Alternative Religiosities in the Soviet Union and the Communist East-Central Europe: Formations, Resistances and Manifestations

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Tolstoyism in the Late-Socialist Cultural Underground: Soviet Youth in Search of Religion, Individual Autonomy and Nonviolence in the 1970s - 1980s

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Abstract: The 1970s in the Soviet Russia were characterized by religious revival among the members of the Soviet counterculture milieu. The young generation often opted for religious ideas and Tolstoyism served as one such option. The article explores individual cases of coming to Tolstoyism, reading and perception of his ideas, as well as a general historical background of spiritual search of Soviet youth (hippies and others) of the period. The article demonstrates that all countercultural Tolstoyans shared two basic values — personal autonomy and nonviolence. They asserted the ideals of the free and individual search for the truth, of nonviolence, of anti-authoritarian humanism, a quest for a new, spiritual form of community, having nothing to do with obligatory Soviet-type communist, atheist, and materialistic collectivism. The spiritual alternative of the Tolstoyans was directed it not only at the individual, but at society as a whole fully anticipating that society would be improved. The research is based on the wide range of unexplored primary sources (rare samizdat texts and personal archives).

Keywords: Tolstoyism, cultural underground, late Soviet youth, nonviolence, Soviet hippies, religious search, religious revival of the 1970s, religious samizdat

In their studies of the history of religion in the USSR, academic scholars have mainly focused on the situation surrounding the Russian Orthodox Church: the repression of priests and believers of traditional religions, especially during the first decades of the Soviet power, and the anti-religious campaign launched by Khrushchev in the 1950s. Questions about diverse religious beliefs under socialism, the religious search of intellectuals and ordinary people in the last decades of the Soviet Union, and the place of religious ideas and culture in Soviet society remain on the margins of academic interest. The few works dealing with the spread of religious and esoteric ideas among intellectual circles and youth subcultures in the 1960s through the 1980s provide scant information on religious practices during this period.[1] Most of this research focuses on the phenomenon of "the occult" underground and the Russian "New Age." They primarily concentrate

1 See, for example: *The Occult in Russian and Soviet Culture*; Chepurnaia, "Obraschenie v Veru v Sovetskoe Vremia"; *Mistiko-ezotericheskie Dvizheniia v Teorii i Praktike*; Nosachev, "Prolegomeny k Izucheniiu Sovetskogo Ezotericheskogo Podpol'ia"; Mentzel, "Occult and Esoteric Movements in Russia from the 1960s to the 1980s"; Sedgwick, "Occult Dissident Culture: The Case of Aleksandr Dugin"; Rosenthal, "Occultism as a Response to a Spiritual Crisis".

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on religious and cultural matters, not the broader interrelation between the religious sphere and socio-political protest.[2]

This article examines the spiritual quests of young people during the late- Soviet period with a special focus on Soviet hippies and their encounter with the religious and social ideas of Leo Tolstoy. Although the practice of reading and professing Tolstoyan beliefs by representatives of the late-Soviet cultural underground did not revive the Tolstoyan movement suppressed in the 1930s, these ideas did become an eloquent part of the spiritual resistance to the ideological dictatorship of the Soviet regime. I will argue that Soviet countercultural youth reinvented Leo Tolstoy's ideas seeking for personal autonomy and nonviolence as spiritual alternatives to the atheistic, collectivist and restrictive Soviet ideology.

1 The Tolstoyan movement in Russia

As a movement, Tolstoyism traces its origins to the ethical and religious teachings of the Russian writer Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910). The movement was both religious and socio-political in nature. Like Russian slavophilism, socialism, and populism, Tolstoyism emerged as an intellectual and psychological reaction to the modernization process.[3] As a rule, people converted to Tolstoyism after reading his works, *Confession*, *What I Believe* (1884), *What Then Must We Do?* (1886), and *The Kingdom of God Is Within You* (1893).

Academic examinations of both the Russian and international Tolstoyan movements have demonstrated the difficulty in defining "Tolstoyism" as an integrated doctrine. According to Charlotte Alston, a prominent historian of the international Tolstoyan movement, "a number of things united these people into something that can be regarded as a movement. One was the profound impact of their first reading of Tolstoy's work, which in many cases changed the course of their lives. A second was their dedication to promoting Tolstoy's thought, and a third was their sense that they were part of a growing international movement for which Tolstoy was a figurehead. Finally, they all accepted a number of Tolstoy's key tenets, particularly the doctrine of non-resistance"[4].

In religious terms, Tolstoyism represented a rational variant, rather rare for Russia, of "a religion of love and conscience"; its members often called themselves "persons of free-religious outlooks," and rejected any authority except their individual conscience. The core of Tolstoyism was precisely this notion of individual conscience, which they considered to be the "voice of God," and which they held in opposition to other authorities (including "the prophets"). This notion was usually combined with values of nonviolence, religious anarchism and communism, and some other "free religious" ideas, but such a combination was not mandatory.

Initially, the Tolstoyans devoted their energies to disseminating Leo Tolstoy's prohibited works and organizing agricultural communes. In essence, this amounted to escapism defined by the intention to separate from "the impure world" in search of self-perfection. Soon, however, the realities of Russian life forced a change.[5] Thus, in the late 1890s, most of the Tolstoyans opted for public activities, and the movement acquired the identity of a radical-pacifist, Christian-socialist, and anarchist movement. The main principles informing the Tolstoyans' activities were nonviolence, freedom of conscience, and social justice. They defended conscientious objectors from military service, and also the rights of religious minorities and other oppressed people. They fought against the militarization of Russian society and any form of social and political violence, striving to establish social relationships that would not hinder the independent self-realization of any person. In the specific historical conditions of the early twentieth century, their pacifism was directed against the Russian autocracy with its police and repressive apparatus, the official church, as well as against any ideologies that supported their existence.

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2 Rare exceptions see: Bourdeaux, *The Role of Religion in the Fall of Soviet Communism*; Wolf, *Dissident for life*; Zitzewitz, *Poetry and the Leningrad Religious-Philosophical Seminar*.

3 Gordeeva, *"Zabytye Liudi"*, 96-121.

4 Alston, *Tolstoy and His Disciples*, 3.

5 For more details see: Gordeeva, *"Zabytye Liudi"*; Alston, *Tolstoy and His Disciples*.

Foto 1. Leo Tolstoy and Tolstoyan Vladimir Chertkov, 1905-1906 (International Institute of Social History collections)

In the late 1920's and early 1930's, many Tolstoyans were arrested or otherwise repressed. Tolstoyan agricultural communes were ultimately destroyed in the late 1930s.[6] Those few Tolstoyans who survived the repressions and the Second World War did not participate in any public events, but they did manage to collect and keep the movement's archives and write memoirs. None of them could openly profess Tolstoyism, however. As a result, after the war, the movement and its teachings appeared to be totally forgotten.

2 Tolstoy's legacy in the Soviet Union

Leo Tolstoy's literary works were widely known in the Soviet Union. His religious and ethical teachings, however, were not popular and came under constant criticism due to their religious, anarchist, and pacifist content.

To a certain extent, this attitude was based on Lenin's views in regard to Tolstoy and his works. Lenin referred to Tolstoy in several articles and speeches. He considered Tolstoy an important figure for understanding the origins of the revolutionary events of 1905 (then called the First Russian Revolution) as well as the Russian peasantry as a social force. Lenin admired Tolstoy as an opponent of the Russian autocracy and Orthodox Church, but regarded his religious and anarchist ideas to be laughable. In his article, "Leo Tolstoy as the Mirror of the Russian Revolution," written in 1908, Lenin suggests:

> The contradictions in Tolstoy's works, views, doctrines, in his school, are indeed glaring. On the one hand, we have the great artist, the genius who has not only drawn incomparable pictures of Russian life but has made first-class contributions to world literature. On the other hand, we have the landlord obsessed with Christ. On the one hand, the remarkably powerful, forthright and sincere protest against social falsehood and hypocrisy; and on the other, the 'Tolstoyan', i.e., the jaded, hysterical sniveler called the Russian intellectual, who publicly beats his breast and wails: 'I am a bad wicked man, but I am practicing moral self-perfection; I don't eat meat any more, I now eat rice cutlets.'[7]

6 *Memoirs of Peasant Tolstoyans in Soviet Russia*.
7 Lenin, "Leo Tolstoy as the Mirror of the Russian Revolution", 202-209.

This ideological injunction led to the 100-year anniversary of Tolstoy's birth in 1928 being marked in two distinct ways. An official delegation, headed by Anatoly Lunacharsky, People's Commissar of Enlightenment, visited Tolstoy's estate at Yasnaya Polyana in the Tula region and took part in the family celebration. Peasants from nearby villages also participated in the event by giving amateur performances. Soviet authorities carefully censored and supervised these festivities.[8] At the same time, Tolstoy's followers, united around the Moscow Vegetarian Society, organized an unofficial celebration, delivering courageous speeches openly critical of the Bolsheviks' violent politics, a daring act given the continued persecution of religion and dissent.[9]

Foto 2. Tolstoyan commune in Novyi Ierusalim, 1937 (Kemerovskaia regional library)

3 Re-emergence of Tolstoyans in the Soviet Union in the 1970s

Given these circumstances, the appearance of young Tolstoyans in the 1970s was a rather unexpected phenomenon. Most of these young people emerged from the "Soviet" hippie movement[10], strongly indicating that the young generation adopted the religious traditions of Tolstoyism practically, without any influence from Tolstoyans of old age.[11]

8 Tolstaya, "Yubilei", 286-290.

9 Gorbunov-Posadov, "Yasnaia Poliana"; Ibid. "Tolstoy i Sud'by Chelovechestva", 248-264; Boulgakov, "Bolshevistskaia Reklama i Iubilei Tolstogo".

10 Hippie movement is a youth movement emerged in the United States and the United Kingdom in the mid 1960s. It was a countercultural movement with alternative lifestyle and values, included fashion, psychedelic practices, free love, religious search, pilgrimages, nonviolence. The Soviet hippie movement had its own specific, well described in: Fuerst, "If you are going to Moscow", 123-158.

11 This research is based on the primary sources, collected following the interview with former Soviet hippies. They include *samizdat* materials ("self-publishing" literature banned by the state, which produced, copying and distributed in underground), private archives and memoirs. The selection from Vladimir Moroz's diaries of 1974-1981 was published by him personally in 1996, accompanied with his bio by Anna Beskrovnykh. The autobiography of A. Lobachev was published in Lviv's almanac "*Khippi vo Lvove*", devoted to keep memory about the Soviet cultural underground. Initially this autobiography, as well as other works by Lobachev, was put into Lobachev's internet site "*Zelenaia palochka*" (the Green Stick) (URL: http://zpalochka.narod.ru/bibl.html) G. Meitin's memoirs "Dva leta" were circulated in *samizdat* in the second half of the 1980s, later this text was published several times in the informal press, including journal *Yasnaia Poliana*. V. Demin's reminiscences "Moi etapy" were published in 2008 in Sevastopol of small circulation, they are available online in Demin's site (URL: http://slawademin.livejournal.com/18747.html). A part of A. Karev's archives (original versions of his work-books and copies of his private letters) was received by me from his friend Viktor Rezunkov.

At different times, Tolstoy's ideas appealed to various representatives of the Soviet cultural underground some of whom even identified themselves as Tolstoyans.[12] Their interests and views on Tolstoy not only diverged but were as eclectic as they had been in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century.[13] None of them attempted to create a Tolstoyan community, church, or any other formal organization.[14] Claiming to be Tolstoy's adherents, they interpreted and understood his ideas in accordance with their own individual practices, combining them with other ideas and values in the spirit of the anti-authoritarian humanism of the counterculture.

In September 1978, fifty years after the jubilee of 1928, the "parallel" celebrations of Tolstoy's anniversary were repeated. The official program consisted of various events attended by invited foreign guests, and enjoyed wide media coverage. The keynote of the celebration, proclaimed by the chief Soviet ideologist, expressed the idea of Tolstoy's actuality. A film, *Leo Tolstoy: Our Contemporary*, was released on the eve of the anniversary. It portrayed Tolstoy as "a fighter against slavery, a denouncer of Tsarism and the official Russian Orthodox Church, a fighter against colonial oppression and unjust wars." According to the official view, if Tolstoy were alive today, he would be a communist, and would also have been against Hitler and fascism, against the atomic bomb."[15] Other aspects of Tolstoy's thought were passed over in silence, including his religious beliefs and pacifism.

In the midst of the official celebration, from the seventh through the ninth of September, Soviet hippies together with other members of the counterculture movement organized a "pilgrimage" to Tolstoy's museum-estate, Yasnaya Polyana. The idea for the pilgrimage belonged to Alexander Lobachev, a hippie-Tolstoyan from Lviv, who invited other hippies to join him.[16]

On 7 September six moto-hippies (bikers) from Lviv arrived in Yasnaya Polyana. As Vladimir Vishnevskii (aka "Vishnya") remembers, before encamping near the museum, the pilgrims noticed a peace sign - a hippie symbol - drawn at the bus station. Next morning they found Lobachev, sitting on a nearby hill in the company of several other hippies. Police checked their passports, wrote down their names, and suggested they come back another day, warning that 9 September "is not your day."[17]

"Gradually, by word of mouth, news about the meeting spread widely. There were rumours that many people from Moscow and other cities were on their way to Yasnaya Polyana," remembers Georgii Meitin, from Riga.[18] As they approached the estate, they saw policemen posted "every fifty metres along the road to the estate." Near the entrance they saw Lobach reading Tolstoy's text to people who had already arrived.

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12 Among them there were: a collector of unofficial art Vladimir Moroz (b. 1929), Estonian hippie Andrei Madison (aka Makabra) (1952–2009), hippies Alexander Lobachev (aka Lobach) (1953–2011) from Lviv and Vladimir Solomko (aka Lenskii) from Kuibyshev, Alexander Karev (aka Karei) (1959–1981) from Leningrad, Georgii Meitin (b. 1958) (aka Garik Rizhskii) from Riga, Andrei Lemeshonok (b. 1956) from Minsk and hippy from the Baptist family Stepan Gura (Tsyrupinsk, Herson region, Ukraine). In Moscow there were several persons from cultural underground with strong, though temporal, interest in Tolstoy: theatre producer Inozemtsev (aka Inert) and hippy Yuri Popov (aka Diversant) (1954-1999), artists and hippies Viacheslav Demin (b. 1960) and Alexander Rubchenko (aka Rulevoi) (b. 1960), etc. Tolstoy's phrases can also be found in some hippie's leaflets and manifests of the 1980s, as well as in informal anarchist press of the late 1980s – early 1990s.

13 Charlotte Alston noticed that individual Tolstoyans combined reading of Tolstoy with readings of other "prophets" and "negotiated their understanding of Tolstoy's message within their own local political and social environment" (Alston, *Tolstoy and His Disciples*, 3, 5).

14 Later, in 1990s, the attempt to create "Tolstoyan church" was undertook by M.A. Zykov and his daughter , who established in Moscow and Puschino "The Church of Leo Tolstoy". This group combined Tolstoy's ideas with other beliefs and collaborated with American community of Unity School of Christianity. See Skiba, "Sovremennoe Tolstovstvo", 65-73.

15 HU OSA. Fond 300 (RFE/RL Research Institute) – 80 (Soviet Red Archives) – 7 (USSR Biographical files), box 333.

16 In Lobachev's words, he considered that since it did not matter for hippies where to meet, "why we could not try to meet in Yasnaya Polyana on occasion of Leo Tolstoy's anniversary?" (Lobachev, "Avtobiographiia", 163) He started to ask people in other cities to join him. Not without adventures, he managed to escape – usual in such cases – forced psychiatric hospitalization, and arrived to *Yasnaya Polyana*. Surprisingly, nobody stopped him there.

17 Vishnia, "Nastoiashchaia Istoriia", 106.

18 Meitin, *Stop. Flat*.

Foto 3. Lviv moto-hippies on the road to Yasnaya Polyana, September 1978 (archives of V. Vishnevskii)

In total, about thirty people who associated themselves with the hippie movement came to Yasnaya Polyana.[19] They were under constant surveillance and the local police checked them repeatedly.[20] The police did not allow the hippies to enter the museum, though, allegedly because of their "anti-Soviet outfits." But, as Garik Rizhskii remembers, "this was not our ultimate goal. It was enough that people who shared more-or-less similar ideas of non-violence and a free search for the truth had gathered together. And it was not important how far they would let us go."[21] Nevertheless, the moto-hippie from Lviv, Penzel (Igor Ventzslavkii, b.1949), who was dressed as the stereotypical American Wild West cowboy, had to assure the police that they would not "spoil the celebration." After consultations, the hippies decided to leave the next day[22].

A small hippie group of four people from Leningrad enjoyed more luck, however. Among them was a student from Tartu University, Alexander Karev, a Tolstoy devotee, and his close friends Viktor Rezunkov (b. 1958) and Alexander Davydov (1958-1984), the rock-musician. Later, in a private letter dated 13 October, Karev wrote: "As you know, *cher ami*, on 9 September of this year all progressive humankind planned to celebrate the 150-year anniversary of Leo Tolstoy's birth, and we – as representatives of the above mentioned humankind –could not just celebrate it by drinking tea in a narrow circle of close friends; moreover, you know what Tolstoy means for me – a lot!"[23]

19 Vishnia, "Nastoiaschaia Istoriia", 106.

20 Archives of A. Karev. Letters. Letter from Karkna 13.09. 1978. Thus, police surrounded a group of hippies and escorted them to the police station where their passports data had been checked. They were advised to leave the place as soon as possible. After this, the representative of KGB appeared and announced that none of the hippies would be allowed on the museum territory. Answering a policeman, who wondered about the reasons of such "invasion", he said that they all had a "deformed psyche".

21 Meitin, *Stop. Flat*.

22 Lobachev, "Avtobiographiia", 164.

23 Archives of A. Karev. Letters. Letter from Karkna 13.09. 1978.

Foto 4 Hippies in Yasnaya Polyana, 7 September 1978 (archives of V. Vishnevskii)

Together with his friends, Karev arrived at Yasnaya Polyana on the afternoon of 9 September. Approaching the estate, they saw a crowd of approximately twenty hippies who told them it was impossible to enter the museum's territory. They did, however, manage to get inside by presenting their student identity cards. "Later we knew that there should be a "*seishen*" [party] of auto-stop travelers from all over the Soviet Union," wrote Karev. "We constantly met groups of hippies or people who looked like hippies around the estate. It reminded me of the crowds in Leningrad after the breakup of the demonstration on 4 July – it was obvious that people had gathered because 'something held them together'"[24].

Besides hippies, other representatives of the Soviet counterculture attended the celebration during these days. Konstantin Zvezdochetov (b. 1958), for example, one of the members of the art-group *Mukhomory*, came to Yasnaya Polyana with Vladimir Mironenko (b. 1959), another member of the group, and their colleague in the left-wing underground, Ilya Smirnov (b. 1958). Zvezdochetov remembers that they put on special dress called *tolstovki*[25] and went to the museum where a lot of interesting things were underway including discussions with hippies and dissidents.[26]

Among the participants with whom *Mukhomory* talked, was a former hippie, Alexander Ogorodnikov (b. 1950). By that time he was already a religious dissident and founder of religious-philosophical seminars in Moscow. Soon after these events he was arrested,[27] and the people who took part in the discussion around a campfire in Yasnaya Polyana had to endure KGB interrogations.[28]

24 Archives of A. Karev. Letters. Letter from Karkna 13.09. 1978. On the 4th of July 1978, in Leningrad at the *Dvortsovaia* square, the spontaneous demonstration of the countercultural youth occurred. The reason was denunciation of a concert in which they expected the foreign rock-musicians had to participate. They were rumors, that about 5 thousands young men participated in the demonstration and were dispersed by the police.

25 Tolstovka (Tolstoy blouse, Tolstoy shirt) is a kind of men's clothing, named after Tolstoy. Before the October revolution, it was a loose and rather long shirt of one-colored fabrics. Usually it was worn untucked, sometimes with a belt. This shirt was popular among the followers of Leo Tolstoy. Later, in the Soviet times, "tolstovka" lost its original link to the name of Tolstoy (Lebina, *Entsiklopedia Banal'nostei: Sovetskaia Povsednevnost'*, 349).

26 Kovalev, "Frustrirovannyi Kibal'chish".

27 Ogorodnikov was arrested in November 20, 1978. He was accused in «social parasitism». In January 1979 he was jailed to 1 year of the compulsory works.

28 Mironenko, "Ne Nastoiaschee Vremia", 412.

Foto 5 Alexander Ogorodnikov, 1978 (archives of A. Ogorodnikov)

Few photographs remain that capture this gathering of cheerful, unusually dressed (for the Soviet public) company of people, among whom were not only Tolstoyans but would-be Orthodox – both radical and more moderate – believers including the Orthodox priest, Andrei Lemeshonok, a Muslim, a Sufi, and people interested in Buddhism and other eastern religious movements as well.[29]

Foto 6 Soviet hippies in Yasnaya Poliyana, 8 September 1978 (archives of Mishka Man'iak)

Soviet authorities consistently identified these young people as "others" and "aliens" at this official celebration.[30] But the members of the hippie community were used to confrontations with the Soviet state's disciplinary personnel. They consciously cultivated their social and cultural marginality, and were

29 Lemeshonok was baptized in 1978 and now he is an archpriest of Sviato-Elizavetinskii monastery in Mink (Belarus').

30 There some evidences, that there were several foreign pilgrims who also were stopped by the police near Yasnaya Polyana asking for a written permission for their trip from the foreign ministry (HU OSA. Fond 300 (RFE/RL Research Institute) – 80 (Soviet Red Archives) – 7 (USSR Biographical files), box 333).

prepared to deal with these disagreeable eventualities. They lived in their own separate cultural reality, had their own authorities, and even their own Tolstoy. What united them during their trip to Yasnaya Polyana? How was Tolstoy connected with the outlook of Soviet hippies and other cultural outliers of the time?

4 Soviet hippies and the "religious revival" of the 1970s

Hippie was one of the most popular informal movements in East European countries during the late-socialist era. Soviet hippies called themselves *Sistema* [System] and tried to realize their own notion of freedom. The *Sistema* was a rather variegated community consisting of hippies, bohemian-like or just restless people who stood out because of their appearance and life-style; they organized parties (so-called *tusovka*) and hitch-hiking, listened to rock music and experimented with drugs. At the same time, they proclaimed their commitment to the ideas of pacifism and free love. In consequence of their countercultural ideology, hippies communicated with the representatives of various other sub-cultures and communities – rock musicians, non-conformist artists, dissidents, writers and poets, underground religious circles, black marketers ("*fartsovschiki*"), and so on.

The first hippies appeared in the late 1960s roughly simultaneously in Moscow and Leningrad, as well as in the Baltic republics and Lviv (Ukraine). The driving force behind this phenomenon was a protest against Soviet reality. In many respects, it was a generational, aesthetic, and anti-authoritarian protest that manifested itself in alienation and – often – in the self-destructive practices of "negative freedom" (drug addiction, alcoholism, suicidal tendencies, and contacts with criminals). Unfortunately, the cost of such behavior was high, and included sojourns in mental hospitals, early deaths, ruined family lives, etc.[31]

At some point, many representatives of the Soviet underground faced the need to replace their marginalization, the burden of "negative freedom," denial, rejection, escapism, and destructive practices with a system of ideas that offered a more positive vision of the world. The Soviet cultural underground, and the association of Soviet hippies in particular, were clearly explorative in nature; all members were on a mission, searching for their proper place in society, a religion, and an ideology just like their Western coevals.[32] Within the space of the underground, the period of juvenile nihilism shifted into a period of acquiring new values.

Alexander Ogorodnikov, in a letter written in the summer 1976 to Philip Potter, the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, wrote: "My friends and I grew up in atheistic families. Each of us went through a difficult and sometimes even tortuous path of spiritual seeking. From Marxist ideology through nihilism and denial of any ideology, through a fascination with the hippie life style – this is our road to the Church."[33]

Unable to find answers to their inquiries in the official Orthodox Church, young people founded an informal philosophical-religious seminar where free discussions became possible, and where a fraternal spirit of Christian community was established.[34]

"We wouldn't so much as sit down to dinner without first ascertaining God's existence," recalls Maria Remizova about the spirit of the hippie association of the 1980s.[35] She goes on to say: "I have never again met people who were so all-around knowledgeable and interested in random topics. [...] The *Sistema* knew everything—what books to read (what's more, it actually owned those books, both in rare editions and in Xerox copies stamped 'rare collection,' in the original, and even in its members' own translations), what music to listen to, what films to watch. The moment someone unearthed something worthwhile, he or she became an indefatigable advocate and disseminator of the acquired knowledge. The social gatherings were places of uninterrupted exchange of 'cultural artifacts' and 'information,' as well as of opinions about what each person had seen, heard, read, and experienced."[36]

31 Zdravomyslova, "Culturnyi Anderground 1970-kh", 136, 157.

32 Ogilvys, "Communes and the Reconstruction of Reality", 83-99.

33 Cit. ex: Ellis, *The Russian Orthodox Church*, 160-161.

34 Ibid., 162-163. The events in Yasnaya Polyana that took place during Leo Tolstoy's anniversary were also freely discussed there.

35 Mata Hari, *Puding iz Promokashki,* 104.

36 Ibid., 81.

Andrei Madison, a member of the older generation of hippies, describes his reading experiences during this period of searching: "The substance for the new identification consisted of an unlimited number of components: *a melting pot*. In the course of the 1970s and 1980s, I sampled, in no particular order: Tolstoy, Laozi, Confucius, Mo Tsei, chan (dzen), Krishnamurti, Vivekananda, Wilfredo Pareto, Adorno, Berdyaev with Sergiy Bulgakov and such, as well as Rozanov, Konstantin Leontiev, sufi, Bakunin, Nechaev, Fanon, Paris of 1968, Abby Hoffman, Jerry Rubin, Novalis, Jean Paul, Shalamov, Solzhenitsyn, Ciliga, Nietzsche, Spengler, Avtorkhanov, Chakhotin, Ellul, Henry Thoreau, Ken Kesey and—enough."[37] Madison had a strong interest to Tolstoyism, in the post-Soviet period he worked for a short time in the Museum of Leo Tolstoy and presented a lecture "Left Leo: Tolstoy as a hippie, punk and anarchist"[38].

In most cases the spiritual search followed a religious direction – the Soviet hippie movement was an essential part of the general atmosphere of the "religious revival" of the 1970s, which has already been described in a number of publications.[39] A lot of hippies joined the Orthodox community, becoming priests and monks, a smaller number of people followed other religions and religious movements, such as, for example, Buddhism and Hare Krishna, or various Occult groups and the Sufis,[40] very few became Old Believers, Tolstoyans, or followed the Protestant denominations and alternative branches of Orthodoxy. One could meet among the Soviet hippies people who were fond of the teachings of Nikolai Roerich, Daniil Andreev, Porfiry Ivanov, and even Grigory Skovoroda and Russian dissenters from the beginning of the nineteenth century. Official Soviet atheistic publications, as well as religious *samizdat*, served as primary sources for learning about religious matters.

Ecumenical ideas also achieved popularity among the Soviet hippies of the 1970s. In the first half of the 1970s, hippies communicated with the ecumenical group of Sandr Riga (Alexander Rothberg, b. 1939), who initially belonged to Riga's bohemian circles and counted a lot of friends among the hippies. He, moreover, linked the origin of his own circle with the hippie movement.[41] Working with hippies,[42] he tried to provide answers to their religious speculations, helped in organizing baptisms, and also attempted to wean them from drugs.[43] In the early 1970s, the group traveled with hippies on "evangelizations" to the Baltic states, Tallinn in particular.

Foto 7 Sandr Riga, 1971 (Riga, Sandr. *Nonfiction,* Riga, Sacramento, 2011)

37 Madison, "Anekdoty ob Andree Madisone", 179-180.
38 Madison, "Levyi Lev", 87-112.
39 Boobbyer, "Religious Experience of the Soviet Dissidents", 373-390; Zitzewitz, *Poetry and the Leningrad Religious-Philosophical Seminar*.
40 We can even state, that Soviet hippies were a part of the Soviet mystical underground, more information see: Savitskii, *Anderground*, 160-162.
41 Riga, "The Society of Ecumenical Christians", 382.
42 He preached against drugs among hippies.
43 Riga, *Nonfiction*.

Sandr's best friend was the Moscow hippie Vladimir Teplyshev whose "ecumenical" nickname was "Dzen-Baptist" (1949-2009). In 1976, he put together a *samizdat* journal, *Alternativa* (Alternative),[44] in which he collected the best articles about hippies, both positive and negative, from the Soviet and Western press.[45] Two topics especially interested the editor: modern Christianity and alternative communities. For instance, *Alternativa* carried the article "The Jesus Revolution Made in the USA" by Jean Duchesne, which discussed the interest of American youth in Christianity, ideas concerning a spiritual "Jesus revolution," "new Christianity," hippie-Christians.[46] For Soviet hippies, this collection of essays served as an introduction to the religious quest of Western youth, and it made a strong impression on young people.[47]

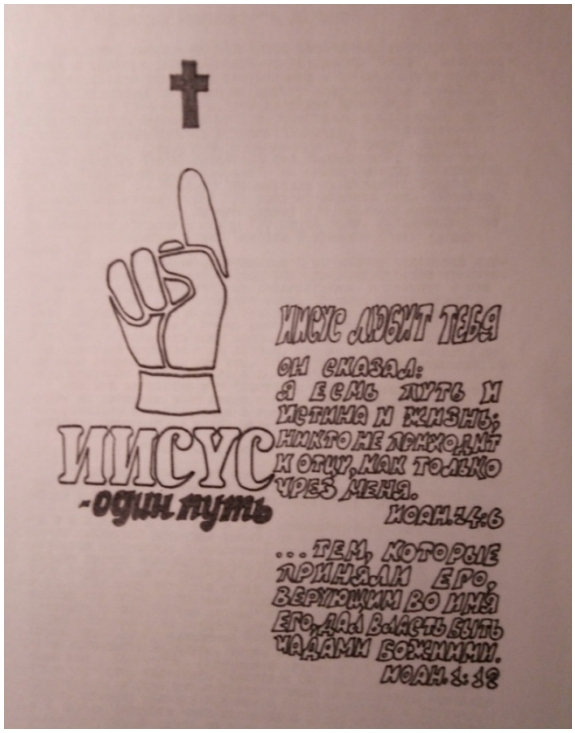

Foto 8 Page from *Alternativa* with picture by Dzen-Baptist, 1976 (Sandr Riga's archives)

Religious eclecticism, frequent change of religious preferences, and psychedelic experiences characterized hippie religiosity. In this respect, the Soviet hippies were not very different from other representatives of the 1960s cultural underground in Moscow or Leningrad where a "new religiosity" was emerging. Viktor Pivovarov, an unofficial artist, defined it as "... a religiosity outside of any confessions, without clear boundaries, without any rituals and priests, in reality, it was an open religiosity"[48].

Evgenii Pazukhin (b. 1944), a religious dissident from Leningrad, remembers that "we gathered in each other's apartments and talked about things 'in heaven, on earth, and under the earth,' having a rather poor understanding of each of these things. We were carried away with one thing after another: the teachings of Nietzsche, Schelling, Freud, the ideas of Buddhism, yoga, the Occult... As one of my friends said, it

44 The copy of this magazine is kept in the personal archives of Sandr in the National Library of Latvia and previously belonged to hippie Mikhail Bombin. Its digital copy displayed in the Internet-site devoted to the Soviet hippies: URL: https://www.hippy.ru/fokv/26022011/

45 Tupikiv, "Volodia Dzen-Baptist", 150.

46 The rock-music opera "Jesus Christ Superstar" (with music by Andrew Lloyd Webber and lyrics by Tim Rice, issued in 1970 as an album and a year later performed in Broadway) was also extremely popular in the USSR in the 1970s.

47 In particular, Irina Iazykova told us in her interview, that thanks to *Alternativa* she started to be interested in religion, joined Sandr Riga's circle and finally came to the Orthodox church.

48 Pivovarov, "70-e: Smena Iazykovykh Kodov", 231. Viktor Krivulin characterized this phenomenon as "spirituality" or "unofficial religiosity" as "a sum of individual spiritual practices, special internal social-cosmic protest" (Cit. ex: Savitskii, *Anderground*, 126).

was a real 'universal cocktail'. Some of us even tried to create something new out of this jumble, some sort of synthesis of virtually every philosophical doctrine and world religion. In fact, 'synthesis,' along with 'spirituality,' was one of the key concepts of that era".[49] Pazukhin also noted that their "religious renaissance" began with a cultural renaissance. "Within this group, he writes, "there was a syncretism in our terminology that was very revealing: cultural manifestations were defined in terms that were, strictly speaking, religious, while religious phenomena were interpreted using cultural language."[50]

Viacheslav Demin also stresses that their minds became incredible hodgepodges filled with confusion and eclecticism. "There was Tolstoyan anarchistic egocentrism, ideas of Judeo-Christianity and the world-religious brotherhood; eastern wisdom, yoga and esotery were combined with the principles of free trade-unions and the thinking of left radicals including Trotskyists and Maoists. Eastern spirituality stood together with palmistry and astrology along with some knowledge about human rights, the western counterculture and avant-garde."[51]

Roman Yashunskiy (b. 1966), a former Soviet hippie and, later, Father Nektarii Olimpiiskii, Bishop of the Greek Old Calendar Church, recalls the Leningrad hippie Tolik Grodnenskii: "He was practicing various eastern meditations and mantras and at the same time he considered himself a Christian. Thus, his religious syncretism was combined with some sort of Orthodox traditionalism."[52] There were other cases where young people, who were interested in the Occult, at some point turned to Lamaism, but later left it for the cult of Che Guevara, and after this they went in for Tantrism and some psychedelic practices.[53]

Frequently, religious searching in the Soviet counterculture merged with psychedelic issues. "I have finally and forever determined that God exists just after particularly strong weed," Maria Remizova wrote.[54] The memoirs of Soviet hippie and occultist, Vladimir Wiedemann, focuses exclusively on the psychedelic combination of the religious and drug elements of the youth counterculture of the late-Soviet period.[55] Contemporaries and participants in the hippie movement themselves underlined that many adepts of the "new religious consciousness" were mainly social outsiders, drinkers, and drug-addicts.[56]

Foto 9 Soviet hippies Vladimir Wiedemann, Rein Metsneisen (aka Michurin, 1955-2013) and their guru Michael Tamm (1911-2002) (archives of Vl. Wiedemann)

49 Pazukhin, "Charting the Russian Religious Renaissance", 58.
50 Ibid., 58.
51 Demin, *Moi Etapy.*
52 Yashunskii, *Moi Memuary.* I am grateful to Roman Yashunskii for the permission to read the text of his memoirs.
53 The real case, mentioned by Vladimir Wiedemann.
54 Mata Hari, *Puding iz Promokashki*.
55 Wiedemann, *Neizvestnyi So'uz.* I am grateful to Vladimir Wiedemann for the permission to read the full text of his memoirs.
56 Pazukhin, "Charting the Russian Religious Renaissance", 61-62.

In the second issue of the *samizdat* journal, *Obshchina* (1978), Ogorodnikov published an article entitled, "Catacomb Culture: On the Experience of a Generation's History," in which he explored the religious search of the Soviet hippies.[57] One of the important features of this period, in his view, was the creation in the USSR of "a second cultural reality" where youth could realize their need to go beyond the Soviet mentality and lifestyle. He argued that this new reality was based on "island communities of people carrying a fundamentally new form of human spirituality, and a non-Soviet consciousness and way of action. The new spirituality, breaking out of the realm of necessity and social compulsion, turned towards the future and seeks the things above. Its topographical world was organized by two coordinates—love and freedom—and creativity is its vital activity."[58]

In his opinion, hippies represented the most typical example of escapism from Soviet cultural reality and signified "a milieu evading the control of the authorities." Hippie started with a spontaneous protest against vulgarity and the violent stamping of the human personality. Hippies tried to adopt patterns of behavior and mindsets developed by the thinkers of the past. "Metaphysical anxiety and restlessness" led them to a religious search in which they wove together the ideas of Kant, Buddha, Gurdjiev, yoga, Sufism, Marcuse, and Sartre.[59] According to Ogorodnikov, a sharp rejection of Marxism and a general irrationalism, existentialist and spiritualistic in nature, marked their search. It was a search for a new philosophy able to synthesize a new experience. This should have resulted, in his opinion, in revolution, but a "revolution of consciousness, a revolution of spirit and values."[60]

In the late 1980s, Ogorodnikov produced, "The Bulletin of the Christian Community," which carried Mikhail Bombin's, *Vzyskuia Grada* (Longing for God's Castle). In this article, Bombin argued that the hippie movement in the USSR expressed a subconscious desire for the Church in imitation of Christ and the first Christians. He believed that "the hippies of the 1960's and early 1970's were in some sense 'catechumens.' In essence, they were people who either disliked the world or the things in the world, and sought another Kingdom, another Castle."[61]

In this context, choosing Tolstoyism as a religion, ideology, or ethics during the late-Soviet period was a logical but still exotic phenomenon. Therefore, a pilgrimage to Yasnaya Polyana in 1978 was a key moment and symbolic act in the hippies' spiritual passage.

5 The cultural underground and Tolstoy: diversity of perceptions

Countercultural "Tolstoyan" biographies differ widely as do individual interpretations of Tolstoy's teachings and the manner in which they present his ideas.

Vladimir Moroz (b. 1929) was an artist, connoisseur, and collector. He led a bohemian lifestyle, and numbered famous artists and musicians among his friends. He also engaged in unsanctioned business activities that helped him accumulate a fair degree of wealth by Soviet standards.[62] Arrested in June 1974 for speculating in foreign currency, he managed to avoid the death sentence prescribed by the Soviet criminal code.[63] Instead, he spent eight years (1974-1981) in prison where he discovered Tolstoy's religious writings. He kept a diary while serving his sentence, excerpts of which are included in the book, *Leo Tolstoy in My Prison Life*.

Tolstoy and his ideas profoundly "struck" Moroz.[64] He considered Tolstoy's teachings similar to the doctrines of Christianity and could not decide whether Tolstoy was "the greatest Christian apostle," or

57 Ogorodnikov, "Kul'tura Katakomb". In 1973 Ogorodnikov was sent down the All-Union State Institute of Cinematography after his attempt to shoot film on the spiritual search of the Soviet youth.
58 Ibid.
59 Ibid., 72-73.
60 Ibid., 75.
61 Bombin, "Vzyskuia Grada". Bombin (1951-2011) was a prominent Soviet hippie, religious dissident (Orthodox) and journalist.
62 Vorobiev, *Vrag Naroda*, 395-396.
63 Beskrovnykh, "Ob Avtore".
64 Moroz, *Lev Tolstoy v Moei Arestantskoi Zhizni*, 75.

creator of a new doctrine and, therefore, Jesus' equal as a Teacher.[65] He understood Tolstoy's ideas, first and foremost, as "a religious point of view on life," and considered his teachings a "rational" religion of conscience, moral self-perfection, and non-violence.[66]

Foto 10 Vladimir Moroz (archives of Larisa Piatnitskaya)

Tolstoy helped him realize his own spiritual makeup, and to establish a connection between his inner world and the world beyond himself, to re-consider his attitude towards the state, other people, art, and humankind in general. Moroz wrote that for Russians Tolstoy is very close, like a "home" tutor, a spiritual guide.[67] He believed that all Russians should familiarize themselves with Tolstoy's teachings; they had a duty to learn Tolstoy's ideas because he "carries the Russian [national] much further than any other ancient teacher [carried] their people — to the universal and supra- even non-national."[68] Vladimir Moroz saw Tolstoy as the creator of "a unified Religious consciousness of humanity," of "a religion of all humanity," and "a reformer of separate religions into a single religion of all humankind."[69] The unification of individual human beings requires a unified religious consciousness, one language, and a unified society not divided into separate states.[70]

Moroz denied the Communist ideology and the Soviet state, considering Soviet Russia "the hottest spot in a world enveloped by violence." The only chance for Russia's (and the whole world's) salvation, he asserted, lay in Leo Tolstoy's "teaching of Love."[71] He was astonished that Tolstoy's ideas were unknown in Russia, and that this great thinker had left no influence on the everyday life of Russian society[72].

Moroz tried to spread Tolstoy's ideas even while in prison. On 22 January 1976, he wrote in his diary about the first of his "Tolstoy readings," his students being three other inmates. In the camp he promised himself that after his release he would do everything in his power to draw public attention to Tolstoy as a religious philosopher. Keeping to this promise, in the early 1990s, Moroz published with his own money fourteen issues of "Tolstoy leaflets" ("Forbidden Tolstoy") that contained Tolstoy's main religious texts.[73]

65 Ibid., 21, 58, 64-65.
66 Ibid., 36.
67 Ibid., 25.
68 Ibid.
69 Ibid., 88, 94.
70 Ibid., 54.
71 Ibid., 96.
72 Ibid., 13.
73 URL: http://www.marsexx.ru/tolstoy-listok.html

In addition, he published a volume of more than one-thousand pages containing excerpts from Tolstoy's dairies entitled, *The Book Humanity Has Long Awaited* (*Kniga, kotoruiu davno dozhidaetsia chelovechestvo*). Over the last few years, Vladimir Moroz has had close contacts with representatives of the religious group *Bogorodichnyi tsentr* (Mother of God Centre), known for its interest in Tolstoy's ideas.[74]

Foto 11 Alexander Lobachev (in the center) and his friends – Lviv hippies Penzel and Voldmur, c. 1977-1978 (archives of V. Vishnevskii)

Alexander Lobachev was born in Lviv (Ukraine). In his final school years, his protest against the "injustice of existing society" led him to the hippies who, in turn, inspired him to grow his hair long. Lobachev was fond of rock music, especially Jimmie Hendrix. He hitch-hiked and later became an opponent of violence and listening to "enemy voices."[75]

As a result of his expulsion from a polytechnic institute, he had to fulfill his military service requirement. So great was his hatred for the army, though, that he succeeded in obtaining a psychiatric discharge that enabled him to return to Lviv where he began working as a stoker in a boiler-room. Around 1975, he discovered the 20-volume collection of Tolstoy's works. As he writes in his "Autobiography," "and finally, the famous sixteenth volume, "squeezed" through Soviet censorship by Tolstoy's former secretary, Nikolai Gusev, containing the Teacher's works on social themes (his religious works have been completely prohibited from publication). That was exactly what I was looking for!"[76]

The sixteenth volume of Tolstoy's twenty-volume collected works, published in 1964, includes Tolstoy's publications from 1855 to 1909 and served, at the time, as a starting point for the Soviet intelligentsia's examination of Tolstoy's religious and social ideas. This volume, as well as pre-revolutionary publications of Tolstoy's religious articles, had never been officially prohibited, but it was very difficult to discover the "genuine" Tolstoy in the late Soviet period as opposed to the Tolstoy defined by Lenin's evaluation.

"The central idea," Lobachev continues, "is that we, by improving ourselves, solve social problems because if everybody would do the same society will be fair, struck by the clarity of this thought." Of course,

74 For more information see: Iordanov, *Dukhovnyi Diumvirat*.
75 Vishnia, "Nastoiaschaia Istoriia", 99-100.
76 Ibid., 160.

he was also greatly influenced by Tolstoy's, *Confession*.[77] Under Tolstoy's influence, Lobachev reconsidered his life, became a vegetarian, and started to think about God and love for people ("practicing bhakti yoga," in his words). Once, in the autumn of 1976, during his usual meditations, while "perfecting [himself] in Divine Love," he "suddenly felt in his heart a special, inexpressible in words, warmth and inner light."

Initially, Lobachev considered himself to be a Christian (at this time he managed with great difficulty to gain access to the Gospels), but gradually, also under the influence of Tolstoy, he developed an interest in Indian philosophy and a preference for the *Advaita Vedanta* school. As he writes in his autobiography: "I have started to mediate about God as Brahman (in the Russian language –'the world itself'), and later – about the 'true self' ('Atman' in Sanskrit). Under the influence of Mahatma Gandhi, the Indian adherent of Tolstoy, I have tried to take some vows—fasting, for example, or keeping silent once a week. I continue to fast, but had to give up the second [since] once some big boss entered the boiler room while I was observing silence."[78]

In Lobachev's apartment various people, mainly philosophers and religious thinkers, used to get together.[79] His summer hitch-hiking turned into religious pilgrimages during which he tried to visit various religious communities in search of kindred spirits. He especially liked to travel to Tbilisi attracted by the Georgian Academy of Science library, which he visited regularly. He dreamed of living in a community of like-minded friends, but he could not find any.

In the 1990s, his family moved to Odessa. By this time he was already a spiritual monist.[80] In the 2000s, he created a website named "Green Stick" (*Zelenaia palochka*); since his death, in 2011, his friends and followers have maintained the site.[81]

Lobachev was an extremely kind person and, like Leo Tolstoy, placed "universal love" in primary position, considering that love should be present in peoples' lives every day.[82] For this purpose, he founded a special type of activity—"a ministry"—requiring one to render help to other people and animals once a day. As part of his own "ministry," since he could not adopt a child, he visited orphanages for many years, providing the children with fruit and toys.[83]

In the 1970's Lobachev befriended the moto-hippie, Penzel, and in his apartment – among many other pictures and photographs – there is still a portrait of Leo Tolstoy. For more than twenty years, another, even bigger portrait of Tolstoy hung by the door, but one day it was blown away by a strong wind.

Another of Lobachev's friends, closer to him ideologically, was Georgii Meitin, whom everybody called Garik. Born in Riga, the only child of technical college teachers, Garik preferred books to socializing with his childhood peers. He found art books and the art world, in general, especially attractive.

By the age of thirteen, he already felt like a believer. In high school, he discovered Tolstoy's ideas of non-violence, and became the master's disciple. He stopped eating meat, and refused to engage in military training at school. He also refused to serve in the army, in any case the medical commission found him unfit for service due to poor health. Garik experienced both a religious and an ethical revolution, and firmly believed in the unacceptability of violence, in the deep relationship and unity of a life in God, and in the presence of the Divine in all people.[84]

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77 Lobachev, "Avtobiographiia", 160.

78 Lobachev, "Avtobiographiia", 162.

79 Yavor, "Grazhdane Rima".

80 Spiritual monism as a branch of the Tolstoyan movement emerged in the second quarter of the 20th century; its members, following the ideas of Petr Nikolaev, denied the existence of a material world. For more information see: Prokopchuk, "Nikolaev P.P.", 343-344.

81 URL: http://zpalochka.narod.ru/ The title of the site follows the title of Leo Tolstoy's and his brothers' child's play, which contained a strong utopian motive. According to the legend, invented by Nikolai Tolstoy, if somebody finds the "green stick", all people became happy forever. The search for the "green stick" was a favourite game of Tolstoy in his childhood.

82 Lobachev, *Kakomu Sueveriiu*.

83 Lobachev, "Avtobiografiia", Ch. 5.

84 Meitin, "[Ot redaktora]", 32.

Foto 12 Garik Meitin (on the right) in the circle of Riga's hippies-pacifists, 1981 (archives of G. Meitin)

After meeting with Riga's hippies, he joined their community and partly accepted their lifestyle, growing long hair and a beard, and practising hitch-hiking. During his travels, however, he always sought out religious communes of different origins. Pursuit of this goal took him to the far corners of the Soviet Union. Because Garik had no interest in obtaining a university degree, he became a coal stoker in a boiler room, and later worked as a gas boiler operator.

In 1984, Garik wrote a memoir, *Dva leta* (*Two Summers*), in which he discussed the period 1979-1980, when he traveled over the country and practiced nonviolence.[85] In his unpublished reminiscences, he describes his encounters with religious youth who were interested in both Christianity and Eastern faiths; he writes about their spiritual quest, interest in the East, and relates how they read the Bible together and other religious texts. He also recalls long conversations about religions and pacifism, meeting with people of various confessions, and visits to churches.[86]

Like other hippies, Garik was detained several times during his travels. The many hardships that he encountered served to validate and clarify his ideas. He delved deeper into the tenets of non-violence, seeking to prove his love towards people, including the police, and to openly declare his principles and views. Once, while under arrest for vagrancy, he was brought to a skin and venereal disease dispensary (an obligatory measure) where he had a conversation in which he formulated his credo:

> "So, what are you, a believer?"
> "A believer."
> "And what is your faith?"
> "My faith doesn't have a name."
> "So, you're a sectarian?"
> "No. Each sect has its own name. And mine doesn't."
> "He's a hippie," the policeman explained.
> "Someone calls me a hippie, but it's not the name of the faith."
> "Then, what is your faith about?"
> I felt uncomfortable saying too much here and therefore only replied:
> "It is about the fact that all people are brothers."[87]

85 Meitin, "Dva Leta". The first variant of his memoirs was confiscated by KGB; in 1985 Meitin re-wrote the book and it was disseminated through *samizdat* channels. It was republished several times in the informal press during *the perestroika* period.
86 Meitin, *Stop. Flat*.
87 Meitin, "Dva leta", 45.

In the first half of the 1980s, a small circle of counterculture-minded young people in Riga formed around Garik. All the participants considered themselves believers and pacifists; almost all were interested in the ideas of Leo Tolstoy and were vegetarians. Among them were two rock musicians — Dmitrii Fedotov and Vladimir Shakul' — and a poet, Grigorii Gondelman. On 10 March 1982, the newspaper *Sovetskaya molodezh* (Soviet Youth) published an article, "Lost lamb or..." It discussed, in indignant terms, the existence of the Tolstoyan pacifist group in Riga, members of which refused to serve in the army. Before the article appeared, the young people had been summoned to the KGB for "a talk."

From March 1988 until 1991 Garik put out – practically alone – a socio-religious *samizdat* journal, *Yasnaya Polyana*. Twelve issues appeared in all. The periodical was dedicated to the themes of non-violence, the free search for truth, and the universal brotherhood of man. Vladimir Yakushonok, another young Tolstoyan and pacifist from Riga took part in the production and dissemination of the journal. The authors were mostly old Tolstoyans, hippies, and devotees of other religious and social movements. Both in content and style, the journal resembles Tolstoyan periodicals from the beginning of the century.

Alexander Karev lived in Leningrad. By his own definition he was an intellectual, hippie, and "sentimental idealist."[88] He liked rock music and considered himself a believer. His letters from 1977 to 1980 are full of references from Tolstoy that he found appealing. He entered Tartu University in 1978, choosing to conduct research on the history of religious dissent in Russia at the beginning of the twentieth century. In notes that survive from this period, there are numerous excerpts about the Tolstoyan movement, the Doukhobors and other religious groups, and also about the poet A. Dobroliubov and his followers.[89]

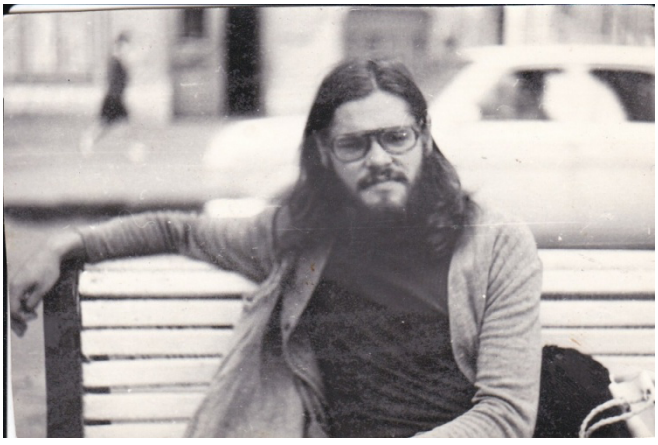

Foto 13 Alexander Karev (archives of V. Rezunkov)

Karev adhered to a definite religious perception of Tolstoy.[90] In Tolstoy's ideas, Karev and other representatives of the counterculture found religious and moral validation for their individualism and protest against existing reality. They also supplied justification for the theory and practice of man's spiritual rebirth and principles of an honest life "according to good conscience." It was also important for him that Tolstoyism originated as a "Russian faith" thereby connecting him with the national religious tradition.[91]

For Karev, Soviet culture was "a culture of the concentration camp" which, he was certain, was on the verge of extinction. Karev considered the countercultural community (which he belonged to and which he defined as "the narcotic and mystical wing of the youth subculture of protest") a primary source of revolutionary power in Soviet society. In his letter from 28 December, he wrote that "previously I did not

88 Karev, Alexander. Letter, May 5, 1978. I am grateful to Viktor Rezunkov for possibility to get acquainted with Karev's letters and other materials from his personal archives.

89 Alexander Dobrolubov (1876-1945?) – Russian poet-symbolist, abandoned the bohemian circle for a life among so-called "ordinary" people. He created his own religious sect of *dobrolubovtsy* (Etkind, *Khlyst*.)

90 Karev, Alexander. Letter, March 31, 1978.

91 Personal letter by V. Resunkov.

see any connection between particular *nishtiaki* and *vumaty*[92] (I wondered if there is anything in common between the First Christianity, Salvador Dali and the Beatles), but now they are joined to each other in a harmonious whole, this is a world of another reality, a different life plan, a different culture." This "different culture"—"a culture of discontent"— like Tolstoyism, became for Karev an essential component of the new culture.

Karev considered counterculture more than simply communal gatherings. He saw it as a movement towards the creation of a new culture. The main feature of this period was a "moral tension" that, in his opinion, was being felt by more and more people. One of the initial displays of this "tension" was closely connected with a mass demonstration that took place in Leningrad on 4 July 1978 after a supposedly scheduled concert of Carlos Santana and the group "The Bee Gees" had allegedly been canceled. In connection with this event Karev wrote to his friend: "We are a lot! Believe me. I never thought that this possible. Moral tension (hard to imagine better at the moment), the belief that something must be done immediately, not waiting for anyone, permeates the atmosphere and infects a vast, unimaginable number of people [...] Let it be a myth. But this myth makes us like the first Christians who were waiting for the Second Coming, and who recognized Christ in the beggars [...] And what, didn't they await a grandiose revolution? Let it be a myth, but a myth that touches something inside and creates an invincible solidarity. This is a myth that inspires confidence and a feeling that change is close. Finally, it is a myth that influences the present and prepares people to fight against the current reality. I believe and I am ready to give everything for it"[93].

Charles Reich's *The Greening of America*, published in 1970, served Karev as another "great book." In a letter from 16 May 1979, Karev wrote that he had read the chapter, "Consciousness III: The New Generation," as "the Gospel."

His circle associated the use of drugs with ideas of the psychedelic revolution, the revolution of consciousness. But Karev was sure that Tolstoy, and even God, are on the side of rebellious youth: "Ugliness is closer to the Lord than beauty that is always the same, always according to the rules. He, I'm sure, looks graciously at us coming to Him in our own way [...] God helps us! He says: 'Explosion-Freedom!'"

In 1979, two other hippies, Viacheslav Demin and Alexander Rubchenko, became interested in Tolstoyism (although for a relatively short period) under the influence of Demin's uncle, who (like his grandfather) was a true Tolstoyan. He introduced them to Tolstoy's "forbidden" works. Direct influence like this was rare at the time. In most cases, the young generation latched onto Tolstoyan religious traditions on their own without any influence from the "old" Tolstoyans.

Demin remembered later, when he had already became an Orthodox believer, that "this cosmopolitan, ecumenical teaching, very dangerous for the salvation of souls, enveloped our young souls and brains like a web... After reading, *The Interpretation of the Gospel*, *The Reading Circle*, Tolstoy's moralizing fiction, and other religious and philosophical books, my whole world view changed radically." He writes that both of them immediately "knew the truth," which he had been seeking for a long time. It was expressed in the Sermon on the Mount and was brilliantly explained by count Tolstoy. And, "everything became clear and understandable [...], not like before, when I was trying to read the Holy Scriptures on my own." Inspired by these teachings, young people became committed vegetarians and tried to lead an ascetic life, following the principle 'Thou shalt not kill' even in relation to insects. Their goal was moral self-perfection, self-knowledge, personal freedom, and spiritual liberation from state and social slavery.[94] During this period, Demin recalled, he also experimented with drugs without seeing any doctrinal contradictions.

To a certain extent, their "Tolstoyism" had an ecumenical character. According to Demin, since Tolstoyism encompassed "anything and everything," his friends started to take bits and pieces from diverse teachings – "a little from Buddhism, something from Hinduism, [...] from ancient philosophy, from the medieval mystics, and from the teachings of the Russian renegades." Young people felt such enthusiasm that Demin even tried "healing by hands," drawing energy from the ground and trees; in emulation of Tolstoy,

92 *Vumatnyi, vumat or umatnyi* – slang words meaning the highest stage of pleasure, enjoyment. *Vumatnyi shtrikh* – a person, drug-addict, good guy (personal letter by V. Rezunkov, 30.06.2016)

93 Karev, Alexander. Letter, without date.

94 Demin, *Moi Etapy, etap tretii*, 4-8.

he walked about barefoot, caressing the trees, and meditating in nature. Demin and Rubchenko acquainted themselves with members of various religious groups, including Baptists, Adventists, Pentecostals, and Jehovah's Witnesses.

At the time, they believed in a single God and that sooner or later "all of humanity would unite in a single, religious impulse." They also promoted their new ideas among the hippies. This usually happened in the cafe "Russian Tea" (*Russkii Chai*), where members of the Moscow counterculture gathered not to party, but to engage in serious discussions. According to Demin, Tolstoy's ideas appealed to the "flower children" because they complemented one another: "pacifists, anti-militarists, nonconformists, and anarchists, [who viewed] the existing system, its ideology and moral values, with hostility."[95]

Demin connects two central ideas of his ideology with this period: the political and ideological denial of power, and his genuine religiosity. Demin the Tolstoyan rejected Soviet ideology because "it was absolutely alien to wisdom and the humane teachings we considered the basis of world civilization." Even at a time when Demin already treated Tolstoyism negatively, he admitted that it was during this brief period when true faith in God was born in his soul, and he "realized the infinity of life and creation," and "felt the presence of the highest ideal, the radiance of the spiritual light, the existence of another dimension somewhere there, beyond the visible world." In his memoirs Demin calls Tolstoy "heretic." He writes, however, of his gratitude because his own "true search for God" started with the ideas of Leo Tolstoy[96].

Foto 14 V. Demin and A. Rubchenko in the hippie's meeting in Tsaritsyno (on the top of the photo), 1983 (archives of A. Rubchenko)

Demin, Rubchenko, and their classmate Irina made their pilgrimage to Yasnaya Polyana in September 1979, the anniversary of Tolstoy's birth. There they met with the other "pilgrims" – like-minded foreigners from Europe and Doukhobors from Canada. According to Rubchenko, they spent the night of 8-9 September in the hollow of a huge oak tree in Yasnaya Polyana. After this trip, they felt even more assured in their faith, "promoting the idea of non-resistance, public disobedience, and social anarchism" whenever possible. Soon, however, Demin abandoned his pacifist ideas, and in 1980 moved from God-seeking to a radical leftist, anarchist movement. Within five years he was sentenced and exiled for participating in the underground, revolutionary Social-Democratic Party. Currently Demin is an Orthodox monarchist, who holds to the notion of a so-called "white Aryan world."[97]

His friend Alexander Rubchenko also abandoned the Tolstoyan movement with its ascetic extremes. Later, he became interested in the ideas of the New Left. In the 1980s he took part in the independent peace movement as an activist of the Group for Establishing Trust Between East and West.

95 Ibid., 6.
96 Ibid., 7.
97 Demin, *Moi Etapy, etap trinadtsatyi.*

6 Conclusion

The seventies were characterized by religious revival among the members of the Soviet counterculture milieu. The young generation often opted for religious ideas and Tolstoyism served as one such option. Each emphasized different aspects of the Tolstoyan outlook. They did not blanch at eclectically combining Tolstoyism with a wide range of values and ideas adopted from different religious and ideological traditions, from Oriental religions and spiritual practices, up to the ideas of the New Left and the psychedelic revolution. They were flexible, correcting and changing their views throughout whole their lives. At the same time all countercultural Tolstoyans shared two basic values — personal autonomy and nonviolence.

Tolstoyism became a kind of ethics that followed in the wake of their "nihilist" period of protest ("Great Refusal") for a larger search for meaning and recognition of the spiritual dimensions of life. The followers of Tolstoy asserted the ideals of the free and individual search for the truth, of nonviolence, of anti-authoritarian humanism, as well as a quest for a new, spiritual form of community, having nothing to do with obligatory Soviet-type communist, atheist, and materialistic collectivism. Contrary to most other representatives of cultural underground, the spiritual alternative of the Tolstoyans was socially and sometimes even politically oriented. They directed it not only at the individual, but at society as a whole fully anticipating that society would be reformed, if not perfected.

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