues of both and avoid their vices, a sensible if difficult plan. The previous translations of *War and Peace* have erred slightly too much on the puritan side, literal fidelity being set at a higher premium than writing naturally in English. It is now time to move somewhat in the other direction.

Let me give a couple of small examples. If a Russian asks, ‘Did you study in Kiev?’, another Russian will respond by saying, ‘In Kiev’. The puritan will use that repetition, while the cavalier would give the normal English speaker’s response, ‘Yes’, or ‘Yes, I did.’ Similarly, when a Russian mother says to her child, ‘Ne nado!’, the puritan will be tempted to render this literally as ‘That’s not necessary!’, whereas the cavalier will go for ‘Don’t!’

The reason for this puritanism is not far to seek. It lies in what Rutherford refers to as a ‘mistaken attitude of reverence for the original artist beside whom it’s all too easy to feel like humble artisans who can only ever aspire to produce a pale shadow of the original...a self-fulfilling prediction... Literary translators must conquer these fears.’³ This is good advice. Without ever drifting too far away from the original, it does seem reasonable to aim for the kind of English that would have occurred naturally in its context and now sounds appropriate.

Another way to look at this is to imagine how the average Russian reads *War and Peace* and to try to recapture something similar in the translated text. Tolstoy’s literary style has its faults – such as undue repetition, grammatical inaccuracy and some sentences of excessive length⁴ – and many of them have to be faithfully reproduced in order to avoid falsification, but by and large he is an easy read for a Russian (and comparatively easy to translate). Stylistic angularities, shocks and surprises are infrequent, and the dialogue in particular is individualized but always

natural. It seems most important to ensure in any translation the same kind of smooth reading, and varied but realistic-sounding dialogue. In rendering colloquial speech, of course, a translator has to choose a particular regional dialect and its idioms, and I have used a British English form of speech, without, I hope, making the text unnatural for non-British readers.

The first edition (1868–9) of the novel had long passages in French. But Tolstoy had second thoughts and removed most of them during a drastic revision in 1873. Previous translators cut these further and provided translations in footnotes. But few readers today have a sound knowledge of French, so I have decided to translate all of it.

Does this change matter? Sometimes it does, but it is possible to indicate that a speaker is using another language. It is not unusual for Tolstoy himself to say (in Russian) for example, ‘Since Pierre was speaking French at the time he ...’ I have used this kind of formula on those few occasions when a linguistic choice or shift has real significance, e.g. in the second paragraph on the opening page. It remains true that certain characters – Bilibin, for example – lose some of their finesse because of this treatment, but there seems to be an overall gain in following the lead established by Tolstoy (and the Maudes with his blessing) by making the text more directly accessible.

A NOTE ON THE TEXT

For almost a century several editions of *War and Peace* vied for acceptance. The first book version appeared in six volumes (four in 1868 and two in 1869), but was riddled with errors, nearly 2,000 of them. Then, in 1873 Tolstoy published his revised edition. In the 1930s Russian scholars preparing the *Jubilee Edition of the Complete Works of L. N. Tolstoy* decided to use the fifth edition of 1886, even though Tolstoy had not been involved in its publication, but they did incorporate some of the 1873 emendations (a second edition was based on the 1873 text). When it was discovered later that numerous changes in the 1873 edition had been introduced by N. N. Strakhov, most of them without Tolstoy’s approval, a team of scholars led by E. Zaydenshnur set about the formidable task of collating and comparing all versions, including the manuscripts, copies (mainly in Sonya Tolstoy’s hand), annotated editions and corrected or half-corrected proofs, with the goal of eliminating any alterations introduced by

outsiders. Their work bore fruit in the early 1960s, when a truly definitive text emerged, from which all subsequent editions derive.

The present translation is based on the text of *War and Peace* prepared by E. Zaydenshnur in the 1960–65 twenty-volume *Collected Works of L. N. Tolstoy*, published by Goslitizdat (State Publishing House for Literature), edited by N. N. Akopova, N. K. Gudzy, N. N. Gusev and M. B. Khrapchenko.



VOLUME I

PART I

CHAPTER 1

‘Well, Prince, Genoa and Lucca are now nothing more than estates taken over by the Buonaparte family.¹ No, I give you fair warning. If you won’t say this means war, if you will allow yourself to condone all the ghastly atrocities perpetrated by that Antichrist – yes, that’s what I think he is – I shall disown you. You’re no friend of mine – not the “faithful slave” you claim to be ... But how *are* you? How are you keeping? I can see I’m intimidating you. Do sit down and talk to me.’

These words were spoken (in French) one evening in July 1805 by the well-known Anna Pavlovna Scherer, maid of honour and confidante of the Empress Maria Fyodorovna, as she welcomed the first person to arrive at her *soirée*, Prince Vasily Kuragin, a man of high rank and influence. Anna Pavlovna had had a cough for the last few days and she called it *la grippe* – *grippe* being a new word not yet in common currency. A footman of hers in scarlet livery had gone around that morning delivering notes written in French, each saying precisely the same thing:

If you have nothing better to do, Count (or Prince), and if the prospect of spending an evening with a poor sick lady is not too unnerving, I shall be delighted to see you at my residence between seven and ten. ANNETTE SCHERER

‘My goodness, what a violent attack!’ replied the prince, who had only just come in and was not in the least put out by this welcome. Dressed in his embroidered court uniform with knee-breeches, shoes and stars across his chest, he looked at her with a flat face of undisturbed serenity. His French was the elegant tongue of our grandparents, who used it for thought as well as speech, and it carried the soft tones of condescension that come naturally to an eminent personage grown old in high society and at court. He came up to Anna Pavlovna and kissed her hand, presenting to her a perfumed and glistening bald pate, and then seated himself calmly on the sofa.

‘First things first,’ he said. ‘How are you, my dear friend? Put my mind at rest.’ His voice remained steady, and his tone, for all its courtesy and sympathy, implied indifference and even gentle mockery.

‘How can one feel well when one is ... suffering in a moral sense? Can any sensitive person find peace of mind nowadays?’ said Anna Pavlovna. ‘I do hope you’re staying all evening.’

‘Well, there is that reception at the English Ambassador’s. It’s Wednesday. I must show my face,’ said the prince. ‘My daughter is coming to take me there.’

‘I thought tonight’s festivities had been cancelled. I must say all these celebrations and fireworks are becoming rather tedious.’

‘If they had known you wanted the celebration cancelled, it would have been,’ said the prince with the predictability of a wound-up clock. Sheer habit made him say things he didn’t even mean.

‘Stop teasing me. Come on, tell me what’s been decided about Novosiltsev’s dispatch?² You know everything.’

‘What is there to tell?’ replied the prince in a cold, bored tone. ‘What’s been decided? They’ve decided that Bonaparte has burnt his boats, and I rather think we’re getting ready to burn ours.’

Prince Vasily always spoke languidly, like an actor declaiming a part from an old play. Anna Pavlovna Scherer was just the opposite – all verve and excitement, despite her forty years. To be an enthusiast had become her special role in society, and she would sometimes wax enthusiastic when she didn’t feel like it, so as not to frustrate the expectations of those who knew her. The discreet smile that never left her face, though it clashed with her faded looks, gave her the appearance of a spoilt child with a charming defect that she was well aware of, though she neither wished nor felt able to correct it, nor even thought it necessary to do so.

Then suddenly in the middle of this political discussion Anna Pavlovna launched forth in great excitement. ‘Oh, don’t talk to me about Austria!³ Perhaps it’s all beyond me, but Austria has never wanted war and she still doesn’t want war. She’s betraying us. Russia alone must be Europe’s saviour. Our benefactor is aware of his exalted calling and he’ll live up to it. That’s the one thing I do believe in. The noblest role on earth awaits our good and wonderful sovereign, and he is so full of decency and virtue that God will not forsake him. He will do what has to be done and scotch the hydra of revolution, which has become more dreadful than ever in the

person of this murdering villain.⁴ We alone must avenge the blood of the righteous. And whom can we trust, I ask you? England, with that commercial spirit of hers, cannot understand the lofty soul of our Emperor Alexander, and never will. She has refused to evacuate Malta.⁵ She keeps on looking for an ulterior motive behind our actions. What did they say to Novosiltsev? Nothing. They didn't understand, they're not capable of understanding, how altruistic our Emperor is – he wants nothing for himself but everything for the good of mankind. And what have they promised? Nothing. And what little they have promised, they won't carry out. Prussia has already declared that Bonaparte is invincible and that the whole of Europe is powerless to oppose him ... I for one don't believe a single word from Hardenberg or Haugwitz. That much-vaunted Prussian neutrality is just a trap. I put my faith in God and the noble calling of our beloved Emperor. He'll be the saviour of Europe!

She stopped suddenly, amused at her own passionate outburst.

'I think if they had sent you instead of our dear Wintzengerode,'⁶ said the prince with a similar smile, 'an onslaught like that from you would have got the King of Prussia to agree. You are so eloquent. May I have some tea?'

'Yes, of course. By the way,' she added, calming down, 'there are two very interesting men coming here tonight – the Vicomte de Mortemart, a Montmorency through the Rohan line, one of the best French families. He's the right kind of émigré, one of the genuine ones. And the Abbé Morio – such a profound thinker. Do you know him? He's been received by the Emperor. Have you heard?'

'Oh, it will be a pleasure to meet them,' said the prince. 'But tell me,' he added, with studied nonchalance, as if an idea had just occurred to him, though this question was the main reason for his visit, 'is it true that the Dowager Empress wants Baron Funke to become First Secretary in Vienna? They do say he's a miserable creature, that baron.'

Prince Vasily wanted this post for his son, but other people were working through the Empress Maria Fyodorovna to get it for the baron. Anna Pavlovna half-closed her eyes to indicate that neither she nor anyone else could pass judgement on what the Empress might feel like doing or want to do. 'Baron Funke has been recommended to the Dowager Empress by her sister,' was all she said, in a dry, lugubrious tone. As she pronounced the name of the Empress, Anna Pavlovna's face took on an expression of profound and sincere devotion mixed with respect and tinged with sadness,

which invariably came upon her when she had occasion to mention her exalted patroness. She said that her Majesty had been gracious enough to show Baron Funke great respect, at which her face once again dissolved into sadness.

The prince said nothing and showed no feeling. Anna Pavlovna, with all the sensitivity and quick thinking of both a courtier and a woman, decided to rebuke the prince for daring to refer in such a way to a person recommended to the Empress, and at the same time to console him. 'But, on the subject of your family,' she said, 'do you realize how much your daughter has delighted everyone in society since she came out? They say she's as beautiful as the day is long.'

The prince bowed as a mark of his gratitude and respect.

'I often think,' Anna Pavlovna resumed after a short pause, edging closer to the prince and smiling sweetly to indicate that the political and social conversation was now at an end, and personal conversation was in order, 'I often think that good fortune in life is sometimes distributed most unfairly. Why has fate given you two such splendid children? I don't include Anatole, your youngest – I don't like him,' she commented in a peremptory tone and with raised eyebrows. 'Such charming children. And I must say you seem to appreciate them less than anyone. You really don't deserve them.'

And she smiled her exuberant smile.

'What can I do? Lavater would have said that I have no paternity bump,'⁷ said the prince.

'Oh, do stop joking. I wanted a serious talk with you. Listen, I'm not pleased with your younger son. Just between ourselves,' her face went all gloomy again, 'his name has been mentioned in her Majesty's presence, and people are feeling sorry for you ...'

The prince said nothing, while she gave him a knowing look, waiting in silence for his reply. Prince Vasily frowned.

'What *can* I do?' he said at last. 'You know I've done everything a father could do to bring them up well, and they have both turned out to be idiots. At least Hippolyte's a fool on the quiet – Anatole's the rowdy one. That's the only difference between them,' he said, with an unusually awkward and forced smile, which gave a sharp twist to the lines round his mouth, making it surprisingly ugly and coarse.

‘Why do men like you have children? If you weren’t a father, I could find no fault with you,’ said Anna Pavlovna, looking up pensively.

‘I’m your faithful slave. I wouldn’t admit it to anyone else, but my children are the bane of my life. They’re the cross I have to bear. That’s how I explain it to myself. What would *you* ...?’ He broke off with a gesture that signalled his resignation to a cruel fate. Anna Pavlovna thought things over.

‘That prodigal son of yours, Anatole, haven’t you thought of marrying him off? They do say,’ she went on, ‘that old maids have a mania for matchmaking. So far I’ve never been conscious of this failing in myself, but I do have a certain little person in my mind, someone who is very unhappy with her father – a relative of ours, the young Princess Bolkonsky.’

Prince Vasily made no reply, but being quick on the uptake and good at remembering things – qualities that came naturally to the denizens of high society – he gave a slight nod to show that he had noted her comment and was considering it.

‘No, listen, do you realize that boy’s costing me forty thousand roubles a year?’ he said, obviously unable to check the dismal drift of his thinking. He paused. ‘What will it be like in five years’ time if he carries on like this? You see what the benefits of fatherhood are ... This princess of yours, is she rich?’

‘Her father’s a very rich man and a miser. He lives out in the country. You know, Prince Bolkonsky. He’s very well known. He retired under the late Emperor. They used to call him “the King of Prussia”. He’s a very clever man, but he’s a crank, not easy to get on with. Poor little thing, she’s as miserable as any girl could be. It was her brother who married Liza Meinen not too long ago. He’s one of Kutuzov’s adjutants. He’s coming here tonight.’

‘Listen, my dear Annette,’ said the prince, suddenly taking his companion’s hand and pressing it downwards for reasons best known to himself. ‘You set this up for me, and I’ll serve you like a faithful slave for ever. (Or *slafe*, with an ‘f’, as my village elder puts it when he writes to me.) She’s a girl from a good family, and she’s rich. That’s all I need.’

And with the freedom, familiarity and sheer style that were his hallmark, he took hold of the maid of honour’s hand, kissed it and gave it a little shake, easing back into his armchair and looking away from her.

‘Wait a minute,’ said Anna Pavlovna, thinking things over. ‘I’ll have a little talk with Lise, young Bolkonsky’s wife, this very evening. Perhaps something can be arranged. I’ll use your family to start learning the old maid’s trade.’