

LETTERS

TO THE EDITOR:

Sidney Monas's review of my book *The Major Works of Peter Chaadaev: A Translation and Commentary* which appeared in the September 1970 issue includes a statement which requires clarification for the readers of the *Review*. Monas wrote: "The Gershenzon edition of the 'Apology' contains a whole long paragraph which has been eliminated in McNally's version." This statement could leave the impression with the reader that my translation was incomplete, which is not the case at all. I did not "eliminate" anything; that "long paragraph" is simply not present in any of the extant original manuscripts. In this case the original manuscripts are clearly more reliable than the 1862 Gagarin edition which was republished by Gershenzon.

In my previously published critical edition of the original manuscripts in French (*Forschungen zur osteuropäischen Geschichte*, 2 [1966]: 24–128) I drew attention to this point clearly: "The manuscripts were at the Institute of Russian Literature in Leningrad (F. 309/2688 and F. 357/2/408). Both manuscripts are copies; the later one contains extensive corrections in Chaadaev's own handwriting. The basic texts of both manuscripts coincide, aside from a few variants. Manuscript F. 309/2688 is the one which used to belong in the Archives of the Turgenev Brothers. Gershenzon reproduced it (2:29–40) along with that from the Gagarin edition (1:219–34). But I have chosen to edit manuscript F. 357/2/408, since Chaadaev made extensive corrections on this manuscript, and there is a section not found in the Turgenev manuscript. For the purpose of citing variants manuscript F. 357/2/408 will be compared with the Gershenzon edition of the Turgenev manuscript and not with the longer Gagarin-Gershenzon edition which contains an end section not present in either of the manuscripts" (p. 32). Certainly corrections in Chaadaev's own handwriting lend a greater presumption of authenticity than the Gagarin-Gershenzon version for which no manuscript exists.

In addition, we know that Gagarin considerably edited Chaadaev's other texts, as the reader can see from my list of variants (pp. 118–24), so that it is likely that he tampered editorially with the "Apology" text as well. For example, the well-known reference to the Decembrist uprising in Letter I of Chaadaev's *Philosophical Letters* was printed in a wholly distorted version by Gagarin. In all of the Chaadaev manuscripts the original text reads "nous ne rapportâmes que de mauvaises idées et de funestes erreurs," whereas Gagarin simply published the word "aspirations." That distortion was unfortunately republished by Gershenzon and led to innumerable misinterpretations of Chaadaev's real attitude toward the Decembrist uprising, until my edition and translation corrected that important error.

Monas should also have called the reader's attention to the fact that my edition of the "Apology" contains an entire paragraph missing from the Gagarin-Gershenzon edition, which I discovered in the manuscripts and published for the first time, so that in my translation the reader has access to more of Chaadaev's own writing than in previous editions.

In conclusion, my translation is, relatively speaking, the most complete and authentic rendition of Chaadaev's major works; it is based upon a study of the actual manuscripts rather than upon the defective Gagarin and Gershenzon editions.

RAYMOND T. McNALLY
Boston College