

## Journal des traducteurs Translators' Journal

**Po-Russki Ahoy ! Comments on Russian dictionaries by Lewis Bertrand, New York. (P.O. Box 3057, Grand Central Station, New York 17, N. Y., U.S.A.). Rights in this series are reserved by Lewis Bertrand**

---

Volume 7, Number 3, 3e Trimestre 1962

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1061305ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1061305ar>

[See table of contents](#)

---

### Publisher(s)

Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal

### ISSN

0316-3024 (print)

2562-2994 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

---

### Cite this review

(1962). Review of [Po-Russki Ahoy ! Comments on Russian dictionaries by Lewis Bertrand, New York. (P.O. Box 3057, Grand Central Station, New York 17, N. Y., U.S.A.). Rights in this series are reserved by Lewis Bertrand]. *Journal des traducteurs / Translators' Journal*, 7(3), 92–96. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1061305ar>



## LES OUTILS DU TRADUCTEUR

¶ *Po-Russki Ahoy!* Comments on Russian dictionaries by Lewis Bertrand, New York. (P. O. Box 3057, Grand Central Station, New York 17, N. Y., U.S.A.). Rights in this series are reserved by Lewis Bertrand<sup>1</sup>.

Light on the language of Soviet Russia began to be shed by a series of bilinguals that started coming out around 1930. The Russian-English was known as Boyanus-Müller. In latest guise it now blossoms forth as Smirnitsky, and the name of Simon C. Boyanus (d. London, July 19, 1955) is no longer given. I here pay tribute to him as a pioneer, scholar, and gentleman, with whom I held converse during my stay in Moscow, 1932-1934. The immediate goad which took me there was an item in Moscow News, purchased in New York, announcing formation of a dictionary publishing house in the Soviet Capital. I sent my "American English for the Educated Foreigner", developed in teaching Soviet engineers at Amtorg, ahead. On arrival I was told the manuscript could not be published as its substance was "an apology for the American bourgeoisie". As for the house that was to put out dictionaries, the project had been abandoned. The latter circumstance helps explain on the personal side why I latched on to Moscow News during my two-year stay, and on the lexicographical why Soviet specialized dictionaries for the next two decades were to be a pretty shabby lot.

Even at the present date, no matter how you slice the Russian-English kolbasá you still get only three pièces de résistance for current translator use. The rest is filler.

In the list which follows Russian publishers are represented by the Academy of Sciences, the Encyclopedia Publishers, a revived Publishing House of Foreign-Language Dictionaries, scattered industries and professions. In detail or in toto the assortment is nothing to shout from the rooftops about. The list simply reveals that in recent years Russia has produced specialized bilinguals which are better than those which preceded. As output of what we like to imagine a coordinated society they hardly bespeak any coordinated effort.

The list also includes American publications. These are in even worse stead. Russian does not offer any match for the De Vries (German, Ahoy VII), or Sell (Spanish, Ahoy VIII), or the Poliglota (Portuguese, Ahoy V). Yet millions of dollars are poured on our side into Russian Institutes at universities, the Universities proper, the coddled and touted Translation Machine, Defense translation contracts, and the whole fanfare of pretending to keep tabs on everything Russian. Once the Department of Commerce received half a million for a "crash" Russian translation project. Lexicographically alone this is a piddling sum against the \$3,500,000 Merriam-Webster required to launch its Unabridged III. Where does any equivalent dough for our vaunted Russian program go, then? Probably into the deadhead translation machine.

To those who wield the funds, workers in Russian are entitled to address a demand that attention be paid to their needs, as well, when giant sums are expended upon the machine. For one thing, vocabularies devised for the machine might be assembled for availability to the human translator, who at present juncture is better equipped than the robot to make continuous use of them. On the other hand, in exploring areas where the Soviets and the United States could cooperate, this one of dictionary-

(1) Cf. *Old Gray Mare (Webster's) Ahoy!*, J. des T. VI.4 (1961); *Castellano Ahoy!* J. des T. VII.2 (1962). Prices are given in U.S. dollars. [May 1962].

making should be given thought. There is room here for a concerted Soviet-American effort vastly greater than the nibbly tries thus far made in dictionary collaboration.

The three basic aids to which I referred in the beginning are specifically these :

- I SMIRNITSKY, A. I. Russian-English Dictionary. 3d ed. Revised and enlarged under the editorship of O. S. Akhmanova. 50,000 words. 951 2-col. pp. E. P. Dutton & Co. New York, 1959. ----- \$7.00
- II MÜLLER, V. K. English-Russian. Companion volume to I. 6th ed. "Revised and completely reset". 60,000 words. 699 3-col. pp. E. P. Dutton & Co. Inc. New York, 1959. ----- \$7.00
- III CALLAHAM, Ludmilla Ignatiev. Russian-English Technical and Chemical Dictionary. Copyright 1947. 7th printing 1960. 794 2-col. pp. John Wiley & Sons, Inc., New York, ----- \$16.50

I and II are of Soviet and III is of American origin.

\* \* \*

Before we take up the gamut of bilinguals we have earlier described as filler, let us first examine some of the monolinguals that are available in Russian.

- IV DAL', Vladimir. Tolkóvyi Slovar' Velikorússkogo Yazyká. 4 vols. Total 2700 pp. Reprint by the State Publishing House of Foreign and National Dictionaries, Moscow, 1955, of the 1882 edition. (N. Y. Public Library has the 1909 edition). Dal' was over threescore and ten when he died in 1872. Thus between the author's lifetime and entrenchment of the Soviets there intervened a fecund half-century of Russian creativity in letters, the theater, science, technology, sociology, politics, which provides a fallow field for intensive lexicographical exploitation. To what extent the impressive 15-volume Slovar' sovreménnoho rússkogo literatúrnoho yazyká, Academy of Sciences, Moscow-Leningrad, 1961, had mined this wealth only diligent consultation can reveal. Yet few can indulge the dollars, shelf-space and time which possession and use of such a set involves. Consequently we must turn for help to a smaller work of recent date, to wit :
- V AKADEMIYA NAUK. INSTITUT YAZIKO-ZNANIYA. Slovar' Rússkogo Yazyká. 4 vols. Moscow. 1957-1961. Some 4000 pp. Indifferent paper. Indifferent binding. No illustrations. Accents. No Slavonic derivations but occasional Greek etymologies.

For current usage I checked poká. In its classical meanings poká occupies 45 lines. A further entry then reads : (Nu) poká (prostorechnoe slovo, vyrazhenie) = do svidaniya.

For politics I checked trotskism, found :  
trotskism, -a. m. vrazhdébnoe marksizmu-leninizmu techénie v rabóchem dvizhénii, raznovídnost' menshevizma. [A tendency in the labor movement hostile to marxism-leninism, a form of menshevism.]  
trotskíst, -a. m. Poslédoval' trotskísma. [A follower of trotsk(y)ism.]  
trotskístskii, aya, oe. -[adj.] fr. trotskíst, trotskíst. Trotskístskaya oppo- sítsiya.

Trotskístskie lózungi. [Trotskyiet (trotskyist) opposition, Trotskyite slogans.]

[Webster III provides 15 lines, 5 entries, cross-reference to Stalinism, Titoism.]

For science I turned to yádernyi, found :  
yáderni, aya, oe. 6 lines. Yádernyi reaktor [nuclear reactor] and yádernaya fízika / nuclear physics / total 5 lines together.  
[Webster Unabridged III devotes 50 lines, with 6 cross-references, to the word nuclear.]

In fine, these 4000 pages do not respond to translator needs. To raise the general

level of output, the State Scientific Publishers of the Soviet Encyclopedia luckily have come forward with a notable physics job. Of a prospective set of four or five volumes only one volume is off the press, though, namely :

- VI FIZICHESKII ENTSIKLOPEDICHESKII SLOVAR'. Tom I A-D. 664 pp. Good paper, good print, illustrations, bibliographical references for all major entries. If the other tomes of this Encyclopedic Physics Dictionary live up to the promise of Volume I, and if the complete set comes out in seasonable time, the megalexer working on physics should here have a translation aid that truly serves his purpose.

\* \* \*

And now for the compartmentalized bilinguals. These make translator sense only when backstopped, we insist, by general reference works, principally :

- (a) a Webster-style Unabridged in one big volume in the language proper.  
(b) a life-size Polytechnic bilingual that embraces all the technological sciences.

The 4-volume Slovar' described in V is no fitting answer to (a), and although E. A. Carpovich is reportedly engaged on (b) one must wonder how satisfactory a job will be forthcoming unless the necessary kind of money is provided for research and for the kind of published book that is needed.

Meanwhile, the multiplicity of bilinguals is their indictment. Encomium is due every individual laborer in the vineyard, every compiler proper, and those about him who provide encouragement, assistance, publication, distribution. But the System, as Establishment, by which they are engendered only adds to the hectic climate enveloping USA-Soviet language relations. The helter-skelter with which language materials are spawned betrays a method or lack of one which on our side may be labeled stumblebum, on the Soviet side kustarnyi or po vegetarianskii. Whether kustarnyi or stumblebum, neither, approach is in keeping in a machine age in which the translation machine may become viable any day.

Odds are the machine's megalexing will at all times demand close human-megalexer attention. It will want the ministrations of the human megalexer editorially. The human editor will then require aids (a) and (b) no less acutely, indeed very much more acutely, than today's megalexer who types or dictates his product in only relatively small amounts.

Residual sanity dictates that for large-scale megalexing, whether human, machine or post-machine human, this dispersed material must be pooled into the manageable aids I have indicated in (a) and (b). Consequently, every dollar and ruble which the Foundations, Scientific Boards, Learned Societies, or Governments put into the translation machine, stop-gap glossaries, or actual translation, is in part a dollar or ruble down the drain, unless some proportion of it is set aside for quick readying of an All-Russian Unabridged India-paper volume and a full-sized Science and Technology Russian-English bzw English-Russian dictionary that really meets specifications.

As currently the megalexer must nevertheless cater to the Establishment on its own unreasoned terms, his recourse is necessarily to existing partial compilations whose true aim must be to supplement an Unabridged unilingual and a complete technological bilingual, not to pinch-hit for them. In this awareness, let us see what the presses have given us.

- VII PUSHKARYOV-SECHEGOLEVA-YAMPOLSKY. Russian-English (212 pp) English-Russian (590 pp) Dictionary of Building and Architectural Terms. The Ukr. SSR State Publ. House for Literature on Building Construction and Architecture. Kiev, 1961.
- VIII VOSKOBOINIK-TSIMMERMAN. Russian-English Nuclear Dictionary. 334 pp.
- IX VOSKOBOINIK-TSIMMERMAN Companion volume : English-Russian Nuclear Dictionary. 395 pp. Fizmatgiz : Central Editorial Board, Fgn. Lang. Scientific & Techn. Dictionaries. Moscow. 1960.

- X USOVSKY-LINNIK-PODKAMENNYCH-SHKONDE. Russian-English Agricultural Dictionary. 504 pp. Fizmatgiz. Moscow. 1960.

While VII to X do not exhaust the list of the few Russian-English aids published in Russia, they may be taken as fair sample. The English-Russian list is much longer. English-Russian can serve the into-English translator in reverse when the translator is at home in the subject. The fact remains that the specialized bilingual in absence of a comprehensive technological bilingual is a makeshift and when it is used in reverse its make-do character is re-emphasized. Such second-remove materials for the translator into English are these :

- XI PTASHNY, L. K. English-Russian Dictionary for Automatic Control Machines. 379 pp. State Publishing Office for Technical and Theoretical Literature. Moscow. 1957.
- XII GOLD-KOOGUEL. English-Russian Automotive Dictionary. 752 pp. + filler. State Publishing Office for Technical and Theoretical Literature. Moscow. 1956.
- XIII HERZFELD. English-Russian Dictionary of Pure and Applied Chemistry. 3d edition. 709 pp. Fizmatgiz. Moscow. 1960.
- XIV DOUBOSHIN-KOTOV-BOUTOUSOV-CHAUSSKI. English-Russian Aeronautical Dictionary. 2d revised ed. 455 pp. State Publ. Off. for Techn. & Theoretical Lit. Moscow. 1958.
- XV BARON-ERSHOV. English-Russian Mining Dictionary. 992 pp. State Publishing Office for Physical and Mathematical Literature. Moscow. 1958.
- XVI KOSMINSKY-MATVEEV-TERPIGOREVA-VOROBIEV-MELKUMOV. English-Russian Mining Engineering Dictionary. ca. 500 pp. Ugletekhizdat : Coal Industry Publishers. Moscow. 1958.
- XVII GLUSMAN. English-Russian Dictionary of Railway Signaling and Communication. 394 pp. + filler. State Publ. Off. for Phys. & Math. Lit. Moscow. 1958.

The medical field affords the following Russian-English assist :

- XVIII Russko-Anglo-Kitaiskii Meditsinskii Slovar'. 679 pp. Moscow or Peking, 1959. Reported available in London.

This side the water, for medicine we encounter :

- XIX JABLONSKI-LEVINE. Russian-English Medical Dictionary. Academic Press, Inc. N. Y. 1956.

Author Jablonski has been associated with the National Library of Medicine, Wash., D. C., and author Levine with the U. S. Health Service. In the medicine I have had to do from Russian this volume proved of meager help for lack of entries. It is neatly printed and bound, contains 422 pages, and is priced at **\$11.00**.

- XX CARPOVICH, Eugene A. Russian-English Biological and Medical Dictionary. Typed and offset. 398 pp. Technical Dictionaries Co., N. Y. 1958.

Other material our side the water includes :

- XXI RUSSIAN-ENGLISH GLOSSARY OF AERONAUTICAL & MISC. TECHNICAL TERMS. "Distributed by the Office of Techn. Services in the interest of industry". PB131634. Typed and offset. 400 pp. Technical Docts. Liaison Office. MCLTD. Wright Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio. 1956.
- XXII RUSSIAN-ENGLISH DICTIONARY OF THE MATHEMATICAL SCIENCES. Under grants by the National Science Foundation. Lohwater-Gould, assisted by Kudryatavtsev, Solntsev and Solomentsev. [English-Russian in preparation.] Joint auspices of USSR Academy of Sciences and American Mathematical Society, Providence, R. I. 267 pp. 1961.

This approach in collaboration sharply raises the question whether for translator, researcher, student, scientist, technologist, interested reader or subject specialist, language, which is organic, can helpfully be lopped into non-communicating compartments in this way. I say yes, if a non-specialized comprehensive science and technology volume is also to hand. Hence momentarily, in the language man's view, No.

XXII is an amiable international boondoggle. If, however it can be made to trigger off a program of comprehensive volumes such as we take our stand for, it can come to possess genuine validity as an act of USSR-USA collaboration in hewing a path through the jungles of linguistic lichen with which we presently have to contend.

XXIII RUSSIAN-ENGLISH GLOSSARY OF METALLURGICAL AND METAL-WORKING TERMS. Howerton-Akhonim. Typed & offset. 175 pp. Center for International Studies. M.I.T. Cambridge, Mass. "Communist Bloc Program". 1955. Pomp and circumstance, and forth comes a mouse — with the rickets!

XXIV DERUGUINE, Tanya. RUSSIAN-ENGLISH DICTIONARY OF METAL-LURGY AND ALLIED SCIENCES. 32,000 entries. Gives composition of the alloys. Has received favorable reviews. Typed and offset. 470 pp. Frederick Ungar, Publishers. New York. 1962 ----- **\$15.00**

XXV CARPOVICH, Eugene A. and Vera V. Russian-English Chemical Dictionary. Typed and offset. Technical Dictionaries Co., N. Y. Rave reviewed (Chem. & Ind., 1962, 455-456), its 352 pp may supplement Callaham, III above, whose 795 pp are dated 1947, but can hardly replace it. Conflicting sources give date 1961 price **\$12.00**, 1962 price **\$14.00**.

In 1960 New York University's Committee for Russian-English Technical Dictionaries issued a closely printed 20-page report [40c in stamps, Professor A. F. Hubbell, Gallatin House, NYU, New York 3, N.Y.] prepared for the National Science Foundation by A. F. Hubbell, Aaron Bakst, Natasha Artin, Susan Shuff, 30 consultants, and some 200 "responding organizations". This array vividly demonstrates concern over the dictionary problem in many quarters. But a Dictionary Foundation has yet to be created to grapple with the problem full time, day in day out, through all the shifts, swells and eddies of the language tide.

What happens commercially is illustrated in the case of a reprint of the once invaluable Louis Segal book "New Complete Russian-English Dictionary, 4th ed. Printed in Gr. Britain, 1959. 1016 pp." Bearing this same 1959 dateline the book is also issued by a N. Y. publisher. Regrettably, there is no indication of copyright date, which raises the question whether the publishers are not concealing a true dateline for the sake of sales.

Foundation funds supplied en gros and collaboration full-scale with Russia in a rational dictionary-making program would signify at least the attempt to do more than make polite gestures toward meeting the two nations' reciprocal lexicographical needs. Such an all-out program started in earnest would be cause for the translator to cry not just Ahoy but Yo-Ho! <sup>2</sup>



(2) Acknowledgments: Slavonic Dept. N. Y. Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42d St., N. Y.; Acad. of Medicine Library, 2 East 103 Street, N. Y. 29; Translations, 130 W. 57 Street, N. Y. 19. Leonard Mins, Russian-Language Department; Tanya Deruguine, c/o Frederick Ungar, Publ. 131 East 23 Street, N. Y.; Dr. M. F. Mattisson, Literature Chemist, Commercial Solvents Corp., Terre Haute, Ind. Sources of Supply: Four Continent Book Corp. 156 Fifth Ave., N. Y.; Budin-Books, 80 East 11 Street, New York; Technical Dict. Co., Box 144, N. Y. 31; Crossroads Bookstore, Chicago, Ill.; Intl. Bookstore, Market at Fell, San Francisco, Cal.; Collet's Bkstore, 44 Museum St., London, W. C. 1, England; Le Livre Etranger, 10 rue Armand Moisant, Paris 15, France.