

## CONFERENCE PRESENTATION REVIEW

### Wow, How Am I Going to Interpret That?

Presented by Nikolai Sorokin

Reviewed by Anastasiya Kogan

***“Three musketeers?!”***

***“Three knights?”***

***“Three warriors...,” the list of suggestions could probably go on.***

If you are a little confused as to why my review of Nikolai Sorokin’s lecture, “Wow, How Am I Going to Interpret That?!” begins with a list of three triumvirates, let me explain. These are possible translations of the Russian expression “три богатыря” that attendees of the talk proposed during a quick brainstorming session initiated by Sorokin himself.

A little context:

During the ATA’s 58<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference (2017), Nikolai Sorokin, a retired presidential interpreter, made a presentation about challenges interpreters confront when dealing with colloquial and colorful expressions and unexpected turns of phrase—things that occasionally catch interpreters off guard and cause them to ask themselves the question in the presentations title. He shared many anecdotes and lessons learned both from his personal experiences and experiences of his colleagues. I will mention just three of them.

Going back to the “три богатыря,” Nikolai described a situation in which the head of the Russian delegation referred to his three colleagues as “Бот, три богатыря” as they were walking into the room. All the Russians present burst out laughing. The interpreter, who remained nameless, translated this as “Oh, the three stooges,” making his American delegation break out in laughter, too. Would you say that the interpreter was taking a risk when he translated “богатырь” as “stooge”? Perhaps so, since the two designations definitely have different meanings and even more different connotations. Yet, his solution worked out well at that particular moment in that particular context. In my humble opinion, and you may disagree, it was a perfect translation, as what mattered more than accuracy was the reaction to what was said—that light-hearted laugh.

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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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This issue of *SlavFile* owes its existence, in addition to those listed above, to:

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Emma Garkavi

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Steven McGrath

Laurel Nolen

Thanks also to Jamie Padula of ATA Headquarters for his advice and help.

In compliance with ATA guidelines, we requested and received permission from Shelley Fairweather-Vega and Katherine E. Young to reprint photographs (on page 9) taken during their recent ATA58 presentation.

Nikolai gave another example, one where the interpreter erred on the side of literalness: that notorious adjective “яркий,” which crossed the ocean as “bright.” I’m referring of course to the now famous instance that brought the issue of translation, at least briefly, into the limelight, when, back in 2016, President Putin was interviewed by CNN’s Fareed Zakaria and described then Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump as a “яркая личность.” The interpretation was done in the simultaneous mode and the interpreter opted for a literal “bright.”

Again, Nikolai offered the audience the opportunity to think of other possible ways to translate that adjective.

Colorful?

Flashy?

Flamboyant?

Conspicuous?

Standout personality?

What would your word choice be?

To give you a chance to hear the exchange between President Putin and Fareed Zakaria first-hand, here is a link to the video: [www.cnn.com/videos/tv/2016/06/17/exp-gps-putin-on-trump.cnn](http://www.cnn.com/videos/tv/2016/06/17/exp-gps-putin-on-trump.cnn)

At the time when that story broke, I was still a student at the University of Maryland, College Park, in the Graduate Studies in Interpreting and Translation program. One of our instructors shared that link with us and asked us what we thought. I remember saying “charismatic” after taking a few minutes to think about the context and other nuances. But let’s remember, as Nikolai said during his lecture, as an interpreter, you only have a split second to make a decision and “no time to look up anything or think about it.”

Spoiler Alert!

If you are still thinking about rendering that “яркая личность” into English, don’t look at the table below as you may be disappointed that you had not thought of this translation. ☺

Nikolai offered his version of what Putin said in Russian:

Russian
“Трамп яркий человек. А что не яркий? Яркий. Никаких других характеристик я ему не давал.”
English
Trump is quite a personality. Wouldn’t you say he stands out? He does. That’s the only characterization that I made.

I think Nikolai nailed it, don’t you? In my opinion, this translation does not share the somewhat negative connotations of flashy, flamboyant, and other alternatives. It fits the context. It is accurate and idiomatic.

As both examples discussed are not Nikolai’s personal experiences, let the third be from his own career—an experience that he thought would put an end to that career.

Back in the summer of 2006, Nikolai was accompanying President George W. Bush on his visit to Russia. The President and First Lady were hosted in St. Petersburg by President Putin. As you can imagine the schedule was a busy one, with numerous events and meetings. However, what really unnerved Nikolai was what he experienced during the joint press conference attended by a few thousand journalists and reporters at the end of the visit. Instead of summarizing it, let me quote Nikolai:

“The venue was essentially a gigantic big white tent. [...] The interpreting booths were located along the left wall at the back of the tent, almost a football field’s distance from the stage, and the sound quality in our earphones was definitely not good. I was interpreting President Bush into Russian. At one point, president Bush said the following: ‘I talked about my desire to promote institutional change in parts of the world like Iraq where there’s a free press and free religion, and I told him that a lot of people in our country would hope that Russia would do the same thing.’ To laughter and applause, Putin responded: ‘We certainly would not want to have the same kind of democracy as they have in Iraq, quite honestly.’

“Well, at President Bush’s words about a free press and free religion in the midst of Iraq’s civil war I froze, thinking I may have not heard him well. As I said earlier, the reception in my earphones was not very good. Maybe I had missed the word ‘not’ somewhere in there. I paused, deciding what to say. Finally, I told myself that I heard what I heard, and so I interpreted the sentence as I heard it. The explosion of laughter when Putin (who was listening to my interpretation) answered was frightening. What if I was wrong? Had I made a fool of my president in front of the world with a completely wrong interpretation? It can happen, you know.

“After the press conference ended no one said anything to me about how they thought it went. It was a 40-minute ride in total silence back to the Angleterre Hotel in town. I went to my room, collapsed on the bed, and was pretty sure that my career

Nikolai Sorokin chats with an audience member



as an interpreter had come to a crashing end. My future had become a thing of the past. In this profession you’re really only as good as your last job. And I must have screwed up royally. Well, after about an hour of moping, I decided to face the music and find out for sure. I went to the lobby, used one of the public computers there, and typed in the CNN site. The lead headline for that hour was something like ‘Bush tells Putin that Russia should have freedom of press and religion like Iraq.’ What a relief! I got off the computer went to the bar and ordered a Manhattan, knowing

that I still had a job. That was probably the worst ‘Wow, how am I going to interpret that ?!’ moment in my career.”

Nikolai shared many stories about how interpreters took risks and came up with creative solutions that sometimes worked great and sometimes less so. He talked about simply rendering the sound of a non-critical word in the original language, a compromise that can come in handy when you don’t know the equivalent in the target language. At the same time, he warned of the dangers of such expedients, sharing an example about a wooden box made of “самшита” (boxwood). Finally, he emphasized once again that interpreters should be faithful to the original, but being faithful doesn’t mean being literal.

In conclusion, let me say that the lecture was stimulating for the audience, as we all brainstormed alternative ways of rendering colorful expressions into English. Secondly, it was educational, as we learned a few lessons on how to navigate the uncharted waters of diplomatic interpreting and were reminded of the “Do no harm” principle. Thirdly it was great fun and gave every one of us some good laughs.

Anastasiya Kogan is a trained Russian><English freelance interpreter based in the area of Washington DC. In 2017 she successfully completed a two-year program in conference interpreting (Russian><English and Spanish>Russian) at the University of Maryland, College Park. She has worked as interpreter/translator for a number of international companies in both Europe and Central Asia. She can be reached at [an0304sh@gmail.com](mailto:an0304sh@gmail.com)

The Greiss Lecture that Nikolai Sorokin also gave at ATA58 is reviewed on the first page of the Winter 2018 issue of *SlavFile*.

You may read it at

[www.ata-divisions.org/SLD/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/SlavFile-2018-1-Winter.pdf](http://www.ata-divisions.org/SLD/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/SlavFile-2018-1-Winter.pdf)





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Dear SLD members,

Below you will find updated information about SLD initiatives. Thank you to all volunteers who find time to help out and make all of the SLD's programs possible!

### Our New Initiatives

#### SLD Google Group

In case you have not heard, there is now a Google Forum for SLD members, a listserv we can use to communicate with each other, managed by Julia Thornton. You can join either by applying to join the group at: <https://groups.google.com/forum/#!forum/ata-sld-forum>, or by sending an email to [ata-sld-forum@googlegroups.com](mailto:ata-sld-forum@googlegroups.com).

#### SLD Podcast

The first recording, a virtual Ru>En translation slam with Eugenia Tietz-Sokolskaya and Elizabeth Adams, went out earlier this year; a second one on marketing and a third one on the SLD's ATA Certification Examination practice group have followed. You can find them at <https://soundcloud.com/atasld>. Veronika Demichelis, the SLD podmaster, welcomes suggestions from SLD members at [demichelis.veronika@gmail.com](mailto:demichelis.veronika@gmail.com). Let us know what you are interested in, what you want to learn, and whom we should invite to the podcast.

#### SLD Outreach Initiative

We are delighted to announce that the Outreach Initiative has been approved by ATA, and that we will be trying to forge mutually beneficial relationships with other Slavic-language T&I associations. If you would like to help with the effort, or have suggestions on the ways we could collaborate with such associations, please reach out to Ekaterina.

#### The Conference is Coming (almost)

Now that the submission deadline is past, we would like to thank all of the SLD members who submitted their proposals!

If you would like to add variety to the conference by proposing additional SLD events for New Orleans, "official" or otherwise, please let us know! And, of course, if you have suggestions for the New Orleans dinner venue, please get in touch with Eugenia Tietz-Sokolskaya. She is also welcoming blog post submissions for the SLD blog.

#### SLD Proofreading Pool

This initiative is managed by Viktoriya Baum. The first deadline for joining the initiative passed on 04/01, but if you are interested in this project, please reach out to Viktoriya ([vbaumoo@gmail.com](mailto:vbaumoo@gmail.com)) for details on how to join.

#### SLD Leadership Council 2018

*Rather than publishing LC member emails in bulk, Ekaterina and Eugenia ask that you email either of them if you wish to contact individual LC members about their area of activity. Your message/request will be passed on.*

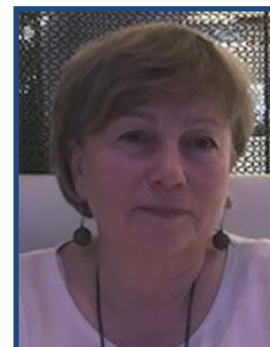
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Steven McGrath	Reviews for Ru>En (SLD Certification Exam Group)
Viktoriya Baum	Proofreading Pool
Veronika Demichelis	SLD Podcast

## TRUST ME, I AM A CERTIFIED INTERPRETER!

*Monique Roske, Emma Garkavi, and Milena Calderari-Waldron  
Presentation summary by Emma Garkavi*

*SLD Member Emma Garkavi and two colleagues participated in an ATA58 presentation under the Government T&I track. The presenters provided as a handout the first ever compilation of all possible interpreter credentialing organizations in the United States, including all the essential links. This compilation is available to SlavFile readers at [tinyurl.com/2018-ATA-Credentialing](http://tinyurl.com/2018-ATA-Credentialing).*

*Emma is Strategic Advisor to the Seattle Municipal Court, and as part of the above presentation, provided an example of the way interpreting credentials are required in this court system. Even for those of us who are not now and will never be interpreters, this is a fascinating case study to read about.*



Emma Garkavi

The Seattle Municipal Court experiences 7000 interpreted events per year, involving about 68 languages annually, with 136 languages requested since 2007.

In this court, interpreters are provided to Limited English Proficiency (LEP) persons free of charge in criminal and civil matters and requested for the following:

- Hearings
- Trials
- Attorney-client interviews
- Probation
- Psychological evaluations
- Classes (e.g. DUI Victim's Panel, Prostitution Patronizing Prevention)
- Customer services

In Washington State, depending on the language, an interpreter may become either certified or registered. The courts are required to contract credentialed interpreters, if any are available. The following table

explains the differences between the two types of credentials. LOTE=languages other than English.

Certified interpreters are available at this court in 12 languages. Registered interpreters are available in 28 more languages. There are many languages, though, where there is no credentialing available. Credentials are not required in certain languages because there are currently no interpreter tests in them.

When no credentialed interpreter is available, non-credentialed interpreters are selected based on:

- Other states' certified court interpreter directories
- Recommendations by other courts
- Education
- Resume
- Interview and introduction to court interpreting
- Invitation to the *Courtroom Protocol and Ethics for Court Interpreters* class
- Ongoing monitoring

CERTIFIED	REGISTERED
Written Exam in English	
Mandatory Orientation (8 hours)	
<b>Interpreting Skills Exam</b> Consecutive (EN<>LOTE) Sight Translation (EN>LOTE and LOTE> EN) Simultaneous (EN>LOTE)	<b>Oral Language Proficiency Test</b> (ACTFL Superior) EN and LOTE
Mandatory Training (8 hours)	
Oath	
Subject to Disciplinary Proceedings	
Continuing Education (16 hours every 2 years)	

The Seattle Municipal Court has developed a new mentoring program for non-credentialed interpreters involving 12 sessions: 6 (2-hour) sessions in person in court and 6 (1.5-hour) sessions via webinar. Topics covered are:

- Intro to court interpreting
- Code of ethics
- Courtroom protocol and etiquette
- Creation of personal glossaries, including authority for a term definition
- Team interpreting
- State and local rules

Emma Garkavi is a certified court interpreter in Washington and California and an ATA-certified En>Ru translator. She has interpreted for municipal, district, superior, Federal, and immigration courts in Washington and other states and has participated in the development of interpreter standard ASTM F2089-15. She can be reached at [Emma.Garkavi@seattle.gov](mailto:Emma.Garkavi@seattle.gov).

## ATTENTION ALL INTERPRETERS

The ATA Directory of Translators and Interpreters recently included Credentialed Interpreter designations in three areas of interpreting:

conference, healthcare and legal.

To find out more about this designation see:

[www.atanet.org/onlinedirectories/interpreter\\_credential.php](http://www.atanet.org/onlinedirectories/interpreter_credential.php)

On this page you will find a link to an everything-you-need-to-know podcast.

**Title sample page from the comprehensive compilation of interpreter credentialing programs compiled by Monique Roske, Emma Garkavi, and Milena Calderari-Waldrón.**

### CREDENTIALING OPPORTUNITIES AND CODES OF ETHICS FOR U.S. SPOKEN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS

ORGANIZATION	CREDENTIAL	WEBSITE	CODE OF ETHICS
<b>1. INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS</b>			

#### 1.1. INTERNATIONAL INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

UNITED NATIONS LANGUAGE COMPETITIVE EXAMINATIONS	P-1	<a href="https://careers.un.org/lbw/home.aspx">https://careers.un.org/lbw/home.aspx</a>	<a href="http://www.icty.org/x/file/Legal%20Library/Miscellaneous/it144_codeofethicsinterpreters_en.pdf">http://www.icty.org/x/file/Legal%20Library/Miscellaneous/it144_codeofethicsinterpreters_en.pdf</a>
	P-2	<a href="https://careers.un.org/lbw/home.aspx?viewtype=LCRF">?viewtype=LCRF</a>	
	P-3		

#### 1.2 INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

ASSOCIATION INTERNATIONALE DES INTERPRETES DE CONFERENCE	AiIC Member	<a href="http://aiic.net/">http://aiic.net/</a>	<a href="http://aiic.net/page/54/code-of-professional-ethics/lang/1">http://aiic.net/page/54/code-of-professional-ethics/lang/1</a>
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### 2. US GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

#### 2.1. FEDERAL AGENCIES

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE OFFICE OF LANGUAGE SERVICES	CONFERENCE	<a href="http://www.state.gov/m/a/ols/c56573">http://www.state.gov/m/a/ols/c56573</a>	<a href="https://apps.carleton.edu/ccce/assets/ProfessionalConduct_2.pdf">https://apps.carleton.edu/ccce/assets/ProfessionalConduct_2.pdf</a>
	SEMINAR	<a href="http://www.state.gov/m/a/ols/c56573.htm">.htm</a>	
	LIASON		
UNITED STATES FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATIONS	FBI CONTRACT LINGUIST	<a href="http://www.fbi.gov/foia/privacy-impact-assessments/contract-linguist">http://www.fbi.gov/foia/privacy-impact-assessments/contract-linguist</a>	UNKNOWN

**It is with great sadness that the editors of *SlavFile* announce the passing of our valued colleague Alex Lane.**

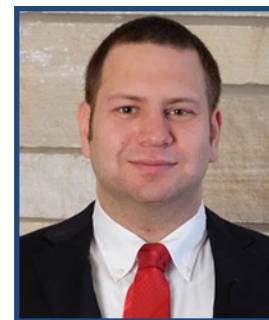
**We are planning to publish a tribute to Alex—a man of tremendous talent and wit, a former SLD administrator and assistant administrator, and an all-round wonderful man to be around—in our summer issue.**

**Please send your reminiscences of Alex to Nora Favorov ([norafavorov@gmail.com](mailto:norafavorov@gmail.com)).**

# The Russian Revolution in Spanish Translation: The Forgotten Revolution of the Ukrainian Anarchist Benjamin Abramson in Argentina

*Presented by Adel Fauzetdinova (in the Literary Division track)*

*Reviewed by Steven McGrath*



Like many other countries during the interwar period, Argentina was ripe for revolution. Argentinians, having recently won expanded political rights, began looking overseas for models—positive and negative—of how society could further develop. Revolutionary Russia held particular interest for this new generation of thinkers, and, for decades, one of their windows into Soviet ideas was Ukrainian anarchist Benjamin Abramson (1886-1965). In her presentation at the 58th Annual ATA Conference last October, Adel Fauzetdinova provided a fascinating account of this translator's life and long-term impact in Argentinian culture.

Adel is an Assistant Professor of Spanish, Portuguese and Translation at Westfield University in Massachusetts. She is a native speaker of Russian who has a PhD in Hispanic language and literature from Boston University. Her research focuses on cultural dialogue between Latin America and Russia, specifically on Russian literary translations in Argentina and Brazil.

Exiled as a young man for his role in the Revolution of 1905, Abramson made his way to Argentina in 1910, where he joined a newly-emergent left. He found a home in the *Boedo* literary group, named for a working-class neighborhood in Buenos Aires, and began contributing to the circle's main periodical, *Los Pensadores* (later called *Claridad* from 1926 on). In those pages, Abramson offered his own translations of both Silver Age classics and ideologically charged contemporary Soviet literature.

Like the magazine he published in, Abramson did not feel much obligation to adhere strictly to the original Russian texts in either a political or literary sense. The selection of passages to be translated, word choice and the insertion or omission of certain fragments all served to create an implicitly critical, often parodic, view of the Soviet government and Russian literature. Adel listed several ways that Abramson's translations influenced perceptions of Russia and the Revolution in Argentina (and I quote):

- by translating works prohibited in Russia and exposing violence that helped to create a critical attitude towards the regime

- by turning translation into a commentary and showing humor in it

- by adding through his translations to the exaggeratedly tragic image of everything Russian which easily lent itself to parody

- by translating works that turn Lenin into a character and making him say things he never said

All of this was not necessarily done to put readers off Russian literature or communism. Rather, Abramson took his subjects off the pedestal, making them more accessible to the Argentine literary community. Adel gave the example of a humorous commentary on Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons*. The trivial criticisms in the article create an opening for writers to deal with Russian classics on a more equal footing.

Abramson's inclination to humanize and parody his subjects shows through particularly well when he addresses the cult of Lenin. *The Human in Lenin*, published in *Claridad* in 1929, combines two articles by Mikhail Koltsov, the most prominent Soviet journalist of the time, without notifying the reader. The first is a seeming puff piece which discusses how the leader loves kittens and is good at chess. The second is a dramatic recounting of Lenin's funeral, which Abramson takes to absurd lengths in his translation. "¡Son bolsheviks que lloran!" the article ends, "Those are Bolsheviks that are crying!" The original reads simply, "Большевики плачут."

And what was Bolshevism, the ideology of Lenin? How did it distinguish itself from the less militant and dominant movements on the left? Abramson translated part of an open letter from People's Commissar Lunacharsky, responsible for education and cultural work in the country, to a pacifist comrade disconcerted by the violence of the Revolution and Civil War: "Yes, we are tyrants. Yes, we are dictators. Do you see this saber? It is identical to the one used by the noble. But that one kills in the name of Slavery, and this one, in the name of Freedom. It will be difficult to change your cranium. You are a good man...." This is where the editors of *Claridad* cut off the quote. Abramson's translation, however, continued: "and a good man strives to help the oppressed. Transiently, we are the



oppressors. Fight against us, and we'll fight against you, for if we oppress, it is to sweep all the violence from the face of the world." Did the end of the quote truly change its meaning? In retrospect, not really. At the time, however, it would have made the Bolshevik view seem a bit saner.

All of this left a stark impression on the man who would come to be recognized as the most influential Argentine writer of the time, Roberto Arlt. Arlt, also a member of the *Boedo* group, saw Lenin as "the new Napoleon" envisioned by Raskolnikov in *Crime and Punishment*, a man possessed of an idea and unconstrained by conventional morality. "Macbeth + Don Quixote = Lenin," his formula went. This mix of intensity and absurdism could be applied across the political spectrum.

The characters of Arlt's novel, *The Seven Madmen*, exhibit these Dostoevskian tendencies, filtered through Abramson's translation of revolutionary texts. "What kind of a revolution is this if we can't shoot anybody?" one character repeats to himself. Another says, "I don't know whether our society will be Bolshevik or Fascist. Sometimes I tend to think that the best that we can do is prepare a Russian salad that even God can't understand." In much the same way that Dostoevsky showed prescience concerning Russia's political outlook, Arlt's work presaged many themes of Argentina's 20<sup>th</sup> century history. It was ideologically ill-defined, by turns radical and conservative, pragmatic and brutal, absurd and authoritative.

After the coup of 1930 in Argentina, Abramson found himself once again exiled. Always a devoted communist, he sought shelter in the Soviet Union. Abramson and his daughter, Adelina, served as interpreters in the Spanish civil war, and then returned to Moscow to work as translators, mainly concerned with ideological texts and the works of Lenin and Stalin. In 1951, Abramson was arrested as a Trotskyist. After his release upon Stalin's death, he lived a quiet life until he died in 1965.

The political fervor that struck the world in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century perplexes many historians to this day. In some ways, it is refreshing to know that people of the time were equally perplexed. One common theme of the era, however, tends to draw people together: that of the individual, choosing the path they think is right and trying their best to leave a positive impact. Benjamin Abramson was one such individual.

Steven McGrath is an ATA-certified Russian to English translator who received a Master's Degree from Lomonosov Moscow State University. He translates material in the Humanities, Social and Natural Sciences. Steven lives in Iowa City, Iowa and can be reached at [steven@mcgrathtranslation.com](mailto:steven@mcgrathtranslation.com) (website: [www.mcgrathtranslations.com](http://www.mcgrathtranslations.com))



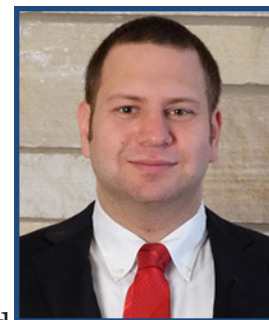
Some of the covers of the leftist Argentine journal *Claridad*. This journal is subtitled in Spanish: *A Forum of Leftist Thought*. Illustration provided by Adel Fauzetinova.



## How to Mix Business and Poetry

*Presented by Shelley Fairweather-Vega and Katherine E. Young*

*Reviewed by Steven McGrath*



The hook was in the title. “How does one mix business and poetry?” I asked myself. “Everyone is always warning us that literary translation is not often commercially viable. Surely, then, translations of poetry are the least viable of all!” Well, over the course of their presentation, Shelley Fairweather-Vega and Katherine E. Young largely confirmed this suspicion. But, through the model of their respective careers, the two poetry translators gave reason to hope that, with hard work, persistence, flexibility and passion for the written word, literary translation can become a rewarding avenue to follow. A chance commission to publish translations of the same poems offered attendees an opportunity to compare different approaches to the task, demonstrating both the skillfulness of the poets and the intrinsic value of art.

First, Shelley and Katherine detailed some of the differences between literary translation and the more common work of commercial translation. One type is commissioned by authors, the other by clients, entailing two distinct sets of demands. Clients work on tighter deadlines, take a more objective view of translator qualifications, and would absolutely replace you with a robot if they could. Seeing as they can’t do so without sacrificing quality, however, they are forced to pay fair market price.

Most authors, on the other hand, can’t afford the fair market price for translation. Literary translators are often paid at discounted rates, in future royalties or even simply in prestige. The expectation is that credit and the opportunity to do desirable creative work will compensate for the lower pay. The lower pay is then exacerbated by the slower turnover time—if that is even the right term—stretched out by long

deadlines, slow communications and the vicissitudes of the publishing world.

This applies in the extreme to poetry, with its highly-specialized market, low word count and the requirement for a painstaking attention to detail. A poet might agonize over a single stanza for weeks, and a good translator will do the same. Every word serves a purpose, and often more than one. I, who look upon poetry with a dilettante’s eye, recognize register, rhythm, rhyme scheme, imagery and alliteration, but serious poets, poetic translators and readers take many other aspects into account, and, unlike me, they have taste.

You must take into account and try to balance everything the original poet was doing while putting it into a form that meets the aesthetic standards of target-language poetry. Then, when you are done, poetry buffs generally and fans of the original in particular will turn into your biggest critics (Katherine recalls being shouted at in the US Embassy in Moscow). Sounds like fun, huh? But then, poets write for themselves, as do poetic translators.

Shelley and Katherine were commissioned to contribute translations for the book *100 Poems About Moscow*, which later won the 2017 Books of Russia poetry award. Shelley submitted 10 poems, Katherine 20. Then translation editor Anne Fisher approached them both, apologized, and told them that two poems had been sent to both of them by mistake. Since this was the publisher’s error, both poets received payment for the work done, but with their permission, the two versions of each poem would be laid side by side and one of each poet’s works would be chosen.

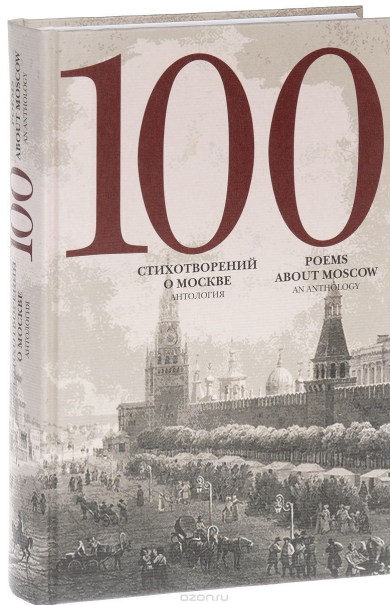
The poets object to characterizing this situation as a “competition.” As Katherine says, “I didn’t view what happened as any kind of “competition” with a winner or loser. It was a business problem: because of an oversight, the editor had two good versions of two poems and could only take one of each. I don’t think Shelley or I would say it was a question of ‘best’ versus ‘worst’—the editor had to manage a tough situation and one obvious solution was to choose a poem by each translator so that everyone got something.”

The first poem, two stanzas from Mikhail Lermontov’s “Sashka,” was written between 1836 and 1839. A reflection on the city of Moscow, written as though from in the shadow of the Kremlin, the



Shelley Fairweather-Vega and Katherine E. Young at their presentation. Photograph reprinted with kind permission from *Source* (No. 73, Winter 2017-2018), a publication of ATA’s Literary Division

passage contrasts the eternal majesty of the Russian state with the subject impermanence of the speaker. A product of the romantic movement, each of its eleven-line stanzas follows the quasi-sonnet rhyme scheme of ababacddde with thoughts or syntactic units continuing onto the next line. This poetic device, I learned, is called enjambment. Both poet-translators sought to maintain the elevated diction and meter. Shelley kept the rhyme scheme as well, while Katherine adopted “slant rhyme,” which uses similar-sounding but not perfectly-rhyming pairs. Katherine’s version of this poem was chosen for the anthology. The first stanza of this poem in the original, in literal translation, and as translated by both of the presenters is provided on the next page.



The second poem was Anna Akhmatova’s “Третий Зачатьевский” (*Trety Zachatyevsky [Pereulok]*) (1940), whose name alone presents difficulties for the translator. The word “alleyway” (переулок) never appears on English-language street signs and has less prepossessing connotations than the Russian word. Also, it is unclear whether the title is meant to be read together with the first line.

This poem clearly belongs to modernism. Seven rhyming couplets using a natural meter, the lines present a stirring variety of images around a single theme: death, death, death. The poet compares the street she lives on, which bows into a loop shape, to a noose which chokes her, as expressed by the ellipsis in the first line.

Here, again, Shelley kept the rhyme scheme while Katherine adopted slant rhyme. Katherine’s poetry background has led her to conspicuously avoid formal

elements that may sound forced to American ears. Over-attentive rhyme and meter, she says, sound “like a Hallmark greeting card.” Shelley, however, prefers retaining these elements of the original for their own sake. After all, she says, “I don’t know any readers of modern American poetry.” Shelley’s version of the Akhmatova poem was chosen for the anthology.

You can compare each translator’s line of reasoning by reading the finished product. Line by line, the translators chose their priorities, keeping some elements and discarding others. Is the resulting poem accurate? Is it faithful? Yes. This translation is

faithful, as is that one, as would be a hundred or more distinct poems resulting from the translation of a single work. The harder question is: is it *good*? Having no taste, I’m in no position to answer that. I liked them all, personally. But then, the first two questions are meant for translators, while the third concerns the human relationship with art itself.

To one extent or another, the issues that translators of poetry face are those that confront the entire industry. The importance of linguistic nuance to prose literary translation is the most obvious. That buzzword of recent years, transcreation, suggests a growing demand among commercial clients for literary translation skills. Even editors of computer-generated translations, if they want to stand out, should look beyond the grammatical coherence of the finished product to its subjective adherence to the musicality of human speech. We should not underestimate the value that our artistic sense has to our work and lives.

### THE PERIPATETIC HISTORY OF “KOMPROMAT”

It would be difficult for any Slavist to fail to notice the arrival of the word kompromat (sometimes spelled with an initial c), meaning compromising (i.e., damaging to one’s reputation) material, in the media, and equally clearly and appropriately, given its context, borrowed from Russian. Attested in English since 1990, it came into prominence as a result of precipitating events occurring in 2017.\* Indeed in 2017, it was “shortlisted” by the Oxford English Dictionary as a word of the year. OED refers to it as a “boomerang word” meaning that Russian, which had once borrowed it from English, had its way with it, and then flung it back at us. However, etymological research shows that “boomerang” underestimates the complexity of its journey. Compromise was borrowed into English from old French (which took it from late Latin) in its meaning of agreement by mutual concession. As far as I can tell, the current French cognate does not have the secondary pejorative meaning and was borrowed into English separately from Latin a century later. Perhaps in describing journeys such as these, and there must be others, the word “shuttle” (as in shuttle diplomacy) might be used.

Lydia Razran Stone

<p>М. Ю. Лермонтов</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>САШКА</b> (фрагмент первой главы поэмы)</p> <p>Москва, Москва!.. люблю тебя как сын, Как русский, – сильно, пламенно и нежно! Люблю священный блеск твоих седи И этот Кремль зубчатый, безмятежный. Напрасно думал чуждый властелин С тобой, столетним русским великаном, Померяться главою и — обманом Тебя низвергнуть. Тщетно поражал Тебя пришлец: ты вздрогнул — он упал! Вселенная замолкла... Величавый, Один ты жив, наследник нашей славы.</p>	<p>Literal Translation (by a neutral party)</p> <p>Moscow! Moscow!...I love you like a son, Like a Russian,—strongly, ardently and tenderly! I love the sacred shine of your gray hair And this Kremlin, crenellated, tranquil. In vain would some alien ruler attempt, To go head to head (or outwit) with you Age old Russian giant and by deception Overthrow (you). Vainly did the upstart strike At you: you gave a start and he fell! The universe was struck silent...Majestic one, You alone are alive, the heir of our glory.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>SASHKA</b> (fragment of the poem's first chapter) <i>Trans. Katherine Young</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">7</p> <p>Moscow, Moscow! I love you like a son, I love you like a Russian – strongly, ardently, Tenderly! I love the sacred shine Of your gray hairs and your crenelated Kremlin Serene. A foreign sovereign thought in vain To match wits with you, age-old Russian Giant, to deceive and throw you down. The stranger struck at you to no avail: Because when you shuddered – down he fell! The universe fell silent.... Majestic, only You live, the inheritor of our glory.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>SASHKA</b> (excerpt from the first chapter of the poem) <i>Trans. Shelley Fairweather-Vega</i></p> <p>Moscow, my Moscow! I love you like a son, A Russian son, with strength, and fire, but sweet! I love your gray gleam, sacred, in the sun That Kremlin, staunch, with toothed walls replete. All in vain did any foreign chieftain Undertake, my Russian land of legend, To move against you, and with vile deception Overthrow you. Worthless was the blow The stranger struck; you stirred, and laid him low! The universe was mute... But you, your Highness, The heir to all our glory, you survived this.</p>

## ATTENTION READERS WHO WORK WITH SLAVIC LANGUAGES OTHER THAN RUSSIAN!

Are you disappointed to find so few articles in our pages pertaining to your Slavic specialty? Frankly, so are we, but only you can do something about this deplorable situation. Volunteer to write something pertaining to your language(s); alternatively, suggest an article you know of that we might get permission to reprint. We do not require our authors to be members of ATA; we are pleased to publish relevant articles from those who are not. We do require that articles be under 2500 words in length and written in English, except, of course, for examples in Slavic languages. We very much look forward to hearing from you!

Send contributions related to:

Polish to Christine Pawlowski [pawlow@verizon.net](mailto:pawlow@verizon.net)

Ukrainian to Olga Shostachuk: [olgalviv27@yahoo.com](mailto:olgalviv27@yahoo.com)

Bosnian, Serbian and/or Croatian to Martha Kosir: [KOSIR@gannon.edu](mailto:KOSIR@gannon.edu)

We are without language coordinators for the remaining Slavic languages. Would you like to volunteer for your language? Send contributions on them to Lydia Stone: [lydiastone@verizon.net](mailto:lydiastone@verizon.net).



# THE US YEAR 2017 IN ENGLISH AND RUSSIAN ADJECTIVES

Lydia Razran Stone

Very soon after editing Viktor Slepovitch's article published in the [Winter 2018 SlavFile](#) on the difficulties involved in translating English adjectives into Russian, I read in the *Washington Post* about a survey the newspaper had taken asking approximately 2,000 adult Americans to provide a single word to describe the year 2017. The *Post* listed the 20 words (predominantly adjectives) that had been named by 1% or more of the respondents. Here was a list of adjectives generated by a somewhat representative sample of English speakers to describe something that was, or at least should have been, of some importance to them. To my mind at least, this made it worthy of some linguistic attention. I decided to use these adjectives to do a smaller-scale study of my own. And what could be more natural than trying to find out how highly competent English>Russian translators would translate these terms? Accordingly, I sent my list to 10 translators, including seven SLD members and Russian native speakers now living in the US whose linguistic skills I particularly respect. The other three respondents were Viktor Slepovitch himself and two surveys returned to me by Viktor Lanchikov, the editor of *Mosty*, the Russian translation journal. I do not know and did not ask the names of these two, but

I assume one is Viktor himself. Before I go further, I should say that before sending out my list I eliminated one item out of the 20, the surname of the major protagonist in 2017's political drama, simply because I did not think it would elicit interesting (at least from a linguistic standpoint) Russian responses.

The respondents who participated in the original study were asked to volunteer a single descriptive (English) word. I did not ask my 10 respondents to limit themselves to one translation and many did not. (However, the two subjects referred from Russia gave exactly one response per English word, so I imagine they were instructed to do this.) Because I set no limit on response number, the 10 subjects generated between 50 and 19 (the two from the RF) responses each for a grand total of 268 translated Russian words or phrases—a rich data set, perhaps too rich for analysis. Of course, there was some overlap but, by my count, approximately 190 different words were generated. I have never claimed to be adept at E>R subtleties, but in my opinion, not one of these 190 responses could be considered outright incorrect, though I believe some are better than others. Below you will find the English words, some statistics about responses, and the most chosen Russian equivalents.

English Word (% is number of original respondents choosing)	Number of Answers	Number of Different Answers	Number of Unique Answers	Predominant Answer(s) ≥3 and Number Choosing
Awesome (1%)	16	12	9	Потрясающий (3)
Bad (1%)	15	9	6	Плохой (6)*
Busy (1%)	15	10	7	Занятой (3), Загруженный (3)
Challenging (2%)	17	13	8	None exceeded two
Crazy (3%)	12	5	3	Безумный (6)*, Сумасшедший (3)*
Disappointing (2%)	14	9	5	Разочаровывающий (3)* + 2 phrases (each chosen by one person): [Полный]/[Год] разочарований
Disaster/Disastrous (2%)	15	13	11	None exceeded two
Divisive (1%)	18	14	11	Обостривший идейные разногласия в обществе (cited in Multitrans.ru) (3)
Eventful (1%)	11	4	1	Насыщенный/Насыщенный событиями (6)
Good (2%)	15	7	4	Хороший (7)*
Great (2%)	20	16	12	Отличный (3)
Hectic (1%)	13	4	1	Суматошный (7)*, Сумбурный (3)
Horrible/Horrid/Horrendous (2%)	27	12	5	Ужасный (7)* + 3 more with same root, Жуткий (3), Чудовищный (3), Кошмарный (3)
Interesting/intriguing (2%)	21	10	6	Интересный (8)*, Увлекательный (3)
Okay (1%)	13	8	7	Нормальный*(4)
Scary (1%)	14	8	5	Страшный (3)*, Жуткий (3), Пугающий (3)*
Tumultuous/Turmoil/Turbulent (2%)	19	9	5	Бурный (5)*, Непокойный or Беспокойный (5)
Unsettling (1%)	13	8	7	Тревожный (6)

\* Translations found in Katzner's English>Russian dictionary (1984 edition).

Other than specifying what the original English speakers had been asked (to describe the year 2017 in the US, as opposed to, say, a movie), eight of the 10 respondents were not given any instructions as to how many terms they were to generate for each prompt and were not even asked not to use a dictionary. This circumstance and the wide discrepancies in number of responses given by the individual translators, and probably numerous other factors, mean that this cannot be considered a scientifically controlled study. However, the linguistic data set is particularly rich and lends itself to some interesting observations, if not well-supported conclusions. One inescapable conclusion, though, is that the respondents were well-chosen to be more than equal to the task they were asked to perform.

Here, then, are some observations.

First, here is some information about differences among the subjects: As noted, the total number of Russian responses for the 19 English terms varied between 19 and 50. In my view this variation is likely to be a result of understanding of the task requirements rather than in the number of Russian translations each subject thought might be appropriate. It is tempting to speculate that giving more responses could indicate some doubt as to whether any one of them is completely appropriate, but that is just speculation. Overlap of responses between two subjects varied from 0 to 15 responses, the number seeming to be a function of total number of terms generated by the two subjects. The two subjects with the high overlap gave a total of 96 responses, while the two with zero overlap had a combined total of 40 responses. Of more interest are individual differences in giving the dominant response. All except one subject selected the most popular response for more than 50% of the English words. However, no predominant term was offered by more than 8 subjects.

Sheer numbers of different responses to a single English term may show the richness (or perhaps lack of clarity) of the meaning represented or, possibly, the extent of disagreement among translators, while very few responses suggest specificity of meaning and good correspondence between the two languages. At any rate, 4 of the 19 terms generated 5 or fewer different responses: *Chaotic* (3), *Crazy* (5), *Eventful* (4), *Hectic* (4). The English terms that generated 12 or more different responses were: *Awesome* (12), *Challenging* (13), *Disaster* (13), *Divisive* (14), and *Great* (16). Terms that evoked a response chosen by more than half the translators were: *Interesting/Intriguing*: Интересный (8), *Horrid/Horrible/Horrendous*: Ужасный (7), *Good*: Хороший, (7), and *Hectic*:

Суматошный (7), *Bad*: Плохой (6), *Crazy*: Безумный (6), *Unsettling*: Тревожный (6), and *Eventful*: Насыщенный (6).

Of these well-agreed-upon equivalents, *Good*, *Bad*, *Interesting*, *Crazy*, and possibly *Horrible*, with their dominant Russian equivalents, represent what might be called basic terms likely to be encountered in the early years of language study. Six of the eight pairings, all except *Unsettling*: Тревожный and *Eventful*: Насыщенный, are English-Russian definitions found in my 1984 Katzner.

In some cases there was fairly high translator agreement about the appropriateness of a root morpheme but some disagreement as to the form that was most appropriate. *Horrible/Horrid/Horrendous*: Ужасный (7),\* Ужасающий (2), Вселяющий страх и ужас (1); *Disappointing*: Разочаровывающий(3)\*, Полный разочарований (1), Год разочарований (1); *Divisive*: Раскол (2), Расколотый (2), Вызывающий раскол, (1) Несший раскол (1), Год раскола и разногласия (1).

In some instances, two or three terms accounted for a fairly high percentage of all responses. Most striking was the case of the English word: *Chaotic*, which evoked only three different translations—Суматошный (4), Хаотичный:(4)\*, Сумбурный (3)—and to which only two respondents gave a second answer. A nearly identical pattern occurred with the English *Hectic*, although Суматошный (6) was more heavily favored. I find this interesting because, to me at least, the core meanings of hectic and chaotic are not strikingly similar.

Finally, there were English terms for which unique responses accounted for more than half the translations given. These English adjectives were: *Awesome* (56% unique responses), *Challenging* (53% unique responses), *Disaster* (73%), *Divisive* (61%), *Great* (65%), *Okay* (54%), *Unsettling* (53%). Although the conclusion that this suggests disagreement among translators as to appropriate translations may not be justified, it cannot be ruled out.

Another possibly suggestive commonality among some of the words with high diversity of responses (in this case, *Awesome*, *Challenging*, and *Great*) is that the three of them are in common use in current written and especially conversational English in senses that have strayed or at least taken on additional connotations from the original. Both *great* and *awesome* in colloquial use have more or less lost their connotations of strikingly outstanding and can be used simply as a synonym for satisfactory. *Awesome* in particular has an aura of young and fashionable usage. In addition, both *awesome* and *great* can be

used sarcastically in a way that the less exalted *good* cannot. *Challenging*, while not having lost its original sense of challenge as a call to combat (вызов), is currently used frequently as a kind of politically correct euphemism, meaning difficult or even excessively difficult but (don't despair) surmountable

with sufficient effort and/or accommodation.

Of possible interest are the tables below showing English terms that were translated the same way as one or more other English term. In each of these cases the shared terms seem to me completely appropriate since important components of the English and their possible translations overlap.

	<b>Good</b>	<b>Great</b>	<b>Awesome</b>
Good		Хороший	
Great	Хороший		Замечательный Грандиозный Потрясающий Превосходный
Crazy			Потрясний
Okay	Неплохой		

	<b>Bad</b>	<b>Disaster</b>	<b>Horrible</b>	<b>Scary</b>
Bad		Ужасный (Крайне) Неудачный	Ужасный	
Disaster			Жуткий Ужасный Кошмарный	Жуткий, Страшный
Horrible	Ужасный	Жуткий Ужасный Кошмарный		Страшный (3)* Жуткий
Disappointing	Неудачный	(Крайне) Неудачный		

	<b>Busy</b>	<b>Chaotic</b>	<b>Eventful</b>	<b>Hectic</b>	<b>Tumultuous</b>	<b>Unsettled</b>
Busy	Насыщенный		Насыщенный			
Chaotic				Сумбурный, Суматошный		
Hectic		Сумбурный Суматошный			Беспокойный	
Tumultuous				Беспокойный		Тревожный

	<b>Great</b>	<b>Interesting</b>	<b>Busy</b>
Challenging	Увлекательный	Увлекательный Интересный	Насыщенный

	<b>Great</b>	<b>Challenging</b>
Interesting/Intriguing	Примечательный Увлекательный Многообещающий Любопытный	Увлекательный

I really have no conclusions to draw other than the suggestions above. I will say that I would be delighted to share the data tables I have drawn up concerning various classifications of the full set of data. Contact me at [lydiastone@verizon.net](mailto:lydiastone@verizon.net). If anyone would like to continue discussion of these results, either as outlined above or based on what I send, I know an editor willing to publish their comments.

I do want to thank the 10 stellar translators who took the time to contribute their responses to this survey.



# Review of “Russian Submarines: How They’re Built”

Presentation by Robert Burns

Reviewed by Laurel Nolen



I was very happy to see this subject listed in the preliminary program for ATA58, and Robert Burns did not disappoint.

I started translating documents in the nuclear field in 1996, while finishing up my master’s at the Monterey Institute of International Studies (now the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey). MIIS has a think tank—the Center for Nonproliferation Studies—dedicated to the nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction, where I worked during my final semester and for six years after graduating, first on a part-time basis as a researcher, and ultimately as an editor and staff translator. Having learned about issues of nuclear power and nuclear weaponry from the policy angle, and lacking an engineering or military background, I have not personally seen most of the technology involved in one of my areas of specialization. One can’t exactly approach a naval base, à la Star Trek’s Pavel Chekhov, and ask, “Where are the nuclear vessels?”

Enter Robert Burns, a former military interpreter who had translated Russian source material for Ramsey Flynn’s 2004 book *Cry From the Deep*, an account of the *Kursk* submarine disaster. Burns provided a blueprints-to-commissioning overview of how submarines are built. His presentation included a great deal of useful terminology, a sample of which is presented below.

Burns began by noting that Russian State Standards (ГОСТ) and the Civil Code dictate the steps a submarine designer must take, beginning with exploratory research and then moving on to solving concrete tasks. Stage 1 of the R&D phase is to look at existing documentation and identify improvements that could be made. Stage 2 is to create mock-ups of the new design. Stage 3 is to create full-scale mock-ups. Burns pointed out that the Russian abbreviation НИОКР (научно-исследовательская и опытно-конструкторская работа), which I have usually rendered as just R&D, conceptually encompasses testing and evaluation stages so it should more properly be translated as RDT&E. I will be sure to keep this in mind in the future.

Depending on the tasks at hand, the submarine being designed will be either a diesel electric submarine or a nuclear submarine (Russia is also exploring air-independent propulsion systems). At present, Sevmash is Russia’s only producer of nuclear

submarines, while

Admiralteyskiye Verfy is the only diesel-electric submarine producer. Each type has its advantages and disadvantages: diesel-electric subs can be built more cheaply and quickly, but operate at shorter ranges, must surface every 2–3 days to run their generators and charge their batteries, and have less room to store provisions for the crew; nuclear submarines can run with no disruptions and have more room for storing crew provisions, but they are more expensive and time-consuming to build, and they generate waste that must be stored.

Burns showed a series of slides depicting the structures and components of different types of submarines. Modern submarines are made with two hulls: the outer hull (sometimes called the “light” hull) and the pressure hull (or “strong” hull). Dual-hull construction increases survivability when the submarine is hit. Russia’s Oscar-class submarines, of which the ill-fated *Kursk* is the best known, use the space between the two hulls for their missile tubes. Burns compared the structure of the United States’ Los Angeles-class submarines, which have two compartments, to Russia’s Oscar-class submarines, which have nine compartments—again, to improve survivability.

After discussing submarines’ physical structure, Burns moved on to describing the various stages of the construction process. These are keel-laying, placement of the keel authentication plaque (an object I’d heard of many times when translating texts on submarine dismantlement, but had never seen a picture of), roll-out (often mistaken for launch, but the submarine remains in dry dock at this stage), launch, fitting out (when all cables, equipment, and connections are installed—something I had assumed would take place while the submarine was still in the dry dock, but then again, why would you add a whole bunch of expensive electronics to a vessel before making sure it floats?), degaussing (reducing or neutralizing the submarine’s magnetic signature), factory/builder’s sea trials, and sonar calibration. These processes are then followed by the administrative procedures of ownership transfer, commissioning, and operational evaluation.

Burns noted that working with submarine terminology can be tricky, as engineers and the military sometimes use different terms for the same thing. He also mentioned struggling for a while to find the best rendering of a particular Russian term, and then later chancing to find the perfect equivalent for it in a random naval text; “operational evaluation” was one such serendipitous term.

The last part of the presentation was a discussion of the *Kursk* disaster. Burns related some fascinating, though very tragic, information about what the investigators of the accident found. It was a compelling end to an interesting session.

The table below gives a sample of the glossary Burns developed and presented in his session.

<b>Russian abbreviation</b>	<b>Russian Term</b>	<b>English Counterpart/ Translation</b>	<b>English Abbreviation</b>
	акт сдачи-приемки	ownership transfer document	
	акустический портрет	acoustic profile	
АПЛ	атомная подводная лодка	nuclear-powered submarine	SSN
АПРК	атомный подводный ракетный крейсер	nuclear-powered missile submarine	SSBN/ SSGN
АПРККР	атомный подводный ракетный крейсер с крылатыми ракетами	nuclear-powered cruise missile submarine	SSGN
	баллистическая ракета	ballistic missile	
	баллистическая ракета морского базирования	submarine-launched ballistic missile	SLBM
БРПЛ	баллистическая ракета подводных лодок	submarine-launched ballistic missile	SLBM
	введение в состав/ включение в состав	commissioning	
	вертикальный руль	rudder	
	выкатка	roll-out (N.B., sub is still in dry dock at this stage)	
	горизонтальный руль	diving plane	
ДПЛ/ДЭПЛ	дизельная/дизель-электронная подводная лодка	diesel-powered submarine	SS
	дифференциальная цистерна	trim tank	
	доковый комплекс	dry dock	
	достройка	fitting out (all cables, equipment, connections)	
	(заводские) ходовые испытания	(factory/builder's) sea trials	
	закладка	keel-laying	
	закладная доска	keel authentication plaque	
	кингстон	Kingston valve	
	легкий корпус	outer hull (in some sources, light hull)	
	межбортное пространство	free-flood space	
НИОКР	научно-исследовательская и опытно-конструкторская работа	research, development, testing, and evaluation	RDT&E

НАПЛ	неатомная подводная лодка	conventionally-powered submarine	SS/SSP
	опытная эксплуатация	operational evaluation	OPEVAL
ПЛАРБ	подводная лодка, атомная, баллистические ракеты	nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine	SSBN
ПЛАРК	подводная лодка, атомная, крылатые ракеты	nuclear-powered cruise missile submarine	SSGN
ПЛАСН	подводная лодка, атомная, специального назначения	nuclear-powered special-purpose (auxiliary) submarine	SSAN
	поисковая научно-исследовательская работа	exploratory research	
	прикладные работы	solution of concrete tasks	
	противокорабельная крылатая ракета	anti-ship cruise missile	ASCM
	противолодочная ракета	antisubmarine missile	
	противоназемная крылатая ракета; крылатая ракета против наземных целей	land-attack cruise missile	LACM
	прочный корпус	pressure hull (in some sources, strong hull)	
РКД	рабочая конструкторская документация	sum of all design documents for production, delivery, usage, and repairs of a product	
РПКСН	ракетный подводный крейсер стратегического назначения	nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine	SSBN
	спуск на воду	launch	
ИКУ	"удочка"	sonar-calibration truss	
	цистерна быстрого погружения	negative tank	
ЦГБ	цистерна главного балласта	main ballast tank	MBT
	цистерна кольцевого зазора	water-round torpedo tank	WRT
	шпигат	flood hole	

Laurel Nolen is a certified Russian-to-English translator specializing in aerospace and nuclear nonproliferation. She is a graduate of Illinois Wesleyan University and the Monterey Institute of International Studies. Laurel lives in Chicago and may be reached at [laurel@laurenolen.com](mailto:laurel@laurenolen.com).

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# SLAVFILE LITE: NOT BY WORD COUNT ALONE

Lydia Razran Stone

On a particularly gloomy day, casting around in my mind and files for something *lite* to fill this column, I remembered my attempts a few years ago to put a large number of Russian proverbs into English rhyme. I have selected a fair number of them and have decided that as a kind of challenge I will not cite the Russian originals. Readers who wish to compete are invited to send me their “guesses” as to which proverbs inspired which piece of doggerel. I promise to announce all winners in the next issue. Readers who would simply like to know the answers are invited to write to me ([lydiastone@verizon.net](mailto:lydiastone@verizon.net)) and ask for them—an answer sheet is all prepared. Of course, those who wish to ignore the whole thing are more than welcome to do so. Oh, one more thing: far from all of the original proverbs were known to me; I found the rest in books. If some of them are unknown to even the most well-versed (and proverbied) Russian native speakers, I apologize.



1. For someone else don't dig a pit;  
You yourself may fall in it.
2. Like first pancakes, all first tries  
Rarely get to win first prize.
3. May your road be smooth and clear  
And may it take you far from here.
4. If from wolves you'd keep away,  
Into the forest do not stray.
5. Once you've spent a night in bed,  
You will have a clearer head.
6. The devil has a tail and horns upon his brow,  
But it would be insane to take him for a cow.
7. When a craftsman is a fool,  
He blames each failure on some tool.
8. Each and every snipe  
His own swamp does hype.
9. If there's a trough full of edible stuff,  
Then pigs will discover it quickly enough.
10. I'd love to go to heaven,  
But, sadly, I have sinned.  
I do not think they'd ever  
Agree to let me in.
11. It wasn't me; I wasn't there.  
That horse you see is not my mare.
12. With seven nursemaids, you would think  
The baby's diaper would not stink.
13. Some folks till the ground,  
While others hang around.
14. They print these bills in first class ink;  
There's nothing there to make them stink.
15. Life's a bitch;  
Fate's a witch.
16. Each city, so the proverb says,  
Has its own peculiar ways.
17. Great pride precedes a fall,  
As Satan's tells us all.
18. If you give this guy a finger, you should understand  
The chances are near perfect he's going to want  
your hand.
19. It's true not just of wheels you know--  
They must be greased before they'll go.
20. Who will heed you when you cry?  
The tsar's too far and God's too high.
21. What's written down in black and white  
Isn't always true or right.
22. Invite a pig to dine with you;  
He'll dip his trotters in the stew.
23. Lobster are the only creatures  
Ill fate endows with rosy features.
24. I want to and I'm scared to,  
And Mama says don't dare to.
25. The alphabet he doesn't know,  
Can't tell an az from his elbow.
26. The fortune teller hedged her bet:  
"It will be either dry or wet."
27. If tempted by some rich man's sleigh,  
Don't sneak inside, just turn away.
28. Work won't run off like wolf or bear;  
Tomorrow it will still be there.

29. For normal men the world has rules  
But they do not apply to fools.
30. A rich man acts from his own plan;  
A poor one just does what he can.
31. Although you think your wolf's been tamed,  
He craves the forest, just the same.
32. See that gentle gray haired man?  
Avoid him, ladies, if you can.
33. Observing folks, I'd have to say.  
We all go nuts in our own way.
34. The sheep are living still;  
The wolves all ate their fill.
35. If you're born to be hung, it is fate's own decree  
You don't have to fear being drowned in the sea.
36. Oh my God, that girl is hot!  
But for the likes of us she's not!
37. Little children bring small woes,  
Which grow when they do, heaven knows.
38. Because my hut's so far from town,  
I never know what's going down.
39. There will be medals on my chest,  
Or else a bullet in my breast.
40. Just when things were going right,  
The devils spoiled them out of spite.
41. Unless you need to kill a flea,  
Don't ever do things hurriedly.
42. Someone whose money fills a vault  
Is rarely judged to be at fault.
43. A person sows seeds when he speaks,  
But when he listens, then he reaps.
44. Before I'd be a slave,  
I'd be buried in my grave.
45. All cats think fresh fish a treat,  
But many fear to wet their feet.
46. Those who're not afraid to dare  
Always get the lion's share.
47. When one misfortune comes your way,  
Expect another any day.
48. The only man who never errs  
Is one who nothing does or dares.
49. A man whose belly shouts for bread  
Hears nothing else inside his head.
50. Good reputations stay at home;  
Bad ones through the city roam.



## Part II.

Judging by the standing room only attendance at Alexey Rumyantsev's ATA58 talk on translating Trump, I am not the only person fascinated by how our current president's colorful language is rendered in the Russian press, especially when this language is highly relevant to Russia. So when the US headlines featured the quote "They must be laughing their asses off in Moscow," I immediately went to my favorite source of such information, Yahoo's Russian Translators Club (to join contact Nora at [norafavorov@gmail.com](mailto:norafavorov@gmail.com)). As always, I was not disappointed. I want to thank Oksana Haby, Elena Sheverdinova, Evgeny Pobegalov, Irina Knizhnik, and "Tom B." who did not further identify himself, for sending me the renditions, all different, that they encountered.

Before listing them let me give my own analysis of the English original. In my opinion, while "laugh their asses off," contains a rude and, some might even say unpresidential, word, aside from the fact that, like the more acceptable "their heads off," it is physiologically impossible, it is not directly insulting to those in Moscow. Of course, it is possible that any violation of

ostensibly polite diplomatic language might be considered insulting in high diplomatic circles.

The Russian translations that were sent to me fall into two categories. Either the original's lapse into a low and crud register is ignored and the translation simply renders the meaning "laugh a great deal." Or, at the other end of the spectrum, an involuntary loss of control over physiological functions is referred to even more crudely than in the original. Neither one of these approaches seems to me to render the meaning and tone of the original accurately.

Here are the quotations.

### **Type 1, elimination of crude language.**

"В Москве смеются до упаду"  
<http://rusnext.ru/> and many other sites. (In Moscow they are laughing so hard they are falling down.)

"Россия смеется над Америкой", Kommersant.  
(Russia is laughing at America.)

"В Москве смеются"  
<https://tvzvezda.ru> (They are laughing in Moscow.)

## Type 2, even cruder language.

“В Москве над нами смеются до усрачки!”  
[meduz.io](http://meduz.io) (In Moscow they are laughing at us so hard they are losing control of their sphincters!)

Another informant says he or she read *уписались со смеху* somewhere, but the source was not found. (They were laughing so hard they wet themselves.)

Into Russian translators and interpreters, what would you have done?



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## Current and Future Certified Translators: Are You Aware of All Sources of Continuing Education Points?

Lydia Razran Stone



I have never paid a great deal of attention to the ins and outs of continuing education points for certified members simply because, when the requirement was introduced more than 10 years ago, I was already over the age limit. (I do not know whether the age limit has to do with thinking that we, the “elder statesmen” of the ATA,

had surely learned enough by our 60<sup>th</sup> birthdays, or with the idea that we were probably no longer capable of much additional learning.) However, even though I have not missed a conference since 1991 and thus would have easily earned enough credits anyway, I am grateful not to have had one more thing to keep track of all these years.

Recently, however, I became interested in the requirements because I wanted to make sure that certified translators who volunteer for *SlavFile* and other SLD activities know what they can claim for credit and I hoped that providing this information might also encourage others to volunteer.

To summarize, to maintain certification a translator must accrue and maintain evidence of 20 points of continuing education over a three-year period. Considering the relative generosity with which points are doled out for activities, this total should not be a burden to reach, even for translators who do not attend the annual conference. And a one-year deferral may be requested in extenuating circumstances, e.g., military service, serious illness, or other hardship. Descriptions of the current requirements and how to meet them are not all that easy to locate on the ATA site—at least they were not for me—but they can be

found at [www.atanet.org/certification/aboutcont\\_record\\_requirments.php](http://www.atanet.org/certification/aboutcont_record_requirments.php). Since the current requirements have been in place for more than 10 years, and much has changed in that period, a task force has been formed to update them. However, such mills tend to grind slowly.

Some, including me, may object to the ceiling placed on the number of points a translator can accrue in certain categories over a given three-year period. For example, a translator may claim no more than 8 points (Category C) for writing books or articles (the maximum of 8 points is awarded for a single book or four articles; additional publications earn nothing). A certified translator may claim a maximum of only 6 points for volunteering (Category E) in any way for one or more translation organizations or for performing *pro bono* language services (with 6 points the equivalent of 12 hours of volunteer work for most activities).

The ATA website contains a page [www.atanet.org/certification/aboutcont\\_lowcost.php](http://www.atanet.org/certification/aboutcont_lowcost.php) with very helpful general suggestions for continuing education point-earning activities that require little or no financial outlay. The list of web-based activities and local events throughout the country that have already been approved for CEP credits, [www.atanet.org/calendar/](http://www.atanet.org/calendar/), is likewise highly recommended to *SlavFile* readers.

I am very grateful to David Stephenson and Caron Mason for their help in preparing this article.

*SlavFile* editor, Lydia Razran Stone, has been working with ATA Certification since 1995, when she became a Russian into English grader. The current error assessment scale, based on powers of two, was her suggestion. She has taken an active role in writing the two most recent versions of Into English Grading Standards and has just volunteered to work on developing an updated version of Continuing Education Requirements for Certification. She may be reached at [lydiastone@verizon.net](mailto:lydiastone@verizon.net)



# Two Anecdotes from *The Spirits of Heinrich Böll's House* by Josip Osti

Martha Kosir



*The Spirits of Heinrich Böll's House* (Duhovi hiše Heinricha Bölla, 2016) is a collection, over 400 pages long, of short stories and anecdotes (some only a few lines long) describing Josip Osti's encounters with fellow writers and poets working in South Slavic languages. In

what the author describes as a "kaleidoscopic novel," he recreates, through a fascinating mixture of humor and tragedy, the rich and vibrant Yugoslav literary scene. Many of the characters described are eccentric and highly unconventional, making the collection all the more interesting.

Having spent a number of years translating Osti's poetry from Slovenian, I could not overcome the temptation to try my hand at his prose as well. The experience, although very rewarding, proved to be a lot more challenging than I had anticipated. I ultimately concluded that translating Osti's prose was a lot more arduous than translating his poetry (or any other poetry I've attempted). To most literary translators, this observation is probably surprising. I too was surprised.

I had particular concerns about translating the humor infusing so many of Osti's stories. The many nuances that worked so well in the Slovenian language often seemed to fall flat and dry in English. One of the main challenges was capturing that humor while decoding the author's frequent highly complex and compound sentences (so very popular in the Slovenian language). I was constantly in suspense, wondering whether I would be able overcome the challenges presented by each new sentence of this type.

As I was working through the stories that Osti had so masterfully crafted, I was reminded of Mark Twain's famous essay "The Awful German Language." I felt as if Osti's eloquent prose suddenly had to be put on what I imagined as a sentence chopping block. The beautiful and long sentences (sometimes extending across an entire paragraph) that worked so perfectly in Slovenian had to be hacked up into smaller pieces in order to make sense in the English language and satisfy the expectations of English syntax.

Accustomed to writing in English, I was keenly aware of the need to avoid run-on sentences at all costs. Although some of the Slovenian sentences were

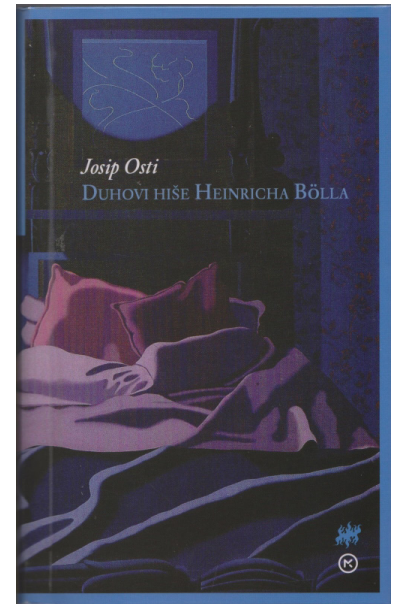
short and to the point, the vast majority seemed to continue infinitely. I had no choice but to rearrange parts of the sentences and repackage them into new units, to ensure that the meaning was conveyed as accurately as possible.

Even though I was working with a completely different language (yet one as complex as German), I felt like Twain, who described the average German sentence as a "sublime and impressive curiosity." The never-ending accumulation of information often felt overwhelming (something I never seemed to have to worry about when translating poetry).

Twain understood, but deplored, the fact that German verbs normally came at the end of a very long sentence. Translating many of Osti's sentences, I similarly kept anticipating that final and critical piece of information that would need to be tied into the rest of my translated sentence. To make matters worse, the grammar checker on my computer kept flagging my translated sentences, reminding me they were becoming too long, despite my best efforts. Not only did I have to put Osti's sentences on a chopping block, but also my own sentences as well.

Despite the challenges, I very much enjoyed translating these stories, and I am far from done. I keep being reminded of the introductory story in Osti's novel, where he points out that "there are no recipes or rules for creative writing." Writing, according to Osti, "is art that ultimately captures and transcends content and technique. It becomes an adventure, an endless search that is filled with great uncertainty. The best literary works though are fruits born precisely out of this search" (from *The Spirits of Heinrich Böll's House*, translation mine).

My experience translating Osti's stories was an adventure that kept me wanting more. The anecdotes below are my humble tribute to the artist's genius and another step on my continued journey through the endless possibilities offered by languages.



Risto Trifković, a storyteller and occasional novelist, often talked to me about a literary evening that had taken place toward the end of the 1950s in a mining town not too far from Sarajevo. The participants were some of the best Sarajevan poets and writers at the time, among them Meša Selimović, Mak Dizdar, Ahmet Hromadžić, Miodrag Žalica and many more whose names I no longer recall. Despite its size, the town, like countless other small towns, boasted a large cultural center that was even bigger than the local school. All cultural and social events used to be held there.

Although the bus carrying the writers had been running late due to a breakdown, they reached the town on time. Not just on time, but fifteen minutes early. At the bus station, the director of the cultural center welcomed everyone personally, elated and relieved that they all had made it. With a slight stutter, he greeted each writer cordially and extended his hand for a handshake, seemingly facing a terrible quandary in trying to determine how hard to squeeze each writer's hand and for how long. After all, they were academics and not political or business leaders. Hromadžić, who specialized in children's literature, and Trifković, who was among the youngest in the group, saved him from this predicament by saying: "Don't worry, Mr. Director, just relax. Talent isn't contagious." The ice was broken, a heavy weight was lifted off the director's shoulder, and everyone was able to laugh about it cordially.

The director proceeded to lead the group to the cultural center, which was located right next to the bus station. They walked through a large empty auditorium to his office, behind the stage, somewhere

at the end of a dark labyrinth of corridors. They kept looking at each other, convinced that this literary evening was going to play out like many others before. They expected to read in front of a handful of listeners, who would be made to seem even fewer by the immensity of the auditorium.

The director offered them coffee and alcohol. As he talked about the natural beauties of the area, the history of the town and its rapid economic development, they kept glancing at the clock and listened to what he was saying with only half an ear... Five minutes after seven, the time the event was set to commence, a female employee knocked on the door, opened it only slightly, nodded her head, and then closed the door behind her again. The director turned to the writers and told them it was time to take the stage. When they arrived on the stage and took their places at the table, they were more than astonished. The auditorium was filled to capacity, and some of the younger crowd were even standing.

Although the director introduced them as the best-known Bosnian-Herzegovinian bookkeepers (*knjigovodje*), instead of writers (*književnici*), they pretended not to hear him. They were exceedingly pleased to be there, not only because of the director's reference to their fame as one that "extended beyond the republic's borders," but also and most importantly, because of the packed auditorium. The audience's rapt attention to their readings and the long and enthusiastic applause that followed gave them even greater pleasure.

Whenever Trifković spoke about this event, he would always emphasize that he could not recall any other event like it. Nothing could compare to the concentrated attention and enthusiasm of the crowd that evening. He felt that none of the other writers could possibly recall a similar event.

Although he was sitting next to the director and noticed that his right arm jerked a bit after each reading, and that this motion was followed by the audience's loud and long applause, he had not paid much attention to this quirk. After all, his own right arm would occasionally jerk involuntarily as well ever since his imprisonment on Goli Otok, an experience he never spoke or wrote about. Clearly pleased with the visit and the reception by the crowd, like everyone else, Trifković had paid little attention to the fact that the director's right hand, again for unknown reasons, also jerked right before the audience members began to leave the auditorium. It was something he could only attribute to a tic.

After the event, the director took the writers back to his office. Once again, they drank coffee, and this time they could enjoy unlimited libations. They joked and laughed, until Meša Selimović said to the director:

"Frankly speaking, I am astonished by the tremendous turnout and the intense attention to the readings. I am also amazed by the reception of everything we read."

And he added:

"Tell me, please, how did you manage to bring in such a huge and receptive crowd?"

The director replied:

"It was quite easy. Since the people from our town don't care for literary evenings, we bring in, as we did tonight, people from the home for the deaf, located very close to here."

A long silence was interrupted by Hromadžić, who glanced at the clock and said:

"Let's hurry, so we don't miss the bus."

And they all rushed off, remaining silent during their entire ride back to Sarajevo.



Izet Sarajlić mentioned to me several times that Dobriša Cesarić was a magical poet and an unusual man. During his rather long life, he seldom wrote and produced relatively few poems, but all of them, a total of about sixty, were like wonderfully crafted linguistic lace. Each of the poems reflected harmony and beauty, not only in the limited sense of what the critics of the time considered harmonious and beautiful but also in a much more universal and deeper sense. One could say that his poems embodied the best characteristics of poetry, regardless of time or language.

To this, Izet would add:

“Gustav Krklec, a master of the sonnet, a jovial man and a wine lover, produced a brilliant analysis in which he concluded that Dobriša’s upbeat poems, if read backwards, starting at the end, could in fact turn into sad ones and vice versa. Dobriša, who was generally laconic, responded to this analysis with the remark: ‘And who reads poems backwards?’”

Izet continued:

“I’ve been friends with Gustav for many years, and he’s shared with me a number of things about a much younger Dobriša. He told me, for example, how they once read their poetry at one of the Zagreb’s high schools. Gustav told the students, who had crammed into the school’s gymnasium, that in his early youth, he had especially loved Dobriša’s poems. He even pointed out that they had a definitive effect on his decision to become a poet. The students applauded for a long time. Even though Dobriša did not say anything at that time, he could not hide his satisfaction. This was easy to discern from the mysterious grin on his round, gleaming face. It was not until ten years later that he asked Gustav, as they sat alone at a table at

one of the local inns, how he was able to read his poems in his early youth when he, Dobriša, was the younger of the two. One could hear in his voice that he had been trying for a long time to solve this mystery, which had loomed over him like a terrible nightmare. He also wanted to know how his poems could have influenced Gustav’s decision to become a poet, since he, Dobriša, had published his first poem after Gustav had already published his first collection. Gustav did not answer him. He called the waiter and ordered another liter of red wine, which the two drank in silence.”

Izet also told me the following:

“We all knew that Dobriša writes only poetry. Nothing else. And he lives exclusively on what he writes and publishes. Generally, only a few poems per year. When I worked at one of the publishing houses, I explicitly suggested that Dobriša write a foreword for the publication of selected poems by the Herzegovina-born Croatian poet Antun Branko Šimić. Everyone agreed, including Dobriša, who accepted the offer immediately. He even thanked me for having thought of him. Months went by, but we received no word from him. During this time, he was not to be seen at his usual local pub or on the street. There was simply no sign of him. Since the deadline for submitting the text had long passed, and Dobriša did not have a telephone at home, I decided to pay him a visit. I knocked on the door for a long time, and when he finally opened it, I was stunned. His typically clean-shaven face was overgrown with a dense black beard. His clear blue eyes were bloodshot and had bags under them. I walked into the room, but before I could ask him how the writing of the foreword was going and whether he would finish it shortly, I saw papers on his desk and all over the floor. There was only one sentence on each sheet of paper, each worded slightly differently: “The poet Antun Branko

Šimić was born in 1898 in Drinovci. The poet Antun Branko Šimić was born in Drinovci in 1898. In 1898, the poet Antun Branko Šimić was born in Drinovci. In the year 1898, the poet Antun Branko Šimić was born in Drinovci ...” I realized that there was no end in sight to his mission to find the right words. I therefore suggested that he put an end to his torment. I sensed his immediate relief, and that a huge burden had been taken off his shoulders. He still received the remuneration he had been offered, but another writer’s text was published in the foreword. That same evening, Dobriša, clean-shaven again, was back sitting in the city café’s garden. As was customary for him, he was observing the crowds of passers-by with one eye, and the clouds rushing across the sky with the other.

One time, when he came to Sarajevo, he paid me a visit and brought me his latest book. All the poems included had been published previously but were now arranged in a slightly different order. One or two were left out, because over the years he had become increasingly critical of his own poetry. When I saw that the book lacked a dedication, I asked him to write something for me. Suddenly it was as if a cloud passed over his face. He excused himself and said that he needed some peace and quiet. I left him alone in my office, closed the door behind me, and went into the kitchen. I made coffee and waited. And then I waited some more. In the meantime, the coffee got cold, so I finished my cup first, and then his. And I kept waiting. About an hour later, he quietly opened the office door and stood in the doorway. Drenched in sweat, he resembled a man who had dug up and carried heavy rocks the whole day and night. With a trembling hand, he passed the book back to me. On the first page it was written: *To Izet - Dobriša*. And the date.”