

Iskra (magazine)

“Iskra” or **“The Spark”** (in Russian: Искра) is a Russian satirical magazine with a democratic tendency. It was published in Saint Petersburg from 1859 to 1873 .

Appearance of the review

In 1856—1858, Nikolai Stepanov , a talented satirical artist, democrat, close to the editorial staff of the magazine “ Le Contemporain ”, published an album of current caricatures entitled “Knowledge” accompanied on the literary level by the “Knowledge Leaflet” . Among other authors we find in these pages works of Vassili Kourotschkine , who is already a known author, translator of Pierre-Jean de Béranger . The aim of the caricature and the texts is to highlight the inequality that exists in society. In 1857 , Stepanov planned to publish a satirical magazine which would be called “Iskra”. He obtained official authorization to publish, but due to lack of money, the launch of the magazine was postponed. The first issue of “Iskra” appeared on January 1, 1859 . The editorial office is located at Mokhovaïa Street (Saint-Petersburg) 30, in Stepanov's apartment.

The editorial team affirmed from the beginning its objective of creating a satirical type magazine and of refusing lies in all areas of life and art, promising its readers to put its determination at the service of the research of social injustices.

The page dimensions of the magazine originally set quickly no longer sufficed to be able to insert the readers' letters section and its dimensions were doubled. From the third copy, the review appeared on Fridays, then from 1864, on Tuesdays. In St. Petersburg the copy cost six rubles and in the provinces seven and a half rubles. “Iskra” was a relatively inexpensive magazine that focused on current affairs. In many ways, the role of “Iskra”, according to Maxim Gorky , was enormous. Alexandre Herzen 's magazine “ Kolokol ” was the one before which the elite of the capital trembled. While „Iskra“, was distributed among the working classes of the cities and in the provinces, was more financially and intellectually accessible to readers composed largely of student youth ¹ .

Composition of the editorial board and collaborators



Writing of “Iskra” in 1860. 1. Mikhail Stopanovski 2. Dmitri Minaev 3. Nikolai Kourotschkine 4. Nikolai Lomane 5. Nikolai Alexandrovich Stepanov 6. Vassili Kourotschkine 7. Grigori Ellisseïev 8. Pyotr Veinberg 9. Nikolai levlev 10. The painter Adrian Volkov 11. composer Alexander Dargomyjski 12. V. Toblin 13. PS Gravior 14. SN Stepanov

The different areas covered are distributed among the journalists. Vasili Kurochkin takes charge of the literary part of the weekly and Nikolai Stepanov the part devoted to the arts.

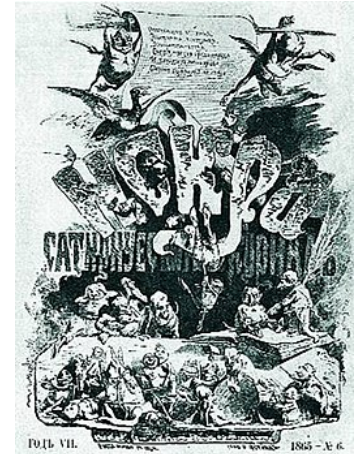
The editors managed to attract the best journalists of the time: the poets Dmitri Minaev , Pyotr Veinberg , Vasily Bogdanov , Nikolai Kurochkin , Nikolai Lomane , Victor Bourenin , Gavriil Joulev , Pyotr Choumaker , Liodor Palmin , Alexei Zhemchuzhnikov , Kozma Prutkov , Lev Meï , Alexis Konstantinovich Tolstoy , Alexei Plechtcheïev , Vladimir Chtchiglev , the prosecutors Gleb Ouspenski and Nikolai Ouspenski , Alexandre Levitov , Fiodor Rérenikov , Pavel Iakouchkine , Nikolai Zlatovratski , Sn Fiodorov , Khaïl Stopanovski , Nikolai Demetr and many others again: Alexander Herzen , Nikolai Dobrolyubov , Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin , Nikolai Nekrassov .

The penetrating power of the magazine, both intellectual and satirical, constantly increased thanks to the caricatures of talented cartoonists. Despite the absence of a uniform point of view among all these poets and writers who published in the magazine, a great identity of democratic point of view common to all allows it to appear as a whole. As the authors of the magazine “Satirikon” were later called “satirikonovitsy”, in the 1860s the term “poets-iskrovtsy” appeared in Russian literature .

Journal content

Due to the fact that the magazine was not expensive and that it was distributed in the provinces, it quickly became very popular. Many readers become correspondents for “Ikra”, and the editorial team thus has a network of correspondents in all corners of the province. The authors describe abuse of power, corruption, embezzlement, and unfair trials. The heart of the newspaper was the “They write to us” department. Civil servants were still afraid of giving rise to articles about them in the magazine “Iskra”. A particular expression appears — “to be defeated by Iskra”. The “They write to us” department becomes the target of censorship. Sometimes half of the texts are banned from publication. Censorship prohibits the naming of important officials, cities where too much anarchy and arbitrariness develops. The magazine uses nicknames to designate the targeted personalities. Everyone knows them but this helps avoid censorship. Likewise, the names of cities are distorted so that the origin of the person concerned cannot be discovered. Muraviov, governor of Pskov becomes “Moumou”, Den governor of Kursk becomes “Raden”. The city of Vologda becomes “Bolotiansk”, that of Kostroma “Koutermu” etc. The most popular translations presented by the magazine are those of Pierre-Jean de Béranger which were in fact disguised to adapt to Russian reality.

Iskra



Front page of Iskra No. 6 (1865).

Original title	<i>Праздничная дума (д)</i>
Format	<u>Magazine</u>
Language	<u>Russian</u>
Creation date	<u>1859</u>
Date of dissolution	<u>1873</u>
Place of publication	<u>Saint PETERSBOURG</u>
Country	<u>Russian Empire</u>
Editor	<u>Vasily Kurochkin</u>

But all these artifices of journalists are detected by the censorship. When № 29 was released after 1862, the “They write to us” section was prohibited. But despite this, the editorial staff continues to look for ways to provide its readers with news of local events. In place of the section “They write to us” the magazine inserts another: “Iskorki”, meaning, research, excavations written in the form of jokes, aphorisms, parodies, epigrams, “Modern Tales of Scheherazade”.

In the late 1860s, a satirical column regarding foreign policy appeared in the magazine under the title “Notes from All Corners of the World.” More than once the magazine makes fun of the way in which the conservative and liberal Russian press reports the “horrors of the French Revolution”, “monsters and crocodiles Marat and Robespierre”.

Like other democratic magazines, “Iskra” presents reflections on current affairs and social literature and is hostile to the concept of “art for art's sake”. The magazine parodies the verses of Apollon Maïkov, Afanasi Fet, and Konstantin Slutchevsky. “Iskra” takes an active part in the controversy triggered by the release of Ivan Turgenev's novel *Fathers and Sons*. Under the pen of Dmitri Minaev, *Father and Son* becomes the target of criticism. It was the beginning of a controversy between the subversive young generation and the older one in the years following the publication of the novel in 1862.

Decline of the journal

In the mid-1860s, with the growth in the number of daily newspapers and the means to quickly and completely disseminate news, the role of “Iskra” began to diminish. The importance of permanent censorship played a fatal role for the magazine.

From 1862, the authorities became increasingly interested in Vasily Kurochkin. In 1864, the Censorship Committee demanded the change of this responsible editor, and from № 37 of 1864 the editor became (at least in form) Kurochkin's older brother — Vladimir Stepanovich. At the end of 1864, the moderate Nikolai Stepanov, founder of “Iskra”, left the magazine to found his own new satirical magazine “Le Réveille-Matin”. The number of themes covered by the magazine decreased and it was only interested in literature and theater. As early as 1865, the censors could proudly write that “the too harsh tone of the review has softened considerably since the elimination of Vasily Kurochkin from the editorial staff”.

Trying to escape prior censorship, from 1870, the magazine refused illustrations. This obviously does not bring him success. As Alexander Skabichevsky rightly notes, “Iskra” without its caricatures becomes a “flies without wings”. In its new form, despite the inventiveness of its journalists, publishing becomes a scarecrow for censorship. As for its large social audience, it completely disappears. The magazine passed from hand to hand of owners and ended up in those of V. Leontev. In 1873, the publication in its pages of the translation of novels (Émile Zola, Hector Malot) began. It is published twice a week but that does not avoid failure and agony.

In 1873, after three warnings, “Iskra” was suspended for four months, but publication was never resumed. The official reason for the sanction is the publication of an article “Notes from the journal” (1873, № 8). This article supported the wishes of “...a government coming freely from the people..., and something other than a bureaucracy defending caste interests...”. The text was considered to contain “completely inappropriate false judgments about the power of government.” “Iskra” disappears...

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 - (ru) This article is partially or entirely taken from the Russian Wikipedia article entitled “Искра (журнал)” ([https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%98%D1%81%D0%BA%D1%80%D0%B0_\(%D0%B6%D1%83%D1%80%D0%BD%D0%B0%D0%BB\)?oldid=76563611](https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%98%D1%81%D0%BA%D1%80%D0%B0_(%D0%B6%D1%83%D1%80%D0%BD%D0%B0%D0%BB)?oldid=76563611)) ” (see the list of authors ([https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%98%D1%81%D0%BA%D1%80%D0%B0_\(%D0%B6%D1%83%D1%80%D0%BD%D0%B0%D0%BB\)?action=history](https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%98%D1%81%D0%BA%D1%80%D0%B0_(%D0%B6%D1%83%D1%80%D0%BD%D0%B0%D0%BB)?action=history))) .

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“Iskra.” Cover of the magazine with a caricature of stock speculators. 1861.



Editors defend their articles at the office of the Censorship Committee (Russian Empire) 1 — Nikolai Nekrasov ; 2 — Vasily Kurochkin ; 3 — Stepan Gromeka ; 4 — Mikhail Dostoyevsky). Caricature by Nikolai Stepanov . “Iskra”, 1862, № 32.