

Interview with Michele Berdy, Our 2006 Greiss Lecturer and Presenter of the “Torture the Translator” Pre-conference Workshop

SlavFile: After living in Moscow almost continuously since 1978, are you more likely to run across an expression (idiom or neologism) in English you’re not sure you understand or one in Russian?

MB: My problems in the two languages are probably inverse mirror images. In Russian I am fairly up to date with buzz words, new idioms, political jargon and slang. But I have to haul out the dictionaries when I’m reading 19th century and early 20th century literature. In English I manage with anything written before about 1990. But I sometimes have problems understanding new US vogue words and slang. Recently “bling” gave me a hard time. And forget youth slang; I’m hopelessly out of date.

Sometimes, to the delight of family and friends, I mix up English idioms and expressions, like “chalk that one up to the Gipper,” or “in days of lore.” In the US I sometimes mentally translate from Russian. I once asked my brother where the “technics” section of a department store was, and it was only after I realized he was staring at me in utter bewilderment that I recalled the word “electronics.” You think it will never happen to you, but it does.

SlavFile: You have worn so many hats over the years—translator, interpreter, author, TV producer, columnist, teacher, communications consultant. Which of these hats are you wearing most at the moment?

MB: Right now I wear three hats: a comfy wool cap for translating, a warm beret for writing, and a rakish fedora for communications. Occasionally I put on a severe hair band to teach.

SlavFile: Can you give us a little hint about how you’re going to “torture the translator” in New Orleans?

MB: I plan to torture everyone with what has been torturing me lately—why suffer alone, right? Lately I’ve been struggling with translating genres and styles, such as extreme expressiveness and politeness in English and decorum and formality in Russian, conveying subtext and irony, dealing with lexical issues connected with the influx of English words into Russian and their semantic transformations (when is *glamurny* glamorous?), and untangling some syntactical issues, especially connected with the logic of exposition.

I hope that we’ll have a mix of native English and native Russian speakers, so the native speakers can be explicators and sounding boards for the non-native speakers. I don’t plan to “teach” so much as to “facilitate a workshop.” I hope it will be fun as well as helpful. Even if it will be somewhat torturous.

SlavFile: We linguistic masochists will be looking forward to it!

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**American Translators Association’s
 47th Annual Conference
 New Orleans, Louisiana
 November 1-4, 2006**

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SlavFile is published four times yearly.

Articles of interest to Slavic translators and interpreters are invited.

Designation of Slavic Languages Division membership on ATA membership application or renewal form provides full membership.

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CONFERENCE NEWCOMER ACTIVITIES:

We are again planning a few measures to welcome newcomers to the next conference, to SLD, or to both. Fifteen minutes before the start of the Wednesday evening ATA reception, SLD officers and any other interested members will **meet and greet newcomers** at the door. After all, who wants to enter a huge room full of people without recognizing a single face? In addition, we will hold the second annual **SLD Newcomers Lunch** on Thursday at 11:45 (or when the orientation for first-time conference attendees ends, whichever comes first). We will meet at the ATA registration booth and proceed to a nearby inexpensive restaurant. Non-newcomers are encouraged to come, too. Those wishing more information or with other concerns can contact Lydia at lydiastone@verizon.net.

SLD BANQUET: Administrator Joseph Bayerl has done a heroic job of finding us a reasonably priced restaurant in walking distance from our hotel for our annual banquet, to be held on Friday evening, November 3. The *Bubba Gump Shrimp Co.(!)* has been enthusiastically recommended by Nora's husband, who visits New Orleans frequently. There will be fish, meat, and vegetarian alternatives for non-shrimp eaters. The price for a three-course meal with a cash bar will be \$32. For further details, see page 22.

NEED A CONFERENCE ROOMMATE? If you are still in need of a roommate for New Orleans at the Sheraton or a less expensive nearby alternative, it may not be too late to find one. Contact Nora at norafavorov@bellsouth.net.

SLAVFILE DELAYS: We have been experiencing delays in getting the announcement that the *SlavFile* has been posted on our web site out to members. For the summer issue, the delay was more than two weeks. We are working to ensure this does not happen again. Details will follow in a subsequent issue and/or announcement. In the meantime, if you begin to feel it is high time that a new issue of our publication appear, check our web site www.ata-divisions.org/SLD/slavfile.html, as it may already be there.

**OFFERS OF WORK FROM EMPLOYERS
AND CLIENTS ARE PUBLISHED FREE**

CONFERENCE PREVIEW

CONFERENCE SESSIONS: Below you will find a listing and description of the SLD sessions planned, as well as a few additional recommendations. Presenters, we, the editors, would consider it an enormous favor if you would find volunteers to review your sessions for the *SlavFile* and let us know. Audience members, if you would like to get your name in print and earn continuing education points, volunteer as a reviewer either to the presenter directly or to a member of the SlavFile staff.

SLD SESSIONS

Seminar T: Torture the Translator

Michele A. Berdy

Wednesday, 2:00pm-5:00pm - All Levels

No matter how many years you have been translating Russian into English or English into Russian, there are words, syntactical constructions, and aspects of cultural reality and genre that remain problematic. When translating English into Russian, what do you do with inclusive language (s/he)? When translating Russian into English, how do you repackage a five-line, three-clause sentence in which the subject is the last word? We will examine genre (with special attention to business correspondence), subtext, lexical difficulties, and syntax in order to improve both translations and translation strategies. We will translate both Russian into English and English into Russian.

Note: this seminar requires advance registration and payment of a fee. Contact ATA to see if space is still available.

SL-1 Susana Greiss Lecture: Translating Genres, Styles, and Realities

Michele A. Berdy

Thursday, 1:45pm-3:15pm - All Levels
(Presenting Languages: English & Russian)

The presenter recently discovered that she had unwittingly followed Lanna Castellano's suggested translation career path: live abroad, marry a foreigner, work in a profession other than translation, and start serious translation mid-life. She has lived on and off in Moscow since 1978, working in media and communications. During that period, she translated constantly, often for herself. As a translator, she cares about words. As a client, she cares more about audience, genre, communicative goal, and emotional impact. Her experience has clarified her notion of a "good translation," but the fast-forward language evolution in Russia makes "good translation" an increasingly elusive goal.

SL-2 My Crude Ain't Your Oil

Konstantin Lakshin

Thursday, 3:30pm-5:00pm - All Levels

This presentation provides a brief overview of the basic technical concepts you need to be familiar with before attempting your very first translation for the petroleum industry. This will be followed by a list of puzzlers that baffle outsiders coming to petroleum from other translation specialties. These include the many differences in Russian and U.S. oil patch lingo and divergences between Russian and North American petroleum practices. A list of reference materials will be provided.

SL-3 Slavic Languages Division Annual Meeting

Joseph G. Bayerl

Friday, 3:30pm-4:15pm - All Levels

The purpose of the Slavic Languages Division's Annual Meeting is to take care of old and new business and to discuss division activities. All division members are encouraged to attend. Non-members are invited to come learn more about the SLD.

SL-4 Translation of English Language Advertising Materials: Use of Adoptions and Their Grammatical Assimilation in Russian

Elena S. McGivern

Friday, 4:15pm-5:00pm - All Levels

This presentation will focus on such topics as the evaluation of advertising markets; sectors of foreign advertising in Russia; methods of translating advertisements (foreignization and domestication); and what is lost and gained during the translation process. The presentation will be "diluted" with funny commercials containing linguistic examples.

SL-5 The Name of the Game: Russian Translation of English Expressions Drawn from Sports

Vladimir J. Kovner and Lydia Razran Stone

Saturday, 8:30am-10:00am - All Levels (Presenting Languages: English & Russian)

Many idioms, phrases, and metaphors from the world of sports appear in general English discourse. These may pose challenges for those translating from English. In this presentation, we will attempt to provide some help in this area for translators into Russian. We will first analyze a list of English sports expressions with regard to meaning and usage in non-sports contexts, and speculate why such usages

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are more common in English than in Russian. We will then present our tentative Russian translations of some of these and ask our audience to suggest suitable Russian equivalents of others.

SL-6 Impact of Translation on the Vocabulary and Grammar of Russian Media

Irina Knizhnik

Saturday, 10:15am-11:00am - All Levels (Presenting Language: Russian)

This session will discuss how the need to keep pace with a flood of new loan words has contributed to a situation where translators are left wondering if their Russian-language competence has experienced a meltdown.

SL-7 Looking at the Overlooked: Sentencing, Paragraphing, and Textual Cohesion in Russian>English Translation

Brian James Baer and Tatyana Y. Bystrova-McIntyre

Saturday, 11:00am-11:45am - All Levels

Translation training and assessment are, for obvious reasons, generally focused on issues of semantic transfer. However, many non-semantic textual elements, when ignored, can negatively impact the quality of translation, contributing to the production of translationese. Based on the findings of a comparative study of Russian and English corpora, this presentation will isolate differences in sentencing and paragraphing and situate those differences within a broader discussion of textual cohesion. Examples will be taken from both literary and non-literary texts

OTHER RECOMMENDED CONFERENCE ACTIVITIES

TP-14 Weekly Training Events: Teaching Translation and Interpreting Skills Online

Elena Levintova Allison

Saturday, 4:15pm-5:00pm - All Levels

Defense Language Institute is developing a series of computerized learning units in four languages (Arabic, Chinese, Korean, and **Russian**) under the title of "Weekly Training Events." Among the various skills addressed are sight translation and consecutive interpreting (two-way and one-way). The learner is provided with authentic documents or authentic and semi-authentic audio files, guidelines for performing the task, and feedback containing professional translations and various linguistic and cultural notes. Sample learning activities will be demonstrated during this presentation.

Literary Division After Hours Café

We highly recommend the Literary Division's After Hours Café on Thursday evening between 9 and 11:00 p.m. Bring short original poetry or excerpts from other writings and translations into or out of any language and be prepared to read. Everyone who wants to do so gets the chance. Or simply come to listen.



Hello Lydia!

First of all I wanted to thank you for the great work you do as the SlavFile editor! Being a novice in the field of translating I find it to be extremely helpful. In particular, I pay a lot of attention to the subjects and words that I am not familiar with.

This time I came across a new term in *Characteristics of Legal English* that made me do some research of my own. The reason was that one Russian translation did not sound right.

The article gives it as "Offeree = оферты". After checking with several dictionaries I found that «[оферта = offer](#)», and «[offeree = акцептант](#)». There is a big difference and I felt I should let you know. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,
Elena Boucheva

Elena is, of course, correct and we are grateful to her for pointing out this error, for which we, the editors, are exclusively responsible. Tom West's original handout read "Offeree = акцептант оферты" and we inadvertently left out the first word of the Russian. We humbly apologize both to Tom and our readers.

BEGINNER'S LUCK

Liv Bliss (perennially novice translator)

Lakeside, Arizona

What the world really needs is more love and less paperwork
Pearl Bailey

While Ms. Bailey's aversion to paperwork is sure to strike a chord with many (most?) of us, you have to wonder if that jazz icon's agent would have agreed with her. While good fences might not always make good neighbors and good contracts don't always guarantee an infinitely trouble-free business relationship, you can be sure that bad contracts are all too often a harbinger of bad times ahead. So today we'll be talking about contracts.

When I first began in the freelance world, I was thrilled to get work under any circumstances. I hated contracts. I didn't even want to read them, much less think about what they meant and implied, in case I found something so unacceptable that even I couldn't ignore it. Later, working for a large language services company, I would send out the standard contract drafted by our legal department, and would be quite peeved if anyone balked at signing it. I mean, I knew that the company's intent was to treat its vendors honestly and honorably, so why the paranoia? Now, much older and a little wiser, I have finally realized that: 1) A contract is just a tool, albeit an important one, and is, in the final analysis, as good (or bad) as its implementation; and, 2) Better no business relationship at all than a business relationship that is unprofitable or unpleasant.

Three provisos, now. First, I am not an attorney and nothing in this column constitutes legal advice, from me, the *SlavFile*, or the ATA. It is not an encouragement to move as a group against any client or to do anything else that would constitute a violation of U.S. Antitrust legislation. Second, you will read little or nothing below that isn't already out there on the Internet. I just thought it might be useful to present my own discoveries in as neat a package as possible. Finally, in all fairness I have to say that I personally have encountered far fewer bad contracts than contracts that were unimpeachably fair and sensible.

Contracts can take several forms. For instance, you may receive an e-mail from an actual or potential client outlining a job and offering it to you (with any contingent conditions, such as the need to deliver in a particular file format or by a certain date, to confirm your ATA certification status, etc.). Once you accept the job under the conditions stated, a contract can be said to exist. Or the source files may be accompanied by a Purchase Order, perhaps one that you are supposed to sign and return. Or you may be sent a formal, multi-page contract, either for the individual job (this rarely happens unless the job is large) or to establish an ongoing business relationship. In any event, *always get it in writing*. If a client, especially a new client, calls you and you agree to the terms over the phone, that is an oral contract, but just try arguing the details in a legal setting, if

something goes wrong and you and the client have differing recollections of what was said. (And, if the client is unscrupulous, you can bet your receivables that there will be a huge discrepancy, and it won't be in your favor.) At the very least, e-mail that client, clearly stating your receipt and understanding of the job (scope and deadline, as a minimum), any special conditions, and your acceptance thereof. You should also ask the client to e-mail you back, acknowledging receipt and understanding of your e-mail. None of this is bulletproof, but it's better than nothing.

There are those who will tell you *never* to accept a client's contract but always to insist on your own. After all, a plumber doesn't usually sign a list of your terms and conditions before you, as the client, have him fix your faucet. But—need I say it?—we're not plumbers, and, having been on the other side of the project manager's desk, I don't know what I would have done if I had had to maneuver among dozens of idiosyncratic contracts from the dozens of vendors with whom I dealt on a regular basis. It simply wouldn't have worked.

Consider the time element too: most project managers are under severe time pressures, want a "yes" or a "no" or at least a constructive "maybe" pretty much by return e-mail, and are not interested in entering into a detailed debate on the minutiae of their terms. There is a sizable distinction between being professionally cautious and just plain nit-picky for the fun of it. But that is no reason to hastily cave in and agree to questionable terms if your instincts are telling you not to. (And those instincts will become increasingly well-honed as you rack up experience in client relations.) If you are not comfortable, walk away. Those are words to live by, and not just when it comes to contracts.

Earlier this year, on an online payment practices message board, the ATA-certified Portuguese and Spanish translator and interpreter J. Henry Phillips, a fount of commonsense wisdom, wrote "If some people rob you with a fountain pen, it is because you invited them to. Payment fraud exists because people call themselves independent contractors, yet lack the initiative to write their own agreements." From the context of the preceding discussion, my understanding (and I hope he will forgive me if I'm wrong) is that we are being advised to counter an unfair or overly vague client contract with a contract of our own, and I am all for that. We'll talk about *your* contract in the next column.

But what makes a contract dubious or unacceptable? A newly-fledged language provider, especially one who has had little experience with contracts in other settings, may find it difficult to recognize the red flags. Here are some of the big, glaring ones that can spell trouble.

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When it comes to legal language, the devil is in the *implications*. Carefully consider how far a suspiciously broad clause might actually extend, before you agree to it. Take a look at this one, from an article by Chantal Wilford cited below: “Translator represents and warrants that he/she has the requisite education and technical knowledge to translate any and all business documents, including but not limited to documents which may require the translation of scientific and mechanical terminology.” That’s just ludicrous, and you don’t have to be a seasoned professional with decades of experience to see that. If a translation company can’t take the trouble to qualify its vendors by specialty, I’d rather not work with it at all.

Look out for a “hold harmless” clause, such as “xxx agrees to indemnify, defend, and hold yyy harmless from any liability, claim, or demand (including costs, expenses and attorney fees) that may be incurred by yyy by reason of the service, acts, or omissions, or lack of services rendered or supplied by xxx.” The range may even be expanded to encompass cost or liability to the client arising from “any claim alleging damages resulting from false or misleading information or other misrepresentation, in materials or literature developed, written, created or approved by xxx.” Note that “alleging.” That seems to mean that the claim does not even have to be proven legitimate before you will be made responsible for whatever happens next.

Now, I have no qualms about a language provider being fairly penalized for negligent work: as I see it, a thorough drubbing by a qualified editor, a reduction in the fee, and a stern instruction never to do it again would fall into the category of fair penalization. But do you see how broad those terms are? Do you also see how easily they could be turned against you and how helpless you would be if they were? Notice, too, that the entire burden for quality assurance apparently falls upon “xxx”—and that would be you. The courageous among us will tell you that clauses such as these are unenforceable in any jurisdiction, because they are blatantly unfair and unreasonable. Frankly, I would not want to stake my well-being, not to mention peace of mind, on that. I will no longer take the risk of signing a contract containing such a clause.

Among all else, this kind of “hold harmless” clause makes no sense in the context of our business. You have no control over (and often no knowledge of) what happens to a translation after you submit it to your client. Assuming that the client adds value by having your material edited or at least proofread, how can you possibly be held individually liable for the end-product? And if, on the other side of the spectrum, the client is merely a “pass-through” that forwards your work, warts and all, to the end-user, why would you even want to work with an outfit like that?

Also be wary of contracts that specify in excruciating detail what the client will do to you (including reducing your fee, fining you, and/or hauling you into court) for unsatisfactory work without indicating who is to determine what is unsatisfactory, and what criteria will be used to make

that determination. At least look for an arbitration clause: a three-person arbitration panel with one member chosen by you and one by the client, and the third chosen by those two members seems fair to me. But even so, if the arbitration is to be held in Peshawar and you live in Poughkeepsie, would you really be prepared to transport yourself (and possibly also an attorney) over there or would you just take the financial hit and creep away to lick your wounds? Make sure the arbitration conditions are not abnormally unfair to you, for whatever reason.

I have an allergy to contracts that require you to provide proof of liability or “errors and omissions” insurance. The entity with good insurance is the entity with the deepest pockets. I’m certainly not telling you that you should not carry the appropriate insurance. I’m just saying that your insurance is no one else’s business. If I had the time and was feeling suitably sassy, I might respond by telling the client “you show me yours and I might show you mine.” After all, why bother working with agencies at all, if those agencies are not adequately protected and able to extend a reasonable amount of that protection to us?

Go looking for the clause on payment terms (but don’t be surprised if you don’t find one; too many clients are naturally particular about *your* deadlines but don’t care to impose any on themselves). And if 60 days after the end of the month in which the invoice was submitted (up to 3 months, in practicality) isn’t acceptable, then don’t accept it. And remember: Even if the payment terms are illegal in your or the client’s jurisdiction, you may be validating them in some degree by agreeing to them.

And if a contract explicitly tells you that you will be paid after the client has been paid by the end-user of your work...well, I’d advise saluting that organization for its audacity and trotting away, fast. Aside from your having to wait for a possibly unreasonable length of time to get paid, consider what happens to your fee if the end-user does not pay your client. Once more, with feeling: You should never allow the client’s arrangement with its clients to become your problem.

Some contracts will tell you that you cannot engage any third party to work with you. I can see where this came from. Agencies are sometimes placed in an untenable position by an over-extended vendor who quietly farms an entire project out to someone else, and then delivers it at the last moment without even a cursory quality check. (Yes, it has happened to me, and I never worked with that vendor again.) There is also the issue of confidentiality, which may be an absolute condition for certain kinds of jobs. But I would have a problem being prohibited *as a general rule* from working with subject specialists, posting select queries in online fora, or making my own arrangements with a trusted editor or proofreader. If the contract won’t allow you to do that and you feel you can’t work properly without doing it, let the project manager know and take it from there.

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Finally (but no, not definitively: there are many, many more, but this column could never be long enough to cover them all), a small grab-bag of oddities.

There may be a clause that requires you to surrender all materials relating to a job on completion of that job, including deleting files from storage media. I leave it to you to decide how advisable it would be for you, as a businessperson, to comply with that; for a given project, you might not mind at all.

Then there is the matter of not directly soliciting your client's clients. I am generally OK with that (in my project manager days, I was staggered when a client forwarded to me precisely such a solicitation from a favorite translator of mine), but I have a huge problem when that clause extends beyond reason, to "future or potential" clients. I cannot possibly know the names of every one of my client's *current* clients, much less those that will, or even *might*, become its clients in the future. That's just silly. I will happily agree to a clause prohibiting me from approaching a particular end-user in the course of a particular project and for a reasonable time thereafter, but more than that...No thanks.

Some contracts may define your translation as a "work for hire," which essentially means that the copyright to the translation rests not with you but with the client (whether you are paid or not). I am told by those who know a lot more about this than I do that this is incorrect and that only an employee can perform a work for hire. My own two cents' worth is that your ownership of copyright to your own work could be an important bargaining chip if you are experiencing problems getting paid, but you will have no such right if you have signed it away.

There is probably no perfect contract in this imperfect world. But we're the language people, right? It's our job to read these things and make sure we understand them. You can discreetly query your colleagues in an online business practices forum if there's something you don't understand—and don't for a moment imagine that there's any shame in that. Over the years, in the course of preparing legal documents for translation, I have called clients (and those clients were attorney firms) with a request to explain a given

piece of verbiage, only to be told "It's funny you should ask. No one here understands that either." Take the contract to an attorney with expertise in contract law for your state (at least), if that would make you more comfortable; try to find one who will give you a brief one-time consultation for a reasonable fee. Bottom line: You should not sign anything that you don't understand.

And if you do understand perfectly well and don't like what you see, what then? Simple enough. 1) Point out the problem (in a calm and friendly manner: chances are the project manager didn't write this contract and may not even have read it). 2a) Offer to delete or modify the offending clause/s and sign the contract anyway (after which you must return it by mail or fax, keeping a dated copy); or 2b) Refuse to sign the contract at all. I had one client that continued to work with me under those circumstances, which was far from ideal, because then neither side had any legal protection. Finally, if no suitable accommodation can be reached, 3) Turn the project down and/or formally terminate the relationship.

For more on this general subject, read Chantal Wilford's excellent article entitled "Contracts" at www.linguabase.com/tips.asp (scroll down the page and click on Contracts). In fact, all the articles that can be accessed from this section—Top Ten Tips, Soliciting Work, Rates, Where to Find Work, etc.—will probably be worth your precious time. Another reader-friendly overview, written by attorney and translator Derek Gill Franßen and titled "Contracts I: Would you sign this?" is accessible at www.proz.com/doc/554.

Next time, we'll be talking about other contractual wrinkles and how you can insert yourself more proactively into the contract process.

I have no doubt that many of you have encountered other doubtful or peculiar contract conditions, and I would love to hear about them. Feedback from interpreters would be especially welcome, as would, of course, comments from language companies. I can be contacted at bliss@wmonline.com.

SLD WEB SITE: Webmasters Dina Tchikounova and Nora Favorov have been working hard to update the SLD website and, judging from what can now be seen, have done a stupendous job so far. They are seeking additional photographs of SLD activities, particularly past conferences, to provide visual interest. If you have any good ones you are willing to share, send scanned or digital photos to Dina at dina@broadreach.biz or Nora at norafavorov@bellsouth.net. Contact Dina or Nora at these addresses about sending hard copies, which will of course be returned. Anyone interested in bringing a digital camera to the conference has a chance to become the SLD's first official photographer.

Language as a Weapon in the Battle for Moscow's Architectural Landmarks

Stephen McCarthy

As the Russian capital continues to grow and its housing resources continue to age and decay, the need for new and safe residential buildings is growing at an accelerating pace. City officials must struggle to balance the housing requirements of a surging population with the legislative obligation they bear to preserve over 3,000 historic structures within the city center. The restoration costs for such preservation work are extremely high, and some would argue that any available state funds should be applied to providing Muscovites with desperately needed housing.

If the high cost of elaborate restorations were not reason enough, developers and state officials on the other side of the argument also address the “health” of a landmark building in stark terms as a means of promoting their development schemes. The first indication that a given building, or even neighborhood, has become the focus of developers and building contractors is the diagnosis of an illness that the Moscow city government deems inoperable. It confers upon the building the fateful status of *аварийность*, a kind of death sentence even for landmarks that are in principle under the protection of both the municipal and federal governments. This official term, which can be non-anthropomorphically defined as “too decrepit or unsafe for occupation,” has been applied to hundreds of buildings that had previously been designated as landmarks by the state.

In a clever PR move, the prodevelopment forces seek public approbation for such questionable actions. They declare that these steps were taken in the interest of preventing a building collapse or other dangerous calamity and should be viewed as *противоаварийные работы*. The practice has been reported by *Izvestiya* in virtually every one of its weekly features on historic preservation.

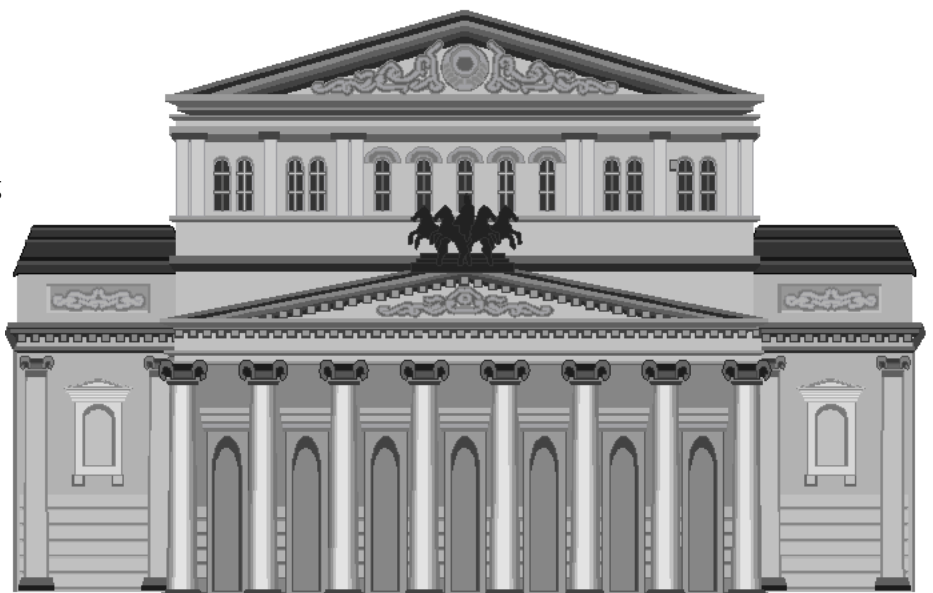
By demonstrating, with reference to unnamed experts' conclusions, that a building is structurally unsound and in need of a “mandatory restoration solution” (*вынужденное реставрационное решение*), developers can evade the onerous landmark legislation that impedes them in their stated goal of developing Moscow into a modern city with adequate housing for its citizens. Moreover, they pledge that the design of the new structure will reproduce in a faithful, and, most important, safer manner the identity of the lost building. (“*Чтобы получить согласования, иногда достаточно просто назвать строительство регенерацией утраченного, как бы ни отличалось новое от старого.*”) In at least pledging to regenerate an imperiled landmark, the developers can hurdle a legislative impediment and enable the city to grow architecturally at the same pace as its citizenry.

The sudden profusion of residential buildings being labeled “distressed” by government officials has even created a kind of refugee crisis within the city as entire communities are removed from their housing in areas that are highly coveted by Russian developers. *Izvestiya* reported over a year ago, “*В полную интригу и сюрпризов игру под названием ‘переселение по сносу’ власти вовлекли сотни тысяч москвичей.*”

With hundreds of thousands of Muscovites facing the prospect of forced eviction, the unofficial term *переселение по сносу* is capable of striking terror in the heart of any resident whose building has become an object of interest for a developer with strong ties to Moscow's city hall. A recent *Izvestiya* article says, for example, “*Самая страшная угроза для москвичей, живущих в центре: ‘Вот признают ваш дом аварийным и переселят в Южное Бутово’.* *Причем по закону все верно – ‘аварийщиков’ в отличие от других категорий переселенцев можно отправить в любой район столицы.*”

For the developers and investors with grand schemes for turning the Russian capital into a globally recognizable world capital replete with shimmering office and residential towers that boast exclusive shopping centers and extensive, multi-tiered underground parking lots—all requisite elements that comprise the global template for a modern city—the Lilliputian campaign against them to preserve Moscow's architectural treasures is a mere speed bump on the superhighway to modernity, which will carry them away from their nondescript, internationally derided Soviet past.

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In addition to their impressive war chest from petrodollars and holding company assets, these urban planners enjoy the favor of like-minded city officials who are willing to evade and disregard the landmark status of many historic structures that stand in the path of their vision of a modern Moscow. Their vision includes the largest office tower in Europe, the central component in the ambitious *Москва-Сити* (Moscow City), the crown jewel and pet project of Mayor Luzhkov's urban design strategy.

It is no wonder that disputes are voiced in terms of concern for the "health" and life cycle of historic buildings. Like an actual person, each landmark building is issued a special "passport," bestowing upon it special status that in theory guarantees safe passage through the current development boom in Moscow, much like the benefits of a passport for an individual traveler in a hostile land. The official term is *охранный паспорт*, but the rights this document seems to confer on its bearer are neither absolute nor inviolable. In many cases the government bodies that are supposed to protect these landmarks are indifferent to the threat they face in the recent development boom.

One such state body for the preservation of historic architecture in Moscow is *Комитет по культурному наследию города Москвы*, or *Москомнаследие*. The group's main charge is the safeguarding of officially designated landmark buildings in the Russian capital, but it is actually a toothless government agency with very limited power to enforce the landmark legislation that applies to these historic buildings.

The key in the cases that are reviewed by the commission is at least providing the appearance of a just decision for revoking landmark status, which most commonly is provided by affixing the important term *аварийность* to a historic building that stands in the way of a developer's plan. Once the state has recognized the "emergency state" of a landmark, the hands of the developer are freed to perform any "restoration with elements of reconstruction" in the interest of public safety. In many ways, this term, along with the variations that have sprung from it—*аварийщики*, *аварийный*, etc.—is the only justification for demolishing historic buildings and for violating the guarantee that the architectural treasures of Moscow are not lost unnecessarily.

In the pitched battle between real estate developers and preservationists over the fate of historic buildings in Moscow, events have begun to resemble, quite literally, a life and death struggle. The anthropomorphization of historic buildings that begins with the issuance of passports has continued with the use of arresting terms such as "regeneration," "demolition," "rebirth," and "cremation," which appear weekly in the headlines of newspaper articles chronicling the recent development boom and implying an attendant campaign against the architectural fabric in the city center of Moscow.

For several years now the battle lines have been clearly drawn in this war for control of the more than 3,000 landmark buildings in Moscow. There is an enormous ledger in the Mayor's architectural office that catalogues every building throughout the entire city of Moscow. Historic buildings that are at risk of development or destruction are noted in red on maps that hang on the wall, while the sites of those that no longer exist are denoted in black. Literally and figuratively stealing a page from the municipal government, preservationists have seized upon this categorization and compiled their own "red book" (*Красная книга*) of endangered landmarks as a means of rallying public opinion to their cause, attempting to draw on associations with the red book of Russia's most endangered species, as well as the importance of the word *красная* in Moscow's architectural and cultural history.

One local preservation group that serves as an unofficial watchdog for protecting historic buildings, *Moscow SOS*, has seized upon this term to draw attention to its campaign by maintaining its own electronic *Красная книга* on its website, a perfect marriage of Internet technology and the *великий и могучий* Russian language. As the founders of this organization note on the website's homepage: "...теперь положено начало интернет-версии 'Красной книги' – книги угроз." With the electronic publication of its "red book," the group has shrewdly exploited the official language of the government for its own purpose of saving historic buildings by establishing a ghoulish kind of death watch over Moscow landmarks.

Another example of the linguistic tactics for rallying public opinion to their cause is how these groups have addressed the honor and integrity of the landmark buildings as if they were living, breathing entities. In a somewhat romantic approach to these historic buildings, Russian preservationists employ the term "inviolability" (*неприкосновенность*) as a way of emphasizing the value and integrity of these threatened landmarks. The fear is that in disturbing the historic virtue of these landmarks, even for such basic needs as safety and modernization, the very essence of these structures will be lost forever. "*Неприкосновенность центра в пределах Садового кольца подразумевает реставрацию памятников, а не реконструкцию их до полной неузнаваемости.*"

To win the important battle of public opinion, both sides have waged a long and spirited campaign in the Russian press. As a means of dramatizing and strengthening their respective cases for either demolishing or preserving landmark properties, both sides have employed a wide range of terms that invoke such mighty subjects as biology, morality, and eschatology. To lend further weight to their argument for preserving Moscow's remarkable architectural patrimony, preservationists have shrewdly employed both foreign and native linguistic terms to imply that these landmarks

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Language as a Weapon

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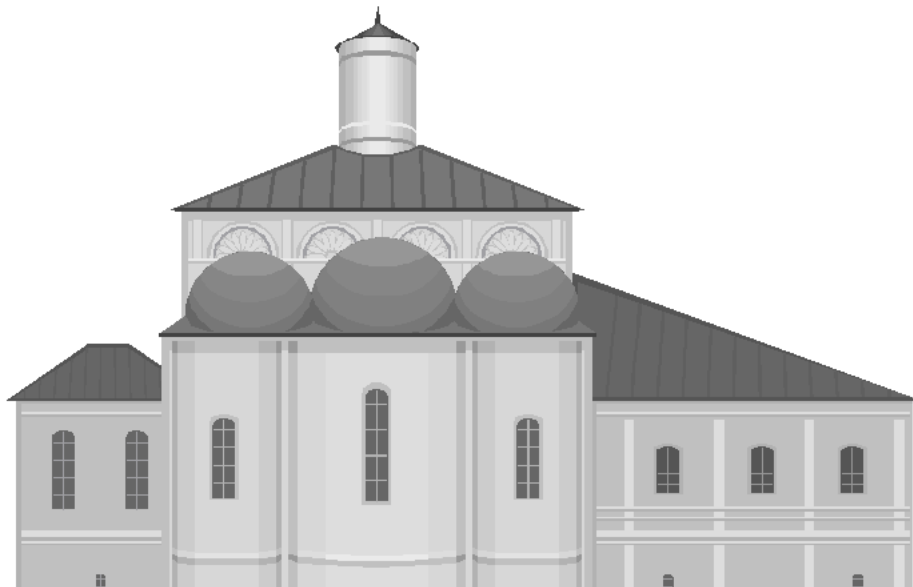
are actual living entities which, while admittedly suffering from the ravages of time and the elements, cannot be casually discarded like the scraps of a meal. Although preservationists acknowledge that in numerous cases these “patients” are in a critical, even “pre-infarctious” condition (*предынфарктное состояние*), the solution, they argue, is not euthanasia but a careful, painstaking, and costly course of treatment to bring them back from the brink of death.

In their desperation to save landmark buildings, these cyber-preservationists have even resorted to foreign languages to convey the vision of horror and vulgarity that current development plans in Moscow hold for the city and its residents. One such term is the French word *moulage* (English equivalent is “facadism”) from the verb *mouler* which means to mold or cast. The Russian rendering of this term, *муляж*, is a wonderfully nuanced word that has cultural resonance on multiple levels, despite its foreign provenance. *Муляж* in Russian is clearly defined on the *Москва которой нет* website (which we will refer to as *МКН*) as follows, “*Муляжи – воспроизведение фасада предварительно снесенного здания в новых материалах. При этом полностью меняется вся внутренняя планировка дома, он в 99 случаях из 100 становится больше, ‘облагораживается’ подземными этажами и т.д.*”

Further in the *МКН* definition we come across the significance of this life and death struggle for the fate of authentic Russian monuments. As argued by the Russian architect Dmitri Kulchinski, architectural replicas of genuine, irreplaceable landmark buildings can in no way capture, replace or match the invaluable essence of an original masterpiece. “*По меткому выражению архитектора Дмитрия Кульчинского, муляж – это ‘реанимация путем предварительной кремации’.* Иными словами, *муляж даже не копия (и уж тем более не точная), это памятник памятнику. Не более.*”

This *cri de coeur* succeeds in its emotional impact by amplifying what for some may appear an inconsequential urban issue to a fateful struggle over the body and soul of Moscow’s past. When reading such stark terms as “reanimation by means of preliminary cremation,” the reader is forced to confront the preservation issue as a great moral and philosophical issue, tantamount to one of the eternal “accursed” questions for which Russian history is so famous.

Furthermore, the word *муляж* applies not only to the elegant cast models found in art studios, but also the tawdry and somewhat vulgar plastic food models that are



sometimes placed in restaurant windows as a way of enticing prospective diners to come in off the street. Perhaps the semantic association with these insipid, ersatz food models is intended as a wry and effective way of demonstrating the insipid and uninspired effect of “facadist” restoration.

Despite their eloquence and linguistic talents, these cyberpreservationists freely acknowledge that their campaign to save landmark buildings is greatly outmatched by the money and influence of developers bent on transforming the historic center of Moscow. *МКН* itself notes that, “*За последнее десятилетие, только по официальным сведениям, снесено более двухсот архитектурных памятников федерального значения!*”

And yet they fully commit themselves to this struggle for their country’s architectural patrimony. On the same website, the group’s founders accept the challenge of its opponents to “cremate” and “reanimate” Moscow’s landmark architecture as a kind of crucible from which the city, and nation, will emerge even stronger. As they note in the concluding paragraph of the site’s homepage or “vestibule,” “*Иногда только сильная душевная боль ведет к полному выздоровлению.*” Even in this desperate hour for the fledgling Russian preservation movement, there is hope and conviction that a better future lies in store for its ailing and “distressed” patient.

Stephen McCarthy is a free-lance translator based in New York City. He has lived and worked periodically in Moscow where he acquired a deep appreciation for the city’s historic architecture. In the past two years a large portion of his work has focused on historic preservation issues in Moscow. He can be contacted at khrlmv17@yahoo.com.

ВОТ ЧТО Я ЛЮБЛЮ

(Russian translation of McDonald's Slogan: I'M LOVING IT)

Contributed by Boris Silverstejn

Editors' note: Our good friend and frequent contributor, Boris Silverstejn, declined to do a Baffle Boris column for us this issue on the grounds that 1) no one had sent him anything for it and 2) he was busy interpreting for McDonald's. Trying to make lemonade out of lemons, we immediately asked him for an English-Russian McDonald's menu glossary, producing the following. Those of you with a particular interest in fast food operations (предприятия быстрого обслуживания (ПБО)) may wish to check out McDonald's Russian web site (mcdonalds.ru) for further information and terminology. There we find that the McDonald's slogan Quality, Service, Cleanliness &

Value (QSC&V) is rendered Качество, культура обслуживания, чистота и доступность (ККЧ и Д), giving rise to interesting musings as to the cultural reasons why "service" and "value" are best not translated literally in this context.

As the Russian translation market waxes and wanes, which of us is sure that it may not improve our career potential to be able to say, Do you want fries with that? in Russian? Please keep Boris, at least, employed in the future by sending him baffling English idiomatic expressions to translate into Russian for his column.

MCDONALD'S MENU VOCABULARY (E-R)

apple pie	яблочный пирожок	lunch rush	обеденный час-пик
barbecue sandwich/sauce	сэндвич/соус «Барбекю»	McHappy Meal	детский набор (МакХэппи Мил)
Big Mac sauce	соус для Биг Маков	menu prices	цены на продукты меню
biscuit	бисквит	milk shake	молочный коктейль
black currant pie	черносмородиновый пирожок	muffin	кекс
bun	булка	orange	апельсиновый сок, напиток «Фанта»
cake	пирожок, блинчик	patty	кусочек мяса
cheddar	сыр «Чеддер»	pie	пирожок
Coca-Cola Classic	обычная кока-кола	pin	сувенирный значок
Coca-Cola Light	кока-кола лайт	quarter-pounder	квотер
condiment	приправа	regular size	стандартный размер (о порции картофеля, стакане для напитков)
cone	рожок для мороженого	root beer	травяное пиво, рут-бир
crisp	хрустящий (о картофеле, пирожках)	saithe	сайда (рыба, используемая для изготовления Филе-О-Фиш)
crown	верхушка (булки)	seasoning	приправа
crumpled buns	смятые булки	shake syrup	сироп для коктейлей
cup	стакан	shortening	шортенинг
decanter	графин	Sprite	Спрайт
dehydrated onion	сушеный лук	steam	готовить на пару
deluxe	сэндвич «Делюкс»	sugar base syrup	сироп с сахарной основой
Diet Coke	диетическая кола	sugar free syrup	сироп без сахара
drive-through	автораздача	sundae	сандей
Egg McMuffin	Макмаффин с яйцом	taste	пробовать на вкус, проверять качество пищи
Filet-O-Fish	Филе-О-Фиш	taste of the season	вкус сезона (временное блюдо в меню)
French fries	картофель-фри	toasting	поджаривание (на тостере), карамелизация
fudge	шоколадный наполнитель	topping	топинг (мороженого)
hot cake	горячий блинчик	undercook	недоготовить
large Coke	большой стакан кока-колы	wrap	обертка, упаковка
lettuce	латук	zest	пикантность, особый вкус, особая приправа
liner	рекламка на подносах		

SLAVFILE LITE: NOT BY WORD COUNT ALONE

Lydia Razran Stone

To start with something utterly trivial: this summer my St. Petersburg cousins and I spent a week in Cape Cod, a mere stone's throw from what has to be one of the best independent ice cream stores in the country (*Smitty's* in East Falmouth, MA). This life-changing experience moved us to coin a Russlish word for the single portion or extra portion of black raspberry (the family favorite) you can't turn down no matter how full or non-hungry you've just said you were. The word—*скунчик*. We also got into a dispute about the etymology of the word *белка*. I claim that there must have originally been a white squirrel or similar white rodent that gave this species its name. My cousin says that *белка* is just a word (of course, we translators know that, while there may or may not be such a thing as a white squirrel, there is definitely no such thing as "just a word") and Russian squirrels are everywhere and always reddish. Does anybody have any etymological or zoological information to settle this dispute?

Just yesterday in answer to my prayers for something to come along to help me fill this column, I spotted another Cyrillic license plate—HE TBOE. I suppose I should immediately have checked to see if it was on a particularly expensive or otherwise desirable car, but I did not think of this until the opportunity had passed. On the other hand, perhaps the car, like the ones we keep acquiring, was simply one that looked exactly like 100 others in every parking lot.

HOW WE DID IT IN THE DAY: SOCIAL SECURITY TRANSLATION. A couple of weeks ago I spent 3 boring and unproductive hours waiting in our local Social Security office so that my husband and I could start the process of receiving our entitlement. (You 30-something translators, don't you wish that you too were 62, or, gasp, even older, so that you could have a chance to receive the benefits paid for by your money instituted in a kinder, more user-friendly U.S.?) The experience actually wasn't too bad since we have a rule in our family that no one goes anywhere without a book, although we until now, unaccountably, have failed to add a codicil that two books must be brought for an appointment at a government agency. At any rate, after I had finished my novel, I used the waiting time to muse about my first encounter with the Social Security Administration way back at the other end of my career in languages.

When I was 16 and had just graduated from high school, I had a summer job working for the translation department of a technical publishing company for which my father edited translated journals. Having discovered early on that my linguistic and editorial skills surpassed, if only just barely, my clerical skills, and, I suppose, having promised my father to keep me off the street for a couple of months, rather than letting me go, the boss put me on a variety of projects more interesting than the typing he had originally planned. One of these involved working on a contract to translate for the NY Social Security Administration. Every day we would

get a thick envelope of documents that had been submitted to prove someone's claim. I would open it, log in the documents (actually, I only assume I logged them in, I cannot really remember doing so), make sure that the language identified on the cover sheet was indeed the document's language (checking with my boss, who was one of those multilingual Eastern Europeans, if I was not sure), reserve any I myself wanted to translate, and distribute the rest for next-day translation. For this relatively straightforward task, we did not use our regular translators, who included (I note not without pride) Prince Obolensky, but mainly various people working in our large multistory building (I remember the printing department being a particularly rich source). Now no one has ever called me an obsessive-compulsive, but even I am astonished at how loose this whole system seems in retrospect. As I said, I remember no logging system; nor do I recall being required to note to whom I gave documents and when. Certainly no control was exercised over the process through which our Macedonian man took a document home, discovered it was Bulgarian and got his brother-in-law's friend to translate it. As far as I can tell, no particular attempt was made to test my ability to translate Russian and French documents. I was allowed to do them simply because I said I could—and I was 16 at the time! I can't imagine the process was more rigorous for the others, all of whom were at least adults. Of course, there may have been extensive checking and editing going on that I was simply unaware of (though I doubt it). I am more sure of my memory that the documents we processed were originals (after all, this was before the general availability of copy machines), some of them likely to be of considerable personal and even historical value. I remember certificates with illustrations and gilding and clearly recall an entire Church record book from Poland that someone had had the presence of mind to take with him when he fled his native town. Our translators took these home to work on, me included! I cannot say that no document was lost over the summer I worked there, but certainly I would have remembered if a major fuss had been made because of such an event. No, SSA, at least from my worm's-eye viewpoint, appeared perfectly satisfied with our work.

I do not mean to be critical of anyone here. My boss, and most likely those in charge of Social Security, were well-meaning, competent, conscientious people who were used to a world where people simply had not learned to take elaborate precautions against any possible thing that could go wrong. In spite of what, to us, seem shockingly lax procedures, most likely everything was fine: the translations, even mine, were OK for the purposes of establishing birth dates and other information, and all the original documents were returned intact to their owners without even a drop of coffee on any of those embellished by gilded angels. If there

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is a moral to this story at all, I suppose it is that the flip side of “we’ve come a long way, baby” is that the world used to be a simpler, and certainly easier, place to live in. P.S. To confirm my supposition that the SSA translation process has undoubtedly changed, Associate Editor Nora Favorov, writes, after reading the above, “I have been doing SSA docs lately, and today I did my first *выписка из метрической книги*. I loved your stories of the good ol’ days. I had to be fingerprinted before they’d let me get my hands on other people’s birth certificates!” P.P.S. To my clients and potential clients: my visit to Social Security does not at all mean that I have gone out of the translation business. LRS.

Mike Launer of RussTech Inc. has sent out the following inquiry. “I am hoping that someone on this distribution list has heard or can suggest a concise translation of the term ‘**facilitator**’ into Russian. In case you don’t know... a **facilitator** is a moderator or group leader for ‘table top’ discussions (*мозговой штурм?*). This individual encourages participation by all attendees, seeks all possible points of view, writes down all the ideas that have been stated on large sheets of paper (which get pasted to the walls in the discussion room), keeps the discussion on task, summarizes the results, and distributes discussion notes to all participants.” Although any suggestions elicited by reading this column will probably be too late for Mike’s current purpose, both he and I would be interested in what you can come up with; recall that RussTech is a major employer of Slavic translators. Send suggestions to Lydia.

Have any of you who work from English had the need to find appropriate translations for *nerd*, *geek*, and *dork*? In case you are still working on this or may need to in the future, here is some information on the distinction among them.

“According to [Whatis.com](#), nerds are people of above-average intelligence who place little importance on their appearance. [Nerds](#) are often aware of their status, but they don’t mind. In fact, many take pride in the putdown, as it means they’re smart and not wrapped up in superficial worries. Like nerds, geeks are smart, but they tend to focus more on technology. As [Urban Dictionary](#) explains, these are the people you make fun of in high school and later work for as an adult. Being called a “**dork**” is the biggest insult of the three. There’s no way you can spin this into something positive. After all, even the dictionary writes that dorks are “stupid” people. And to make matters worse, dorks assume they’re cool. Oh, and they [are reputed to] [smell](#), too.” From *Ask Yahoo*, August 25, 2006.

Please send your Slavic equivalents of *nerd*, *geek*, and *dork* to Lydia at the address on the masthead. We will publish all we receive.

A VOICE (Crying that the emperor has no clothes). I am among those who—given the difficulty of getting books of translated poetry published—imagine that translated works that are published, especially by a major or prestigious academic press, are predominantly of very high quality. Thus, I was shocked to the point of doubting my own judgment when such a work translated by an eminent professor and Center director, published by a well-known university press, under an even more eminent editorial board, which was furthermore shortlisted for one literary translation prize and to my certain knowledge nominated for another, turned out to be not only poetically undistinguished in my view (admittedly a matter of opinion) but full of mistranslations. I have before me a book of translated poems by Anzhelina Polonskaya, a very difficult and highly regarded younger Russian poet, as well as the Russian originals of some of the poems. I would like to discuss here the translation of the first stanza from the first and title poem of this collection, if for no other reason than as a check that I am not imagining things.

<p>1. Голос. бьющийся о слепые окна, дрожащий голос, 2. в эти стены, словно и не случайно набиты гвозди; 3. Голос из горла, как будто из неволи голубь, 4. натываясь в тесноте на глухих; на пальцев свисающих гроздь.</p>	<p>1. A voice bouncing off boarded-up windows, a quivering voice 2. within walls, like well-driven nails. 3. A throaty voice, as of a caged dove, 4. groping through deaf darkness into bunches of hanging fingers.</p>
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The first thing that might be noted is that the Russian uses a unique version of slant rhyme in which the last accented syllables (but not subsequent unaccented ones) of alternate lines are identical or virtually so. The translator does not attempt this, nor does he match line lengths (irregular in the original, more so in English). There, thus, would seem to be no reason to exercise the Procrustean bed of poetic license and distort meaning for the sake of retaining form. But distorted meanings are everywhere!

Line 1. My native speaking informant informs me that though *слепые окна* might conceivably be *boarded up windows*, *blank*, or even *dark windows* would be a more normal translation. I would also prefer some word more violent and erratic than *bouncing* for *бьющийся*, not to mention less evocative of *bouncing off the walls*, but these are not actual mistranslations. Line 2. I don’t know why *these* is omitted, especially since the English then implies that the *walls*, not the *voice*, are being likened to nails; *не случайно* is not *well-driven* but *intentionally driven*. Is the author perhaps aiming for sound repetition between walls and well? I suppose so. Is it worth the meaning change? I wouldn’t think so, unless he believes the poet is choosing her words randomly, or this particular word choice is trivial. Line 3. This one really appalls me. The poet is saying that the voice escapes from the throat like a dove from its

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cage, not that the voice is throaty like that of a dove, caged or otherwise. Furthermore, doves emphatically do not have throaty voices. Line 4: This line contains major translation errors even if all others are open to interpretation.

Теснота is *closeness or crowding* not *darkness*, although the Russian words differ by only one letter. I had to ask a Russian native speaker friend for help with this translation of the line, the syntax was so difficult and the image so obscure. His gloss: *Stumbling in the cramped room on the deaf people, on the clusters of hanging down fingers*. I will spare you his evaluative comments.

Other stanzas and other poems contain similar translation errors (*служитель* rendered as *servant* when it is clearly meant to be *priest*, a pet described as *feeding from its mistress' hand* is translated as *pecking it*. English terms

are selected which have distracting or even misleading additional meanings, flower girl for a middle-aged florist, hot flash where menopause is not at issue, etc. Interesting formal features of the original are generally ignored.

Well, what are your thoughts? Is all this just sour grapes on my part because I have not yet succeeded in finding a publisher? Is this translation worth a prize? publication? Would you pass it on a certification test? I am truly interested to know what readers think.

Two of the more prosaic joys of the end of the summer are the gradual disappearance of biting insects and the impending start of school. Jack Prelutsky, as translated by SLD member and my partner in poetic crime, Vladimir Kovner, has dedicated verses to both of these topics.

See you in New Orleans!

Jack Prelutsky

I've got an itch.

I've got an itch, a wretched itch,
No other itch could match it,
It itches in the one spot which
I cannot reach, to scratch it.

Homework! Oh, Homework!

Homework! Oh, homework!
I hate you! You stink!
I wish I could wash you
away in the sink,
if only a bomb
would explode you to bits.
Homework! Oh, homework!
You're giving me fits.

I'd rather take bath
with a man-eating shark,
or wrestle a lion
alone in the dark,
eat spinach and liver,
pet ten porcupines,
than tackle the homework
my teacher assigns.

Homework! Oh, homework!
You're last on my list,
I simply can't see
why you even exist,
if you just disappeared
it would tickle me pink.
Homework! Oh, homework!
I hate you! You stink!

Владимир Ковнер

Ух, как чешется!

Ух, как чешется – не описать!
Я б почесал раз сто или двести,
Я бы чесал всеми пальцами вместе,
Но чешется в том единственном месте,
Что мне никак,
ну, ни-
как,
ну, ни-
как
не достать.

Задание на дом.

Задание на дом!
Тебя ненавижу!
Каждую ночь
В страшных снах тебя вижу.
Сотню задач
Подогнать под ответ!
Лучше бы всех их
Спустить в туалет,
Лучше бы бомбой
Их всех – на куски,
Чем каждый день
Умирать от тоски.

Лучше б я сплавал
С акулой два раза,
Или со львом
Поборолся слегка,
Или бы гладил
Рукой дикобраза,
Или бы в яблоке
Съел червяка,
Лучше б я спал
С крокодилами рядом,
Чем делать задание,
Данное на дом.

Задание на дом!
В ужасе дети.
Зачем ты вообще
Существуешь на свете?
Никто не страдал бы
Нигде, никогда,
Если б исчезло ты навсегда...
Лето кончается,
Школа всё ближе.
Задание на дом!
Тебя ненавижу!

IDIOMS AS A MAJOR SOURCE OF MISTAKES IN TRANSLATION

2006 ATA CONFERENCE PRESENTATION BY ANASTASIA KORALOVA

Reviewed by Lydia Stone

Fifteen years ago when I was working for NASA, I requested permission to attend an ATA conference. Permission was granted (after all, one conference per year was stipulated in the contract), but my boss smirked and asked in mock (or maybe not so mock) amazement, "Translators have conferences!?! What in the world do they find to talk about??" A Ph.D. in biology and a decent enough fellow, he evidently was afflicted with a very limited understanding of the nature of language and thus of translation. Most likely he pictured translators standing around saying things like, "Did you know that the Spanish word for dog is perro, while the French word is chien?" I bring this up here because Anastasia Korolova's ATA conference presentations are precisely the right anecdote to this idea of what there indeed is to talk about. They not only provide interesting and well-documented insights about the nature of language but practical hints for the translator as well.

In her 2006 presentation, Korolova presented a taxonomy of the principal sources of typical mistakes made in translating idioms. Taxonomies interest many of us in themselves, but this one also has a real practical use. Most categories are associated with a danger flag warning translators to be extra vigilant to avoid error.

The first error source occurs in cases where the literal meaning of the idiom is not lexically or grammatically discordant in context. Two examples of this sort of idiom in context sentences are: *John is telling Bob to keep his shirt on*, and *The vacant house was on the block* (i.e., *being offered for sale*). Clearly, a translation of *Джон советует Бобу не снимать рубашку* is a serious translation error. Although there are no explicit warning flags for this type of pitfall, translators might suspect an idiom where the literal translation of a phrase, while not overtly anomalous, seems vacuous, or unmotivated in the broader context of the text.

The second error source occurs in cases where an idiom in the source language translated literally yields an idiom in the target tongue. The problem comes where the two idioms do not have the same meaning in the two languages. An example is *to see eye to eye*, which means to hold the same opinions, while the equivalent *видеться с глазу на глаз* describes a tête-à-tête encounter. Most often context will help the translator see that the two idioms are not, after all, equivalent. But, Korolova warns, not always.

The third category is closely related to the second and occurs where idioms in the two languages are not quite translational equivalents but close enough to falsely suggest that they have the same meanings. A good example here is: *to throw dust in someone's eyes* (to attempt to misdirect or deceive someone), while *пускать пыль в глаза* means to

put on a false front in order to impress.

Another source of translator confusion is the existence of two different idioms in the source language that are very similar in form but have quite discrete meanings. An example of this would be *to make good time* (to travel rapidly, or more rapidly than expected) and *to have a good time* (to enjoy oneself). Since much travel is enjoyable, or meant to be so, there are many contexts where confusion of these two idioms is a danger.

The last three categories of error sources involve idioms in the two languages that have essentially the same meaning but differ in some aspect of the way they are normally used. These divergent aspects are:

1) In the application or scope of meaning. For example, *out of hand* can be applied in English both to unruly children and overwhelming work. In Russian, *отбиться от рук* is fine for home use but, Korolova suggests, another expression, perhaps *прошло так неорганизованно* is more appropriate for the office.

2) In intensity of meaning. The presenter suggests that *to tear one's hair* is appropriate for much milder cases of despair than *рвать на себе волосы*.

3) Finally, there may be a difference in connotation. Russian *спасти свою шкуру* can only be translated as *save one's (own) skin* when the connotations are negative; when they are positive and used to indicate someone else was saved, *выручить* is necessary.

The full version of this excellent presentation may be found in the published *Proceedings for the 46th Annual ATA Conference*.

SlavFile is eager to publish the translator profiles, original line drawings (cartoons), glossaries, reviews (book, dictionary, movie, etc.), insights, opinions, and/or ramblings of our readers. Especially welcome are contributions pertaining to Slavic languages other than Russian. Send contributions or inquiries to Lydia or Nora at the addresses on the masthead.

Partners in Rhyme: Translating Poetry for Fun and the Multi-Cultural Child

ATA 2005 Presentation by Lydia Stone and Vladimir Kovner

Reviewed by Nora Favorov

The last SLD session at the ATA conference in Seattle to be reviewed in *SlavFile* is, naturally, the one presented by editor Lydia Stone and her partner in rhyme, Vladimir Kovner. The two speakers, who had known each other for only a few months and had never met face-to-face before the conference, were bound to find one another eventually. Kovner, a mechanical engineer living in Michigan with a life-long passion for poetry, had been devoting more and more time to his favorite pastime—translating English-language children’s poetry into his native Russian, while among her many projects, Lydia was also spending what time she could on transforming Russian children’s verse into amusing and rhythmic English. In both cases, the appearance of grandchildren seems to have added a certain *актуальность* to the endeavor.

The first thing to say about this session is that it featured a handout which, while perhaps not the most professionally valuable document I have ever been given at an ATA presentation (since I don’t have the privilege of translating children’s poetry for a living), is certainly the most entertaining, readable, and pleasing to the eye. Entitled, *An Alphabestiary: THE ABC’S OF RUSSIAN <> ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF CHILDREN’S POETRY*, the 38 page booklet featured an entry for every letter of the alphabet on matters relevant to the subject alluded to in the title, beginning with Anachronisms and ending with Zakhoder, featuring stops along the way for Compromises (“the translation of poetry is a series of compromises punctuated by mira-

cles”), Culture Specific References, Каламбурь, Stevenson (Robert Louis), Thank God for Contractions, and Whimsy. Virtually every entry is illustrated through examples of their work—Lydia’s translations into English of the likes of Marshak, Chukhovskiy, and her favorite, Zakhoder, and Vladimir’s translations of Dr. Seuss, Robert Louis Stevenson, A.A. Milne, and others.

Both the presentation and the booklet demonstrated how much and how perspicaciously the two poet-translators have thought about the problems encountered when translating children’s poetry. Early in the presentation we were told how Lydia and Vladimir learned about one another. The story is illustrative of the types of problems both were pondering and struggling with.

Tanya Gesse, a translator and interpreter known to many *SlavFile* readers, was aware of Vladimir’s and Lydia’s mutual obsession. When Vladimir shared the following story with her, she forwarded it to Lydia, who, as it turned out, had recently confronted the exact same problem.

The story involves a friend of Vladimir’s who created illustrations to accompany some Mother Goose rhymes and their Russian translations. The problem was that this friend’s “knowledge of English didn’t match his artistic talent.” He had based his illustrations on Marshak’s translation of Mother Goose without understanding the original. None of his images matched the English verses. This

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ORIGINAL ENGLISH	MARSHAK TRANSLATION	KOVNER TRANSLATION
<p><i>I saw a fishpond all on the fire, I saw a house bow to a squire, I saw a parson twelve feet high, I saw a cottage near the sky, I saw a balloon made of lead, I saw a coffin drop down dead, I saw two sparrows run a race, I saw two horses making lace, I saw a girl just like a cat, I saw a kitten wear a hat, I saw a man, who saw it too, And said, though strange, they all were true.</i></p>	<p><i>Я видел озеро в огне, Собаку в брюках на коне, На доме шляпу вместо крыши, Котов, которых ловят мыши. Я видел утку и лису, Что пироги пекла в лесу, Как медвежонок туфли мерил, И как дурак всему поверил.</i></p>	<p><i>Вчера я видел пруд в огне, И дом, стоящий в стороне, Как вдруг – на что это похоже? Дом начал кланяться прохожим. Ещё увидел я потом, Хотя и верится с трудом, Как парень, ростом метров десять, На небо дом сумел повесить. Вокруг него росла трава, Плели лошадки кружева, И воробьи, надев коньки, Бежали наперегонки. В том доме (видно сквозь окошко) Девчонка прыгала, как кошка, И кошка на окне весь день Сидела в шляпе набекрень. Ещё я видел старика, Кто подтвердит наверняка: Во всём, что рассказал Вам я, Ну нет ни капельки вранья.</i></p>

problem inspired Vladimir to take a stab at translating the rhyme and, as you can see from the table above, he was very successful.

Lydia herself had encountered this problem translating Russian children’s poetry for a website that featured illustrations. She was thrilled to learn of someone else aware of this problem. Were it not for the problem of illustrations, there would be very little reason not to be quite free in selecting equivalent images to those from the original. As stated in the handout and reiterated during the presentation, the most important criterion of a good children’s poetry translation is “that the translation produce an ‘aesthetic’ or emotional effect on the reader analogous to that of the original.” Or as Lydia put it during the presentation, “If your grandkids don’t laugh at what makes the little Russian children laugh, you haven’t done your job.”

There are many other criteria, but they are secondary, and the translator tries to accommodate as many of them as possible. For example, as explained in the K for Каламбур section, it is obviously ideal to translate a rhyme that involves a pun using the same pun in English. This, however, is very rarely possible. In such cases, an equivalent pun is acceptable. So long as there is no illustration that works with one and not the other, the original and translation will both work equally well for their respective target audiences. Here is a marvelous example of a pun (translated by Lydia) that works just as well in English as in Russian.

<p>Гадюка Как это принято у змей, Кусают за ногу ГАДЮКИ. А потому При встрече с ней, Берите, дети, ноги в руки! Заходер</p>	<p>The Asp The asp, as snakes are apt to do, Will bite your foot right through your shoe. If near an asp you chance to stand, You'd better take your feet in hand!</p>
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Under the letter P we find an entry entitled Publication, and as the presenters confessed, this is their “hidden agenda.” Both before and since they met, the two have compiled a vast collection of their translations of children’s poetry. They are currently looking for a publisher interested in putting out a joint edition of their R-E and E-R translations of children’s poetry. Their project has a target audience: “Our book will be targeted at immigrant бабушки и дедушки; тети и дяди and even мамы и папы, who have children unable or reluctant to read poetry in Russian. We hope our work will give the older Russian-speaking generation the opportunity to read to their small relatives the classics they so loved reading themselves or to their children, as well as allowing them to read Russian versions of English children’s classics.”

So far, they have not met with success, although their work appears regularly in a New York immigrant magazine called, appropriately enough, *Подумели*. Certainly *SlavFile* readers know many members of our partners in rhyme’s target audience and can agree with me as to the shortsightedness of any publisher who would not back an edition of a few thousand copies. Let us hope one of these soon sees the light and puts a talented and clever illustrator to work creating illustrations to accommodate both the original poems and their translations.

In the meantime, if you are interested in being emailed a copy of the handout, please contact Lydia at the address on the *SlavFile* masthead.

SEEKING SLOTR (Slavic Languages Other than Russian) EDITORS:

We are seeking editors for 1) the Western Slavic languages other than Polish, 2) Bulgarian and Macedonian, 3) Bosnian, Serbian, Croatian, and 4) Belarusian. This is not a major commitment—all we ask is two columns a year, either or both of which may be reprinted or written by someone else. Non-Slavic languages of the former Soviet Union have historically been underrepresented in the *SlavFile*; we would be thrilled to remedy this and ask anyone interested in coordinating such contributions to contact Lydia or Nora. An editorship is yours for the asking.

NUTS AND BOLTS or Confessions of a Lazy Translator

by Jennifer Guernsey

Way back in the Fall 2005 issue of *SlavFile*, I described a free newsletter, *Tool Kit*, put out by Jost Zetsche, a fellow ATA member and translator who has developed a second specialty of helping translators get the most out of their computers. (Conference-goers, take note: Jost is an engaging and informative speaker, and will be presenting a session in the Translation and Computers category at the upcoming conference in New Orleans.) At the time, I mentioned that he has also published *A Translator's Tool Box for the 21st Century—A Computer Primer for Translators* (or *Tool Box* for short), and I promised to review it for you. Here, at last, is that review.

I initially assumed that the *Tool Box* would resemble a large, hopefully somewhat organized version of the *Tool Kit*

newsletter—in other words, a loose collection of a zillion small tips and tricks—and I expected to be overwhelmed by it. I was generally pleased to discover that I was wrong. The *Tool Box* really was, as its title implies, a primer on computers written for the moderately computer-literate translator, and was far more coherent than I had expected. Only rarely did *Tool Box* confuse and confound me, such as when it suggested using an FTP client to transmit large files, but didn't explain how this works or how to do it (though it does provide a source for further information).

The book, which is provided as both a PDF and an HtmlHelp file (the latter works in Windows only), provides information in the following major sections:

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The screenshot shows a Windows-style window titled "Tool Box Help". On the left is a search and index panel with a search bar and a list of topics. The main area displays the title page of the book "The Translator's Tool Box: A Computer Primer for Translators" by Jost Zetsche. Below the title is a colorful illustration of a wrench and a screwdriver. The version information "Version 4.1, April 2006" and copyright notice are also visible. The Windows taskbar at the bottom shows the Start button and several open applications including Adobe InDesign, a folder named "Fal_announce...", an "Inbox - Micros...", and Adobe Acrobat.

- **Operating Systems:** Focuses on Windows, since it is the platform most commonly used among translators and the best-supported by translation-related tools. Includes a description of the advantages of Windows 2000 and XP over previous Windows versions; a variety of shortcuts and programs available to enhance Windows Explorer; ways to improve computer efficiency, ranging from controlling automatic startup of files to defragmenting the hard disk; and general information on Windows maintenance and repair (safe mode, restore points, system backups, Windows updates).
- **Web Browsers:** The different Internet browsers available, a few Google browsing tips, and ways to transfer files to another user.
- **Text/HTML Editors:** What text editors are, what types are available, and how and why to use them; how to work with HTML editors as a translator; web spiders (for downloading complete websites and related tools).
- **Utilities:** Graphics management; file renaming; file search; CD emulators (primarily useful for working with multiple CD-based dictionaries simultaneously); utilities for file compression (zipping), measurement conversion, word counts, keyboard layout customization, time tracking, clipboard management, collaboration with colleagues, and merging files; PDF readers.
- **Office Suites:** What's available, when to upgrade (including considerable detail on differences between the various versions of Microsoft Office programs), general tips for MS Office programs.
- **Desktop Publishing Programs:** General description of the various programs available, and a few useful additional utilities.
- **Graphic Applications:** What's available (and why not to bother getting fancy stuff), taking screenshots, ways for users of computer-assisted translation (e.g., Trados, WordFast, Déjà Vu) to work with PhotoShop or Illustrator files.
- **CAT (Computer-Assisted Translation) Tools:** Translation memory programs—who needs them, what types are available, comparison of the major players. Terminology management tools—what and why they are, description of the different types. Software localization tools—what they are, when to use them, the different types. Management tools (e.g., invoicing and office manager-type programs).
- **Quick Reference for Translating Complex File Formats:** How to translate files in DTP, graphic, tagged, software development, help system, and database formats using various CAT tools.
- **Voice recognition:** Minimal information citing the location of relevant articles.
- **Support:** Where to find help for various utilities, Microsoft, Adobe, and CAT tools.

One of the best things about *Tool Box* is that it was written by a translator for translators. Everything is evaluated from a translator's perspective, and the descriptions of various utilities incorporate clear assessments of whether and how they could be useful to a translator. For instance, CD emulators can be used to simultaneously view multiple CD-based dictionaries; fancy graphics programs are simply not necessary to the ordinary translator.

However, all translators are not alike, and there is a fair amount of information in *Tool Box* that, while undoubtedly useful to a subset of translators, is not useful to me personally—for instance, information on software localization, translating files in HTML and other complex file formats, and measurement conversion utilities. I simply have never dealt with any software or website localization projects (I don't think there's a huge market for that in the Russian>English direction), nor have I had any clients who have asked me to localize units of measure rather than simply translate them. In addition, some of *Tool Box's* tips and tricks might save a tiny bit of time, but apply to tasks that I never felt took much time in the first place—opening or copying a file, for instance.

Despite these limitations, there is much truly useful content in the *Tool Box*—for instance, I have already adopted a very handy shortcut to Windows Explorer, and I found the information on word count software to be quite helpful as I have been considering purchasing such a program. The section on utilities was rich in descriptions of handy little programs—some free, most cheap—that can handle all sorts of tiresome tasks.

Tool Box would be of greatest benefit to translators who are either fairly new to the translation business or who are considering expanding or upgrading their computer capabilities. It provides a very good overview of major topics, including succinct and objective descriptions of the different programs and products available. Thus, if you are considering upgrading your operating system or a software program; purchasing software (particularly CAT tools, desktop publishing suites, graphics programs, or translation office management software); or expanding your capabilities into heretofore unfamiliar areas, I highly recommend *Tool Box* as the place to start educating yourself on what is available, right for you, and worth the price.

I give the overall formatting of the *Tool Box* a grade of B. It is clearly laid out, well-organized, and easy to follow. In the PDF, the font size is perfect for reading an entire page at a time on-screen in Acrobat Reader (handy, since the notion of expending 264 pages' worth of paper and printer ink was daunting). However, the screen shots are a bit too small—while they look fine when printed out, they do not correspond well to the font size, and must often be enlarged from full-page view in Acrobat in order to be seen clearly.

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The screen shots are perfectly legible, however, when viewed in the HtmlHelp file.

Throughout the text are paragraphs set off by a tool icon, but I was never really able to determine how these paragraphs differed from the main body of the text and why they were set off. Sometimes they were essentially parenthetical comments, sometimes they described specific techniques for performing an action, and at no point was their significance explained.

The *Tool Box* PDF provides two types of indices: the first is a “how-to” index listing specific actions a user may wish to take; the second is a standard alphabetical index, which I found far more useful. The HtmlHelp file dispenses with the “how-to” index but, like many help files, has tabs for contents, alphabetical index, and search on the left side of the window. The searchable index and better screenshot readability make the HtmlHelp file considerably more user-friendly than the PDF. If you already own a previous PDF-only version of the *Tool Box*, it will be worth your while (and your \$15) to upgrade just for the improved format, let alone the updated and expanded content.

Tool Box is available from www.internationalwriters.com as a downloadable password-protected PDF file and an accompanying HtmlHelp system for \$40 (or shipped on CD for an additional \$10). The price includes a year-long premium subscription to the *Tool Kit* newsletter, meaning that you will receive the freebie newsletter plus special “premium content” articles that are normally reserved for paying newsletter subscribers (at \$15 per annum). You can view a detailed table of contents of the latest edition of *Tool Box* online.

* * *

DICTIONARIES ON CD: YOUR OPINION WANTED!

A recent letter from the ATA President, Marian Greenfield, to the membership described ATA’s progress in its planned conversion to computer-based certification exams and mentioned that exam-takers will likely be able to use dictionaries on CD-ROM. This plus my desire to be more mobile and less Internet-dependent as I translate have gotten me thinking about purchasing some dictionaries on CD. So I want to know: What dictionaries do you have on CD? Are they accurate? Are they useful? Are they user-friendly? Are they worth the price you paid? Are you happy with them? Please drop me a quick email at jenguernsey@att.net to describe your experiences, and I’ll share them in my next column.

FREE SOUTH SLAVIC BOOKS: Who can resist a freebie? We have review copies of two impressive-looking South Slavic language books to be given to anyone who promises to review them for the *SlavFile*. The first is *Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian: A Textbook with Exercises and Basic Grammar* by Ronelle Alexander and Ellen Elias-Bursać; it comes with a DVD film entitled, surprisingly, *Penguin Charlie*. The second book is *Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian: A Grammar with Sociolinguistic Commentary* by Ronelle Alexander. Both are published by the University of Wisconsin Press and dated 2006. The list price of each is \$39.99. These copies will be sent out on a first-come, first-served basis to volunteer reviewers, and we would prefer to give the two volumes to different people. However, first-come or not, we will happily provide both of them to anyone volunteering to be our Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian editor for a period of at least a year. Just think: the reviews will provide you with the core material for at least two columns. Contact Lydia or Nora at the addresses on the masthead.

A MODEST PROPOSAL CONCERNING RUSSIAN

Cathie Petersons

Editors' note: One of the many joys of editing SlavFile is being the first one to see what comes over our electronic transom from all over the world—frequently an interesting or, even better, entertaining, outpouring inspired by some aspect of the writer's love-hate relationship with Slavic, translation, or language in general. The "letter" that follows belongs to this class of contributions. We who remember our own struggles with Russian 101 all too clearly find it very funny. Native speakers of Russian, or any other language subjected to daily assaults by jack-booted English imperialism, may or may not find it as amusing. We hope you will acknowledge that the величие, могущество, правдивость and свобода of the Russian language may at times be overshadowed for the disgruntled learner by the fact that it is also diabolistically сло́жный. English, of course, is also no picnic to learn. We encourage our non-native English speaking readers to take revenge—not on us, but on the equally сло́жный and, to my mind, much less elegant English language in these pages. We await your contributions. LRS

Board of Directors
Russian Academy
Russian Academy St
Moscow

Dear Sirs,

Re: Wholesale Replacement of the Russian Language

Obviously, I am writing in English to the upholders of the Russian language, and it is this issue that goes to the heart of my subject matter today. I am suggesting that, once again, the Russian people embrace revolution, only this time for constructive and positive ends.

In short (conciseness being a major feature of my mother tongue), I would like to propose to you that the Russian language in its entirety be scrapped, and that English be introduced as the national language of the Russian Federation.

My proposal is based not so much on what's good about English as on what's wrong with Russian. Russian has an impoverished vocabulary. With an estimated word count of 100,000 words, it lags far behind the half-million words ascribed to English. Given that many Russian words involve taking a much-loved root and slapping a prefix onto it, or simply tweaking a single vowel in the middle, I'm sure that the actual number of Russian words is significantly lower. By trading up to English, you will thus immediately gain 400,000 new words, and free your speakers from the shackles of an inadequate and highly redundant vocabu-

lary. Ascending up, and crossing across will be relegated to the past, and new and improved words will be brought in. The process has already begun. Russian has *gangsters* and *killers*, you have *managers* to do *business* and *marketing*. Why fight this development when you can be in the vanguard of its expansion?

Then there's the alphabet. The Romans developed a system of writing that was good enough for pretty much everyone else in the Western world, but Russia sensibly opted for an alphabet devised by a saint no one ever heard of, which requires seven more letters, features "signs" telling you whether the preceding sound is hard or soft, contains words spelled with *o* that are more often pronounced as *a* and *g* that are pronounced as *v*, and has a special letter for the sound *ch*, often pronounced as *sh*. Nonetheless, misguided native speakers like to tell you that their alphabet is very phonetic. It's also very simple to master, once you realize that the printed and handwritten forms bear no relation to each other whatsoever, and have letters that quite often swap form on the path between. Take *D* for instance, which ends up in cursive looking remarkably like the Roman *g*. In fact, there are so many letters that look identical to the Roman alphabet, but have been associated with a completely different sound, that the hapless learner is forced to conclude that this is all a red herring to throw non-Slavs off the scent (or that St. Cyril lifted copious amounts of the Roman alphabet for his own system, but then forgot the sounds attached to them). An incidental advantage of making the shift to the Roman alphabet is that your people will actually be able to read all the glossy advertising billboards on display, along with Western print media, and may finally be able to wean themselves off Versace.

The alphabet may be the least problematic element of the Russian language, however. It's the grammar that causes the most problems, given that it appears to have been devised by a group of psychiatric patients during a drinking contest. In what other language do you have 37,284,976,956 different forms of the verb *to go*, necessitating a distinction between walking, driving, setting off, setting off and actually arriving, visiting a person or a place, going one-way or round-trip, arriving at the door, arriving at the door and actually going in, leaving, venturing onto the street, walking through the forest, standing on the doorstep and being greeted by a babushka with a shot of vodka and a plate of warm piroshki, not even getting to the doorstep before being chased away by a man in a bearskin hat brandishing a Kalashnikov (*medvedshapkakalashnikovpohodit*)? The list is endless. And I mean really endless. I suspect there's leeway for creativity in there, because every time I think I've got most of them pinned down, my husband invents a new one. Think of the joy of being able to

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replace this grammatical mayhem, and all its social implications, with the simple verb *to go*.

Moving on to another Russian trouble spot – numbers. The Russian numerical system is the linguistic equivalent of a train crash. Not only are the numerals themselves badly devised, making it difficult to distinguish between twelve and twenty, for instance, but whoever decided it would be a good idea to have all the numbers decline through six cases was either a sadist or just a guy in sore need of a hobby. Many numbers don't draw the line at changes to their endings, but decide to mutate in their middle as well, like dangerous viral strains. Oh yes, and then there are the special forms for groups of people and friendly ducks, the floors of buildings, and the number of pears Yevdokiya Vikentievna buys at the market on Tuesday mornings (strontium levels and season permitting). The number horror doesn't stop there. If you buy one of anything, it takes the nominative singular. Buy two to four of something, and it takes the genitive singular. That's right, the singular. Don't worry, that's rectified for numbers from five to twenty, all of which take the genitive plural. This system (well, what we'll laughingly refer to as a system, anyway) brings to mind an indecisive shopper. Should I use the nominative or the genitive singular with numbers, or perhaps the genitive plural? Oh bugger it, wrap them all up for me. Compare and contrast with the English counting method. One apple, two apples, five apples, 3,478,935,798 apples. .

I could go on and on explaining why Russian should be phased out like an aging nuclear reactor. Aspect. Six cases. Three genders. Inordinately long words. "Davaetye poznamkimcy" may mean the speaker wants to get to know

you, but it sounds like the Russian equivalent of "Get thee behind me, Satan!" No form of *to be* in the present tense. Russian is a language that appears to be entirely gargled from the throat. This may be practical in the cold weather, but it does mean that the speakers, for reasons of pronunciation necessity, always look mildly to deeply pissed off. Think of the broader implications—along with your visa processing system, this may be having a negative effect on tourism in your country. In fact, it is entirely possible that Russian speakers are in fact pissed off. I know I am when faced with all of the grammatical wreckage detailed above. And I only spend about an hour a week on it.

Many people would claim that a project to bring a language to extinction within generations is impossible. However, experience in the Soviet Union shows us that the opposite is true. The venerable directors of the Russian Academy, I am sure, played an active role in making Russian dominant in several former Soviet Republics, at the expense of the local language. Now is the time to adapt this project, and use your powers for good.

Should you have any questions on the above, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,
Catherine Petersons

Cathie Petersons is a freelance interpreter and translator based in Germany. A native speaker of English, her working languages are German, French and Dutch. Married to a Russian, her efforts to learn the language have thus far been spectacularly unsuccessful. She can be contacted at: cathie_petersons@hotmail.com

SLD BANQUET 2006

Sign up today!

New Orleans is famous for its unique cuisine, so you won't be seeing our usual *zakuski* this year. Bubba Gump's Shrimp Company gets rave reviews from all corners. Not only that, this year's banquet venue is less expensive and more convenient than those of recent years. The service and food are both reputed to be great. Please reserve your spot soon by sending a check to Elena Bogdanovich at the address below. Sending in your check by October 15th will guarantee you a spot at the table.

BANQUET DETAILS:

WHEN:

Friday, November 3, 7 o'clock
ATA Annual Conference

WHERE:

Bubba Gump's Shrimp Company
429 Decatur St., New Orleans
(just a few blocks from the conference hotel)

WHAT:

A fabulous four-course meal, with choice of shrimp, fish, steak, or vegetarian entrée.

COST:

\$32 per person (this includes everything but alcoholic beverages)

BRING:

Your appetite;

Two rhyming words in English, Russian or Ukrainian (for SLD Burime master Vadim Khazin).

HOW:

To make your reservation, please send a check or money order for \$32 (made out to Elena) and the names and contact information for those attending to:

**Elena Bogdanovich, 29 Oregon Yacht Club,
Portland, OR 97202.**

Questions? Contact Elena or Nora at the addresses on the *SlavFile* masthead.