

Title: A Witness from the Alexandrine Era: Tolstoy and Ivan Liprandi

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In Tolstoy's works the phrase recurs, "of that epoch," sometimes modified by an adjective, "of the Alexandrian epoch." The phrase encodes a conception of history and character fundamental to Tolstoy's works: men of the Alexandrian epoch were the benchmark against which men of the present era were to be judged.

Many figures from *War and Peace* (both fictional and historical) extend Tolstoy's examination of the Alexandrine man. This paper concerns a different aspect of his fascination with men "of that epoch." The writings of Ivan Liprandi, one of the most colorful figures of the Alexandrian epoch and a significant contributor to historical writing about 1812, constitute an important source for the novel. Liprandi is little acknowledged in discussions of Tolstoy's sources but is significant not only for factual detail, but even more as Tolstoy's guide to the issues. As Tolstoy wrote in his notes, "Liprandi is important..." (*Iub.* 15, 240). Liprandi, uniquely among writers on 1812, brought Tolstoy into the broad arena of European discourse, often quoting extensively from memoirs and histories. Three works deal with the Battle of Borodino and provided Tolstoy with a menu of "spornye voprosy," as well as a way of regarding them counter to the official histories, both Russian and French. Liprandi combined the cosmopolitanism of the Alexandrine gentry with patriotic fervor.

A text based on Liprandi, the events of the day preceding the battle, shows the complexity of Tolstoy's method, bringing into view the specific circumstances from which his philosophical generalizations arose, in events and in the historical discourse. His critical dialogue with one of the sharpest intellects of the Alexandrian epoch shaped both the artistic and the philosophical possibilities of *War and Peace*.

Work Cited: L. N. Tolstoi. *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, v. 15. Moscow, 1953 (*Iubileinoe izdanie*)