

SlavFile

Autumn 1995

Vol. 5, No. 3

RUSSIAN LANGUAGE DIVISION
AMERICAN TRANSLATORS ASSOCIATION

FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR

by Susana Greiss

In the last few months we had several inquiries from clients regarding some good free-lance jobs, mostly for interpreters, and we hope that quite a few members received these jobs. We need to be able to identify quickly who are experienced simultaneous interpreters and/or conference interpreters, because when the inquiries come, they need the information right away. We also need to know who can interpret Ukrainian, Georgian, and other languages of limited diffusion. Our data base is now reaching its last stages and it should be very helpful.

Some recent inquiries were: 1) a Hebrew-German translator; 2) Dr. Tom Peters, a genealogist, requested names of translators specializing in genealogy; 3) translators into Georgian; 4) The Language Solution called for a Russian translator, living in Florida, specializing in Engineering/Metallurgy for a large project, who must be a U.S. citizen. I referred them to a local member of RLD for names. However, it may still be worth calling them at (800)391-3710; ask for Derya. 5) The Corporate Word (our very own member Kathy Stackhouse) requested our membership list for a mailing regarding a large long term contract to work with NASA; I believe everyone has heard from them by now. 6) A translation bureau in California asked for several Russian and Ukrainian translators, interpreters and escort interpreters to work at a conference in Las Vegas and California; many members were referred. 7) Global Publications, who needed Russian interpreters in California and near Washington, D.C.

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On another subject, we are very disappointed with the responses we are receiving from some of our members — actually, we mean non-responses. About half of our membership failed to fill out the entry for the directory, even though we are offering it free of charge for the first time. A large number of new members also failed to return questionnaires, so that we have no information on them, except for the labels ATA gives us for our mailings. Members who move or change telephone numbers fail to notify us. Sometimes it takes 2 or 3 long-distance calls to reach a member.

Please bear in mind that if you joined the Division in the process of joining ATA, it does not mean we know that you joined, or that we have any information about you; all we get from ATA is a set of labels four times a year when we are ready to mail the

Slav File. We spend hours comparing our membership list with ATA's list, and find many errors. Then, when we have identified the new members, we send them a questionnaire, a directory entry blank and a copy of our bylaws. Half of the time we never receive anything back. So we have to wait a whole year for the ATA membership directory to come out in order to compare our records, and we find lots of discrepancies. Also, by that time, you may have moved or not renewed, and we don't know about it. This is why sometimes your mail is sent to the wrong address! If you would only return the questionnaire to your Administrator, we would have current information. All we ask is for you to take a minute to make our task easier. Remember that we are all volunteers, and the time we spend on keeping track of our members could be used on other projects for your benefit. Also please don't forget to include all information; we get questionnaires with telephone numbers but no area code, address but no city name or state, and even some with no name, so we have to get the name from the envelope!

o o o

On the lighter side, a good illustration of how much the public needs to be educated with respect to foreign languages in general, and Russian in particular, is a true story somebody told me had happened a few days earlier. A client called a translation bureau about a document they needed to go into Russian; however, they wanted to know whether the bureau had a keyboard with acrylic characters! I am still laughing five days later.

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Compuserve 72644,1133

SlavFile is published four times yearly.

Letters to the Editor,

short articles of interest, and information for the calendar are invited.

Submissions become the property of **SlavFile** and are subject to editing.

Opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Editor or of the Division.

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Membership

\$15 addition to ATA membership fee and designation of Russian Division membership on application or renewal form provides full membership.

Write to ATA, 1800 Diagonal Rd., Ste. 220, Alexandria, VA 22314.

Affiliate membership \$15 per year provides a subscription to the newsletter and participation in regional and national activities.

Write to Susana Greiss at above address.

Advertising rates

Classified ad: \$5 per issue for up to 5 lines.

Display ad: \$25 per issue for up to

¼ page. Send artwork to editor and payment to Susana Greiss.



THE VIEW FROM NEW YORK

by Susana Greiss
Administrator

We had a lovely meeting at Henry McQuiston's on July 9 and, as usual, a nice crowd showed up. Henry had a fairly short glossary he had compiled recently on his job, which was passed around for comments. It is truly amazing how many opinions there can be on the translation of a few fairly simple phrases! The discussion was lively and everyone was scribbling furiously.

On August 19 we will have had our Massachusetts meeting at the University of Massachusetts at Lowell. I am looking forward to this experiment in bringing our division closer to our members. The agenda will be on the light side, considering it is a hot summer, and will consist mostly of a general discussion of our activities and sounding out members regarding what they would like us to be doing, answer questions about the tools of the trade, and so on. We will also bring some materials to distribute, and David Tornquist promised to bring Henry's glossary, complete with alternatives, for some more feedback.

We would like to congratulate the following members who have passed the accreditation exam since the beginning of the year:

English/Russian

Olga Belozerova

Leonid Burstein

Maria Khristoforova

Peter Nemirovsky

Katya Nemtchinova

Svetlana Romanov

Marina Tarlinskaya

Russian/English

Mark Eckert

John Falconer

Leonid Fridman

Tanya Gesse

April Gifford

Michael Launer

Roy Nakatsuka

Joseph Shapiro

Alexander Svirsky

James Vail

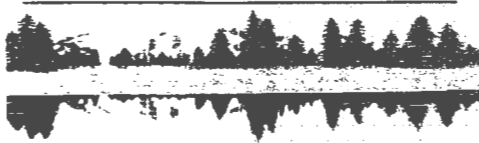
Dennis Wester

Not content with his accomplishments, **John Falconer** has also earned Japanese/English accreditation as well! I always remember John fondly because we took the same intensive course/cruise on the Volga four years ago. I never saw such a dedicated person!

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

by Christina Sever

I have been editor of the *Slav File* for one year now, and I must announce that I wish to pass the honor on to another brave Russian translator. Take note, it is a good time to take the job. There is a very industrious group of helpers which make this task unusual in the realm of volunteer opportunities. It is not overwhelming. The layout and desktop publishing are being beautifully and efficiently handled by Galina Raff in Florida, while the printing, collating, folding, and mailing is handled by the Russian Interest Group of NOTIS in Seattle. You can't ask for a better deal. You only need receive, compile, edit, and endure a few slings and arrows from disgruntled members' faxes and E-mails. If you are interested in this opportunity, please contact Ann Macfarlane or myself ASAP by phone, fax, or E-mail.



THE VIEW FROM SEATTLE

by Ann G. Macfarlane
Assistant Administrator

Seattleites enjoyed a convivial lunch at Ivar's Salmon House in late June. Two dozen members and friends of the Russian Language Division gathered to discuss the hot topics of the day, catch up with old friends, and network with new acquaintances. We had a beautiful view of Union Bay (as promised!) and decided to repeat the event in the fall.

Bill Derbyshire's piece (page 10) will give the update on the Slavic Department crisis at the University of Washington.

We are still in a "holding pattern" with the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services. They are going forward with their plan to "broker" language services, but have delayed issuance of the Request for Proposal in order to incorporate input from professionals and service providers. It does appear that this government agency may be recognizing the need to work together with colleagues in the relevant professions. The "Informal Coalition for Interpreting Services," which we have established to try to influence government policy, gave suggestions to a draft "Code of Professional Conduct" for interpreters, all of which were adopted. *Translation News*, a periodical published in New York, ran a long piece on the Washington State crisis in its June issue. I have copies if anyone is interested.

Finally, wearing my "business hat" I had the opportunity to participate in an exciting event in early June. The Foundation for Russian-American Economic Cooperation (FRAEC) coordinated an event entitled the "Pacific Partnership Conference." This was a gathering of businesspeople and government

officials from the states of the West Coast of the U.S. and the Russian Far East. We had working sessions for three days in order to provide input to the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Gore Chernomyrdin Commission.

My company was asked to coordinate the consecutive interpretation. Seven teams of two interpreters, paired to include one native English and one native Russian speaker each, facilitated discussions in the fields of agriculture/fisheries, energy, forestry, mining, telecommunications, trade and transportation infrastructure. It was a demanding assignment, but the interpreters did so well that they received a standing ovation at the final reception.

This was the first time that the FRAEC had used professional interpreters, rather than volunteers, on such a large scale. I believe that it marks a new plateau in recognition of the importance of using trained and qualified people for events of this type, and I hope that it will lead to many more assignments for our colleagues in the future.

Fall activities in Seattle include:

Saturday, September 30: NOTIS Annual Meeting

1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Program:

Report on Year's Activities

Proverbs Workshop

Reception

RSVP by September 26 to NOTIS Voicemail, 206-382-5642 so we can plan refreshments

Friday, October 27, 1995, 12 noon:

Lunch at Ivar's Salmon House
Everyone welcome -no need to RSVP.

Tuesday, November 21

6:30 to 9:00 p.m:

Russian Business and Computer Terminology Workshops

Shoreline Center

Письма

Dear Mrs. Greiss:

I have just received the May issue of the Slav File, which has prompted this letter.

You may recall that I wrote you several years ago, bemoaning the dwindling supply of R-E work. I have since "switched" to Hebrew-English, but the jobs are small and far between.

If you have a minute, please drop me a line as to how you see the current situation, i.e., is there any chance that things will change, or are we stuck with the current state of affairs from now till the (foreseeable) infinity.

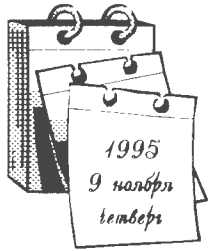
Dov Lederman

Members and Affiliates:

We are searching for someone who has already researched the various glossary-type database systems which can accommodate both Russian (and other Cyrillic languages) and English to summarize and rate them and write an article for the Slav File. The most important skill for this person to have, beyond the obvious knowledge of these databases, would be the rare ability to communicate clearly and simply about them to translators. Many of us have enough computer literacy to operate a word processor and not much more, but we need to learn about and choose a database for use in preparing glossaries for large projects. If there is not one person out there with this knowledge and the willingness to take on the project, perhaps it could be the subject of an East or West Coast subdivision workshop. Or there could be a series of mini-reviews printed in the Slav File, each submitted by their users and proponents.

Mike Conner

Austin, Texas



CORRECTED LISTING OF ATA RUSSIAN LANGUAGE DIVISION ACTIVITIES AT THE ATA CONFERENCE IN NASHVILLE, AND OTHER SESSIONS OF SPECIFIC INTEREST TO TRANSLATORS AND INTERPRETERS IN RUSSIAN AND SLAVIC LANGUAGES

THURSDAY, November 9

Russian Language Division Annual Meeting

R-1 (3:30 p.m.)

Susana Greiss, Administrator, ATA Russian Language Division, and freelance translator, New York City

This year's agenda includes a review of the past year's work, the financial report, and the election of division officers. Members will vote on the motion, made at the last Conference, to change the Division's name to "Slavic Language Division."

A Slavic People in Germany VA-2 (3:30 p.m.)

Karl Kummer, manager, Department of Translations, Christian Science Publishing Society, Boston.

A discussion of the history, culture and language of the Sorbs of the Lausitz region of eastern Germany.

FRIDAY, November 10

Russian Business Terminology Workshop

R-2 (10:15 a.m.)

Ann Macfarlane, Assistant Administrator, ATA Russian Language Division, and agency owner, Seattle; and *Robert Taylor*, freelance translator, Fontana, Wisconsin.

This will be a hands-on, collaborative working session in which translators will work in groups to translate short, business-related Russian and English passages. Although technical financial vocabulary matters will be discussed, emphasis will be on general financial terminology and newly-coined financial terms. Thus, this session is appropriate for Russian translators of all backgrounds. Glossaries will be provided for both translations. Groups will be encouraged to draw on the overall experience of native Russian and English speakers in the group when completing both translations.

Russian General Session R-3(1:45 p.m.)

This time slot has been reserved for late-breaking activities of the Russian Language Division.

Interpreting and Social Dialects in a Medical Setting I-4(1:45 p.m.)

Natasha Geilman, Associate Member, Hennepin County Medical Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota, and RLDivision member.

A discussion of the role of the interpreter as the one who is responsible, in a medical setting, for the choice of social dialect in the target language.

FRIDAY, November 10

Translating a Killer L-3 (3:30 p.m.)

Laura Wolfson, freelance literary translator and conference interpreter of Russian, Philadelphia, and RLDivision member.

A discussion of Wolfson's translation of the novella "Killer for Export" by Russian emigre Edward Topol, including its bilingualisms and underworld slang.

The Hump-Backed Horse and I

Lydia Razran Stone, freelance translator, Alexandria, Virginia, and RLDivision member.

A reading and discussion of Stone's rendition of a 19th century Russian folk tale into humorous verse.

Third Annual Russian Language Division Dinner

Friday, 8:00 p.m.

Contact Ann Macfarlane, assistant administrator, by noon on Friday to reserve a place at this popular all-Division event.

SATURDAY, November 11

English/Russian Glossary Compilation Technology using dBASE DBMS R-4 (8:30 a.m.)

Igor Vesler, freelance translator, New York City.

Demonstration and discussion of major steps in creating and maintaining an English-Russian project glossary, including source text analysis, terminology selection, dBASE database creation and use. (Number of participants will be limited.)

Ukrainian Translation Workshop R-5 (10:15 a.m.)

Igor Vesler, freelance translator, New York City, and *Ann Macfarlane*, Assistant Administrator, ATA Russian Language Division, and agency owner, Seattle.

Ukrainian translation is increasing in frequency and importance in this country today, yet few translators in the U.S. are equipped to deal with the issues it presents. This will be an informal, hands-on workshop to explore an interesting English language contract, discuss terminological alternatives, and examine the ways in which the Ukrainian of today reflects American realities. Everyone with an interest in Ukrainian is welcome.

FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR

(continued from page 1)

In this issue we are publishing letters we have received from several members giving their views pro and con changing our name from Russian Language Division to Slavic Languages Division (or even to get another name). I will ask you to think about this issue very carefully and consider all the angles, since this question will be on the ballot at the forthcoming ATA Conference. As you know, you do not need to be at the Conference to vote, but you need to be an Active member of ATA. Your status as active, associate, corporate or institutional member or affiliate will be explained when ballots are distributed. If you do not have the right to vote, you will not receive a ballot. If you receive a ballot in error, please let us know immediately. If you do not plan to go to Nashville, you can mail in your vote, or give a proxy to another member who is coming to the Conference, so that he or she can vote for you or deliver your vote. All the rules will be explained to you in detail in a separate mailing.

After reading all the arguments pro and con the change in our Division name, I still find that some angles have not been fully explored. It is, of course, up to you to decide which way we should go, but I feel that some issues have not been addressed. For instance: the word Slavic, which was suggested by several people in a desire to encompass a broader range of languages under one roof, also automatically excludes perhaps as many languages as it includes. For instance, it is generally assumed that the people of the various republics of the former Soviet Union know Russian; however, if they are from Latvia, they can also translate Latvian; if they are from Georgia, they can translate Georgian, but their common denominator is Russian. If we change our name to Slavic, will people then assume that Georgians and Latvians are also part of our divi-

sion? In this case, isn't Slavic more exclusive than inclusive? Also, will Latvians and Georgians (as well as Uzbek, and all the other nationalities of Eastern Europe and Central Asia feel welcome? After all, the word Slavic can be considered more limiting than Russian, because Russian has been historically associated with all the former republics of the Soviet Union, and with other countries of the former Soviet Bloc.

On the other hand, Slavic may extend to countries that do not wish to be associated with Russia, such as Poland, for instance. If Polish translators—of whom there are many, and who make a good living at translation—decided to have their own division, wouldn't the existence of a Slavic Division stand in their way?

No matter how we look at it, very few languages of the former Soviet bloc are in sufficient demand for a translator to make a living working exclusively with that language; therefore, it follows that he or she would almost have to be able to work in Russian in order to survive in our profession. Therefore, they would end up being Russian translators as well, regardless of what other languages they work with.

If we look for a parallel, does the ATA have an Oriental Languages Division, or a Romance Languages Division? No. And why not? Because such a broad classification would become meaningless, and because Italian translators have problems that are much different from the problems of Portuguese translators, or Spanish translators.

In addition, let us not forget that knowledge of Russian is not a requirement to be a member of the Russian Division, just as it is not a requirement to be a translator in order to join the ATA. Our Division, as it stands, does not exclude anyone from joining. This is one of the points to include in a cover letter when our Directory comes out and in our proposed brochure:

we would like to provide a home for translators of languages of limited diffusion whose numbers are too small for them to have their own division.

In conclusion, I would like to remind you that whatever we decide will still be subject to ratification by ATA's Board of Directors and that our by-laws will have to be amended. I am sure there are other angles to this question and we would all like to hear them, so please write.

ПИСЬМА

Because of the vote to be taken at the ATA Conference in Nashville on whether to change the name of the Russian Division, we are reprinting all the letters we have received on the subject. (editor)

Dear Susan:

I would like to express my appreciation of your efforts to establish a strong organization of professionals working in the Russian translation business. I am quite sure that it will improve clients' confidence as well as raise the average level of competence and quality of our work.

Also, there are a couple of issues I would like to bring to your attention. First, I do not see any reason to change the name of the Division. We can incorporate or affiliate any other language not represented in ATA Divisions, but let's not change the original name because there is an important idea behind it: a large and still growing Russian community, which is engaged in Russian/American business, multiple projects in Russia/CIS, yet in the initial phase, and my personal belief that the Russian language will dominate in CIS states, at least in technical fields, since, except for language and literature professionals, technical education in Soviet universities was in Russian.

(continued on page 6)

Письма

(continued from page 5)

Second, I would recommend changing the format of the RLD directory by including brief resumes (30-50 words), covering primary fields of experience and accomplishments. It will help the client make the right choice, as well as allow people having common areas of expertise or interests, work together on large projects and, probably, help other RLD people with terminology, preparing workshops, etc.

Ben Krayzman

From 1993:

In Article 2 [of the bylaws], "Purpose," the expression, "the languages of the former Soviet Republics," seems to be inappropriate. First, at the present time these Republics are independent states, and calling them "former Soviet Republics" sounds like questioning their sovereignties. Second, relating any specific language to a state or a country is not methodologically correct; for example, more than 40% of the population of Ukraine speak Russian and consider it a native tongue. Moreover, "the languages of the former Soviet republics" also include Latvian, Lithuanian, Estonian, Uzbek, Georgian, Armenian, etc. having completely different origin and belonging to different language groups. If the Division is assumed to cover Slavic languages, those of the "former Soviet republics" are Russian, Ukrainian, and Belorussian. However, if we follow "the Slavic principle," we would have to include Polish, Czech, Serbian, Slovak, and Bulgarian. There is an alternative—to limit the Division's language coverage to only those languages which are Cyrillic-based. Then Article 2 should list Russian, Ukrainian, Belorussian, Bulgarian as having almost the same alphabet (the Serbian alphabet is quite different even though it's Cyrillic-based).

The fact that translators use special software, fonts, etc. for translation into any of the Cyrillic-based languages speaks in favor of this alternative....

Igor Vesler

.... I agree with Igor Vesler that the phrase "languages of the former Soviet republics" in "Purposes" needs updating. I also agree that our Division should encompass all Slavic languages which use some form of the Cyrillic alphabet, not just Russian.

Igor suggested "... Russian, Ukrainian, Belorussian, and Bulgarian...."; but rather than list the languages, I suggest simply a descriptive phrase capturing Igor's idea. I suggest something like the following: "... any of the Slavic languages using the Cyrillic alphabet." This would include Serbian, but I see no reason to exclude Serbian translators from our Division just because the Serbian Cyrillic alphabet is modified more than in some other languages.

At the least, if we do list the languages, the conjunction should be "or," not "and," because few of us can translate all five of those languages (including Serbian).

We should also change our name from "Russian Division," since, by any variation, we seek to encompass not just the Russian language. I suggest: "Slavic Cyrillic Division."

Peter J. Benson

Sykesville, MD

From the May, 1995 issue:

Editor:

I was glad to see an invitation in the February issue of the Slav File to voice our views on the proposal to change the name of the Russian Language Division to "Slavic Language Division."

I oppose such a change. It makes no more sense to lump all Slavic languages into the Russian

Language Division than to merge Dutch and Swedish into the German Division or to combine Japanese with Chinese and change the Japanese Division name to Character Language Division. Such divisions would be too general and would provide no added benefit past that already provided by general linguistic associations such as the ATA.

The Russian Language Division was formed because of the need of Russian translators and interpreters for a language-specific forum. Some of the Slavic languages don't even use the same alphabet. The Russian Language Division should remain exclusively Russian. For that matter, the name "Slav File" should be changed to the "Russian File."

Tanya Gesse

Chicago, Illinois

Editor:

With regard to the other Slavic languages, I would make the strongest possible pitch that the current Russian Division include them. Speaking from 35 years experience teaching in Russian/Slavic departments in this country, I think it unlikely that there will ever be sufficient demand for translators of the other Slavic languages to be able to form their own separate sub-division. (The same would apply to translators of the non-Slavic languages of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.) Most of the Slavic languages are so close in their structures and vocabulary that there could be a great deal of valuable exchange of ideas at future meetings. I myself am competent in Slovene and Serbo-Croatian as well as Russian, and I welcome the participation of translators of all Slavic languages.... [Other suggestions for division names are] the Russian/Slavic Division, the Eastern European Division, or even the Russian and Eurasian Division.

(continued on page 7)

Письма

(continued from page 6)

Having written the above, I state that my own preference is to be as inclusive as possible and to have a group which would welcome translators of all Slavic languages as well as those not related to the Slavs linguistically, i.e., neighboring languages or those who have had, for better or worse, historical ties with the Russian empire such as Hungarian, Armenian, etc. Finally, although I very much dislike the idea of giving prominence to the name of just one language in a title, for practical reasons I also believe it is necessary to highlight the word Russian. I would therefore propose the following title for the current Russian group: Russian and Eastern European Division. None of the titles proposed above have much pizzaz, but each is plain, simple, and conforms to common usage in academia and the public and private sectors. Whatever new name the Russian Language Division takes on, it should be one that clearly identifies it as that arm of ATA which concerns itself with the languages east of the German speaking territories up to, let us say, the Ural Mts.

I hope that the preceding is of help in your deliberations.

William W. Derbyshire
Somerset, New Jersey

Editor:

ATA is now examining its structure and looking at possible by-laws changes. One proposal calls for geographical representation on the Board of Directors. But as the globe shrinks, we can see how interest groups are becoming the dominant principle for representation, not geography. I have more in common with a Russian-English translator who works in New York than an English-Spanish interpreter who works here in Austin. If Board seats are

allocated, the principle might focus on Division representation in a governing body. In any event, I believe the Divisions will grow in importance with regard to ATA itself, and especially in terms of useful services they can provide. That is why we should carefully define and name ourselves....

Russian is the primary working language for a large body of ATA members. Although we may also translate other Slavic languages and other languages of the former USSR, the term best describes the majority interest. We focus our energy on Russian, but we can and do support other languages. Ukrainian translators, for example, have entries in the division's directory and present sessions at workshops and conferences; indeed, they are now working to establish ATA accreditation examinations for Ukrainian translators. The RLD's current "big umbrella" policy will support and publicize the activities of its members, but these activities will be conducted by those who work with the specific language.

On the other hand, if we want to encourage active participation by those who work with all Slavic languages, it is only natural that we call ourselves the Slavic Language Division. This does not detract at all from the majority working with Russian, but merely acknowledges that our interests go beyond that one language.

The division has had a de facto policy of inviting other-than-Russian linguists to join and participate. Why not make this policy explicit in our name? Our newsletter is already called the *Slav File*. Polish translators, for example can more readily identify with a Slavic Division than a Russian Division. We might expect a small growth in membership by being more openly inclusive. And there is strength in numbers.

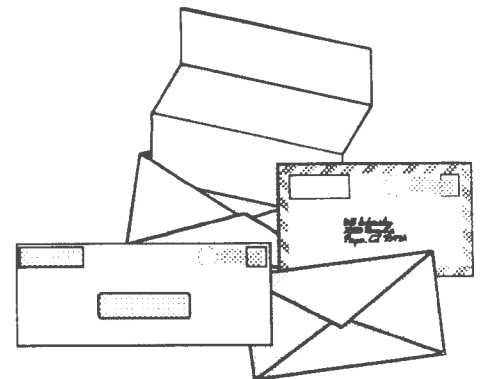
On consideration, I believe I will vote for "The Slavic Language Division." Russian translators have

nothing to lose, and by acknowledging all the translators and interpreters within our linguistic family, the division has much to gain.

Mike Conner
Austin, Texas

I approve a change to the Slavic Language Division. And I see no reason to restrict it to Cyrillic-alphabet Slavic languages. There is no compelling reason **not** to be open to all the languages of our family, and there are many advantages. The consequences of coming out from under Communist regimes gives us much more in common in terms of our work as translators and interpreters than just the language family itself. The ATA does not now accredit translators of any but Russian and Polish. Until that problem is solved, we can provide a home for the rest of the Slavic translators. There are many of us who work in more than one Slavic language, and that number will probably increase given the explosion in travel, trade, and communication. I myself am learning Ukrainian intensively right now, and have done a little work with Croatian.

Editor



Translator Profile

Robert T. Creutz

South Weymouth, Massachusetts

I heard my first Russian words in my early childhood here in the U.S., at home, from my maternal grandparents – native Lithuanians who spoke fluent Russian and a heavily Russian-influenced dialect of Lithuanian, in which they conversed with their children, and then with me. Had I been aware as a young boy that relatively few people in the world at large spoke Lithuanian, I would have been doubly dismayed the first time I was ridiculed by speakers of the "standard" language, when, at the zoo, I called an elephant *slonas* rather than *dramblys*.

Admittedly, it was not only the many Russian words I already knew, but also the aesthetic appeal of the Cyrillic alphabet (it was Ж that did it) that lured me into electing to study Russian formally, at the earliest opportunity in those days, in college. Having already studied Classical Greek and Hebrew (ahhh ... the Ϝ and Ϙ), as well as Latin from age 11, I did not find new alphabets or complex grammars intimidating.

The attraction proved fatal, resulting in my majoring in Russian as an undergraduate and, later, after working in business and research administration for a number of years, receiving a teaching fellowship and then a master's degree in the language (Boston College, 1972; concentrating in Slavic linguistics).

By the time I found myself at Copenhagen University's Slavic Institute, I had logged 10 years of formal study of Latin, had mastered French grammar to the point that I was asked to teach it, read German well, had studied Czech for a year, and earned a proficiency certificate in the Danish language, in which, also owing to family circumstances, I was fluent. I had worked as a musician, typesetter, pattern maker, pantograph engraver, molder, machinist, spray painter, production manager of an architectural and art bronze company, customer service executive and assistant buyer in retailing, insurance claims adjuster, and research contracts and grants administrator at an astronomical observatory. The coherence here was elusive, not least to myself. I had yet to turn this multifaceted background to my advantage.

Until one day I was asked by Rigshospitalet in Copenhagen to translate, for publication, from Danish to English an article on leaks in anesthesia apparatus, which, of course, I knew nothing about. I was astonished that someone would offer to pay for this service, and I confidently and naively agreed. And proceeded to spend countless hours researching the field, resulting, in terms of time spent, in the least money I've ever made on a single job as a translator. But as a crash course in practical translation it was the best investment I could have made.

I soon found that I could understand articles in Russian on a hobby of mine since childhood – amateur radio and electronics. At the same time, back in the U.S., I learned from a friend of a huge contract that a translation company had with the U.S. government to translate from Russian articles, dealing with, among other things, computers and electronics. I walked in, did a few samples, and was given a pile of journals to take home. The articles turned out to be on nearly every technical field under the sun, from particle physics to veterinary medicine. I had begun my apprenticeship as a freelance translator. The pay was awful, but before long I built up speed and was editing translations done by others.

That was some 23 years ago. In the meantime I have learned enough about – among other things electronics, computers, metallurgy and mechanical and nuclear engineering to have successfully translated a couple of dozen full-length books from Russian to English for the U.S. government and private industry. As well as a vast amount of journal articles, patents and other technical documents. And lots of legal documents in the last five years.

The greater burden for the translator is knowledge of the subject field, of its concepts and of its vocabulary, most especially in the target language. The learning never stops, particularly for the generalists among us, and this makes the field of translation especially attractive to me. I attribute my versatility in large measure to a solid broad education and knowledge gained from having worked in a variety of fields. I benefited from being the early product of a Sputnik-era accelerated math and science program at Boston Latin School (they gave select high-schoolers college-level courses, and Linus Pauling to read). Early on, I worked in metallurgy – formulating, making, casting and machining bronze, and then managing the entire operation. Not solely (but very much) a "language nut," I have nurtured my technical bent and easily assimilate new fields, the latest of which is pharmaceuticals, in which I have already done considerable work.

I translate from other languages besides Russian, and I have been privileged to work with several of you on into-Russian projects. My cohorts will perhaps recall as among the most harrowing our collaboration for the U.S. tours of Messrs. Shevardnadze and Gorbachev a few years back, when changes had to be made continually, right up to the very last moment.

What's next? I vow to start regaining my once respectable conversational Russian skills, which got lost in the process of just reading Russian. As soon as I get the next job out.



TIPS ON TRIPS TO RUSSIA, BUSINESS OR PLEASURE

*Following is a portion of an informative and interesting collection of advice on visiting and doing business in Russia and the CIS. It was discovered by our alert editorial staff member, Galina Raff, on Compuserve recently, and we will be reprinting portions of it in the next several issues of the newsletter. This first section is on **PROTOCOL***

NOTE: The Russian word *некультурный* (literally, "uncultured" or "bad mannered") signifies the wrong way to do something. Foreigners are often judged by the same standards Russians apply to themselves. Some "nyekulturny" behaviors are:

- ✧ Wearing your coat (and heavy boots) when you enter a public building—particularly the theatre! You are expected to leave your coat in the *зардероб* (cloakroom). One does NOT sit on one's coat at a concert, restaurant, etc. Many office buildings also have a "garderob".
- ✧ Standing with your hands in your pockets, or generally lounging around. This is especially true in public buildings.
- ✧ Wearing business clothes that are less than conservative, for example, pastel shirts with white collars.
- ✧ Speaking or laughing loudly in public.
- ✧ Not only is whistling indoors considered "nyekulturny", but there is a superstition that it will cause a loss of money.

GREETINGS

- ✧ Only during greetings do Russians display affection in public. Relatives and good friends will engage in a noisy embrace and kiss each other on the cheeks.
- ✧ Except at formal or state occasions, Russians usually greet a stranger by shaking hands and stating their name, rather than uttering a polite phrase (such as "How do you do?"). Respond in the same way.

TITLES

- ✧ Russian names are listed in the same order as in the west, but the Russian middle name is a patronymic (a name derived from the first name of one's father). Thus, Fyodor Nikolaievich Medvedev's first name is Fyodor (a Russian version of Theodore), his last name is Medvedev, and his middle name means "son of Nikolai."
- ✧ Russian women add the letter "a" on the end of their surnames; Medvedev's wife would be Mrs. Medvedeva.
- ✧ Unless invited to do so, do not use first names. If a Russian has a professional title, use the title followed by the surname. If he or she has not title, use Mr., Miss, Mrs., or Ms., plus the surname.
- ✧ Among themselves, Russians use a bewildering variety of diminutives and nicknames. They also address

each other by first name and patronymic, which can be quite a mouthful. As you establish a relationship with them, you will be invited to call them by one of these. This is the time to invite them to use your first name.

- ✧ Despite the length of their names, there are relatively few variations of first names and surnames in Russia. Indeed, some names (i.e., Ivan Ivanovich Ivanov) are so common that you will need additional information to be able to identify the correct person. In official circles, Soviets use a person's birth date to differentiate between identically named individuals.

GESTURES

- ✧ Russian is a language abundant in curses, and there are quite a number of obscene gestures as well. Both the American "O.K." sign (thumb and forefinger touching in a circle) and any shaken-fist gesture will be interpreted as vulgar.
- ✧ Whistling is not taken as a sign of approval in a concert hall; it means you did not like the performance.
- ✧ The "thumbs up" gesture indicates approval among Russians.
- ✧ Do not sit with the legs splayed apart or with one ankle resting upon the knee.
- ✧ As a society historically subject to police surveillance, the Russians evolved gestures that would foil eavesdroppers. For example, to avoid saying the name of Brezhnev, Russians would touch a finger to an eyebrow (a reference to Brezhnev's hairy eyebrows). The free speech which has accompanied glasnost has reduced the need for such circumlocutions, but they have not entirely disappeared. Nowadays, a gesture may be used to refer to a member of the Russian Mafia.
- ✧ Some common traditions or superstitions include: sitting a minute before leaving a home, knocking three times on wood to avoid bad luck, spitting three times behind the shoulder to prevent bad news, etc.

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РЕЧЬ, ПРОИЗНЕСЕННАЯ ПРИ ОСВЯЩЕНИИ КЛАДБИЩА В ГЕТТИСБУРГЕ

Восемьдесят лет тому назад наши праотцы породили на этом материке новую нацию, зачатую под знаком свободы и посвященную принципу, что все люди созданы равными.

Ныне мы ведем великую гражданскую войну, подвергающую испытанию вопрос, может ли эта нация или любая другая нация, так зачатая и тому посвященная, долго просуществовать. Мы сошлись на поле одной из великих битв этой войны. Мы пришли освятить часть этого поля, как место последнего упокоения тех, кто отдал жизнь свою, чтобы эта нация могла жить. Такое действие нам вполне подобает и приличествует.

Но, в более обширном смысле, мы не можем посвящать, мы не можем освящать, мы не можем возводить в святыню это место. Мужественные люди, живые и мертвые, здесь боровшиеся, уже осветили его, далеко превысив при этом все, что мы с нашими слабыми силами могли бы прибавить или отнять.

Мир мало заметит и не запомнит надолго то, что мы здесь говорим, но он никогда не сможет забыть то, что они здесь свершили. Это нам, живым, скорее следует здесь посвятить себя незаконченному делу, которое сражавшиеся здесь двигали доселе столь доблестно. Это скорее нам следует посвятить себя великому труду, который еще остается перед нами: дабы набраться от этих чтимых нами усопших вящей преданности тому делу, которому они принесли последнюю полную меру преданности; дабы нам здесь торжественно постановить, что смерть этих умерших не останется тщетной; что эта нация, с помощью божьей, обретет новое рождение свободы; и что правление народное, народом для народа не сгинет с земли.

Авраам Линкольн

19 ноября, 1863

Перевел Владимир Набоков

UPDATE ON PROPOSED ELIMINATION OF UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON SLAVIC LANGUAGES DEPARTMENT

We reported in the May *Slav File* that it looked like the Department of Slavic Languages and Literature at the University of Washington would be eliminated. Since then appeals have poured in from around the Northwest and from other parts of the country. Following is an abridged version of an article in the latest issue of *NOTIS News* on the final outcome of those appeals.

"...UW President William Gerberding announced June 28 that, 'With respect to the Departments of Slavic Languages and Literature... their elimination is not in the long-term interests of the University [and] they should be spared....' Citing the importance of the department to the intellectual life of the university, Gerberding overturned a decision made by the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences last November.... The Slavic Department [had] received

massive support at the local and national levels which clearly helped to reverse the ill-taken decision...

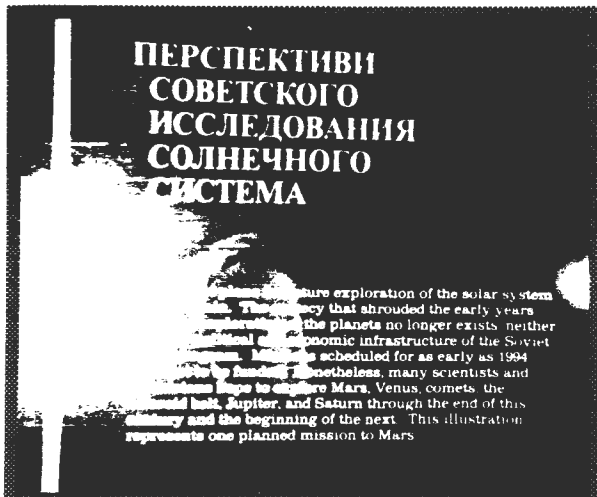
[The Department] will, however, be reduced in size.... What has been gained, and what has been lost? First and foremost, the Slavic Department retains its status as a separate department. One hopes that its badly demoralized faculty members do not continue to seek appointments in other departments or, worse, leave the university out of disgust, a move which would weaken further the badly battered department.... Rebuilding the department's reputation both within and without the university will take a huge effort. It will take years to recover from the black eye received, and potential future faculty members and graduate students will think twice before deciding to come to UW.

Most troublesome is the question of reductions. There have already been significant losses. A search for a new faculty member to join the staff next year was cancelled long ago. In June two of the department's three very able supporting staff members departed. If any faculty member, full- or part-time were to be let go, courses would have to be cancelled and/or teaching loads redistributed in a way unsatisfactory to the department. Will reductions include the loss of a portion of the graduate program in Slavic? Quite possible. There remain many questions to be addressed, and Gerberding hopes, '...that constructive discussions can begin promptly....'

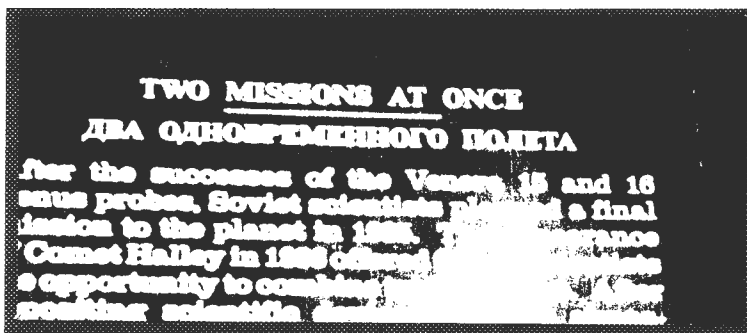
*Excerpts from an article
by William Derbyshire
NOTIS News, July/August 1995
(condensed and reprinted
with permission)*

КАРТУНКИ С ВЫСТАВКИ

Галина Рафф



В августе этого года мы были в Вашингтоне и посетили Национальный музей воздухоплавания и космонавтики (National Air & Space Museum). На первом этаже музея расположена выставка, посвященная советской космонавтике. Надписи к экспонатам сделаны на английском и русском языках. Что касается переводов на русский, то они представляют собой не русскую речь, а крайне неграмотно написанные русскими буквами слова и предложения. Вызывает удивление, что перепутанные (*поверхность*) или пропущенные (*Совет Министв*) буквы, а также неправильные суффиксы и окончания (*моделирующее устройство*) не были исправлены с помощью элементарных компьютерных программ. Хотя, конечно, компьютер вряд ли сможет изменить фразу *открытие тайн Венеры*.



Рассматривая фотографии, привезенные из Вашингтона, я с сожалением констатирую факт, что практически в каждой русской надписи есть орфографические, грамматические или стилистические ошибки. Удивительно, как такое могло случиться не в какой-нибудь глуши, а в столице великого государства, в «самом посещаемом музее мира», расположенном рядом с Капитолием и Белым домом....

GOVERNMENT GRANT AWARDED TO SEATTLE TRANSLATOR

Russian Division member Bill Derbyshire "has received word from the U.S. Department of Education that he has been awarded a grant in excess of \$50,000 to write an inflectional dictionary of Slovene. The period of the grant is July 1, 1995 - June 30, 1996. Bill states that the dictionary will be based on the core vocabulary of Slovene and will contain up to 5000 words. Nouns and adjectives will appear with all their declined forms, verbs will be fully conjugated, and all words will be stressed. No similar work exists, not even in Slovenia.

Bill received a similar grant from the USDE in 1989-1990 to write his reference grammar of Slovene, published 1993. His current project grew out of the frustrations he encountered in providing many forms in that grammar. Slovene Academy dictionaries and orthographic guides fail to provide much information needed by non-native speakers. In verifying forms, Bill found that native speakers often contradict one another... and he hopes that his work will help to fill this lacuna somewhat."

NOTIS News, July / August 1995
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SIVFIRE



A garden locked is my sister, my bride,
garden locked, a fountain sealed.
Your shoots are an orchard of
pomegranates
with all choicest fruits,
henna with nard,
nard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon,
with all trees of frankincense,
myrrh and aloes,
with all chief spices—
a garden fountain, a well of living water,
and flowing streams from Lebanon.

Song of Solomon 4:12–4:15
The New Oxford Annotated Bible

* * *

Вертоград моей сестры,
Вертоград уединенный;
Чистый ключ у ней с горы
Не бежит запечатленный.
У меня плоды блестят
Наливные, золотые;
У меня бегут, шумят
Воды чистые, живые.
Нард, алой и киннамон
Благовонием богаты:
Лишь повеет аквилон
И закаплют ароматы.

А. С. Пушкин [1825]