F. V. Bulgarin’s novel “Pyotr Ivanovich Vyzhigin” (1831), which takes place against the background of the Patriotic War of 1812, can be considered a forerunner of “War and Peace” by L. N. Tolstoy. It drew first a rather negative criticism. The French edition, published almost immediately after the Russian one, in 1832, included lengthy comments by journalist and literary critic E.-J. Héreau, which have not yet attracted the attention of researchers. It is the purpose of this paper to examine them. Far from the quarrels of the Russian literary scene, Héreau was relatively free from prejudices and passions. On the other hand, his being French could in some cases distort his perception of recent events affecting both France and Russia. Héreau’s comments, many of which contain references to specific historical works and sources, are examined using biographical, historical-cultural, historical-genetic and comparative methods. As the French critic addressed mainly the French public, ignorant of the realities of Russian life, he gave them all sorts of information: basic notions about Russia; judgments about the moral character of Russians; criticism of Bulgarin’s interpretation of some episodes of Napoleon’s Russian campaign. Héreau appears to share in many respects the skepticism of Russian critics. Like them, he seems to regret the fact that the two storylines of the novel, historical and fictional, only occasionally intersect. However, Héreau was more concerned with questions of plausibility. In general, he paid more attention to the historical storyline, criticizing Bulgarin for using Ph. de Ségur as his main source of information.

Keywords: E.-J. Héreau, F. V. Bulgarin, Pyotr Ivanovich Vyzhigin, literary criticism, historical novel, Patriotic War of 1812.
ка Э.-И. Эро, которые до сих пор не привлекли внимание исследователей. Далекий от ссор русских литераторов, Эро был относительно свободен от их предубеждений и страстей. С другой стороны, будучи французом, он мог в некоторых случаях искаженно воспринимать недавние события, затронувшие как Россию, так и Францию. Комментарии Эро, многие из которых содержат отсылки к конкретным историческим трудам и источникам, анализируются с помощью биографического, историко-культурного, историко-генетического и сравнительного методов. Поскольку французский критик адресовался главным образом к французской публике, несведущей в реалиях русской жизни, он постарался представить ей разнообразную информацию: базовые сведения о России; суждения о нравственном облике русских; критика булгаринской интерпретации отдельных эпизодов Русской кампании Наполеона. В результате проведенного исследования стало ясно, что Эро разделял во многом скепсис русских критиков. Как и они, он испытывал сожаление по поводу того, что две сюжетные линии романа, историческая и художественная, лишь изредка пересекаются. Однако Эро больше интересовали вопросы правдоподобия. В целом французский комментатор уделял большое внимание историческому фону, критикую Булгарина за то, что тот использовал Ф. де Сегюра в качестве основного источника своих сведений.

Ключевые слова: Э.-И. Эро, Ф. В. Булгарин, Петр Иванович Выжигин, литературная критика, исторический роман, Отечественная война 1812 г.

Introduction

“Pyotr Ivanovich Vyzhigin”, published in St. Petersburg in 1831, became the third novel by F. V. Bulgarin after “Ivan Vyzhigin” (1829) and “Dimitry the Pretender” (1830). While “Ivan Vyzhigin” was presented as a “moral and satirical novel”, according to the definition of Bulgarin himself, and “Dimitry the Pretender” as a historical novel, then “Pyotr Ivanovich Vyzhigin” had the subtitle “moral and historical novel”. All three novels enjoyed reader success, especially “Ivan Vyzhigin”, which was named “the first Russian bestseller” [Reitblat, 2001, p. 194]. It was the popularity of the first novel that prompted Bulgarin to write its following, which was “Pyotr Ivanovich Vyzhigin”.

The publication of Bulgarin’s novels was immediately followed by their French editions. “Pyotr Ivanovich Vyzhigin” in French edition of 1832 included lengthy comments by journalist and writer Edme-Joachim Héreau (1791–1836), French connoisseur of Russian literature. The action of the novel takes place against the background of the grandiose historical events of the Patriotic War of 1812. Héreau himself was a witness to the Russian campaign of Napoleon, as he spent ten years in Russia from 1809 to 1819. First a tutor in the family of a Russian prince, after Napo-
leon's invasion in 1812, he became, in his own words, “State prisoner in Russia” [Bulgarine, 1832, t. III, p. 244].

The purpose of this paper is to examine the comments by Héreau, which have not yet attracted the attention of researchers. “Pyotr Ivanovich Vyzhigin” drew first a rather negative criticism in Russia. That’s why it seems that such an analysis will make it possible to reveal in what way the perception of the Bulgarin’s text by the French critic converged or differed from the reviews of his Russian colleagues and for what reasons. It can be assumed that free from the prejudices and passions of Russian literary circles, Héreau brought more objectivity to his judgments. At the same time, one cannot ignore that his being French could in some cases distort his perception of historical events painful for both Russia and France.

Methods and material

E.-J. Héreau’s comments to the French edition of Bulgarin’s novel “Pyotr Ivanovich Vyzhigin”, many of which contain references to specific historical works and sources, are examined using biographical, historical-cultural, historical genetic and comparative methods.

After his return to France, Héreau became executive secretary of the liberal “Revue Encyclopédique”. A regular reviewer for the “Foreign books” rubric, he published articles on Russian literature and about such phenomena as censorship in Russia etc. Publications in the “Revue Encyclopédique” introduced the French reader to the literary and journalistic activities of F. V. Bulgarin. In 1828, an article by J. H. Schnitzler reported some remarkable biographical information about him [Schnitzler, 1828, p. 416].

A native of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Faddei Venediktovich Bulgarin (1789–1859) participated with the Russian army in the war of the Fourth coalition of 1806–1807, but went over to the side of Napoleonic France in 1811. His participation in the campaign against Russia can be explained by his Polish origin. Many Poles then believed that Napoleon would restore Polish statehood lost during the partitions. Captured by Prussia in 1814, he was extradited to Russia, which treated him generously due to the desire of Emperor Alexander I to attract Polish sympathies to his side. Having laid down his arms, Bulgarin in a short time managed to create a reputation in journalism and literature, largely thanks to cooperation with N. I. Grech.

Together they were engaged in the publishing of many reputable periodicals. Such publishing activity made Bulgarin an influential person in literary circles. A. S. Pushkin’s words in a letter to P. A. Vyzemsky testify to this: “I am moving from politics to literature, that is, to Bulgarin” [Push-
Pushkin at that time was in a literary controversy with Bulgarin, mixed with indignation for political reasons, since Bulgarin had a reputation as a consultant to the Third Department of the personal office of Emperor Nicolas I. Bulgarine, for his part, did not favor Pushkin, denouncing him as “literary aristocrat” [Feduta, 2015, p. 229–230].

The first publication of Héreau on Bulgarin dates back to the end of 1829, when his review of the novel “Ivan Vyzhigin” appeared in the “Revue Encyclopédique” [Héreau, 1829, p. 136–137]. In the next issue has been published another, more extensive review by Héreau, this time for the Paris edition entitled “Ivan Wijighine, ou le Gilblas russe”. Héreau’s verdict was ambiguous. In his opinion, Bulgarin’s merit consisted in “a bold and faithful portrayal of morals” of Russian society. “As for the interest inspired by the characters and even the hero, it is almost nil, and it is not a skillfully plotted novel that the author wanted to present to us” [Héreau, 1830, p. 429].

It is worth noting that Héreau’s last publication in the “Revue Encyclopédique” dates back to 1831. The reason lies in the change of directors of the journal. In April 1831, M.-A. Jullien de Paris, the founder of the journal, resigned his powers. With the establishment of the July Monarchy, tensions appeared in Russian-French relations. Having lost the opportunity to publish in the “Revue Encyclopédique”, Héreau seems to be out of the situation by writing comments on the French edition of “Pétre Ivanovitch, suite du Gilblas russe”.

Each of four volumes of the French edition was accompanied by comments by Héreau, placed for the most part at the end of the text. The intrigue is based on the love story of Pyotr Vyzhigin with Liza, who at the beginning appears as an orphan. Before marrying Liza, the hero has to overcome many trials. The French edition did not reproduce Bulgarin’s preface, in which he reported that “the war of 1812 in my (his) novel is only an episode, and the novel itself is moralistic” [Bulgarin, 1831, t. I, p. II]. It is clear that in this way he tried to protect himself from criticism in advance. According to Bulgarin: “Everything that Napoleon and his associates say in the novel is not invented by me, but is drawn from the writings to which I refer” [Bulgarin, 1831, t. I, p. I]. It should be noted that Héreau, for his part, constantly referred to historical works on Napoleon’s Russian campaign and memoirs.

**Results**

The originality of the novel by F.V. Bulgarin “Pyotr Ivanovich Vyzhigin” is that it tells about the recent past. But the choice of 1812 as the historical background for a rather trivial love story did the novel vulnerable
to criticism by witnesses and participants of the Patriotic War. Indeed, most contemporary to Bulgarin authors of historical novels like W. Scott. F. Cooper, p. Mérimée, A. de Vigny, preferred to describe events in the distant past. A kind of “payment” for courage was the rather harsh criticism of Bulgarin’s novel by Russian writers, and not only Pushkin’s circle. By the way, Pushkin did not devote a special text to the analysis of this novel. Immediately after its edition, critical reviews were published in the journals “Teleskop”, “Moskovskij Telegraf”. Their authors N. A. Polevoy, N. I. Nadezhdin did not belong to “literary aristocrats”. Some of reviewers were hidden behind anonymity. Later A. A. Bestuzhev and V. G. Belinsky joined the critical voices against “Pyotr Ivanovich Vyzhigin”.

The review by N. A. Polevoy criticized Bulgarin’s ambition “to fit into one and the same work — both pictures of morals, and the events of the gigantic 1812, and the love story of the heroes of the novel, and great historical figures!” The narrow frame of the world of his heroes cannot accommodate huge historical events, which results in an unimaginable mixture of the great and the ordinary. “From this, two main characters appear in the novel: Napoleon and Pyotr Ivanovich Vyzhigin! They go hand in hand, can’t part with each other and make us wonder how the writer did not see this inconsistency!” [Polevoy, 1990, p. 87–88].

N. A. Polevoy was echoed by the anonymous reviewer “M” from the “Telescope”: “Historical scenes, or in general everything that relates to the war of 1812, is so sharply different from the rest — moralistic, like oil differs from water”. According to the scathing critic, Bulgarin showed mainly a talent for historical scenes, as a result of which “Petr Vyzhigin barely drags behind Napoleon on a skinny nag” [“M”, Telescope, p. 357–358].

On the contrary, A. A. Bestuzhev believed that “the historical part is completely consumptive, despite the fact that “Napoleon occupies more space in “Vyzhigin” than the hero of the story himself”. The lack of persuasiveness consists in the author’s superficial argumentation: “To assure that Napoleon went to Russia, deceived by Caulaincourt, that he would be received with open arms, it was possible in 1812, no later than; and even then these rumors were believed only in the Gostiny Dvor” [Bestuzhev, 1981, p. 448]. V. G. Belinsky considered that “Petr Ivanovich completely overshadowed Napoleon, which proved Bulgarin’s inability to paint historical figures, especially such great ones as Napoleon” [Belinsky, 1842]. In general, Russian critical reviews differed in details, but agreed on the main thing — “Petr Ivanovich Vyzhigin” consists of two novels, the storylines of which intersect only from time to time.

Comments by E.-J. Héreau to the French edition were somewhat different from the usual critical review. They contain only analyze, but also
provide information from Russian life, because Héreau addressed for the average French reader, not familiar with life in Russia. So, Héreau gives explanations of the origin and meaning of some Russian words, names and patronymics, diminutive forms from names, traditional forms of addressing equals and superiors, ranks according the Table of ranks etc. He offers information about tea from a samovar, kvass, vehicles such as droshky, kibitka, telega etc. Héreau specifically dwells on the custom of Russian peasants to make the sign of the cross at the entrance to the hut, thereby indicating the piety of the people. It should be noted that Héreau was very accurate every time with regard to his sources. In most cases, he indicated not only the author and the title of the work cited or mentioned by him, but also the place of publication, publisher, year and pages.

The comments talk about the architecture of St. Petersburg, the landscape and sights of its environs. On occasion, Héreau supplements the general information with his own impressions. So, the Kazan Cathedral containing the tomb of M. I. Kutuzov is “unfortunately crushed by the surrounding houses”. Regarding the Yusupov Garden, owned by Prince Yusupov, Héreau also refers to his own memories: “We happened to see in his palace, in Moscow, very beautiful paintings brought by him from France...” [Bulgarine, 1832, t. I, p. 233–234].

The commentator points to those elements of the text that, in his opinion, are erroneous. So, he does not remember that in the vicinity of St. Petersburg there was a place designated as Largolova, but he had to stay many times in the picturesque place Pergola, called “Little Switzerland”, to which the description given by Bulgarin fits well [Bulgarine, 1832, t. I, p. 237]. Apparently he means Pargolovo. When mentioning Krestovsky island, Héreau refers to the enthusiastic testimony of Dupré de Saint-Maure in his “Russian anthology” (Paris, 1823) [Bulgarine, 1832, t. 1, p. 234–236].

Héreau happens to dilute information about the architectural sights of St. Petersburg with anecdotes. So, according to rumors, one Englishman undertook a trip to St. Petersburg solely in order to enjoy the view of the lattice of the Summer Garden, after which he immediately left for London [Bulgarine, 1832, t. I, p. 234]. It is interesting to note that the same anecdote was reproduced by A. Dumas in his “Travelling impressions. In Russia” [Dumas, 1865, p. 49].

Among the comments of Héreau are those in which he corrects the author. Liza, having arrived in Vilna in search of her benefactors, the Shmygailo couple, remains for some time in the house of Pan Morikonsky, where she was given a separate room. But the author forgot that the only free room that remained in the house of was occupied by Morikonsky’s daughter and son-in-law, who came to visit. Another time Bulgarin forgot
that Romuald Schmigaïo does not know French [Bulgarine, 1832, t. II, p. 228].

In addition to a purely informative function, Héreau’s comments perform a moralizing one. As a rule, he reinforces the Bulgarin text with his own observations or makes skeptical judgments on certain issues. According to the novel’s French ambassador, St. Petersburg is the only place in Europe where the fine manners of the Louis XIV epoch have been preserved. Only French abbots were missing. Of course, Héreau is perfectly aware of Bulgarin’s irony. However, he confirms, that “nowhere do we find better manners, a better tone than in high society in Russia, which has faithfully preserved the tradition of fine manners under which our ancient nobility, it is true, sometimes hid its nullity” [Bulgarine, 1832, t. I, p. 239].

Prodigality is also a distinctive feature of the Russian nobility, which neither the author nor the commentator passes by. One of the protagonists, already in his advanced years, recalls how, as an adjutant of Suvorov, he competed with his comrades in prodigality. The entertainment was to burn bank assignments as fireworks. Commenting on this episode, Héreau refers to his own experience of living in Russia: “These traits of madness are rarer today, no doubt among the Russians; and yet we have seen, a few years ago, young madmen, inflamed by wine and gambling, lighting their pipes with banknotes of 10 and 25 rubles” [Bulgarine, 1832, t. I, p. 239].

The commentator also makes a judgment about the corruption in Russia. Mikhail Ivanovich, an old man, recalls that before officials did not give anyone an account of their actions. Since an imperial decree forbade accepting gifts. However, Héreau is skeptical. In his opinion, the decree is unlikely to be able to eradicate the bribery in Russia, because “there is no country where one can make a more just application of this verse of Molère: “There are accommodations with heaven” from the satirical comedy “Tartuffe or the Deceiver” [Bulgarine, 1832, t. I, p. 239–240].

The most critical part of Héreau’s comments relates to the historical background of the novel. Héreay reproaches Bulgarin for drawing his information from Count de Ségur’s ook “History of Napoleon and the Great Army in 1812”, becoming one of the first historical stories about the Russian campaign [Ségur, 1824]. Héreau reproaches him with excessive dramatization of the narrative and too much interest in the psychological side of events. When commenting on some episodes, he wrote “See Ségur” and indicated page for finding analogies.

Héreau himself preferred the work of Colonel J. Chambray “The History of the Expedition to Russia” [Chambray, 1823]. Chambray participated in Napoleon’s campaign in Russia and was taken prisoner in the battle of Berezina. Perhaps their common experience of being in Russian
captivity made Chambray such an authority in the eyes of Héreau, and perhaps the fact that the historian managed to work with documents from the archives of the military department. In any case, his history had a good reputation. Colonel D. P. Buturlin was another historian of the Russian campaign in whom Héreau trusted [Buturlin, 1824].

Bulgarin fully relies on the Ségur’s version in reproducing Napoleon’s famous proclamation addressed to the Grand Army on June 22, 1812 from the imperial headquarters of Vilkovyshki. In it, Napoleon announces the beginning of the Second Polish Campaign and even already thinks about the conditions of the future world: “…it will put an end to the disastrous influence which Russia has exercised for fifty years over the affairs of Europe” [Bulgarine, 1832, t. II, p. 51]. Héreau pointed out that instead of “disastrous influence” with its negative meaning, the original proclamation mentioned “proud influence” of Russia. He refers to Chambray and Buturlin, who reproduced the proclamation in accordance with the original. “M’ de Ségur, in his “History of Napoleon and the Grand Army, said disastrous. May posterity not confirm this last epithet!” [Bulgarine, 1832, t. II, p. 229]. One can say that Héreau’s wish was fulfilled [Kerautret, 2004, t. 3, p. 64].

Héreau also uses the memoirs by S. de Choiseul-Gouffier, from which he quotes about the historical ball at the Zakret estate near Vilna, as well as about the tragic event that preceded it. The architect Schultz did not properly calculate the strength of the foundation for the gallery he built in the garden, that collapsed two days before the arrival of Emperor Alexander I. The guilty architect drowned himself. The novel contains the same story. According to Héreau: “We did not expect, when writing the first note of this chapter, that we were going to find a few pages later, the account of the event which we had judged curious to record there…but it will not be quite a duplication…” [Bulgarine, 1832, t. II, p. 227]. This confession testifies to the method of Héreau’s work. Unlike Bulgarin, he does not accept Choiseul-Gouffier’s hints about a possible collusion between Schultz and the French in order to kill the Emperor and draws a parallel with the suicide of the famous chef-cooker Vatel [Bulgarine, 1832, t. II, p. 7].

Héreau repeatedly refers to his experience in Russia, in order to confirm, or more often to refute Bulgarin’s interpretation of some phenomena. Commenting the scene of a popular gathering to organize resistance to enemy marauding he assures that Bulgarin exaggerated the bloodthirstiness of the Russian peasants. “Prisoner of State at the time of this disastrous war, we have unfortunately witnessed the ill-treatment and some of the excesses to which despair and revenge sometimes carried Russians against those who had invaded their territory, and who insulted even to
their God; several times also, we have been happy intermediary between them. But this exasperation of the Russian people is short-lived; it only manifested itself against enemies taken up arms, rarely against prisoners..." [Bulgarine, 1832, t. III, p.244]. In the public opinion of the July Monarchy, there was great prejudice against the Russians, so Héreau was trying to smooth out the unpleasant impression that the reader could have from the harsh words.

In this way, Héreau’s comments allows to learn some facts from his biography, which is very valuable, since there is little information about his stay in Russia. There is an opinion that he was exiled to Siberia for seven years, from 1812 to 1819) [Wolpert, 2007, p.506]. One can doubt the stay in Siberia attributed to Héreau, especially since he does not confirm this anywhere. Contrary to popular belief, the prisoners of war of the Napoleonic army were kept in the European part of Russia, and Héreau, as follows from his own words, acted as an interpreter with them. Commenting on the episode, where the inhabitants of Moscow cannot believe in its abandonment, Héreau recalls an era of Napoleon’s expulsion from Russia. He happened then to witness similar illusions: “We saw the French prisoners believed their brothers in arms triumphant within the capital of the Russian Empire, when the allied troops were on their way to Paris; and, later, when it was a question of sending them back to their country, they still imagined that they were being deceived, saying that they were intended to form legions that were to be sold to the English, or to populate the Siberian deserts” [Bulgarine, 1832, t. III, p.262].

Bulgarin, followed by Héreau, raised debatable issues of Napoleon’s Russian campaign. There is an episode where Marshal Ney criticizes Napoleon for not using the Guards at the end of the Battle of Borodino on September 7. According to Ney, this error of the Emperor did not allow the Great army to achieve a complete victory over the enemy [Bulgarine, 1832, t. III, p.261]. Indeed, some marshals, including M. Ney, known for his intractable character, expressed dissatisfaction with the unclear outcome of the Battle of Borodino. Héreau notes that Bulgarin once again borrowed information from Ségur, but at the same time he added from himself and put into Ney’s mouth a phrase that he definitely could not say: “We are soon at the end of the world”. According to the critic, in the mouth of Marshal Ney, it sounds implausible. Only a simple soldier could “look at Moscow like the Pillars of Hercules” [Bulgarine, 1832, t. III, p.254].

The theme of implausibility is quite widely present in Héreau’s comments. In one of the scenes, armed Russian patriots catch a Russian police commissar of the French government of Moscow, at the moment when he says a toast to the health of Napoleon. Héreau is quite skeptical: “The
police commissar of the French government! All this goes a little beyond the limits of invention and especially those of plausibility” [Bulgarine, 1832, t. III, p. 263]. Another episode, in which a carriage with women, accompanied by an escort of horsemen, calmly moves through the streets of Moscow, infuriates Héreau with its implausibility, especially the phrase: “They encountered many French soldiers, but none had the audacity to stop them” [Bulgarine, 1832, t. III, p. 240]. Héreau is indignant: “Stronger and stronger! But these are the inconveniences of the historical novel. It is very difficult, not to say impossible, to make the novel and history work side by side, without the latter having to suffer from the proximity” [Bulgarine, 1832, t. III, p. 263].

The position of Héreau commentator in relation to the historical background of the novel is pro-French. He does not strive for objectivity and judges everything from his French point of view and from the height of his personal experience of being in Russia during the tragic events described in the novel.

Discussion

In Russia and in France there is not a single study devoted to the journalistic and literary activities of E.-J. Héreau. However, his name is often mentioned on the pages of works devoted to French journals of the 1820s–1830s, the “Revue Encyclopédique”, F.V. Bulgarin, Russian-French literary relations. Héreau is strongly associated with the “Revue Encyclopédique”, a periodical that introduced the French reader to Russian literature, largely thanks to the mediation of Russian informants, such as S.D. Poltoratsky, Ya. N. Tolstoy, P. A. Vyazemsky [Durylin, 1937, p. 94; Zaborov, 2019, p. 37; Zaborov, 1978, p. 258–266].

Often, Russian writers themselves took the initiative of their publication in French. So, “translations of Bulgarin’s works appeared, as a rule, not as a result of the choice of French editors, but at the initiative of Bulgarin himself” [Artiukh, 2019, p. 365]. Bulgarin resorted to the mediation of N.I. Grech [Artioukh, 2010b, p. 225]. By the way, it seems useful to point out E. A. Artiukh’s erroneous interpretation of Héreau’s phrase in the review on “Ivan Vyzhigin”, when he refers to a French translation which “we knew was in press, and today we come to fulfill this commitment” [Artioukh, 2010a, p. 213; Héreau, 1830, p. 426]. It cannot be “Pyotr Ivanovich Vyzhigin” simply because at the time of this note, in February 1830, the novel had not yet been written. In real, the above phrase means that after a short note on the Russian edition of “Ivan Vyzhigin”, Héreau finally had an opportunity to write on its French edition, as well.
In the 1990s and 2000s, many studies about F. V. Bulgarin were published, in contrast to the previous period, when he was seen, first of all, as a spy of the Third Section and a literary enemy of A. S. Pushkin. A. I. Reitblat did a lot to draw attention to the fate and literary work of Bulgarin [Reitblat, 1990, p. 87]. Nowadays “Pyotr Ivanovich Vyzhigin” is of increasing research interest as the first Russian novel about the Patriotic war of 1812. It is studied by such literary critics as N. N. Akimova, D. Rebecchini, L. N. Kiseleva, A. Yu. Sorochan etc. Some of them focus on exploring the Polish theme of the novel [Kiseleva, Yashchuk, 2019].

As N. N. Akimova rightly noted: “If the emergence of the European historical novel coincides with the end of the Napoleonic wars (in 1814, W. Scott’s first novel “Waverley” was published), then the Russian historical novel as the genre takes shape by the 1830s” [Akimova, 2012, p. 4]. “Pyotr Ivanovich Vyzhigin” like the historical novel by M. N. Zagiskin “Roslavlev, or the Russians in 1812”, was published on the eve of the twentieth anniversary of the victory of Russia. Interest in the Patriotic War was partly generated by the Polish uprising of 1830–1831, which caused a movement in support of the Poles in France [Rebecchini, 2012, p. 425, 430].

The researchers note at the same time that Bulgarin’s hero now and then finds himself in the circumstances of a “foreign” world, which allows the reader to look at the conflict from the outside and deprives it of a “sharp nationalist basis” [Akimova, 2012, p. 22]. The image of Napoleon, displayed in the novel, has become the subject of discussion. Some researchers think, he was given an apologetic interpretation, while others believe that Bulgarin endowed him with a number of negative features [Reitblat, 2016, p. 244, Rebecchini, 2012, p. 430]. S. M. Petrov, for his part, was completely of the opinion that “Bulgarin impoverishes outstanding historical figures, stupefies and distorts their role and significance” [Petrov, 1984, p. 63].

It is stated that “Bulgarin was one of the first in the literature to give an objective assessment of Barclay de Tolly” [Akimova, 2012, p. 31]. According to D. Rebecchini, who studied the ideological nature of Bulgarin’s novel “Pyotr Ivanovich Vyzhigin”: “At the same time, unlike Pushkin and in the future Leo Tolstoy, Bulgarin did not praise either Barclay or Kutuzov: from his point of view, Russia was saved by the tsar Alexander I, inspired by God and supported by most of his subjects, especially from the lower strata of the population” [Rebecchini, 2012, p. 431].

Russian reviews on Bulgarin’s novel, as a rule, received only a brief mention in research papers [Akimova, 2022, p. 288–289]. Soviet literary critic S. M. Petrov was an exception, since he not only gave a long quote
Conclusion

The study of E.-J. Héreau’s comments to the French edition of F. V. Bulgarin’s novel “Pyotr Ivanovich Vyzhigin” reveals that the French commentator had much in common with the negative reaction of Russian critics. Like them, he seems to regret the fact that the two storylines of the novel, historical and fictional, only occasionally intersect. But there is one nuance. Héreau was more concerned with questions of credibility. In his opinion, when these two storylines happen to intersect, they produce something implausible. Héreau, in general, paid more attention to the historical background and to its sources, convicting Bulgarin in copying Ségur’s history of Russian campaign of 1812. As to the fictional storyline, Héreau suffered the same disappointment as in the case of “Ivan Vyzhigin”. The critic remained of the opinion that Bulgarin succeeded in describing morals better than anything else. For Héreau, his comments were also an opportunity to share with fact that he took it upon himself to write a novel about the recent past. However, the symbolic meaning of “Pyotr Ivanovich Vyzhigin” is great in the sense that it can be considered the forerunner of “War and Peace” by Leo Tolstoy.

Sources

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