



TOLSTOY FOUNDATION NEWSLETTER

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A TRIBUTE TO ALEXANDRA LVOVNA TOLSTOY

An exhibit on *The Life and the Work of Alexandra Tolstoy* (1884-1979) has opened in Moscow in cooperation with the Tolstoy Foundation, the L. N. Tolstoy State Museum and the National Memorial Park Museum-Estate of L. N. Tolstoy "Yasnaya Polyana". The official presentations, the press conference and the gala opening took place on September 20th at the L.N. Tolstoy Museum's exhibition house on Pyatnitskaya 12.

The joint exhibit in Moscow is the first official recognition by Russia of Leo Tolstoy's daughter, who in 1948 was officially branded a traitor in the country of her birth, with her name and activities repressed throughout the Soviet Union. It is also a testimony to her splendid humanitarian legacy and her Foundation's activities on behalf of refugees and displaced persons throughout the world.

In the words of First Deputy Minister of Culture Natalia Dementieva, it is "an exceptionally wonderful and unique exhibit—the first of its kind in Russia... a long-overdue tribute to a splendid Russian



OPENING CEREMONY SPEECHES
Left to right: N. Dementieva, V. Tolstoy,
X. Woyevodsky, I. Bagration

"... The wise man must remember that while he is a descendent of the past, he is also a parent of the future. Alexandra Lvovna's memory and spirit will long endure and her legacy will continue to inspire others. She is a consistent reminder of how much one life can accomplish. How one human being can touch and transform the existence of many."

XENIA WOYEVODSKY

woman who devoted her life to her family, to the Russian people and to the high ideals of service to humanity."

Irina Bagration, TF Board Member and widow of the late Teymuraz Bagration, called her "a practical idealist who probably never set out to save the world and humanity, but in her quest to help those around her, she was also able to help save the world and humanity as well."

Alexandra Lvovna Tolstoy was forced to leave Soviet Russia in 1929, after five arrests and imprisonments, because of her outspoken commitment in defense of free speech and assembly. In 1939, she founded the Tolstoy Foundation in New York City. Under her leadership the Tolstoy Foundation became a pioneer in international refugee relief efforts, spanning the globe and assisting about a million people from 40 countries.

"What we are witnessing at this exhibit is truly exceptional," said Vladimir Tolstoy, Director of the Museum-Estate of L.N. Tolstoy at Yasnaya Polyana. "I hope that people who visit this exhibit will begin to

understand better this incredible woman whose life was complicated, frequently tragic, but nevertheless very fulfilling—a lonely, but very strong woman, who possessed great love and compassion toward her fellow man. Let us learn from her example and let us try to emulate her in our own small way, so that, as she did, we can leave this world a little better for having acted.”

Her official “rehabilitation” in 1994 helped to begin to repair the injustice and restored the link that

was broken for over half a century. It also gave way for the Tolstoy Foundation to become more actively involved in Russia and paved the way for the realization of an exhibit of historical proportions that pays homage to the two halves of Alexandra Tolstoy’s life and her achievements in Russia and America.

“It was in America that Alexandra Lvovna began to evolve from the shadow of her beloved father and teacher into a highly-

respected humanitarian in her own right. She applied the very best of Tolstoy’s teachings in combination with her strong Orthodox faith and a proactive brand of humanitarianism drawn from her personal experiences in a world very different from that of her father’s,” said Xenia Woyevodsky.

The exhibit will run for 6 months and includes material from Russian sources and Tolstoy Foundation archives that has never before been shown to the public.

STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR JAMES F. COLLINS, U.S. AMBASSADOR TO MOSCOW

On the Occasion of the Opening of The Life and the Work of Alexandra Tolstoy Exhibit

L. N. TOLSTOY STATE MUSEUM, MOSCOW, SEPTEMBER 20, 2000

The name of Tolstoy is associated not only with classic literature, but also with caring for one’s fellow man. Throughout his life, Lev Nikolayevich was concerned with moral questions, with how to help people in need.

This laudable Tolstoy tradition was continued by the unique person we are honoring this afternoon, Alexandra Lvovna Tolstoy. Her life-long work on behalf of refugees and the disadvantaged throughout the world was one of the great humanitarian efforts of the twentieth century.

I am glad that the United States State Department collaborated with Alexandra Tolstoy in the Refugee Resettlement Program for over twenty years. This program made it possible for refugees from all over the world, including from Russia, to settle in the United States and to start a new life.

Today, like the Tolstoy Foundation, the US govern-

ment is involved in another important humanitarian project assisting orphans in Russia. The main objective of our program, funded by the Agency for

International Development (AID), is to provide an alternative to abandonment or institutionalization of children in orphanages. I am sure that Alexandra Lvovna would have supported such an approach.

For far too many years, the Tolstoy Foundation was not allowed to work in Russia, the country that is together with the United States its spiritual home. It is wonderful that today we can honor the Founder of that generous organization in the land where she was born.

This exhibit is a unique homage to Alexandra Lvovna’s life and work. I would like to thank all those who have made it possible for us to share the memory of all she did for humanity.



Ambassador James F. Collins addressing gathering

ALEXANDRA TOLSTOY INSTITUTE EXCHANGE PROGRAM, FALL 2000

Yasnaya Polyana, Krapivo, Nikolsko-Viazemsky and Pirogovo

The third *Alexandra Tolstoy Institute (ATI)* exchange program is currently underway with 18 children, ages 10-16, from Tula. Unlike TF's past groups, the 18 program participants were selected from needy families from the villages of Yasnaya Polyana, Krapivo, Nikolsko-Viazemsky and Pirogovo, as well as from the Yasnaya Polyana local orphanage (5). The majority of the children (11) go to the Yasnaya Polyana school, which was founded by Alexandra Tolstoy and where she served as Director for one year prior to her exile.

The children are immersed in a daily curriculum of English as a Second Language, as well as practical skill-training courses. Anton Degtiarev says he is taking full advantage of the fact that the teachers of English at the *ATI* speak English fluently.

"What an opportunity!" he says. Nikolai Kobiakov, who comes from the Yasnaya Polyana Orphanage, says that he wants to learn English well, as he plans to return to the United States a few more times. For Julia Kopylova, the two most interesting courses at the *ATI* have been Religion and English—two subjects, she says, which are lacking in her school back home.

In addition to those courses which have always formed an integral part of *ATI's* curriculum, *ATI* offers current program participants two new courses: a survey course developed by Ekaterina Salmanova entitled "Contemporary America", and an iconography class. Topics covered in "Contemporary America" include American government, society, sports and cuisine. In the iconography class, taught by Michael Buleyev, children are taught the basic techniques of this ancient Byzantine discipline. Grigori Volchikov, one of M. Buleyev's youngest students, says that he "likes painting God, because he likes God!" Elena Boushina, an enthusiastic course participant, hopes that iconography will be offered at her school in Yasnaya Polyana upon the group's return.

In the tradition of past programs, a full schedule of outings and trips has been planned for the children. Taking full advantage of the mild Fall weather, the kids have gone apple picking, they have visited the Bronx Zoo and the Statue of Liberty. More sites on the agenda include a trip to Newport, Rhode Island to view the Vanderbilt and other historic mansions; a weekend trip to the nation's capital; Thanksgiving celebrations



Top to bottom: Ceramics class;
TFC Administrator Catherine Larin with
children; Iconography class

spent with families in the local community; and a trip to Manhattan which will include a visit to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Guggenheim Museum, a viewing of the tree at Rockefeller Center.

With a full academic and extra-curricular schedule, the children have time left only to make the most of their unique surroundings at the Tolstoy Foundation

Center. Julia Dezhenkova was astonished to find herself in the countryside. She thought that the program would occur in a more urban setting. The children are making friends and lasting ties with the local community and with their devoted teachers. Their opinion of their teachers is, as Nadezhda says: "Here, the teachers are happier, and they do not scold as much!"

RETURN TO VORONEZH AND ROSSOSH

Follow-Up



Since the group of children from Voronezh and Rossosh (ATTs second exchange program to date) returned to Russia, TF has focused activities on follow-up and evaluation of this group. There have been three on-site follow-up visits to monitor the children and the program's success. All evaluations of the Voronezh/Rossosh program were very positive. Individual interviews were held with each participating child and with the directors of the orphanages, the teachers, the staff, and the Department of Education. Everyone felt that the children had gained a great deal from the program. They have become more self-assured, less introverted and, on average, much stronger in their academic perfor-

*Left: X. Weyevodsky and Board member S. Loponkhine, with wife Anastasia, visiting with children in Rossosh
Right: Visit with children in Voronezh*

mance. Not only has their experience in the U.S. not traumatized them, but it has motivated them in many positive ways.

There has been an enormous amount of good will from the US to the children of Voronezh and Rossosh. Literally hundreds of letters have been exchanged between the children and their U.S. sponsors. The U.S. sponsors have shown on-going love for the children and concern for their education and their future after they leave the orphanages. Excerpts from letters below show the extent of these bonds.

TO ZHENYA OMAR, TF CENTER RESIDENT FROM MASHA K., VORONEZH, RUSSIA

"Sometimes it seems to me that you will forget us all, promise us that we will not be replaced by other children. I do not want to lose friends such as you!"

TO MASHA K., VORONEZH, RUSSIA FROM ZHENYA OMAR, TF CENTER RESIDENT

"Put such thoughts out of your little head. We love you all and consider you as family, as our own dear children. No one will ever replace you!"

VORONEZH REGIONAL CENTER FOR ASSISTANCE TO ORPHANAGE GRADUATES OPENS IN VORONEZH

At age 16-17, when institutionalized children are released from orphanages in Russia, they are ill equipped to fend for themselves and have few opportunities to forge a life for themselves outside of these institutions. Many of these disadvantaged youth end up on the street. Statistics indicate that every 3rd child leaving an orphanage is homeless; every 5th child is destined to commit a crime; and every 10th child ends his or her life by suicide. Subsequently, a major part of Tolstoy Foundation's US-based educational and training programs for Russia's disadvantaged and orphaned youth involves follow-up support and training in Russia: (1) to ensure that the experience and the training of the children in the US does not go to waste when they return to Russia; and (2) to guarantee a viable safety-net for graduates of orphanages, who are in need of practical assistance and support. This will be accomplished by setting up counseling and support centers, with hot-lines, to offer assistance to graduates of orphanages by providing continued training, counseling and job placement.

In September 2000, the TF

reached an agreement in Voronezh in cooperation with the *Committee for Social Services of the Voronezh Region (CSSVR)* and with a local, private, charitable grass-roots organization, called the *Vzroslyi Detskiy Dom*, which has been monitoring the whereabouts and the problems



Municipal Social Services Center of Voronezh

of orphanage graduates for several years now. The agreement calls for the establishment of a counseling and support center, opening in January 2001 in the city of Voronezh, with the support of the Tolstoy Foundation and the CSSVR. This Center, the first of its kind in Voronezh and, probably, in the entire Russian Federation, will save about 5,000 graduates and will offer counseling, as well as practical assistance with apartment and job searches, to orphanage graduates. In the future, the Center will also provide other

skills-enhancement programs and seminars on various pertinent subjects, such as, how to budget money, and other independent-living skills which are often lacking, especially among institutionalized children. Staff will include an Executive Director, Boris Svinin, who is currently also President of the *Vzroslyi Detskiy Dom*; a social worker; a psychologist; and a legal assistant.

The space for the counseling center is being made available free of charge and will be located in the *Municipal Social Services Center of Voronezh*. The counseling center will serve the entire population of the Voronezh region; and orphans and young people from large needy families, of all age groups in these categories, will be eligible to seek assistance at this Center. The Center will work closely with the orphanage directors throughout the Voronezh region to ensure that no graduate falls through the cracks.

The program will be carefully monitored and evaluated on a semi-annual basis by the Moscow office of Charities Aid Foundation. Charities Aid Foundation (CAF) is a UK-based charity that promotes philanthropy worldwide.

The Tolstoy Foundation would like to express its heart-felt gratitude to the following friends and supporters who have so generously remembered us in their bequests and legacies:

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