

Mikhail Rostovtsev, “International scientific communication,” *Russkaia mysl’* bk. 3 (1916): 74-81.

The terrible war has forced us to forget about much and to remember one thing only. But time goes on, the keenness of initial impressions weakens and involuntarily, while working for the present as before, you think about the future and the past.

The war weighs especially heavily on us scholars, including those whose field of work is pure knowledge, unapplied to life. The usual daily work, of course, is broken off, new concerns and a new social labor have appeared, but you feel that completely abandoning your creative scientific activity is both criminal and anti-state: what has been interrupted is so difficult to revive, and the broken thread is sometimes impossible and always difficult to tie again.

This is why any one of the scholars would scarcely cease to work, snatching remnants of time and the night hours, and public service [literally “social work”] would scarcely absorb someone completely. But working scientifically is becoming more and more difficult with each passing day. Every new work demands corresponding new apparatus. We cannot do without replenishing personal and public libraries with books new and old. This replenishment has now been made absolutely impossible. Following the latest scientific literature is becoming more and more difficult. Scientific work has not been interrupted, understandably enough, in either the belligerent or the neutral countries. But the connection among the individual countries, even the friendly ones, has somehow been broken off. What was once such a lively bibliographic exchange of books and brochures by specialists, often not personally acquainted, has almost ceased, and scientific correspondence, exchange of manuscripts and copies, exchange of queries and information has been interrupted.

Bibliographies now only excite curiosity and force postponement of many new works out of fear of repeating what has already been done by others.

But this will pass with the end of the war, of course, and much that is now impossible will again become accessible, and if I speak of the difficulties of the present day, then only to show at a glance what international scientific communication has done in the life of the scientific world and how difficult, I would say impossible, it will be for our generation to return to the times of disconnection and lack of coordination of European scientific life.

The war will end and international exchange will have to return to normal, but how? We need to think about this now, without closing our eyes to the fact that much will unavoidably and sharply change. We need to think about these changes calmly, maturely, and consciously; we have to prepare for them so as not to bring fruitful scientific development to a halt for many years.

We mustn’t forget that science in recent years has increasingly stood under the sign of internationalism, despite the strong development of nationalism, despite the polyglot condition that has not only not decreased, but is ever more growing. Knowledge of a greater number of languages is increasingly demanded of the scientist: the powerful growth of science in the Slavic countries, in the Scandinavian states, in Italy, and even in Spain, Romania, and Hungary has led

to the creation in all these countries of youthful, fresh, interesting scientific literature and to the necessity of keeping abreast of it one way or another.

In the meantime the polyglot status of scientists has become an ever rarer phenomenon in daily scientific life. Strange as it may seem, but the internationalism of science has not at all been growing in parallel with the expansion of familiarity with foreign languages among individual scientists.

International congresses, unions of scientific societies and academies, systematic bibliographies, and half-international journals, in any case multi-lingual ones, have all become surrogates [for internationalism]. A series of languages of international scientific communications have been established, and have gradually expanded: to French, German, and English has been joined Italian, and we Russians successfully led a battle for inclusion of the Russian language in this group of obligatory scientific languages.

The war has interfered with this battle, as well as the still far from perfect means of reconciling national sciences with the ideal of general science. The work was cut short, and in the form in which it was carried on it will be hard to revive.

We will not forget the role that Germany has played in this movement. In many areas it was achieving and almost achieved, if not hegemony, then a special, indubitably leading position. The German language, of course, did not become and could not become the language of international scientific communication, but everywhere people still felt the need to know the language, to have the opportunity to read German, to follow the German scientific literature on one's own. What was written in German easily entered into scientific international use, what was written in other languages penetrated there more slowly, and sometimes didn't penetrate at all.

Germany was perfecting the organization of the army of scientific workers with every day. German encyclopedias in many instances were purely German only in language: all nations were drawn into the orbit of cooperation. On the other hand, in the great British encyclopedia many, many articles were written by Germans. German journals attracted greater and greater numbers of collaborators from Italy, France, England, Russia, Slavic and Scandinavian countries, etc. German summary publications of texts were often issued in Berlin by French and English scholars, etc., etc.

In Germany itself the attraction of collective enterprises was so great in many instances it seemed the individual creativity of scientists is being transformed into a big scientific factory with master specialists, for whom their specialty is increasingly becoming a trade [*remeslo* soon takes on the sense of "profession" as well].

In many universities a kind of laboratory of dissertations was founded, frequently training by template and without any creative inspiration.

In many respects Germany's economic prosperity made possible its intensive activity in the scientific domain and the opportunity to realize what was not in the power of others to do. The giant German publishing houses played an enormous role here, having organized a book trade

never before seen and having grown their publishing business to colossal proportions while working increasingly in the international market.

War put an end to all this. The cooperation of an enormous share of the civilized nations with Germany has passed into oblivion for a long time to come. Germany will hardly manage to continue the business of transforming the German language in the international scientific language even in the event of a comparatively successful end of the war for it. The reaction against the German language will still dominate for a long time in the Roman and Slavic world. I do not think that it will succeed or even desire to return itself after the war to the central position that it occupied in the scholarly world.

In the meantime scientific international communication of the sciences as such is as necessary as air, and we must now think and even lay the foundations for the fastest restoration of the most intensive possible scientific exchange among the majority of the cultured nations.

And we Russians must seriously think about Russian occupying a fitting place in this restoration of international communication not only from a political point of view, but also from a purely scientific one. Of course, one cannot speak of full restoration of international communications in all their scope immediately after the war. The wounds are too deep, the deep disappointments in peoples and their ideals are too fresh, and those characteristics which our German colleagues both individually and collectively gave to the entire Russian nation, to its culture, to its state system, to its general worldview, are not forgettable. Indeed it has become clear to us that Germany did not know and did not want to know Russia and the Russians, that all attempts by people like Krumbacher broke down into schoolbook and ordinary clichés, nourished in part by half-mystical ideas of old Slavophiles, in part by the pitiful literature of the so-called Russian revolutionaries, readily marketed in Berlin to both Russians and foreigners.

For all the organization of international scientific communication, for all the bibliographies, for all the existence in Berlin of a chair of Russian history occupied, in a word, by a blazing Russophobe, Germany has known nothing of real Russian history and of the genuine character of Russian culture and education. Even the attraction of Russian literature and music has not dispersed this haze, in whose condensation not a few of our fellow Baltic German citizens are guilty, knowing the real Russia just as little as their compatriots in Germany, and having founded for themselves in Russia a life outside Russia in the artificial medium of their schools, their newspapers, their music, their purely German secular communication. I am speaking, of course, not about all of them, but about the majority.

The war has shown us that German only sought material in Russian science, without wanting to take into account at all and not wanting to know of the great work of ideas which has been done in Russia, primarily in recent years, and which grants us the right to speak of *Russian science*, and not just of scientific works in the Russian language, and of *Russian scientists*, who were and are regarded in Germany, truth be told, as German disciples who for some reason were writing not in German, but in Russian.

I will not say that a completely different understanding of Russia dominated in the states which are politically friendly to us. What they knew and thought about Russia differed little from the

understandings that were and are reigning in Germany. We must not forget that close ties to Germany strongly undermined in so many domains the once close cultural proximity of Russia with France. We must remember that we have never had real cultural closeness with England.

I think that now the time has come when the haze that shrouded Russia in the eyes of her present, and I hope, permanent allies has begun to scatter and that our good will and that of our allies now depends on that haze scattering once and for all, so that Russia is known in France, in Italy, and in England at least as much as we know France, England, and Italy.

It is the business of scientists, both Russian and foreign, to acquaint our allies, and through them Germany as well, above all with the real scientific physiognomy of Russia. This task is pressing, necessary not only to us, but in the same degree, if not more, to our allies, and above all our joint organizational efforts must be directed toward it.

Achieving this is a complex and difficult problem. I will permit myself to indicate here only a few of the paths leading to the main goal: acquainting our allies with our science and by the same token with our nation and our country.

1) It would be highly important for the milieu following science in France and England to be in satisfactory degree fully informed about current Russian scientific literature. This could be achieved completely only via broad dissemination of Russian language knowledge. There isn't any presently, however, and that must be taken into account. Our allies' business is to advance Russian language instruction in France, England, and Italy. Our business is to demonstrate that it is worth studying Russian, that a rich and valuable phenomenon is hidden from the West European scientific world behind this wall.

We can only keep our allies informed about this with their consent and their readiness to make some sacrifices for it. The publication of Russian works in French and English is a means both accessible and useful, but of necessity accidental and individual. It would be more important to have a systematically regulated organization of surveys of individual branches of scientific knowledge, in the first instance those that are best developed in Russia. In the humanities this is Oriental studies in all its scope (language, literature, history, archeology, and art history), Russian history, history of Russian literature, history of Russian art, Byzantine studies, history of the Slavs, Slavic literature, and art, and history and archeology of our south since ancient times.

These surveys do not have to be pure bibliography: it is useful in itself, but not suitable for the aims I have in mind. I take surveys as lively, thoughtful explication of the most important work that has been done in a given time period, preferably annual.

Surveys must be written by completely qualified people and must be edited by the most eminent specialists in the area.

Above all they must not be random, but brought out regularly according to a well-considered system. For this I see only one way. There should be an institution in every one of the allied countries, locally or better yet in Petrograd, which keeps up direct ties with Russian scientists and jointly works out a plan with them. This institution, subsidized by the corresponding

government, concentrates all the surveys at its locale and edits them in terms of language (much, of course, will have to be translated directly from Russian). It keeps up relations with the scientific journals of their countries and organizes space in these journals according to the specialty of the various reviews, always printing surveys in a given specialty in the same journal.

2) The organization of French, English, and Italian translations of the most important books and articles in this or that specialty would have great significance. The matter would have to be completely in the hands of the scientists of the given country, and for our part we would only be able to give pointers and contribute to editing of translations.

3) It would be no less important to organize regular trips to Russia, on the one hand, and to the allied countries, on the other, by high-profile specialists for individual lecture series, whether in English, French, Italian, or Russian universities (especially provincial ones). The living word is often stronger than the printed and can draw the interest of wider circles, primarily student youth, stimulating in them an interest for both the language and the science of the respective country.

4) Organizing all this, and perhaps much more that ought to be mentioned, is not easy. Even creating the indicated organizations would only be possible with constant and regular interactions of scientists in a given specialty. For this it would be most expedient to call for congresses from time to time of specialists from the allied powers.

Unfortunately the time will not soon return when large international congresses will be possible again. But for all their great significance they were nonetheless gradually becoming mostly a place for scientists to make personal acquaintances and hold private scholarly conversations. Their programs would usually be random and provided comparatively insignificant results in scientific terms.

Small congresses with practical tasks would be rather more useful, like academy congresses. At these problems would be successfully settled concerning international scientific exchange. Academies would be the most natural for taking up this organization, having the necessary means and adequate authority for this.

Scientific cells would also be highly desirable, and French, English, and Italian organizations in Russia, institutes or schools. The French institute in Petrograd could already arrange much of what I noted above now.

But our top priority must be thinking about our own organization. Recall, first of all, how pitiful the number of scientific journals here is. Despite all efforts up to now, Russia does not have a single history journal that is sufficiently informed and authoritative. Our pride—Oriental studies—throws around its articles anywhere and everywhere. Matters are somewhat better with Byzantine studies or, rather, there is the hope that it will get some better.

Private initiative will hardly do much here. Some kind of organized authoritative power is necessary. I only see one such power—the Academy of Sciences.

The absolute necessity of a series of scientific journals for the healthy scientific development of Russia scarcely requires demonstration. We need to give young scholars the chance to put their

powers on display, we need to get them used to the thought of the necessity of constant scientific productivity, but for this one has to provide the opportunity to publish not only big books and dissertations, but also small specialized researches and articles, one has to create all-Russian scientific communication and constant exchange of scientific achievements. The existing organs are not adapted for this. Some of them are aimed at a wide audience, and necessarily avoid specialized articles, attracting only articles of a general character to their pages, whether of a derivative or diversionary nature. On the other hand, university and ministry organs are so multi-topical and scattered in content that they can scarcely count on broad all-Russian distribution.

Finally, those few specialized journals which we have are so little suited to the journal type, i.e., real periodical publications for wide distribution, that using them as journals is almost impossible.

Finally, the book trade and book exchange are set up so primitively and amateurishly that you often can't obtain this or that journal and certainly don't know where to turn to get it.

Incidentally we do have the scientific powers for producing journals, and a reading public, and with every day it is multiplying. What is lacking is initiative and independence, there is no organization.

I repeat, the only cell that could give impetus to this matter is the Academy of Sciences, which not without reason is a large state institution in Russia with a cadre of state-salaried members.

Scientific societies are already long following this path, but small resources and small powers are in their hands. The initiative of the academy, its aid to other organizations, is absolutely necessary.

Science congresses are the second big power. It is enough to remember how much they did and do for physics, chemistry, medicine, Russian archeology. But there are not a lot of them. For many specialties there aren't any and none are foreseen. I remind you that the entire enormous domain of historical knowledge has not summoned to life hardly a single steady and regularly acting organization.

Russian and general history, art history, philosophy, classical philology, jurisprudence, etc., etc. are all areas which made as if they did not need regular scientific communication among the individuals studying them. And this matter has to be put straight and set on firm foundations. Only then will we be in a position to speak out at full power and with due influence as full-fledged members of the international scientific family.

These are all only general outlines, of course; detailed development will deepen and clarify much. But we need to think about this and be preparing now, no matter how difficult and fearful the times we are living through.

Translation: KH