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**FROM THE NAPOLEONIC WARS TO THE CRIMEAN WAR.
FADDEY BULGARIN'S INFLUENCE
ON RUSSIAN-FRENCH RELATIONS IN THE FIRST HALF
OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY**

Abstract

Faddey Bulgarin [Polish: Tadeusz Bułharyn] (1789–1859) was one of the best-known authors and journalists in the Russian Empire in the first half of the nineteenth century. A former French army officer (1811–14) who had settled down in St. Petersburg, he was particularly interested in maintaining a good relationship between the two countries. The opinion-making newspaper *Severnaya Pchela*, edited by him, published information on France regularly. Moreover, Bulgarin dealt with French affairs in his reports and letters to the Third Department of His Imperial Majesty's Own Chancellery, mainly in connection with the Polish question. Bulgarin sought to influence the Russo-French relations in breakthrough moments, such as the French Revolution of July 1830, the Polish November Insurrection 1830–1, the Spring of Nations, and the Crimean War. During the forty years of his activity as a man-of-letters, he successfully broke the stereotypes prevailing among the Russians concerning Napoleon I. This article seeks to analyse several aspects of Bulgarin's influence on the Russian Empire's policy toward France.

Keywords: Crimean War, Napoleon, Faddey Bulgarin/Tadeusz Bułharyn, revolution, Russian Empire, France

I
INTRODUCTION

Faddey Bulgarin, also known by his Polish name Tadeusz Bułharyn, the noted Russian writer and political commentator, a native of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania, is a figure whose importance is critical to comprehending the history of Russian literature and the Polish-Russian relations in the first half of the nineteenth century.

His tumultuous personal history led to him being regarded at the tsarist court as an expert not only in literature, Poland and Poles but also in everything related to France. He shared his knowledge and experience in French and French affairs with his readers and the Third Department of His Imperial Majesty's Own Chancellery.

I will try to establish herein below how and in what ways Bulgarin attempted to influence the Russo-French policy and consider to what extent his reports and articles were actually analysed by the tsarist diplomats and court officials. I will mainly refer to the articles published by Bulgarin in the *Severnaya Pchela* [The Northern Bee] newspaper between 1825 and 1856 as well as his reports, letters or memos to the Third Department, placing emphasis on the context of the Crimean War. Moreover, I will try to answer the question whether, as a Third Department collaborator, Bulgarin was indeed capable of influencing the Russo-French relations and to what degree he actually did, as an editor of a periodical with a circulation of a few thousand copies, shape the Russians' opinions about France.

Bulgarin's activities, both political and literary ones, have long been neglected by scholars. Both in the Russian Empire and in the Soviet Union, he tended to be shown explicitly as an informer and a mediocre author. This changed in the early 1990s, with an attempt at restoring his merits made by Abram Reitblat, a historian of Russian literature, who is now justly regarded as the 'father of Bulgarin studies'. More than seven hundred articles and a dozen books have been written on Bulgarin's activities ever since;¹ however, no study has yet been compiled on his attitude toward France during his entire activity period. Despite the relatively scarce records, some authors have dealt with Bulgarin's service in the French Army.² I will therefore avoid dealing with this particular period in detail, focusing on the years 1830–1, the Crimean War, and Bulgarin's view on Napoleon Bonaparte.

¹ 'Книги и статьи о Ф.В. Булгарине (1958–2014) (Библиографический список)', in Абрам И. Рейтблат, *Фаддей Булгарин: идеолог, журналист, консультант секретной полиции* (Москва, 2016), 564–604.

² Абрам И. Рейтблат, 'Булгарин и Наполеон', in *Наполеон. Легенда и реальность. Материалы научных конференций и наполеоновских чтений. 1996–1998* (Москва, 2003); Любовь Н. Киселева, 'Фаддей Булгарин о наполеоновских войнах: к вопросу о прагматике мемуарного текста', in *Цель непрерывного предания* (Москва, 2004).

II FASCINATED WITH FRANCE

Faddey Bulgarin was born as Tadeusz Bułharyn in the estate of Peryshevo, Governorate of Minsk, in 1789. His father had joined the Kościuszko Insurrection of 1794 to fight against Russia, for which he was deported to Siberia. The geopolitical circumstances (after the partitions of Poland-Lithuania, the Bułharyns' family estate became part of the Russian Empire) and the family situation (after returning from exile, his father had a lawsuit) made Tadeusz move to St. Petersburg. There, relying on the favouritism of influential acquaintances, he enrolled in 1799 in the elitist Imperial Landed Gentry Cadet Corps, which was a hotbed of human resources for the Russian army. Having completed his education there, he joined the Uhlan Regiment of the Grand Duke Konstantin Pavlovich. He served with the Russian Army until 1810, taking part in the battle of Friedland, for which he was awarded the Order of Saint Anna (3rd Class), and in the Swedish campaign of 1808–9. Then, in 1811, he resolved to join the Duchy-of-Warsaw army. However, as there was no vacancy available in the officer corps of the Polish uhlans, he had to seek an officer's post with the French army and eventually signed up with the 2nd Vistula Uhlan Regiment commanded by Tomasz Łubieński. He joined Napoleon's army for the great expedition against Russia and served loyally with this army until being taken prisoner-of-war by the Prussians in 1814.³

The year 1815 saw Bułharyn use the amnesty opportunity announced by Tsar Alexander I and settle down in Warsaw, where he decided to delve into journalism. However, he was not too successful in this field, neither in Warsaw nor later in Vilnius. In 1819 he moved to St. Petersburg again, where he contributed to the periodical *Syn Otechestva* [Son of the Fatherland], edited by the reputed Russian editor and author Nikolay Grech. Within a few years, Bulgarin established himself as one of Russia's best-known writers and journalists. In 1822, he set up *Severny Arkhiv* [Northern Archive], an influential magazine dealing with history, statistics, and travel; three years later, together with Nikolay Grech, Bulgarin established Russia's first private newspaper *Severnaya Pchela*, which for almost thirty years was the leading opinion-

³ Piotr Głuszkowski, *Barwy polskości, czyli życie burzliwe Tadeusza Bułharyna* (Kraków, 2018), 25–68.

-forming medium in the Russian Empire. On top of that, Bulgarin became valued as a fiction writer: his novel *Ivan Ivanovich Vyzhigin* [Иван Иванович Выжигин] sold in 5,000 copies in 1829 alone, the top such result in the local book market at the time.

In 1826–31, Bulgarin was a proactive associate of the Third Department of H.I.M. Own Chancellery, in charge of Polish and Livonian affairs. Although not a full-time staff member, he wrote several hundred reports, notes and letters being brief analyses or guidelines for Russian politicians and Tsar Nicholas I himself. He pronounced several opinions on Poles arriving in Russia. It was thanks to his reply to the charges put forth by Nikolay Novosiltsev that Adam Mickiewicz could stay in Petersburg. His other reports dealt with French affairs, such as concerning the triangle of France–Russia–Poland. Alexander von Benckendorff, the founder of the Third Department, greatly trusted Bulgarin; hence, the latter's political analyses, especially those published in *Sekretnaya Gazeta* [Secret Newspaper], the Department's in-house organ, were received directly by the emperor.

From 1819 onwards, Bulgarin was efficiently building his own reputation as an expert in French matters. Albeit his French was far from perfect, at least according to his close acquaintances,⁴ his readers trusted his genuine expertise in French questions, particularly those related to history, politics, and literature. Until 1830, Bulgarin would not keep secret his past association with the French army: he would proudly tell stories about it, boasting about his personal acquaintance with Napoleon. Many a Russian believed his wartime reminiscences that Bulgarin was appointed captain personally by Napoleon in recognition of his physical fitness and command of languages he had proved during a reconnaissance.⁵ On his part, Bulgarin skilfully made Russian intellectuals believe that he was the one who assisted Napoleon in crossing the Berezina:⁶ he knew the river very well as it flowed through his mother's estate. Bulgarin's first literary pieces referred to French threads and aspects, just to recall his essay on Spain, with the motif of the Spanish-French war as perceived by a Polish Napoleonic army's soldier, or the

⁴ Николай И. Греч, *Записки о моей жизни* (Москва, 2002), 439.

⁵ Фаддей В. Булгарин, 'Знакомство с Наполеоном на аванпостах под Бауценом 21 мая (н.с.) 1813 года', in Александр И. Федута (ed.), *Ф. Булгарин, Выбранные* (Минск, 2003).

⁶ Józef Załuski, *Wspomnienia* (Kraków, 1976), 253.

battles of Kulm and Bautzen.⁷ The three years of his service with the French Army – specifically, the Legion of the Vistula – sufficed for Bulgarin to consider himself an expert in all things French.

In the early 1820s, Bulgarin would openly declare that he was a Francophile associating his future with France. Wincenty Pełczyński, a friend of his from Vilnius, wrote to Józef Jeżowski, professor of the classics, that Buglarin “has written ... in the Russian language a short outline on Polish literature; he is working on a history of Polish literature, which is due to be published in French; in this matter, he is following the arrangement according to the work of Pierre-Louis Ginguené, the noted French poet and historian of Italian literature”.⁸

As Bulgarin wrote in a July 1823 letter to Grech, he edited and published a newspaper in Russia with the intention to pave his way to France, to have people comment after he would have left for France someday: “This is Mr Bulgarin, the editor of the newspapers *Severnyy Arkhiv* and *Literaturnye Listki* [Literary Letters]”.⁹ Indeed, his tactic did work for many years: in the 1830s, he became the most popular Russian author in France, having his works translated and published in book form as well as in periodicals – the latter including *L'Europe littéraire*, *Le journal de la littérature nationale et étrangère*, *La Revue du Nord et principalement des pays germaniques*, and more.¹⁰

The periodical run by Bulgarin and Grech made a name for itself thanks, among other things, to the feuilletons penned by the former, which were published twice a week. Bulgarin was the first to introduce this genre in Russia, based on his experience from Vilnius and Warsaw. His articles frequently touched upon matters relating to France. Most often, his focus revolved around stereotypes,¹¹ language,¹² and the war

⁷ Tadeusz Bułharyn, ‘Bitwa pod Kulmem. Sierpnia 30 roku 1813. Wyjątki z pamiętnika polskiego oficera Tadeusza B.’, *Tygodnik Wileński*, 10 (1820), 124–32; *id.*, *Wspomnienia ob Hispanii* (Санкт-Петербург, 1823).

⁸ ‘List Pełczyńskiego do Jeżowskiego’, in *Korespondencja 1815–1823*, iii (Kraków, 1913), 20.

⁹ ‘Письмо Ф.В. Булгарина Н.И. Гречу от 16.07.1823’, in Рейтблат, *Фаддей Булгарин: идеолог*, 331.

¹⁰ Екатерина А. Аргюх, ‘Ф.В. Булгарин во французской прессе 1830-х годов: в поисках признания’, in Абрам И. Рейтблат (ed.), *Ф.В. Булгарин – писатель, журналист, театральный критик* (Москва, 2019), 363–76.

¹¹ Ф.Б., ‘Длижанс или всякая всячина (Письмо Гречу)’, *Северная пчела*, 51 (1828).

¹² Ф.Б., ‘Предсказания на 1927 год’, *Северная пчела*, 3 (1827).

of 1812. To Bulgarin's mind, the Russian elite used French too often, forgetting about their mother tongue, which many of them mastered poorly and made mistakes whilst using it. He believed that the Russian elite ought to have a command of French (as would be expected from Europeans) but should use Russian on a daily basis. He described this particular problem in one of his first reports for the Third Department. In his opinion, the Russian intelligentsia received quite a superficial home education (in most cases, from French private tutors), which all too often left them without the basic knowledge about the world and made them perceive every event or occurrence through the French prism: they would read French literature and press, speak French all the time, and relax in France. "Every single thing that has been, and is, in France seems for them to be ideal and worthy of use, regardless of the situation. They regard the principles of the French Encyclopaedists, which they call 'the philosophy', to be human wisdom at its highest".¹³ In the dispute between the West-oriented *zapadniks* and the Slavophiles, Bulgarin tried to prevaricate, but his views were much closer to those of the Occidentalists.¹⁴ And, he was certainly not uncritical toward France.

III THE THIRD DEPARTMENT

In his reports for the Third Department, Bulgarin most frequently informed on the relations between Poles and Frenchmen. After the December 1825 experience, Tsar Nicholas I was very much afraid of a new uprising, and this (among other premises) prompted his consent for the formation of the Third Department, a significant task

¹³ Фаддей В. Булгарин, 'О цензуре в России и книгопечатании вообще', in Абрам И. Рейтблат (ed.), *Видок Фиглярин. Письма и агентурные записки Ф.В. Булгарина в III отделение* (Москва, 1998), 46.

¹⁴ Piotr Głuszkowski, 'Wpływ Tadeusza Bułharyna na rozwój rosyjskiej myśli społecznej I połowy XIX wieku', in Łukasz Adamski and Sławomir Dębski (eds), *Myśl i słowo. Polsko-rosyjski dyskurs ideowy XIX wieku* (Warszawa, 2014), 83–102. Following the publication of Petr Chaadayev's philosophical letters, two currents of socio-political thought appeared in Russia in the 1830s: Slavophiles assumed that Russia should go its own way without looking back at the other nations, whereas the Occidentalists claimed that Western-style reforms were necessary for further development of the country and state.

of which was to nip in the bud any possible rebellion, insurrection, or revolution. Before 1830, Bulgarin sporadically touched in his reports upon political issues related to France. One of his reports analysed the European states' impact on the political views in Russia.¹⁵ His view of Austria, which to his mind endeavoured to sow confusion in Russia and, circumstances permitting, trigger a revolution, was highly critical.¹⁶ For a change, his assessment of England's attitude toward the political situation in Russia was positive. In his opinion, the English government was not interested in fomenting unrest in Russia, contrary to some members of English clubs and individual diplomats involved in distributing revolutionary literature into Russia. As for France, he found that "the French government does not participate in disseminating revolutionary ideas at all. It has to be borne in mind, though, that Paris still remains the heart of demagogic associations".¹⁷ Then he explained that Parisian Masonic lodges have their contacts worldwide, as he could personally experience when living in Russia. Albeit the lodges were wound up in the Empire in 1822, their numerous former members did not sever their relations with the 'brotherly' lodges from other countries. Thus, Bulgarin made it clear that one should better beware those returning from Paris, as French revolutionaries operated in Petersburg and Moscow via their Russian partners who were 'politically hypnotised' by them and supplied with the indispensable literature.¹⁸

France became the main topic in the reports for the Third Department after the July Revolution broke out. Despite his cooperation with the secret police having been discontinued for more than six months, Bulgarin wrote a report on the occurrences in France and their echoes in Russia. According to him, the revolutionary events in France and Belgium were enthusiastically received by a significant portion of the Russian intelligentsia, particularly those residing in St. Petersburg:

¹⁵ Фаддей В. Булгарин, 'Записка о влиянии иностранных держав на политический образ мыслей в России', in Рейтблат (ed.), *Видок Фиглярин*, 200–3.

¹⁶ Until 1830, Bulgarin vainly strove for sparking a war between Russia and Austria, counting that the then-Austrian Galicia would thereby be included in the Kingdom of Poland. He notified the Third Department in his reports that the Poles in the Austrian partition were waiting for a signal to start a rising against the Habsburgs and join the Russian Empire.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 203.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

“They are mad with joy and are making use of the situation in order to pronounce their own views in various situations”.¹⁹ A majority of the bourgeoisie shared their joy, too, without getting emotionally involved in what was going on, confining to talking about it as an interesting and vital occurrence in European politics. “The common voice of indignation against Charles X reverberated in Russia. From the chosen one to a vagabond, everyone is claiming the same thing: ‘The brute took his reward!’ He did not observe the law, he violated the oath, and thereby he has deserved that he is receiving!”²⁰ According to Bulgarin, the Russians reluctantly responded to the attempt at restoring the House of Bourbon made by the king of France, since in the latter half of the 1820s, many influential politicians in Russia viewed Charles’s politics in a negative light. Bulgarin wondered why they acted to the detriment of reinforcement of the conservative rule in France. He advised Benckendorff in a report that, instead of looking for secret associations in Petersburg or Moscow, he had better take a closer look at Nicholas I’s closest circle, possibly preventing a possible revolution in Russia. By the early 1830s, many former Decembrists held high positions in the Empire’s administration and army; in the subsequent years, their number was growing.²¹ The echoes of this report, including the warnings against those closest to the emperor, are reflected in the Third Department’s report prepared, on an annual basis, at the year’s end for Nicholas I.²² In a number of his reports, Bulgarin made it apparent that the press could be used to control Russia’s public opinion to prevent possible unrest.

From 1815 on, Bulgarin consistently spoke against upheavals and revolutions in Europe, valuing the peace and order elaborated at the Congress of Vienna. Through his reports and articles, he made efforts to prevent the dissemination of riots in Europe. In 1831, he watched with concern the policy pursued by France and appealed to the tsar, via the Third Department, that the events in Europe be

¹⁹ Фаддей В. Булгарин, ‘Толки о революции во Франции’, in Рейтблат (ed.), *Видок Фиглярин*, 393.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Владимир А. Шкерин, *Декабристы на государственной службе в эпоху Николая I* (Екатеринбург, 2008).

²² Фаддей В. Булгарин, ‘Картина общественного мнения в 1830 году’, in Марина В. Сидорова and Екатерина И. Щербакова (eds), *Россия под надзором: отчеты III Отделения 1827–1869: Сборник документов* (Москва, 2006), 70–1.

attentively followed and responded to before another revolution broke out. According to Bulgarin, after Louis Philippe came to power, an alliance between France, England, and Austria targeted against Russia became highly plausible: "Not so much the French government as the group of liberals, which presently have a decisive say in England and France and are controlling the governments there, are striving for it".²³ As evidence for it he quoted the covenantal policy of Austria concerning the November Insurrection in Poland of 1830–1 and the gossip being disseminated about Austrian Galicia's possibly joining the Kingdom of Poland. This time, Bulgarin's concerns were rightly belittled. It is worth bearing in mind, though, that until 1831 his reports and letters were often forwarded to the tsar himself, and both Alexander von Benckendorff and Maximilian von Fock, head of the Empire's secret police, highly valued his political intuition.

After the outbreak of the November Insurrection in the Russian partition, Bulgarin intensified his collaboration with the Third Department, engaging himself as a political journalist. He used all means possible to prevent the uprising from spreading, locally and internationally. In several feuilletons and reports, he persuaded his readers, and Benckendorff himself, that the Polish insurrection was not a nationwide burst but a revolt of a handful of young officers and noblemen who had yielded to the French demagogy. "Would you please admit, Messieurs the Revolutionaries, that the reason behind your revolt has been your compassion for the French revolution, rather than oppression from Russia",²⁴ ascertained he in his newspaper. He also referred to Vasily Ushakov, a friend of his and a writer (basically forgotten today), stating that "the French demagogues kindled the fire of defiance in a courageous but reckless nation".²⁵ The revolutionary ideas have penetrated via Belgium and some German countries into Poland, which by no means is to say that a majority of Poles fail to appreciate the grace they have received from Alexander I and Nicholas I, Bulgarin argued in *Severnaya Pchela*.²⁶ He did not doubt that no uprising

²³ Фаддей В. Булгарин, 'Propos dans un comité particulier chez M. Bourgoïn. D'après les rapports d'un Polonais', in Рейтблат (ed.), *Видок Фиглярин*, 409–10.

²⁴ Ф.Б., 'Современная политика: Несколько замечаний на последнюю польскую революцию', *Северная пчела*, 69 (1831).

²⁵ В.У., 'Письмо Булгарину из Москвы', *Северная пчела*, 248 (1831).

²⁶ Ф.Б., 'Размышления о нынешней польской революции', *Северная пчела*, 73 (1831).

would have erupted had Russia made, just in time, specific steps to prevent the penetration of revolutionary ideas from France, itself respecting the Constitution of the Kingdom of Poland.²⁷ This attempt at throwing the responsibility for the November Insurrection on the French did not meet with understanding from Benckendorff, though.

In his reports, Bulgarin referred several times to Russia's ailing cultural policy. He observed that the Russian language and Russian literature should integrate all the inhabitants of the Empire, like in ancient Rome or in the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. He gave seventeenth-century France as an example, as it "forever annexed the Germanic provinces subdued by it, wherein nowadays only the peasantry speaks German, and which are no inferior in their patriotism to Normandy or Burgundy".²⁸ Bulgarin did not doubt that France was successful in this respect thanks to its *belles-lettres* and culture, as a broad concept, the interest in which the French managed to arouse in the local elites. The writer found it deplorable that the Russian authorities completely neglected this particular aspect and were unwilling to take advantage of the French and Polish experience. When the insurrection was still on, he proposed specific steps that could have been taken not only to integrate the Kingdom of Poland with the Empire but also to show that an alliance with Russia was the only chance for preserving the identity of Poles, as opposed to conspiracies with Austria or France.²⁹

IV NAPOLEON

France was described in Bulgarin's numerous books, including the renowned novel *Ivan Ivanovich Vyzhigin* [Иван Иванович Выжигин] set in the 1812 war realities. The novel is worth commenting on at some length as it once drew the attention of Tsar Nicholas I, who in 1830 recommended it to his subjects despite its doubtful literary value and his evident personal lack of sympathy for the author.³⁰ On the

²⁷ For more, see Głuszkowski, *Barwy polskości*, 177–95.

²⁸ Фаддей В. Булгарин, 'Записка о Северной пчеле', in Рейтблат (ed.), *Видок Фиглярин*, 438.

²⁹ Фаддей В. Булгарин, 'Рассуждения зденшних поляков', in Рейтблат (ed.), *Видок Фиглярин*, 420.

³⁰ 'Внутренние известия', *Северная пчела*, 2 (1831).

one hand, Bulgarin played there on the national and patriotic string, which the Russians found the most sensitive, as he took up the topic of the 'patriotic war', with Moscow burnt down, hundreds of thousands killed, and a significant part of Russia's territory devastated. On the other, he portrayed French army officers as heroic and honourable knights whose prowess and valour was all the more evident against the numerous marauders pillaging Russia. According to Bulgarin, the core staff of Napoleon's army observed the code of honour, the destructions and looting having resulted from the activity of the forayers, who, after all, come into being alongside any army. "Napoleon and his generals are not commending this [i.e. the brigandage] – moving columns have been formed of the French and our Lithuanians for persecuting the forayers and depredators",³¹ one of the characters said. As opposed to the later combats – for instance, the Crimean War – it was a war of honour, in which both sides respected each other: the captives were kept in decent conditions, the wounded were dressed and treated identically, regardless of their nationality, the combat was pursued in line with the art-of-warfare principles, and nobody would fear that the enemy might behave unethically.³²

After the defeat of the November Insurrection, Bulgarin retreated from politics: he suspended his cooperation with the Third Department, left St Petersburg, and avoided discussing politics in his feuilletons. Despite his fear of censorship, he never ceased to praise Napoleon I. His positive portrayal of the French Emperor, bordering at times on admiration, was a remarkable act of courage on his part. In 1812, the Orthodox Church in Russia presented Napoleon as the Antichrist.³³ This attitude somewhat changed after his death, but he remained a demonic figure evoking unambiguously negative associations in Russian historical memory. Bulgarin consistently fought this image by describing Napoleon's genius campaigns and showing, in parallel, how great a deed was the 1812 defeat of the "conqueror of half the Europe". He also emphasised that Russians had no reason to be ashamed that they had earlier lost to Napoleon several times, for, unlike almost all the

³¹ Фаддей В. Булгарин, 'Петр Иванович Выжигин', in *Иван Выжигин* (Москва, 2002), 401.

³² *Ibid.*, 383.

³³ Николай К. Грунский, 'Наполеон в русской художественной литературе', *Русский филологический вестник*, xl (1898), 100–20.

others, they wrestled with him as equals. Bulgarin formulated this thought most expressly in the 1840s, as part of his memories from Tilsit, where the peace was signed between Russia and France.

The two rulers appeared there: the one of the North, and the one of the West; the former was strong owing to his pure heart and the public opinion, the latter was a commander of genius, whose name was intimidating to the whole of Europe – and both of them held a brave and magnificent army. The thought of two empires, the Eastern and the Western one, cropped up spontaneously in my head. There was no one to care for England onshore; the other states had long lost their voting power. There were only two autonomous rulers in the world: Tsar Alexander and Emperor Napoleon.³⁴

In Bulgarin's opinion, a division of Europe into two mutually cooperating camps would have been the best solution for the European civilisation, preventing any further bloodshed at the same time. This was, incidentally, one reason why Bulgarin opted for a 'holy alliance' that would bring about lasting security in Europe.

In his feuilletons, Bulgarin argued that Napoleon's rule was pretty beneficial for Europe. The German countries served as one example: without the Emperor of France, they would not have formed the Customs Union (*Zollverein*), to which they owed their economic powerfulness.³⁵

In the 1840s, Bulgarin openly stated that he had admired Napoleon already in his youth, considering him one of the most illustrious commanders in the entire history of military art. He compared him to Alexander Suvorov, the centrepiece and icon of the Russian army:

There are few such commanders as Napoleon and Suvorov who, like those two, could move the hearts of their soldiers, each along the lines of the spirit of his nation. Both Napoleon and Suvorov did know that if they had not enkindled their people, reach for their hearts, no outstanding achievements could have possibly been awaited from them ... Since the very first years of my youth, I considered Napoleon an eminent man, and instinctively refused to believe the lies contrived against him. When I saw, with my own eyes, the France he had created out of the revolutionary chaos; when I got an earful of the stories told by the witnesses about what it was like in France before Napoleon came, and even before the revolution,

³⁴ Фаддей В. Булгарин, *Воспоминания* (Москва, 2000), 338.

³⁵ *Id.*, 'Tutti Frutti', *Северная пчела*, 151 (1844).

I then confirmed my belief that Napoleon was a combination of two types of genius: the military and the governmental or administrative one, which is an extremely rare a trait amongst people.³⁶

An image of the French Emperor of genius, who was honest and human throughout, was still unpopular in Russia in the late 1830s and early 1840s, so Bulgarin did his best to have numerous translations of articles on Napoleon, showing him in a positive light, published in *Severnaya Pchela*.³⁷ Nikolay Grech, the newspaper's co-editor, aptly referred to Bulgarin as a 'Napoleon-phile'.³⁸ According to Abram Reitblat, Bulgarin managed to alter the image of Napoleon in Russia. Whereas until the 1840s, the French Emperor was showed in an unambiguously negative fashion, from the Spring of Nations onwards, let alone during the Crimean War, increasingly numerous opinions supported Bulgarin's views.³⁹

During the Spring of Nations, Bulgarin openly wrote that humanity owed gratefulness to Napoleon for "the taming of the blood-thirsty beast inimical to science, the arts, industry, and progress in general. The beast is named *revolution*; with Napoleon, it was silent like a lamb!".⁴⁰

It was not until the European revolution that Bulgarin could have vented his fascination with Napoleon, irrespective of the censorship. He described the situation in Europe in almost each of his feuilletons dated 1848. Seen against the 1848 revolutionaries, Napoleon appeared as a saviour of France, who at the century's turn suppressed the revolution and prevented its flooding across Europe. Bulgarin was absolutely sure that the new 'reformers', who had come to power

³⁶ *Id.*, *Воспоминания*, 203.

³⁷ For example, Сальванди, 'Сражение и Наполеон', *Северная пчела*, 86 (1837); 'Наполеон и Хладни', *Северная пчела*, 257 (1838); 'Литературные мнения Наполеона', *Северная пчела*, 4 (1839); Е. Барет, 'Сапожник. Эпизод из жизни Наполеона', *Северная пчела*, 291 (1839).

³⁸ П.С. Усов, 'Ф.В. Булгарин в последнее десятилетие его жизни (1850–1859 гг.)', *Исторический вестник*, 8 (1883), 328.

³⁹ Николай Дубровин, 'Наполеон в современном ему русском обществе и русской литературе', *Русский вестник*, 2, 4, 6–7 (1895); Алексей А. Васильев (ed.), *Наполеон. Легенда и реальность. Материалы научных конференций и Наполеоновских чтений. 1996–1998* (Москва, 2003).

⁴⁰ Фаддей В. Булгарин, 'Заметки, выписка и корреспонденция', *Северная пчела*, 49 (1848).

resulting from the upheaval, were the “people who for their personal profits are ready to set fire on their fatherland and then pour blood onto the fire. Their hatred toward Napoleon is completely understandable, for he had an iron hold of them ...”⁴¹

Bulgarin realised how great was the effort he had made to demythologise the figure of Napoleon. “There is no such lie and no such indignity in the world that Napoleon would not have been exposed to. The main factory of all the lies is located in England ... My intent is not to justify or excuse all the deeds of Napoleon; yet, I believe that his honour was all too frequently denied precisely for what he should have been praised”.⁴²

V

THE CRIMEAN WAR

The Crimean War marked a particularly important period in the Russo-French relations. Over the preceding hundred-odd years, Russia had been waging victorious wars against Turkey, which led to a considerable expansion of its territory and prestige in the Caucasus, the Black Sea region, and the Balkans. After the relatively easily won war of 1828–9, a peace treaty was concluded in Adrianople, which granted Russia a new territory and gave independence to Greece and autonomy to Serbia, Moldavia, and Walachia.⁴³ Ridden by internal struggles, Ottoman Empire was not capable of rivalling the Nicholas-ruled Russia. The subsequent years confirmed its weakness: the Russian army intervened to protect the Porte against the forces of Egyptian pasha Muhammad Ali in 1833. The Turkish-Egyptian war would have most probably led to another defeat of the High Porte, had Turkey not sought help from England, Russia, Austria, and Prussia. This led to Turkey’s eventual getting out of the dominant influence of Russia, with an informal protectorate of the four powers installed instead of it. This doubtlessly marked a failure of Russian diplomacy.

⁴¹ *Id.*, ‘Журнальная всякая всячина’, *Северная пчела*, 244 (1848).

⁴² *Северная пчела*, 276 (1848).

⁴³ Bulgarin described this war in vast amounts of detail; see Фаддей В. Булгарин, *Картина войны России с Турцией в царствование Императора Николая I* (Санкт-Петербург, 1830).

The 1840s decade marked Nicholas I's strife for renewing the 1814 treaty of Chaumont, which had been targeted against France.⁴⁴ The tsar placed his high hopes in England, neglecting the change that had taken place not only in that particular country but also in Europe's geopolitical situation over the previous decades. Despite no signs of interest from the English government, the Russian diplomacy repeatedly offered London to have Turkey partitioned. Nicholas could not understand that since the mid-1830s, England had been drawing considerable profits from the trade with Turkey, which within a short time had exceeded the commercial turnover with Russia.⁴⁵ In the 1850s, which saw a French-Russian dispute over the custody of the safety of Christians, not only did England neglect the idea to support Nicholas I's policies, but it was intensively getting prepared for a war with Russia.⁴⁶

Despite the unfavourable political situation, the Russian tsar believed that by having his troops enter Moldavia and Walachia, he would take little risk as the Ottoman Empire could only count on support from France,⁴⁷ and he would relatively easily defeat their joint forces. However, the tsar's calculation was highly exaggerated as it did not consider England joining the war whilst Austria would stay neutral. Before 1854, however, it had seemed that France, not to say England, would confine themselves to diplomatic notes. The situation changed after the Russians won at Sinope and a rapid collapse of Turkey became plausible.⁴⁸

Since the beginning of 1854, the war against Turkey was the dominant subject-matter in *Severnaya Pchela*. Despite Bulgarin's incessant squabbles with censors, the authorities fully trusted the editorial board, and the newspaper was the only periodical allowed to publish political news based on foreign newspapers (in the form of reprints, summaries, or comments). Although by the middle of the nineteenth century, there was no classical 'fourth estate' domesticated in Russia

⁴⁴ Михаил Н. Покровский, *Дипломатия и война царской России в XIX столетие. Крымская война и завоевание Кавказа* (Москва, 2016), 110.

⁴⁵ Евграф Н. Серчевский, *Обозрение Оттоманской империи Молдавии, Валахии и Сербии* (Санкт-Петербург, 1854); Фаддей В. Булгарин, 'Журнальная всякая всячина', *Северная пчела*, 68 (1854).

⁴⁶ Евгений В. Тарле, 'Крымская война', in *Сочинения в 12 томах*, viii (Москва 1959), 177–205.

⁴⁷ Покровский, *Дипломатия и война*, 123.

⁴⁸ Тарле, 'Крымская война', 406–24.

yet, the Spring of Nations demonstrated how important the press actually was – especially if allowed to comment on political developments on an ongoing basis.⁴⁹ Not only did the popular ‘Bee’, with its 3,000 to 10,000 readers, prove to be capable of efficiently influencing the public opinion inside Russia: its impact extended to the other countries as well – the newspaper was considered among diplomats to be an essential source of information, and some of its articles were reprinted, summarised, and commented by the foreign press.

As far as the Russo-Turkish war was concerned, *Severnaya Pchela* assumed the tactic adopted by Russia’s diplomatic service and persuaded the readers, in every single issue, that the war was being waged to protect Christianity against Turkey’s persecution. The High Porte had thereby broken the conditions of peace that were meant to ensure respect of religious freedom to all the Orthodox Christians within the Ottoman Empire. The newspaper, moreover, repeatedly reassured that Russia was not intending to subdue Turkey or seize its territory, which – however far from what Nicholas I actually planned – was an excellent means of reinforcing Russia’s position as a peacefully inclined ‘gendarme of Europe’. Bulgarin endeavoured to create an impression that Russia was not lonely as most European countries supported its Eastern policies. ‘News from Turkey’ was *Severnaya Pchela*’s permanent column during the Crimean War, along with ‘The Christians’ Uprising in the East’, which mainly dealt with persecutions of Orthodox Christians and their attempts at fighting against their oppressors. The editors drew information from their own correspondents and readers as well as from reprints from other papers. Quoting the German press, they informed their readers that “Seeing that Russia was ready to fight for her holy cause against Europe entire, the Orthodox Christians grew rapidly imbued with a warlike spirit, feeling that time has finally come to throw off the lawless yoke from the Christians. A rising has begun, which is proliferating quite fast. How will the Sultan’s allies behave, given the prevailing situation? If they want to remain loyal, they ought to suppress the rising and fetter the Christians again”.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Марина Ю. Досталь, ‘Отражение революционных событий 1848–1849 гг. в славянских землях Австрийской империи на страницах газеты *Северная пчела*’, *Славянский Альманах* (2006), 133–66.

⁵⁰ *Северная пчела*, 49 (1848).

Although Bulgarin declared that he would not touch upon political issues in his feuilletons, since a considerable portion of the newspaper was filled with such issues, almost every single issue of *Severnaya Pchela* published his comments on the current events and showed what the author thought of the Crimean War. He did it in a more or less allusive manner, thereby contributing to leveraging society's morale.

Still, in early 1854, Russia would use any and all measures to prevent an anti-Russian coalition – to no avail, however.⁵¹ Bulgarin persuaded his *Severnaya Pchela* readers that England was the actual enemy of Russia. In contrast, France had become part of the coalition, as it were, by coincidence and had no interest whatsoever in waging war against Russia. Almost every single issue of the paper offered news from the war front testifying to the heroism of Russian soldiers and a crisis pestering the Turkish army. Bulgarin referred with relish to the foreign press, trying to pick out articles presenting the Russian point of view – such as news on Christians persecuted by the Turks and anti-Turkish uprisings, England's pragmatic attitude valuing the profits on trade higher than religious freedom, lostness and confusion of the French. For quite a while, the editor was giving his readers a hope that neither England nor France would resolve to enter into the war, limiting themselves to a manifestation. However, when the first clashes between the coalition and Russia occurred, Bulgarin decided to launch an anti-English offensive, showing Britain as a colonial empire negligent towards human rights and ready to incite a war merely for profit.⁵² In the subsequent months, he would compare the English fleet to pirates and the British soldiers to invaders and Tatar hordes. His portrayal of France, which had apparently been dragged into the war by its monarch, a man full of complexes, was completely different: "There is no point talking about France. The French nation is not willing at all to have a war with Russia; they are being drawn by England, in line with their monarch's will".⁵³ He repeatedly stressed that, despite the title of emperor, the new ruler of France is neither a genuine emperor nor a genuine Napoleon: if he were one, he would have never let his country join such a heinous war.

⁵¹ Покровский, *Дипломатия и война*, 106–78.

⁵² Булгарин, 'Журнальная всякая всячина', *Северная пчела*, 53, 59, 120 (1854).

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 59 (1854).

Bulgarin explained France's participation in the war in terms of Napoleon III's overgrown ego; to his mind, this monarch had been elected by the French by coincidence and, mainly, with the *ad-hoc* purpose in mind to fight and eradicate communism and revolution. This random ruler, wanting to equal Napoleon I, had dragged the entire nation into a war from which no profit whatsoever could be obtained:

All the French people sincerely desire peace and concord with Russia, with which there is no reason to quarrel. Like earlier on, France wants to trade with Russia, supply it with its handicraft products and those made at its factories and manufactures, as well as to use Russian makes. This is the sincere and general desire of France, about which French periodicals or newspapers do not dare to write. In contrast, the opinion of France is being expressed in the Belgian newspapers, which are also published in the French language.⁵⁴

In the subsequent year of the war, he explained the conduct of the French similarly: fearing a revolution, they have chosen the lesser evil – the reign of Napoleon III, who has humbled “the blood-thirsty animal in the human form, that is, the communists⁵⁵ and the republicans”.⁵⁶ Nicholas I looked at the Emperor of France with distrust, treating him as a usurper – especially that the French ruler was capable of deftly weaving his way amidst the conservative and revolutionary slogans.⁵⁷ “Who is there to endanger France and her safety? No one, definitely! Should love for the fatherland reveal itself in the French people in the form of defence of Islam, which is hostile to Christianity; and, should their patriotism boil down to sacrifice the fourteen million Christians to the Turkish fanaticism and bestial cruelty?”⁵⁸ Bulgarin tried his best to assure his readers that most of the French people understood that Russia was fighting in their interest as well; his portrayal of the confrontation with the Ottoman Empire was one

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 82 (1854).

⁵⁵ Referring to the followers of Louis A. Blanqui and other radical factions or groups taking part in the revolution.

⁵⁶ Булгарин, ‘Заметки, выписки и корреспонденция’, *Северная пчела*, 65 (1856).

⁵⁷ Jerzy W. Borejsza, ‘„Zasada narodowości” od Wiosny Ludów do wojny krymskiej’, in Grzegorz P. Bąbiak and Jerzy W. Borejsza (eds), *Polacy i ziemia polskie w dobie wojny krymskiej* (Warszawa, 2008), 15.

⁵⁸ Булгарин, ‘Журнальная всякая всячина’, *Северная пчела* (1854), 50.

of Christianity's holy war against Islam and a clash between the two civilisations, highlighting that "for the Turks, Christians – the French included – deserve being hated much in the way the Turkish slaves do: the Greeks, Bulgarians, Serbians, Bosnians, Albanians, Montenegrins, the Druze, or Maronites – that is, just like all the Christians, which are called *dogs* by the Turks and treated by them patronisingly and neglectfully".⁵⁹ It was not his intention to reduce the Crimean War to a holy war waged by Orthodox Russia against the world entire. He sought to prevent the Russians from feeling bereft, and thus he often wrote about the common values shared by the Christian world.

Bulgarin, the author and editor, persuaded his readers that the Englishmen delved into the war calculatingly. He repeatedly pondered why the French were fighting alongside the English in defence of Islam – those who had demonstrated so many times that Christian values were a priority for them. In parallel, he found that moments of hardship were worthy of enduring, for England, let alone France, could not wage war against Russia too long. First of all, Russia was too strong, he remarked; second, there were too many wise individuals living in these two countries to let their governments remain in conflict with Russia, their ally. Whilst France "is presently dormant after an acute nervous attack which occurred in 1848, the poor French soldiers are marching to anywhere their commanders are telling them to go. But France will get awakened one day".⁶⁰

Bulgarin did not doubt that commercial deals with Russia made a significant part of France's economy. Therefore, he was astonished at learning from the French papers, particularly the *Journal des débats*, that the trade turnover with Russia amounted to merely 2 per cent of the country's foreign trade balance. He categorically called such information lies, though – apart from the letters he exchanged with his acquaintances in France – he would not point to the statistics making him believe that such figures were dramatically understated.⁶¹ He would refer several times to the Russian economy, describing it as self-sufficient and capable of undergoing industrial development owing to the war. The latter worked like a catalyser indeed,

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Северная пчела*, 137 (1854).

⁶¹ *Северная пчела*, 82 (1854).

making Tsar Alexander II realise how backward Russia actually was in this field.⁶²

In his last days, Bulgarin was too experienced to expect the French to withdraw from the Crimean War. Reading the French and German press, he knew all too well the reasons why France had joined this war. In parallel, until 1856, he consistently argued that the actual enemy was England: it was the English that perpetrated cruel acts in the war front, sought to debilitate Russia and to subdue Turkey.⁶³ Until the very end of the war, Bulgarin counted that Russia would succeed in driving a wedge between the allies, whose interests in respect of Russia and the Black Sea basin were so different. One cannot resolve today whether the articles penned by this author contributed, in one way or another, to putting an end to the war. They indeed strongly impacted Russia's society, which perceived the English, but not the French, as the main enemy. It also informed the mentality of the Russian politicians, who after Nicholas I's death started to probe what terms could be offered to France in order to make it accept Russia's capitulation. The opinions on French people, always positive or neutral, appearing in Russia's major opinion-forming newspaper contributed to a thaw in the atmosphere of the peace talks in which the French party had been involved since October 1855.⁶⁴

VI SUMMARY

Over the forty years of Bulgarin's literary and political activity, he repeatedly addressed the topics of France and Russian-French relations in the newspaper he edited, the books he wrote, and in the reports he compiled for H.I.M. Own Chancellery's Third Department. Being a Pole and a former officer with the French army, who had turned into the editor of an influential paper, he frequently had to manoeuvre and present his views in a veiled fashion, to prevent his *Severnaya Pchela* from closing down by the censorship. For many years, he attempted to break the

⁶² Валерий А. Степанов, 'Крымская война и экономика России', in Jerzy W. Borejsza (ed.), *The Crimean War 1853–1856. Colonial Skirmish or Rehearsal for World War? Empires, Nations, and Individuals* (Warszawa, 2011), 275–98.

⁶³ *Северная пчела*, 76, 82, 170, 203 (1855).

⁶⁴ Дмитрий А. Милютин, *Воспоминания 1843–1856* (Москва, 2000), 400–1.

anti-French prejudices among the Russian elite, stemming from the 1812 war. Moreover, he was one of the very few Petersburg-based political commentators to show Napoleon positively, writing about his military and political genius – thus prominently contributing to de-mythologise this figure and raise his profile among Russians.

France aroused the highest interest in Bulgarin in the breakthrough moments of the July 1830 Revolution, Poland's November Insurrection, the Spring of Nations, and the Crimean War. Napoleonic wars frequently reappeared in his literary works. Until 1831, based on his cooperation with Fock and Benckendorff, Bulgarin directly influenced the Russian Empire's policies. From 1837 onwards, he focused on running his newspaper.

Bulgarin was the first in Russia to have appreciated the powerfulness of the press and showed how social opinion could be influenced. In the 1850s, already an old man, during the Crimean War he engaged in political journalism, trying in parallel to contribute to bringing about peace with France as soon as practicable. As opposed to most of the Russian newspapers, *Severnaya Pchela* did not show the conflict with the anti-Russian coalition in terms of a religious war between the Orthodoxy and the united forces of Islam and Western Christianity – one sufficient reason being that Bulgarin himself was and remained a Catholic. As late as 1854, he still expected a chance for a peaceful conclusion of the war and continued cooperation between Russia and France. His feuilletons and the selections of news published in *Severnaya Pchela* implied that many a Russian did not perceive the French as their enemies. Bulgarin attached high significance to the Russo-French relations. One important reason was that these relations had a significant bearing on the 'Polish question' and, consequently, on the perception of Bulgarin the man and his activities in the Russian Empire.

transl. Tristan Korecki

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