

THE USE OF THE PARTICLE *БЫЛО* IN MODERN RUSSIAN*

A.A. BARENTSEN

1. INTRODUCTION

- (1) Настена шагнула было к двери, но он остановил:
- Куда ты? (Распутин)

Constructions in which the particle *БЫЛО* is used constitute an interesting feature of modern Russian.¹ Such constructions are by no means uncommon²; nevertheless, translators of Russian literary texts vary considerably in their treatment of them, which suggests the absence of a consistent understanding of their function. For an interesting discussion, see Nilsson, 1967.

Few text-books of Russian grammar include an adequate discussion of *БЫЛО*-constructions³; some omit the topic altogether⁴. An over-literal interpretation of definitions given in the standard dictionaries can lead to confusion: the following dictionary extracts all suggest that the action in question was not completed, whereas, in example (1) above, it seems clear that Nastena's action - taking a step - actually was completed.

Ušakov: "действие началось, было предположено, начато, но не совершилось."⁵

MAS: "действие началось или предполагалось, но не было закончено силу каких-то причин."

BAS:⁶ "начатое, но не оконченное или не имевшее результата действие."

A recent study of the translation of Russian verbal categories into French (Kunert 1984) contains a brief discussion of the *БЫЛО*-

phenomenon. This discussion highlights some of the problems arising from definitions like the ones just quoted. Kunert uses a definition that is essentially identical with the above-mentioned ones: according to him, the combination 'perfective preterite + *было*' indicates an action that has begun, but has not been completed ("eine begonnene, aber nicht vollendete Handlung").⁷ His only example is the following sentence from Dostoevskij's 'Prestuplenie i nakazanie':

- (2) - Умирать-то не след! - крикнула Катерина Ивановна и уже бросилась было растворить дверь ... но столкнулась в дверях с самою госпожой Липпе-Вехзель... (Kunert 1984: 153)

The two translations into French that are mentioned by Kunert differ in the choice of the verbal form to render the phrase *бросилась было растворить дверь*. While one of the translators (Guertik) uses the 'imparfait': '/elle/ se précipitait /.../ pour ouvrir la porte', the other one (Ergaz) uses the 'passé défini': 'se précipita'. Kunert seems to prefer Guertik's solution because he assumes that 'se précipiter pour ouvrir la porte' is treated here as a single action, viewed as uncompleted. According to Kunert, this is just what the Russian author intended. In Ergaz's translation, the action 'se précipiter' is separated from 'ouvrir la porte', and therefore it can be presented as completed even when the door is not opened.⁸ Clearly, examples like (2), in which the preterite form is combined with an infinitive, present a special problem, because the definition does not specify what must be taken as the action to which the notion of '(non)completion' must be applied: the 'rushing' indicated by the preterite form *бросилась* or the 'opening' indicated by the infinitive *растворить*.⁹ However, the final part of (2) mentions the collision of *Катерина Ивановна* with *госпожа Липпе-Вехзель* at the very door, which indicates that the "rushing" did in fact take place; whereas the act of "opening the door", denoted by the infinitive, remains as a possible non-completed action. This seems to suggest that where the finite verb form is combined with an infinitive, the notion of (non)completion has to be applied essentially to the action denoted by the infinitive. Because of the difficulty of applying the notion of '(non)-completion' to verbs like *хотеть*, this view seems to be supported

by examples of the following type:

- (3) Катя хотела было растворить дверь, но Маша ее позвала
обратно. (ИНФ)¹⁰

We might conclude that the definition used by Kunert could easily be adjusted to account for cases like (2) and (3). However, it is certainly not immediately clear how it could be applied to the far more frequent examples which do not contain an infinitive¹¹, such as the examples (1) and (4):

- (4) Катя бросилась было к двери, но столкнулась на полпути с
Машей. (*idem*)

If we assume that the non-completed action must be that denoted by the *было*-verb, then here it must be the one denoted by *бросилась*. However, it is difficult to see this action as different from that denoted by *бросилась* in example (2) above. As Kunert with regard to (2) does not seem to reject an interpretation according to which the (part of the) action denoted by *бросилась* is completed, sentences like (4) really must present him with a problem.

In view of the difficulties mentioned above, a closer examination of the use of the particle *было* seems appropriate. This article presents a study of the various ways in which *было* is used, based on more than 500 examples. Approximately half the examples were found in the grammatical and lexicographical literature, the rest were located by searching various texts.¹² All 149¹³ occurrences of *было* in the works of Puškin were easily located in the "Bol'shoe akademičeskoe izdanie"¹⁴, with the aid of the information provided in the *Словарь языка Пушкина* (SJaP). The *Словарь автобиографической трилогии М. Горького* (SATG) provided all instances from the three autobiographical novels (appr. 600 pages - but only 3 examples). About a hundred examples were added during an examination of approximately 2500 pages of other texts, mainly written in the 20-th century.¹⁵

We may now proceed to a survey of the various morphological forms used in conjunction with *было*. This will be followed by an examination of the meaning of the particle.¹⁶

2. БЫЛО IN CONJUNCTION WITH FINITE PRETERITE FORMS

It is usually stated in the literature that *БЫЛО* is used with preterite forms. Guidance is not always given regarding the choice of aspect, although the examples usually contain perfective forms. Garde (1980: 402) names the perfective preterite as the only possibility. The authors who mention the occurrence of imperfective forms usually state that the perfective aspect is predominant. (Cf. Isačenko: "die Partikel *БЫЛО* die sich mit der Form des (meist perfektiven) Präteritums zu einer Einheit verbindet" (1968/62: 292); Borrás/Christian: "This particle is used almost exclusively with the perfective past" (1971/59: 139); Forsyth: "in the case of a single action the verb is invariably perfective (except for the occasional occurrence of *хотел* and *собирался* /.../" (1970: 105) (emphasis mine - A.A.B.))

In the examples collected for the purposes of the present study the perfective aspect predominates (377 out of 480 finite preterite forms are perfective, i.e. 79 percent); however, the use of imperfective preterite forms is less infrequent than either Borrás and Christian or Forsyth suggest. In view of the important distinction between constructions which contain an infinitive and those which do not, they will be discussed separately.

The construction consisting of *БЫЛО* and a single perfective preterite, is exemplified in (1) and (4) above. Many more such examples will be given elsewhere in this article. The small number of examples that contain a negation¹⁷ all belong to this group. The following extracts contain instances of negative *БЫЛО*-constructions:

- (5) Вот видишь ли, аристократами /.../ называются те писатели, которые с нами не знакомятся, полагая вероятно, что наше общество не завидное. Мы было того и не заметили, но уже с год как спохватились, и с тех пор ругаем их наповал... (П: Ж₁ 137.23)
- (6) - А я его не узнал было, старика-то, - говорит солдат на уборке тел, за плечи поднимая перебитый в груди труп /.../ (Л. Толст.)

A minority (about 28 percent) of the examples which contain a finite perfective preterite form, also contain an infinitive, as in (2). Such combinations exhibit considerable variation in type, as can be seen from the following:

- (7) Мы вышли было пройтись, но дождь заставил нас вернуться.
(Гвоздев 1952: 143)
- (8) Мы остановились-было смотреть на учение; но он просил нас идти к Василисе Егоровне /.../. (П: КД 297.8)
- (9) - Доста-а-нем!
С испугу Настена кинулась было грести во весь дух, но тут же опустила весла. Куда? Зачем? (Расп.)
- (10) Только один /.../ принялся было ковырять землю, но на него сейчас же зашипели: - Стыдно, Петя, перестаньте сию же минуту. (А. Толст.)
- (11) Совпадение варианта Ъ с текстом письма показывает, что Пушкин начал было перерабатывать этот вариант, но после двух не удовлетворительных его попыток снова вернулся к нему. (Note of the editor in Полн. собр. соч. Пушкина, т. 13: 362)
- (12) Я стал было его бранить. Савельич за него заступился /.../. Савельич был прав. Делать было нечего. (П: КД 287.33)
- (13) Одно время она решила было поехать к отцу в Самару, но подумала, что полторы тысячи верст не спасут от искушения, и махнула рукой. (А. Толст.)
- (14) Я попытался было объяснить, но черта с два! Меркулов уже неся прыжками по лестнице. (Незн.)

Where the imperfective aspect occurs, the situation is reversed: examples in which an infinitive is used are in the majority and only 11 percent of the было-sentences contain only a single imperfective finite form. The following are examples of this latter (minority) group¹⁸:

- (15) /.../ в утешение нашел я ваши письма и Марфу. И прочел ее два раза духом. Ура! - я было, признаюсь, боялся, чтоб первое впечатление не ослабело потом: но нет - я все-таки при том же мнении: Марфа имеет европейское, высокое достоинство. (П: Пс 542.5 (letter to Pogodin))

- (16) Он было и ее выписывал, да матушкины родные ее не пустили, написали, что больна. (Островский; Mazon 1914: 180, also cited by Karcevski 1927: 143, and Bogusławski/Karolak 1973/70: 369)

Within the imperfective preterite + infinitive group, examples like (3), containing the verb *хотеть*, are very frequent (85 percent of the group). The following instances are typical:

- (17) Бопре в смятении хотел было привстать, и не мог: несчастный француз был мертво пьян, (П: КД 280.31)
 (18) Солдаты вернулись и хотели было уже отвечать, но увидев зайца, крепко выругались по его адресу. (Степ.)
 (19) Я было совсем отчаявался получить Записки, столь нетерпеливо мною ожидаемые. Слава богу, что теперь попал на след. (П: Пс 1120.10)
 (20) Волин пытался было втиснуться в это хлебное дело, но его оттерли - раньше надо было родиться. (Незн.)
 (21) /Проскураков/ вызвал машину и собирался было уезжать домой, когда дверь кабинета неслышно отворилась и вошел Пименов. (Сем.)

3. OTHER TYPES OF *БЫЛО*-CONSTRUCTION

Other constructions containing *было* are seldom mentioned in the literature. However, Černov (1970) pays special attention to such cases: he presents an almost complete survey of *было*-constructions, omitting only those containing an infinitive.

Amongst these 'other constructions', the type which occurs most frequently is the one which contains a past participle. Some authors make no explicit mention of this possibility, although they may provide one or more examples, usually of a perfective active past participle, in a *было*-construction: see Boyer/Spéranski 1921/05: 253; Karcevski (1927: 142) (Boyer/Spéranski and Karcevski use the example from AS, as does MAS). These authors apparently consider that the category of 'preterite forms' normally includes such participles. However, there are other writers who do not subsume participial expressions under the heading 'preterite

forms', but accord them a separate mention. Vinogradov (1972/47: 463) only discusses the active perfective participle: "в сравнительно редких случаях частица было сочетается с формой причастия действительного совершенного вида".¹⁹ The examples given by him are the same as Boyer/Spéranski's. Other authors (AS; Unbegaun 1951: 254; Ferrell 1953: 114; Švedova 1960: 112; Isačenko 1940: 195 and 1968/62: 606; Nilsson 1967: 41 - footnote; Černov 1970: 260; RG 1980, I: 727; II, 102) do not exclude the passive participle, although AS, Ferrell, Švedova and Isačenko do not give examples of its use.

The following extracts illustrate the use of было in conjunction with participles of each type:

Past participle active¹⁹

- (22) Чиж, выглянувший было из каземата, быстро юркнул назад.
(Степ.)
- (23) Спавший было днем мороз к вечеру заметно усилился /.../.
(Степ.)
- (24) Появились попрятавшиеся было ротные командиры, и понемногу части стали отходить к своим эшелонам. (А. Толст.)

Perfective passive participle

- (25) Застигнутые было врасплох в самом селе, гитлеровцы оправились; на улицах и огородах завязался неравный бой.
(М. Алексеев; Černov 1970: 260)
- (26) Показали гнездо аиста, улетевшего отсюда, напуганного было грохотом стройки. (газ.; RG 1980, II: 101)

In view of the equivalence of participial constructions and attributive clauses, sentences like (22) - (26) can, in principle, be transformed into sentences using the conjunction который and a finite form of the verb. Some sentences of this type were found in the course of collecting material for the study, although they are even less frequent than sentences containing a participial construction. The next few examples illustrate the use of было in this type of attributive clause:

- (27) Послушайте, как пишет он (Ломоносов) этому самому Шувалову, Предстателю Муз, высокому своему патрону, который вздумал было над ним пошутить /.../. (П: Ж₁ 254.28)

- (28) Он проворно вскочил в седло, не дождавшись казаков, которые хотели было посадить его. (П: КД 335.2)
- (29) /Наталья/ явилась к бабушке, упала ему в ноги и просила /.../ забыть ту дурь, которая на нее нашла было и которая, она клялась, уже больше не возвратится. (Л. Толст.)

Perfective gerunds

The occurrence of *было* in conjunction with perfective gerunds is even less frequent than with participles²⁰, and is mentioned only by Unbegaun (1951: 254), Černov (1970: 260) and RG (1980, I: 727). The following are examples of such occurrences:

- (30) Сам съешь есть ныне главная пружина нашей журнальной полемики. Является колкое стихотворение, в коем сказано, что Феб, усадив было такого-то, велел его после вывести лакею, за дурной тон и заносчивость, нестерпимую в хорошем обществе - и тотчас в ответ явилась эпиграмма, где то же самое пересказано немного похуже, с надписью: сам съешь. (П: Ж₁ 151.21)
- (31) - Слушай, Валя, - сказал Серпилин, принявшись было за чай, но отодвинув от себя стакан. - Знаешь, что я хотел тебе сказать? (Симонов; Černov 1970: 260)
- (32) Максим одеревенел и, сделав было до этого несколько шагов от порога, опять потянулся рукой к полушубку. (Сартаков; *ib.*)

The adjective ГОТОВЫЙ

The occurrence of *было* in conjunction with this adjective is mentioned only by Černov, who emphasises the exceptional nature of the construction ("совершенно исключительные случаи" 1970: 260). In view of its rarity, all his three examples are reproduced here:

- (33) Ныне байкалские волны размывают уже совсем было готовый котлован. (Лит. газета)
- (34) Саша Казанцев рассказывает, как "споткнулись" об этот гриф представители крупного завода, уже совсем было готовые заключить с "Факелом" соглашение... (Лит. газета)
- (35) Это необычайное зрелище так поразило Свету, что зонт, уже готовый было раскрыться в ее руках, так и остался закрытым. (Б. Привалов)

This use of *готовый* rests on the fact that it denotes a state similar to states which can be expressed by certain verbs. When used without an infinitive, as in (33), the state indicated by *готовый* can sometimes be equated with the state that results from the action denoted by a verb like *закончить*. This resultant state can be presented as an attribute of an individual by the use of the passive past participle. For this reason, *готовый* in (33) might be replaced by *законченный*, resulting in the slightly more common construction exemplified in (25) and (26). In conjunction with an infinitive, *готовый* has the somewhat different meaning of 'intention' or 'readiness'. In the case of an animate being, the existence of intention can be expressed by the use of an imperfective verb like *намереваться*, or by a perfective verb like *собраться* (in the latter case, the coming into existence of this state is emphasised). For this reason, *готовые* in (34) can be directly replaced by *намеревавшиеся* or *собравшиеся*. In this sentence, the participial construction might in principle be transformed into a subordinate clause, using the short form of the adjective: *которые уже совсем было готовы были заключить соглашение* although this sounds rather awkward because two almost identical forms are used in close succession. Replacement of *готовы были* by the finite verb forms *намеревались* or *собрались* results in a more acceptable sentence with practically identical meaning (cf. examples (27)-(29) above).

Although the construction in (35) is of the same type as that in (34), the replacement of *готовый* by a verbal form is not possible here, for lexical reasons: apparently there is no Russian verb that can express the variant of 'readiness' intended in (35), i.e. a kind of 'tendency', characteristically ascribed only to inanimate entities.

Present tense forms

While it is true to say that *было* has a special connection with past events, this does not mean that it can never be used with present tense forms, since there are situations where these forms can perfectly well be used to refer to past events. Nevertheless, examples of present tense forms used in conjunction with *было* are extremely rare, and mentioned only by three authors: Potebnja,

Švedova and Černov. All their examples are quoted here.

The most obvious category contains sentences with an imperfective present form used as *praesens historicum*. Here are two examples:

- (36) - Мне бы хотелось пригласить вас в воскресенье на прогулку
в горы, /.../ ну как?
- Я с удовольствием, - говорит Адриен.
- А ты, Мартин?
- Да, - начинаю было я, - тут...
- Also, *Verabredet! Jawohl*, все прекрасно.
('т Харт; translated from the Dutch by V. Belousov)

- (37) Золушкин берется было за револьвер, помышляя о
самоубийстве, но тут /.../ потянуло к родным краям.
(Лит. газета; Чернов 1970: 261)

(Note the presence of a preterite form in the immediate context, in (37)!))

The following example, also given by Černov, is somewhat different:

- (38) Фадеев откидывает мяч назад было, но Хурцилава не
успевает. (радиорепортаж)

I assume that this sentence was produced by someone reporting on a football match. This use of present tense forms closely resembles the so-called 'actual present'; but where events take place in rapid succession, each one has already become part of the past before it can be reported. Apparently, for the speaker in (38), this awareness of the shift to the past is strong enough to permit the use of было.

Stage directions form a special category where tenses are concerned, although not all grammarians distinguish the use of imperfective present in these cases - the *praesens scenicum* - from *praesens historicum*. Whereas with the *praesens historicum* the association with the past is quite clear, and the switching from present to preterite forms in the same context is permissible (cf. (37)), in modern Russian stage directions are normally given in the imperfective present. One might argue that this is only natural, as the events expressed by these forms are intended to be reproduced

every time the play is performed. On the other hand, when a play is considered as just one way of telling a story (which is easy when the play is read), its difference from novels and other narrative texts diminishes, and reference to a previous time is suggested. The only example to hand of the use of *БЫЛО* in this type of text is one quoted by Švedova (1960: 111). It is taken from Tolstoj's 'Плоды просвещения':

(39) Федор Иванович садится БЫЛО за газету.

As is well-known, the use of perfective present verb forms to describe habitual actions in the past is common in modern Russian. The particle *БЫВАЛО* can be added to emphasise both habitual occurrence and past reference. Most commonly, the events referred to are elements of a 'chain of events'. The notion of 'habitual nature' has to be applied to the whole chain. When the relations between the elements of the chain are such that the use of *БЫЛО* would have been justified in the description of one single chain of this type (normally with perfective preterite forms), it seems permissible to use *БЫЛО* in conjunction with perfective present forms which express the habitual nature of the chain in the past. In such circumstances one gains the impression that the particle *БЫВАЛО* is 'replaced' by *БЫЛО*. *БЫЛО* partly takes over the function of *БЫВАЛО* (emphasising past habitual nature of the action), but adds its own meaning (to be discussed below). A sentence that can be seen as an example of this use of *БЫЛО* is quoted by Potebnja (1888/74: 268):

(40) Пойдет, БЫЛО, и вернется.

A more recent example is given by Černov, who states that it clearly refers to the past ("Здесь четко выражено отнесение действия к прошлому") (1970: 263):

(41) Он (критик) соберет, БЫЛО, рекомендации у известных писателей, изловчится, да и ударит по приемной комиссии.
А его возьмут да и отшибут. (Лит. Россия)

Habitual past events can be expressed by imperfective present tense forms too.²¹ Instances of the use of *БЫЛО* in this setting appear to be still more infrequent than the types mentioned above. The only example to hand is the following sentence, taken from Potebnja.

Here there is some special reason to oppose the imperfective verb to the following perfective:

- (42) Говорит, было, говорит, и ничего не скажет (1888/74: 286)

'Elliptical' sentences

When the nature of the event that has to be reported is sufficiently clear from the accompanying adverbial expressions, the verb form is sometimes omitted. Even in these circumstances, *было* can still be used. According to Černov (1970: 261), this is a recent development²². No instances are to be found in Puškin, but Švedova (1960: 112) gives an example from Gogol':

- (43) Акакий Акакиевич еще было насчет починки, но Петрович не дослывал...

In the Academy grammar, the following sentence is given as an example of this use of *было*:

- (44) Она было в слезы. (RG 1980, I: 101)

In the few examples of this type located during the present study, the event is usually an utterance or a movement. The following examples, taken from other authors, may supplement the picture:

- (45) Я было то да се, а он чуть было не закричал на меня...
(Достоевский; Švedova 1960: 112)
- (46) Он было и наутек, да в прихожей, сказывают, задержали.
(Салтыков-Щедрин; *ibid.*)
- (47) Все-таки несколько слов Эдик сказал. Галя пошла, он было за ней. (В. Шугаев; Černov 1970: 261)
- (48) Я ему рупь за работу, он два требует. Я было горлом на него, а он костыль половчее берет... (А. Иванов; *ibid.*)

Infinitives

Examples of combinations of the particle *было* with an infinitive are very rare, and the meaning of some of them is doubtful. The only example known to me in which *было* undoubtedly has the same meaning as in the examples presented above is given by van Holk in his article on the 'actor-infinitive construction'. He uses it to

emphasise the quality of past reference of the construction that is labelled by him 'historical infinitive' (1951: 140):

- (49) Те (мачеха и дочери) было прятаться, но куда ни
бросятся - глаза за ними так и глядят. (Афанасьев)

This example closely resembles the 'elliptical' sentences quoted above. Here again, the reference to an action in the past is very clear.

In the section on *было* in Švedova (1960) quite a different example is given:

- (50) /Скотинин/ Все меня одного оставили. Пойти было
прогуляться на скотный двор. (Фонвизин)

According to Švedova this can be viewed as a special use of *было*: "особое значение неуверенного, с оттенком сомнения утверждения, предположения" (1960: 113). The other examples which she gives in this connection contain a preterite verb form, and are thus closer to the 'normal' uses of *было*:

- (51) - Надо дырочками вниз ставить.
- Я было так и ставила. (Из разг. речи)
(52) - Ты ее пересолила.
- Да я было чуть-чуть посолила. (Из разг. речи)

Native speakers of Russian, when asked to comment on example (50), regarded it as quite abnormal, at least from the standpoint of modern usage. They suggested the replacement of *было* by *что ли*. The difficulty is, that it seems impossible to interpret (50) as referring to a past event. In view of the absence of similar examples it seems preferable to regard the occurrence of *было* in example (50) as outside the scope of this study.²³

The survey of *было*-constructions given above shows that they are more diverse than is generally thought. Nevertheless, all examples share one important feature: they refer to past events. The new Academy grammar offers this formulation: "Эта частица сочетается с глаголом в форме прош. вр. или вводится в предложение с общим значением прошедшего" (RG 1980, I: 727; emphasis mine - A.A.B). It will be argued below that this feature -

reference to past events - proceeds naturally from the meaning of *БЫЛО*. A survey of various definitions located in the literature will be followed by a discussion of how best to formulate the meaning of the word.

4. SURVEY OF DEFINITIONS OF *БЫЛО*²⁴

The definitions of the meaning of *БЫЛО* which are to be found in the literature can be divided into two groups, according to whether they concentrate on the non-completion of the action (type A) or whether they admit - explicitly or implicitly - that the action may be completed, while at the same time suggesting that its results are unsatisfactory or cancelled (type B).²⁵

TYPE A. NON-COMPLETION OR INTERRUPTION OF ACTION

1. To this group belong the dictionary definitions, and Kunert's definition, quoted in section 1.
2. A.X. Vostokov (quoted by Švedova 1960: 109), draws a distinction between the functioning of *БЫЛО* "в окончательном виде" and "в начательном виде". According to Vostokov, in the second group (examples: *Стал БЫЛО читать. Стал БЫЛО говорить*), *БЫЛО* indicates "что начавшееся действие не имело продолжения". This seems to correspond to the notion of 'interruption'. *Прочел БЫЛО* and *Сказал БЫЛО* are given as examples of the first group. According to Vostokov, in these cases, *БЫЛО* is used "для показания, /.../ что действие не дошло до исполнения".
3. Buslaev (1959/1881: 286): "для означения несовершенного действия".
4. Mazon (1914: 217): "exprime une action considérée dans son accomplissement intégral, mais non réalisée".
5. Pedersen (1916: 163): "*БЫЛО* udtrykker, at noget var lige ved at ske, men så blev opgivet eller forhindret" ('*БЫЛО* expresses that something was just going to happen but was given up or prevented').
6. Šaxmatov (1941/25-27: 405): "действие не достигло результата, не выполнено".²⁶

7. Gvozdev (1952: 143): "Особый оттенок прерванности действия".
8. Kuznecov (1959: 231): "/выражение/ действия в прошлом, прерванного другим действием".
9. GRJa (1960/52, I: 472): "оттенок неосуществленного действия"; (646): "действие началось, но не было закончено в силу каких-то причин, непредвиденных условий, помешавших осуществиться этому действию".²⁷
10. Galkina-Fedoruk/Gorškova/Šanskiĭ (1958; cited by Nilsson 1967: 40): "действие, которое могло совершиться, но не совершилось, или действие начавшееся, но прерванное другим действием".
11. Tauscher/Kirschbaum (1967/58: 421): "/*было* drückt aus/, dass eine Handlung beabsichtigt oder auch begonnen wurde, aber nicht zur Ausführung bzw. zur vollen Ausführung gelangte".
12. Isačenko (1968/62: 292)²⁸: "Vorgänge, die in der Vergangenheit zwar einsetzten, aber durch andere Vorgänge unterbrochen wurden"; (606): "Modalität einer unterbrochenen Handlung".
13. Nikitevič (1963: 202): "не полностью осуществившееся или прерванное действие".
14. Tagamlickaja (1964: 188): "/характеристика действия/ начавшегося, но чем-то прерванного", "сложное и своеобразное значение - начинательное незавершенное".
15. Forsyth (1970: 105): "/*было*/ expresses the fact that the action of the verb it accompanies was contemplated or even begun, but that the performer then changed his mind or was prevented from carrying the action to its conclusion".²⁹
16. Černov (1970: 260): "действие не достигает своего конечного предела"; (261): "/общее значение/ начатого или задуманного, но не осуществленного действия".
17. Rozental' (red.) (1971: 378): "значение невозможности завершить действие вследствие каких-либо причин".
18. Kiselev (in Astaf'eva et al.) (1971: 17): "действие /.../ начало осуществляться, но было прервано".
19. Demidenko/Naumovič (1972: 64): "действие, которое могло совершиться, но не совершилось, или начатое, но прерванное действие".
20. Garde (1980: 402): "action commencée et interrompue ou une action projetée mais non réalisée".³⁰

21. Crome (in Eckert et al.) (1983: 172): "die Bedeutung einer beinahe zustande gekommenen, dann aber nicht ausgeführten Handlung".

TYPE B. ACTION COMPLETED, RESULTS UNSATISFACTORY OR CANCELLED

1. I.I. Davydov (cited by Švedova 1960: 109): "для означения неудачи".
2. K.S. Aksakov (cited by Vinogradov (1970/47: 463; footnote) and Švedova (1960: 119)): "действие /.../ уже началось и встретило препятствие, или совершилось и было уничтожено".³¹
3. A. Potebnja (1888/74: 266)³² "оттенок действия, недошедшего до надлежащего исполнения, лишенного своих прямых последствий".
4. Boyer/Spéranski (1921/05: 252): "une action verbale commencée n'a pas été achevée, - ou /.../ cette action, même achevée, n'a pas produit l'effet qu'on en pouvait légitimement attendre, ou enfin /.../ cette action a été simplement projetée, mais non mise à exécution".
5. Peškovskij (1920: 87) : "/особый оттенок/ неудачности, без-результативности".
6. Karcevski (1927: 142) : "acte annulé en fonction de son résultat".
7. Vinogradov (1970/47: 463) uses the formulation "прерванность осуществления действия". In a footnote on the same page, this is equated with "значение аннулированного результата". Later in his book, the following definition appears: для обозначения действия с неосуществленным или аннулированным результатом" (1970/47: 573) (an identical statement can be found in 1975/50: 79).
8. Unbegaun (1951: 253): "/Le mot *было*/ indique l'acte abandonné, à quelque stade que ce soit, que cet acte ait eut lieu, ou fût seulement projeté: l'essentiel est que cet acte n'ait pas mené au résultat attendue ou escompté".
9. Borras/Christian ((1971/59: 139): "expresses the fact that the result which might naturally have been expected from a completed perfective action was frustrated. The action may actually have been begun or simply projected" (emphasis mine - A.A.B.)
10. GSRLJa (1970: 578): "значение действия начатого, но прерванного или не давшего желаемых результатов".³³

11. RG (1980, I: 727): "значение действия осуществившегося, но или прерванного, не доведенного до конца, или не приведшего к желаемому результату, не достигшего цели".³⁴

12. Pennington (1980: 283): "to indicate incomplete or unsuccessful actions".

As these definitions show, the various authors differ to a surprising extent in their formulations of the meaning of *БЫЛО*. This variety might be accounted for at least in part by the ambiguity of the expressions used in the definitions. Owing to the ambiguity of terms like 'result' or 'action', and to the fact that it is often not clear to which 'actions' some of the notions must be applied (cf. section 1.), it is possible that some of the authors whose definitions are classed here under group A in fact hold a view which is closer to that of the writers whose definitions are placed in group B.³⁵ For the purposes of the classification, I have taken the definitions quite literally. Of course, the authors illustrate their definitions with one or more examples, and in practice, some well-chosen examples can often exclude undesirable interpretations. Still, the possibility of confusing the reader remains, especially when the number of examples is limited. Group A definitions are the most difficult. This point has already been illustrated in section 1., with reference to Kunert's definition, and since this kind of definition seems to be favoured by the majority, it will be elaborated in the next section.

5. *THE PROBLEM OF IDENTIFYING 'THE ACTION'*

All definitions of type A refer to a characteristic of 'the action'. However, as already stated in section 1, when one tries to apply such a definition to the expressions containing *БЫЛО*, it is often not immediately clear to what the term 'action' in fact refers. To illustrate this point, let us turn to Garde's definition (A20): it is a recent formulation, fairly representative of the definitions of type A, and Garde's examples have some interesting features.

According to. Garde, *было* indicates an action that was begun and interrupted, or intended but not realised. He gives the following two examples, taken from literary texts:

- (53) Он было бросился на шею к дяде, но тот ... держал его в некотором расстоянии от себя. (Гончаров)
- (54) Поехали было в Париж, но там нам показалось холодно, и мы вернулись в Италию. (Чехов)

Unless it is otherwise stated, one naturally assumes that the word 'action' is being used in the same way as in accounts of the verbal aspects: for example, in discussions of the perfective aspect, the 'action' is 'that which is presented as a single whole'. Such a conception of 'totality' presupposes a certain 'critical point', a *terminus* (henceforth: 'Term.')

that must be reached. There are considerable differences between verbs, and between different uses of the same verb, with respect to the relation between the situations preceding and following this 'Term.': with some verbs, e.g. *написать*, the situation³⁶ immediately preceding the 'Term.' is conceived as an 'activity' (writing), leading up to a 'result' (the situation immediately following the 'Term.'). In the case of other verbs, like *заговорить*, the situation immediately following the 'Term.' (the talking) would normally be thought of not so much as a 'result', but rather as an 'activity'. This 'activity' must not, however, be confused with the essential 'action' denoted by the verb *заговорить*: the start of the talking. It is clear that the notion of 'totality' associated with the perfective aspect must be applied here to the start of the talking and not to the talking itself. A considerable number of verbs in Russian have a similar meaning, i.e. they place the main emphasis upon the 'postterminal' situation. At the centre of this group are the so-called 'ingressive' verbs ('ingressive Aktionsart', 'начинательный способ действия'). The essential 'action' denoted by these verbs is in fact the start of something else.

It is interesting to note that the verbs in both of Garde's examples are of an 'ingressive' nature. The verb *поехать* is in fact generally considered to be of the 'ingressive Aktionsart'. This verb - like others formed by adding the prefix *по-* to a 'determinate verb of motion' (*пойти*, *побежать* etc.) - denotes the 'action'

of transition from a resting state to a state of a movement in a certain direction. A similar meaning can be expressed by the verb *броситься*, although this verb is not considered to be a member of the 'ingressive Aktionsart'. In the sentences in the present sample the verb *броситься* can always be interpreted as referring to an energetic start - a transition into a fast movement. The following are all the other examples at the author's disposal (see also (2), (4) and the example in note 11):

- (55) Ибрагим, узнав Петра, в радости к нему было бросился, но почтительно остановился. (П: АП 10.21)
- (56) - Ах ты, я доберусь до тебя... - бросился было солдат к поручику, но тут же был сбит с ног ударом кулака. (Степ.)
- (57) Я бросился было к нему на помощь: несколько дюжих казаков схватили меня и связали кушаками /.../. (П: КД 324.15)
- (58) Он бросился было на помощь Юрасевскому, но поняв, в чем дело, кинулся к Малееву. (Степ.)
- (59) Мятажники бросились было на них, но были рассеяны пушечными выстрелами с противного берега. (П: ИП 59.11)
- (60) Я бросился было за ним, но на левой руке моей повисла тяжесть. Это была она /.../. (Л. Толстой; Bondarko 1983: 141)
- (61) "А где же Екимовна? Позвать ее сюда". Несколько слуг бросились было в разные стороны, но в ту же минуту старая женщина (i.e. Екимовна - А.А.В) /.../ вошла припевая и подплясывая. (П: АП 20.19)
- (62) я бросилась было бежать, но он схватил меня за руку. (Тургенев; Nilsson 1967: 46)
- (63) Встречаясь с генералом Раевским и боясь его шуток, он, дабы их предупредить, бросился было его обнимать; Раевский отступил и сказал ему с улыбкою /.../. (П: Ж₂ 166.13)
- (64) Шурка исподлобья посмотрела на отца, а затем бросилась было очищать его от грязи. - Не трожь, дура! Как есть - до командира пойду /.../ (Степ.)
- (65) Сказал волк и пустился к деревне; увидал свинью с поросятами и бросился было схватить поросенка, а свинья не дает. (Афанасьев; Mazon 1914: 217)

The 'ingressive' nature of such events is important when they occur in combination with *было*. The usual definitions of *было* run into

trouble over ingressive-type verbs, because it would have to follow from them that the start of the action has not been fully realised, i.e. the start was begun but interrupted, or intended but not realised. In either case, the activity itself, the 'post-terminal' activity, never happened at all. It seems unnecessary to interpret in this way any of the examples in this section (including Garde's examples, (53) and (54)). Several of them make sense only when it is assumed that the 'post-terminal' activity did actually come into existence. Sentence (55), in which the subsequent action is denoted by a verb of opposite meaning, is an especially clear case. The same applies to the following examples, which illustrate the use of verbs generally acknowledged to be 'ingressive': the *поехать*-type, and the *заговорить*-type:

- (66) Помощник было пошел, но приостановился и крикнул /.../
(Серафимович GRJa 1960/52, II, 1: 392)
- (67) Я поехал было за Нижегородским полком, но лошадь моя хромала. Я отстал. (П: ПА 471.21)
- (68) В вагоне рослые мужики тащили с полок чемоданы, выкидывали их через окошки, человек в пенсне полез было на откос к вагону: - Господа, господа, там у меня физические приборы, ради бога, осторожнее, это хрупкое...
На него зашипели, схватив сзади за непромокаемый плащ, втащили в толпу пассажиров. (А. Толст.)
- (69) Схватка была коротка, четверо казаков осталось лежать на бугре, двое, спешенных, побежали было и упали под выстрелами. (А. Толст.)
- (70) Мы заговорили было о деле, но нас отвлекли.
(Gvozdev 1952: 143)
- (71) С Потугиным он заговорил было, но тот неохотно отвечал ему.
(Тургенев; Nilsson 1967: 44)
- (72) Я было заговорил о чем-то постороннем, но старик только рукой махнул. (Достоевский; Švedova 1960: 112)
- (73) Собаки было залаяли, но узнав Антона, умолкли и замахали косматыми хвостами. (П: Д 175.25)
- (74) - А знаете ли, господа, отчего мы сегодня сидим повесив носы? - сказал Злов, который запел было "*mihi est propositum*" и остановился, видя, что никто ему не подтягивает. (Жихарева; Prokopovič 1982: 112)

- (75) Он (Волин) было загрустил, но оттаял, потому что как раз в это время именно там, в Скатертном переулке, познакомился со своими благодетелями - Володи́й Казаковым и Юрой Леоновичем. (Незн.)

In sentences like these, the notions of 'interruption' or 'non-realisation' in Garde's definition can hardly apply to the action directly denoted by the verb (the start of another activity or the inception of a state (cf. (75))), but seem to make sense only when applied to the activity or state resulting from the transition.³⁷ Note the fact that sometimes the verb used in conjunction with *было* is followed by a more or less direct antonym (cf. (66), (73) and (74)). With verbs of the *заговорить*- or *поехать*-type, the nature of this activity or state is wholly defined by the meaning of the corresponding non-prefixed imperfective verb. The meaning of *броситься* can come very close to the meaning of *побежать* (cf. (4), (55)-(62) and the example in note 11). However, when combined with an infinitive other than *бежать* (as in (2) and (63)-(65)), the movement suggested by *броситься* often merges with the initial phase of the action denoted by the infinitive. In these cases, it is feasible that the movement leading up to that action is actually completed, but that the notion of 'interruption' or 'non-realisation' has to be applied to the latter action (cf. the discussion in section 1).

We may conclude that definitions of type A have a serious shortcoming: they do not make it clear that the 'action' of which they speak may be only indirectly related to the 'action' denoted by the *было*-verb. The examples discussed in this section show that in some cases, what is really meant is, activities or states resulting from the *было*-event. It might be that the distinction between 'beginning' - 'interruption' on the one hand, and 'intention' - 'non-realisation' on the other (a distinction that is made by Garde and some other authors, most notably Vostokov) reflects the authors' awareness of the problem. The question is, to what extent uses of *было* with verbs that are more or less distinctly 'ingressive' must be distinguished from its uses with other verbs, e.g. 'resultative' verbs. However, before we move on to this question, more examples will be given of ingressive constructions.

6. FURTHER EXAMPLES OF THE USE OF *было* IN INGRESSIVE CONSTRUCTION

The idea of 'ingressiveness' can be conveyed by constructions in which a finite verb form expresses the start of an activity specified by a following imperfective infinitive. We have already come across the construction *бросился бежать* in the preceding section. Similar examples can be found containing verbs like *кинуться* (cf. (9)), *пуститься* and *пойти*:³⁸

(76) Тут он пустился было бежать, но Саша догнал его, толкнул в спину, и мальчишка упал со всех ног /.../. (П: Д 216.21)

(77) А то А. пошел было ставить чай... (Из разговора)

As well as sentences like these, where the meaning of the finite verb form more or less clearly exceeds the notion of ingressiveness, the present sample contains a relatively large number of sentences with verbs which specialise in expressing ingression: *стать*, *начать* and *приняться*. These verbs are not confined to the inception of motions but cover a much wider field. Their use is illustrated in (10)-(12) and in the following examples:

(78) Со вздохом выпрямилась она, принялась было шить, уронила иголку, оперла лицо на руку и, легонько покусывая кончики ногтей, задумалась /.../. (Тургенев; Nilsson 1967: 48)

(79) Обольщенный моею славой, он стал было искать моего дружества; но я принял его холодно, и он без всякого сожаленья от меня удалился. (П: В 69.18)

(80) Эта мысль успокоила его немного: он стал было засыпать. "Ну, что ежели вдруг ночью возьмут Севастополь, и французы ворвутся сюда? Чем я буду защищаться?" Он опять встал и походил по комнате. (Л. Толст.)

(81) Стал было он (француз) своим словам учить меня, да мать запретила. (Горьк.)

(82) Пишу тебе у Рейна /.../. Начал он тебе было диктовать письмо в своем роде - но заблагорассудил изорвать его. (П: Пс 28.38)

(83) Г. Федоров, в журнале, который начал было издавать, разбирая довольно благосклонно 4 и 5-ую главу, заметил однако ж мне, что /.../ (П: Ж₁ 149.18)

- (84) Граф приблизился ко мне с видом открытым и дружелюбным; я старался ободриться и начал было себя рекомендовать, но он предупредил меня. (П: В 71.37)
- (85) /.../ князь начал было рассказывать о своих похождениях на берегу, но лейтенант его перебил вопросом /.../. (Степ.)
- (86) Саша Пискунов начал было хлестать громко, как всегда, и вдруг осекся. (Дудинцев; Ćernov 1970: 259)
- (87) Я начал было извиняться за поздний приход, но мой так называемый отчим замахал руками и потащил меня в столовую. (Незв.)
- (88) - Расследованием, произведенным стажером Турецким, было установлено - начал было я фиглярничать, но увидел, что этот номер сегодня не проходит /.../. (Незн.)

The last example is interesting because it is close to a use of *начал было* without infinitive that occurs relatively frequently in the literature, - in the writing of dialogue: "It indicates that the speaker is interrupted or does not bother to complete the speech that was begun" (Nilsson 1967: 44). Nilsson gives a number of examples from Turgenev that are of the same type as the following examples taken from more recent literary works:³⁹

- (89) - Наш флот настолько слабее японского... - начал было Агатева, но грохот взрыва не дал ему закончить. (Степ.)
- (90) - По положению о морских собраниях, не полагается... - начал было один из офицеров .
- Ну вас к черту с вашими положениями, - оборвал его князь. (Степ.)
- (91) - Ну, как работается? Как Меркулов, не обижает? /.../
- Да какой начальник не обижает... - начал было я с приторной шутливостью в тоне. Но Пархоменко не намерен был уходить от серьезной темы /.../. (Незн.)
- (92) - По-моему, они говорят о тебе, - начал было Грикспоор, но тут громко закричала Мария, и все затихли. (Вестд.)⁴⁰

All of the above examples, with one possible exception, allow the interpretation that the 'terminus' of the 'action' denoted by the *было*-verb is reached. The doubtful case is (84): in view of the meaning of the verb *предупредить*, it might be argued that the

subject of the sentence did not actually start the act denoted by the verb *рекомендовать*, being pre-empted by the action of the count. However, in some of the other sentences, it is clear that the activity of which the *БЫЛО*-verb marks the beginning has already been in progress for some time, cf. (76), (79), (82), (83), (85), and (89)-(92).

The points made in this section and the preceding one lead to the conclusion that where *БЫЛО* is used with ingressive-type verbs, its meaning must be defined in relation to the state of affairs resulting from the action denoted by the *БЫЛО*-verb, and not that action itself. The state of affairs comes into being, but does not progress as might have been expected.

7. SENTENCES CONTAINING 'RESULTATIVE' VERBS

We may now turn to an examination of the functioning of *БЫЛО* in combination with other kinds of verb. As already stated in section 5, there is a notable difference between 'ingressive' and 'resultative' verbs with respect to the temporal location of the main activity - whether it starts or ends at the 'Term.' of the action that is directly denoted by the verb. One might expect, therefore, that when *БЫЛО* is used with a resultative verb, it would operate on the state of affairs preceding the 'Term.', i.e. on the action itself. It might be thought that the second part of Garde's definition ("action /.../ intended but not realised") applies especially to the 'resultative' cases. However, this is not borne out by the uses of *БЫЛО* in the present sample.

This point is best illustrated with the aid of examples containing the verb *написать*: it is an excellent example of the group of 'resultative' verbs because it is a verb with an object, denoting something that comes into existence as a result of the action. All eight instances in the present sample are reproduced here:

- (93) Я было написал письмо, да опять изорвал.
(К.С. Аксаков, cited by Švedova)
- (94) Не разжимая зубов, Катя мотнула головой. Написала было Даше коротенькое письмо, но сейчас же порвала. (А. Толст.) (Cf. GRJa (1960/52, II, 1: 392) and Borrás/Christian (1971/59: 139).)

- (95) Я из Пскова написал тебе было уморительное письмо - да сжег.
(П: Пс 223.39)
- (96) Он (Ганибал) написал было свои записки на французском языке, но в припадке панического страха, коему был подвержен, велел их при себе сжечь вместе с другими драгоценными бумагами.
(П: Ж₂ 313.9)
- (97) Милый мой ангел! Я было написал тебе письмо на 4 страницах, но оно вышло такое горькое и мрачное, что я его тебе не послал, а пишу другое. (П: Пс 9 50.2)
- (98) Я было написал на него ругательскую Антикритику, слоном Галатей - взяв в эпиграф *Павлуша медный лоб приличное название!* собирался ему послать, не знаю куда дел.
(П: Пс 439.17)
- (99) - Вы хотели просить меня, чтоб я написал Александру /.../.
- Да, напишите... напишите что хотите... А вот это... - она торопливо пошарила у себя в кармане и достала небольшую тетрадку. - Это я было для него написала... перед его бегством... Но ведь он поверил... поверил тому!
(Тургенев)
- (100) Кстати: Лиза написала было мне письмо в роде духовной: *croyez à la tendresse de celle qui vous aimera même au delà du tombeau* и проч., да и замолкла; я спокойно себе думаю, что она умерла. Что же узнаю? Элиза влюбилась в вояжера *Mornau* да с ним кокетничает! Каково? *O femme, femmel créature faible et décevante*... (П: Пс 654.36)

In all these sentences, *было* is clearly not being used to show that the action 'to write something' has not reached its 'Term.'. The context suggests that something has been written and that it has existed at least for a short moment. The use of *было* seems to indicate that something has disturbed the subsequent course of events. In (93)-(96) the document is destroyed⁴¹, apparently because the subject was dissatisfied with what he had written ((93)-(95)) or became afraid that it might cause trouble (96). In (97) the subject's dissatisfaction prevents him from posting the letter. In (98), the document was lost and could not be posted for that reason. In (99) it probably did not reach the addressee (because he had fled).⁴² In all these examples, there appears to have been

some disturbance of the 'normal' course of events: a letter is usually dispatched by the writer, and received and read by the addressee; memoirs are written for future generations to read, and are published for that purpose, etc. However, as example (100) illustrates, the use of *было* is still possible even when all the events that normally follow the writing of a letter actually take place: the letter has been written, has been posted, is received by the addressee, and is read by him. What, then, is the function of *было* here? The context shows that there is a certain inconsistency between the message that the writer sent, and her subsequent behaviour. The content of the letter led the recipient to believe that the writer was in love with him, and close to dying, but afterwards it comes to his knowledge that she is very much alive, and flirting with someone else.

An examination of examples (93)-(100) shows that even with such typical 'resultative' verbs as *написать*, it is perfectly normal for the action to reach its 'Term.'. The same applies to most of the other sentences containing more or less 'resultative' verbs. A number of examples are given below:

The following four sentences describe a change of position that was wholly or partly cancelled by the action denoted by a following verb:

- (101) Базаров, который встал было навстречу Павлу Петровичу, присел на край стола и скрестил руки. (Тургенев)
- (102) Дампфер сел было, но сразу же встал снова и отыскал взглядом Максимова. (Аксенов; Forsyth 1970: 105)⁴³
- (103) Демин лег было, а теперь опять поднялся на локте... (А. Рыбаков; Švedova 1960: 111)
- (104) Барабан умолк; гарнизон бросил ружья; меня сшибли было с ног, но я встал и вместе с мятежниками вошел в крепость. (П: КД 324.13)

In the next four sentences the verb following the *было*-verb is not its direct opposite, but again it is quite clear that the result of the action of the *было*-verb has existed for at least a short period before being 'annulled' by the following action:

- (105) Воротился старик ко старушке, / Рассказал ей великое чудо. / "Я сегодня поймал было рыбку, / Золотую рыбку, не

простую / /.../ Не посмел я взять с нее выкуп;/

Так пустил ее в синее море". (П: РР 30)

- (106) Послание к Давыдову - прелесть! Наш боец чернокудрявый окрасил было свою седину, замазав и свой белый локон, но после Ваших стихов опять его вымыл - и прав.
(П: ПС 1175.22)
- (107) Здесь Перовский его (Брюлова) было заплотонил; перевез к себе, запер под ключ и заставил работать. Брюлов насилу от него удрал. (П: Пс 1188.17)
- (108) Один из солдат вскинул было винтовку, но другой толкнул его в плечо, и тот не выстрелил. (А. Толст.)

In the next set of examples, the *было*-verb implies that some other person was persuaded to act according to the wish of the subject of this verb. However, the context indicates that this other person apparently changed his mind afterwards:

- (109) Отдавая ему (отцу) имение, я было выговорил для тебя независимые доходы с половины Кистенева. Но видно отец переменял свои мысли. (П: Пс 1205)
- (110) Он было спас и офицеров полка Прусского короля, уговорив мятежников содержать несчастных под арестом; но после его отъезда убийства совершились. (П: Ж₂, 200.28)

In the next example, the result did come about - the book has been opened -, but the reader did not find the solace she had hoped for:

- (111) Даша усаживалась в большом кресле то боком, то поджав ноги, раскрыла было книгу - отчет за три месяца "деятельности Городского союза", - столбцы цифр и совершенно непонятных слов, - но в книжке не нашла утешения. (А. Толст.)⁴⁴

The last example in this section was noticed in the ordinary speech of a Russian, in the following situation: the telephone had rung once only. She went to the telephone and dialled the number of her friend (В.). On finding out that this number was occupied she commented:

- (112) В. разговаривает. Она было мой номер набрала по ошибке. Сразу опустила трубку.

The preceding examples show that there are no essential differences between 'resultative' and 'ingressive' constructions, with respect to the interpretation that the action reached its 'Term.'. *БЫЛО* seems to act upon situation(s) following the 'Term.'. ⁴⁵ This does not necessarily mean that it affects our perception of the two kinds of situation in the same way. Whereas with 'ingressive' verbs the notion of 'interruption' normally seems quite adequate to describe our idea of what happens with the 'postterminal' activity, this notion often seems inapplicable to 'resultative' verbs. However, a closer look at the examples shows that even this difference is not a major one. Garde's second example (example (54) in section 5 of this article) is instructive in this respect. Although this example contains a typical 'ingressive' verb (*поехать*), the 'postterminal' activity - the movement towards Paris - is clearly not interrupted at all: as the immediate context shows, the subject actually arrived in Paris (where the next action - *нам показалось холодно* - is located). Here, as in examples (93)-(112) above, the only reason for the use of *БЫЛО* appears to be that there is something disturbing in the ultimate development of things. In this case, the subject had apparently planned to stay for some time in Paris but owing to bad weather the travellers changed their plans.

The above observations, and a study of examples like (54) and (100) lead us to the conclusion that there is no essential difference between the meaning of *БЫЛО* as used in conjunction with 'ingressive' verbs, and as used in conjunction with 'resultative' verbs. With both kinds of verb, *БЫЛО* does not preclude the completion of the action denoted by the verb, i.e. the attainment of the 'Term.'. *БЫЛО* can be used in conjunction with both kinds of verb to suggest a disturbance in or annulment of the situation immediately following the 'Term.'. Alternatively it can apply to subsequent developments - the occurrence of unexpected events only indirectly connected with the *БЫЛО*-event. Clearly, definitions of *БЫЛО* should account for such uses, since they are commonplace enough. It is argued above that group A definitions are not satisfying because they imply that the action of the *БЫЛО*-verb does not reach its critical point. ⁴⁶ Group B definitions are superior in this respect, although some of them are unfortunately vague (cf. B1, B5), and others contain elements which unduly restrict the

applicability of the definition. The term 'result', often used in the Group B definitions, gives rise to difficulties similar to those which we encountered in connection with the term 'action' in group A definitions. The plural form 'results' (B10), or the term 'effect' (B4), are preferable because they can be taken to include the more indirect effects of the action. Other elements, like 'annulment of the result' or 'non-attainment of the desired result' cannot adequately explain some of the more extreme cases like (54) and (100). Nevertheless, some of the definitions contain certain elements that point the way to a more generally applicable definition; for example, Borrás/Christian's notion of 'frustration' (B9) (which is less specific than 'annulment'); the notion of 'expectation' in Boyer/Spéranski (B4) and in Unbegaun (B8); and the notion of 'consequences' ('ПОСЛЕДСТВИЯ') in Potebnja (B3).

However, before attempting to formulate an alternative definition, we must consider at least the following questions:

- a) Is non-attainment of the critical point a possible interpretation at all, and if so, what factors are important here?
- b) What is the relation between *БЫЛО* and *ЧУТЬ (БЫЛО) НЕ*?
- c) How does *БЫЛО* function in negative sentences like (5) and (6)?
- d) How does *БЫЛО* function with imperfective verbs?

8. PRETERMINAL INTERRUPTION

Some definitions of *БЫЛО* suggest that its use precludes the reaching of the 'Term.', the 'critical point', which is such an important element in the meaning of perfective verbs. We have decided that this is not the case. We will now consider whether the use of *БЫЛО* can preclude the reaching of the 'critical point'. Of the examples quoted up to this point, practically only (84) could really be interpreted in this way, and even so, it could be argued that here the 'Term.' of the interrupting action does not in fact precede the 'Term.' of the *БЫЛО*-verb, but practically coincides with it. In the present sample there is no real instance where the context compels us to locate the 'Term.' of the interrupting event, if any, before the 'Term.' of the *БЫЛО*-verb, or otherwise makes it clear that the 'Term.' is not reached. Even in the cases where the

expected post-terminal situation clearly did not come about it is possible that the 'critical points' of the *БЫЛО*-event and of the interrupting event coincide. The following example is a clear case of such a coincidence: the phrase 'в дверях' indicates that the subject halted at the very 'border' that has to be crossed to leave the room:

- (113) Тут он БЫЛО ВЫШЕЛ, но остановился в дверях, оглянулся на простреленную мною картину, выстрелил в нее почти не целясь и скрылся. (П: В 74.31)

The following example, a note written by Puškin to accompany a text sent to his brother - is one of the few cases that probably could be interpreted as an instance of non-attainment of the 'Term.':

- (114) Я БЫЛО ПОСЛАЛ это в Сын Отечества, да кажется журнал сей противу меня восстанет, судя по сухому объявлению Пчелы. В таком случае мне не годится там явиться, как даннику атамана Греча и эсаула Булгарина. Дарю отрывки тебе: печатай где хочешь. (П: Пс 141.1)

It seems possible here to assume that the manuscript was never actually sent off to the journal. Nevertheless, it could be argued that some preparative work might already have been made for its despatch. A consulted native-speaker suggested the possibility that the text had already been handed over to a servant, but was afterwards taken back.

The following example is taken from Isačenko (1968/62: 293):

- (115) Он уже миновал БЫЛО заборик Журбиных, когда над головами собравшихся ... ударил гулкий выстрел.

According to Isačenko's interpretation the subject had not yet passed the fence: 'Er hatte den Zaun der Schurbins beinahe schon hinter sich, als ...' (emphasis mine - A.A.B.). My Russian advisers preferred the interpretation that at the moment when the sound was heard, the subject was already at the very edge of the fence or even slightly further.

In the following two examples, 2 interpretations are possible:

- 1) the critical points of the two verbs coincide; 2) the critical

point of the *БЫЛО*-verb is anticipated by that of the second verb. Both are acceptable.

(116) Сережа вошел уже было в ворота, но вдруг заметил возле урны с мусором папиросную коробку. (Шварц)

(117) /Меркулов/ занялся осмотром рукава моей нейлоновой куртки. Я было сунул руку в карман за синим пакетом, но Меркулов сказал: - Ш-ш-ш... (Незн.)

(It was dangerous to show the packet. It is not clear whether the hand was actually slipped into the pocket, but of course the packet was left there:)

The next example is the only one where the second part of the sentence makes it clear that the action was interrupted before the critical point:

(118) Он упал было, да удержался за перила. (Pedersen 1916: 163)

However, it is interesting to note that Boyer/Spéranski give an example where the same verb is used, but the second part of the sentence means just the opposite:

(119) Он упал было, но сейчас же поднялся (1921/05: 253)

We may conclude that interruption of the action before the terminus is reached is in principle possible, although there seems to be a strong tendency to locate the interrupting event farther 'to the right', i.e. at the very point when the 'Term.' is reached, or after it. One gains the impression that the presence of the particle *БЫЛО* often causes the situation around the critical point to become faint or blurred. The help of the context is needed to be able to determine whether the 'Term.' of the *БЫЛО*-event was actually reached or not. However, the notion of pre-empting or non-attainment of the 'Term.' seems to be more marked: when the context does not provide information that points to the contrary, the interpretation of attainment of the terminus seems preferable.

According to some grammarians, the presence of the adverb *совсем* would tend to encourage the view that the action is pre-empted before its critical point is reached. The next section contains a brief discussion of the functioning of this adverb.

9. THE ADVERB *совсем*

Boyer/Spéranski seem to assume that the presence of *совсем* indicates preterminal interruption: "Parfois *было* s'accompagne de l'adverbe *совсем*; c'est alors l'action verbale n'a pas même reçu un commencement d'exécution" (1921/05: 253). They contrast example (119) with the following example:

(120) Он *совсем* было упал.

Example (119) is translated as follows: "il est tombé, mais s'est relevé aussitôt". It is followed by this comment: "- et l'auxiliaire *было* indique que cette chute n'a point eu les suites fâcheuses qu'on pouvait craindre". In the case of (120) they state "il était sur le point de tomber, il a failli tomber, mais il n'est réellement pas tombé".

The same assumption is made by Borrás/Christian: "To express clearly that the action in the main clause was not even begun, the expression *совсем было* may be used" (1971/59: 140). They provide the following example:

(121) Он тоже взялся за ложку и уже *совсем* было погрузил в суп,
но сейчас же он опять положил на стол. (Щедрин)

which they translate as follows:

'He also took hold of the spoon and was about to dip it in the soup, but straight away put it back on the table'.

My Russian advisers agree on the possibility that the spoon has not yet touched the soup, but do not wholly exclude the possibility that it was in fact dipped in the soup. Amongst the sentences in the sample which contain *совсем* it is difficult to find instances in which the attainment of the 'Term.' appears to be entirely excluded. The following example is possibly one case:

(122) Ласковой улыбкой и обещанием "прокатить" Павел Антоныч заманил ее в сани и повез. Дорогой Танька *совсем* было ушла. Павел Антоныч успел подхватить ее под мышки и опять начал уговаривать. (Бунин)

It seems clear here that Tan'ka did not succeed in escaping from the sleigh. In the next example, however, the function of *совсем*

cannot be explained as indicating the failure: the subject has actually been quite near to the other person mentioned:

(123) Я было совсем пододвинулся к нему; но при этом последнем слове невольно вскочил на ноги. (Тургенев; Nilsson 1970: 47)

One of my Russian acquaintances said that in this example, the presence of *совсем* suggests a certain progression: the subject had been moving towards the other person for some time and had already got very close.

With regard to the next example, it was said that the subject had already made up her mind to walk to the door, but that it was not very clear whether she was already actually walking:

(124) - Простились, и она совсем уже было к двери пошла, вдруг оборачивается и спрашивает... (Полевой; Švedova 1967: 113)

When asked about the effect of the substitution of *она совсем уже было к двери пошла* by *она пошла было к двери*, a native-informant stated that in the *совсем*-variant, the subject had to be closer to the starting-point than to the door, whereas the 'normal' variant is neutral in this respect.

The following example is a translation of a letter written in French by Anna Vul'f. (Letter Nr. 233 in the *Полное собрание* of the works of Puškin - cf. note 14):

(125) я поэтому совсем было успокоилась на твой счет, как вдруг твое письмо так неприятно меня разочаровало.

Russian native-informants commented that the subject had already stopped worrying. When *совсем было успокоилась* was compared with *почти уже успокоилась*, it was felt that in the first sentence, the subject was more at ease than in the sentence with *почти* (which word clearly indicates that the 'Term.' has not been attained). (The French original - *je commençais donc à devenir tranquille* - seems to be more close to the Russian *я уже начала было успокаиваться* .)

These observations and comments suggest that the influence of *совсем* on *было*-sentences is less straightforward than the authors cited above would lead us to believe. The presence of this adverb does not exclude the attainment of the 'Term.', but seems to con-

centrate our attention on this 'critical point'; this may cause a certain shift to the left of the location of an interrupting event with respect to the corresponding *было*-sentences without *совсем*. In some cases, this apparently favours the idea of a preterminal interruption. Another (accompanying?) effect of *совсем* seems to be 'indication of intensity'. It is not entirely clear to the present writer whether the location of *совсем* in relation to *было*, and the presence or absence of *уже*, play a part here. In order to elucidate this point, a special investigation would be needed, using a larger sample.

We may conclude this section with some more examples of sentences featuring *совсем*. These will help the reader to arrive at a better understanding of its use (see also (33) and (34)):

- (126) Друзья совсем было собрались во дворец, когда явился курьер герцога курляндского. (Лажечников; OIG 1964: 245)
- (127) - Постой, постой! - закричал вдруг Максим Максимыч, ухватясь за дверцу коляски, - совсем было забыл... у меня остались ваши бумаги, Григорий Александрович... (Лерм.)
- (128) Милый мой, еще просьба: съезди к *S^t Florent* (т.е. к его преемнику) и расплатись с ним за меня. Я, помнится, должен ему около 1,000 руб. Извини меня перед ним - я было совсем о нем забыл. (П: Пс 572.29)
- (129) Он уже совсем было решил поворачивать назад, но вспомнил о недавнем столкновении с Давыдовым и изменил решение. (Шолохов; Astaf'eva et al. 1971: 17)
- (130) В суде адвокат совсем уже было его оправдал - нет улик, да и только, как вдруг тот слушал-слушал, да вдруг встал и прервал адвоката. (Достоевский; OIG 1964: 17)
- (131) /Гордей Карпыч/... Спасибо, что на ум наставили, а то было свихнулся совсем. (Островский; Švedova 1960: 113)
- (132) Он был уже старым прокурором, отказавшимся от некоторых перемещений, ожидая более желательного места, когда неожиданно случилось одно неприятное обстоятельство, совсем было нарушившее его спокойствие жизни. (Л. Толстой; Nilsson 1967: 41)

10. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN *чуть не* AND *было*

As is shown in the following sentences, *было* can be combined with *чуть не*:

- (133) /.../ княгиня завезла меня во Французский театр, где я чуть было не заснул от скуки и усталости. (П: Пс 769.19)
- (134) Ришелье за нею волочился, и бабушка уверяет, что он чуть было не застрелился от ее жестокости. (П: ПД 228.11)
- (135) - Андрей, что ты?! Что ты?! Что с тобой?! - испугалась она. Он чуть было не всхлипнул, но удержался. (Расп.)
- (136) Грикспоор еще больше высунулся, так, что чуть было не вылетел из беседки вместе со стулом. (Вестд.)
- (137) Дно то поднималось, то опускалось, и раза два Юрий чуть было не сорвался в какие-то ямы. (Арцыбашев; Sémon 1979: 95)
- (138) Идя к вам я чуть-чуть было не поссорился с отцом; скажи да скажи, куда я иду. (Pedersen 1916: 161)

Presumably all such sentences indicate that the 'Term.' has been closely approached, but not reached. However, the same interpretation seems to apply to sentences containing *чуть не* without *было*, as in the following examples:⁴⁷

- (139) Бумага чуть не выпала из моих рук. (П: КД 365.6)
- (140) Прочитав это письмо, я чуть с ума не сошел. (П: КД 342.13)
- (141) Выслушав сей разговор, Корсаков хотел выдти из круга, но зашатался и чуть не упал к неопisanному удовольствию государя и всей веселой компании. (П: АП 18.3)
- (142) Кохен /.../ побрел дальше /.../ и чуть не столкнулся с голландским эсэсовцем, который сказал ему "пардон", на что Кохен ответил "*Verzeihung*" /.../. (Вестд.)
- (143) /.../ долго они за ним гонялись, особенно один раза два чуть-чуть не накинул ему на шею аркана /.../. (Лерм.)

The difference in meaning between sentences of the first type (with *было*) and sentences of the second type (without *было*) is often slight. In many sentences of the second type, *было* can be inserted without changing the meaning.⁴⁸ However, it is important to note that the combination of *чуть не* with *было* appears to be restricted to sentences containing perfective preterite forms (including

participles; cf. Saenkova 1971: 301). Without *БЫЛО*, *чуть не* has a much greater range of applicability: it can be combined with imperfective forms, present tense forms and adjectives, cf.:

- (144) Он рассказывал мне армейские анекдоты, от которых я со смеху чуть не валялся /.../. (П: КД 283.15)
 (145) /.../ я предвидел долговременное заключение в стенах оренбургских, и чуть не плакал от досады. (П: КД 341)
 (146) /.../ Вслед/ Она глядит и чуть не плачет. (П: ГН 92)
 (147) - Эти деньги чуть не краденые.
 (А. Островский; Saenkova 1971: 301)
 (148) Подумай обо всем, и увидишь, что я перед тобой не только прав, но чуть не свят. (П: Пс 977.5)

In sentences like these, the meaning of 'approximation' associated with *чуть не* seems to operate in an other dimension: not on a scale of temporal proximity, but on a scale of similarity. Some sentences with perfective preterite can be interpreted thus as well, and this explains why some of the combinations have virtually become set idiomatic expressions. Such expressions typically indicate a high degree of confusion (cf. (140)) or grief, as in the following example:

- (149) - А уж как она его любила, чуть не умерла с горя.
 (А. Островский; Saenkova 1971: 303)

In such cases, the inclusion of *БЫЛО* is less probable because it would suggest that a real change of situation, as indicated by the perfective verb, had somehow been expected.

On the basis of these observations, it seems plausible to regard *чуть было не* as a combination in which each of the two components (*чуть не*⁴⁹ and *БЫЛО*) restricts and/or modifies the applicability of the other. In conjunction with *БЫЛО*, the meaning of 'approximation' associated with *чуть не* is restricted to the temporal scale and can be paraphrased as 'close approach but non-attainment of the 'Term.' of an action'. On the other hand, the meaning of *БЫЛО* is modified in such a way that the non-attainment of the 'Term.', which, as we have seen above, in sentences without *чуть не* is quite exceptional, becomes the only possible interpreta-

tion. Naturally, this view of the meaning of *чуть было не* has some implications for the meaning of *было* as well. It supposes that the meaning of *было* must be formulated in such a way that the possibility of a shift of attention from the situation(s) following the 'Term.' to the preterminal situation is at least not excluded.

Even if one regards the meaning of *чуть было не* in the way described above, i.e. as analysable into its component parts, it is clear that there is a marked difference between the meaning of sentences featuring this combination, and sentences in which *было* is not combined with *чуть не*. This fact seems not to have received sufficient attention in many accounts of *было*. Sometimes, examples of *чуть было не* are presented alongside 'normal' uses of *было* without any special comment on the effect of the element *чуть не* (cf. BAS, MAS, Dal', Šaxmatov 1941/25-27: 485, Karcevski 1927: 143 ("D'autres variétés de la même modalité"), Nilsson 1967: 56, Prokopovič 1982: 112 etc.). In Demidenko/Naumovič (1972: 64), the only example given to illustrate *было* appears to be an example of *чуть было не*!

On the other hand, one can hardly regard *чуть было не* as having little connection with other uses of *было*. Nevertheless, some writers do seem to take this view, e.g. Saenkova 1971, and in RG 1980,1: 727). Consider the following statement of Saenkova: "В компоненте *было* в составе сложной частицы *чуть было не* /.../ стирается значение частицы *было*, употребляющейся в аналитической форме "глагол + *было*" (1971: 302). However, Saenkova presents a formulation of the difference between *чуть не* and *чуть было не* that demonstrates that she is aware of the more verb-like character of the latter particle. Whereas *чуть не* is compared with *почти*, *чуть было не* is equated to "*был близок к тому, чтобы*" (1971: 300). The presence of the finite form in the latter formulation can be interpreted as an indication of the temporal dimension.

The differences between *было*, *совсем было*, *чуть было не* and *чуть не* can sometimes be very subtle. This is best seen in sentences containing the verb *забыть*, cf.:

- (150) Офицер воротился. - Я было забыл самое важное. Дайте мне честное слово, что все это останется между нами - честное ваше слово. (П: Д 201.23)
- (151) Осман-Паша /.../ просил графа Паскевича за безопасность харема /.../. В первые дни об нем было забыли. Однажды за обедом /.../ граф вспомнил о хареме Османа-Паши и приказал г. Абрамовичу съездить в дом паши /.../. (П: ПА 480.1)
- (152) Тогда Гаврик почувствовал уху, о котором было забыл. (Катаев; Ferrell 1953: 113)
- (153) /Дарья/ Ах, сударыня! я было и забыла совсем, Иван-то Петрович приказывал... (Островский; Švedova 1960: 111)
(See also (127) and (128) for other examples with *совсем*.)
- (154) - Ах, да! чуть было не забыл... . Пожалуйста два рубля! (Чехов; Saenkova 1971: 301)
- (155) Да..., чуть было не забыл тебе сказать... Велите завтра наших лошадей к Федоту выслать на подставку. (Тургенев; *ibid.*)
- (156) Ах! Боже мой, чуть не забыл! вот тебе задача /.../. (П: Пс 115.40)

As can be seen from examples (127), (150), (153)-(156), all types can be used to convey something the speaker just remembered. However, *чуть (было) не* presents this as something that was in danger of being forgotten, whereas (*совсем*) *было* presents it as something that was already forgotten, but (just now) recalled. In example (150) the choice of *было* seems to be more natural than *чуть было не*: it is quite obvious that the speaker actually forgot to tell what he had to say, and only remembered after he had already left.

In the remaining examples - (151) and (152) - it would be quite unnatural to choose *чуть (было) не*, because the context clearly indicates that the thought or the feeling has been forgotten for some time.

21. *БЫЛО IN NEGATIVE SENTENCES*

Negative sentences containing *было* in which the negation of the verb is not preceded by *чуть* or *едва* are relatively rare (about 2 percent of the cases with a finite perfective preterite form). They are, nevertheless, important, because a proper definition of the meaning of *было* should be able to account for the less usual *было*-constructions as well as the more central ones.

The following instances are the only ones in the current sample, except for examples (5) and (6), given in section 2:

- (157) Ваню я сперва было и не заметил. (Тургенев; Boyer/Spéranski 1921/05: 253; also cited by Vinogradov 1972/47: 463 and GRJa 1960/52, I: 646)
- (158) И свет совсем не тот. Мы было не заметили, да Фаластов пришел, смеется. (Сологуб)
- (159) Через час я выехал, оставив Касьяну немного денег, которые он сперва было не принял, но потом, подумав и подержав их на ладони, положил за пазуху. (Тургенев; Nilsson 19 67: 50)
- (160) Б. Согласен.
 А. Русские журналисты не заслуживали такого унижительного сравнения!
 Б. А так извини: я с тобой не согласен.
 А. Как так?
 Б. Я было тебя не понял. Мне казалось, что ты находишь обиженными демократических писателей XVIII столетия /.../
 (П: Ж₁ 170.29)

A little further on in the same text the same combination occurs:

- (161) Б. Извини, брат. Опять было тебя не понял. Этого в газете не сказано. (П: Ж₁ 171.13)

All these cases can probably be seen as indicating a change that initially failed to occur. It is significant that the adverb *сперва* is present in two of the seven cases. According to a Russian colleague this adverb (or its synonym *сначала*) could be inserted in the other sentences as well.⁵⁰

Cases like these are difficult to explain on the basis of the traditional definitions, which suggest just the opposite: something positive is intended or brought about, but somehow prevented or

cancelled by the following course of events. However, a permanent feature of both positive and negative *БЫЛО*-sentences appears to be the idea of a contrast between the state of affairs directly denoted by the *БЫЛО*-verb, and a subsequent state of affairs. In both types, the presence of *БЫЛО* apparently evokes the idea of a subsequent change, but in order to account for the negative cases, the definition of the meaning of *БЫЛО* should not specify whether the subsequent change is of a negative, 'cancelled' nature (as in the non-negated sentences) or has a positive character (as in the negated sentences).

The suggestion of a subsequent change, which the use of *БЫЛО* apparently always conveys, presupposes a comparison between two situations. In general, the use of a negated perfective form suggests a situation where certain features, normally resulting from the action denoted by the perfective verb are absent. The choice of the perfective aspect in negative sentences usually suggests that this change was likely to occur and could somehow have been expected on the basis of the preceding state of affairs.⁵¹ It is interesting that amongst the negative *БЫЛО*-sentences, there is only one - example (159) - where the negation of the perfective form is clearly accompanied by this notion of expectation on the basis of the preceding situation: the money was left for Kas'jan, so it would have been quite normal for him to accept it. The sentence *он /их/ не принял* tells us that this expected action did not follow, and Kas'jan, contrary to our previous expectations, did not dispose of the money. However, the presence of *БЫЛО* tells us that things changed. The presence of the adverb *сперва* reinforces the contrast.

The sentences containing *не заметил(и)*, *не узнал* and *не понял* apparently involve a different use of the negated perfective preterite form. In such sentences the idea of expectation on the basis of the preceding state of affairs seems to be less prominent or completely absent. Instead of a special relationship with a preceding situation, we see a special relationship with a following one, typically the speech-situation.⁵² This accounts for the strong air of retrospection which these sentences have. One gains the impression of backward reasoning: the speaker points to the fact that the subject (usually himself or including himself) has become

aware of something that he had previously not yet noticed. The initial situation is negated primarily by comparison with the more recent knowledge of the subject/speaker.

The idea of retrospection, which is a prominent feature of such sentences, appears also relevant to all other uses of *было*. Looking forwards in time from the situation denoted by the *было*-verb, the second state of affairs is not yet real, merely possible or expected. However, at the time of speaking, it is the second situation which is more real, more recent. The speaker's use of the particle *было* indicates that on the basis of his present knowledge, he is able to state that things developed differently from what might have been expected at the time when the state of affairs denoted by the *было*-verb prevailed. The use of *было* presupposes knowledge which was obtained at two different points in time, one more recent than the other. This explains why *было* can be used only with respect to events occurring in the past.

12. SINGLE IMPERFECTIVE PRETERITE FORMS

As already pointed out in section 2, *было*-sentences containing an imperfective preterite form not combined with an infinitive are relatively rare. All the examples available to the author are given below (except for examples (15), (16) and (51) already quoted in sections 2 and 3):

- (162) Каждый раз он садился было, но сразу же вставал снова.
(Forsyth 1970: 105)
- (163) Также рассказывал Антон много о своей госпоже, Глафире Петровне /.../ как некоторый господин, молодой сосед, подделывался было к ним, часто стал наезжать, и как они для него изволили даже надевать свой праздничный чепец, с лентами цвету массака и желтое платье из трю-трю-левантина; но как потом, разгневавшись на господина соседа за неприличный вопрос: "Что, мол, должен быть у вас, сударыня, капитал?" приказали ему от дому отказать. (Тургенев; Nilsson 1967: 47)
- (164) Дело решалось было тем, что если земляки мои подпишутся, что я точно такой-то из кизлярских пленных, то буду отпущен. (Даль; BAS, in the article on *решаться*)

- (165) Ходил было, да не достиг своей цели.
(И.И. Давыдов, cited in Švedova 1960: 109 - footnote)
- (166) - Catherine, значит, была у вас?
- Была, и просила было ...⁵³
- И что же?
- Разумеется, ничего. (Писемский; Švedova 1960: 113)
- (167) Надобно вам знать, что я готовился было не в учителя, а в кандиторы - но мне сказали, что в вашей земле звание учительское не в пример выгоднее ... (П: Д 200.38)
- (168) Говорили было, что приедут артисты, а их все нет.
(GSRLJa 1970: 578; RG 1980, II: 101)
- (169) "Слава богу!" - вскричал он, увидя меня, - Я было думал, что злодеи опять тебя подхватили. (П: КД 328.40)
- (170) - Как самочувствие его высочества?
- Сейчас он спит. Сперва было немного нервничал, но затем вынул бутылку коньяку и успокоился. (Степ.)

It is well known that one of the main functions of the Russian imperfective forms is to express repeated events. In such cases the imperfective form itself does not usually reflect the aspectual properties of each individual occurrence of the event. This means that in such cases, the imperfective aspect is compatible with contextual elements suggesting attainment of the 'Term.'. As we have seen, this notion of 'attainment' plays an important part in most of the *было*-constructions: practically all the examples with a perfective preterite form allowed an interpretation according to which the critical point was reached. The frequency of these cases leads to a strong association between *было* and the 'post-terminal' situation. One might have expected, therefore, that a substantial number of *было*-sentences containing an imperfective would be concerned with recurring complete events. Interestingly, this assumption is not confirmed by the facts: sentence (162) is the only example of this type. It is interesting to note that it is not found in an original Russian text, but was apparently especially constructed by Forsyth on the basis of example (102), to demonstrate the compatibility of elements like *было*, *едва не* and *чуть не* with the imperfective aspect "when a multiple action is concerned" (Forsyth 1970: 105). As my informants confirm the acceptability of

this sentence, we must conclude that the system allows the possibility, although the preference for indicating non-repeated events must clearly be regarded as a very characteristic feature of the *БЫЛО*-construction.⁵⁴ It seems that this cannot be adequately explained by the usual definitions of the meaning of *БЫЛО*, which concentrate on the properties of the event itself. The previous discussion has shown that the use of *БЫЛО* implies a comparison of the *БЫЛО*-situation with a subsequent situation known to the speaker, i.e. the meaning of *БЫЛО* is essentially relational. The relationship between the two situations may be so specific that it is unlikely that the whole configuration will be repeated.

In examples (163), (164) and (16), we see another important function of imperfective aspect, viz. the presentation of the action in the course of its development. This use of the imperfective preterite can have a more or less strong 'conative' or 'tendential' connotation. Examples (16) and (163) are clear examples of 'conation': a paraphrase with *ПЫТАЛСЯ* plus the corresponding perfective infinitive is possible here.⁵⁵ In such cases, where the aspect-opposition is strongly associated with the contrast 'attempt' - 'success' (cf. Maslov 1984/48: 59), *БЫЛО* apparently emphasises the unsuccessfulness of the action. At the very moment of naming the action, it is already indicated that the subject has not succeeded in bringing about the change of situation that he intended. In (163), the choice of the single imperfective form (*ПОДДЕЛЫВАЛСЯ*) may be motivated at least in part by the fact that the following expression (*ЧАСТО СТАЛ НАЕЗЖАТЬ*) gives more details of the same action. When there is no such reason to concentrate on the way in which the subject tries to attain his objective, a more specialised way of expressing the notion of unsuccessful attempt is normally preferred, viz. a combination of *БЫЛО* with the finite form of *(ПО)ПЫТАТЬСЯ* or *(ПО)ПРОБОВАТЬ*, followed by the (usually perfective) infinitive⁵⁶, see (14), (20) and the following examples:

- (171) Возвратясь, я попытался было завести речь с моим ямщиком, но он как будто избегая порядочного разговора, на вопросы мои отвечал одними: "не можем знать, Ваше Благородие, а бог знает, а не что..." (П: МЧ 405.1)

- (172) Дальше Ростова, в глубь Дона и Кубани, немцы не пошли. Они попытались было замирить Батайск /.../. Но несмотря на ураганный огонь и кровопролитные атаки, взять его так и не могли. (А. Толст.)
- (173) Он попытался было жаловаться на то Дефоржу, но знания его во французском языке были слишком ограничены для столь сложного объяснения - француз его не понял, и Антон Пафнутьич принужден был оставить свои жалобы. (П: Д 198.19)
- (174) Андрюша пытался было подойти к нему, но по дороге споткнулся, упал, /.../ и от боли потерял сознание. (А. Толст.)
- (175) Некоторые пытались было ему подражать и выдти из пределов должного повиновения, но Кирила Петрович так их пугнул, что навсегда отбил у них охоту к таковым покушениям /.../. (П: Д 162.33)
- (176) Одно затрудняло ее: она попробовала было пройти по двору босая, но дерн колотил ее нежные ноги, а песок и камушки показались ей нестерпимые. (П: БК 113.25)
- (177) Уля попробовала было заговорить о посторонних делах, мать неловко поддержала ее, но так фальшиво это прозвучало, что обе замолкли. (Фадеев; Černov 1970: 259)
- (178) Шаповаленко пробовал было возражать... (Куприн)

When the change of situation that normally results from a given action is not desirable, or if the action is not performed by an animate agent, the concept of 'tendency' is more appropriate than that of 'conation'. Example (164) could be regarded as expressing 'tendency'. The verb *решалось* indicates a certain development: in the given situation, all things pointed to a certain outcome - the liberation of the hero after the fulfilment of certain conditions. Although the further context of this example is not to hand, it seems plausible to assume that *было* is being used to indicate that the expected outcome was not realised, that things developed otherwise. It is interesting to note that the idea of expectation is very prominent here: the development expressed is primarily a projection of the things to come, based on an evaluation of the available information.

Examples (165) and (166) bear a certain resemblance to the 'conative' cases ((163) and (16)), as they too have strong connotations of unsuccessfulness. The main difference is that the verbs *ходить* and *просить* in (165) and (166) lack the strong 'terminativity' of verbs like *выписывать* and *подделываться*. The 'aim' of the action is therefore less clearly defined in the verb itself.

In examples (167)-(169) and (15), the *было*-verbs are not primarily associated with an 'activity', but point to something that goes on in the mind of the subject - 'intention' (167), the 'expression of thought' (168), 'thought' (169) or 'thought accompanied by worry' (15). With the exception of (169), all these examples contain the image of a subsequent event: 'the subject will become a confectioner' (167); 'some artists will arrive' (168); 'the impression will weaken' (15). The use of *было* in these cases is probably motivated by the speaker's wish to emphasise that up to the moment of speaking, events have not taken the expected direction: the intention was not fulfilled, the artists have not yet arrived and the impression is not weakened.⁵⁷ A similar effect can be found in example (169). Here, again, the speaker emphasises that the state of affairs, associated with the *было*-verb, does not coincide with the knowledge that has become available to him by the time he makes the utterance. The only difference between (169) and the other examples is that in (169), the event that is associated with the *было*-situation is not a subsequent event but a preceding one. As the following sentences demonstrate, this is not a fundamental difference, but a consequence of the fact that a verb like *думать* lacks an 'inherent temporal perspective' (cf. Daneš 1975):

- (179) a. А, ты здесь! А я было думал, что ты уехал! (ИНФ)
 b. " " что тебя нет! (ИНФ)
 c. " " что ты не придешь! (ИНФ)

There is some resemblance between the *думать*-examples and the examples containing *не заметил(и)*, *не узнал* and *не понял* (discussed in section 11). All these examples contain the idea of correcting one's view of the world in the light of information that has more recently become available to the subject (typically, the speaker).⁵⁸

The fact that there is only one example of the combination of *думал* + *было* in the present sample apparently relates to the aspecto-temporal behaviour of verbs that denote thoughts and feelings. When used in dialogues etc, i.e. in a situation where the question of the present relevance of the actions is central the use of imperfective preterite verb forms usually suggests that the thought or feeling that is indicated by the verb no longer exists at the moment of speaking; whereas the corresponding perfective form (which often has an ingressive meaning) is normally taken to indicate that a feeling or thought is still present. Cf. *Она мне нравилась* vs. *Она мне понравилась*, *Мне казалось* vs. *Мне показалось*. *Думал* does not, in fact, need *было* to express the change of mind: in sentence (169), it is practically redundant, and the replacement of *я было думал* by *А я-то думал* has hardly any effect on the meaning. The Academic edition of Puškin's work gives some interesting variants of *Мне казалось, что ты находишь ...* at the end of example (160): *Я думал, что ты...* and *Мне показалось было, что ты* The distinctions between these variants are probably not entirely arbitrary, but reflect the fact that with a form such as *показалось* the change of mind must be explicitly indicated, and *было* offers the simplest way of doing this; whereas, where *казалось* or *думал* is used, this change is practically self-evident.

The notion of 'correcting one's view of the world', mentioned above in connection with verbs like *думать* seems also to play a part in the other *было*-sentences. This could be the clue to the explanation of the use of *было* in Švedova's examples of the 'special meaning of uncertain assumption' - (51) and (52). We may take it that in these cases, as in (167)-(169) and (15), *было* is used primarily to emphasise the contrast between the assumptions of the speaker, and the presentation of the real state of affairs with which his interlocutor confronts him. The element of doubt, emphasised by Švedova, might result from the fact that it is difficult for the speaker to accept that he apparently misjudged his own actions. As a comparison of the two examples will show, both aspects can occur in such cases. The choice of aspect seems to depend on the same factors as in the case of dialogue. In (51), the main emphasis is on the way in which the action was supposed to be performed. This is an obvious point in favour of the choice of the

imperfective aspect. It is reinforced by factors such as doubt, and the idea that the way in which the action was performed is open to criticism.

Example (170), the last example to be discussed in this section, differs from the other examples containing an imperfective preterite form. The verb *нервничать* does not evoke the idea of a result that is to be achieved (as with *подделываться* etc.), and it does not have a special connection with our view of the world (as with *думать* etc.). The reason for the use of *было* with such a verb is far from obvious, because there does not seem to be a notion of a subsequent development that takes an unexpected turn. The only development that can be meant here is the continuation of the state denoted by *нервничал*. The following part of the sentence shows that this state came to an end. The end probably came as something of a surprise or a relief for the speaker, who apparently wants to emphasise the contrast between the preceding state of nervousness and the subsequent state of tranquillity by using the adverb *сперва*. The use of *было* in the sentence seems possible largely on account of the presence of this adverb, which introduces an element of comparison, contrast and development which is totally absent from the verb itself. In a sentence like this, the particle *было* seems to add very little to the total meaning of the sentence. Its main function seems to be the strengthening of the contrast already suggested by *сперва*.

13. CONSTRUCTIONS CONTAINING A DEPENDENT INFINITIVE

As stated in section 2, constructions in which *было* is used with an imperfective preterite verb form usually contain an infinitive. Among imperfective *было*-verbs combined with a dependent infinitive, the verb *хотеть* undoubtedly occurs most frequently (85 percent of cases in the present sample).⁵⁹ Although the perfective aspect predominates in *было*-sentences, the most frequently encountered individual verb is *хотеть* (15 percent of sentences in the sample). This seems to suggest a natural association between *хотеть* and *было*; perhaps owing to the relationship between the

meaning of *хотеть* and the thought of future events: the meaning of *хотеть* is orientated towards the future.

Usually, the infinitive is in the perfective aspect. Sentences containing *хотел было* + a perfective infinitive are common enough; a few examples will suffice (see also (17) and (28)):

- (180) Привыкнув не церемониться с хорошенькими поселянками, он было хотел обнять ее; но Лиза отпрыгнула от него и приняла на себя такой строгий /.../ вид, что /.../ (П:БК 114.32)
- (181) Я было хотел его успокоить; он мне сказал: Vous ne connaissez pas ces gens-là /.../. (П: ПА 461.1)
- (182) Хотели уже было выпустить пару снарядов прямо в море, /.../ когда несколько легких японских крейсеров приблизились к Артуру. (Степ.)
- (183) Я хотел было заикнуться о понятиях, но Меркулов /.../ уже быстро шел, почти бежал к оранжерее /.../. (Незн.)
- (184) Лев Иванович хотел было прочитать Ленькино сочинение, но завуч Мария Васильевна взяла его первой. (Сем.)
- (185) Хотел было я прислать вам отрывок из моего Кавказского Пленника, да лень переписывать. (П: Пс 26.21)
- (186) Что моя трагедия? отстойте ее, храбрые друзья! не дайте ее на съедение псам журналистам. Я хотел ее посвятить Жуковскому со следующими словами: я хотел было посвятить мою трагедию Карамзину, но так как нет уже его, то посвящаю ее Жуковскому. Дочери Карамзина сказали мне, чтоб я посвятил любимый труд памяти отца. /Which Puškin actually did!/ (П: Пс 528.19)⁶⁰

It is interesting to note that in most cases, *хотел* has an 'active' meaning: it denotes the preliminaries of a 'controlled' action in which the subject will take an active part.⁶¹ It is often clear that this activity has already started (see (180) and (181)). In such cases, the meaning conveyed by the construction comes very close to that conveyed by *было*-sentences having a single imperfective form with 'conative' meaning (see (16) and (163)), or sentences with *(но)пытаться* etc. ('unsuccessful attempt') (see (171)-(178)). As in examples (171)-(178), the perfective infinitive denotes the change in situation at which the subject is aiming. The speaker's use of *было* immediately makes it clear that aim has

not been achieved. This type of *БЫЛО*-construction may bear a special responsibility for the popularity of the definitions based on the notion of non-completion.⁶²

The meaning of *БЫЛО* typically includes the idea of comparing/contrasting two views of a set of circumstances, dating from different points in time: one located in the past and directed towards the future and the other located in the present and directed towards the past. The first view indicates one's expectations regarding subsequent developments starting with the *БЫЛО*-event; this view is based on knowledge of the situation in which this event takes place plus general experience of how things tend to develop. The second view indicates the way things actually turned out, which became apparent to the speaker before or at the moment of speech. This knowledge of the real course of events enables the speaker to evaluate the expectations previously connected with the *БЫЛО*-event. The use of *БЫЛО* signals or emphasises the existence of a certain contrast between the expected and the actual course of events. The relative weight given to each view seems to differ in different instances. In sections 11 and 12, we saw a number of cases where the 'retrospective' view is more important. The sentences with *ХОТЕЛ БЫЛО* can be roughly divided into two groups according to whether the main emphasis lies on the view taken at the moment of speech, or that taken at the time of the *БЫЛО*-event. Examples (180)-(183) rather fall within the latter group: in these cases, the meaning of *ХОТЕЛ БЫЛО* is often something like 'to be on the point of'.⁶³ In examples (185)-(186) (and possibly (184)), the view taken at the moment of speech seems to be more important: here the meaning of *ХОТЕЛ БЫЛО* is closer to '(I) had meant to' or '(I) had intended to' (cf. Borrás/Christian 1971/59: 140).⁶⁴

Although the perfective infinitive is most common after *ХОТЕЛ БЫЛО*, the imperfective does occur as well. Contrary to Černov's assertion (1970: 260), this is not limited to unprefixated verbs of motion. The following are all the examples currently to hand (see also (18)):

- (187) - Работать надо, факт! - резко ответил Давыдов и ХОТЕЛ БЫЛО ИДТИ, но Лушка, чуть смутившись, его удержала.
(Шолохов; Černov 1970: 260)

- (188) Она раскрыла зонтик и хотела было итти домой, как вдруг из-за угла избушки выехал, на низеньких беговых дрожках, человек лет тридцати... (Тургенев; Ferrell 1953: 113)
- (189) Мятежники хотели было ехать к Аракчееву в Грузино, чтоб убить его, а дом разграбить. 30 троек были уже готовы. Жандармский офицер, взявший над ними власть, успел уговорить их оставить это намерение. (П: Ж₂ 200.25)
- (190) Дедушка хотел было Ванюшу-то в полицию нести, да я отговорила: возьмем, мол, себе... (Горьк.)
- (191) Татьяна хотела было сперва отвечать, что нет, но, одумавшись, сказала: "Да, немножко". (Тургенев; Nilsson 1967: 44)
- (192) Выбор гимназии состоялся не сразу, меня хотели было отдавать в кадеты. (Боборыкин; Borrás/Christian 1971/59: 140)
- (193) Я хотел было продолжать, как начал, и объяснить мою связь с Марьей Ивановной так же искренно, как и все прочее. Но вдруг почувствовал непреодолимое отвращение. (П: КД 368.11)
- (194) Я хотел было противиться, хотел было протестовать, чтобы он выстрелил в меня; но он подошел ко мне и протянул мне руку. (Тургенев; Nilsson 1967: 56)
- (195) Исправник понизил голос и хотел было их уговаривать. - Да что на него смотреть, - закричали дворовые, - ребята! долой их! - и вся толпа двинулась. (П: Д 181.21)

With regard to (192), Borrás/Christian suggest that "The imperfective infinitive here gives the sense of uncertainty and discussion". The choice of the imperfective aspect after *хотеть* (in positive sentences) usually tends to emphasise the action itself, or the start of the action ("приступ к действию"). This same effect seems to be a feature of *было*-sentences.

In conjunction with an infinitive, the verbs *намереваться* and *собираться* are fairly close synonyms of *хотеть*. It is, therefore, not surprising that these verbs also occur in *было*-sentences. The following are examples of such occurrences:

- (196) Я сам хучь и не пробовал так сеять, но в этом году уж было намеревался спытать. (Шолохов; Černov 1970: 259)

- (197) Дельвиг собирался было написать вам вместе со мною длинное письмо, чтобы просить вас быть осмотрительным! (Translation from the French, page 558 of volume XIII of the Poln. sobr. soč. Puškina)

Regarding *собирался*, Borrás/Christian state that this verb "is used almost exclusively with reference to long journeys" (1971/59: 140). They give the following example:

- (198) Я собирался было поехать этим летом на море, но обстоятельства помешали.

However, this meaning does not predominate amongst the limited number of instances in the sample. See (21), (197) and the following:

- (199) Соня собиралась было пойти, но читательская конференция совпала с днем рождения отца. (Эренбург; Forsyth 1970: 105)
 (200) На следующее утро матушка /.../ собиралась было послать к нему нарочного, как он сам опять появился перед нею. (Тургенев; Nilsson 1967: 45 and 49)
 (201) Я все шел и уже собирался было прилечь где-нибудь до утра, как вдруг очутился над страшной бездной. (Тургенев; Nilsson 1967: 45)

It is interesting to note that in the present sample, the perfective constriction *собрался + было + infinitive* occurs three times as often as the same construction with *собираться*. This perfective verb has an 'ingressive' meaning: it denotes the emergence of the intention, the existence of which is denoted by *собираться*.⁶⁵ Consider the following examples:

- (202) Он собрался было вызвать такси, но именно в эту минуту - трах! - постучалась Старая Лошадь. (В. Каверин)
 (203) Мимо Красавина прошла последняя сотня. Он собрался было идти, как вдруг в темноте послышался конский топот. (Листовский; Belošarkova 1961: 42, 43)
 (204) Он (Схюлтс) уже было собрался по привычке начать отгадывать, откуда родом каждый из них, когда его тронули за плечо и повели в другую комнату. (Вестд.)

- (205) Он /.../ уже совсем было собрался отправиться восвояси, да как-то разговорился и остался. (Тургенев; OIG 1964: 244)
- (206) "/.../ перенести могилку надо. Потому что то место, где она находится, уйдет под воду. Там, - говорит, - будет водохранилище". Кондрат было собрался переносить, а я сказала, что на это не согласная. Пусть наш хлопчик лежит, как лежал. (Пауст.)
- (207) Дирке Бовенкамп /.../ отогнала наседок и только было собралась пойти взглянуть на ведра для молока /.../, - как на гумне появилась /.../ Марья. (Вестд.)
- (208) Я пришел сюда. Ее мать /.../ собралась было уходить, чтоб нас одних оставить: Надя ее к этому приучила. "Останься, мама, - Надя ей тогда сказала, - посиди с нами /.../". (Сем.)

As these examples show, the meaning of the sentences containing *собрался было* comes close to that of sentences with *собирался было* or *хотел было*, in spite of the different aspect. The presence of the intention can be indicated equally clearly by *собрался* or *собирался*, although the former gives a slightly more dynamic character to the sentence, which makes it preferable in sentences like (207) (with the adverb *только*), or (208), where a connection with the preceding action is of some importance.⁶⁵

14. CONCLUSION

The argument presented in this article can be summarised as follows:

The use of the particle *было* signals or emphasises a disturbance of the natural flow of the events which started with the *было*-event.

This disturbance has become apparent before, or at, the moment of speech.

This definition should, of course, be supplemented by examples of actual use, to illustrate the range of interpretational variants.

It should also be accompanied by a fuller explanation of some elements in the definition. They have been discussed in detail in the main body of the article. The following are the most important:⁶⁶

- a) The *БЫЛО*-event is the event directly indicated by the predicative centre of the *БЫЛО*-phrase (in the case of an elliptical sentence, the picture of this event is reconstructed on the basis of the object and/or adverbial modifier(s)). Usually, the *БЫЛО*-event is expressed by a finite verb. For other forms to convey the *БЫЛО*-event, see section 3.
- b) The idea of 'the natural flow of events'⁶⁷ is central to the definition. It is based on the idea that the subjects of the speech act have experiential knowledge of the usual relations between events, which determines their expectations regarding a plausible continuation of a given course of events. The existence of these expectations is especially apparent in those cases where we need to indicate that they have not been fulfilled, for instance, in certain sentences with adversative meaning (when a clause, introduced by *НО*, indicates a subsequent event). The same applies to the *БЫЛО*-construction: the narrative up to (and including) the *БЫЛО*-event provides a basis for regarding various possible continuations as more or less probable.

Since the perfective aspect presents an event as part of a certain whole, this is the typical form for the presentation of the flow of events. The importance of this notion for the *БЫЛО*-construction explains its frequent association with the perfective aspect.

The notion of the 'natural flow of events' must be taken as broadly as possible: it does not only apply to 'material' events, but also to the development of our view of the world.

- c) The term 'disturbance' must also be taken very broadly. In this definition, it only means that at the moment of speaking things appeared to be different from what might have been expected at the time of the *БЫЛО*-event. This implies a certain element of contrast, which explains why *БЫЛО*-clauses are very frequently followed by adversative conjunctions like *НО*, *ДА* and *А*.⁶⁸

d) In the definition, the *БЫЛО*-event is presented as the starting-point of the flow of events that is disturbed. This indicates that the disturbance normally occurs only after the part of the event that is denoted by the given aspectual form, i.e. with a perfective form, the critical point ('Term.') is normally reached.⁶⁹

e) The second part of the definition indicates that the future developments expected at the time of the *БЫЛО*-event are contrasted with the actual course of events known at the moment of speech. This implies that the *БЫЛО*-event is located in the past, which explains why past tenses are normally used in this construction.

University of Amsterdam

NOTES

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When referring to books or articles that were first published in an earlier edition than the one I used, I indicate both dates if known to me, e.g. 1968/62 means: first published in 1962; edition used here published in 1968.

¹ It is generally assumed now that the *БЫЛО*-construction evolved from a younger variant of the Old-Russian pluperfect: the combination of the *л*-participle with the perfect form of the auxiliary *БЫТИ*. The following example of this construction is cited by Potebnja (1888/74: 266): *Ты мя еси, сыну, самъ позывалъ Киеву, а язъ есмь былъ цѣловалъ хрестъ къ брату своему Дюргеви* (Ipat'ev chronicle; emphasis mine - A.A.B.). The present tense auxiliary (*есмь, еси* etc.) of the perfect could be omitted from an early stage and around the beginning of the 17th century the neuter form *БЫЛО* gradually began to replace the element *БЫТЬ, БЫЛА* (etc.), i.e. the latter element lost its agreement in number and gender with the *л*-participle of the verb, and became an uninflected form - a particle. The meaning of the contemporary *БЫЛО*-construction has apparently evolved from one of the variants of meaning of the preceding construction, relating to the use of the pluperfect in compound sentences with adversative meaning.

Information on the history of the relevant forms can be found in the following sources: Potebnja (1888/74: 265-268), Sobolevskij (1907⁴: 164, 239-243), Isačenko (1940: 194-195), Nikiforov (1952: 163-165), Černyx (1953: 346-347), Kuznecov (1959: 231-232), Cocron (1962: 236-238), Kiparsky (1967: 229-230), Veyrenc (1970: 83), Sumnikova (in RJa 1979: 211), Pennington (1980: 283-284), Eckert et al. (1983: 172).

Judging from the limited number of early examples of the use of the *БЫЛО*-construction in the 17th century found in the above sources, the meaning of the construction at that time cannot be fully equated with its meaning in modern Russian, as discussed in this article. This point does not seem to be suffi-

ciently appreciated in the grammatical literature: the 17th century construction and the modern construction are often defined in the same way. In this article I confine myself to modern Russian. The earliest examples to be discussed are from Puškin. My Russian contacts feel that there is no significant difference in meaning between *было* in contemporary Russian and as used in the early 19th century. For this reason, I feel free to take examples from the whole period of modern Russian.

For ease of reference, I shall underline the elements of the *было*-construction in all the examples.

² Authors differ considerably in the extent to which they use *было*. This seems to be primarily a matter of individual style (cf. Nilsson 1967: 42). The following figures show frequency of use of *было* in a comparable amount of text taken from two authors from each of three different periods:

	Number of pages	Number of examples	
Early 19th century:			
Puškin:	156	33	
Lermontov:	160	10	
<u>First half of 20th century:</u>			
A. Tolstoj:	525	20	(cf.: Stepanov: 383 - 37!)
Gor'kij :	600	2	
Contemporary writers:			
Neznanskij:	330	17	
Semenov:	340	6	

(The Puškin texts used for this comparison are: *Капитанская дочка* and *Повести Белкина* (without *Барышня-Крестянка*). The other texts used here are indicated in note 15.)

³ In my opinion, the relevant sections of Unbegaun's grammar (1951: 253-254), the textbooks of Borrás/Christian (1971/59: 139-140), and the much older Boyer/Spéranski (1921/05: 252-253), offer the best descriptions in the non-specialist literature.

⁴ For instance, in prestigious works such as: *Kurs sovremennogo russkogo jazyka* by Bolla, Pall and Papp (Budapest, 1970) *Die russische Sprache der Gegenwart. 2. Morphologie* by Mulisch et al. (Leipzig, 1975) and *Russkaja grammatika 1* by Barnetová et al. (Prague, 1979). Even in a special textbook on particles, (A.N. Vasilyeva: *Particles in colloquial Russian*, Progress Publishers - Moscow) no mention is made of *было*.

⁵ Cf. АС: "/означение/ действия начатого или только предположенного, но не совершившегося."

The definitions in Ožegov and SATG are essentially identical with Ušakov's: Ожегов: "действие началось или было предположено, но не совершилось."

САТГ: "действие началось, предполагалось, но не совершилось."

⁶ In this dictionary, *было* does not have an entry of its own. It is discussed within the article on *БЫТЬ*.

⁷ Kunert opposes the meaning of this construction to the meaning of the imperfective aspect, which, according to him, does not make any statement about the completion of the action, and can therefore be used to indicate a) actions stopped before their completion, b) completed actions viewed before their completion or without emphasising their 'completed' nature.

⁸ 'Man könnte vielleicht sagen, dass E. Guertik "se précipiter pour ouvrir la porte" als eine einzige Handlung betrachtet, die sie wie der Autor des russischen Textes als nicht zu ende geführt ansieht, während Ergaz die Handlung "se précipiter" von "ouvrir la porte" trennt und so die Handlung "se précipiter" als vollständig realisiert bezeichnen kann, auch wenn die Tür nicht geöffnet worden ist." (Kunert 1984: 153).

⁹ Even if we accept Kunert's suggestion and take the whole combination as denoting one complex action, the decisive moment must be the (non)completion of the component denoted by the infinitive.

¹⁰ The abbreviation (ИНФ) indicates that an example was constructed for the purpose of this article, and accepted by a native speaker of Russian.

¹¹ Examples containing an infinitive can also present problems. If the idea of non-completion applies to the action denoted by the infinitive, perhaps it follows that we know what the completed action would have looked like, and that it should, therefore, be indicated by a 'terminative' verb. The close relationship between 'terminativity' and the perfective aspect could explain the frequent use of the perfective infinitive in such constructions (see (2) and (3)). However examples like the following sentence from Puškin's 'Dubrovskij' seem to contradict this view:

Увидя его, они бросились было бежать. Дубровский со своим кучером поймал из них двоих и привел их связанных к себе на двор. (П: Д 165.8)

¹² Some examples were kindly provided by colleagues and students of mine. I am especially indebted to Ms. M. Dekker for the example using *начинаю* (36) and to my colleague H. Proeme for the example using *решалось* (164).

¹³ In this article, except when stated otherwise, occurrences of *было* with *чуть* *не* are not considered. (The *чуть (было) не*-construction is discussed in section 10 of this article.)

In SJaP, 151 instances are given. Volume Ж₁ contains three cases where *было* is part of a fragment of text that can be found on two different pages (in identical or very slightly modified form) (151.21=169.21; 151.28=169.28; 224.14=244.35). I count these instances once only. This leaves 148 examples, to which can be added one example that does not occur in the main text, but is mentioned as a variant (*мне показалось было* as a variant of *мне казалось* on page 170 of the same volume).

In this article, examples from Puškin will be indicated by the letter П, followed by the SJaP code to indicate its exact place location (cf. the example in note 11).

¹⁴ А.С. Пушкин, *Полное собрание сочинений*, тт. 1-16. М.: Изд. АН СССР. 1937-1949.

¹⁵ The following texts were searched for occurrences of *было*. Sometimes only part of a book has been used. The figures after the texts indicate the number of pages searched followed by the number of examples found there. The abbreviations given after these figures are used in the main body of the article to refer to these texts:

19th century:

М.Ю Лермонтов: *Герой нашего времени* and *Вадим*. (160 - 10); Лерм.
Л.Н. Толстой: *Севастопольские рассказы*. (130 - 5); Л. Толст.

20th century:

М. Горький: *Детство, В людях* and *Мои университеты*. (600 - 31); Горьк.
Ф. Незнанский: *Ярмарка в Сокольниках*. (330 - 17); Незн.

К. Паустовский:	<i>Рождение моря.</i>	(150 - 1); Пауст.
В. Распутин:	<i>Шеи и помни.</i>	(180 - 4); Расп.
Ю. Семенов:	<i>Петровка, 38 and Огарева, 6.</i>	(340 - 6); Сем.
А. Степанов:	<i>Порт-Артур. Книга первая.</i>	(383 - 37); Степ.
А.Н. Толстой:	<i>Хождение по мукам.</i>	(525 - 20); А. Толст.

Alongside these original Russian texts, the following translation of a contemporary Dutch novel is included:

С. Вестдейк:	<i>Пастораль сорок третьего года.</i> (Translation by I. Volevič and Sečkova)	(332 - 10); Вестд.
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¹⁶ The question of the position of *было* in the sentence will not be treated in this article. Some comments and information can be found in Švedova (1960: 111, 112) and Nilsson (1967: 42). Garde classifies *было* (together with *бы*) as an enclitic that can occupy either of the two typical positions: after the word it depends on (*я забыл было*), or after the first word of the sentence (*я было забыл*) (1980: 119). It seems to me that these rules have to be refined to account for all uses represented in the present sample. Some of the problematic examples are cited in this article, cf. (99), (107), (113) and (151).

¹⁷ N.B. *чуть было не* constructions are treated here as a different (though related) construction (cf. section 10). They are excluded from the various counts.

¹⁸ The only example of imperfective preterite + *было* that indicates a repeated event will be discussed in section 12.

¹⁹ All 25 participial constructions in the sample, with the exception of one example given by Švedova (1960: 112) contain a perfective participle. Švedova's example of an imperfective preterite participle is: *хотевший было*. Unfortunately, this example is given with no context or indication of the source. Although the *было*-construction with an imperfective preterite participle is certainly very rare, there seems to be no reason in principle for excluding the possibility. A native Russian speaker accepted the replacement of *которые хотели было посадить его* in example (28) by *хотевших было посадить его*, and the replacement of *готовые* in (34) by *намеревавшиеся*.

²⁰ Amongst the 149 examples from Puškin there is only 1 perfective gerund (but no participles at all). Amongst the other 387 examples in the sample there are 27 active participles, 5 passive participles and only 4 gerunds. In approximately 2500 pages of text examined (see note 15), no passive participles and gerunds were found, and only 7 active participles.

²¹ The most obvious form for expressing habitual past events is, of course, the imperfective preterite. A *было*-sentence of this type will be discussed in section 12.

²² According to Černov, the same applies to the use of present tense forms, discussed in the preceding part of this section: "В наши дни модальную конструкцию с частицей *было* образуют и формы настоящего времени" (Černov 1970: 261).

²³ The same applies to this sentence cited by Potebnja (1888:74: 268): *быть, было, ненастью, да дождь помешал*. Apparently this sentence is of the same type as the following sentence from Kotošixin: *прибыль которой было быть в котором году*. The latter sentence is discussed by Pennington (1980: 284). According to this author, in sentences like this (characterised by a 'subject' in the dative case), *было* has only a temporal significance, and lacks the modal sense of the

typical *было* construction (which also occurs twice in Kotošixin's work). Another example of *было* + infinitive which apparently cannot be interpreted as an instance of the *было*-construction as studied in this article is the following sentence from the dictionary of Dal': *взяться было за ум вовремя*.

24 Unfortunately I have not been able to consult the dissertations of Saenkova and Novgorodova (or their *авторефераты*):

Н.А. Саенкова: *Модально-приглагольные частицы было и бывало и конструкции, образуемые при их участии в современном русском языке*. АКД. Москва, 1968.
Р.Т. Новгородова: *Значение и употребление частицы "было" в современном русском литературном языке*. АКД. Новосибирск, 1971.

25 A rather different view of the meaning of *было* has been presented by Ferrell, according to whom the main function of *было* has much in common with the English pluperfect. Ferrell emphasizes that *было* restricts the use of the preterite form in conjunction with which it occurs to describing "an action with reference to time prior to the moment of utterance"; and that it additionally marks this time as "asynchronic with the time of discourse" (1953: 113). This asynchronism can arise from one of two possible circumstances: a) "the action denoted may have been realized prior to the time of discourse" - "In this function, as Professor Roman Jakobson has pointed out, the use of the non-present with *было* closely approximates to that of the English pluperfect" - and b) "The non-present with *было* can on occasion be used to describe an uneventuated action with reference to time prior to the moment of utterance". Only the latter variant falls within one of the groups of definitions discussed in section 4 of this article (group A), as it means, that "the action is not carried out in its entirety". Ferrell cites Šaxmatov's example *Мальчик упал было*, in which sentence, according to Ferrell, "the verb can mean 'all but fell', or 'nearly fell'; i.e. the sentence means the same as *Мальчик чуть было не упал*. However, at this point Ferrell notes that his "younger informants apparently all feel that *было* is now used only to form a pluperfect" (114), i.e. variant a). As this variant seems to admit the possibility of completion of the action, it might be thought that it falls within our second group of definitions, i.e. the definitions that suggest that the results of the action are unsatisfactory or cancelled. However, no statement to this effect is made by Ferrell, and so far as I know, this is at best a marginal feature of the English pluperfect.

26 In §555 (page 485) of his book Šaxmatov presents constructions with *было* as instances of a special mood: "недействительное наклонение". This mood is described as follows: "Говорящий, устанавливая связь субъекта с предикатом, посредством этого наклонения выражает, что связь эта не осуществилась, хотя и могла осуществиться.". Belošarkova states that in sentences where the conjunction *как вдруг* is used, the particle *было* is the formal expression of the meaning of "прерванность", "недействительность" (1961: 42; emphasis mine - A.A.B.). This apparently refers to Šaxmatov's notion of "недействительное наклонение".

27 On page 392 of part II (Syntax) of this grammar, a different formulation can be found: "/выражение/ действия, которое было начато, но прервано или не дало желаемого результата". Because of the presence of the attribute "желаемый", this definition might be considered as belonging to group B.

28 Cf. Kiparsky (1967: 230): "die heutige Konstruktion *было* + 1-Partizip /.../, die einen Vorgang bezeichnet, der in der Vergangenheit zwar einsetzt, aber aus irgendeinem Grunde unterbrochen wird und auf Deutsch am besten durch "beinahe schon", auf Französisch durch 'a failli de' auf Finnisch durch den sog.

V infinitiv (*oli -maisillaan*) wiedergegeben wird."

In an article published in 1940, Isačenko discusses the predecessor of this construction - the pluperfect with finite form of the verb *быти* that agrees with the grammatical subject. According to Isačenko, these complex forms "gradually acquired a secondary meaning. They indicated an action which was interrupted and rendered ineffective by some other action" (1940: 195; emphasis mine - A.A.B.). Apparently Isačenko assumes that the modern *было*-construction has approximately the same meaning.

In the same article Isačenko points to the fact that the particle *было*, which replaced the inflected auxiliary, can now be used with participles as well. The example he gives is practically identical with the example in his later published grammar: *он/я разбудил заснувшего было товарища*. It is interesting to note that the translations he provides reflect a considerable difference in the interpretation of this sentence, cf.: "he woke the comrade who had been sleeping for a little while" (1940: 195) and "ich weckte den Kameraden, der beinahe schon eingeschlafen war" (1968/62: 606).

²⁹ This formulation seems to suggest that the *было*-action has to be 'controlled', or at least ascribed to an 'animate' subject. Although that type of *было*-sentences (i.e. with human 'agents' and 'controlled actions') is indeed the most frequently encountered, instances of other types of action and/or subject (or even impersonal sentences) are not at all uncommon. Some examples have already been given in the preceding sections ((23), (33) and (35)). Some additional examples are presented here:

- (I) *Возник было пожар, но тотчас был потушен.* (Степ.)
- (II) *Мелькнули было в памяти яркие обрывки дня, /.../. Но воспоминания вонзались в мозг так болезненно, /.../, что Иван Ильич замычал: скорее, скорее о чем-нибудь другом....* (А. Толст.)
- (III) *Эта схоластическая величавость полу-славенская, полу-латинская, сделалась-было необходимостью: к счастью Карамзин освободил язык от чуждого ига и возвратил ему свободу /.../. (П: Ж₁ 249.13)*
- (IV) *Начало было моросить, но потом посветлело.* (GSRLJa 1970: 578; also cited in RG 1980, II: 101).

³⁰ On page 119 of Garde's book, the formulation "action manquée" is used. This could be viewed as belonging to group B.

³¹ A little earlier in the fragment cited by Švedova, Aksakov criticises Buslaev's definition (A3 above) and lays strong emphasis upon the completion of the action: "-я было пошел, я было сделал; это совсем не то, что "несовершенное действие"; напротив: действие о котором говорится, совершено, но должно быть опять или прекращено (напр.: я было стал читать... да печать очень мелка), или уничтожено (напр. я было заснул, да меня разбудили), или обращено назад, т.е. тоже уничтожено (напр.: я было воротился с прогулки... да вас увидел в саду и пошел к вам)." (emphasis mine - A.A.B.) If taken literally, the first option seems contradictory: "совершено /.../ но /.../ прекращено". The contradiction can perhaps be resolved by applying the first characterisation to the 'action' denoted by the finite form (*стал*), and the second one to the action by the infinitive (*читать*).

³² In this passage, Potebnja does not in fact describe the 'modern' use of *было*, but one of the variants of meaning of an earlier construction from which the *было*-construction originates: the pluperfect with the preterite of the auxiliary *быти* (cf. note 1).

³³ The same definition is given by Šsedova in the article on particles (*частицы*) in RJa 1979: 390.

³⁴ In part II of this grammar, a different formulation is used: "предикативный признак проявился, но /.../ он или был прерван, или не дал ожидаемого результата" (RG 1980, II: 102).

³⁵ The opposite is also possible: owing to the vagueness of Davydov's definition (B1), it is difficult to decide whether it falls within group A or group B.

³⁶ The term 'situation' is used here as a blanket term to cover all temporal features; differences between 'actions', 'states' etc. are left out of consideration.

³⁷ As will be discussed in section 7, example (54) cannot be explained even in this way.

³⁸ As with *броситься*, all these verbs can also be used without an infinitive. In such sentences, the 'ingressiveness' is probably slightly less prominent. Cf. (66), for an example of *пойти*, and the next two sentences:

- (I) *Боцман кинулся было вниз, /.../ но изрежеченный пробоинами "Страшный" уже сам стал быстро погружаться носок в воду. (Степ.)*
- (II) *- виноват, батюшка Кирилы Петрович, я было рано пустился в дорогу, да не успел отъехать и десяти верст, вдруг шина у переднего колеса пополам - что прикажешь? (П: Д 192.19)*

³⁹ Cf. a similar use of *начинаю* (in *praesens historicum*) in example (36).

⁴⁰ It is interesting to note that a number of other verbs are used with the same function, although, with the exception of *заикнуться*, they have only an indirect connection with the notion of inception:

- (I) *Раненько, Вашество /.../ заикнулся было Павел Трофимович. (Салтыков-Щедрин; Boyer/Spéranski 1921/05: 253)*
- (II) *Часть солдат, приняв это обращение за приветствие, гаркнула было: "Здрав..., но, не поддержанная другими, тут же сконфуженно замолчала. (Степ.)*
- (III) *Так вот что... промолвил было я и прикусил язык. (Тургенев; Nilsson 1967: 48)*
- (IV) *- Едем в морг на опознание.
- А... - я было раскрыл рот, толком не зная, что спросить, и потому замолк на полуслове. (Незн.)*

Apparently the combination *раскрыл было рот* can be used only when the speech has hardly begun (cf. "замолк на полуслове"), or is not yet begun, cf.:

- (V) *Мазер обвел глазами присутствующих, давая понять, что он хочет поговорить со мной наедине, и я было уже раскрыл рот, чтобы выпроводить лейтенанта Гречанника и майора Погорелова, как вдруг вперед, по-петушиному, выступил Гречанник и произнес: /.../. (Незн.)*

⁴¹ Cf. the comment of Borrás/Christian on example (94): "the note was written but the logical result of it having been written - its dispatch and receipt - was frustrated" (1971/59: 139).

It might be objected that the notion of its destruction does not necessarily imply that the document was finished. However, in the cases where an unfinished document is destroyed, apparently the verb *начать* is used instead of *написать*, cf. the following examples from Turgenev, given by Nilsson (1967: 48):

- (I) *Базаров начал было письмо к отцу, да разорвал его и бросил под стол.*
- (II) *Он начал было письмо к Верочке, к Петру Васильевичу - и тотчас разорвал и бросил начатые листы.*

⁴² Another possible interpretation is that the text was read by the addressee, but did not prevent his flight.

⁴³ Forsyth's translation - "Dampfer was just going to sit down..." - accords with his view that the action cannot be carried to its conclusion. It is, however, possible that Dampfer did sit down, but only very briefly.

⁴⁴ Nilsson (1967: 51-52) discusses an example of the same combination taken from Turgenev: *раскрыл было книгу*. Here it is less clear whether or not the subject had already managed to look at the contents of the book.

⁴⁵ Some other interesting examples of this type (from Turgenev) are discussed by Nilsson (1967: 52-54), who comments that the use of *было* in such cases seems "outside the usages described in the grammar".

⁴⁶ Cf. the definition of Černov who even uses the Russian equivalent of the term *terminus*: "конечный предел" (A16).

⁴⁷ The combination *едва не* has a similar function, cf. the following examples:

(I) *Бедняк от радости едва не помешался.* (Крылов; Saenkova 1971: 301)

(II) */.../ и вдруг сильный толчок едва не сбросил меня в море.* (Лерм.).

Although in principle it seems possible to combine this particle with *было*, examples from literary texts are lacking. The only example at my disposal is given by Šaxmatov:

(III) *он едва было не ударил меня* (1941/25-27: 485)

For this reason, constructions using *едва не* are left regarded as outside the scope of this article.

⁴⁸ In SJaP *чуть было не* is treated as a variant of *чуть не*. In Puškin's works, the relative frequency of these variants in sentences with a perfective preterite is as follows: 11 cases of *чуть было не* vs. 32 cases of *чуть не*.

⁴⁹ This does not mean that I regard a further analysis of *чуть не* impossible. As is well known *чуть* is not always accompanied by a negation and it might well be that it is possible to formulate a 'general meaning' for both components that can account for all their uses.

⁵⁰ Example (161) must be excluded here because it is almost a repetition of (160).

⁵¹ See Forsyth (1970: 104) and Rassudova (1982: 70) for a discussion of the notion of expectation, associated with negated perfective forms. This is exemplified in sentences such as: *Он споткнулся, но не упал.*

⁵² These two types of use of negated perfective preterite forms reflect the distinction that is usually made between the "аористическое значение" and the "перфектное значение" of this form (cf. Bondarko 1971: 95). In the latter case, the past event characterises a later time (typically the 'moment of speech') that serves as a kind of orientation-point. The cases of "aorist-function" are usually defined negatively as the absence of such a typical link with the orientation-point of the speaker. In my opinion, however, the action in these cases is linked with something else also: it is presented as part of a certain "chain of events", in which it is linked with previous and/or subsequent events. The notion of expectation which is often present in sentences with a negated perfective preterite form results from the linkage with a previous situation.

In my opinion, both the linkage of events in the "aorist-function", and the special linkage with the orientation-point in the "perfect function" result from a common feature that is an essential element of the meaning of the perfective aspect in Russian. I have labelled this element "(contrasting) sequential connection" (cf. Barentsen 1985: 60). It presupposes two other features. The first I label "event-unit". This signifies that the meaning of the given verb is such that the event is associated with a certain discrete unit, that the boundaries of the event are relatively clearly defined, and so it is clear what kind of change a complete event brings about. (This notion of an "event-unit" closely corresponds to the property that is usually denoted by terms such as "terminativity" or "boundedness"). The second feature is "totality": the presentation of the event-unit as a single whole, a totality (which implies the attainment of the "terminus"). The deciding feature "(contrasting) sequential connection" implies that this event-unit, which is itself viewed as a whole, is also presented as a specific link in a greater whole: in this way, the changes that are brought about by the completed event are emphasised.

⁵³ In view of the elliptical character of this sentence, it is not clear whether the example must be regarded as an instance of a *было*-sentence with single imperfective preterite form, or as an instance of the more common construction of imperfective preterite + infinitive.

⁵⁴ The two *было*-sentences containing a perfective present form - (40 and (41) - and the one example with an imperfective present form - (42) - are the only other examples I know of *было*-sentences referring to a repeated event.

⁵⁵ The 'conative' character of (16) is recognised by Mazon, who uses the term "prétérit imperfectif de tentative" (1914: 180). With respect, to (163), Nilsson tries to explain the imperfective aspect by referring to its 'durative' character. In his article, the following comment precedes the presentation of this example: "*Было* is usually encountered in connection with perfective verbs. That this should be so is easy enough to understand. For the normal function of *было* is to indicate that the act which would ordinarily have been initiated and then carried through to full execution is being interrupted. But there are also examples showing the particle used in connection with imperfective verbs, signifying that an act which would under normal circumstances have been carried through for an indefinite period of time will suddenly be discontinued. The following provides a characteristic example:" (1967: 47; emphasis mine - A.A.B.). In my opinion the notion of 'duration' is more likely to be regarded as derivative of the notion of 'conation'.

⁵⁶ In my material, the different combinations are represented as follows:
попытался + pf inf - 10, *попробовал* + pf inf - 3, *пытался* + pf inf - 2, *пробовал* + ipf inf - 2, *попытался*, *пытался* and *попробовал* + ipf inf - one of each. The combination *попытался было* + pf inf clearly predominates, and it can probably be regarded as the conventional way of expressing the idea: 'he made an unsuccessful attempt to....'.

⁵⁷ A similar meaning is found in constructions of the type 'imperfective finite verb + *было* + infinitive'. In the next section, sentences of this type with finite verbs expressing intention are discussed. In my sample there is one example with the verb *отчаиваться*, that is semantically closer to verbs like *бояться* and *думать*, discussed in this section. The example has already been given in section 2: (19).

⁵⁸ Where there is no special connection with the situation at the moment of speech, a *было*-construction including the perfective verb *подумать* is normally

used to express a thought which later proves not to accord with reality:

- (I) Оно (письмо) привлекло внимание Грязнова сначала своей чудовищной неграмотностью. Он, было, подумал, что этот замдиректора "косит" и нарочно написал с такими умопомрачительными ошибками. Но потом ему показалось, что когда-то давно он уже встречался с подобным "правописанием": /.../. (Незн.)
 - (II) До отъезда Евгений думал об Аксинье нехотя, урывками... Одно время он было подумал: "Не буду прерывать с ней отношений. Она согласится. Но чувство порядочности осилило, - решил он по приезде поговорить и, если представится возможность, расстаться. (Шолохов; Forsyth 1970: 145)
 - (III) Так вот, этот тип дал мне выпить коньяку из своей фляжки, я было подумал, что он достает из кармана револьвер, и сказал, что я вел себя как надо /.../. (Вестд.)
 - (IV) На бегу он (Грикспоор) очень сильно стукнулся головой, подумал было, что ранен, но побежал дальше под градом земли и камней. (Вестд.)
- (It is interesting to note that in the Dutch original of (II) and (III), the adverb *eerst* ('at first') is used. This is the Dutch parallel of the Russian *сперва*, which has a certain relationship with the *было*-construction, cf. section 11 and example (170).)

⁵⁹ In my sample the corresponding impersonal construction is found only once, in the following thoughts of Puškin's coffin-maker: /.../ разве гробовщик гаэр святочный? Хотелось было мне позвать их на новоселье, задать им пир горой: ин не бывать же тому! (П: Г 92.16)

⁶⁰ This example shows that the constructions '*хотел* + infinitive + *было*' and '*хотел* + infinitive without *было*' are very close. The reason for not using *было* in the first sentence is probably the wish to avoid an accumulation of embedded *было*-constructions.

⁶¹ It seems that the particle *было* cannot be used with *хотел* when the aim of the subject is an activity or a change of situation in which he has only a passive role, e.g. in a sentence like: Я хотел получить несколько экземпляров этой книги.

⁶² Cf. Rozental' (ed.) (1971: 378), where the only example of *было* given is a sentence with *хотел*: я хотел было остаться дома, но не вытерпел и отправился к ней (Тургенев) and the meaning of *было* is described as 'the impossibility of concluding the action' (def. A17).

⁶³ Cf. Unbegaun's translation of он хотел было лишить себя жизни, да испугался: "il était sur le point de se donner la mort, mais il a eu peur".

⁶⁴ Kirsner/Thompson use an English construction of this type - 'I had intended to give you an exam next week' - to illustrate the difference between MEANING and INFERENCE. According to them this sentence "strongly suggests that the speaker no longer intends to give the exam". But "the MESSAGE of 'non-intention in the present' is not the MEANING of *had intended* but rather an INFERENCE from that MEANING" (1976: 203).

⁶⁵ It is interesting to note the absence in my material of examples containing *захотеть* - the ingressive derivative of *хотеть* - (although there is one example of the ingressive counterpart of the impersonal verb *хотеться* (cf. note 59): Мальчики сидели вокруг их, тут же сидели и те две собаки, которым так было захотелось меня съесть. (Тургенев; Nilsson 1967: 50)). As stated at the beginning of this section, in *было*-sentences, the verb *хотеть* has an 'active' meaning, something like: intention + preliminary activity. Apparently it is

difficult to express the notion of the emergence of this variant of intention with the ingressive verb *захотеть*. It seems to me that in contemporary Russian, the verb *собратся* is more or less specialised in this function. In a way, *собрался было* serves as the ingressive counterpart of both *собирался было* and *хотел было*. This could explain the fact that the verb *собратся* is the most frequently used finite verb in the construction 'finite perfective verb + *было* + infinitive' (17 percent of the cases). The verb *вздумать* appears to be closely related semantically. In the works of Puškin, this verb occurs seven times, and here it is almost the only ingressive verb that is used in *было*-sentences expressing non-realised intention (there are no Puškin-examples with *собрался было* at all). The other four examples of *вздумал было* in my material are all taken from the works of Turgenev (and cited by Nilsson). Cf. (27) and the following examples:

- (I) Буджацкие татары *вздумали было* нас беспокоить. Казачий полковник заманил их по своему в засаду. 160 были убиты, шестеро взяты в плен. (П: ЗМ 337.10)
- (II) Для развлечения *вздумал было* я в клобе играть, но принужден был *остановиться*. (П: Пс 950.31)
- (III) *Вздумал я было* ее заложить: пятится моя лошадь назад. (Тургенев; Nilsson 1967: 42)
- (IV) Иные помещики *вздумали было* покупать сами косы на наличные деньги и раздавать в долг мужикам по той же цене; но мужики оказались недовольными и даже впали в уныние /.../. (Тургенев; Nilsson 1967: 42 (the first four words))

⁶⁶ It would probably be useful to present a typology of the various types of 'disturbance', but this would exceed the scope of this article.

⁶⁷ This term is used by Ebeling (1956: 86) in his description of the use of the Russian imperative that is sometimes labelled 'dramatic imperative'. According to Ebeling, the general meaning of the Russian imperative "can be defined as an action fulfilled as the result of a foreign impulse or permission." (*ibid.*) The 'dramatic imperative' is illustrated by the following sentence from Turgenev: *А тут еще, как нарочно, подвернись другой знакомый нам гимназист, и начини хвастаться новыми часами*. In this sentence, "the imperative shows the actor himself as the urging or enabling force". "Nonetheless, we may speak in this case of a foreign impulse, because the action is presented as not in accordance with the preceding actions, as breaking the line of events. Thus the word "foreign" in our definition does not point solely to the actor, but to the natural flow of events as a whole" (*ibid.*; emphasis mine - A.A.B.). It is interesting to note that there is actually an example of the *было*-construction in which the 'disturbing' action is indicated by such a 'dramatic imperative': *Только было цветы распустились, как вдруг возьми да приморозь*. (Karcevski 1927: 140).

⁶⁸ Cf. Bogusławski/Karolak (1973/70: 369). Nilsson (1967: 47-50) discusses the various ways in which the clauses or sentences that indicate a disturbing event can be connected with the *было*-clause. The affinity of *было* with the conjunction *как вдруг* is stressed by Belošapkova (1961: 41) and OIG (1964: 239-246). According to Belošapkova, *как вдруг* expresses that the second of two events "неожиданно прерывает или сменяет первое" (l.c.).

⁶⁹ Where a past imperfective indicates a single 'action in progress', it is natural to apply the notion of disturbance to the action itself (cf. section 12). However, to express an action that is disturbed before attaining the 'Term.', one of the more specialised constructions is normally used: the combination of perfective aspect with *чуть не*; or the expression of the event by a perfective infinitive, preceded by a finite form of one of a limited group of verbs, chiefly: *хотел, собирался, собрался, (по)пытался*.

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