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The Development of Business Writing in Russia throughout the 20th Century

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1. Introduction

Business writing is an integral part of the business culture of every country. The tradition and rules for the creation and processing of business correspondence develop in the context of the socio-economic environment and reflect the worldview. This paper discusses the history of commercial correspondence in Russia in the 20th century and highlights the main periods in the formation of modern business writing. The article focuses on the structural elements of business correspondence and the content of business letters in various periods of the 20th century. The goal of the study is to review changes in business writing in the context of socio-economic changes in 20th century Russia. The objectives of the study are: 1) to conduct a diachronic analysis of the main elements of business correspondence and 2) to determine the stages of development of business writing. Thus, the subjects of the study are both the external structure of business documents and their linguistic features. The pis’movnik* and business correspondence manuals published in Russia and the USSR during the 20th century were used as sources of business correspondence.

* Pis’movnik (lit. “scribe”) is a manual consisting of samples for writing business correspondence.
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There are several reasons to utilize pis’movniki and business writing manuals as sources for analyzing business writing. First, business writing manuals incorporate the latest document management trends of each period and, therefore, reflect the main features of business correspondence. The authors of the manuals, setting themselves first of all the applied task of increasing the business literacy of readers, thereby contribute to the dissemination and popularization of certain business practices. Such manuals, being the standard of business writing of each period, express the trends and characteristics of business communication. Thus, the use of business writing manuals allows for diachronic analysis comparing approaches to business correspondence from different periods. Then, the content of business letters, which in the overwhelming majority of cases is classified as commercial or confidential text, contributes significantly to the choice of sources of benefits; for this reason, it is practically inaccessible in volumes suitable for analysis. Finally, in contrast to the financial documentation and records kept in the archives of institutions, business writing as a genre is not an object of long-term storage, and the ability to analyze business letters for such a long time frame is problematic.

In this study, business writing refers to business correspondence as a document. Document, in the broad sense of the word, is the consolidation in writing of what can subsequently serve to inform or determine a particular course of action. In this meaning, the term document applies to trade books, protocols, contracts, and, of course, all kinds of business letters. The reason for limiting the scope of the study to the 20th century is mainly the accessibility and diversity of business writing sources of the selected period, as well as the practical implication of the study, which aims to study the dynamics of changes in business writing, which should benefit both theoretical researchers of Russian business communication and practitioners of modern international business.

The research on history of business writing is actively contributed by foreign researchers (i.e., Douglas and Hildebrandt, 1985; Locker, Miller, Richardson, Tebeaux, and Yates, 1996; Thomas, 1999), yet the number of works targeting Russian business communication is relatively limited. In “Studying the History of Business Communication,” Locker et al. (1996) point out the value of historical research: “Understanding the historical, political, social, and material context in which earlier documents were created also helps us be more aware of the web of influences and constraints that affect business communication
today and thus helps us to be better able to assess, and if need be, work to change them” (p. 123). Since language is considered a reflection of culture, language can also reflect values of business people in a particular culture (Hall, 1989). Understanding how language of business evolves over time can help us create a dynamic image of a particular business culture. While this study is designed to focus on changes in business writing, it is important to consider such changes in the context of paradigm shifts in business, which occurred in Russia throughout the 20th century.

Due to ideological reasons and differences in socio-economical models, there was no active research on business communication in USSR, which created noticeable gap in a number of studies. Historically the main fields of business writing research in Russia are in such areas of knowledge as documentation science, management science, and linguistics. Moreover, each of the disciplines seeks to consider business writing as an object of research, while focusing on those aspects that are studied by that science. Documentation science and archiving deal mainly with the problems of unification, systematization, and storage of documents (Matveeva, 2012; Pegov, 2005). In management science, much attention is paid to the application of business documentation for solving managerial problems and the use of business writing in a communicative function (Veselov, 1968). Linguists in their works focus on the various aspects of language and the style of business documents (Rakhmanin, 1988; Fedyurko, 2002).

This article has the following structure. After this introduction, the next section discusses the features of business correspondence in pre-revolutionary Russia at the beginning of the 20th century. The structure and stylistic features of business documents from the end of the 19th century are analyzed. Next, we consider the period after from the first “five-year plans” to the end of the 1960s. Changes in business writing and the formation of new rules for organizing business documents are highlighted. The problems of document management in the years of the first five-year plans in the USSR are also considered. The next section, which discusses business writing of late USSR, is limited by 1970–1990 time frame and covers the introduction of state standards (GOST) in the USSR that regulate the rules and the procedure for compiling business documents. Finally, changes in business writing after the collapse of USSR are drawn and followed by the conclusion of the article.
2. Business writing in Russia at the beginning of the 20th century

At the beginning of the 20th century, a formalized system of business documentation was emerging in Russia, which was reflected in the increased number of published books on business correspondence. Among the most noticeable literature, it is possible to point out the works of Sivers (1913), Blatov (1917), Sazonov and Belsky (1901), and Dmitriev (1910). The works of this period are generally applied in nature and delivered in the format of the so-called *pis‘movniki*. The main trends in the development of business writing of this period were formulated by Blatov in his work “Commercial correspondence” (1917): “The literature on commercial correspondence in Russia, being quite extensive in the number of books, is very poor in substantial works. Although existing books have undoubted merits, they pay extremely little attention regarding the methodological side of commercial correspondence, as one of the subjects of commercial education.” At the same time, researchers are pointing out an ongoing standardization and unification of business writing. The concept of “company blank” (“firmmeniy blank”) emerges (Blatov, 1917), and a business style framework and a correspondence structure are formed (Sivers, 1913). This section briefly examines the prerequisites of the development of business writing at the beginning of the 20th century and describes the main trends in the business writing of this period.

At the beginning of the 19th century, a new ministerial management system was adopted in Russia, which existed until the beginning of the 20th century. Based on individual management, it provided the management system with flexibility and efficiency. The legislative act “General Institution of Ministries,” published in 1811, introduced uniformity in the system of the office work of ministries from the creation of documents to their archival storage. The 19th century was marked by the appearance of extensive clerical literature, in particular, the *pis‘movniki* mentioned above, as well as scientific research in the field of Russian official business writing. Varadinov’s studies are of great theoretical importance during this period. Speaking about the goal of theoretical research in this area, he hoped that “the publication of uniform forms of business papers and theoretical rules will perhaps result in the introduction of uniformity, and with it the simplification of our paperwork.” Varadinov (1873) referred to the subject of theoretical paperwork as the “external properties” of business papers, such as, for example, titles and formulas for referring to different persons, parts
of business papers \textit{(formulyar documenta)}, and the order in which the text was written; Varadinov also distinguished different types of business papers in terms of their external form: a) relations; b) registries, magazines, protocols, statements, inventories, reports; c) business letters; d) notes; and e) statements. Among the internal properties, he pointed out the \textit{slog} (style) of documents and writing features (spelling), adopted in business papers.

Thus, at the beginning of the 20th century, all prerequisites for the further unification and development of theoretical thought in the field of business communication were apparent. The development of technology, such as the widespread introduction of the telegraph, has led to the emergence of a new genre of business writing — telegraph messages — which were discussed in business correspondence manuals as a separate mode of business communication.

Now it is possible to draw the main characteristics of business correspondence at the beginning of the 20th century. The appearance of a business letter was an object of attention: the appearance of a commercial letter is primarily determined by the paper size. Large mail format, regular format, and small format of letters are highlighted. Requirements for the quality of paper are also presented: “dense, strong, but not thick” (Blatov, 1917, p. 5). Most often, commercial correspondence paper has blue ruling lines. With the spread of typewriters, the role of paper size decreased; however, regulations regarding margins and the relative placement of elements will evolve and remain in modern business correspondence manuals.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the concept of the \textit{blank} (letterhead) of business letter was introduced. The company name was indicated on the first page of the business letter with information regarding its location and specialty. In addition, a number of other indications could be added: 1) a list of branches and agencies of the company, 2) the year of foundation, 3) the amount of capital, 4) the mail and telegraph address, 5) the number of current accounts with banks, 6) the number of telephones, and 7) the name of the “code” that the company used when transmitting messages by telegraph. Moreover, the \textit{blank} could also contain images of factories and shops belonging to the enterprise and emblems or awards received at various exhibitions. Also, the company could print on the letterhead “№” (a number symbol) if the letters in the company were numbered. The type of activity of the company was placed in the upper left corner of the sheet or occupied its entire upper part. Such placement of the company’s letterhead is preserved in the business culture of Russia to this day.
Compared to 19th-century business correspondence, the structure of writing became more complex. In the structure of a business letter, the first signs of *rekvizity* ("requisites," mandatory elements of a letter) are traced (Fig. 1). Among them, manuals usually point out:

- date of the letter (indicating the place and time of the writing of the letter);
- name of the addressee (to whom the letter is addressed);
- internal address (to where the letter is addressed);
- greeting (name of the addressee with the words "Milostiviy Gosudar," "Milostivaya Gosudarynya," or "Milostiviye Gosudari");
- content (which in turn is divided into a) introduction, b) main part, and c) conclusion);
- signature of the addressee (person or institution sending the letter);
- notes about attachments to the letter.

The *pis’movnik* examines in detail the question of the addressee’s name. The addressee’s name, if the correspondence is directed to one person, begins with the word "Gospodinu" or "Gospozhe," followed by the name, patronymic, and last name of the addressee in the dative case. The name and patro-
nymic are often written in abbreviated form, only with initials: “Gospodinu Il’ye Petrovichu Andreevu” or “Gospodinu I. P. Andreev.” When addressing a letter to an enterprise, it is typical to write “Gospodam,” “V Torgovyy dom,” or “Torgovomu Domu.” The company name is written in the nominative case, without any changes: “Gospodam “Nikity Ponizovkina S-’ya”” or “V Torgovyy Dom “Nikity Ponizovkina S-’ya.”” If the addressee is an office, bank, company, or other institution, then its name is written in the accusative case with the pre-text “v”: “V pravleniye Rossiyskogo Obshchestva kolonial’noy torgovli” or “V Petrogradskuyu Kontoru Gosudarstvennogo Banka.” If the addressee is an official or a titled person, then the name is spelled “Yego Siyatel’stvu” or “Yego Prevoskhoditel’stvu.” Thus, we can conclude the pronounced importance of the format and phrasing of the addressee element. The clear regulation of this element of business correspondence reflects the structure of social stratification of society in pre-revolutionary Russia.

One element of a business letter that was mandatory at the beginning of the 20th century and subsequently disappeared is the vnutrenniy address (internal address). The internal address is the part immediately following the name of the addressee. In most cases, the internal address consisted of the word zdes’ for letter recipients living in the same city as the sender, or only in the name of the city if the addressee is a nonresident. The city name was put in the prepositional case with the preposition “v” or in the nominative case and underlined. Only when a letter was addressed to a little-known party or when the envelope was signed by a person different from the one who wrote the letter would the address be provided in full detail.

A feature of the business correspondence of the pre-revolutionary period is the presence of the etiquette greeting (obrashenie) as an independent element of the letter. This greeting to the addressee is considered a separate element from the name of the addressee and is also regulated. The greeting should be expressed with the words “Milostiviy Gosudar” or “Milostiviye Gosudari,” depending on whether the letter is sent to one person or an institution. It is also noted that shortenings or abbreviations in etiquette are not acceptable. To differentiate a business letter from a private letter, the greeting in business correspondence should be followed by a comma, not an exclamation mark (as opposed to private correspondence). Thus, we can conclude that the greeting is structurally separated from the main content of the letter, and its etiquette role is emphasized.
In the content part of the letter, as now, three parts are distinguished: the introduction, the main body, and the conclusion. The design of the introduction can differ, depending on whether the letter is the first communication to a new addressee, one letter to an addressee with whom regular correspondence is maintained, or is written after a long period of time. In regard to the content of the letter, it is emphasized that a commercial letter should not contain messages or information of a personal, private nature, even if friendly relations exist between the addressee and the sender. Thus, the role of business writing as a legal document and the inappropriateness of complicating it with extraneous issues are declared.

Commercial letters of this period also highlight the norms for drawing up a conclusion. The usual etiquette formula for concluding content is the phrase “s sovershennym pochteniyem,” a transition to the signature, often expressed through the phrase “prebyvayem.” The pure etiquette role (lack of real content) of such an expression is emphasized, and the possibility of replacing it with similar formulas—“s iskrennim uvazheniyem” and “s istinnym pochteniyem”—is also commonly suggested. Unlike the greeting, the etiquette part of the conclusion is considered to be a transition from the main content to the signature and is not structurally isolated.

The role and format of the signature in a business letter is also emphasized. It is noted that each commercial letter must be signed with an appropriate signature. The form and procedure for issuing a signature are regulated based on the type of enterprise. The use of seals and stamps is allowed. It might also be noted that the etiquette formula of the conclusion is sometimes considered to be an element of the signature, with the corresponding visual design. In this case, we can conclude that the role of the closing etiquette formula as an element of the letter is not yet fully developed.

Concluding this section, we can summarize the main characteristics of business correspondence at the beginning of the 20th century. It is possible to identify some features of the business correspondence of this period: the presence of clear regulation both in the structure of the document and in the arrangement of its parts, as well as the availability of recommendations for the use of business style. The etiquette and emphasis of the social structure of society, which are reflected in the design of the addressee element, greeting, and etiquette conclusion, are also clearly visible. It is now possible to move to the Soviet period of business correspondence in Russia.
3. Business writing in the USSR

The October Revolution of 1917, which entailed a change in Russia’s socio-economic model, had a significant impact on the further development of the business culture in general and business letters in particular. After the reform of the Russian language, carried out in 1918, document texts took on a new linguistic form. If the appearance and style of business documents, in general, remained the same, this cannot be said about their content. The profound changes that occurred in the economic structure of the country could not but have an impact on the nature of civil relations. The scope of private initiative declined, and, on the contrary, the state regulatory basis strengthened. This was reflected in the content of business correspondence. Moreover, the new organizational forms of enterprise inextricably linked with state economic construction could not help but be reflected in the business documents. The main sources for business correspondence of this period were the works of Evzlin (1927), Rakhmanin (1988), Shevchenko and Svetlova (1961), Veytsman (1927), Veselov (1968), and Demidova and Smirnov (1985). In the Soviet period of the development of business writing, three main stages can be distinguished: a) the years of the first five-year plans (1917–1930s); b) the middle stage of the 1930s–1960s; c) the stage of the late USSR (1970s–1990s). The current section will review these stages separately.

3.1. Business writing in the early period of the USSR (1917–1930s)

The Soviet period of Russian history was associated with the replacement of the existing state apparatus. Questions arose regarding bringing paperwork in line with the newly created state structures and developing new requirements for the linguistic forms of official business letters. With all of the various types and forms of documents circulating in the Soviet institutions, the flow of documentation continued to be disordered in form and content. By the end of the 1920s, problems with their unification and standardization had become apparent. The State Institute of Management Technology (MTU), formed in 1926, created the Standardization Cabinet, which developed standards for service letters, telegrams, telephone messages, protocols, notifications, etc. An important stage in the development of official documentation was the drafting of a new document: “General Rules for Documentation and Document Management” (1931). It reflected the best practical experience accumulated at that time by various
departments and organizations in the USSR and summarized the research of domestic and foreign scientists. “General Rules” was expected to be introduced eventually as standard and uniform for all institutions. However, the draft was not finalized or approved. The State Institute of Management Technology was disbanded in April 1932.

In the early period, the general requirements for letter design did not undergo significant changes. The *blank* with the name and basic information about the organization was placed on the left or middle top side of the first page. Unlike during the pre-revolutionary period, the letter form then served advertising purposes to a lesser extent. Although, as before, it included in addition to the name and location of the organization a listing of its institutions (departments, agencies), information of an apparently advertising nature was gradually disappearing. The Soviet-style *blank* contained only the name of an institution, as well as its location. In addition, an abbreviated address for telegraph messages and telephone numbers were also provided.

The next main element of the business letter was information about the addressee. It had undergone changes associated with structural changes in the socio-economic system of the country. Instead of the “*Gospodinu*” form used earlier, the words “*Grazhdaninu*” and “*Tovarishchu*” were used in everyday business practice. At the same time, the spelling of the addressee in the dative case and the spelling of the names of organizations and institutions retained the same order. Indications about the internal address of the addressee inside the letter were still used and underlined. In general, it can be concluded that the rules for the design of this element of the letter changed mainly in the substantive part.

One of the most striking differences from the pre-revolutionary period of Russian business correspondence concerns the etiquette greeting (compare *Fig. 1* and *Fig. 2*). The greeting, which used to be expressed in the words “*Milostiviye Gosudari*” when the letter was addressed to an organization, partnership, or business, was no longer mentioned in manuals on business correspondence. In the years of the first five-year plans in the USSR, the greeting was either completely omitted — especially when the letter was addressed to a public organization or a company — or was replaced by the expression “*Uvazhayemiy tovarishch*” or “*Uvazhayemiye tovarishchi.*” The disappearance of the greeting from the structure of business letter became a hallmark of business correspond-
ence in the early and middle Soviet period. The greeting formula returned to business correspondence only in the 1970s.

The content of business correspondence and the presentation style as a whole remained the same. Yet, a new concept of business writing as a “document” was gradually introduced in everyday practice. In addition to the requirements for clarity and conciseness, there were requirements for the expression of will and intention. The legal significance of letters as documents became emphasized. The final part of the main text of the letter, which was previously expressed in the words: “s sovershennym pochteniyem” and similar etiquette formulas, had also undergone changes. After the establishment of Soviet power, the etiquette greeting in the conclusion was either omitted — especially when the letter was addressed to a public organization — or was replaced by the expression “s tovarishcheskim privetom,” and then signed, like any document, by authorized persons. In general, business correspondence manuals of this period did not mention etiquette formulas in the conclusion of a business letter.

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3.2. Documentation science in the 1930s and 1960s

The drastic turn that occurred in the USSR in the 1930s led to significant changes in all spheres of life in Soviet society. It was accompanied by massive political repression, which seriously affected scientific and managerial personnel. Studies in the field of documentation management were curtailed, and many of the best practices remained on paper, including the above-mentioned “General Rules for Documentation and Document Management.” The exceptions were certain areas that were either focused on fulfilling the social order of the totalitarian authorities (improving the system of registration of Soviet citizens, introducing a passport system) or were carried out within the framework of some large departments (rationalization of accounting, personnel documentation, etc.). A distinctive feature of this period was the lack of research and publications on business correspondence, which eloquently speaks for itself in regard to the situation with the development of business correspondence during this period. It should be noted that new studies on documentation and business correspondence appeared only in the late 1950s.

However, during Stalin’s rule, certain prerequisites were created for the development of future document management. In 1930, the Moscow State Archival Institute (MGIAI) and the Moscow Library Institute, designed to train specialists in the field of working with documents, were opened in Moscow. In particular, the MGIAI initially trained specialists to work with state archives, and then began to graduate state clerks as well. In the early 1940s, the term document management first appeared; however, it was limited to the scope of office work issues. Such a narrow understanding of document management was dominant over the next several decades.

The peculiarities of business correspondence reflected the progress of document management science with the appearance of “a correspondence index and registry notes” as a separate element of the letter structure (see number 4 in Fig. 3). Another addition to the document style was the indication of the letter’s subject with keywords “Kasatel’no” (lit. “regarding”) or “Kas.” This information as a structural element of the letter was located below the blank of the organization, date and place of compilation, and internal address. Indication of the letter’s subject was separated from the main part of the letter by a horizontal line. As mentioned in the previous section, manuals on business correspondence still completely avoided any mention of the etiquette greeting
at the beginning of the business letter. However, regarding the conclusion part of the letter, there was a return of “etiquette politeness” in the form of the phrase “с уважением.” Fig. 3 illustrates a typical business letter layout of this period: 1) information regarding the sender (company name, contact information), 2) the type of letter, 3) the date and place, 4) correspondence index and registry notes, 5) recipient’s name and address, 6) title of the document (indicated by a keyword “Касательно”), 7) main body of the document, 8) conclusion part with etiquette greeting, and 9) appendixes.

3.3 Business correspondence in the late USSR

The order of main elements in the business correspondence familiar to us today was settled by the early 1970s. The mechanization, and then automation and computerization, of document management in the Soviet organization required an in-depth study of the document, bringing it to uniformity and establishing a single procedure for working with it. The growth of interest in management problems and its documentation support started in the 1960s. However, in comparison with the world’s achievements in the field of information technologies
and mathematical methods of management, Soviet science demonstrated a noticeable lag that became especially acute in the 1980s and 1990s. Nevertheless, considerable results were achieved in the practice of unifying and standardizing documents: The Unified State Documentation System, union-wide classifiers, was created, and GOSTs for document management and unified documentation systems (UDM) were published. The creators of the Unified State Documentation System summarized the best practices of their time and proposed optimal technology for performing management operations and documenting them. However, the elements of new information technologies were not presented in the Unified State Road Register. This gap was partially filled in the new edition of the State System of Documentation Support of Management (GSDOU), approved in 1988.

Business correspondence manuals of the late 1960s revealed the consolidation of the structural elements of business writing, despite the fact that the content and style were still undergoing changes. The concept of “rekvizit pis’ma” (a required element of the letter) was formally introduced into everyday practice as a mandatory element of the document structure, the location and design of which was strictly regulated. The GOST 6.15.1-75 “System of organizational and administrative documentation” established the characteristics, purpose, and composition of unified documentation. Thus, a set of state standards was established that specified general requirements for the content and forms of documents used at all levels of the Soviet state. The forms of the act—business letter, memorandum, statement, instruction, personnel questionnaire, explanatory note, position, resolution, order, protocol and others—were included. The concept of “an official form of document” was finally consolidated as a set of elements that described a design and content, evaluated in terms of their composition, volume, arrangement, and interconnection. Document design elements included names, various addresses, dates, registration numbers, etc. Content elements were the structural parts of the main text—appeals, motivation, conclusions, lists, schemes, etc. At this stage, it was clearly stated that the form of the document was determined by its name, type, and also specific content. A document, as a rule, had a standard form and was supposed to be prepared in strict accordance with the standard form adopted for documents of this variety. It became clear that business correspondence in the USSR had acquired all necessary theoretical frameworks, and its implementation was imminent.
In accordance with GOST 6.39-72, the sample document must demonstrate the following complex composition: 1) the state emblem of the USSR; 2) the emblem of the organization or enterprise; 3) images of awards; 4) the code of the enterprise, institution, or organization; 5) the code of the form of the document; 6) the name of the ministry or department; 7) the name of the institution, organization, or enterprise; 8) the name of the structural unit; 9) the index of the communications company, postal and telegraphic address, teletype number, telephone number, and bank account number; 10) the name of the type of document; 11) the date; 12) index; 13) a reference to the index and date of the incoming document; 14) place of compilation or publication; 15) signature stamp restricting access to the document; 16) addressee; 17) stamp of approval; 18) resolution; 19) text heading; 20) control mark; 21) text; 22) a note on the availability of the application; 23) signature; 24) signature stamp; 25) visas; 26) printing; 27) mark of certification of copies; 28) the name of the contractor and his phone number; 29) a note on the execution of the document and its direction in business; 30) a mark on the transfer of data to a machine medium; and 31) a mark on admission.

While different types of documents might include only some of the listed requisites, GOST notes that the presence of listed elements was required to ensure legal and practical usefulness of the documentation. Figure 4 illustrates an example of a business letter structured according to the GOST 6.39-72 with the following elements: 1) emblem of the organization, 2) company name, 3) postal address, 4) phone number, 5) telex number, 6) addressee, 7) document number, 8) document date, 9) reference number, 10) letter title, 11) main body, 12) signature, 13) notes regarding appendixes, and 14) notes regarding copies and other addresses.

In the 1980s, a new type of business writing “telex” appeared as a new means of business communication. While mentions of telegrams gradually disappeared from business correspondence manuals, instructions regarding the telex were being added. A telex was a telegram sent by teletype (teleprint). The main feature of writing letters using telex was the transliteration of the Russian text using the Latin alphabet. The text to be transmitted by the telex was compiled without paragraphs; it omitted conjunctions, prepositions, pronouns, and punctuation marks. Also, telex instructions advised the omission of etiquette formulas (opening greeting and final formula of courtesy).
By the end of the 1980s, GOSTs were actively introduced into office practice, and Document Management as a discipline was included in the curriculum for training specialists in various fields, the program of which contained aspects related to documents and business correspondence. Thus, a modern structure of writing elements was finalized in a business letter, including courtesy formulas and relative positions of elements. The concept of *rekvizity pis’ma* was settled, while GOSTs allowed two layouts of details with an angular or usual arrangement of the form. The angular arrangement of the document required information about the sender to be placed in the upper left corner. Therefore, information about the addressee was located in the upper right corner of the document. The usual (or horizontal) arrangement of elements presumes that information about the addressee was located under the sender’s data. Correspondence indexes and other marks were located on the right side of the letter together with the date. An indication of letter’s subject was emphasized as a requisite of the letter, but the use of expressions “*Kasatel’no*” and “*Kas.*” was discouraged, which was a clear difference from the norms of the previous period. The use of the greeting formula at the beginning of the main text became clearly regulated. At the
same time, it was necessary to choose between “Uvazhayemiye tovarishchi” and “Uvazhayemiye gospoda” as an etiquette greeting, depending on whether the letter was addressed to representatives of capitalist countries or not. Similar recommendations applied to the addressee element of the letter. With almost no changes in the overall design and structure, business letter remained in a similar form during subsequent years.

4. Business writing after the collapse of the USSR

After the collapse of the USSR and the transition of the economic model from a command-administrative model to a market economy, changes in ideology also occurred. These changes were reflected in the modification of some elements of business letters. Particularly, simultaneously with the collapse of the USSR, the formula “Uvazhayemiye tovarishchi” completely disappeared. It was replaced by the formula “Uvazhayemyye gospoda” used previously only to representatives of capitalist countries. At the same time, there was no return to pre-revolutionary forms of greetings, such as “Milostiviye Gosudari,” which suggests that modern business language had completely lost connection with the etiquette of pre-revolutionary business correspondence.

The development of business and commerce in the last decade of the 20th century in Russia saw significant changes, not only the form, but also the content of business communication, including written communication; this required the creation of new types of business correspondence (advertising business letters, resumes, presentations, etc.) and linguistic patterns appropriate for new communication situations. Today, the number of business contacts is rapidly growing, which requires an increased number of business letters and a variety of genres they should represent. The system of state regulation of documentation continues to develop dynamically. State standards regulating business documentation are constantly updated. For example, GOST 6.39-72, mentioned earlier, was replaced by GOST 6.38-90, which was also subsequently replaced by GOST R 6.30-97.

By the end of the 20th century, business letters were being transformed to function not only in the traditional paper form but also in electronic form. Modern organizations introduced informational systems that could operate with huge volumes of both official and private electronic business correspondence. In this regard, the problem arose of determining the place of electronic business
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writing in the total set of electronic documents, its functions, structure, and details. An electronic document is defined as a collective concept for all sorts of documents allocated in accordance with their electronic form. Among them, electronic business letters are now challenging the top rank of the business communication media. An electronic business letter is a type of business letter transmitted by e-mail, designed for operational information exchange both between organizations and individuals. Electronic business letters, on one hand, are analogs of traditional business letters; at the same time, they have significant differences caused, first of all, by new opportunities provided by modern technology. In general, the structure of a business e-mail can be represented by the following details: sender, addressee, date and time, title and text of the letter, personal signature with contact details, and number of attachments attached to the letter. The first manuals on business correspondence by e-mail appear in the literature. Attention is drawn to the more open nature of the style in business e-mails as compared with ordinary business correspondence. However, the final consolidation of business e-mail norms is taking place already in the 21st century.

5. Conclusion

This article examined the development of business writing in Russia during the 20th century. Manuals on commercial correspondence published in Russia and the USSR between 1900 and 1999 were used as sources of business correspondence for diachronic analysis. Studying the main elements of business letters revealed that business correspondence in the 20th century has undergone several noticeable changes. The first period started with the transition from the pre-revolutionary style to the Soviet-style after the October Revolution of 1917. During this period, changes in the structure and content of business letters were most pronounced. The etiquette style and courtesy greetings disappeared, and the etiquette formulas were replaced by simplified analogues or simply omitted. In such a transitional form, business correspondence existed until the end of the 1960s. The second stage in the development of business writing can be considered after the introduction in the early 1970s of state standards (GOST) to prescribe the use of letters and their elements while moving forward requirements for procedures for processing and storing business documents. Although after the collapse of the USSR in 1991, the substantial part of business letters
underwent minor changes (i.e., disappearance of the formula “Uvazhayemyye tovarishchi”), the main part of the changes during this period centered on the emergence of new genres of business writing (promotion letters, resumes, etc.) and new ways of communication (such as telex and then e-mail).

It has become apparent that changes in the socio-economic model and ideology influenced and even guided the development of business writing in Russia. The disappearance of etiquette politeness and the simplification of business language are clearly attributed to the October Revolution of 1917. Business writing, which had an extended tradition in pre-revolutionary Russia, was eventually simplified and, in response to the challenges of the era, became straightforward and formalized. The creation of common standards for business writing can be seen as one reflection of the state’s shaping of a centralized system of planned economic management. Although the collapse of the USSR led to an instantaneous change in some elements of business writing, it remains obvious that the form and language of business writing in Russia today are more soviet than pre-revolutionary. However, changes in culture do not happen instantly. The changes in the language of business writing that were highlighted in this study are only an outward manifestation of ongoing deeper changes in cultural values. Also, the impact of globalization as a cultural factor of the 21st century should not be disregarded. Further changes in business writing are of great interest for further research and will help us understand the dynamics of Russian business culture.

Finally, it is necessary to point out some limitations of the current study. Foremost, this study elaborated on Russian correspondence as an example of changes in business writing. However, it is worth comparing such changes with those of other cultures and countries. Also, the time frame for the current study was set in the 20th century. The earlier period is also an interesting area of research, although it is limited by the number of available sources of business writing.

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