



BULGARIN AND “SEVERNAIA PCHELA”’S PLACE IN 19TH CENTURY RUSSIAN JOURNALISM

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Abstract: Faddei Venediktovich Bulgarin is known in Russian literature as establisher of different journals and newspapers, besides being the writer of different novels, stories, and essays. Among the journals and newspapers established by him, the most prominent one was the newspaper “Severnaia pchela” (The Northern Bee). “Severnaia pchela”, which was the first private newspaper in Russia, succeeded to appeal to wide audience thanks to its wide content. Besides economic, political, cultural news and literary critiques, in this newspaper, there were advertisements, which were accepted as a novelty in Russian journalism of that period. While it was the first private newspaper, “Severnaia pchela” obtained political and pro-government character after the Decembrist revolt and started to be published under the control of the Third Section. Besides, the newspaper entered into arguments with outstanding litterateurs of its period. Hence, the newspaper started to lose its audience and reputation in the course of time. In this study, “Severnaia pchela”’s content and its communication with literary communities are examined. In this respect, it is aimed to determine Bulgarin’s and his newspaper’s place in 19th century Russian literature and journalism.

Keywords: Russian journalism, Bulgarin, Severnaia pchela

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1. Introduction

Journalism in Russia developed with the help of important names such as Nikolai Ivanovich Gretsck, Nikolai Alekseevich Polevoi, Vissarion Belinsky and Faddei Bulgarin. Among these, Faddei Venediktovich Bulgarin (1789-1859), originally Belarusian, is known as a Russian journalist, litterateur, and author of the first historical novels, fantastic stories, travel notes and feuilletons in Russian literature (Vodneva, 2021). He was an officer in army, but after he wrote a satire on the regimental commander in 1809, he was dismissed from service in 1811 (Ostashevsky, 2015). Afterwards, he ran over to the French, when Napoleon’s army entered Russia, obtained the rank of captain and fought against the Russians. In 1814, he was captured by the Prussians, and after the end of the war, he settled in Warsaw, from where he then moved to St. Petersburg, as a result of exchange of war prisoners (Zapadov, 1973). Here, he became acquainted with some important names such as A.S. Griboyedov, K.F. Ryleev Rileev, V.K. Kuchelbecker. He was also a very close friend of A.S. Pushkin’s, until Bulgarin criticized chapter VII of his poem “Eugene Onegin” (Ostashevsky, 2015).

Bulgarin was among the most active literary men in Russia. In 1822, he started to publish the journal “Severnyi arkhiv” (The Northern Archive), which started to collaborate with the journal “Syn otechestva” (Son of

the Fatherland) in 1829. In 1823 he published “Literaturnye listki” (Literary Sheets). In 1825, Bulgarin established the first private newspaper “Severnaia pchela” and published it on his own between 1825 and 1830. After 1831, he worked with Gretsck (1787-1867) and managed it for more than 20 years (Zapadov, 1973). Popularity of the newspaper reached the peak between the 1820 and 1830’s. Besides its literary content, the newspaper also became famous for its advertisings (Stepanov, 1950). It purposed to appeal to a wider audience, and it made difference with its variety of content.

As an important personality, who contributed to Russian journalism and literature, there is little study on Bulgarin’s journalistic activities and his “Severnaia pchela” except for the ones in Russia. Thus, in this study, it is aimed to give information about importance of Bulgarin and his newspaper “Severnaia pchela” in 19th century Russian journalism with the help of studies, conducted in its original language until today.

2. Development of Journalism in Russia

Modern press dates back to the era of the disintegration of feudalism and to the emergence of capitalism. Almost at the same time as the first works of printing press in the middle of 15th century, handwritten bulletins containing information about politics, economics



appeared. Accordingly, the periodical press became one of the growth factors of the society (Berkov, 1950). Novelties in Russia as a result of the reforms of Peter I at the beginning of 18th century affected the field of literature, publishing and journalism, as well as many other fields. Peter I closely followed the printing activities and wanted the published works to have a plain language. In 1702, the newspaper "Vedomosti Moskovskogo gosudarstva" (The Moscow Borough News) or just "Vedomosti" (The News), the official publication of the government, began to be published (Zapadov, 1973). "Vedomosti" ceased to be published in the 1727, just after Peter I died. Afterwards, "Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti" (The St. Petersburg News), through which the Academy of Science started to publish long series of publications, appeared. From Catherine I's accession to throne and until the early 1760's, a new stage of Russian history continued, representing a complex combination of political reaction and persistent progressive currents (Berkov, 1973). In this period, along with special scientific journals, the Academy of Science published popular science and literary periodicals. Besides popular scientific and literary journals such as "Primechaniya k Vedomostyam" (Notes to the gazette), the Academy started to publish "Ezhemesyachnye sochineniya" (Monthly Essays), in 1755. The idea of such a publication belonged to M.V. Lomonosov, and G.F. Miller was appointed to its editorship by the Academy.

With the cease of "Ezhemesyachnye sochineniya"s publication in 1764, the first period in the history of Russian journalism, that is, the period of undivided centralization in the hands of the government and its organs of journalism and publishing came to an end. At the end of this period, private journals started to appear, and after a while, they became the predominant form of Russian journalism in the 18th century (Berkov, 1950). Also, the first satirical journal "Truten" (The Drone) started to be published by Nikolai Novikov between 1769 and 1770 (Berkov, 1950). In 1802, N.M. Karamzin's "Vestnik Evropy" (The Messenger of Europe) was established (Gippius, 1950).

Journalistic activities in Russia continued to develop together with the progress in literature at the beginning of 19th century. A great number of litterateurs in that period published their works in periodical publications. Newspapers and journals usually served as a means of civic ideas and scientific knowledge, and thanks to them people learned about what was happening around the world (Oboymova and Razzhivin, 2019). The 1820s and 1830s are considered the most important periods of professionalization in Russian journalism and its evolution. Especially in that period important changes in publishing activities occurred. Changes in the field of journalism were related to the historical features of Russia of that period and were characterized not only by the development of capitalist relations, but also by serious social upheavals. The most important factor increasing the interest in journalism was the Decembrist

revolt (The Decembrist Revolt of 1825, was a revolutionary action that took place at Senate Square in St. Petersburg, aim of which was to protest the appointment of Nicholas I as Tsar after the death of his brother Alexander I) in 1825. It was a powerful push for the development of national consciousness, awakening society, having it seek answers to the most important questions of that time (Ivanova, 2016). Among important journals of that period was "Otechestvennye zapiski" (Fatherland Notes), established by P.P. Svinin in 1818. In 1825, N.A. Polevoi founded "Moskovskii telegraf" (Moscow Telegraph). In the same year, Bulgarin started to publish "Severnaia pchela".

3. "Severnaia pchela"

Bulgarin was a reader-oriented litterateur and in his period, readers were keen on politics, for which people fought tooth and nail, according to him. Thanks to collaboration in many publishing houses in Petersburg, he became acquainted with important politicians (Zapadova, 1973). "Severnaia pchela" was founded with the help of such an acquaintance, Russian politician Alexey Andreyevich Arakcheev. From 1825 to 1831 the newspaper was published three times a week, since 1831 it started to be published daily (Stepanov, 1950).

Having declared a cruel struggle against progressive journalism, the government of Nicholas I willingly supported reactionary publications of Bulgarin and Gretsch. Accordingly, "Severnaia pchela" acquired an officiously well-intentioned character only after December 14th, 1825, and in 1826, it came under the control and leadership of the Third Section (Third Department, Russian Tretye Otdeleniye, also called Third Section Of His Imperial Majesty's Own Chancery In Russia, was created by Emperor Nicholas I to conduct secret police operations. Designed by Count A.Kh. Benckendorff, who was also its first chief administrator (1826-44), the department was responsible for political security) (Zapadov, 1973), which was responsible for political security at the time. Even though "Severnaia pchela" was the first large-scale private newspaper, it became a semi-official state organ after Third Section was established and Alexander Khristoforovich Benckendorff (1781-1844) was assigned to the post of chief of gendarme in 1826. Bulgarin was guided in his activities by the instructions that he received from Benckendorff and other leaders of the Third Section. Third Section even met the expenses of the editorial board in some cases (Stepanov, 1950). Declaring war against progressive journalism, the government of Nikolai I willingly supported publications of Bulgarin (Krivitskaya, 2016).

Until this time, famous Russian writers of that period such as K.F. Ryleev, F.N. Glinka, I.A. Krylov, I.I. Kozlov and A.S. Pushkin collaborated with the newspaper. Especially Pushkin published in this newspaper his epistle "To Chadaev (K Chadaevu, 1818)" and Ryleev published fragment from his poem "Paley (Paley, 1825)" and his

other poems (Stepanov, 1950). After tsar's victory over the Decembrists revolt, Bulgarin drew up a memorandum "On Censorship in Russia and Printing", in which he demanded an increase of supervision on press and transfer of censorship in periodicals to a special office of the Ministry of the Interior. Nicholas I liked the note, and Bulgarin received two appointments: publicly, he became an official for special assignments at the Ministry of Education, and secretly, he became an agent of the Third Section. Benckendorff instructed Bulgarin to keep an eye on writers and journalists, reporting everything he could find out. "Policeman Faddei" as Pushkin called Bulgarin, wrote many denunciations (Zapadov, 1973). Prince Vyazemsky (1792-1878), in one of his letters, criticizing closeness of Bulgarin to the government, sneered at the fact that no one in Russia could publish a political newspaper, except for Bulgarin, although not announced by the ruling Senate (Stepanov, 1950). So, it is clear that "Severnaia pchela's" popularity was due to the fact that it was the only private newspaper, having the right to give political information. In addition to political reasons, the newspaper was also famous for the fact that it had wide ranging program, including literary materials in addition to foreign and internal news. The newspaper published feuilletons, literary critiques, and theatre critiques for the first time. About the popularity of the newspaper especially in the province, literary historian A.V. Nikitenko mentions that people didn't read anything except for "Severnaia pchela", in which they believed like a holy book. In addition to literary aspects, advertisings and recommendations about shops, restaurants or factories also took place in "Severnaia pchela" pages, as well (Stepanov, 1950).

Bulgarin's program, characterized by Benckendorff himself, consisted of upholding and promoting well-intentioned patriotic thoughts and feelings, in preaching "loyalty to the government" and those protective morals and virtues that were supposed to be, from the government's point of view, an antidote against progressive and democratic ideas, against all freethinking (Stepanov, 1950). However, the program of "Severnaia pchela" in accordance with desire of Bulgarin and Gretsch to win the widest possible audience was very diverse.

In the announcement of the publication of the newspaper in 1826, it was reported that "Severnaia pchela" was a news magazine on history, politics, literature and morals, or a new political and literary newspaper. In an effort to please the public at all costs, Bulgarin supplied the newspaper with politics, trade and fashion news, having a clearly educational nature. They were presented not only in an interesting, entertaining way, but also in such a way that the reader felt like thinking and enlightened person. (Ivanova, 2016). In the newspaper there were these sections: 1) Political and foreign news, 2) Internal news, 3) Non-political news: about new publications and enterprises; about scientific, artistic and commercial

productions; 4) News about all published Russian books; 5) Morals. Small articles about morals; critical and moralizing remarks; 6) Literature. Light poems and various articles in prose, 7) Mixture 8) News about the latest fashions (Stepanov, 1950).

Among these sections, the most interesting one was the unofficial, mainly "Literature" section of the newspaper. Here, national news, travels, reports on lawsuits, articles on scientific discoveries, economic and statistical reviews and information, news of medicine and technology were widely and interestingly selected. Besides "Literature" section, which contained short stories, poems and critical articles, the actual literary part of the newspaper consisted of "Morals" chapter, moralistic feuilletons, and "New Books" section, which was available in most issues of the newspaper and contained announcements and reviews on published books. Also, a large place was given to theater critique in the newspaper. In accordance with the program of "Severnaia pchela", based on the approach of the government and commercial and industrial circles, one of the central places in the newspaper was occupied by articles and feuilletons that promoted this approach and called for new industrial successes in "National News", "Observations in Fatherland", "Morals", and "Travel" chapters (Stepanov, 1950).

Bulgarin's newspaper was famous for its criticisms towards different litterateurs. Bulgarin paid attention to "morality" in literary works and accordingly, he unconditionally criticized French prose and novels of Victor Hugo, Eugène Sue, Honoré de Balzac. The reason of his criticism was the fact that works of new French literature were "miserable offspring of a deformed imagination and corrupted morality" generated by the French Revolution. He also criticized Russian writers such as A.S. Pushkin, N.V. Gogol and Ye.A. Baratynsky. In his article *"Examination of Russian Anthology (Rassmotrenie russkih al'manahov)"*, published in fourth number of "Severnaia pchela" in 1828, Bulgarin clarified his understanding of "moral" and "immoral", which went back to moral and didactic aesthetics of the 18th century. According to Bulgarin, "moral essay" is the one, in which vice is presented in such a way that it arouses abhorrence. The reactionary character and unprincipled literary position of the newspaper was completely reflected in evaluation of other literators' works. Thus, "Severnaia pchela" had polemics with many important names. Pushkin was especially against this imposition of didactic schemes on art in his articles. Baratynsky also objected to Bulgarin's theory in the prolog of his poem *"The Gypsies (Tsyganka, 1831)"*. He pointed out that these demands led to rejection of the truth, of real depiction of life, because according to him, Bulgarin's didactic scheme only distorted the reality, subjected literature to the requirements of this understanding of "morality" and religion (Stepanov, 1950).

Except for Bulgarin's this point of view, there were other reasons for polemics with other authors. One of the main

goals of these disputes was the struggle for hegemony in the field of print journalism (Oboymova and Razzhivin, 2019). One of the reasons for the struggle between Bulgarin and his most famous opponent Pushkin was their sharp remarks on one another. Even while Bulgarin made positive commentaries about Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin's (Evgenii Onegin, 1833)* second chapter in 132nd number of "Severnaia pchela" in 1826, he wrote that Onegin remained alien to reader, since his character had not yet been sufficiently disclosed (Stepanov, 1950). Besides, he subjected the poem to a harsher criticism: "Onegin is an unsuccessful imitation of Childe Harold and Don Juan... There is no brilliant poem of the author in the whole chapter VII, except for two stanzas XXXVI and XXXVII, which are marvelous. Two stanzas in the whole book!" (Oboymova and Razzhivin, 2019). Even when Pushkin went to Caucasia, to war against Turks, Bulgarin went on criticizing him: "We thought that the author of "Ruslan and Lyudmila" rushed to the Caucasia to feed on high feelings of poetry, to be enriched with new impressions and to convey great feats of Russian heroes in sweet songs to the posterity...The famous lyres remained silent, and pale, weak Onegin appeared again in the desert of our poetry, it hurts my heart when you look at this colorless picture!" As an answer to these critiques, Pushkin claimed in his article *On the Notes of Vidocq (O zapiskah Vidoka, 1830)* that Bulgarin stole a number of motifs from his *Boris Godunov* into *The False Dmitry* and satirized him in the guise of a French spy, named as Vidocq (Stepanov, 1950).

After Pushkin, Bulgarin directed his criticisms towards Nikolai Vasilyevich Gogol. In 115th number of the newspaper in 1835, a generally positive remark on stories of Gogol' in *Mirgorod (Mirgorod, 1835)*, especially on *The Tale of How Ivan Ivanovich Quarreled with Ivan Nikiforovich (Povest' o tom kak possorilis' Ivan Ivanovich and Ivan Nikiforovich)*, was made. However, it was criticized by Bulgarin as well, in the following way:

"What is the purpose of these pity and disgust scenes not exciting the soul of the reader? There is nothing neither funny, nor touching and funny. Why do they show us these rags, these dirty rags, no matter how artfully they were presented? Why did he paint an unpleasant picture of the backyard of life and humanity for no apparent purpose?"

Besides that, in 1836, the newspaper commented that *The Government Inspector (Revizor, 1836)* was "bad farce" (Stepanov, 1950).

As a result of Bulgarin's controversy with Pushkin, Gogol', and other writers such as P. A. Vyazemsky, in 1840s he had a negative reputation as a journalist, in addition to the problem of relations with the reader and professionalization of literary work. He was presented as an opponent of A.S. Pushkin and an uninteresting writer and a reactionary editor (Vodneva, 2021) Hence, after a long period of popularity between the second half of 1820s and 1830s, "Severnaia pchela"s popularity sharply decreased from the beginning of 1840s due to controversies and struggles with other writers. Thus,

after 1850, Bulgarin actually moved away from management of "Severnaia pchela", editorship of which he conducted together with Nikolai Gretsck between 1831 and 1859, and he handed it down to P.S. Usov (1828-1888). In 1860 Usov became the official editor of the newspaper until 1864. In 1869, the newspaper was renewed by A.V. Starchevsky (1818-1901), but it continued its existence only several months (Stepanov, 1950).

4. Conclusion

The analysis revealed that Bulgarin played an important role in Russian journalism by establishing the first private newspaper. Due to its multi-perspective and large-scale context, appealing to a wide audience, it became the most popular and most read newspaper at the time. Also, it became an example for future newspapers and journals in terms of its multifaceted character, and it was famous for its advertisements, which took part in no journal or newspaper of that time, as well. However, it is clearly seen that thanks to its redactor's conservative and reactionary character, "Severnaia pchela" became a semi-official newspaper and obtained a pro-government character after the Decembrist revolt in 1825, and it started to be published under the control of the Third Section. However, because of Bulgarin's conservative and reactionary character, the newspaper had controversies with important progressive authors and literary communities. Thus, together with Bulgarin, the newspaper became the focus of criticism as well, and this led to the fact that the newspaper lost its reputation.

Author Contributions

The percentage of the author contributions is present below. The author reviewed and approved final version of the manuscript.

	M.S.
C	100
D	100
S	100
DCP	100
DAI	100
L	100
W	100
CR	100
SR	100
PM	100
FA	100

C=Concept, D= design, S= supervision, DCP= data collection and/or processing, DAI= data analysis and/or interpretation, L= literature search, W= writing, CR= critical review, SR= submission and revision, PM= project management, FA= funding acquisition.

Conflict of Interest

The author declared that there is no conflict of interest.

Ethical Approval

Ethics committee approval was not required for this study because of there was no study on animals or humans.

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