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“Unity in Diversity: Russia and the English-Speaking World.

Time for Equal Opportunities”

Исследовательская работа (эссе)

«АНГЛИЯ В ОПИСАНИИ РУССКИХ ПУТЕШЕСТВЕННИКОВ 18-19 ВЕКОВ»

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Individual essay contest

“Unity in Diversity: Russia and the English-Speaking World. Time for Equal Opportunities”

Research work (essay)

“ENGLAND AS DESCRIBED BY RUSSIAN TRAVELLERS OF THE 18th-19th CENTURIES”

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The history of Anglo-Russian relations began quite late. The most detail notes of Russian travelers appeared only in the 18th century. Every entry was unique because it contained the personal experience, opinion and way of life its author. but all of them had one common feature - every traveller was impressed by the country of the "foggy Albion".

In my essay I want to answer the following questions:

- Who of the Russians visited England in the 18th-19th centuries?
- What were the purposes of the trip to the homeland of football?
- What things did surprise Russian travelers the most in the British Empire?
- What pros and cons did Russian figures highlight during their trip?
- Would they like to stay in England longer?

In my essay I want to consider the records about Great Britain of Peter the First, E.R.Dashkova, N.M.Karamzin, A.I.Herzen, F.M.Dostoevsky and P.I. Tchaikovsky.

In this research I set a goal to make a general picture of England in the 18th-19th centuries through the eyes of our compatriots.

«I had been in London for only eight days, and, at least outwardly, with what wide pictures, what bright plans, peculiar, unregulated plans for one measure, it was shrouded in my memories. Everything is so huge and sharp in its originality».

F.M. Dostoevsky

Oh, England, a great maritime power, praised by poets, artists, musicians and other cultural creators. It is a mighty empire with a comprehensively developed structure. Many great historical personalities aspired to see this wonderful country of tea lovers. Undoubtedly, Russian travellers visited the UK too.

It should be mentioned that Russian people had hardly been to England before Peter the First. The greatest Russian emperor set a goal to study modern technology, science, diplomacy, shipbuilding and art in European countries.

To tell the truth, at the beginning of the eighteenth century the European countries were head and shoulders above Russia but the difference between England and patriarchal Russia was too obvious (about 100-300 years). I am very pleased that our country during the reign of Peter the Great was able to catch up and even overtake in some places the European countries. The experience gained in Europe played an important role in this development. Besides, Peter the Great had a good opinion of England. He was amazed at English shipyards, its museums, manufactories and Greenwich hospital for old sailors.

As a result, Russian students began to travel to England more often: at first they learned to build ships, work on metal, make furniture and decorate houses, and during the reign of Catherine the Second they studied economics and politics, the device of manufactories and landscape design. However, the first travel notes about Britain appeared during the Catherine era. They were written by Catherine Dashkova, Nikita Demidov, Michail Pleshcheyev, Vasily Malinovsky and other[1].

Catherina Dashkova, an associate and faithful friend of Catherine the Great, dedicated her work "The Journey of a Noble Russian Lady through Some

[1] https://www.culture.ru/s/zapiski-puteshestvennika/velikobritaniya/#literature

English provinces" to England. She compiled these notes not for the purpose of gaining fame as a writer, but for her own pleasure. She wrote that she was more keen on England than any other country that she had ever visited because, in her opinion, England was the symbol of political freedom and a model of a well-organized and enlightened state. Its richness was a direct result of the activities of the government, and Dashkova believed that the English constitutional monarchy was the most complete and perfect system she had ever met. Catherina Romanovna described her trips to England, showing in detail the country houses of the noblemen (lords of Weymouth, Clive, Mr. Golding) with their wonderful gardens, the infrastructure of cities (Salisbury, Peterfield) and sightseeings (Stonginches, Gothic churches, fountains)[2].

However, there is a minus in these idealized notes of Great Britain. For example, we learn about lone robbers who were the dangers of English roads. This feature makes the British Empire somewhat similar to the Russian Empire because Russian roads were unsafe too. The author also noticed the economic situation. So, it was possible to find all the necessary goods even in the small town Salisbury. As for me, it shows the security and development of trade in the country. It should be mentioned that Dashkova's memories about Great Britain are a great value for both historians and geographers. But the personality of Catherina Romanovna also plays an essential role in the description of the country because her records represent a positive subjective assessment in favor of Britain.

The most famous description of eighteenth-century England belongs to the writer and historian N.M.Karamzin and his "Letters of a Russian Traveller". Karamzin constantly compares Britain with his expectations, exaggerated stories of other travelers, and reality, “There was a time when, having hardly seen the English, I admired them, and imagined England to be the most pleasant land for

[2] http://dugward.ru/library/dashkova/dashkova_puteshestvie_odnoy.html

my heart…Now I see the English up close, I do them justice, I praise them - but my praise is as cold as they themselves". There is a traveler's disappointment here that he cannot hide. And the reason for this disappointment is the coldness of the English character. Drawing a psychological portrait of an Englishman, Karamzin wrote, "... I don't like their cold character at all. My Russian heart loves to pour out in sincere lively conversations; it loves the play of the eyes, the rapid changes of the face, the expressive movement of the hands. The Englishman is silent, indifferent, speaks as he reads, never revealing quick spiritual aspirations ...".

It is obvious that a sensitive traveler in his wanderings on England lacks simple human warmth, "sincere lively conversations", "quick spiritual aspirations" and outpourings to which he is so accustomed at home, in Russia. However, in "Letters ..." Karamzin thinks not only about the peculiarities of the English character, he also describes the sights of London and its surroundings, the British parliament, the family life, the English language and literature. By the way, the historian compares Paris and London and gives a clear preference to the English capital in this eternal confrontation. According to Karamzin, London is beautiful. It is cleaner and simpler; all people are equal there. Nikolai Mikhailovich praises the architecture of London (the Tower of London, the Buckingham Palace, the Windsor Palace). A low bow is dedicated to the Greenwich Hospital, "... where grateful England showers flowers on the old age of its sailors. Not many Tsars live as splendidly as English elderly sailors." [3]

In the early nineteenth century, the collection of travel notes about England was supplemented by the works of Pavel Svinyin, Pavel Sumarokov, Nikolai Grech, Nikolai Krivtsov, Vladimir Orlov-Davydov. The later personalities even lived there and talked about the life of the British through letters to their friends. It was the period of appearance of stereotypical images-symbols about England:

[3] https://docviewer.yandex.ru/view/0/?page=9&lubz0wIn0%3D&lang=ru

"foggy Albion", "shores of freedom, arts, cranks, successful cartoons, Radcliffe, gloomy Shakespeares, roast beef and fighters".

Many representatives of the Russian intelligentsia emigrated to the UK in the 1850s. They considered the island state to be the most advanced as English industry and political institutions were developed and the feminist movement was gained strength. But on the other hand, it was the «shore of solitude».

The Russian revolutionary publicist Alexander Herzen emigrated to England because of his political beliefs. In his memoirs "Past and Thoughts" he wrote about the life of Russian and European society in the mid-nineteenth century. Here is what Herzen wrote about the rainiest city: “There is no city in the world that would wean more from people and accustom more to loneliness, like London…Anyone who knows how to live alone has nothing to fear from London boredom. The life here, just like the air here, is harmful to the weak, frail, looking for support outside of himself, looking for greetings, sympathy, attention; moral lungs should be as strong here as those who are assigned to separate oxygen from the smoky fog.” We do not find admiring exclamations about the beauty and modernity of London, there are no praises of English architecture and the form of government like before. It is dull grey London. They are eternal fog and a loneliness.

Defender of the "humiliated and insulted" F.M.Dostoevsky did not ignore Great Britain. There is no glare of spotlights in his notes, but there are hundreds of tramps, impudent prostitutes and a motley crowd on the Gaymarket. There was nothing sublime and romantic, there was only a cruel reality. I think that Dostoevsky wanted to show us that London is the same as St. Petersburg: it was dirty, beggar, it was "poorer" than its provinces[4].

The world-class composer P.I. Tchaikovsky was a real anglophobe. The reasons for such hatred are unknown but the composer visited the UK four

[4] https://www.geopoesia.ru/ru/travelogs/england/dostoevskiy/zimniye/page2.html

times. The first trip had the most positive reviews from Tchaikovsky, “London is very interesting but it makes a gloomy impression on the soul. The sun is never visible in the city, rain is almost at every step. I really like the food here.” I am glad that Peter Ilyich liked the food at least. On the second trip he again called London a dull city. For the third time Tchaikovsky compared the capital of the British Empire to a prison in a dungeon. During the fourth visit the composer refrained from commenting. Tchaikovsky's opinion about the British and England itself left much to be desired, but this man clearly did not suffer from Anglomania and soberly assessed things[5].

Tracing the threads of Russian people's travels to England, we notice a certain pattern. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the British Empire represented the center of the universe for backward people. В начале восемнадцатого века Russian noblemen actively absorbed new knowledge, they admired England, its culture, history, traditions. The British were gods for the Russian elite. However, the euphoria had subsided in the nineteenth century. Someone (perhaps time) took off the pink glasses from the Russians, and the "foggy Albion" ceased to be a paradise on Earth. More people noticed the cynicism of the British, the greyness of the weather and the gloom of London. Things that used to be a miracle have now become common objects. Finally, there is a simple acceptance of the English lifestyle without any fanaticism. And many Russian intellectuals could say that London and St. Petersburg were very similar in the end of the nineteenth century. A complex contrast between Peter the Great's adoration of Great Britain and Tchaikovsky's open contempt for London occurred over two hundred years. It was not connected with political views. It's just that Russians had become more modern, the Russian Empire was more developed, and the standard of living was higher than at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

[5] https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/velikobritaniya-v-zhizni-i-tvorchestve-chaykovskogo-po-materialam-lichnogo-arhiva-kompozitora/viewer

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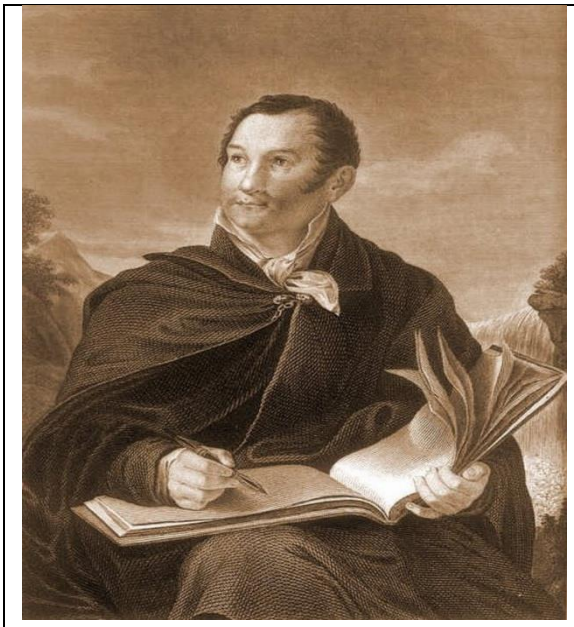
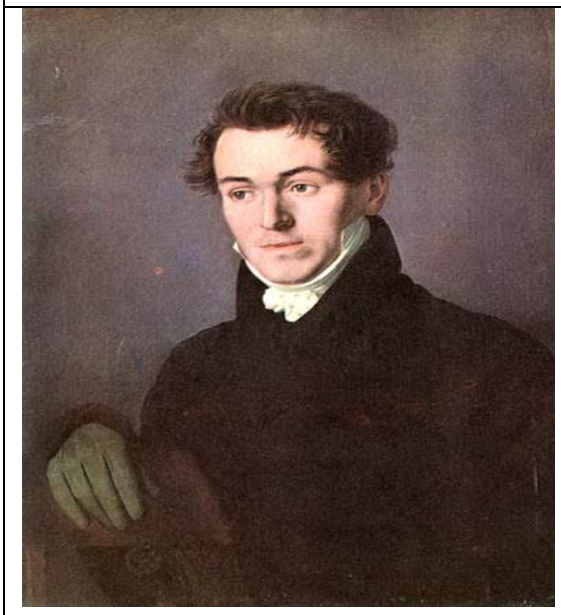
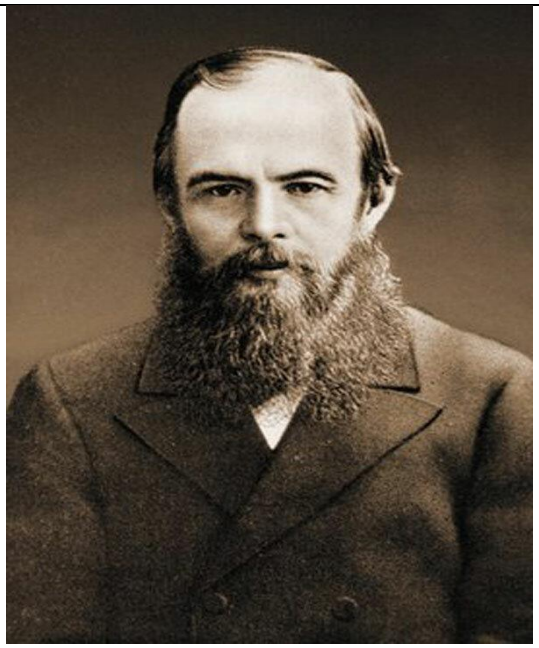
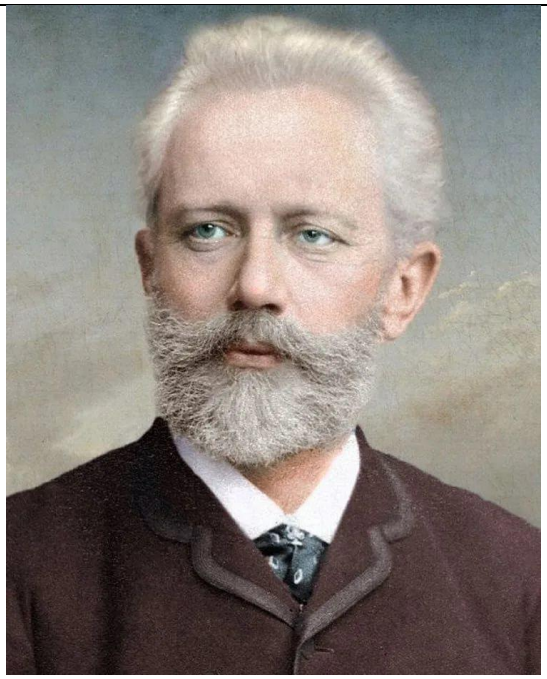
Appendix

	Peter the Great (1672-1725) - the first Russian emperor. He carried out large-scale reforms in the country and created a new era in Russian history. His activities are considered quite controversial.
	Catherina Romanovna Dashkova (1743-1810) - a friend and associate of Catherine the Great, who played a significant role in the 1762 palace coup that brought Catherine II to the throne. She was the first woman of non-imperial origin to hold high government posts - Director of the St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences and Chairman of the Russian Academy.

	Nikita Akinfievich Demidov (1724-1789) - a Russian industrialist from the Demidov family. He was a large landowner. Besides, Demidov owned Nizhny Tagil plants in the Urals and founded the Nizhne-Saldinsky and Verkhne-Saldinsky plants.
	Nikolai Mikhailovich Karamzin (1766-1826) - Russian historian, the largest Russian writer of the era of sentimentalism, nicknamed "the Russian Stern". He was creator of the "History of the Russian State" - one of the first generalizing works on the history of Russia. Editor of the "Bulletin of Europe".

	***Pavel Petrovich Svinyin*** (1787-1839) - Russian writer, publisher, journalist and editor, artist, historian, geographer
	**Alexander Ivanovich Herzen** (1812-1870) - Russian revolutionary publicist, writer, teacher, philosopher. He belonged to the far-left politicians and critics of the monarchical system in Russia, advocating socialist transformations, which he proposed to achieve through revolutionary uprisings.

	***Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky*** (1821-1881) - Russian writer, thinker, philosopher and publicist. He is a classic of world literature, according to UNESCO, one of the most widely read writers in the world
	***Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky*** (1840-1893) - Russian composer, teacher, conductor and music critic. He is one of the most famous world composers,