

THE PORTRAYALS OF S. WITTE AND F. F. MARTENS IN JAAN KROSS'S "PROFESSOR MARTENS'S DEPARTURE"*

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This article will study the function of the character of S. Y. Witte in the character structure of Jaan Kross's "Professor Martens' Departure" (1984). The figure of Witte (derived from a historical prototype — the famous Russian government official Sergei Yulyevich Witte) is an important element of the novel's plot and thematic domains, and in particular, is called to accent and shade the peculiarities of the character and worldview of the novel's protagonist, F. F. Martens. This article will attempt to demonstrate which methods and type of transformation of historical facts related to the biography and activities of Witte and the outstanding attorney Fyodor Fyodorovich Martens are used, as well as to identify the points at which the images of these two characters intersect.

The action of the novel unfolds on June 7, 1909, the day of the death of the main character, Russian attorney and specialist in international law F. F. Martens. On his way from Pärnu to Petersburg, the protagonist recalls the events of his personal and professional life, evaluates his own actions and compares himself with prominent government and social figures. Martens dies at the last Livonian railway station, Valga.

One of the compositional peculiarities of the novel is its repeated and/or varying fragments, which carry important meaning (regarding this, see: [Pild]). One of these, for example, is Martens' recollections of the Portsmouth conference at the beginning, middle, and end of the novel (chapters 2, 12, and 26). The novel's description of this forum is built around the depiction of Witte's and Martens' relationship, and their roles in settling the Russo-Japanese peace agreement in 1905.

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Since the author's archive is currently inaccessible, it is impossible to determine *precisely every* historical source used in creating the characters and the story about the Portsmouth conference. Thus, the present analysis of prototypes and characters in the novel will refer to texts that *hypothetically* could have been in Kross's range of reading. This includes, for the most part, Russian-language brochures and research, as well as encyclopedic articles published before novel's release in 1984.

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S. Y. Witte (1849–1915) was born in Tbilisi, on the southern edge of the Russian Empire. His father, the German Christoph Heinrich Georg Julius Witte, received his education at Dorpat University and in Prussia. Witte's mother, nee E. A. Fadeeva, came from the noble Russian line of Dolgoruky princes. Despite such kinship, Witte, upon completing the Department of Physics and Mathematics at the University of Novorossiysk, began his career on the Odessa railroad as a cashier in the ticket office. Thanks to his industriousness and deep study of everything regarding the running of the rail lines, he quickly proved himself an invaluable worker. In 1889 Witte was named director of the Department of Railroad Affairs and promoted to the rank of Actual State Councilor; by August 30, 1892, he became minister of finance. During his tenure (until 1903), the average annual growth of the Russian budget was 10.5%.

In 1906 M. I. Grant, who was critical of Witte's policies, admitted his outstanding abilities:

Undoubtedly gifted by nature with brains, sound knowledge, practical shrewdness, and amazing industriousness, this man quickly stood out against a backdrop of general incompetence and bureaucratic sloth <...> The appearance of a new man in the post of minister, someone who had independently achieved his ministerial portfolio, was exceptional in the Russia of that day <...> Witte was in the fullest sense a "homo novus" [ГРАНТ: 7].

In 1915 the author of the brochure entitled "The Secret of Count Witte" underscored that Witte was a genuine and effective specialist:

No one could compare to Count S.Y. Witte, there was not a single government figure who could keep pace with him, with his rapid thoughts, with his startling ability to quickly and accurately master the main point of a phenomenon, the essence of the subject [Аео: 8].

Witte led the modernization of Russia according to the European model, which shaped the specifics of his views on the Eastern Question. According to his

economic program, the construction of the Trans-Siberian railroad was to promote the development of Russian lands in East Asia. Witte assigned Russia the role of middleman, through whom goods would be carried between East Asia and Western Europe. He emphatically protested the endeavor to join Northern Manchuria to Russia, as well as activities that could have led to conflict with Japan's interests in Korea. As an opponent of territorial conquest, Witte confronted the Minister of War, General of Infantry A. N. Kuropatkin, and the Secretary of State, Colonel A. M. Bezobrazov. The finance minister's firm position drew the displeasure of Nicholas II, and on August 16, 1903, Witte was dismissed from his post and reassigned as chairman of the Committee of Ministers. However, this formal promotion was a defeat for Witte in the Eastern Question. On June 30, A. M. Bezobrazov was named governor of the Far East and given a credit line of 2 million rubles; now he answered exclusively to the czar, and not to the prime minister (see: [Тарле; Корелин, Степанов; Ананьич, Ганелин; Ойе]). In 1922, B. A. Romanov stated that, "no one put so much effort into the fight to prevent it <the Russo-Japanese War> than he, Witte" [Романов: 140].

In comparing the biographies of S. Y. Witte and F. F. Martens, many parallels are evident: both were born on the edges of the Russian Empire, distinguished themselves with remarkable industriousness and high professionalism, had passionate personalities, and built themselves careers contrary to the existing order and bureaucratic system. Let us turn now to those facts from the biography of the prototype for the novel's main character that are the most important for the novel's character structure.

F. F. Martens (1845–1909) was born in Pärnu on the northwestern edge of the Russian Empire. In January 1855 he was sent to the orphanage established near the Lutheran Church of St. Peter in Petersburg. Martens finished the Main German School of St. Peter and then the Law Department of Petersburg University, where he later became a professor of international law. A member of the Council of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia, vice-president of the European Institute of International Law, and member of the Permanent Council of Arbitration in The Hague, Martens was author of the fundamental works "Modern International Law of the Civilized Peoples and Collected Treatises and Conventions between Russia and Foreign Powers" (see: [Грабарь; Britannica 1911: 786; Пустогаров]).

Martens' origins remain debatable. As noted by the modern scholar V. V. Pustogarov, there are two theories about this. German scholars believe

that Martens is descended from a poor Baltic German family¹. According to Estonian scholars, Martens was an Estonian (see, for example: [Лесмэнт: 354–355]). As Pustogarov established, Martens himself did not write about his origins in his diary, nor provided information about his parents in the document sent to the compilers of the “Biographical Dictionary”, published in 1898 (compare: [БС: 6]).

Martens’ lack of knowledge about or his attempts to not reveal his true origins is reflected in the content of biographical articles about him: information about his background is absent from nearly all encyclopedias (compare: [Грабарь; Britannica 1911: 786; Britannica 1929: 982; Enciclopedia 1934: 435; БСЭ 1954: 394]). The one exception in this series of resources is the Estonian encyclopedia published during the time of the first Estonian Republic and during Soviet times; the authors of this article indicate that Martens was Estonian (see: [Entsüklopeedia 1935: 1007; ENE 1973: 85]). For Kross, Martens’ belonging to the Estonian nation is one of the key elements that underpins the ideological structure of his novel.

The question of Martens’ origins led to the creation of important plot and thematic fields in the novel. Depending on the situation, Martens either agrees that he is a Baltic German (at the audience with Chancellor A. M. Gorchakov), or underscores his Estonian roots (in his conversation with the American journalists). The author reveals the psychological difficulties and contradictory internal positions of the protagonist, accenting in his thoughts and actions his constant balancing between identifying with “his own” and “the other”.

One of the novel’s compositional features is the motif of the *self-made man* (a person who has independently broken into society), which unites the beginning and the end of the work. In the first chapter, Huik, the station master, hurries to the ticket box to obtain a ticket for a Privy Councilor and, as Martens notices, “his readiness to serve was mixed with genuine respect, respect for the self-made man, which I am in his eyes (and in my own eyes, station master or no) ...” [Крощ: 322]. In the last chapter, it seems to the dying Martens that “Mister Huik, the son of my father’s friend, is a self-made man, like me, is waving a red disk, for some reason running toward me ...” [Ibid: 588]. The designation of *self-made man* unites the main and secondary characters who, while occupying different rungs of the social ladder, have the same

¹ Unfortunately, one of the shortcomings of Pustogarov’s book is the lack of reference to specific biographical articles or books by German authors. In the fundamental reference book “Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie” is found the name Martens, Friedrich, with a date of birth given as 1845 and occupation given as Jurist; Völkerrechtslehrer; Publizist [ADB]. This reference was published from 1875 through 1912 and totals 56 volumes.

ethnic roots. Tellingly, Kross does not give this highly valuable characteristic to Witte, thereby excluding from his character an important feature of Witte's historical prototype: the *independent* path of the industrious and outstanding man to achieve deserved recognition and a government position.

The theme of the Russian governmental elite's hostility toward the professional who independently built a remarkable career links a number of Martens' arguments in the novel:

Mister Minister <P. A. Stolypin> did not deign to take me with him... <...> if, in Russia, you are not the bastard son of a grand prince, a count, a millionaire, a crook who is considered a miracle-worker, but simply the best specialist in the world, then here you are no one all the same [Крощ: 337].

I graduated among the highest ranks of international scholars. But the clan of hereditary diplomats from noble families nonetheless resented me: really, who did I think I was?! Whence, how, and with whose permission did I appear?! In Russia, after all, one can rise only with someone's permission... [Ibid: 388].

These thoughts present an interesting parallel to the diary entries of the real F. F. Martens, which are preserved in the Archive of Foreign Affairs of Russia². Having studied these archival materials, V. V. Pustogarov noted that Martens "was outraged by service careers that owed their success to gentility and secular connections". He spoke out sharply against the sons of minister N. K. Giers, who successfully climbed the career ladder; for example, Giers's youngest son, Mikhail, he characterizes as "a kind man, still a youth in school, completely uneducated" (quoted from: [Пусторатов: 198]).

Kross consistently omits historical facts from Witte's biography that otherwise would have drawn him closer to Martens. The author does not mention, for example, the negative characterization of Witte's prototype that prevailed among his contemporaries (that Witte was an upstart): "he is no kind of government man", "a tiny little soul, capriciously sliding into a large shell" [Баян: 13; 55]. It is interesting to note that the real F. F. Martens wrote contemptuously in his diary about S. Y. Witte's appointment to the post of chairman of the Committee of Ministers: "the former station attendant!" (quoted from: [Пусторатов: 198]). The relationship between the real Martens and Witte changed after they became personally acquainted in 1905; the diaries of this period express a positive evaluation of Witte³.

² It is known that Kross was not acquainted with these diaries.

³ Compare to Martens' diary entry written after the news of Witte's dismissal in 1906: "Witte and Goremykin. One is a most capable man, the other is all-around mediocrity... Witte will have

Kross characterizes the governmental and political activity of Witte very sparingly. Thus, for example, Martens, in describing the reception held by the Mayor of Portsmouth, notes that “He greeted Witte as the most honored reformer of the Russian economy (well, one can agree with that to some extent, no?)” [Кросс: 424]. The positive assessment of Witte’s economic policies is contrasted with the protagonist’s critical opinion of P. A. Stolypin’s reforms⁴:

I think nothing good awaits the government from this prime minister, this cadet of the bayonets, as he was supposedly called even by Witte, no matter how loudmouthed his agrarian reform may seem <...> I remember how Stolypin followed us with his usual dissatisfied expression from under his yellow, bald forehead and black eyebrows with that stillness <...> in Stolypin’s presence such amicability could even be dangerous... [Ibid: 337; 340].

Kross paints a repellant, inhuman portrait of Stolypin, who, in his opinion, became famous solely due to political repressions. The author expresses his position from the point of view of his protagonist. In the novel’s eighth chapter, in which Martens meets Johannes, who has been convicted of revolutionary activity, Martens muses:

And now <...> I, shivering, think <...> In a dark, narrow “stolypin”. Yes, yes: the convict rail cars with bars on the windows and locked compartments, which now occur in half of the trains, the people call by the name of the prime minister [Ibid: 372].

In Kross’s novel, the “stolypin” car symbolizes the repression of personal and national freedom⁵. Through the prism of Martens’ negative attitude toward Stolypin, the author expresses his opposition to the policies aimed at strengthening the empire (Russian statehood) and at the suppression of revolutionary movements (in the Estonian context, national freedom movements). The au-

monuments raised in his honor; Goremykin will be forgotten on the day of his death” (quoted from: [Пычораров: 221]).

⁴ P. A. Stolypin was, in fact, S. Y. Witte’s political heir. From 1903 to 1906 Witte headed the Committee of Ministers of the Russian Empire, then, from October 24, 1905 through April 22, 1906 was prime minister of the Russian Empire. Stolypin became chairman of the Committee of Ministers on July 8, 1906, replacing I. L. Goremykin in the post.

⁵ In his memoirs, Kross, telling the story of his own arrest and dispatch to a GULAG (1946–1947), cites a passage from his novella “The Ashtray”, published in the 11th issue of “Looming” magazine of 1988: “The compartment into which they stuffed me was a regular ‘stolypin’; yellowish wood of the third sort, turned grey from use, bars on the doors and windows. Many of my generation knew that car window with the bars; I want to say that not only from personal experience, but, of course, from the albums of postcards from my parents or from czarist times “History of Russian art” <...> And, of course, political protest against the spirit of the time, against the wagons that embodied that time, which prime minister Stolypin began to use in Russia after 1905” [Kross: I, 249].

thor thus indirectly contrasts Stolypin's harsh domestic policies with Witte's liberal concessions⁶.

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Let us turn now to Kross's description of the events of the Portsmouth conference. The scene of the reception of the Russian delegation by the mayor of Portsmouth comprises Martens' *second recollection* of the Russo-Japanese 1905 peace negotiations (chapter 12). Kross clearly uses the memoirs of S. Y. Witte, who wrote:

The public stood everywhere on the streets, and in the main part of the city stood troops in columns. The public paid attention to the Japanese authorities, who traveled in the first carriage, but then, upon seeing us, renewed with great strength the signs of their sympathy <...> We were brought into the town hall. Here we were met by the governor with all the members of the city administration. The governor gave a speech, and then the group photo was taken. The ceremony thus finished... [Витте 1960: 426].

Witte depicts the diplomatic meeting of representatives from *three* powers and sees himself as an exclusively honorary head of the Russian delegation with great international authority. He emphasizes:

At that time all the European powers for some reason had a high opinion of me, and with one voice all the governments expressed the opinion that if any-one could secure the peace agreement, then it could only be Witte [Ibid: 410].

In the novel's depiction of the city reception, the Japanese side's participation in negotiations is not described. The author emphasizes that, from the point of view of the Secretary of State and of Martens himself, Witte held the authority

⁶ The protagonist Martens recalls: "At the beginning of October, 1905 <...> the liberals were more vocal than any time before. The black-hundredists also. And the rabble began to break into arms stores. But that had nothing to do with me. Witte knew this. When the emperor made him a count and put him at the head of the Committee of Ministers. Thus he was compelled to begin the project of creating an imperial manifest" [Крощ: 327]. Martens is speaking of the Manifest of October 17, which announced the establishment of the State Duma, and also proclaimed civil rights and freedoms. The emperor was obliged to give concessions as a result of political strikes all across Russia. In this same chapter, Kross describes the strike of the Estonian railway workers and Martens' first meeting with his nephew. The protagonist, an attorney in service to the imperial powers, does not approve of the on-going events. But as Johannes' relative and as an Estonian, Martens feels sympathy for him. At their second accidental meeting, he passes a file to the arrested man to help him escape from the "stolypin" car. Throughout the course of the novel the hero struggles between national feeling and imperial loyalty.

of an economic reformer⁷. Kross declines to depict a positive impression of the Russian politician who defended imperial interests. Not by accident did the author exclude facts from Witte's biography that characterize him as an opponent of the Russo-Japanese War and a supporter of the peaceful economic development of East Asia.

The *first recollection* of the Russo-Japanese negotiations, in chapter two, characterizes the true conditions advanced by the Russian delegation at the Portsmouth conference, precisely conveying the sense of achievement felt by the Russian side. Martens recalls:

That is, Witte knew all along what he wanted. No contributions to Japan. Not a single war ship taken refuge in a neutral port. No territorial concessions. At the very most, half of the island of Sakhalin. All of this he had perfectly fixed in his bullish head. But how to achieve it <...> Witte had not the slightest idea. And I had to write it all and drive it into his head [Kpocc: 326–327].

The protagonist's point of view is similar to the diary notes of the real Martens, and includes a characterization of the responses of his contemporaries who were dissatisfied with the “shameful” peace.

Evaluating *Witte's role in the Portsmouth conference*, the novel's protagonist pejoratively speaks out about his diplomatic abilities, so necessary in conducting successful negotiations. The fictional Martens' evaluation resonates with the arguments of the real-life Witte's opponents. In 1906 the author of an article in “Russkoe slovo” wrote:

Legends ascribe him an unusual dexterity in his defense of Russian interests. In reality, Witte and other Russian representatives were the most vulnerable [К предстоящему: 3].

Although the real Martens noted certain errors by Witte in his diary, he was not unequivocally categorical with respect to the head of the Russian delegation:

⁷ An unknown author wrote in a 1905 book about Witte that: “America gave him a triumph that, seemingly, had never been awarded to a single foreigner. President Roosevelt told Witte that if he were to live in America for three years, then in three and a half years he would be elected president” [ГЦИОБ: 17]. Kross recreates the historically accurate benevolent atmosphere that surrounded Witte. The difference between Witte's memoirs, the brochures written by his contemporaries, and Kross's text is in the emphasis. Kross highlights many of Witte's accomplishments in his version of the character, but not the political and diplomatic contributions thanks to which Witte earned his popularity in the USA.

Witte — is a very smart man, but he does not know diplomatic practice. One can be a great minister of finance and all the same know nothing about conducting diplomatic matters (quoted from: [Пустораров: 235]).

After his return from Portsmouth in autumn 1905, Martens noted in his diary:

Only S. Y. <Witte> has a genuine governmental mind, and he is a man of great character and tremendous force of will. None of our ministers can compare to him (quoted from: [Ibid: 221]).

In the novel, Kross portrays the negative information he had gathered from historical sources, while excluding those statements by Witte's contemporaries that gave a positive impression of him as the head of the Russian delegation⁸.

Recalling the *return of the Russian delegation to Petersburg*, the novel's protagonist feels personally offended by Witte's refusal to share a deserved success:

<...> official Petersburg met us with delight. As if we formalized the Portsmouth agreement not as a defeat for Russia, but as her victory. And of course, Witte <...>, taking it for granted, took all the recognition for himself. With his banker's conscience and engine driver's intellect... [Кросс: 327].

The source for the construction of this perspective in the novel could have been certain statements by Witte's contemporaries. In a brochure of 1906 an author fumed:

He <Witte> always moved at the expense of the creations of "others", and at the same time made it look as if everything he did, said, and wrote were of his own production⁹. <...> the two-faced Janus purposefully hushed up everything that others did, in order to have the chance to accredit himself with all the successes of the Portsmouth negotiations [Small: 88–89].

In his diary the historical Martens also resents the lack of genuine gratitude to him. However, in contrast to the novel, in reality Martens' main reproach was aimed at the czar, who, at the reception after their return to Petersburg, limited himself to words of gratitude. Martens wrote in his diary, "It's terrible to live under such a regime!" (quoted from: [Пустораров: 207]).

⁸ Compare the opinion of the great Russian attorney A. F. Koni about S. Y. Witte: "A powerful and influential government figure and a skillful diplomat, who has been of greatest service to his homeland in a time of shame and humiliation" [Кони: 5].

⁹ In 1922 book, I. Vasilevsky, famous journalist, emphasized in Witte's conduct "an unpleasant smugness and narcissism" after his arrival from Portsmouth [Василевский: 62]. At that time Vasilevsky planned to go back from Berlin to Moscow. I suppose that his notion on Witte's conduct polemically refers to S. Y. Witte's memoirs, published in Berlin in 1921 by I. V. Hessen, the former member of The State Duma, emigrant, and politician. In Soviet Russia Witte's memoirs were published in 1923.

The displacement of emphasis from Nicholas II onto Witte was, above all, due to the author's plot and thematic goal of constructing an opposition between the two characters in his novel. The historically based but one-sided depiction of Witte is intended to emphasize Martens' professional merits. By downplaying Witte's historical role at the Portsmouth conference, the author reveals Martens' "true" (leading) role.

The first widely distributed source highlighting Martens' significant contributions to the signing of the Russo-Japanese peace agreement is the "Encyclopaedia Britannica" (1911):

He played an important part in the negotiations between his own country and Japan, which led to the peace of Portsmouth (Aug. 1905) and prepared the way for the Russo-Japanese convention [Britannica: 786].

This perspective on Martens' role contradicts the assessment given by Witte in his memoirs. At the Portsmouth conference Witte used Martens, above all, in revising the text of the peace agreement. Martens himself, according to modern researcher Pustogarov, "had no influence on the achievement of agreement on important questions. That is why <...> he never publically mentioned his participation in preparing the peace agreement" [История: 238].

In Martens' *third recollection* of the Russo-Japanese negotiations, in chapter 26, the author first describes Martens' excommunication from participation in the conference. Kross reconstructs the inner world of the protagonist, who feels betrayed by "his" colleagues:

Mister Martens, a short interview! Haven't the negotiations already begun? They're already in progress? And why are you not participating? <...> why has your Mister Witte allowed this? <...> However you, as a Russian... Oh, you are not Russian? That means you, as a German, is it not true that... Ah, you are not German? What are you then? Eskimo? No? Estonian? What is that? [Кросс: 538]

In the first part of the above quote, the American journalist asks Martens questions as a member of the Russian delegation; in the second, he addresses Martens as an individual. The protagonist conveys an "other's" perspective of himself (hence only the journalist's speech is given, while Martens' answers are absent). The experienced sense of humiliation leads to an internal protest in Martens. He decides to leave Portsmouth. However, while saying goodbye to Witte, the protagonist learns of the restoration of his status as participant in the conference and is asked to draw up the final version of the agreement:

What else can I do? Maybe I should have refused. In the name of human sovereignty. But I didn't refuse. I don't know, was I glad or not that they picked me

out of the bottom of the gutter for the sake of governmental necessity? Oh God! Yes, I won't hide it, all the same I was pleased that in the riskiest moment for Russia's interests they gave me the chance to walk into the fire [Kpocc: 543].

Thus, Martens agrees to compromise with himself. Russian interests and his ambition deprive the protagonist of a true sense of freedom and personal dignity and cause him to deny "his own" national identity ("But all the same in high society I never blubber about my Estonianness" [Ibid: 528]).

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To Martens' final story about the Portsmouth conference (chapter 26) Kross contrasts the last (27th) "Estonian" chapter. The text begins with Martens mumbling, "Kuni-kuni-kuni-kuni", which recalls in the character's mind the surname Kunileid. He remembers his meeting with the composer Kuni-leid (whose real name was Aleksander Saebelmann), who spoke "good, unmangled, pure Estonian" [Kpocc: 547]. Martens' attitude toward his guest is marked by condescension and irony ("I'm afraid that this was not totally kind courtesy"). Kunileid tells Martens about his life's goal: to compose a national Estonian opera and "dislodge from Estonian music the German flavor currently reigning therein" [Ibid: 550]. The novel indirectly contrasts this lofty goal toward nation-building with Martens' scholarly efforts which, in Kross's opinion, contribute to the justification and strengthening of imperial politics:

I wanted to prove a special position in international law of the so-called civilized governments in comparison to the half-civilized governments¹⁰. <...> But what kind of further aim could there be in the musical works of that boy from Zimse seminary? <...> such a strange feeling followed me <...> a strange mix of nostalgia and envy [Ibid: 549–551].

In the second part of chapter 27 the protagonist recalls an evening at his colleague's, at which a Russian singer and an Estonian composer were also present. I. V. Tartakov sang P. Tchaikovsky's romance "I bless you, forests" and the Demon's aria from A. Rubinstein's opera "The Demon". Then Artur Kapp approached the piano (in his character the author emphasizes "skittishness and bad knowledge of the Russian language"). The musician performed an improvisation that was received with enthusiastic cheers: "Platon shouted, 'Bravissimo!'" The depiction of the superiority of the *Estonian* composer over the *Russian* singer has several functions in the novel. Kross reveals the inner

¹⁰ Martens' idea was used by N. M. Przhevalsky (1839–1888), East Asia scholar and author of the secret document "New Considerations About the War with China", as an argument against opponents of the annexation of Far Eastern territories [Ойе: 50–51].

strength and cultural richness of Estonians on the backdrop of the greatest achievements of “other”, “large” (imperial, in the political sense) nations. The world of art turns out to be the field in which representatives of titular and nontitular nations can be equal. Martens’ meetings with the Estonian composers make him reconsider the value and uniqueness of “his” national identity. Throughout the novel, Martens changes internally; in particular, he becomes closer to his nation¹¹.

Kross contrasts Martens’ government *service* to the interests of the empire and Kunileid’s spiritual *ministry* to the Estonian people. In response to Martens’ question about Kunileid, Kapp calls him a genius: “He has the rare happiness <...> of being the first national composer of his people” [Kpocc: 559]. At the conclusion of chapter 27, Martens recalls that his opponent Vodovozov had just “called ingenious my latent comparison of Russia with the barbarian tyrants <...> this praise probably sounded like mockery from his lips” [Ibid: 560]. The author uses his protagonist to demonstrate that career achievements, world fame, and the world-wide political importance of scientific works do not have absolute, supreme value if a person’s actions turn out to be useless for “his own” Estonian people, if they do not contribute to national awakening and liberation. (It is indicative that Martens feels envy towards Kunileid.)

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In “Professor Martens’ Departure” Jaan Kross analyzes the limits of internal compromise and explores the relationship between the inner freedom and governmental service of a representative of a nontitular nation. One of the creative techniques used to explore these issues is the construction of an opposition between the two characters of S. Y. Witte and F. F. Martens. Through the prism of Martens’ and Witte’s relationship the author expresses his views on Witte, a representative of the German and Russian nations, the historical conquerors of the Estonian people¹². It must be stressed that Kross excludes the

¹¹ See the protagonist’s words that precede the description of his death in the last chapter: “... I will go out of the car for a minute. I will go out and take a deep breath. Well, as if to say, I will breathe in the country where I was born. Wait for me” [Kpocc: 587]. It is no accident that the novel ends with Martens’ death at the railway station in Valga (Walk), in Livonia, right on the border with the Petersburg province. It is important to Kross and sufficient to show that the hero had returned to “his own” national origins and remained in “Estonian” space. It is telling that Kross abstains from any authorial afterword or commentary. (These compositional features were characteristic of two others of his works that depict events from Russian history, “The Czar’s Madman” and “A Rakvere Novel”.)

¹² S. Y. Witte was married to the divorced Jew M. I. Lisanevich. The scandalous marriage worsened high society’s attitude toward Witte. His opponents created around him an image of the Jewenemy. In the novel “The Town of N” (1935) L. I. Dobychin conveys the characteristic hostility to-

“Jewish” code in his portrayal of Witte. The writer’s concern is to illustrate the conflict between a representative of the highest authorities of the Russian state and a representative of a nontitular, conquered nation.

Thus, Kross reveals the relationship between a person’s denial of his national identity and the loss of inner freedom¹³. The writer confirms the idea that the inner liberation of a person and the confirmation of the authentic “Self” depend on his spiritual comprehension of the uniqueness of his national identity and culture.

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ward Witte. See the reception of the news about the conclusion of the Russo-Japanese peace agreement: “Along the road to Gorshkova I met a boy with a ‘Dvina’. ‘A peace agreement!’ he shrieked. <...> We were very happy for the peace, but Karmanova discouraged us. ‘A peace agreement!’ she said to us, ‘when we would have been victorious! Witte purposefully rigged all this because he’s married to a Jew and she provoked him” [Добычин: 54].

¹³ See the meeting between Faberge and an Estonian pastor: “‘Tell me, what have we gotten from these damned Estonians? Huh? I’ll tell you: nothing except our impossible surnames. Do you know what our surname is in Estonian? It’s Old Asshole. Damn it, what could we possibly owe them?!’ Mister Faberge demanded his documents from the St. John’s Church and transferred to the German St. Peter’s Church” [Кросс: 411–412].

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