

TRANSLATION IN RUSSIAN CULTURE

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Though the theory of translation is the product of recent decades, its object is certainly much older than the proverbial hills. We shall probably never know the name of the first translator, but it is evident that even at the most primitive stages of human civilisation there were people who knew more than one language and could ensure contact between people from different linguistic communities. In later periods a multinational state or empire would be unthinkable without interpreters and translators passing on to the subjugated nations the orders of the imperial rulers. We know that royal decrees in ancient Babylon and Assyria were duly translated into the main languages of those empires. In the third millennium B.C. in Ancient Egypt there were groups of people whom we would nowadays describe as 'professional translators' and also a school for training translators. The Old Testament tells us the officials at Pharaoh's court talked to Joseph's brothers through an interpreter. Interpreters and translators were indispensable to ancient merchants, seamen and generals.

With the march of time, translation activity was extended to religious texts and later to works of fiction; it became an integral part of the cultural heritage of mankind.

From the very beginning, translation played an important social role: it made possible contacts between people speaking different languages. With the invention of writing, translation enabled people to get access to the cultural values of other nations; it provided for mutual influence and mutual enrichment of literatures and cultures. A person who knows some foreign languages can read books by foreign authors but no one can read books in all or most national languages. It was through their translations that the classical works of Homer and Shakespeare, Tolstoy and Dostoevsky were made accessible to people all over the world.

Translation played a significant role in the development of national languages and literatures. Translated books not infrequently preceded the emergence of original works, helped the search for new linguistic and literary forms, fostered new, broader strata of readers. Many European nations owe much of their cultural traditions to translations from the classical languages; a very prominent contribution to Old Russian literature was made by its translators, as well as to the literatures of many other nations in the USSR with their age-long cultural histories.

The beneficial influence of translation is often recognised even by the authors of the original books. When Goethe read his *Faustus* translated into French, he wrote: "I wouldn't like to re-read my *Faustus* in German, but in this French translation everything makes a new impression and seems fresh, new and sharp". Leo Tolstoy used to say that reading Pushkin's poem "The Gypsies" in French gave him a new awareness of how strong Pushkin's poetical genius really was. A talented translator gives the source text a new colourful life in another language. A good translation gives sometimes the chance for a new perception of the original creation, the possibility of better understanding and appreciating its author. Thus, the success in Russia of Marshak's rendering of Robert Burns' poems, for example, made the poet more popular in Britain too. The mutual enrichment and exchange of cultural and literary values between different people and nations thanks to translation promoted the emergence of a common human culture shared by all the inhabitants of the planet.

The translators' work is of particular value to the cultural life of small nations. On the one hand, it opens the door for them to mankind's cultural treasury, and on the other, it gives them the opportunity of making their own contribution to that treasury, of demonstrating that no matter how small in number the people of a nation might be, its distinctive cultural heritage is part of our common spiritual wealth.

In Russia many outstanding men of letters and culture expressed their appreciation for the activity of translation. Alexander Pushkin emphasised the social importance of translation referring to translators as to the "post-horses of enlightenment". Much attention was given to translation by such prominent Russian literary critics as Belinsky, Chernishevsky and Dobrolubov.

Translation work in Russia has a long and fruitful historical tradition. It was carried out on a considerable scale as early as in Kiev Rus, where first religious and then secular books were translated mainly from the classical languages (9th-10th centuries). The number of readers at the time was rather limited, no high standards of quality were set to the translators and their translations were often obscure and sometimes unintelligible. The translators had a poor command of their own language and they blindly followed the source text without giving much thought to the intelligibility of the resulting text.

The 18th century proved decisive in the development of translation in Russia. Peter the Great's political reforms, which greatly expanded Russia's economic and cultural contacts with the European countries, created a growing demand for translations of scientific and technical materials as well as of works of fiction. Translators were now expected to meet higher quality standards than in previous centuries. Czar Peter issued a special decree on translation demanding a "distinct" rendering of the original sense. This was the period when the Russian language began to develop its literary norm and many enlightened

Russians found in translating a way of enriching that language and asserting its originality as well as its expressive potential. The great Russian scientist and poet M. Lomonosov often emphasised the great translation potential of the Russian language. He claimed that the works of Cicero, Virgil or Ovid lost none of their excellence in their Russian translation. Lomonosov, as well as his prominent contemporaries Sumarokov and Tredyakovsky, made many translations, predominantly of poetry. All three often supplemented their translations with theoretical discussion, arguing that the source text had to be rendered as it was, and emphasising the great value of the translator's work as well as its creative character. That was all part of the heated debate that accompanied the activity of translation throughout its history.

As in other countries, two opposite directions emerged in the practice of translation in Russia from the very beginning. When enabling business or diplomatic contacts between different nations and, later, translating books of fiction, translators could choose relatively freely among the various expressive means of the target language. Their translation could imitate the source text to a greater or smaller extent: sometimes it was such a very free rendering as to be a kind of re-telling. On the contrary, when translating religious texts, especially the Bible, or philosophical treatises or other publications considered as classical, translators strove for maximum linearity even to the detriment of the sense and norms of the target language, as all formal features in the source text were sacred to them. In fact they believed these texts had some profound, if not always intelligible, sense, and they did their utmost to reproduce not only the spirit but also the letter of the "divine revelation".

These two extremes in the practice of translation continued in Russia in more recent times. But now the choice between literal and free translation was motivated by the translators' intentions and the way they understood their task, rather than by the nature of the source text. The advocates of literal translation paid homage to a loyalty to the source text claiming that the art of translation should make it transparent, ie. that the source text should be seen through the target text word for word. Such transparency was, they insisted, the hallmark of any translation worthy of the name, and any deviation from the source text would have resulted in a paraphrase or original work.

On the other side, the advocates of 'free' translation accused their adversaries of "slavishly copying" the foreign text. They pointed out that a literal translation can never be correct, as it distorts the target language imposing upon it alien forms and expressions, and makes the target text obscure and inaccessible to its readers.

The confrontation between the two main trends in translation was not always so clear cut, however. Some translators believed such extremes to be complementary and tried to make use of both in every translation they made.

However, this confrontation emerges very clearly in the process of formation of a Russian translation school in the 19th and 20th centuries. The school began to take shape thanks to the translation work of such outstanding Russian authors as Karamzin and Zhukovsky. At the end of the 18th century Karamzin published many translations in several periodicals. His aim was twofold: he considered translation to be both a good school for the improvement of the writer's style and a source of information. As he put it: "for the sake of curiosity, for historical facts, for women, for new magazines, or from books not very well known". The spectrum of Karamzin's activity as a translator was very wide: he translated ancient and contemporary authors from Greek, Latin, French, German, English, Italian and some Oriental languages.

Pushkin referred to V.A. Zhukovsky as "the genius of translation". Zhukovsky was a talented original poet, but translations make up a considerable part of his poetry. He translated from English, French, Old Russian, Latin and German. The range of his creative search is staggering: from his translations of fairy-tales by Perrault and the Grimm brothers to a complete translation of Homer's *Odyssey* and of the famous Old Russian epic "The Tale of Igor's Host". Like Karamzin, he advocated free translation which sometimes bordered on paraphrase or telling a new story on the same subject. His brilliant talent, however, forcefully reproduced the style, rhythm and intonation of the source text and his best translations were remarkably true. The Russian school of translation owes much to Zhukovsky's wonderful example.

As to taking liberties with the source text, the practice was well established in the prose translations of this century as well. Irinarkh Vvdensky, for instance, a gifted translator of the novels by C. Dickens and W.M. Thackeray, used to add to his translations many pages which were not in the original novels. Thus, translating Dickens' *David Copperfield*, he introduced his own text at the end of the second chapter, at the beginning of the sixth chapter and in other places. He tried to justify these 'concoctions' by the desire to please his readers. He also claimed that the translator who was "imbued with the spirit of the author's creation" had the right to freely "recreate", to give a new life to the author's ideas in a new situation for a different community, "under another sky".

A place of honour in the history of translation in Russia belongs to our great poets A. Pushkin and M. Lermontov. Although translations occupied a relatively modest place in their poetic activity, they made a notable contribution to the history of literary translation in Russia. Their poetical paraphrases and imitations served as a model of perfection to all other translators. They established as a fundamental principle the ideal that a good literary translation is part and parcel of the national literature of the target language community. Pushkin's role in the formation of the Russian school of translation was especially important. He always showed great interest in the problems of

translation and his critical analyses of translations were exemplary and thought-provoking. His insistence on loyalty to the source text coupled with the high quality and expressiveness of the translator's language and style had a beneficial effect on the best Russian translators in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Coming back to translation practice in the 19th century, it is noteworthy that most translators of that period adhered to free translation. However, some of the outstanding writers and poets kept insisting upon the necessity of maximum similarity to the source text and on word-for-word or literal translations even to the detriment of sense and clarity. Representatives of this trend are personalities such as Vyasemsky, Gnedich and Fet, who translated from a number of languages. However, they did not always do as they preached and sometimes the translator's artistic intuition and talent broke through the barriers of literality. Vyasemsky's translation of the works by B. Constant and A. Mizkiewicz were not devoid of artistic value and Gnedich's translations, especially that of Homer's *Iliad*, were highly appreciated by Pushkin. Fet's extreme formalism doomed to failure most of his translations, which however contain some successful reproductions of parts of the source texts.

Some translators made use of their skill to disseminate democratic or revolutionary ideas in spite of the barriers put up by official censorship. The translations made by V. Kurochkin, D. Minaev, M. Mikhalov and others enjoyed great popularity. These translators achieved their goals by choosing congenial authors as well as by introducing subtle changes in the target texts which evoked associations with the Russian reality at the time. They used translation as a weapon in their struggle for reform and revolutionary change.

The history of translation in Russia took on a new dimension after the October Revolution of 1917. It was the beginning of a tremendous upsurge in translation activity which gave rise to a new Soviet school of translation. For the first time in Russian history people could access the treasure-house of national and world culture. The task was to bring to them everything that was valuable and progressive in the culture, literature and art of other nations. Obviously, translators had no small role to play in this cultural revival.

Soon after the consolidation of the new order a new publishing house, "The World Literature", was set up on Maxim Gorky's initiative. Its publishers pursued the ambitious goal of producing new or revised translations of all major literary achievements both in the West and in the East. In the face of enormous material and organisational difficulties, they managed to publish in the following two decades or so the works of such famous authors as Balzac, Anatole France, Stendhal, Heine, Schiller, Byron, Dickens, B. Shaw, Mark Twain and many others. In the 1930s and later, a great number of translations were also published by many national and local publishers. The country's scholars and authors made their contributions to the enlargement of translation

production. The art of translation was elevated to a new level of perfection. Conscious of their mission and responsibility in the cultural development of their nation, translators strove to preserve in their translations the spiritual values embodied in the works of the world's best authors. They formulated and applied new principles of adequacy in translation which avoided both extreme literalness and unwarranted liberties with the source text. A whole galaxy of brilliant translators emerged in the country who won world-wide recognition for the Russian translation school. The names of such past-masters of the art as M. Losinsky, T. Shchepkina-Kupernik, S. Marshak, N. Lubimov, E. Kalashnikova, N. Daruzes and many others were well known and much respected.

The fact that the Soviet Union was a multi-national state greatly contributed to the rapidly growing scale of translation work. The Soviet people spoke many different languages, multiple nations fostered their own cultures and literatures. Translation was the main channel through which people got to know the cultural values of the other nations in the country, so as to promote friendship and respect for one another and develop their common cultural heritage.

The exchange of translations among the national literatures in the USSR acquired impressive proportions. Russian readers could finally access the great epics of the Georgians, Armenians, Uzbeks, Kazakhs, Azerbaijanis and other peoples, the collected works of T. Shevchenko, I. Franko, N. Baratashvily, O. Tumanyan, Yanka Kupala and many other prominent authors of various nationalities. Local poets and writers whose books were translated into Russian became known to the whole country and to the world at large. Many outstanding personalities contributed to this sphere of translation activity, for example renowned Soviet poets and writers such as L. Ginsburg, B. Pasternak, L. Sobolev, N. Likhanov and many others.

The turn of the second half of our century created a new situation for translation and translators. The last few decades had witnessed a tremendous growth of contacts between people and nations in all fields of political, economic, cultural and social life. Scientific and technical progress was accompanied by an information explosion, an exchange of information and printed matter on an unprecedented scale. The world virtually erupted in meetings, conferences, symposia and all sorts of other international forums involving hundreds and thousands of participants every year.

The United Nations and other international bodies launched world-wide campaigns sponsoring various 'international years' and 'international decades'. The jet age put millions on the move with tourist agencies taking thousands of people all over the world.

The 'information boom' brought in its wake a translation boom. The new developments in the world would be unthinkable without a tremendous growth

of the activity of translation which alone can make possible any exchange of information on an international scale.

Radical changes could also be observed in the character of the translator's work. Translators became professionals who were expected to perform a satisfactory work not of their own choosing but assigned to them by an employer. No matter whether the source text was congenial to them or not, they were expected to deliver the goods. As professionals they could no longer stick to a particular type of work and have their pick of authors or subjects, but at best they could specialise in a particular field which still left them with a great variety of subjects to handle.

Professional translators had to guarantee a high standard of performance. No longer could they take any liberties with the source text as was sometimes the case with some translators in the past. Their translations were often important documents according to which responsible decisions had to be taken or important work had to be done. An error in translation could involve serious consequences, perhaps loss of life or property.

There was a radical change not only in the professional status of translators but also in the type of materials they had to deal with. The bulk of the texts being translated were no longer books of fiction bearing a definite imprint of an author's creative personality. Now they were mostly texts of a pragmatic nature dealing with matters of business, commerce, science, politics and the like. These texts were not infrequently anonymous and their language and style were, as a rule, in keeping with accepted norms, while the individual idiosyncracies of their authors were insignificant and could be safely ignored. Handling such texts, a translator was mainly concerned not with the intricacies of individual style or beauty of expression but with the problems arising from the dissimilarities of the languages involved, each possessing a unique system of its own. Thus the translators of pragmatic texts came to realise the predominant role of languages in their work. Accordingly, translation scholars began to suspect that most translation problems were the concern of linguistics.

Though the quantity of translations of poetry and fiction was still on the increase in the Soviet Union, more than half of the translation work had to do with all kinds of social, political, scientific and technical texts. Special attention was paid to scientific and technical translations in order to enable Soviet experts to keep abreast of the world's latest achievements in science and technology and to ensure the proper handling and maintenance of imported equipment.

In spite of the many ideological restrictions and of censorship, the Russian translations of this period were remarkable for both their quality and quantity, and the country was often described as a great translation power.

The disintegration of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s radically changed this situation. All ideological and moral restrictions were lifted, and a great

number of private publishing houses flooded the market with all kinds of 'bestsellers': detective, erotic, pornographic books and the like, nearly all translated from English. At the same time translations from other languages were drastically reduced, many state publishing houses went bankrupt and their in-house translators lost their jobs. A lot of translations were now made by non-professionals and in great haste, the publishers expecting quick returns rather than high quality. All this could not but lower the general level of translations in Russia, though some professionals insist on trying hard to maintain traditional high standards.

Two important factors contributed to the success of translation activity in Russia and now give rise to the hopes of restoring its high level. These factors are an effective system of training future translators and the considerable progress made by translation theory.

Much importance is attached in Russia to large-scale training of professional translators in higher education establishments. A number of schools of foreign languages have special translation departments; translators are also trained in some technical colleges. Many educational establishments offer training courses in translation to enable students to do translation work as a side-job in addition to their main occupation.

The organisational aspect of translators' training is a challenge to the theory of translation. The theory should provide the teacher with an understanding of what translation is and what makes a good translator, it should rationalise the choice of teaching materials and techniques. The teaching process is always a reflection, either explicit or implicit, of a set of assumptions about the subject of study, even if teachers might believe that their approach is purely empirical. It is obviously an advantage if these assumptions are made on the basis of solid theoretical knowledge, rather than concocted by rule of thumb.

Since translation has become a mass profession, the network of translators' schools is naturally oriented towards a mass production of masters of the art. This means that translation is regarded as a skill that can be learned by an average student, ie. that translators are made rather than born. This assumption seems to be universally accepted as far as translation is of an informative type (ie. business, official, scientific, technical texts etc.), while literary translation is still believed to be the domain of the talented few. Therefore, most training establishments aim at turning out highly skilled translators (or interpreters) of non-literary specialisation. Literary translators are sometimes professionally trained at special schools sponsored, as a rule, by writers' unions enrolling small groups of talented men of letters. Most literary translators are in fact poets or prose-writers who have never had any professional training in translation but have mastered their skill, so to speak, 'on the job'.

As far as the organisation of translation teaching is concerned, there is general agreement on two basic points in respect of the subjects to be studied by trainee translators. First, it is recognised that in order to do their work well, professional translators must have an extensive general and background knowledge and, therefore, besides language proficiency, future translators should study selectively the social, economic and cultural reality of their working languages. The aim here is not to make the trainee a know-all, which is obviously impossible, but to teach him or her how to obtain the required information in various fields and where to look for it. Second, it is recognised that linguistic and background studies are not enough to train a professional translator, but that translation must be taught as a separate subject.

It was long believed that any bilingual could make translations provided they were acquainted with the subject matter of the source text. Consequently, if somebody had studied foreign languages and acquired knowledge in some field of endeavour, s/he had all the necessary training for translation work. In fact, any person who has a good command of a foreign language can and does act sometimes as a translator (and more often as an interpreter) at a certain level of performance. It was soon discovered, however, that this natural translation ability was, in most instances, rather limited. Most people who know foreign languages find themselves out of their depth when they are requested to produce a functionally identical text in the target language rather than an approximate description of the source text contents. There is a certain professional threshold in the art of translation which cannot be surmounted without specific knowledge, skill and practical training. Approximate, amateurish translation is a relatively easy job, while professional translation is, as Eugene Nida once put it, "one of the most intellectually difficult and challenging activities of mankind".

At present there are two major patterns of translators' training. Some training establishments aim at producing highly skilled professionals within a short period of study of six to ten months. To this end they enrol small groups of trainees (mainly university graduates) who already have a perfect command of two or more languages and identifiable abilities for translation work. The scheme implies a very strict selection procedure, and the chosen few usually live up to their teachers' expectations. Its success can be largely attributed to the high quality and dedication of the trainees, as the main line of instruction in such schools seems to be that of 'learning to translate by translating'. This system apparently serves its purpose as far as interpreters' training goes, where no great number of professionals is required, but it is hardly possible to enrol hundreds of talented bilinguals to be trained in such short programs to meet the existing big demand for professional translators.

The second pattern of training aims at turning out translators in sufficiently large numbers. Professional instruction is given here in the course of several

years, concurrently with a full-time university education in philology and foreign languages. The assumption is, as has been stated above, that given an adequate course of instruction and training, any average student of a university faculty or an institute of foreign languages will make a good translator. On the basis of our experience, this assumption is well justified, at any rate as far as translation into the student's native language goes. Teaching translation to a large number of not exceptionally gifted students as part of their university-level education calls for a carefully developed syllabus, adequate textbooks and for teaching techniques which should be chosen in line with some theoretical model of translation. A scientific basis for full-time translators' training can be found in the findings of the general and particular (that is, concerned with a particular combination of languages) theories of translation formulated in this field.

A good command of the two languages and an understanding of the subject-matter as well as a certain attitude and predisposition to this type of mental work constitute the essential prerequisites of successful professional training. Ideally, the trainees should meet these requirements before they are offered specific training programs in translation. In practice, however, teaching translation often goes parallel with language and background courses.

At present there is no general agreement on how translation should be taught in the classroom. The most common, if by far not the most efficient, practical method is that of 'trial and error'. According to this method, when students do practical translation work, at the beginning they make a certain amount of mistakes; after they receive the approval or criticism of their teacher, they do the work again until they learn to do it at the expected level of perfection. In translation teaching this means instruction according to the above-mentioned principle of 'learning to translate by translating'. The teacher gives the students a text to translate, corrects their mistakes, then gives them another text and so on, hoping that quantity will produce a qualitative change and that the day will come when the students will successfully cope with any new text. A similar situation emerges if somebody has to do translation work without any professional training. At first the translations leave much to be desired but years of practical experience bring about the required skills.

The trial-and-error method calls for much time and effort to enable the intuitive mastering by students of the secrets of their future profession. In case a student fails to develop the necessary skills on their own, the teacher cannot be of great help, but can only advise the student to make more translations in the hope that sooner or later s/he will get there. This method can be used as the last resort whenever the subject to be studied is unexplored or the teacher is not proficient in teaching techniques.

A more efficient system of training translators implies the teacher's awareness of the final goal and of the ways of achieving it. If the goal is to train

professionals who will be able to cope with the translation of most challenging texts, the students must develop the appropriate skills and procedures on the basis of a certain amount of specialised knowledge. To be able to control the teaching process and to guarantee good results we should specify the kind of knowledge, skills and procedures to be included in the translation syllabus. Whether this can be done depends on our understanding of what translation is and what makes a good translator. Such understanding can only be provided by an adequate theory of translation. Hence the obvious link between theoretical research and teaching practice.

At present most of the data which are of practical value to the teacher seem to be supplied by the researchers who employ linguistic methods to study the hidden secrets of the translating process. Many postulates of the linguistic theory of translation are successfully applied in translation courses. Some major facts inherent in the training situation emphasise the role of linguistic theory in the teaching process.

To teach means, in the first place, to explain. But explanation will serve no purpose unless it is well understood by the students and carries sufficient weight with them to be convincing. A good teacher of translation should not be satisfied with just telling students that their translations are not up to the mark and have to be improved. In fact, the teacher's duty is to explain to the students why their work is deficient by demonstrating the points of dissimilarity between the related parts in the source and the target texts.

Such demonstration is impossible unless the teacher and the students can make use of a common stock of tools of analysis, ie. unless the students have a good command and understanding of the terms and notions used by the teacher to describe the meaningful elements in the text. Only then the teacher will be able to say "Listen, you should not have rendered *la rosse* in the French original with the German 'Pferd' (or the English 'horse') as the French word has a derogatory connotation that is absent in the translation", assuming that the student knows that words may have not only a referential or denotational meaning but also a connotational colouring. This form of correction is much more effective than a simple statement that a 'horse' is a mistranslation and should be replaced by 'hack'. Or the teacher may say "I see you've translated the French *hotel* as a 'hotel' but here it is a contracted term and rather a 'false friend' and should be translated as 'mansion' ". Effective training depends, to a large extent, on the teacher and the student speaking a common language, in this case the metalanguage that linguists use to analyse the contextual meaning of a word.

There is another important aspect in the training of translators where an extensive use of linguistic theory is needed in the teaching process. It is obvious that future translators must learn to cope with the translation of texts and not of separate words or syntactic structures. But within the training period the students

can translate only a limited number of texts under the teacher's supervision. Obviously the final goal of training is not to teach students how these particular texts should be translated but to enable them to cope effectively with the translation of any text, that is to ensure that the knowledge gained in the classroom is not text-bound. This can be achieved by identifying typical translation problems in the texts chosen for training and showing the students how a problem of a particular type can be solved. Presumably, this will facilitate the search for the correct solution whenever the student comes across the same problem in any other text. Typical translation problems can be conveniently identified by some linguistic features which characterise segments of the source text or their related segments in the target text or both. For example, it has been found that identical situations are often described in French in more general terms than in English. The English language, in turn, uses words of general meaning more often than Russian. Therefore when translating either from French into English or from English into Russian, translators will often resort to the method of translation that textbooks refer to as "specification" or "concretising", that is to say, they will use words of a more specific meaning in the translation.

Let me cite another example. As everybody knows, every source language has a number of lexical units which have no direct equivalents in a given target language. When encountering such equivalent-lacking words in a source language text, the translator has a choice of several ways of rendering their meanings in the target language. The study of such linguistically identifiable translation problems is an essential part of translators' training.

All this allows us to formulate two basic principles of the translation teaching process: first, instruction should be demonstrative and convincing, which means that decisions and choices made in the translating process should be explained and substantiated; second, instruction should be oriented towards generalisation, which means that the emphasis should be on typical translation techniques rather than on unique solutions valid for a particular text only.

In sum, Russian scholars display great interest in translation as an important aspect of national cultural life, and consequently translation has been the subject of intensive research. The growing scale of practical work in this field is well matched by many publications on the theoretical aspects of translation. The books and articles of such eminent Russian scholars of translation as L. Barkhudarov, G. Chernov, L. Latishev, J. Rezker, V. Rossels, P. Toper, A. Fedorov, A. Shveitzer and many others enjoy much popularity in Russia and other countries. Translation research in Russia is characterised by a wide range of investigations covering all types of translation and all the aspects of the translating process. Translation criticism is considered a necessary prerequisite to improve translation practice.

Russian translators and theoreticians maintain contacts with their colleagues in other countries, and attend meetings and conferences on the problems of translation. Many translation forums are regularly held in Russia on the national and international scale. The Russian delegates take an active part in the work of the International Federation of Translators (FIT).

Professional translators are supposed to be well educated and to have a broad world outlook. To be a good translator does not mean just to know some foreign language. Translators must have an extensive knowledge of the geography, economy, history, literature and customs of the source language country and community. This makes them experts in international and literary contacts whose services are invaluable in foreign affairs and foreign trade establishments, publishing houses, universities and the like. Among Russian diplomats, trade experts and college lecturers, there are a number of men and women with a translation background. The profession enjoys considerable public respect and prestige, though much is yet to be done to elevate the translators' legal status and to improve their pay and working conditions.

This outline of the role played by translation in the history of Russian culture was of necessity brief and sketchy. I hope, however, to have made my readers understand that translation and translators are taken seriously in my country!