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Cambridge, Massachusetts

The Publication of Muscovite Kuranty

Vesti-Kuranty 1600-1639 gg., prepared by N.I. Tarabasova, V.G. Dem'ianov, and A.I. Sumkina, under the editorship of S.I. Kotkov. Izdatel'stvo "Nauka", Moscow, 1972, 348 pp. 2 rub. 58 kop. 2850 copies.

In 1697, the author of a book entitled Zeitungs Luft und Nutz advised his readers to keep abreast of what was going on in the world by reading newspapers. Perhaps it is all right, he wrote, if merchants and ordinary people do not concern themselves with such things, but "it is a disgrace if state officials are ignorant of who the Nuntius Apostolicus in Vienna is and whether the Pope is named Alexander, Innocent, Paul or Coelestinus. Such things one learns from newspapers and not from books..."¹ 1697 happens also to be a year taken as marking a symbolic break in Muscovite traditions, when for the first time a Tsar set out to travel in the West. Yet in 1697 the advice of the German publicist would have seemed quite unnecessary in Muscovy, where rulers and statemen had for at least a century been acquainted with the newspapers and Flugblätter of the rest of Europe.

At first Muscovite acquisition of news was irregular: the government relied on reports by ambassadors and agents,

¹Cited by Ludwig Salomon, Geschichte des Deutschen Zeitungswesens von den ersten Anfängen bis zur Wiederaufrichtung des Deutschen Reiches, Vol. I, Oldenburg and Leipzig, 1900, pp. 83-84.

interrogations, and manuscript newspapers obtained at unpredictable intervals. In Europe as a whole, the spread of news improved at the beginning of the seventeenth century with the introduction of the first printed newspapers. Gradually these came to be the main source of Muscovite news about the West, and the means of acquiring such material improved. It is significant that by the middle of the seventeenth century, the variously-named compilations of news (vesti) made in the Diplomatic Chancellery came to be called kuranty, presumably after the titles of Dutch newspapers (Couranten).² The establishment of a postal service to the West in 1665 put the acquisition of news on a regular basis that continued down into the reign of Peter the Great. The postal service at first ran bi-weekly through Riga, but soon a second route through Vilno was added and the frequency increased to weekly. Incoming newspapers and pamphlets were sent to the Diplomatic Chancellery, where within a day or so the translators produced the kuranty, digests of news to be read to the Tsar and boyars and used by the

²One of the contributions of the volume under review (p. 6) is to indicate the earliest known use of the term kuranty (1649). The over-simplified comment about the spread of the term (p. 15) is in need of refinement though, since it seems likely that at first the term meant only Dutch newspapers with the title Courante, then came to be a generic term for foreign newspapers or newsletters, and finally came to designate the Muscovite compilations based on them and other sources. In this article, I shall use the term in the latter sense for all of the seventeenth-century vesti-kuranty.

chancellery staff. At most, two or three copies were made; they were guarded as state secrets along with the other official papers in the chancellery archives. In 1702, impressed by the educational and propaganda advantages of the press, Peter took the manuscript kuranty out of the closed circles of the court: he ordered that these compilations of news, supplemented by items on Russian events, be published for general distribution.

The Muscovite kuranty have tended to attract the attention primarily of those scholars who sought to demonstrate the seventeenth-century origins of one of the most important of the Petrine "innovations", the periodical press. It was in connection with the two-hundredth anniversary of Peter's first newspapers at the beginning of the present century that Prince N.V. Golitsyn proposed to the Archaeographic Commission that the kuranty be published.³ He prepared nearly 1000 sheets of texts before the inability of the Commission to agree on what should be included in the edition and lack of funds forced him to abandon the project. Because of the failure of Golitsyn's plan, until now, scholars have had to rely on a few published fragments of kuranty; those fortunate enough to gain access to manuscripts, have tended to use the copies made by Golitsyn (covering primarily the second quarter of the seventeenth century) and a few of the original kuranty which happened by chance to have found their way into the collections

³The history of the effort to publish the kuranty may be found in the introduction to the present volume, pp. 10-13.

of the Academy of Sciences Library in Leningrad. The bulk of kuranty manuscripts have remained in comparative obscurity in a Moscow archive (TsGADA). Now, however, a team of scholars in the Institute of the Russian Language Language of the USSR Academy of Sciences in Moscow has undertaken what one hopes will eventually be a complete edition of kuranty, the first volume of which covers the years 1600-1639.

Vesti-kuranty 1600-1639 gg. (hereafter abbreviated V-K I), like a number of other recent publications of seventeenth and early eighteenth century texts under the editorship of S. I. Kotkov, is intended first of all for students of the history of the Russian language.⁴ Since we have a very incomplete picture of the development of Russian in this period, a great deal can be learned from a series of dated texts which often include the edited first drafts of the translations from which kuranty were compiled. Perhaps the most significant information the kuranty can provide the philologist concerns the seventeenth-century lexicon. This was a period when a variety of foreign contacts made the use of new words both common and unavoidable. Thanks to the extensive indexes in V-K I (about which, more below), it should now be possible to obtain a much better idea than we have had before about the dating of certain borrowings. Moreover, the evidence provided by the kuranty requires

⁴For a list of these editions, see V-K I, p. 4, fn. 5; see also the comments on pp. 14-15 regarding the usefulness of the texts for the philologist.

scholars now to be somewhat more cautious than their predecessors have been in determining on the basis of isolated words the language from which translations were made.⁵

Until the data of the kuranty are collated with those obtained from other sources, conclusions regarding the lexical norms of the seventeenth century should be drawn cautiously. In the case of the kuranty (unlike with some of the other texts published previously) the editors have rightfully played down the possibilities that one can learn much about seventeenth-century spoken Russian from these materials primarily taken from foreign sources and translated into bureaucratic language. It is certainly appropriate to ask how widespread was some of the new vocabulary introduced by the kuranty, and perhaps even more important, whose vocabulary it was. Many of the translators and perhaps less frequently their editors were of foreign origin, which may mean that a foreign word appears in the texts simply because the translator did not happen to know a Russian equivalent or was compromising

⁵For example, the Russian text of a translation from a German newspaper simply transcribes the French word chevalier as found in the original (V-K I, p. 148, fol. 17). In this case, the word was obviously unassimilated; in other cases, one finds that words of foreign origin had come into common use in the chancellery language. One example is the term zlotye chervonnye (deriving ultimately from the name for the standard Polish gold ducat, the czzerwony zloty). The term appears in a number of instances in the kuranty but does not indicate a Polish origin of the texts. Cf. one attempt that has been made to use the term as proof of the Polish origin of a translated pamphlet; in E. Malek, "'Povest' ob astrologe Mustaedyne"--neizuchennyi pamiatnik perevodnoi literatury XVII v.," Trudy Otdela drevnerusskoi literatury, Vol. XXV (1970), p. 243.

and using a kind of bastardized Russian. All too rarely do we know the identity of the translators, although to some extent this can be established by examination of the administration records from the Diplomatic Chancellery.

As the editors of V-K I mention in passing (p. 14), the kuranty provide material for the literary scholar as well as the philologist. In particular, one finds along with the ordinary short news items a variety of tales about remarkable events, as well as propagandistic writings often in the form of speeches or letters.⁶ Such works unquestionably exercised some influence in the development of new tastes and genres in the literature of the court. Moreover, the influence of the kuranty was not confined to the chancelleries, for we know that despite official secrecy, copies of translated pamphlets and newspapers found their way into private collections. By the early eighteenth century, as G. N. Moiseeva has pointed out to me, kuranty and/or Petrine printed newspapers were even used as sources by writers of belletristic works.

By studying the kuranty the historian of Russian culture

⁶See, for example, in V-K I, pp. 62-65, 217-218; also in the kuranty that remain to be published, see, for example, TsGADA, fond. 155, 1665-1666, No. 11, fols. 6-7 and a variety of other items in the same delo discussed in my unpublished dissertation, Seventeenth-Century Muscovite Pamphlets with Turkish Themes: Toward a Study of Muscovite Literary Culture in its European Setting (Harvard, March 1972), pp. 42-60.

in the seventeenth century can learn a great deal about the processes of cultural change in the Muscovite court. The reign of Alexei Mikhailovich in some ways marks a turning point in Russian cultural development, not only because of the church schism but also because of the fascination of the Tsar and his advisors with things western, an interest that led among other things to the establishment of a court theater and a postal service to the West. The postal service was intended primarily to provide a regular supply of news; but the quantity of pamphlets and newspapers it brought in greatly exceeded what was needed simply for the compilation of kuranty. The latter half of the seventeenth century is precisely the time when we see a great increase in the influx of all kinds of literature from the West. Those involved in its translation and spread were the same individuals responsible for producing the kuranty in the Diplomatic Chancellery. A study of the kuranty is simultaneously a study of the "circle" in the Diplomatic Chancellery from which issued a variety of cultural innovations in seventeenth-century Muscovy.

For the historian, the kuranty are also of great value for the light they throw on Russian relations with the West in the seventeenth century. They reveal that the Muscovite government had much greater knowledge of happenings outside its borders than the ambassadorial reports (stateinye spiski) would lead one to

believe.⁷ In some cases, items in the kuranty had a direct influence on government policy.

In view of the foregoing considerations, we can see that the appearance of V-K I is both important and timely. The editors should be complimented on their decision to publish kuranty and on their careful execution of the task. Yet I have a number of specific critical observations that might be taken into account both by the user of V-K I and by those in charge of preparing subsequent volumes in the series.

The first of my points concerns the choice of materials for inclusion in the edition. The editors have been fortunate in receiving the assistance of TsGADA archivists in searching out vesti-kuranty in a number of foreign relations fondy. This means that the present collection of texts is much fuller than that assembled by Golitsyn. Golitsyn and others believed that the kuranty were first compiled only in 1621, whereas V-K I now provides a few translated vesti and compilations made from them from as early as 1600. This would suggest that Muscovite translations of newsletters probably began soon after such works first began to circulate in Europe.

⁷Cf. M. A. Alpatov, "Chto znal Posol'skii prikaz o Zapadnoi Evrope vo vtoroi polovine XVII v.," Istoriia i istoriki, Istoriografiia vseobshchei istorii. Sbornik statei, Moscow, 1966, pp. 89-129. Alpatov exaggerates the importance of stateinye spiski and pays too little attention to kuranty.

Despite their apparent thoroughness in preparing V-K I, the editors leave rather vague the definition of precisely what went into the collection and what was excluded. They include reports written by agents like Isaac Massa and Melchior Beckmann, "which are not vesti-kuranty but which have a direct relationship to their history" (p. 16), since in addition to relating the activities of the agents, the reports contain sections of "news items." Yet as the editors point out (p. 5), the information flowing into Muscovy came from a variety of sources, not the least important of which were interrogations (rassprosnye rechi) of people coming from abroad, be they captives, merchants, diplomats, or Orthodox clergy. In addition to these interrogations, a number of separate pamphlets that often had little to do with news of real events were included among the kuranty. One might suggest, therefore, that since the compilers of the kuranty did not limit themselves to newsletters or printed newspapers, perhaps the publishers of the kuranty should include all rassprosnye rechi and translations of pamphlet literature, even though such materials might not be found with the compilations from Western news sheets in the archives.

It might be objected that such inclusions would broaden the scope of the edition to the point where it would become unmanageable. Granting this, one must still wonder about the inclusiveness of the present edition. The editors have searched in the archival deposits dealing with relations between Muscovy

and northern European states, but what about those dealing with relations with the Habsburg Empire and Poland, or the Grecheskie and Malorossiskie dela? I cannot vouch for the materials of the first half of the seventeenth century, but I do know that in the second half, the Pol'skie dela contain a wealth of translations of all kinds of pamphlets, many of which rightfully deserve to be classified with the kuranty. The Greek affairs deposits contain letters from the Constantinople Patriarch and other Orthodox clergy in which there are the same kinds of narratives of events that one finds in Massa's letters from Haarlem, even though the sources for the missives of the Greek clergy were not printed newspapers.⁸ One hopes that further searches in TsGADA will be broadened to include deposits not yet touched.

In this connection it would be worthwhile to attempt to clarify the fate of the archival holdings of kuranty since Alexei Mikhailovich's death in 1676. We know that the archive of the Tsar's Privy Chancellery contained practically a complete set of kuranty and many translated pamphlets.⁹

⁸For the Pol'skie dela, see some passing references in A. I. Rogov, Russko-pol'skie kul'turnye sviazi v epokhu vrozozhdeniia (Stryikovskii i ego khronika), Moscow, 1966, pp. 260-261; on the Grecheskie dela, see N. F. Kapterev, Kharakter otnoshenii Rossii k pravoslavnomu vostoku v XVI i XVII stoletiiakh, 2nd ed., Sergiev Posad, 1914, esp. Ch. VII.

⁹See the opisi compiled in 1676 and published in Dela Tainogo prikaza, Vol. I (= Russkaia istoricheskaia biblioteka, Vol. XXI), St. Petersburg, 1907, cols. 2, 4-6, 10.

On his death, these materials, along with the rest of the documents from the Privy Chancellery, were gradually redistributed among the Prikazy to whose affairs they related. Parts of the Privy Chancellery's kuranty collection have survived intact (in TsGADA, f. 155), but much appears to have been lost.¹⁰ It is a fact that in the eighteenth century, draft copies of kuranty were being used for scrap paper--to bind other archival materials and so on.¹¹ Moreover, one can assume that translations of pamphlets pertaining solely to the affairs of one country ended up not with the main collection of kuranty but in the individual foreign relations file to which they pertained. Even in our own century the kuranty have continued to disappear.¹²

¹⁰The set of kuranty that includes a copy of the first Muscovite postmaster's contract (TsGADA, f. 155, 1665-1666, No. 11) is undoubtedly that listed in the 1676 inventory under the rubric "kuranty for the years 172, 173, 174, and contract of the foreigner Ivan Van Svedin indicating why he brought these news kuranty and various letters to Moscow" (Dela Tainogo prikaza, Vol. I, col. 5). Although the inventory lists kuranty for every year from 1655 to 1676, the present collection in f. 155 (assuming I received all that has been preserved for the period--I was not allowed to see the current opisi) is very spotty up to 1665.

¹¹For example, judging from notations on the reverse of the folios, such would appear to have been the fate of the kuranty in TsGADA, f. 155, 1669, Nos. 9 and 10.

¹²The apocryphal letter of the Turkish sultan copied by Golitsyn (and published from his copy in V-K I, pp. 217-218) occupied fols. 10-16 in what is now TsGADA, f. 155, op. 1, 1621, No. 1, but is now missing (see V-K I, pp. 16, 51).

The shuffling of archival collections that has taken place since the seventeenth century has, among other things, led to the alteration of the original order and division of kuranty texts, a fact which leads me to a second critical observation about V-K I. The question of order and division of the texts is of some importance if one wishes to locate the originals for the Russian translations and to gain an accurate picture of the flow of information into Muscovy. The editors have arranged the texts in chronological order by the dates of the news items, although perhaps a more important chronological indicator to follow would be the date when the news was received and translated.¹³ At the beginning of each set of vesti, along with the dates for the information contained therein, the editors have provided their own heading for the set, usually on the basis of the first heading in the original manuscript. The decision as to what constitutes a "set" of vesti appears, however, to have been made rather arbitrarily, for the first heading in the manuscript usually applies only up to the point where the manuscript contains a

¹³Note in one instance that the wrong date would appear to have been assigned to an item: if item No. 37 (pp. 174-176) were turned in, as its manuscript heading indicates, on March 5 in the year 145 (1637), the September news contained therein must be from 1636, not 1637.

new heading.¹⁴ One very often finds that a new heading occurs at the top of a page; moreover, the new heading and its following text are very often written in a different hand and on different paper from that which preceded. The editors of V-K I have been very careful to note where corrections have been inserted in the texts in a different hand from that of the main scribe, but they do not indicate where paleographic changes of the type I have just mentioned occur. This is a crucial omission, for such data do help in determining where one source used by the compiler of the kuranty ends and where a new source or a whole new set of kuranty begin. If such considerations were kept in mind, the texts in V-K I would be broken up into many more individual units than one finds in the edition as it now stands.

In general, it is preferable to employ a conservative approach in editing texts from manuscripts, i.e., to have a minimum of intervention by the editor between the text and its reader. Where manuscript books are involved, apparent inconsistencies in

¹⁴One can find a number of examples: in item No. 5 (pp. 41-49), the text beginning on fol. 31 does not seem to belong under the heading on fol. 16, since the March dates suddenly switch to November dates; in No. 6 (pp. 50-65), fols. 1-9 appear to have come from one source, not necessarily from Poland, fols. 10-16 were from a second source, and the texts beginning on fols. 17, 40, 49 and 66 were also from separate sources; similarly, new headings mark breaks in No. 17 (pp. 86-95) on fols. 42, No. 22 (pp. 99-116) on fols. 17 and 26, No. 23 (pp. 116-129) on fol. 78; possibly there is a break between fols. 18 and 19 in No. 31 (pp. 155-161).

the order of the text may best be left as is. The kuranty are perhaps an exception to this rule, since the present loosely bound or unbound folders of manuscript were put in that form at a very late date (late 18th or early 19th century?) at the time when the individual sheets making up the long rolls of manuscript had been separated. In some instances, in their conservatism, the editors would seem to have erred; yet in the few cases where they have undertaken to reorder the folios as now found, one likewise must question the decisions that were made (and not explained by any notes).¹⁵ For the early kuranty, whose preservation is spotty and which were compiled from relatively small amounts of source material, such questions of order may not be terribly important, but for the later ones (beginning, say, with the introduction of the postal service in 1665), one can discern definite patterns in the way the compilations were done.¹⁶ Such patterns enable one to

¹⁵The news items in No. 6 (pp. 50-65) begin with a pamphlet published in June which includes information about events in May; the news dated March later in the same number undoubtedly comes from an earlier and a different source. The same may be said for the news ranging from December 1630 to July 1631 (No. 30, pp. 144-155), where the chronology is out of order. In No. 7 (pp. 65-70), internal data would seem to suggest that the editorial rearranging of folios is incorrect. Fol. 279 probably follows fol. 259 (in any event, there is a break between 259 and 244), and fol. 249, on which there is mention of "Krag, the previously-mentioned general of the Saxon elector," would undoubtedly have to follow fol. 275, where he is mentioned for the first time.

¹⁶On this, see Waugh, Seventeenth-Century Muscovite Pamphlets, esp. pp. 45-46, 340-341, fn. 22, and the example on pp. 342-343, fn. 35.

locate the sources for the translations more readily than would otherwise be the case; so it is extremely important to be sure that the order of publishing the texts corresponds as closely as possible to the order of their compilation.¹⁷

A third critical observation may be made about V-K I, with regard to the indexing. On the whole, I have nothing but praise for the indexes that have been provided. In earlier publications of texts by the Institute of the Russian Language, the editors included only indexes of proper names; but in the most recent collection of Muscovite gramoty and in the present book, the indexing has wisely been broadened to include a listing of all words (excepting common abbreviations, numbers, etc.) found in the texts. A random check of this index indicates that it is quite accurate.¹⁸

¹⁷ Consideration of procedures for editing texts in manuscript leads one to make one further observation about V-K I. The corrected and edited draft copies of kuranty reproduced separately in a twenty-page appendix should have been used for the primary texts instead of the fair copies. The minor variants found in the latter could easily have been included in footnotes.

¹⁸ It appears that the omission of "d'iak" (found twice on p. 73 in text No. 11, fol. 10) and the omission of "protiv" (p. 73, No. 12, fol. 17) are rare exceptions. "Efalir" (for chevalier) (p. 148, No. 30, fol. 17) is omitted by the principle adopted of excluding most words noted by the editors with a "tak v rkp.," "since the latter usually are erroneous" (p. 241), but it would seem that in the given instance an exception to the rule might have been in order. There are a few misleading listings in the index of personal names: for example, "Z Bailom" (p. 210, No. 50, fol. 168) produces an entry "Bail" even though the text obviously has in mind an unnamed Venetian ballo in Istanbul. "Brorianson" of the index of personal names is the Dutch publisher Broer Janszoon mentioned in No. 4, fol. 44, of the appendix (p. 225) and again in the fair copy of the same (p. 138, No. 27, fol. 23), where the raised letter "r" has been inserted between the wrong letters by the editors (to produce "Broiarnsona").

The index of geographical names, however, raises some questions. It excludes "microtoponyms"; that is, place names within a city, names of churches, and the like. However, as a result of such limitation, one can find any number of tiny European villages around which the events of the Thirty Years' War swirled, but one cannot find the Cathedrals of St. Stephen in Vienna or of St. Peter in Rome.¹⁹ Nor can one find SS. Stephen and Peter anywhere else in the indexes. Perhaps the index of geographical names need not be restricted as at present.

With these critical comments, I do not wish to leave the impression that V-K I is badly done. The decision to publish the kuranty was extremely important, and the first volume has been produced very well indeed, with a useful introduction indicating the features and significance of the texts, a very precise rendering of the texts themselves (preserving all orthographical variants), and indexes that are clearly a labor of love. One hopes that eventually all the Muscovite kuranty will be published with equal care.

If the publication of kuranty is to serve fully its intended purpose, a next step would be to attempt to locate the originals from which the Russian translations were made, and to publish them in a companion volume. Some, but all too few of

¹⁹The former is found on p. 150 (No. 30, fol. 25) and the latter on p. 136 (No. 26, fol. 13) and again in the draft copy of the same item on p. 223.

them (the editors provide one example in photofacsimile--a German newspaper of 1631) have been preserved in TsGADA; the rest must be sought in part through the offices of institutions such as the Staatsbibliothek in Bremen (which has amassed an impressive collection of old German newspapers) and the Instituut voor Perswetenschappen in Amsterdam (where the collection of old Dutch newspapers has begun).

Daniel Clarke Waugh