J.W. Koopmans

FROM BEASTS INTO MEN: RUSSIA IN THE Europische Mercurius (1690-1756)

I. Introduction

In 1723, Laurens Arminius, one of the authors of the Dutch chronicle entitled the Europische Mercurius (EM), mentions the discovery of a conspiracy against Peter the Great in Russia which had occurred at the end of the preceding year. His message is very clear and, to a certain degree, one of disappointment. Although the Russian emperor has just transformed his subjects from beasts into men, many of them – even men of distinction – have forgotten Peter’s benefits and have degenerated into their old state of troublemakers. With such words, Arminius fits into a long tradition of negative opinions and stereotypes about the Russians in Western Europe. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, many travel reports presented the view that the Russians resembled animals more than men. Before the reign of Peter the Great, who was admired in the West for his great reforms, the barbaric Russians could have hardly belonged to the European civilised world. Perhaps Arminius had read some of those stories, such as, for example, the report of J.J. Struys, who used the same comparison with the word ‘beasts’. Arminius himself quotes the Dutch poet Jan Vos (ca. 1615-1667), who had written about the uneasiness of the Russians. It is also interesting to consider the missing items in the EM and the reasons why they are lacking.

The approach will be chronological, with the different editors serving as subdividing elements. Until now, only Laurens Arminius has been positively identified as one of the

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1 This is the second English contribution from my study of this chronicle. The first deals with Scandinavia; see J.W. Koopmans, ‘Scandinavia in the Europische Mercurius (1690-1756)’ in: Hans van Koningsbrugge, Carel Horstmeier and Tomas Anfält ed., North by Northwest. Scandinavia and North-Western Europe. Exchange and Integration, 1600-2000 (Groningen 2000). [Forthcoming]
2 EM I (1723) I, 86-87.
4 See note 2.
5 The authors seldom mention their source. Moreover, one can only guess about the point of time when they made up their monthly reports. What to conclude, e.g., from the following information? Two letters about fires in Moscow in July 1699, dated 6th August are placed under the heading ‘Muscovy’ in September 1699, while the volume was published after December 1699. EM (1699) II, 175-176.
Further, I am almost certain that the fourth author is Johannes Haverkamp. In his editing period, 1727-1737, this name is mentioned in the *EM* in the announcements of other works sold by the same printer. J. Haverkamp translated the biographies of two Swedish kings: that of Charles XII, written by Voltaire, and of Gustavus I, by Vertot and others. A peculiar detail in the *EM* of 1736 is a very unusual reference to the translation of the history of Charles XII, in which the editor J.H. reports on an unlikely bastard of this Swedish king, who is living in France. If J.H. is indeed Johannes Haverkamp, this reference was an implicit advertisement for his own translation. Another indication is the fact that the same Haverkamp published historical documents and stories about the Habsburg Empire and the Dutch governor William IV, after the editing period of J.H. These works are publications in the same line as the *EM*.

The *EM* was printed in Amsterdam during almost the entire period of its publication. It was printed twice a year – with the exception of the first three years when it was a quarterly – and was dedicated to the politicians, diplomats, merchants and men of letters in the Dutch Republic. In the case of Russia, this can be illustrated by the inheritance of the Dutch politician Nicolaas Witsen (1641-1717), who visited Russia in the seventeenth century and accompanied Peter the Great during his visit to Amsterdam in 1697-1698. In 1747, the auction catalogue of Nicolaes Lambertz Witsen (1682-1746), a nephew of the above-mentioned Nicolaes Witsen, who inherited the library of his uncle, contained even two series of this periodical. The copies dated later than 1717 must have been bought by Nicolaes Lambertz, because his uncle had died that year. However, the nephew had been active in the government of Amsterdam as well, and therefore he is also representative for the buying public. The *EM* is also found in the library of Andries Andriesz Winius, another important person in the relations between Russia and the Netherlands around 1700.

II. Muscovy and Russia in the Source

Most of the attention in the *EM* – almost 80 percent – focussed on the Dutch Republic, the British Isles, the German areas, France and the Italian states. The news about Russia in this mercure is just a small portion of the total amount of the nearly 40,000 stately, subdivided pages between 1690 and 1756. Only two percent (slightly more than 800 pages) is classified on a monthly basis under the headings ‘Muscovy’ and ‘Russia’. This percentage is less than

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7 See *EM* (1733) and (1735).
8 *EM* (1736) I, 227.
10 More remarks about the source in Koopmans, ‘Scandinavia’.
13 The other pages, a few thousands are dedicated to surveys about the preceding year, the heading ‘peculiarities’ that was started by Laurens Arminius and some special features.
those of the headings of Spain, Poland, the combined Scandinavian realms\textsuperscript{14}, and Switzerland. On the other hand, it is somewhat larger than the percentages of the Ottoman Empire, a few remaining states of Europe, and the rest of the world. However, one must realise that in the period 1710-1723 most of the Russian news is placed under the heading of the ‘Northern Crowns’. Furthermore, the figures are confused by the system in the \textit{EM} of classing news in another state when there is a connection with that state. For example, one must find the news about the journeys of Peter the Great to Western Europe under the headings of the countries he was visiting. Furthermore, a large part of the Russian participation in the Great Nordic War must be found under Poland, while Turkey contains a great amount of news about the Russian-Turkish troubles. Nevertheless, the share of information about Russia remains a modest one.

The heading ‘Muscovy’ is used before 1724 and at that time the Russians are called ‘Muscovites’. In February 1724, ‘Russia’ as a heading becomes generally used.\textsuperscript{15} The author does not explain his sudden change. Yet, it seems logical to connect it with Czar Peter’s new title of Emperor of Russia after the Peace of Nystad (1721). In the following year, this title was already accepted by the Dutch Republic and gradually the name ‘Muscovy’ fell into disuse in Europe.\textsuperscript{16} Only in 1737, the first year of the fifth editor, does ‘Muscovy’ as a heading return for one more time.\textsuperscript{17}

The classification of the Russian news under different headings means that a comparison between the shares of the different authors cannot easily be made (see table 1). Actually, the percentages of the first three editors are somewhat low, especially those of the second and the third editor, for the reason given above: the inclusion in the heading ‘Northern Crowns’. Still, one may conclude that the emancipation of Russia as a European power is somehow reflected by the increasing percentages, and even more by the fact that Russia as a separate heading became natural in most of the months each year, from 1723 onwards. The explanation for the decline of the \textit{EM} in the last six years seems to be incidental. With the exception of 1756, Russia holds the attention of the anonymous editor(s?) almost every month. Yet, the events in this country were not too spectacular then. Furthermore, there is a shifting interest in some other parts of the world in this period, especially in the West Indies.

Concerning the sequence of the treated countries in the \textit{EM}, the different editors were not always very systematic, and were sometimes even chaotic. Many sequences have been used. Yet, until 1748 Russia has been placed at the end in most of the months and years. Then, Russia becomes one of the opening countries, with the underlying idea of starting with the most remote countries in the world and closing with the neighbouring countries of the Netherlands and the United Provinces themselves.

\textit{Table 1: Pages under the heads ‘Muscovy’ and ‘Russia’ in percentages of the total amount of stately rubricated pages in each editing period}

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\textsuperscript{14} It is difficult to give separate percentages for Sweden and Denmark because the treatment of these countries had been integrated into the section ‘Northern Crowns’ for many years. Nevertheless, Sweden has received more attention than Russia, and Denmark has probably received a bit less.

\textsuperscript{15} In Dutch ‘Muskovien’ or ‘Moscowien’ and ‘Muskoviters’ etc. \textit{EM} (1724) I, 92.


\textsuperscript{17} \textit{EM} (1737) II, 213.
III. The first author: E.V. (1690-1706)

The news about Russia is very scarce in the first years of the EM. Of course, the editor had to build up his network of informants. However, even his other sources, which were most likely the newspapers from different countries in Europe, did not motivate him to write about this country. Muscovy was not yet important enough, although trade connections with the Dutch Republic had already existed for a long time.

Between 1690 and 1696, the first pieces of news under the heading ‘Muscovy’ deal with a princely birth, some fires in Archangel and Novgorod – both with great losses for the merchants – and war preparations against the Tartars and the Turks. Here, the editor sounds negative in his opinion about Muscovy. Its government is called ‘despotic’, especially in comparison with that of Poland. Its intentions are never clear and most of the time one has to believe the opposite of what is said. Sometimes the Czar is even assembling troops for no reason – which is entirely possible, because the system of recruiting soldiers is not expensive for him. In 1694, the author is sceptical about the Russian readiness to fight against the Tartars. Even the war against the Turks does not seem very interesting for him in the beginning. Nevertheless, the struggle near Azov can be marked as a first turning-point. A glorious entry of the Czar, following the conquest of the fortress on the Crimea in 1696, is described quite extensively. In the eyes of the editor, the conquest is an important and unexpected event.\(^\text{18}\)

Concerning Muscovy, it is not very surprising that the ‘Great Embassy’ of Peter to the states of Central and Western Europe is a main topic in the following years. One may consider it as a second turning-point in the slowly-expanding interest in the Czar. In the report of the arrival of the embassy in Königsberg, in May 1697, one sentence in brackets reveals the presence of a prince that might be the Czar himself. Later on, it becomes clear that the author’s doubts about the presence of Peter have receded. Still, the visits in Holland and especially in England are described in quite a neutral way. William III speaks with one of the distinguished princes; the name of Peter is not mentioned here. Yet, in his yearly report in 1698, the author praises the Czar’s devotion to instructing his subjects in shipping and warfare. His activities are unique in history; even the Queen of Sheba has never been as zealous as this Czar. In 1698, the rest of the journey is reported, and contains the visits to Dresden and Vienna and the premature return to Moscow because of the rebellion of the Streltsi. Before the departure, the well-known masquerade in Vienna, where Peter is dressed up as a Frisian farmer during a dinner with the Habsburg emperor, is described with taste. Back home again, the rebels are punished very severely, an incident which is illustrated in the EM with a horrifying print. The information is derived from a letter of a Dutch seaman who has been in the service of the Czar. The author guarantees the truth of the contents. In the meantime, the reader is informed about the death and funeral of Peter’s Calvinist general, François le Fort, in March 1699, one of the members of Peter’s delegation in the previous years.\(^\text{19}\)


\(^{19}\) EM (1697) I, 297-298; (1697) II, 101, 227-230; (1698) I, 16 (comments on the previous year), 55, 275, 287; (1698) II, 32-39; (1699) I, 10 (comments on the previous year), 179-193.
On the whole, the editor does not seem very interested in the diplomatic goals of Peter’s journey.

Rather he reflects on the religion of the Muscovites, which is very close to Roman Catholicism in the eyes of the Dutch. While reading a history of the Popes, he has discovered that the Muscovites have always been welcomed in Rome with great respect. The hope of Rome must always have been that Moscow might join the Roman Church. The author does not expect such a conversion of the present Czar, who is more inclined toward the Anglican than the Roman Church; at least, this is what he is thinking in February 1698. In August, when the people expect Peter to visit Venice and Rome, he is less committed to this matter. The Czar had participated in a Roman Catholic mass in Vienna and he seemed to have enjoyed it. However, the religious insights of Peter have been quite inscrutable until then. As a consequence, the opinions about him have been extremely controversial. Nevertheless, people in Peter’s immediate surroundings tend to judge him in a more positive way. The Czar, however, does have a clear mind. Regarding a possible Muscovite conversion to Rome, the editor advises negative: the Muscovite princes do not have rich estates, while Rome is asking high taxes, which is not problematic for countries like Spain, France and Germany. The rest of his comment is even more curious for a Dutchman. It is regrettable that the British are not paying anymore the Roman penny. One gets the impression that the first editor was not a dogmatic Calvinist.

The rest of the editing years of E.V., between 1700 and 1706, is filled with accounts of the warfare between Russia and Sweden. The author is not surprised at the Czarist declaration of war in 1700. The siege of Narva, in the same year, is very well-documented with records and even three illustrations. The editor’s sympathy goes out to the young Swedish king, Charles XII. The Great Nordic War leads to diplomatic activities from the Russian as well as the Swedish contingents in The Hague. As one can read under the heading of the United Netherlands, both parties try to get the support of the Dutch Republic. In 1701, the only divergent subject matter offered by the publication was the story about a Dutch ship from Archangel, which stayed at the Bears Island for more than eight months.

Table 2: Pages under the heading ‘Muscovy’ in the editing years of E.V.

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IV. The second author: J.C. (1707-1718, June)

In 1707, the second editor continues the news about the wars and the consequences for the country itself on an even more regularly basis than his predecessor had done. Most of the time, the information is supported by accounts from both sides and sometimes it is embellished with extra observations about the foreign areas and the people living there. The

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20 I am grateful to my students Joop de Haan for this and some other ideas; he has written a paper about the journeys of Peter as described in the EM in one of my seminars.

21 EM (1698) I, 160-161; (1698) II, 5-6, 117-118.

22 EM (1700) II, 252-256, 277-279, 293-311 (Muscovy and Sweden are combined in one heading here – in table 2 the pages are divided by two); (1701) I, 6 (comments on the previous year), 137-144, 191 About another Muscovite embassy to the States-General of the Republic: EM (1700) I, 129-131.


24 E.g. the mutiny of Smigelsky and the fate of Peter’s adviser J.R. Patkul, who was arrested by the Polish King on request of his Swedish colleague. The EM about these cases: (1707) I, 106, 209-210, 251-255; (1707) II, 65-69; (1708) I, 82-83.
Ukrainians, for example, are introduced as a people more capable of plundering than of fighting for the Czar. The author notices substantial differences between his sources. In his own descriptions, he seems to favour the Russians above the Swedes, as opposed to the first and the third editors. In 1708, one of the accounts is written by the Muscovite court to its Dutch agent in Amsterdam, Johannes van den Burg, who has been, perhaps, one of the sources of other news about Russia in the EM as well. In 1710, the year after Peter’s victory at Poltava, the author resumes the classification of the Russian news under the heading ‘Muscovy’, with a description of the glorious entry of the Czar into Moscow. Such interior news may have stimulated the author to uncouple Muscovy from the Northern Crowns several times. Moreover, in the following years, the emphasis lays more with the war against the Turks than the Swedes. In 1712, he praises the work of the British and Dutch mediators in making peace with the Porte.

One can understand that the foundation of St. Petersburg in 1703 is not immediately noticed as an important topic by the first author. Even the Russian elites had mixed feelings about the success of this project during a war in the direct vicinity. Less normal is, on the contrary, the omission of the official transfer of Peter’s residence to the Neva in 1712 during this editing period. Two years earlier, the second editor mentions St. Petersburg because of the presence of the navy there. From the ‘many great projects’ of the Czar, he recalls, in 1709, only the completion of two new canals in the connection from the Baltic to the Black Sea. This news is accompanied by a big map in the EM, printed by the same printer, suggesting that it might have been inserted for commercial reasons. Concerning St. Petersburg, the author’s expectations for the future of this new city were obviously low at first. When Peter wants to shift the trade from Archangel to his new capital, the tone is even cynical. The Czar can only force his will on his own subjects and not on the merchants of other countries – and these merchants want to stay where they are. In other words, success will remain elusive. This comment follows another negative view about Peter’s appointment as vice-admiral by the governor of Moscow in 1714. Perhaps the author was shocked about the disgrace of Cornelis Cruys as rear-admiral and his forced exile to Siberia in the same period, although he presents this piece of news mere as a fact. Peter’s predilection for his new city is repeated in 1716.

25 EM (1709) I, 104.
26 EM (1708) II, 194.
29 EM (1710) I, 112-113, 186.
30 Nevertheless, more news is found under the heading ‘Turkey’ than ‘Muscovy’. In EM (1711) II, 116, an illustration of the Russian defeat at the Prut river.
31 In Dutch called ‘dit loffelyk werk’. EM (1712) I, 280.
32 EM (1710) II, 106.
33 EM (1709) I, 107-108.
34 EM (1715) I, 33 (comments on the previous year). In 1715 Cruys was restored to his position. The author writes about the expectation that ‘this luck’ will be followed by the release of other exiles, due to the fact that the Czar is mild-tempered. EM (1715) I, 227-228.
35 EM (1716) I, 24 (comments on the previous year).
In the course of time, it will have become clear for the authors of the *EM* that St. Petersburg was a permanent project.\(^{36}\)

The last great topics of J.C. are the second journey of the Czar to Western Europe and partly the deposition of Crown Prince Alexei. The visits of 1716-1717 are described with more details than the attention given to the first embassy, down to the trivial fact that the Czar took a bath for two hours during his talks with the Danish king in 1716.\(^{37}\) After a few friendly meetings with the Prussian King, Peter arrives in Amsterdam in December. In the early mornings, he views this ‘metropolis’—alone or in the company of a few people. In The Hague, he inspects an instrument, which must have been a periscope—probably an unfamiliar word for the author. In Brussels, in order to avoid the crowds, he declines the opportunity to spend the night in the bed of the late Habsburg emperor Charles V. In Dunkirk, he barely survives the flood by jumping on a horse that was tied to the coach. And he is received in Paris with great enthusiasm. Back in the Republic, he visits a few other parts of the country, all mentioned and narrated.\(^{38}\) In short, the reader is provided with precise details about the itinerary. Once more, however, the diplomatic side of events is treated badly: apart from mentioning some treaties and remarking that the Dutch had hoped in vain for a commercial treaty—presuming that the Czar wanted to transport all the merchandise in Russian ships\(^{39}\).

In February, 1718, the case of Crown Prince Alexei Petrovitsj is announced as a very rare event. The forced renouncement of his rights to the Russian throne after the accusation of high treason is described extensively, although at first in quite neutral terms. The rumour that Alexei was locked in a monastery is confirmed in April. The last information of J.C. about this case deals with the punishment of some accessaries.\(^{40}\)

Table 3: Pages under the heading ‘Muscovy’ in the editing years of J.C.

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<th>Year</th>
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The troubles with Alexei were not yet finished at the moment Laurens Arminius took over the editing job. However, it is not the first information about Russia that the new editor presents. In July, 1718, he sets his own tone by publishing a document from 1514, an original letter from the Habsburg emperor Maximilian I to Czar Basil III. He does this for two reasons. Firstly, the letter proves that this Czar was already given the title of Emperor of the Russians; secondly, it is important to realize that Russia was already an authoritative power around 1500, while most of the Dutch assumed that the importance of this country in European politics dated from the time of Czar Peter. This letter was found during a search in the old archives devoted to Peter. After his journeys to numerous foreign countries, he thought that it would be regrettable to be uninformed about his own lands.\(^{41}\)

\(^{36}\) In 1726 the *EM* mentions e.g. the fact that the merchants in St.-Petersburg intend to move after a flood. However, they stay when the Empress tells them that they won't get the same privileges elsewhere. *EM* (1726) II, 301-302.

\(^{37}\) *EM* (1716) I, 321-314.

\(^{38}\) *EM* (1716) II, 283, 313; (1717) I, 203-204, 254-255, 291-293; (1717) II, 157, 252.

\(^{39}\) *EM* (1717) II, 200-201.

\(^{40}\) *EM* (1718) I, 137-146, 194, 250.

\(^{41}\) *EM* (1718) II, 40. The document was used again in 1743 because of the German emperor’s resistance to the recognition of the title, see *EM* (1743) II, 57-58.
After this history lesson, Arminius treats the death penalty of Alexei and his untimely demise in August 1718. The editor publishes the Czar’s justification, written by Peter in order to avoid being judged as an inhuman father. Arminius completely subscribes to the decisions of Peter. It must have been very hard for His Majesty to take such an extreme decision, which was essentially against nature. Yet, Alexei was a ‘disaster’ who was conspiring against his own family, while his father had raised his son with great tenderness. Peter’s policy must be praised as a deterrent for the future, one which would insure his powerful state. Further, some parts of a manifesto about the death of Alexei are published in the EM during the rest of the year. Arminius’s summary of the whole matter in 1719 proves once more that he had been impressed by the course of events. The reader should read again the legal proceedings and judge for himself.\textsuperscript{42} Here, the author – who was a lawyer – does not mention the fact that he had translated these documents from the French, which were published by the same printer as the EM.\textsuperscript{43} Thus, it is plausible that this remark was dictated by commercial reasons as well.

Next to some interior developments, such as the temporary accusations against Peter’s servants Alexander Menshikov and Fjodor Apraksin\textsuperscript{44}, as well as some governmental reforms, both in 1719, Arminius resumes his narration of the news concerning the Nordic war in the following years. He was far from being pleased with Peter’s ‘inhuman’ destructions on the Swedish coasts and he must have welcomed the peace of Nystad in 1721.\textsuperscript{45} This peace was celebrated in St. Petersburg, together with the Czar’s acceptance of the titles ‘Peter the Great’ and ‘Father of the Fatherland’. Shortly afterwards, the Dutch were informed by the Russian ambassador in The Hague, prince Kurakin, about Peter the Great’s use of the title of ‘Emperor’ instead of ‘Czar’. The EM presents a picture of a temporary building, designed especially for the fireworks in Amsterdam. These were offered by the Russian resident Chr. van Brands, because of the peace.\textsuperscript{46} It is known from other sources that Arminius was asked to write some Latin inscriptions for this construction.\textsuperscript{47} This may mean that he had, at least, good connections with circles close to the Russian resident, a possible indication for one of his sources of the news about Russia in the EM.

It is clear that Arminius had the intention of making the EM more readable by presenting some entertainment between the tedious war reports and affairs of state, and by creating a special heading ‘peculiarities’. For example, in this period he describes another masquerade of the Czar – this time dressed as a Dutch sailor – during a wedding of a courtier, a report about the ‘queer ceremonies’ of the Epiphany in Russia, and the carnival in Moscow with sixty sleigh-drives.\textsuperscript{48} The other news becomes more varied as well, ranging from stories

\textsuperscript{42} EM (1718) II, 92-97, 159-170, 234-246 (although the rest of the manifesto is announced to be published in November, it does not appear in that month); (1719) I, 40.

\textsuperscript{43} In the ‘Bekendmaking’ (= Announcement) at the beginning of the second part of the volume of 1719: Manifest van het Proces Crimineel van den Czarowitz Alexei Petrovitz: uitgesproken door Ordre van Zyn Czaarse Majesteit, te St. Petersburg op den 25 Juny, 1718. waar uit zeer omstandiglyk niet alleen de Behandeling van dien Monarch omtrent zijn Zoon, en zyne beledene misdaden, maar ook het verhaal van deszelfs Doed kan gezien worden, uit het Fransch gescriven door L. Arminius, R.G. This manifesto was printed by Andries van Brands, because of the peace.\textsuperscript{46} It is known from other sources that Arminius was asked to write some Latin inscriptions for this construction.\textsuperscript{47} Description of his funeral in EM (1729) I, 108-109.

\textsuperscript{44} EM (1719) I, 124, 171-172; (1720) I, 29-30 (comments on the previous year). In 1720 the EM gives some figures about the Russian land forces under the heading of ‘Muscovy’. EM (1720) I, 206-209. About the treaty: EM (1721) II, 221-236.

\textsuperscript{45} EM (1718) II, 277, 281-288. In EM (1722) I, 86-90 a report of the festivities of a Russian resident in Copenhagen. It is typical that such a report is repeated in 1728 by the next author on the occasion of the coronation of Peter II, see EM (1728) II, 35-43.


\textsuperscript{48} EM (1721) II, 236; (1722) I, 121, 223-225.
about gold-diggers in Siberia, to books printed in the Russian language and the foundation of an Academy of Science in St. Petersburg; all of these were combined with Peter’s administrative and economic measures and his travels between Moscow and St. Petersburg or to Olonets to use the springs. Thus, the image of Russia created by Arminius was clearly no longer one-sided. Moreover, Peter’s war activities against Persia, near the Caspian Sea, must have broadened the scope of his readers. One can hardly imagine that they were familiar with cities like Astrakhan and Derbent, of which at least two illustrations in the EM give an impression. The opinion of Arminius about the Persian warfare is somewhat vague: Peter was not born to live in rest and anyhow, the statesmen were talking badly about it.

By and large, Arminius admired Peter. In January, 1725, he mentions the rumour that a book about the life and acts of the Emperor, dictated by Peter himself to his secretary Lubras, is to be published in Riga. ‘We wish, Reader, that this tiding will be confirmed by the Thruth, the sooner the better, in order that posterity may read about the things (...) which rise above the human understanding and belief.’ When Peter dies in the same year, Arminius calls him ‘the greatest monarch of the world’. Even the ancient acts of Alexander the Great and Cyrus of Persia pale next to those of Peter. Arminius concludes – after a long description of the course of Peter’s disease – that he would need more than two mercures to describe the complete biography of the deceased monarch. A course of Peter’s career follows in a few pages, together with a eulogy quoted from a Parisian newspaper. Many pages are devoted to the funeral as well – another sign of the editor’s great respect for the deceased Czar.

As is well-known, Peter was succeeded by his wife Catherine. The reader of the EM must have got the impression that she followed in her late husband’s steps, in view of all the news about victories in Persia, exercises of the Russian navy, the stimulation of trade and economy, arts and sciences, and so on. Furthermore, the information about diplomats from several European countries and their activities at Catherine’s court must have made it clear that Russia remained a European power. Arminius does not supply a pronounced view about the Empress. Maybe her reign has been too short for that. Neither was he talking concerning the great power of Alexander Menshikov during this period. The quick passing of Catherine – in May 1727 mentioned in the EM in June – is most likely one of the last issues Arminius has written about. He had the knowledge that some magnates had already shown their aversion to being governed by a woman during her illness. Laurens Arminius was buried on the 21st of June, so that month in the EM must have been finished by the next editor.

Table 4: Pages under the heading ‘Muscovy’ or ‘Russia’ in the editing years of L[aurens] A[rminius]

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50 E.g. EM (1721) I, 284-286; (1721) II, 162-167; (1722) I, 262-264; (1724) I, 94-105, 135-143.
51 EM (1722) I, 303-304; (1722) II, 94, 151-152, 263-264; (1723) I, 36-38, 155, 215.
52 EM (1723) 7 (comments on the previous year). In August, 1723, Arminius seperates the headings ”Northern Crowns’ and ‘Muscovy’. EM (1723) II, 88, 92.
53 EM (1725) I, 57.
55 E.g. EM (1725) II, 187-190, 307; (1726) I, 162-164; (1726 II, 300-302; (1727) I, 151.
56 E.g. EM (1726) I, 153-154; (1726) II, 21-25, 72-74, 120-131, 162-164; (1727), 226-227, 265.
57 EM (1727) I, 312-314. In January Arminius had contradicted a message in a German newspaper about a serious illness of Catherine after the departure of doctor Stahl. EM (1727) I, 77.
VI. The fourth author: J[ohannes] H[averkamp] (1727, July-1737, June)

The first job of the next editor was to describe the succeeding of Catherine by Peter the Great’s grandson of the same name. This news is combined with the punishment of the people who were opposed to a woman on the throne, the engagement of the young Czar to a daughter of Menshikov, the condolences and congratulations of the Dutch ambassador, and some other measures, such as the forced expulsion of the Jews from Russia. Such a list of items indicates that the fourth writer informed his readers about the Russians as well as his predecessor.

Haverkamp’s period is marked by unstable relationships in the top levels of the Russian hierarchy, firstly during the reign of the adolescent Peter II, who disliked his predestined father-in-law and preferred Moscow to ‘the marshy St. Petersburg’. The information about the disgrace of Menshikov begins in October, 1727, and remains a continuing story for some months because of his trial and deportation to Siberia, where he died in 1730. In May, 1728, Heinrich Osterman is considered as the new ‘oracle’ at the court. Haverkamp reports that the Emperor doubles Osterman’s salary, together with the unease of many ‘proud Russians’ about the presence of so many foreigners at the court. On the other hand, the young monarch was pleased about their activities.

While the modern historiography typifies the reign of Peter II as an insignificant period, the EM just presents some phrases about the cleverness of the young man, his popularity, and the increase of his authority. Many people had expected that Russia would relapse into its old state of ‘ignorance and irregularity’ after the death of Peter the Great, but, according to the editor in 1729, time had proven them to be mistaken. Peter’s inheritance is not only saved, but even improved during the reign of his grandson. The labouriousness and knowledge of the Russians are increasing to an unexpected level; they know how to gain large profits from their waste lands. This is illustrated by figures of the results from some Russian mines. His news – in the previous year – about surveyors going to all Russian provinces to correct the maps of 1716 and 1720 can be seen as another example.

In 1730, most of the pages about Russia deal with the early death of Peter II from smallpox, and the succession by the widowed Duchess of Courland, Anna Ivanovna. In December, 1729, Haverkamp had just praised the good constitution of the deceased Czar in his introduction of the prospective bride, the native princess Catharina Dolgorukii. A part of her family fell into disgrace because of their treatment of Peter II. Anna got the complete

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59 EM (1727) II, 53-65. Each month, the different subjects are presented primarily chronologically and therefore the most important topics are not mentioned first.
60 EM (1730) I, 13 (comments on the previous year).
61 EM (1727) II, 240-246, 277-280; (1728) I, 50, 206, 253; (1730) I, 96. His disgrace is compared to the fall of the Dutch nobleman Johan Willem Ripperda, who had to leave the Spanish court in the end of 1726.
62 EM (1728) I, 251.
63 E.g. Bezemer, Een geschiedenis van Rusland, 108.
64 EM (1728) I, 44, 158, 251. In the Republic, his coronation was celebrated by the ambassador Golovkin, who sent 500 invitations. EM (1728) I, 207. His activities are mentioned under the heading of the Netherlands. He was recalled to Russia in the same year. EM (1728) II, 144-145.
65 ‘Ja de arbeidzaamheid en kennis der Russen neemt zodanig toe, dat zy, waar op van te vooren nooit gedacht was, groot voordeel uit den Schoot der Aarde van hun woest Land weeten te haalen.’ EM (1729) I, 49-50. Here, this author repeats that Peter I had civilised ‘several stupid and satisfied unhuman nations’ in a very short time; his success was bigger than the work of his predecessors for ages.
66 EM (1728) II, 302.
sovereign authority; the EM mentions the well-known fact that the text concerning the restrictions on the power of Anna was finally torn up.  

Haverkamp’s first impressions of Anna sound positive. In his yearly report in 1731, he talks about her ‘just and merciful government’. Some manifestos about the administration of justice and the remitting of back toll-money, printed in the EM in August, 1730, may have influenced him. He also published the text of a speech given by the Archbishop of Novgorod because it included many peculiarities about Anna’s life before her reign. In 1732, he repeats the fact that Russia has not fallen back into ‘barbary and ignorance’, apparently still a very prevalent expectation in the Netherlands. This remark precedes the message that the Empress had founded a corps for the noble sons. Most of the news in the following years deals with military affairs at different fronts and concerns diplomacy. In 1736, the development on the Crimea induced the author – or the printer of the EM – to supply a map of this area and the whole Black Sea. In these years, Haverkamp must have judged the War of the Polish Succession and the problems with Turks, Persians and other peoples in the South of Russia to be more important than Russia’s domestic affairs, although he does not forget the dynastic information completely. The rest of the description of Anna’s reign was left to Haverkamp’s successor. The latter stopped his contribution to the EM half-way through 1737.

Table 5: Pages under the heading ‘Russia’ in the editing years of Johannes Haverkamp

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VII. The fifth author: A.L. (1737, July-1750)

The next editor could cover the continuation of Russian military actions, such as the conquest of Oczaków and Cassa on the Crimea in the second part of 1737 and war preparations against Sweden in 1739, after the leaking of the uncertain news that this neighbouring country wanted to restore the empire of Charles XII. Although Sweden guaranteed peace at that moment, both countries were fighting each other in 1741. Concerning the interior relations, it is doubtful whether the author was fully aware of the political set-up at the court. He mentions the Duke of Courland several times and the conspiracy of the Dolgorukii family against the governing Empress and gives much attention to the many foreigners at the court. The next to fall into disgrace in 1740 was the secretary of state Wolinski. The Empress had tears in her eyes when

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67 EM (1729) II, 300-302; (1730) I, 38-44, 96-98, 151-162, 204-209, 255-256; (1730) II, 33-35.
68 EM (1731) I, 7 (comments on the previous year).
70 EM (1731) 51-55.
71 EM (1732) I, 241-244.
72 In this period, the printer was Johannes Ratelband heirs and Company. EM (1736) II, 77-80. The military news e.g. EM (1733) II, 73-74, 146-147; (1734) I, 158-162, 241; (1734) II, 100-103, 189-191, 243-261, 298-299; (1735) I, 159-160, 243-244; (1735) II, 41-44, 304-305.
73 Information about the War of the Polish Succession is above all classed under ‘Poland’.
74 E.g. EM (1731) II, 198 (death of first wife of Peter the Great); (1732) II, 60-61 (journey of the Empress); (1733) II, 73 (death of sister of the Empress); (1736) I, 220 (birthday Empress).
75 EM (1737) II, 135, 213-219; (1739) I, 279-280; (1739) II, 64. The war in the EM (1741) II, 207-211, 259-268.
76 EM (1737) II, 76, 270; (1738) I, 189; (1739) II, 336; (1740) I, 17-19, 48-52.
she signed the death-sentence, but she felt obliged to do it. The author’s general complaint is that Russia seems to be exposed to conspiracies all the time.  

The last year of Anna’s reign was ringed in with the most severe winter in living memory. A whole palace filled with furniture of ice was offered to the Empress. The author mentions the prices of dead-frozen game. More relevant is the news about the death of the Empress and the succession of her grandson Ivan – in the EM mostly called Johan –, both in November 1740. The Duke of Courland, Biron, was elected as regent; however, he was driven out after 21 days. ‘Seldom one has seen such a quick change of Fortune’, the author reacts. Even a few hours before his fall, people were praising him throughout the entire city. In the rest of his comment, the editor pronounces his astonishment concerning the fall of three favourites after the death of their monarch within thirteen years: Menshikov, Dolgorukii and Biron. One has to realise that he did not yet know that this change of government was not the end of the unstable years.  

After thirteen months, in December, 1741, the next person was raised to the Russian throne: Peter the Great’s only living daughter Elizabeth. The EM presents the news under the heading of the Netherlands, because the announcement comes from the Russian ambassador in The Hague. First, in January, 1742, the author has the opportunity to give more details about the army’s coup and its aftermath. The Duke of Holstein-Gottorp was designated as the successor. The message that foreigners could keep their offices must have been reassuring for the readers of the EM. Further on, Elizabeth is characterised as an Empress who wants to follow her father’s policies. This characteristic is accompanied with an order against all splendour, because too much money was leaving Russia. Such luxury was often sold by the Jews, which is why they had to leave the country – unless they were converted to the Orthodox Church. Just like Haverkamp in 1727, the present author does not give comment upon this forced departure.  

The stimulation of scientific progress is occasionally discussed. For instance, the Empress supplied the means of a research about the North Pole in 1737, and ten years afterwards she doubled the money in favour of the Russian Academy of Science in order to maintain the library and the art collection of her father. In 1739, a very good quality of vitriol was discovered in some new mines. In March, 1740, the author mentions a comic discussion between some jurists about the question of whether people making a fire which becomes too dangerous are incendiaries or extinguishers. The author’s solution: they are both, so they have to be punished and to be rewarded.  

In April, 1740, A.L. presents for the first time some news about the new seaway to Alaska – in other words about the second Kamchatka expedition (1733-1743). Some Russians

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77 EM (1740) I, 316; (1740) II, 73-74, 114-118.  
78 EM (1740) I, 63, 140-141.  
79 EM (1740) II, 242-249, 293-304; (1741) I, 91-92, 163-164, 201-202, 277-280; (1741) II, 58-59 Biron was exiled to Siberia, but given more freedom by Empress Elizabeth. See EM (1742) I, 73; (1742) II, 197 (He gets a pension of 16 roubles each day; in a note, the rouble is described as a gold Muscovite coin only used in rates of exchange). In 1750, Biron’s daughter gets a present from the Empress. The author wonders if this is a sign of a rapid rehabilitation of the Duke. EM (1750) I, 116-117. The message in 1754 that Biron was almost dying appeared to be premature because he died in 1772, outside the period of the EM. EM (1754) II, 81.  
80 The author gives a chronosticon: DenIqVe eLIsabeth a IMperatrIX rVssICa eXaLtabItVr. EM (1741) II, 321-323; (1742) I, 8 (comments on the previous year), 66-75, 140-141, 177-186; (1743) I, 32-36 (about December 1742). The fate of the parents of the dethroned Ivan, the Duke and Duchess of Brunswick, is treated elsewhere in the EM (1742) II, 146. Ivan was excluded from the throne after a conspiracy in his favour in 1743. EM (1743) II, 167, 210-218; (1744) II, 209.  
81 EM (1743) I, 90-91.  
82 EM (1737) II, 220; (1739) II, 64; (1740) I, 184; (1747) II, 93. In EM (1746) I, 176, about high expectations of gold- and silver mines in Katuaisch.
and Dutchmen were sent to this peninsula. Captain Sparenberg had discovered land on the other side. He wanted to tell this news to the Empress himself. The author thinks that this news is very favourable for the trade with China and Japan. It is interesting to note here that the first expedition of the Dane Bering to the east, between 1725 and 1730, has not been a topic in the EM, although there were reports about this expedition in the western press in 1730. The next news in the EM dates from 1743. Captain Bering and some of his companions had starved on an unknown island in 1741 during their investigations of the new route to America. The botanist G.-W. Stöller, who brought the news at the court, had saved his life by building a small ship from the shipwrecks. More details about his experiences could be read in his letters from Iskytskoy in Siberia, received in St. Petersburg in 1746. He was already sent for observations to Kamchatka in 1738. He had been sailing along a stretch of land, which he hoped to describe in the future. In a note, the editor remarks that it is a pity Stöller has not mentioned the degrees of longitude and latitude in order to fix the place. A.L. must have had a special interest in the progress of geographical knowledge.

In comparison with the attention for the Lutheran churches of Scandinavia, one may conclude that the authors of the EM have shown little interest in the Russian Orthodox church, except for the above-mentioned reflections of the first editor about this religion during the first journey of Peter the Great to the West. Nevertheless, A.L. starts in 1748 with reports about conversions to the Greek religion. This kind of news was advanced by his successor(s?), although less systematically.

The rest of the news during this editing period deals mostly with diplomacy, interior politics and wars. Yet, the consequences of the War of the Austrian Succession occupy only a small part in the headings on Russia. Only the offer of the Empress to mediate in the conflicts of her neighbours is mentioned in 1745. Threat of war with Sweden is a topic at the end of 1749. The author did not expect the breakout; this appeared to be a correct estimation. The improvement of trade seems to have been the most important question as far as relationships with the Dutch Republic were concerned. In 1747, the Russian court was pleased with the elevation of William IV as governor in all the United Provinces. Dutch merchants in St. Petersburg had celebrated this event with orange cockades and ribbons. A.L. concludes quite moralistcally in 1750: ‘An empire or state defending itself against approaching dangers from the outside is political; and it is religious, when it is restraining interior impieties.’ In this way, the author introduces his news about the defence of Russia and the regulating of some ‘pernicious houses’ in St. Petersburg in 1750. Almost eighty prostitutes were imprisoned

83 EM (1740) I, 246-247.
84 Carol L. Urness, Bering’s first expedition. A re-examination based on eighteenth-century books, maps, and manuscripts (New York and Londen 1987) 155. I am grateful to drs. C.S.F. Zandt for his remarks on this matter.
85 Stöller reported that the Russian captain, Tcherikow, had reached the coasts of America, but he was obliged to return because of ‘the wilds’. EM (1743) II, 243.
87 Koopmans, ‘Scandinavia’.
88 In 1746, he mentions the investigation of the Russian clergy about permitting some Roman Catholic missionaries to travel to China. EM (1746) I, 237.
89 EM (1748) I, 13, 276; (1749) II, 210; (1750) II, 202. EM (1753) II, 280: between 4.000 and 5.000 converts in Kazan and Orenburg and EM (1755) I, 217-218: about baptised Tartars too.
90 EM (1741) I, 160-163; (1745) I, 211, 267-271; (1749) II, 163, 205, 261-262.
91 EM (1745) II, 69-70; (1746) I, 213-216; (1747) I, 297. A.L. gives much attention to this elevation in the rest of his mercure. Further research has to be done in order to determine whether he had Orangist sympathies.
there. Illegitimate children had to be legitimatized by marriage. He praises this policy as an example for other countries. Only then will God’s blessing return.  

Table 6: Pages under the heading ‘Russia’ in the editing years of A.L.

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VIII. Anonymous years (1751-1756)

In the final six years of the EM the initials of the editor are missing on the title-page. It was not the only change. Half of 1749 the printing had been transferred to The Hague. The new printer changed the printing policy. He decided, for example, to use a smaller character in order to increase the supplied information by a fourth in 1750. Still, A.L. did not have enough pages with which he could deliver the news of December 1750. He postponed the description of a special feature to the next year as well.  

Was A.L. tired of the EM, discharged from the job, or ‘simply’ deceased? For whatever reason, the opening of 1751 differs from the previous years, and it is therefore reasonable to believe that another person is contributing to this volume. He starts with the message that the sequence of states will remain the same, with Russia as the first among the most remote countries.

From 1751 onwards, the news remains as various as before. Well-known facts, such as the erection of a university in Moscow and the building of a new winter palace, both in 1755, are treated in the EM. The author sounds positive about the Russian progress. Her Majesty walks in the footsteps of her father. Within seven years the revenues of the Empire are increased by fifty percent without an increase in taxes. The population has grown by a third within twenty years. Although the court has already been in residence in Moscow for one and a half years by June, 1754, no one in St. Petersburg doubts its return; so this part of Peter’s inheritance was saved indeed. In the preceding year the author presented a list of the complete Russian defence, which has to be considered as ‘very accurate’; the abolition of domestic tolls in 1754 is warmly welcomed by the merchants.

The Dutch could read about all these facts and even more.

The final subject, the changes in the criminal law and the ideas concerning these changes, shows the spirit of the age. In 1740, the punishment of prisoners was already embraced by the previous author to explain a Russian instrument, the badoga (a kind of cane) probably in order to show how cruel the system was in this country.

In 1742, he explains the canute, which was used to punish a few Russian soldiers who had mistreated foreigners in a coffee-house in St.-Petersburg. EM (1742) II, 77.

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92 EM (1750) II, 162-164.
93 The printer Fredric Henric Scheurleer introduced the dessendian character. In this way, he legitimated his price increase of four stivers for each volume. In the following years, one can see some other changes in the lay-out, such as the mention of the countries on each page, for the first time set above the text in capital characters. EM (1750) I, the 4th not paged page; (1750) II, 312.
94 EM (1751) I, 1. More research must be done in order to determine whether the whole period is from one hand. Some changes in the last two years indicate the hand of one or even two other writers.
95 EM (1754) I, 294-295; (1754) II, 211; (1755) I, 35, 95, 161, 255.
96 EM (1753) II, 95; (1754) I, 160-161, 264-266.
97 EM (1740) II, 200-201. In 1742, he explains the canute, which was used to punish a few Russian soldiers who had mistreated foreigners in a coffee-house in St.-Petersburg. EM (1742) II, 77.
canute for youngsters in 1752 and the very painful hanging on the ribs in 1753. Many times, the immediate cause was arson – an act that could not be punished severely enough, according the author. The Russian employees held the same opinion. Since the Empress had resolved to use the death penalty sparingly, the cruelties were increased in Russia.

The last news under the heading of Russia deals with the so-called Diplomatic Revolution of 1756. The editor hopes for a reconciliation between Vienna and Berlin and that St. Petersburg can play a role. At this point the reports come to an abrupt end.

Table 7: Pages under the heading ‘Russia’ in the editing years of the anonymous editors

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IX. Final remarks

We may conclude that the news about Russia in the EM became more varied during the years of its publication. It is not surprising, of course, that the news about the domestic political and dynastic developments and about warfare has the biggest share of all the pages devoted to Russia. This kind of news was the main purpose of the EM, and furthermore many changes could be reported. There were, for example, no fewer than four Czars during the editing periods of the fourth and the fifth author. The last one was surprised at the sudden changes in the careers of the Russian politicians, like people recently have been about the appointments of the new prime ministers by the former president Jeltsin. Even more interesting are the few remarks of the fourth editor about the state of civilisation in Russia. After the transformations of Peter the Great, Russia did not relapse into its backwardness, as many had expected in the Netherlands. This is implicitly confirmed by the fifth author with his descriptions about the scientific discoveries and the legal reforms of the Russian court.

Only the first editor was quite negative about the Russian state and its people. In the beginning, he was not writing about Russia at all, perhaps because of a lack of sources, or perhaps because Russia was not important enough in his eyes. The interest in Russian affairs starts with the first embassy of Peter the Great (1697-1698). After the Battle of Poltawa (1709), Russia was taken very seriously in the EM. This part of the Great Nordic War is described by the second author. His other major topics are the second visit of Peter to the West and the problems with the Crown Prince. The third author is completely in favour of Peter’s decisions and is almost lyrical about this Czar. On the other hand, he criticises the conduct of some of Peter’s citizens. The following editors show less distinct preferences. The developments at the Russian court are not always clear for them, so they occasionally have problems giving accurate judgments. Finally, it is striking that the editors have given little attention to the developments in the Russian Orthodox church. Only the first author reflects about this church in some way. Apparently this topic was regarded as not important or interesting enough for the predominantly Protestant reading public in the Dutch Republic. They were not very familiar with the Russian religion, as it was not an immediate ecclesiastical threat to them.

98 The canute was not an instrument for the death penalty. Still, a lot of young men died because of the injuries caused by it. The slowly burning of people was used for some arsonists at this time. EM (1752) II, 241-242; (1753) I, 200.

99 EM (1753) II, 13; (1754) I, 216-218. News about fires remains a recurring subject all the time. One example is the 1754 destruction of a large part of Archangel, some of which was saved by the Dutch. EM (1754) I, 25.

100 EM (1756) II, 250-251.
On the whole, the EM has informed the Dutch people quite well about Russia. It is understandable that some news did not reach the columns of the mercure because it was not known by the editors. Other news was published late because of the distance problem or lack of sources. And some news was not selected by the editors; the reasons for this are difficult to determine, as we do not know much about the selection process. Some mysteries will remain forever.