

INTERVIEW WITH KENNETH KATZNER

## “...a dictionary of this kind is never finished”

In this issue of the *SlavFile* we are pleased to publish an interview with the distinguished linguist, lexicographer and Kremlin-watcher, Kenneth Katzner. Mr. Katzner is best known for his familiar red-covered English-Russian Russian-English dictionary published by John Wiley and considered by many to be the best general Russian dictionary on the market today. He has also authored an interesting and informative book entitled *The Languages of the World*. Here he talks about his work on the dictionary and other subjects of interest to translators and interpreters of Slavic languages. The interview was conducted by **Laura Esther Wolfson**, assistant editor of *SlavFile*.

### **Please tell me how you came to study Russian.**

The decision dates back to the early days of the cold war, when it seemed that we were in for a long and bitter struggle with the Soviet Union. My first exposure to the language was an introductory course at Cornell University. Upon graduation I entered the Air Force and was immediately assigned to a yearlong intensive Russian program at Syracuse University. In one way or another I have been involved with Russian ever since. I might mention that while at Cornell I also took a course in Modern European Fiction taught by the legendary Vladimir Nabokov. We read, and dissected—as only Nabokov could—five novels, including *Anna Karenina* and *Dead Souls*. Nabokov was forever fussing about trivial matters of English translation. He insisted with great vehemence, for example, that the English title of *Anna Karenina* should have been *Anna Karenin*.

### **What led you to compile the English-Russian Russian-English Dictionary?**

It was not the way you might have guessed. No one, at least not in this country, would ever decide on his own to compile a full-size two-way bilingual dictionary from scratch. It is really too much for one person to attempt. (In Russia, of course, it is done by large teams of people).

What happened was that in 1965 I met, quite by chance, the head of a small company that compiled, on contract with publishers, various kinds of reference books—English dictionaries, small encyclopedias, crossword puzzle dictionaries, and the like. He decided to do a series of bilingual dictionaries for five major languages, including Russian. But only the Spanish and Russian were begun and the Russian one was floundering. He asked me if I would take the

material he had on hand and whip it into shape in one year, so that he could get it published and begin to recoup some of his investment.

But it was not that simple. The material on hand was of little value. He kept me on for a second year, but during that year he died. The company continued in existence for another year and then was closed down.

Eventually the manuscript—50,000 index cards filling two huge file cabinets—passed into my possession. Fifteen more years passed—15 years of continually refining and reworking it—before I finally found a publisher and the book saw the light of day.

### **What distinguishes your dictionary from other nonspecialized Russian-English English-Russian dictionaries?**

Of all the two-way Russian dictionaries on the market, only the Oxford can compare to it in size and scope. But unlike the Oxford, this one is based on American English. And the two halves, having been compiled by the same person, are mirror images of each other—i.e., any word given as an equivalent in one half is listed in its own right in the other half. The Oxford, for all its virtues, was compiled by two different people, one ten years after the other, and was originally published as separate volumes. Eventually they were combined into one, but little or no effort was made to coordinate the two halves.

### **What are the greatest problems or difficulties in compiling a bilingual dictionary?**

I would say they are two. The first has to do with words that have more than one meaning. Of course,

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## MESSAGE FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR

by *Susana Greiss*

As I am sure you are aware, many new divisions are currently being formed or are already in operation within the ATA. Ann Macfarlane, who, in addition to being our Assistant Administrator, is Chair of the Divisions Committee, tells me that over 3,000 members of ATA belong to one division or another. In view of all this exciting activity, ATA is thinking of ways to help the divisions develop their programs and prosper. Effective with our last issue, ATA had done the printing and mailing of the *SlavFile*, thus freeing us of this onerous task. ATA is also discussing the division directories and I feel confident that we will have a directory or a separate database by 1998. We will know more about this by the time the Fall issue comes out.

In the meantime, I have embarked on a new project, a listing of members by language pairs. When I started this task, I little realized how daunting a job it would be. When new members join the division, I send them a questionnaire to fill out and return to me; in the last 3-month period, 53 people joined the division, but only about 10 or 12 returned a completed questionnaire. In addition, partly because originally the questionnaire was created primarily for Russian translators, we assumed that members translated either from or into Russian, or both. Other languages were listed as secondary languages. As a result, responses are sometimes hard to interpret; when members list a language, at times it is not clear whether they merely know that language, or translate into and/or from it.

Recently I have had several inquiries for referrals, including requests for translators of Azerbaijani and Bulgarian. Although I was able to give the customer some names, I could not be sure that I was able to identify *all* members who worked in those languages. (The Azerbaijani translator I recommended worked out so well, that the customer took the trouble to call back and thank me. He now needed a Bulgarian translator!)

I urge all those of you who have not returned the questionnaire to please do so and mark your working languages clearly. If you do not have a questionnaire and would to fill one out, please give me a call or send a fax (718-272-2110). I would be happy to hear from you.

### SLAVFILE ADVERTISING POLICY

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All ads are payable in advance. To reserve an ad:

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  2. Send artwork by mail, and advertising copy in electronic format, to the Layout Editor, Galina Raff.
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**Professional job offers from employers are published free.**

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Measurements for a quarter-page display ad may not exceed 95 mm width by 120 mm height.

To place artwork with different space requirements (e.g., landscape layout) contact Ms. Raff directly to discuss specifics.

## SLAVFILE NOTES AND MAILBAG

We have obtained a review copy of *Two Worlds, One Art. Literary Translation in Russia and America* by Lauren G. Leighton, Northern Illinois University Press, 1991, 241 pages of text. Would anyone wishing to review this book please contact the editors. Your reward, aside from the fame and fortune attendant on publication in these pages, will be that you get to keep the book. Also, if anyone sees or knows of a book suitable for review here, we will be happy to provide that person with ATA stationery so s/he can write for a review copy. You must, however, promise faithfully to review the work within 4 months.

**MEA CULPA.** We regret to point out that a relatively serious error crept in to the article (written by Lydia Stone) on the SLD Survey in last March's ATA Chronicle. On page 29, in the description of responses, to question 1, E>R was twice transposed with R>E, giving the impression, for example, that 72% of translators whose native language is English, and none of those for whom it is Russian, translate from English to Russian only. If you have been walking around all spring with such grievously erroneous impressions, we are most sincerely sorry.

**Optimists and Pessimists.** In that same Chronicle article, the author asked for suggestions as to why there turned out to be significantly more "newcomers" (those translating 10 years or less) among those optimistic about the professional future for Slavic translators than there were among the "pessimists." Extrapolating from her own experience, **Cynthia Keesan**, of Ann Arbor, MI, (who is a scientific translator from virtually all of the Slavic languages) sent us a well-reasoned reply stating the following. "In 1990, the bottom dropped out of the Slavic translation market in science, as Eastern Europe simply stopped publishing any science during the recent upheavals. There has been an extremely slow recovery since then, as scientists have left or publish in English now. At about the same time the scientists started immigrating here so did translators, meaning more competition for reduced amounts of work. Since 1990, the situation has gradually improved, with a variety of business-related work on the upswing. This (1997) is the first year that work seems to have recovered to the level of the late. Translators who started before the great immigration of the early 1990s would have seen their workloads drop dramatically without return to pre-1990 levels. Those who started after this point would have had a steady, increase in work. This is a real difference, not just an attitude."

After receiving this letter, we had a long conversation with Cynthia. She agreed that another reason for the post-Cold War decline in our work was that the U.S. government no longer sponsored the translation of virtually every word published in the Soviet Union. It was more difficult to figure out exactly why things have im-

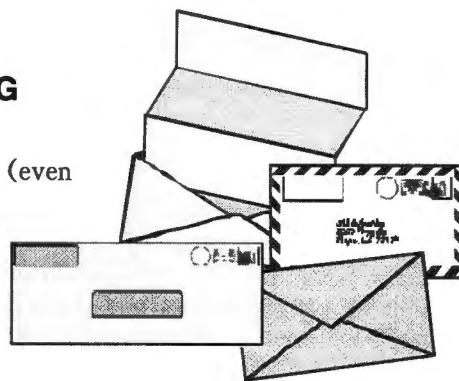
proved lately, (even reaching a dramatic level for some translators this winter and spring). Cynthia says

that she used to translate drug research and now translates the proceedings or evidence for drug trials. We were reminded of the mistaken optimism of many friends of Russian translators who, starting in about 1989, predicted that we would be turning away work once all the joint ventures got going. Ironically, this prediction did not come true for many of us until the joint ventures started going sour, leading to a great increase in law suits and thus in legal translation. We certainly are not comfortable with the idea of becoming akin to undertakers, whose business is only good when things are going badly for the rest of the community.

**Universities as sources of work for translators.** In response to Susana Greiss' discussion of the job market for Russian translators, **Nora Favorov** of Chapel Hill, NC, wrote us to add one more source: universities. "It seems that academia, too, needs to be 'taught' that translation is a profession and not just something anyone who knows two languages can be counted on to manage. I am listed in the directories of both ATA and the Carolina Association of Translators and Interpreters—tools that I *always* use when I refer clients in need of translation help that I am unable to provide—but the vast majority of my jobs come as a result of the fact that I am a graduate student in the Slavic Languages Department of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Movie producers, doctors, lawyers, academics, families involved in adoption—in North Carolina everyone who needs a Russian-English or English-Russian translator calls our department, although it is primarily a department of literature and linguistics, not one that emphasizes language proficiency. [While it is true that] jobs often go to graduate students who actually do have the ability to handle them in a professional manner, I cringe to think of all the other cases where jobs have gone to students who simply have neither the language background nor the proper "professional" attitude needed to do a decent job.

"Many of the jobs have come from academic departments that have recently received large grants to produce some kinds of training materials in Russian, or to study some sociological phenomenon in the former Soviet Union. I would recommend that any [SLD member] living in an academic community find out what departments at the local university are involved in such projects and offer his or her services. It's very nice when poor, hungry

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# SLAVFILE LITE: NOT BY WORD COUNT ALONE

by Lydia Razran Stone

Two readers sent in contributions to our list on assimilation to Russian or American Cultures. **Nora Favorov** writes, "You know you are beginning to grow a Russian soul when...you catch yourself putting ласкательные endings on perfectly American names... and only with people you really like, at that..."

**Tanya Gesse**, collaborating with her mother, Vera, send the following supplement to the other half of the list.

You know you are beginning to assimilate to American culture when:

1. You occasionally use paper plates for your guests.
2. You telephone before dropping by.
3. You go out in the winter without a hat.
4. You walk in the snow in dress shoes.
5. You sing "Happy Birthday."
6. You shower every day.
7. You change your clothes daily.
8. You drink vodka with ice or orange juice.
9. You buy mushrooms at the supermarket.
10. You think of dandelions as weeds.

Surely there are other readers out there who have noticed interesting or amusing ways they differ from their monocultural friends. It is not too late to send us your contribution to this feature!

I discovered the other day that one of my friends was reading *The Brothers Karamazov* for the first time. This inspired me to dig out and polish up a verse plot summary I wrote more than 25 years ago for a contest (I didn't win).

*The Brothers Karamazov* by Fyodor Dostoyevskiy  
Summarized by LR Stone

Son and father, vile Fyodor,  
Become enamored of a wh\_\_\_\_,  
Grushenka, a saintly sinner,  
Mitya stakes his life to win 'er.  
Katerina's vowed to wed him  
T' isn't love but more like bedlam.  
Enter others of the clan—  
Mild Alyosha, grim Ivan.  
Each night Fyodor awaits a visitor.  
Time-out for the Grand Inquisitor.  
God's world's unjust, it's hard to stick it;  
Ivan is giving back his ticket.  
Alyosha's faith is tried as well,  
Zossima dies and starts to smell.  
Fyodor's murdered! Money's gone!  
Police suspect his oldest son.  
Smerdyakov had done the killing;  
Ivan is guilty - he was willing.  
The trial is held with much ado.  
The heart alone can know what's true.  
The law can't see the heart's interior:  
Mitya's sentenced to Siberia.  
Escape is planned but nothing's certain.  
Cheer Alyosha, drop the curtain.

Didn't someone once say that parody is the sincerest form of admiration. No? Well, someone should have!

A few years ago, I translated a cycle of animal poems by Boris Zakhoder. I recently discovered that there were more of them, and I have added the following two to my collection. I call the pair "Rumination on Ruminants."

## БИЗОН

Никакого нет резона  
У себя держать БИЗОНА,  
Так как это жвачное  
Грубое и мрачное.

## ЯК

С виду очень грозен ЯК,  
А ведь он — большой добряк:  
Говорят, на нём в Тибете  
Смело ездят даже дети!

## THE BISON

Why keep a sullen, grouchy bison?  
As house pets go, he's not a nice 'un!

## THE YAK

Although he looks a scary beast,  
The yak's not vicious in the least!  
Why, in his homeland of Tibet,  
He's treated as a children's pet.

**Stray Words.** In a novel I've been reading ("A Stolen Tongue," Sheri Holman, The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1997.) The hero, a medieval monk, says that, though he loves languages, he refuses to translate, because "the world is too full of stray words." In contrast, it seems to me that what I like most about translating is the "stray" words. As in the biblical parable, I get more satisfaction from bringing a single stray into the fold, than from the docile tractability of a hundred herdable words. Here are some strays that I have discovered wandering around in odd places lately.

First, how do you suppose the name Вc. Мейерхольд, got to be part of the label, otherwise in English, of my white ESPRIT jeans (certainly bought at a resale shop, probably inherited from one of my daughters)? The Cyrillic was not added later by someone but is an integral part of the original factory inserted label. It is such trivial mysteries that make life intriguing. Speaking of odd places, I was reading a Russian magazine для взрослых, (simply for terminology, you understand) and came across the Russian equivalent of *Slam, bam, thank-you, ma'am!* — «Туда, сюда, обратно!» Or how about, a Russian translation of *urban sprawl*, — «городское расползание»? Working on a translation involving construction terms I could not for the life of me figure out what the adjectives «переходный», «непереходный» meant when applied to

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such things as ceilings and the trenches in which pipes are laid. After I discussed this with a native Russian speaker, we figured it out: the reference is to whether or not there is a *crawl space*.

To hark back to culture-contact, my roommates at Colorado Springs and I came up with the coinages of "AmbiSlavism" and "AmbiAmericanism" to refer to the strong but mixed emotions we all seem to have to a culture not our own that we are heavily involved with. Please send me your own collections of strays.

Meanwhile, **Christina Sever**, who works from Russian into English, has sent us her list of the 10 Russian words she most hates to have to translate. I'm sure this list will provoke a cry or at least groan of recognition from the great majority of her colleagues. Here is Christina's list:

My Ten Most Despised (and Overused) Russian Words

*агрегат*—pretty big group standing around in pretty close proximity

*база*—useful stuff

*блок*—closed thing or part of a thing

*комплекс*—group of interacting things

*массовый*—having to do with large stuff or a lot of it

*материальный*—stuffiness

*объект*—open thing

*организация*—another group standing around, a little more orderly

*эффективный*—good or better, depending on context

*качественный*—even better

To develop the English to Russian counterpart to this delightful list, I solicited input from three English-Russian translators.

From **Inna Oslon**: I do have a special dislike for some English words, mostly for the politically correct terms, such as, underprivileged, mentally challenged, special education; emotionally impaired, sexual harassment, minority enterprise, etc.. very often they lose their flavor in translation, as real Russian tends to biblical simplicity in such cases (низы общества, умственно отсталые, инвалиды, приставание).

I hate *signature* in *signature color*, *signature group*, and the like. I like *challenge* as such in most cases, but I hate to translate it. I have an ambivalent attitude to *control* (verb and noun). It can be translated in several ways and sometimes there is insufficient context to choose the right Russian word. *Control* is also one of those tricky words that are used to obscure real meanings. When you hear that after a proposed operation, your disease will be *under control*, this is likely to mean either that it is not a real disease, or that it cannot be treated, or that the prime beneficiary of this costly surgery is likely to be the doctor.

From **Maria Zarlengo**: What I really do not like is when one English word requires a long and awkward translation or explanation. I thought about your request ... and came up with the following words that I find "inconvenient" to translate: *privacy*, *philosophy* (meaning main principles of a company, etc.), *affordable*, *indemnify*, *reasonable* (as in *reasonable efforts*), *equity*, *security interest*, *timeshare*, and *if any*. The last one is really bad, because there is no way to shorten it in a Russian version of a legal document.

From **Natalia Kissock**: I could come up with 5 words that I always feel uncomfortable about translating. I suppose this list is strange, since they are just basic words with clear meanings. But let me try to explain the reasons.

*enjoy*: We Russians [are filled with] so much sadness that we are ready to share it with everyone. We are sad about ourselves, politics, environment, the whole universe, etc. That is why I always feel that this word (even in Russian) is sort of foreign.

*serve*: The very idea of good service is foreign to a Russian. After 5 years in the U.S. I am still surprised by good service.

*control*, *operation* (I do not have a clue why, I just do not like these words in texts.)

*things* (Br-r-r, no reason).

Please, readers, send in your own lists, as well as any brilliant suggestions for the translation of the words listed above.

**Please note:** The Literary Division will be holding another poetry reading—coffee house at next Fall's Annual ATA convention. This time we are making a special effort to find a location without crystal chandeliers and silver plated coffee urns, to increase verisimilitude, i.e., resemblance to the original coffeehouses of the 50s, 60s and 70s that us superannuated hippie types remember with such nostalgia. Everyone who writes or translates poems is encouraged to come and read a selection from his or her work (in any language); there is no editorial selection, if you want to read it, we are delighted to hear it. Also folk-singers and guitar (balalaika, etc.) players are urgently solicited. Amateur status is no impediment, what's a few sour notes, ungainly lines, or failed metaphors among lovers of culture?

**SlavFile Lite Recommends.** Do others have the problem of visitors from Russia who *in principle* want to go to restaurants and eat exotic/American fare, but do not seem to like what you suggest they order? Try taking them to any decent Chinese restaurant and ordering a "Pu-Pu Platter" for them. It has worked for me.



## THE VIEW FROM SEATTLE

by Ann G. Macfarlane, Assistant Administrator

First, some Division business. As our readers will see from the Nominating Committee's invitation elsewhere in this issue, this fall we will elect new officers for the Slavic Language Division at our annual conference in San Francisco. Some of you know that after serving as Assistant Administrator for two terms, I had hoped to offer myself as a candidate for the office of Administrator. My circumstances have changed, however, and I will not be able to run for that office.

I would like to ask all of you who have valued the Slavic Language Division, and participated in its activities over these last years, to consider either (a) running for office, or (b) encouraging a colleague to do so. The duties are light compared to the rewards. I can attest that the rewards of serving this Division are substantial. It has been a pleasure for me to get to know fellow members; to collaborate with the editors of the *SlavFile* in producing our quarterly newsletter; and to enjoy the camaraderie and professional growth that have come from our conferences. I look forward to participating in SLD's activities in the years ahead, as a dedicated member and colleague to you all.

On the wider division front, the Divisions Committee is working over a proposal which we hope will improve the functioning of all the divisions within the ATA, including our own SLD. Details will be forthcoming in the next *SlavFile*. I know that such organizational matters can seem intrinsically dull, but in this case I have found that once division members become engaged with the issues, opinions and feelings run rather deep. We would appreciate your input to the proposals, so "listen up" when the time comes, please!

This morning I had the privilege of taking part in a panel presentation on "Getting the most out of interpreting and translating services," presented by the Foundation for Russian-American Economic Cooperation (FRAEC). Members of the FRAEC, perhaps more savvy than most about the need to obtain high-quality language services, said that they appreciated our three-part presentation, which touched on some specific issues in Russian/English cross-cultural communication. They asked where Seattle stood in the matter of client awareness. I had to say that the impression I have, from the ATA, is that clients everywhere in this country need to be educated about our services, and how to get the most from them. If you have the chance to do some client education, please share your experiences with the *SlavFile*.

Monday's headline concerned the acquittal last week of three Russian nationals who had been charged with extortion in Federal court. This complicated case revolved around a fifteen-minute Russian conversation in SeaTac airport which had been secretly tape-recorded. During the trial, the transcript and translation of this conversation

were gone over point by point, with language issues vital to the outcome. (One of the defendants, from Daghestan, spoke Tabassaran as his first language, so the analysis extended even to the level of whether he had mentally interpreted a Tabassaran idiom into Russian, and then been misconstrued by the person he was speaking to). Counsel for the defense Allen Bentley has generously provided us with a copy of this transcript, which includes both the original Russian and an English translation. If you would like to puzzle over questions of current Russian idiom in a criminal case, please drop me a line and I will gladly send a copy on.

Finally, later this month a high-level delegation will arrive in the Pacific Northwest to commemorate the 60th anniversary of Valerie Chkalov's heroic 1937 flight from Moscow to Vancouver, Washington, the first nonstop flight between Moscow and US via the North Pole. At the business conference that will form part of the observances, high-quality interpretation has been given great emphasis. While client education is an issue everywhere, I am happy to report that our professions do seem to be developing slightly greater visibility on the local radar screen.



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SEEKING NOMINATIONS FOR SLAVIC LANGUAGE DIVISION  
ADMINISTRATOR AND ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR

Attention!

*"The duties are delightful  
and the privileges great!"*  
*Sir William Gilbert, on the rewards of "kingship."*

Attention!

Nominations are now open for the Administrator and Assistant Administrator of the Slavic Language Division. All enthusiastic, qualified applicants are invited to throw their hats into the ring. This is your opportunity to have a greater voice in your organization, and to improve your visibility among your peers and potential clients. Nomination Committee recommendations must be made by September 1, so contact Committee members as soon as possible.

Successful candidates will have the following characteristics:

- 1. Commitment, dedication, a willingness to get the job done** (if you are here against your will, you won't be effective).
- 2. Vision, a sense of what should be done, a sense of direction** (this is essential to any leader. As Stephen Covey, author of "The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People," has said, "if you don't know where you're going, any road will take you there").
- 3. The ability to involve others and to delegate responsibilities** (the SLD Administrator and Assistant Administrator can be most effective by involving others and creating a sense that this is our division, not theirs).
- 4. The ability to listen** (to accept good advice from all sources and balance it against one's own judgment and vision for the good of the Division).
- 5. And maybe more...** (fill in the blank with what you think will make a good SLD Administrator or Assistant Administrator).

Job descriptions follow. If you decide to run for one of these positions, or would like to suggest another qualified nominee, please contact any member of the SLD Nominating Committee:

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The following descriptions of responsibilities have been condensed and paraphrased somewhat from the ATA bylaws.

ADMINISTRATOR'S RESPONSIBILITIES

1. maintain overall responsibility for keeping Division activities going; serve as a focal point and encourage others undertaking those activities.
2. write a column for the Division newsletter, and confer with the editor as to subject matter, layout etc. of the newsletter.
3. review and submit to headquarters all claims for financial reimbursement from members for costs incurred carrying out Division duties
4. prepare a proposed budget for the upcoming fiscal year for the ATA Treasurer in August, and an annual report and financial statement for presentation to the Board of Directors and the Membership at the annual Conference.
5. prepare an agenda for the Division Annual Meeting at the annual ATA Conference and chair that meeting.
6. represent the Division, to the general public, prospective and present members, and ATA leaders and membership.

ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR'S RESPONSIBILITIES

1. assist the Administrator in performance of duties listed above.
2. coordinate presentations in the Division language/subject area at the annual conference.

# *At Stalin's Side: His Interpreter's Memoirs from the October Revolution to the Fall of the Dictator's Empire.*

by Laura Esther Wolfson

Translated by Sergei V. Michayev.  
Carol Publishing Group, 1994, 400 pp., \$24.95.

In a most revealing anecdote, memoirist Valentin Berezhkov tells how he became Stalin's interpreter. While negotiating with U.S. ambassador Averell Harriman, Stalin grew annoyed when his own interpreter appeared to be having difficulties and the interpreter for the American side jumped in to assist and correct. Berezhkov had previously interpreted at talks between Hitler and Soviet foreign minister Molotov, and now Stalin ordered him sent in as a replacement.

"But he was interpreting into German at the talks with Hitler," said Molotov.

"Never mind," said Stalin. "I will tell him and he will interpret into English."

Ambassador Harriman later told this story laughingly as an indication of Stalin's sense of his own power. The leader of world communism apparently thought he could make an interpreter speak in any tongue at all merely by giving an order. In this case, since Berezhkov's working languages included English as well as German, Stalin's belief in his own powers appeared to be justified.

Stalin did not concern himself with what Berezhkov's working languages were. However, Berezhkov's linguistic abilities were what thrust him into historic circumstances and led him to tell the tale of his life, a life which, as the book's subtitle implies, spanned the entire Soviet period from the Civil War to perestroika.

The title and subtitle are misleading, however, for according to this reader's calculations, Berezhkov worked with Stalin for no more than five years during World War II, although he did interpret at a number of the crucial meetings between Stalin, Churchill, and Roosevelt. The remainder of Berezhkov's long career, after he fell from grace and left his post within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was spent in journalism and diplomatic service abroad, a form of pseudo-exile. An inattentive reader might not notice the brevity of his service with Stalin, for Berezhkov employs the curious device of alternating chapters about his work as Stalin's interpreter with a chronological account of the first twenty-odd years of his life, including his childhood and adolescence, military service and work as an Intourist guide. He thus creates the impression that his few years working for Stalin lasted as long as his first quarter-century. In fact, much of the light that Berezhkov sheds on Soviet history results less from his brief proximity to power than from the fact that his life, like those of millions of ordinary Soviet people, was touched by the upheavals of war, famine, and other outsized historical events.

The reader who seizes this book eagerly, as did the reviewer, because of the word "interpreter" in the subtitle, will be disappointed. The book contains little or no shop talk of the sort that interpreters thrive on regarding the relative merits of various linguistic equivalents and the complexities arising therefrom, the speech habits and idiosyncrasies of those whose words they interpret and how to reproduce them in the target language, and so on. But this is probably too much to hope for in a book aimed at a general audience.

However, the book does contain edifying speculations about why Stalin conducted foreign policy as he did. Specifically, it tells about the Soviet leader's complex and ambivalent attitude toward Hitler and why he refused to believe numerous convincing reports that German troops were massing for attack on the Soviet border. Berezhkov also provides some interesting and vivid descriptions of behind-the-scenes events he witnessed while in Stalin's employ.

He recounts how, just after Germany invaded the USSR, German foreign minister Ribbentrop whispered to members of a Soviet delegation that he personally was opposed to the action and had tried to dissuade Hitler from taking this step. Berezhkov describes his shock at his first sight of Stalin, whom he had imagined to be tall and godlike, and who was in fact short, deformed, and pock-marked. He mentions Stalin's bodyguard, who grabbed catnaps whenever he could, as he had to be at the leader's side twenty-four hours a day. He reveals that when Stalin received the Japanese foreign minister in the Kremlin, he played the hospitable host to such a degree that the visiting dignitary got thoroughly drunk and had to be carried out and placed bodily in his train car.

No less interesting are Berezhkov's accounts of his childhood, his family's move to the Ukraine in search of more plentiful food, his language studies at a gymnasium in Kiev where German was the medium of instruction, and his father's detention for nearly a year on trumped-up charges.

Berezhkov states that his father's release and the special investigator's acknowledgment that his father was, in fact, innocent, gave him faith in the ultimate fairness of the system. Perhaps this incident even explains why Berezhkov felt no fear when he worked for Stalin years later, oblivious to the danger that the paranoid dictator presented to nearly all who came in contact with him.

Though published in 1994, three years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, *At Stalin's Side* contains lacunae characteristic of an earlier, more cautious period. For example, the author writes elliptically about his

*Continued on page 9*



INTERPRETER'S MEMOIRS *Continued from page 8*

parents, who disappeared at the end of the war and whom he located in the West many years later. Berezhkov suspected that his parents were still alive, but had no idea where they were, or even what country they might be living in. They did not contact him so as not to put him or his career in jeopardy. An episode in the eighties, when the author served at the Soviet embassy in Washington and his son may or may not have requested asylum in the U.S., also leaves unanswered questions and the strong impression that even as he wrote this book, Berezhkov was still trying to protect his relationship with the authorities by not saying too much.

His attitude toward the masters he served is ambivalent, a mixture of the loyalty and historical excitement he felt at the time, genuine realization of the evil his bosses did, and some fashionable perestroika-era repudiation of the past. Berezhkov rationalizes his decision to join the Party, and speaks nostalgically of life in the former Soviet Union. But he also comments on the cold-bloodedness and brutality of high-ranking government officials and states that he was too gullible about the system. He writes at length about how the leaders and well-connected feasted while many starved in the early Soviet period. He attributes his swift rise through the foreign ministry to Stalinist purges which created job openings above him that had to be filled, but his feelings about this remain opaque. If he has any thoughts about the morality of interpreting for Stalin and others of his ilk, Berezhkov does not share them with us. Is the interpreter's role neutral, or does it advance the goals of good or evil? The author passes over this question in silence.

Sergei Mikheyev's translation is generally transparent and felicitous. However, there are a few conspicuous lapses. He uses some contemporary Americanisms that leap out as inappropriate and anachronistic: "Dad," "kids," and "smarts" (the latter used as a noun to mean intelligence or common sense). He translates the Russian forms of address *дядя* and *тетя* as "uncle" and "aunt," when they clearly refer not to kinship ties but are rather an informal, respectful way for Russian children to address their elders. The publisher would have done well to have an extra pair of editorial eyes go over the book to spot such errors before the manuscript went to press. In the final analysis, inadequate editing is a disservice not only to readers but to author and translator as well.

## GLOSSARY OF PETROLEUM CHEMISTRY AND REFINING AVAILABLE TO READERS

SLD member Robert K. Johnston has put together an 8 page single-spaced Russian-English glossary of terms in his specialty of petroleum chemistry and refining, which he is willing to share with our readers. Bob has had 32 years of industrial experience in this field, as well as 25 years of full-time translating experience. Since the 1960s he has been the sole translator of the journal «Химия и технология топлив и масел». To obtain this glossary please send \$1.00 to cover costs and your address to Robert K. Johnston / 20 Country Club Drive / Las Vegas, New Mexico 87701. Bob offers to send either a hard copy or diskette. The glossary is in either WP7 / Windows or Winword 7 format (specify which when ordering.) You will need a Cyrillic font for Windows in order to read the diskette. The glossary is also available free via the Internet, in either Mac or PC format. Cathy Flick has kindly agreed to transmit the glossary via e-mail and it will also be available in the future through FLEFO, flip and the Web. Place your request via e-mail to [cathy@earlham.edu](mailto:cathy@earlham.edu).

Here are a few samples from Bob's impressive work:

- абгаз** - waste gas, tail gas, stack gas, off-gas. Cf. битум.
- асфальт** - asphalt; the Russian term is restricted to a) hard petroleum asphalt produced in a propane deasphalting operation and b) native asphalt.
- бензин** - naphtha (product of refinery process), gasoline (finished product for use as motor fuel); never, benzine.
- битум** - in the petroleum industry, usually "asphalt" or "petroleum asphalt," i.e. finished products obtained by distillation, solvent precipitation, air-blowing and/or compounding. In the more general sense may be "bitumen," a generic term including petroleum asphalts as well as coal tar pitch, native asphalt, and many other materials. Cf. асфальт.
- воск** - wax, usually not a straight petroleum wax; may be a nonpetroleum product such as beeswax, or a petroleum wax compounded with other ingredients.
- гидроочистка** - hydrotreating (not Hydrofining, which is the name of a proprietary process).
- КиШ** - ring and ball, R&B (method for determining softening point)
- коксуемость** - carbon residue
- критическая нагрузка заедания** - seizure load
- механические примеси** - particulate contaminant
- некондиционный** - off-spec, substandard
- парафин** - wax, very rarely paraffin, except to designate a class of hydrocarbons or in combining forms such as "paraffin-base crude."
- утяженное топливо** - high-end-point fuel
- церезин** - microcrystalline wax (from petroleum) or ozocerite wax (fossil wax). The English term "ceresin" denotes only the ozocerite type waxes and preferably should not be applied to petroleum waxes.

INTERVIEW WITH KENNETH KATZNER *Continued from page 1*

anyone can compile a dictionary giving the equivalents in another language of such words as "giraffe" or "geranium." It's the treatment of polysemous words that really make a dictionary what it is. Such words, for example, as "order," "point," "form," "line," "stock," and "credit," not to mention ubiquitous verbs such as "put," "set," and "get," and, of course, all the common prepositions.

It is not just a question setting down, one at a time, the five, the ten, or the twenty-five meanings of such words. The problem is that the meanings themselves are not always specific and finite. What I gradually came to realize is that they often form a continuum, in which one meaning fades imperceptibly into the next and it is impossible to draw a clear-cut line between them. Deciding how to list and define these meanings, and coming up with an English synonym for each before giving the Russian equivalent, is an enormously complex problem. And there is no one answer - ten experienced lexicographers would come up with ten different paradigms for a given word. Just compare two English dictionaries sometime and you'll see what I mean.

The other is this. Even after you determine the meanings that you will include, and come up with a Russian word for each, you often find that the word you have given does not work in many typical English sentences that come to mind. One of the many meanings of the word "point" is "essence" or "gist" and the Russian equivalent is «суть». This works fine for the phrase "come to the point," which in Russian is «дойти до сути». But "the point is..." in Russian is «дело в том, что», and "That is not the point" is «не в этом дело», despite the fact that «дело» does not mean "essence" or "gist." To be fair to the reader you have to include as many common sentences as possible in which the basic equivalent does not work. But the number of such sentences is endless.

**How would you characterize the changes that have occurred in the Russian language over the past several years?**

Since the demise of the Soviet Union, Russian has been inundated with new words, most of them arising out of new institutions that did not exist in Soviet times. Business and finance probably have produced the most, followed by legal terms, political terms, and those pertaining to the electoral process. Almost all are direct borrowings from the English. At what point a given word may be considered to have entered the language is impossible to judge on any scientific basis. My rule of thumb is that after I run across it enough times, I put it in. (Recently, I added the word «электронат»). But what I don't like, and refuse to include, are English borrowings when a perfectly good Russian word exists. I will not, for instance, add the word

«киллер», even though it turns up continually in the Russian press.

**What has user response to your dictionary been?**

Well, I have to say it has been very gratifying. College students, as well as Americans living or working in Russia, tell me they swear by it. I was particularly touched by the comment of a young woman who turned up for a book-signing ceremony a couple of years ago and told me, "This book got me through three years of college Russian."

**What are your future plans for the dictionary?**

First, let me emphasize that a dictionary of this kind is never finished. It is an ongoing, never-ending process, and I plan to keep adding to it and improving it as long as I am able. New words and word combinations, new expressions, and new ways of saying things keep turning up all the time, and they all go onto index cards for inclusion in yet another edition someday. I usually make out several dozen new cards every week.

The second edition was published in 1994, ten years after the first, so it will obviously be some time before a third appears. But in the meantime I am looking into the possibility of bringing out the book on a CD-ROM. If that happens, it will include most of the new material that I have collected since 1994.

**What is the most gratifying aspect of lexicographic work for you?**

I suppose it is the gaining of insights as to how certain words, certain meanings of words, as well as everyday sentences, should be translated from one language into the other. And then getting all this information down, somehow working it into the dictionary, and eventually having it all published in book form, so that it can serve as a permanent resource.

I am also gratified by the fact that the dictionary is being widely distributed in Russia. Although it is an unauthorized edition, I am still pleased that so many people over there are also learning and profiting from it.

One small disappointment. Despite the large number of copies sold, I rarely receive any comments from readers. I don't mean letters telling me how much they like the book, but rather suggestions as to how something could be better translated, or why there is actually more to the translation of a given word than the dictionary indicates. Since each edition of the dictionary contains thousands of additions and changes, it is clear that there is plenty of room for such suggestions. So I hereby invite all readers of *SlavFile* to join in the fun.

## PLANNED SLAVIC LANGUAGE DIVISION ACTIVITIES AT THE NEXT ATA MEETING IN SAN FRANCISCO

From **Christina Sever**, who has been coordinating plans for SLD sessions at the next ATA, comes the following list of proposed meetings and presentations.

1. Slavic Language Division General Meeting—90 min.
2. One 90-minute session on Editing, given by **Paul B. Gallagher** (Russian-to-English translator) on "Russian Translations that Read Like Originals: Tools for Improving Flow and Coherence of English-Language Output" and by **Vladimir Bolotnikov** (English-to-Russian translator) on "Could You Do Some Proofreading?" (The Role of Editing vs. Proofreading Today: An Attempt at Defending the Obvious...)
3. One double 180-minute session on "Russian Medical Translation," given by **Lydia Razran Stone** (Russian to English) and **Natalia Kissock** (English to Russian). The first half of this session will cover selected topics, including types of available biomedical translation and sources for translation work, dictionaries and other electronic and nonelectronic sources of Russian-English medical terminology, and discussion of terminology in various specific areas. In addition to the two listed presenters, we hope to have guests giving very short presentations on their areas of expertise. The second, half of the session will be a workshop in which attendees split up into small groups to translate, edit and discuss two medical texts, one English into Russian, the other Russian into English.
4. One 90-minute panel on "The Terminology and Concepts of Law, Legislation, Commerce, and Finance: Russian/English." Panel members: **Kevin Hendzel**, ASET International Services Corp.; **Thomas L. West**, Atlanta Translations; **Igor Vesler**, Diken Research.
5. One 90-minute panel on "Chernobyl, Nuclear Safety Upgrades and Technology Transfer in the Former Soviet Union." Panel members: **Kevin Hendzel**, ASET International Services Corp., **Igor Vesler**, Diken Research.
6. A presentation by **Laura E. Wolfson**, entitled "How to Swear in Russian Like a Native," concerning her experiences translating a book by Edward Topol, "Dermol the Real Russian Tolstoy Never Used." She promises to include rhymed translations of bawdy Russian verse, for an R (for Russian)-rated session.
7. A further presentation by **Laura E. Wolfson** on "How to Become an Interpreter and Live Happily Ever After." This will be a revised and updated version of her very successful and useful presentation at last year's conference.

In addition, we will have our usual Division Dinner at a fine restaurant carefully selected for us by three gourmets and lovers of Russian Food, residing in the San Francisco area, Michael Ishchenko, Vladimir Bolotnikov,

and Mira Beerbaum. There are also plans to hold a Slavic song-fest one evening and, for the literarily inclined, there will be multilanguage poetry coffee house sponsored by the Literary Division (see write-up elsewhere in this issue.) The annual Friday Table Topics Luncheon always includes at least one table devoted to discussion of Russian and or Slavic topics. Then of course, there are the non-language specific talks on computer-related, professional, and theoretical topics, the various social events, myriad opportunities for networking, the job-exchange, not to mention the sights of San Francisco. Y'all Come!

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### SLAVFILE MAILBAG *Continued from page 3*

graduate students can supplement their meager stipends with a little translating work, but hey! We too are eager for work and we're *competent!*"

We also received a note from **Jim Walker**, of Ellijay GA, whose profile we published last month. Jim reports that he immediately got two positive e-mail messages in response to his article, one of which led to a lunch date. In addition, he heard through the grapevine that one of his clients had xeroxed the article and was proudly showing it to all and sundry. Jim's report goes to show what we have been saying all along—good things happen to those who contribute to the SlavFile.

We would like to communicate to those readers who have sent us gratifying "fan mail" about the SlavFile that, while modesty prevents us from publishing such epistles, we appreciate them very greatly.

## Reminder

SlavFile  
will publish  
free of charge  
all ads  
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for translators and interpreters.

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We encourage  
unsolicited contributions  
from our readers.

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**SLAVFIRE**



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Журнал «Огонек» № 9, 3 марта 1997 г.  
Из статьи «Язык твой—враг мой»

“ Рассказывает Михаил Петров, генеральный директор компании «Делайт 2000»: «После заключенного в Нью-Йорке контракта один крупный бизнесмен был приглашен в гости к своему партнеру, чтобы отметить контракт. Перед визитом он зашел в один из дорогих магазинов, купил там ценный подарок, в коробку с которым попросил положить красивую открытку, на которой было написано «with deep sympathy», то есть, как думал бизнесмен, «с глубокой симпатией». Когда хозяин дома и партнер по бизнесу при получении подарка сильно засмутился, жена партнера посмотрела на бизнесмена странновато, а дочь партнера так просто покатила со смеху, наш герой ничего не понял. Причину странной реакции аборигенов ему объяснили только дома: такие открытки в Штатах дарят, когда хотят признаться в любви».

The following paragraph was taken from an article devoted to the requirement for Russian partners to have access to someone with true competence in English if they are going to do business with English-speaking firms. We find it simultaneously hilarious and appalling that no one involved in conceiving, writing, or editing this article had such competence. Nor evidently did anyone bother to consult a native speaker or even take the step of looking up “with deep sympathy” in a relatively complete English-Russian dictionary. And this is in Ogonyok, one of the most prestigious magazines in the country. If everyone on both sides of the Atlantic hired a competent translator or interpreter every time one was needed, we would all be working 80 hours a week.