

ARCHIVAL HEURISTICS

IRKUTSK'S "SIBIR" AS A SUBJECT OF THE AUCTION (V. M. KRUTOVSKY'S LETTERS TO G. N. POTANIN)

Many swords have been crossed in academic debates about the history of the Irkutsk newspaper "Sibir" ('Siberia'), but nonetheless this edition was always considered by scholars only as a source of everyday information of its time. Yet, during its short life (1873-1888), the newspaper saw a number of editors. This turnover is reflected in the documents and can be traced by researchers. So far, however, not a single researcher has tried to consider the provincial newspaper as a specific 'subject of the auction', though, as we'll be able to see further, there are all prerequisites for such consideration.

The early commercialization of the printed media in the Siberian province was favored by the concessional system of newspapers' establishment. Although a paper itself cost nothing, it was uneasy to establish one. First of all, one would need an approval by the head of the province. In addition, the Governor was responsible for censoring provincial editions through a local representative. According to the Law on Censorship and Press, the latter was responsible for the whole content of the provincial press, thus being a co-editor. It goes without saying, however, that in this function he received no remuneration from the state budget. It is obvious that in the circumstances described, the Governor would not warrant and accept many applications.

The application of the engineer lieutenant-colonel P.A. Klinder for establishing the newspaper "Sibir" was approved for the reason of the 'lack of literary media' in Irkutsk (Russian State Historical Archives (RGIA). Fund 776. Inventory 2. File 10. Page 549, verso). The documented number of the newspaper's subscribers of only about 200 over the two first years of its existence suggests that the paper was not popular enough and could not survive in such conditions. Yet, when leaving Irkutsk, P.A. Klinder offered the edition for sale with the charge of 3,000 roubles. As a result, the newspaper was bargained for the third of the amount initially charged, but still it was a big sum of money equal to the double annual wage of an average functionary of the time.

In the following two years (1875-1876), a new owner was able to bring together many good authors as well as to reduce the price of subscription. Eventually, the run of the paper has grown up to thousands of copies. Later on, however, the group of 'Siberian patriots', with N.M. Yadrintsev and G.N. Potanin in the lead, managed to 'get their hands on the paper', according to V.I. Vagin (The Irkutsk Region State Archive (GAIrKO). Fund 162. Inventory 1. Unit 116. Page 23, verso). The financial

situation and the quality of the paper immediately deteriorated at that period. Thus, "Astrakhanskiy spravochnyi listok" ("The Astrakhan's Reference Leaflet") wrote in April 1878: "Our unique newspaper "Sibir" so enthusiastically denounces the wives of local clerks that it almost does not inform us on what is going on in Europe..." (April 6, No 41). Subsequently, the next owner P.A. Nesterov was trying to improve the financial state of the edition by buying new pieces of printing equipment which, however, burned down together with the building in March 1880.

It was the financial situation that made the editor concede the ownership right to M.V. Zagoskin who got "Sibir" in 1883 for 800 roubles of debt (Russian State Historical Archives (RGIA). Fund 776. Inventory 5: 1872. File 78. Page 207).

A new period in the life of 'Sibir' was connected with the publication of letters. Thus, "Sibir" once published a confidential letter of the Governor of Tomsk in which he petitioned for the approval to publish "Sibirskii vestnik politiki, literatury i obshchestvennoi zhizni" ("The Siberian Bulletin of Politics, Literature, and Social Life"). (The truth is that this letter was considered by the Siberian independent journalists as a denunciation against the private press.) The result of the publication was that the Press Directorate-General demanded to assign a new editor-in-chief and suspended the edition until the approval of a candidate.

The five letters presented below are kept in the collections of the two different funds named after the famous public leader, ethnographer and traveler Grigory Nikolaevitch Potanin (1835-1920) and the doctor from Krasnoyarsk, one of the ideologists of the Siberian press regionalism, editor of "Sibirskiye zapiski" ("The Siberian notes", 1916-1919) Vladimir Mikhailovitch Krutovsky (1856-1938).

1.

Dear Grigory Nikolaevitch!

I clearly understand that it was inappropriate and even foolish to publish your conversation with Ignatiev* in "Sibirskaya gazeta"***, but this all was done unknown to me and against my will***.

* Alexei Pavlovitch Ignatiev (1842-1906), Count, a statesman, the Governor-General of Irkutsk in the years 1885-1889. The letters of A.V. Adrianov to G.N. Potanin suggest that the former made several requests to the latter in order to work out some official matters with the help of A.P. Ignatiev. Thus, in one of his letters, Adrianov expresses a wish to become the head of the Usinsk Frontier District (see: Adrianov A.V. "Dear Grigory Nikolaevitch": letters to G.I. Potanin / Selected and published by N.V. Vasen'kin. Tomsk, 2007. P. 74 etc.).

** "Sibirskaya gazeta" ("The Siberian Newspaper", 1881-1889) was one of the first periodicals in Western Siberia published in Tomsk. A.V. Adrianov was long the publisher of the edition.

*** The publication of the letter mentioned here by Krutovsky here is not yet found until the present day.

I maintain correspondence with Volkhovsky*. As he is interested in the local newspaper of Krasnoyarsk, I mentioned your conversation in one of the letters to him. Subsequently, having received an issue of the newspaper, I got wide-eyed. This circumstance was so unpleasant to me; I don't know how Volkhovsky could make such a blunder.

Urging Zagoskin** to buy the newspaper at the price of 1000 roubles, you might have supposed that the money might have been offered by Matveev***. Unfortunately, this did not happen. Matveev does not seem to be going to provide any money. He delays his reply, and we cannot afford to repeat our request. We tried to find more sponsors but all our requests were declined. We are unlikely to afford to pay 1500 roubles for "Sibir"...

Our decision is that five of us (Konovalov****, Florianov*****, Kudryavtsev*****, and I*****) will pay 500 roubles for the paper, the rest of the sum (1000 roubles) to be

* Felix Yakovlevitch Volkhovsky (1846-1914) was a state criminal exiled to the Tobolsk province, in Tomsk since 1881. Volkhovsky worked for "Sibirskaya gazeta". In 1889, he reached Vladivostok and from there defected abroad.

** Mikhail Vassilievitch Zagoskin (1830-1904) was the editor of "Neofitsial'naya chast' Irkutskikh gubernskikh vedomostey" ("The Unofficial Part of the Irkutsk Governorate Gazette") as well as of the first Siberian private newspaper "Amur". Since 1875, he participated in the editorial board of "Sibir". In 1883, Zagoskin became the publisher of "Sibir". Since 1880, he fulfilled the functions of its editor-in-chief.

*** Innokentiy Alexeevitch Matveev (1857-1936), a Veterinary graduate of the Military Medical Academy; one of the founders of the Krasnoyarsk City Museum, as well as of the public library. The Museum began as the private collections of coins, household items and art objects that belonged to the family of Matveev.

**** Pyotr Nikolaevitch Konovalov (1850-1939), a doctor, a member of the Krasnoyarsk Section of the Russian Geographical Society.

***** Ye.L. Florianov (?-1893) was a famous Krasnoyarsk poet and newspaper satirist (feuilletonist).

***** Yemelian Fyodorovitch Kudryavtsev (1857-1916) was an editor and publisher of the first private newspaper in the Yeniseysk province "Spravochnyi listok Yeniseyskoy gubernii" ("The Reference Leaflet of the Yeniseysk province", 1889), later renamed into "Yeniseyskiy spravochnyi listok" ("The Yeniseysk Reference Leaflet", 1892), "Yeniseyskiy listok" ("The Yeniseysk Leaflet", 1893) and, finally, into "Yenisei" (1894).

***** This does not seem to be a calculation error. The "five of us" could possibly include Potanin who participated actively in the newspaper and might have claimed to be one of the owners. By that time, Potanin may even have owned a share in the newspaper and was searching partners who would purchase the rest of the shares from Zagoskin (for more information see: The letter of N.M. Yadrintsev to A.S. Gatsisky in *Izvestiya Omskogo gos. Ist.-kraeved. muzeya* ("The Bulletin of the Omsk State Museum of Local History"). Omsk, 2012. No 17. P. 16-17.; Mandrila Yu. L. On the periodical press of Siberia in the twilight of the Soviet tradition // *Vestnik Tyum. gos. un-ta* (Tyumen State University Herald). 2009. No 7: *Istoriya* (History). P. 200).

paid by installments to the local Literary Fund*. If this can be agreed on in Irkutsk, please, Grigory Nikolaevitch, try to arrange it and inform us on how and who we should ask to move the newspaper to Krasnoyarsk etc. We are aware of nothing here. Can this petition be started in Irkutsk, for things to advance faster? For here we will face constant delays as the common attitude to the newspaper is unfriendly. Can the price per issue be reduced to 6 roubles?*** We are going to name Florianov as a future editor. The paper will be published by our own forces and at our common expense, as far we can afford it. Kudryavtsev is no threat for us as he is only going to own a fifth of the total, and he is also the one we need as the owner of the printing house (that formerly belonged to Adrianov****) and a good author.

I earnestly ask you again not to delay your negotiation with Zagoskin.

I communicate your request to Matveev as for arranging Proskuryakov*****'s trip for which an application to the section of the Geographical Society is needed. I also informed Proskuryakov on this.

Give my kindest regards to your dear wife*****.

V. Krutovsky.

P.S. I ask you again, Grigory Nikolaevitch, to petition for the newspaper and give me the details of what and in what way we need to do.

* This Fund is unknown to the author of the present article.

** According to the Law on Censorship and Press, periodicals with a subscription price of not less than 7 roubles were granted the right to publish articles on the irregularities, shortcomings and abuses that occurred within the local administration and court. In order to publish articles of that kind, V.I. Vagin fixed this minimum subscription price for "Sibir" in 1875 when he had acquired the paper from the previous owner, P.A. Kindler. Obviously, the transfer of the newspaper from Irkutsk to Krasnoyarsk, accompanied by the decrease in subscription price, was a stroke of policy aimed, on the one hand, at limiting the reading audience and, on the other hand, at making the content of the edition "safe" for the state administration.

*** Alexandr Vassilievich Adrianov (1854-1920) was an explorer of Siberia. He wrote for many Siberian editions and, for some time, headed "Sibirskaya gazeta" and "Sibirskaya zhizn". The printing house was, in fact, sold by him to Kudryavtsev immediately after the closure of the edition at the decision of the four Ministers in January 1889.

**** Pavel Stepanovitch Proskuryakov (1857-1919) was the first conservator of the Krasnoyarsk Museum. During the last years of his life, he taught history and geography in a women's secondary school in Tyumen.

***** Alexandra Viktorovna Potanina (1843-1893), née Lavrskaya. Participated as an ethnographer and painter in all expeditions of her husband.

Taking into account your being very busy, could you entrust your reply, say, to Vologodsky*?

[September 1887]**.

The Scientific Library of Tomsk State University. Rare Book and Manuscript Section. The Archive of G.N. Potanin. Index 349-350.

2.

Dear Grigory Nikolaevitch!

The situation with the newspaper is as follows: we, i.e. Konovalov and I, have not found an editor. We addressed different people but they all refused, including Matveev, so we had to set the case aside for a while.

Proskuryakov was greatly saddened to receive your news and is only comforted by a single hope to find some money here. The matter is that there was, after some champagne, a conversation at Matveev's name-day celebration that concerned the Museum of Krasnoyarsk and resulted in a written engagement signed by a group of people. The paper signed brought 7000 roubles for the building of the Museum.

Of course, this sum is still insufficient; so meanwhile, I.T. Savenkov*** suggests investing the interest in excavations and local research which would lay the foundation of the future museum. I believe the idea is good, but the interest is not going to work out at 200 or 300 roubles, the sum that may not satisfy our explorers, Savenkov, Proskuryakov and Elenev****.

* Pyotr Vassilievitch Vologodsky (1863-1925). Expelled from Saint-Petersburg University in 1887, he served in judicial clerkships of Tomsk, Barnaul, and Semipalatinsk. He worked as an author for "Sibirskii vestnik politiki, literatury i obshchestvennoi zhizni" ("The Siberian Bulletin of Politics, Literature, and Social Life"), was a co-editor of "Sibirskaya zhizn" ("The Siberian Life"). After the Bolshevik regime was, for a while, overthrown in Siberia, he headed the Provisional Government of Siberia. He was a member and a chairman of the Council of Ministers in Russia under the guidance of A.V. Kolchak and dismissed on the 22 November 1919.

** The date given according to the Website of the House of Ye. F. Kudryavtsev at www.krasplace.ru/dom-e-f-kudryavceva [consulted 25 January 2013]. This Website, however, refers to the Fund of Potanin in the Krasnoyarsk Regional Museum of Local History. Thus, there are two identical letters kept in two different archives — the fact that requires special research.

*** Ivan Timofeevitch Savenkov (1846-1914) was the first Director of the Krasnoyarsk Normal School. Fond of archeology, he headed the Minusinsk Museum of Local Lore in the years 1907-1911.

**** Alexey Sergeevitch Elenev (1856-?), an archeologist. During the years 1879-1892, a teacher at the Krasnoyarsk Normal School.

This week I will send you a small report on the work of our newborn Society of Doctors* of the Yeniseysk province for the year 1886/7. I beg you not to judge harshly those proceedings; these are first steps! The Society would be glad to share reports and proceedings with the Geographical Society**.

My both Lidas*** feel well and send you and your wife their best regards. We cannot wait to see Nikolay Mikhailovich****.

Where can Mikhail Mikhailovich***** have disappeared? Can he have passed Krasnoyarsk by and forgotten to call upon his old friend for a minute or two?

V. Krutovsky.
5 December 1887.
Krasnoyarsk

RGALI (Russian State Archives of Literature and Art). Fund 381. Inventory 1. Unit of issue 77. Page 1-2, verso).

3.

My dear Grigory Nikolaevitch!

The petition concerning the transfer of "Sibir" to Irkutsk and the approval of the editor was sent to Petersburg on the 2nd of April. I also enclosed 10 roubles that will cover the cost of telegrams. The other day, I am going to send a reply telegram to Feoktistov***** to enquire about the results of the petition. As for Ptitsyn*****, I sent him a power of attorney to close a deal with Zagoskin, but I have not heard from him ever

* The Society of Doctors of the Yeniseysk province was established in 1886, The sponsor and, subsequently, secretary and librarian of the Society was V.M. Krutovsky.

** Starting in the year 1887, G.N. Potanin headed the East-Siberian Section of the Russian Geographical Society.

*** Krutovsky speaks of his wife, Lidiya Simonovna, née Goschtoft, and daughter, Lidiya Vladimirovna.

**** Nikolay Mikhailovitch Yadrintsev (1842-1894) was a journalist, traveler and public leader, author of a number of books; editor of "Vostochnoye obozreniye" ("The Eastern Round-Up") during the years 1882-1890.

***** Obviously, Krutovsky simply got the name wrong; he is likely to speak here of *Nikolay*, not Mikhail, Mikhailovich Yadrintsev.

***** Evgeny Mikhailovitch Feoktistov (1829-1989) was the head of the Press Directorate-General (GUDP).

***** Vladimir Vassilievitch Ptitsyn (1854-1908) was a lawyer, ethnographer, and a folklorist, an author of short stories about the Transbaikalia region.

since*. I hope Ptitsyn will not mind paying 5 or 6 roubles as a stamp tax; we will send him the money back immediately.

When are the celebrations of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the East-Siberian Society of Doctors** going to be held? We wish to send them a greeting telegram on behalf of the local Society of Doctors.

Matveev is coming to Russia and is going to stay here till autumn. He has a special goal to study and arrange a new future section of our Museum of Agriculture.

Konovalov has also left for Petersburg for two months, with a single goal to [illegible].

My daughter and wife send you all best wishes.

V. Krutovsky.

[Between the 2nd and 8th of April 1888.]

P.S. Please ask Zagoskin to meet Ptitsyn to arrange the conclusion of the deal. I will surely let you know as soon as the petition is received.

The Scientific Library of Tomsk State University. Rare Book and Manuscript Section. The Archive of G.N. Potanin. Index 1080.

4.

Dear Grigory Nikolaevitch!

We were highly surprised by the telegram of Nesterov*** and Zagoskin in which they demand to deliver the payment immediately. Otherwise, they forewarn of the impossibility to transfer the newspaper.

* On March 23 1888, a notice was sent to the Press Directorate-General (GUDP) concerning the transmission of rights from M.V. Zagoskin to the notary public I.I. Parfentiev as well as the transfer of the newspaper "Sibir" to Krasnoyarsk (Russian State Historical Archives (RGIA). Fund 776. Inventory 5: 1872. File 78. Page 254). However, when the enquire was made by the new owner on the June 4 1888, the latter got a telegraphic message that "no petition on behalf of Zagoskin, the editor of "Sibir", has been received by the Press Directorate-General yet" (Ibidem. P. 252).

** The East-Siberian Society of Doctors (1863-1913) was a scientific medical society in the city of Irkutsk.

*** Andrey Pavlovitch Nesterov (1838-1901) was suspected of being engaged in contacts with those accused or suspected in the case of the so called "Siberian separatism". In the absence of evidence, he was released from custody. Nesterov worked as a journalist for "Kamsko-Volzhsкая gazeta" where Potanin and Yadrintsev also started their path. From 1878 to 1883, Nesterov was the editor of "Sibir".

This requirement seems absurd; why should we pay for what we do not yet have and may not have at all?

It is taken for granted that we will have to pay 500 roubles immediately on the assignment of the editor* and getting a notification approving of the transfer of the newspaper to Krasnoyarsk. It would be a different matter if the newspaper's term was not to expire so soon**... Then, if we failed this time to get the transfer approved, we would be able to try to assign another editor. But now that the term is nearing its end, we can only exchange telegrams ...

In the telegram in question there is a funny and small-minded notice that Zagoskin cannot assume charge of the contract conclusion expenses. What fun! Well, obviously, as the expenses may extend as far as to 6 or 7 roubles, this circumstance appears to require much anxiety and telegraphing on the part of Zagoskin.

Grigory Nikolaevitch, I beg you to explain Zagoskin that we cannot afford to immediately pay 500 roubles for the mere Platonic desire to have a newspaper in Krasnoyarsk! That is too expensive. As soon as we get an approval of the transfer, there will be no delay in payment.

If the newspaper may have any debts unpaid, we are not in charge of them anyway. Alas, it fully belongs to the concern of Nesterov and Zagoskin to clear those debts prior to the July 14.

I apologize, Grigory Nikolaevitch, for disturbing you and drawing you away from your duty.

V. Krutovsky.
7 April 1888
Krasnoyarsk

RGALI (Russian State Archives of Literature and Art). Fund 381. Inventory 1. Unit of issue 77. Page 3-4, verso).

5.

Dear Grigory Nikolaevitch!

I am forwarding you Feoktistov's telegram from which you will see that all our efforts concerning the transfer of "Sibir" to Krasnoyarsk have been rejected. We want

* "Sibir" was suspended by the Minister for Internal Affairs until the assignment of the editor-in-chief was confirmed, Zagoskin acting in lieu of the latter during a number of years.

** The year 1887 saw, on the June 14, the last issue of "Sibir". The edition was suspended by the Minister for Internal Affairs until the candidacy of the editor-in-chief was sanctioned by the Ministry. According to the Law on Censorship and Press, if no issues of the edition were published during a year following the suspension, the edition was considered closed down. This happened on June 16 1888 (Russian State Historical Archives (RGIA). Fund 776. Inventory 5: 1872. File 78. Page 264).

to make another attempt in the same vein; Matveev, when in Petersburg, is going to file a new petition concerning a newspaper to be edited in Krasnoyarsk*. This would be good to have a pull in St. Pete so that the censorship committee would be more lenient.

Do you, or maybe Nikolay Mikhailovitch, know somebody who could be suitable for this and who Matveev could talk to in Petersburg?

We are living in the country at the moment, and little Lida is picking bugs for you in the garden, as you once asked her to.

Proskuryakov is setting about to go on an expedition. I suppose this summer I will be in Minusinsk and if so, I'll go round to see Lake Shira, Lake Tagarskoye and, possibly, even Lake Itkul to learn about their curative virtues.

V. Krutovsky.
June 9 1888.
Krasnoyarsk

RGALI (Russian State Archives of Literature and Art). Fund 381. Inventory 1. Unit of issue 77. Page 5-6, verso).

Yuri L. Mandrika

* I.A. Matveev filed a request to the Press Directorate-General to get a permission to edit a weekly paper "Krasnoyarsky listok" ("The Krasnoyarsk Leaflet") (Russian State Historical Archives (RGIA). Fund 776. Inventory 12: 1888. File 54), but this request was declined as no evidence of Matveev's willingness to become the head of this edition was presented.
