

Why Not Stop Worrying  
about Cyrillic and  
and Read *Russian!*

May 26, 1975

Number 21

This is a follow-up of our recent discussion of transliteration problems in science, especially the conversion of Russian Cyrillic to English roman. I even suggested that the ultimate solution to the problem was simply for the Russians to publish in English, or, as a minimum, to adopt the roman alphabet.

I have been accused of scientific and linguistic imperialism and chauvinism because of my repeated suggestion that English be adopted as the mandatory language of science.<sup>1-4</sup> I anticipate the same reaction when now proposing that the Soviet Union abandon Cyrillic.

It's not a far-fetched idea. As many Slavic languages use roman as Cyrillic, if not more. Some of them, true, display formidable consonant clusters (Polish), excessive use of diacritical marks (Czech), modification of the form of some roman letters (Croat and Slovene), but that needn't be the case, as you'll see. Readers will find it's possible to stop worrying about Cyrillic and try reading Russian.

On the next few pages you will find some specimens of romanized Russian. One is scientific. The other is literary. The scientific example is the same text I mentioned in an earlier editorial.<sup>5</sup> I used it years ago to demonstrate 'automatic' transliteration of Cyrillic at an ACS meeting. This scientific text is chemical, and in dealing with it, the reader has the obvious advantage of the international chemical vocabulary. On the whole, Russian treats

it better than some European languages. It can be more difficult to read scientific Italian than scientific Russian. What remains pretty recognizable in Russian (*gidroksi* for example) can be thoroughly disguised by Italian's euphonic orthography (*idrossi*). The second specimen is the beginning of a novel. The novel itself is certainly one of the best ever written, and this beginning passage among the best-known of all beginnings. I leave discovery of its identity to the adventurous reader. With the specimens of romanized Russian we've supplied a romanized Russian-English glossary, for those who would like to test my thesis.

Romanizing Russian, as we've done here for your experimental benefit, recommends itself to me for two reasons. One of them is perhaps trivial, but the other's important. Except for five of its letters, Cyrillic has nothing but capitals. It does not offer the variety of upper and lower case, although a usually italicized version of written script (even harder to read) is frequently pressed into service for the latter purpose. As one concerned with books in many different ways, I find most Russian books esthetic failures. Page after page of upper case too soon becomes monotonous and curiously stifling. Romanized Russian would experience a sudden and tremendous typographical freedom, with perhaps some psychologically beneficial side-effects.

More important, however, romanized Russian would be easier to learn. That's not as inane or obvious or unimportant a consideration as you might think.

I think most people vastly underestimate the obstacle that the Cyrillic alphabet presents, especially for groups of people like scientists. Few scientists want to become fluent Russian scholars, but a great many would like some facility in reading scientific Russian. Mastery of the Cyrillic alphabet and the *order of the letters in the Cyrillic alphabet* is a simple first step for the linguist or Russian specialist. A scientist or any other busy person may be willing to spend time puzzling his way through a French or German article, helped by a dictionary and learning a little more French or German in the process. The same person will give up when confronted by the Cyrillic alphabet and the frustration of trying to use a Russian-English dictionary, with only a hazy notion of the order of the letters. He might not give up, if the Russian text *and the Russian-English dictionary* were in roman (if the Russians used it), or if both text and dictionary were *transliterated*.

I think it is to be greatly regretted that Lenin did not, when he reformed Russian orthography and discarded redundant letters, go on and romanize the language as well—which is what we've done in this issue of *Current Contents*<sup>®</sup>. I can easily imagine that he may have approved the idea of doing it. The Cyrillic alphabet was then above all else the alphabet of Orthodoxy. It was at least the *lay* alphabet of Orthodoxy; Glagolitic, another alphabet designed by St. Cyril for the Slavs, had been preserved in liturgical material. It still surprises me that Lenin didn't romanize. Perhaps he simply didn't

have time to weigh and decide between alternative 'systems' of romanization suggested to him. A deplorable lapse, in my opinion. Surely few dictators can claim any act as sensible as that of Kemal Ataturk. Despite the Koranic sanctity of the Arabic script, he abolished its use, and romanized the Turkish language. Chairman Mao seems likely to do the same. The roman alphabet is already used in China in elementary instruction. Whether Mao's primary reason is a break with the past or a simplification of written communication, romanization has been reported as a long-range goal of the Chinese government.

I would, by the way recommend the same course of action to the Shah of Iran. Linguistically he has more reason to romanize his language than Ataturk did. Persian is an Indo-European language, like English and Russian. That it continues to be written in a script developed by a radically different language-family can only remain an obstacle to increase of literacy in Iran. Though most living alphabets, including roman, are descendants of a very ancient Semitic alphabet, the modern Arabic script is ill-suited to Persian.

The glossary we've supplied with the two specimens of romanized Russian consists of excerpts from *ISI's Transliterated Russian-English Dictionary*, which we intend to publish late this year or early the next. A prime purpose of this discussion has been to introduce the concept and determine interest in such a dictionary among our readers, and even to accept orders for copies in the very near future. Please let me hear from you if you're interested.

1. Garfield E. English, an international language for science. *Current Contents (CC)* No. 52, 26 December 1967, p. 4-5.

2. ----. "Cover-to-cover" translation of Soviet journals; a wrong "solution" of the wrong problem. *CC*No. 29, 19 July 1972, p. 5-6.

3. ----. International science requires cultural as

well as economic "imperialism". *CC* No. 4, 24 January 1973, p. 5-6.

4. ----. Let's erect a new Tower of Babel! *CC*No. 45, 6 November 1974, p. 5-7.

5. ----. Transliteration≠transcription translation. *CC*No. 16, 21 April 1975, p. 5-7.

6. Anon. Basics of the Chinese language. *China Reconstruction* 24:42-3, January 1975.

# Prostoi sposob polucheniya 9-atsetil-9,10-digidrofenazina i 9,10-diatsetil-9,10-digidrofenazina

(Ukrainskii Khimicheskii Zhurnal 24:489-90, 1958)

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Diatsetildigidrofenazin yavlyaetsya iskhodnym produktom dlya polucheniya 2-aminofenazina. Grabenko i Serebryanyi neskolko usovershenstvovali metodiku i poluchili 2-aminofenazin s vykhodom 63% na iskhodnyi fenazin. Odnako do sikh por poluchenie diatsetildigidrofenazina predstavlyalo soboi dlitelnyuyu i malo udobnyuyu

In this small glossary, italicized abbreviations are those commonly used in interlingual dictionaries. In most cases the form of main entry is the nominative (usually masculine) for nouns and adjectives, and for verbs the infinitive. Rusty or novice readers of Russian may find the following reminders helpful. In addition to the four 'classical' cases for substantives Russian has *instrumental* and *prepositional* cases. Declensional variants in the texts are explained in the glossary. In the case of verbs, almost all derivatives happen to be third person, so only the tense is indicated. The generalized reflexive pronoun *-sya* added to any form of a verb may lend it a reflexive or even passive meaning. The soft and hard signs have not been transliterated in the texts, but are indicated by ' and " respectively in the glossary.

- anglichanka** — *n.f.* english, englishwoman  
**Arkad'ikh** — Arkadich, proper name, patronym from Arkadii  
**aminofenazin** — *n.m.* aminophenazine; =/a (*gen.*)  
**ammoni/i** — *n.m.* ammonia; =/em (*instr.*)  
**angidrid** — *n.m.* anhydride; =/a (*gen.*)  
**atmosfer/a** — *n.f.* atmosphere =/e (*prep.*)  
**atsetildigidrofenazin** — *n.m.* acetyldihydrophenazine; =/a (*gen.*)  
**atsetilirovani/e** — *n.neut.* acetylation; =/em (*instr.*)  
**az** — *arch. prn.* I  
**bega/t'** — *v.* to run (*around*); =/li (*past*)  
**bole** — *adv.* more  
**byt'** — *v.* to be; byl & bylo (*past*) was  
**bylo** — see **byt'**  
**byl** — see **byt'**  
**byvsheyu** — *partic. former (f.s. instr.)*  
**chas** — *n.m.* hour, time; =/a (*gen. s.*); =/ov (*gen. pl.*)  
**chast'** — *n.f.* part  
**chem** — *conj.* than  
**chern/yi** — *adj.* black =/aya (*f.s. nom.*)  
**chlen** — *n.m.* member of a group; =/a (*gen.*); =/y (*pl. nom.*); =/ami (*pl. instr.*)  
**chto** — *prn.* what, which; *conj.* that  
**chuvstvova/t'** — *v.* to feel, be aware; =/li (*past*); =/los' (*past*)  
**den'** — *n.m.* day  
**deti** — *n. pl.* children, 'kids'  
**diatsel'n/yi** — *adj.* diacetyl =/oe (*n.s. nom.*)  
**diatsetildigidrofenazin** — *n.m.* diacetyldihydrophenazine; =/a (*gen.*)  
**digidrofenazin** — *n.m.* dihydrophenazine; =/a (*gen.*)  
**dlitel'n/yi** — *adj.* protracted, extended, lengthy; =/uyu (*f.s. acc.*)  
**dlya** — *prep.* for  
**do** — *prep.* down to, up to, as far as  
**dom** — *n.m.* house; =/a (*gen.*); =/e (*prep.*); =/u (*dat.*)  
**domochad/ets** — *n.m.* member of a household; =/tsami (*pl. instr.*)  
**domochadtsy** — *n.* household  
**drug** — *n.m.* another, each other; =/a (*gen.*); =/ na druga, to each his own, each in his own way  
**dvor** — *n.m.* court, yard; =/a (*gen.*); =/e (*prep.*)  
**ego** — *prn.* to, for him (*acc., gen.*)  
**ei** — *prn.* to, for her (*dat.*)  
**ekonomk/a** — *n.f.* housekeeper; =/oi (*instr.*)  
**eschche** — *adv.* still, yet, already

operatsiyu. Monqatsetilnoe i diatsetilnoe proizvodnye fenazina poluchalis atsetilirovaniem digidrofenzina, kotoryi v svoyu ochered prigotovlyalsya putem vosstanovleniya fenazina sernistym ammoniem v razbavlennom spirtovom rastvore ili kondensatsiei  $\alpha$ -fenalendiamina s pirokatekinom v atmosfere uglekisloty.

Po predlagaemomu sposobu vosstanovlenie fenazina provoditsya tsinkovoi pylyu v smesi uksusnogo angidrida i ledyanoi uksusnoi kisloty pri kipyachenii. Po razrabotannoi metodike diatsetildigidrofenzin poluchaetsya s 95% -nym vykhodom. Konets vosstanovleniya khorosho opredelyaetsya po obestsvechivaniyu reaktsionnoi smesi.

Pri provedenii reaktsii vosstanovleniya pri komnatnoi temperature s vykhodom 96% poluchaetsya monoatsetildigidrofenzin.

est' — *v. is, are (3.s. or pl. of byt')*  
 eto — *dem. prn. that, this, it (is)*  
 fenalendiamin — *n.m. phenylenediamine; = /a (gen.)*  
 fenazin — *n.m. phenazine; = /a (gen.)*  
 frantsuzhenk/a — *n.f. french(woman); = /oyu (instr.)*  
 Grabenko — *proper name*  
 gubernantk/a — *n.f. governess; = /oi (inst.)*  
 i — *conj. and*  
 ikh — *poss. prn. their (3 pl.)*  
 ili — *conj. or*  
 iskhodn/yi — *adj. initial, starting = /ym (instr.)*  
 iz — *prep. from*  
 kak — *conj. as, like, as if*  
 kazhd/yi — *adj. each, every; = /aya (f.s. nom.); = /om (m.s. prep.)*  
 khorosho — *adj. & adv. good, nice, well*  
 kipyachen/ie — *n.neut. boiling; = /ii (prep.)*  
 kislot/a — *n.f. acid; = /y (gen.)*  
 knyaz' — *n.m. prince*  
 komnata — *n.f. room; komnat (gen. pl.)*  
 kondensats/iya — *n.f. condensation: = /iei (instr.)*  
 konets — *n.m. end, conclusion*  
 kotoryi — *inter. & rel. prn. which, that*  
 kucher — *n.m. coachman*  
 kukharka — *n.f. cook*  
 ledyanoi — *adj. icy, glacial*  
 lyudi — *n. pl. people*  
 malen'k/ii — *adj. small, little; = /ie (pl. nom.); = /imi (pl. instr.)*

malo — *adv. a little, some, somewhat*  
 mesto — *n. neut. place, position*  
 metodik/a — *n.f. method; = /e (dat. & prep.); = /u (acc.)*  
 mezhdz — *prep. between*  
 mne — *pers. prn. to me (dat.)*  
 monoatsetil/nyi — *adj. monacetyl; = /noe (neut. nom.)*  
 mozhet — *imp. v. one, he, she, it can*  
 muchitel' — *adj. painful, agonizing; = /no (neut. nom. short form)*  
 muzh — *n.m. husband = /a (gen.); = /u (dat.)*  
 na — *prep. on*  
 napisa/t' — *v. to write; = /la (past)*  
 ne — *neg. prtcl. not*  
 neschastliv/yi — *adj. unhappy, unlucky; = /a (f. short form); = /aya (f.s. nom.)*  
 neskol'ko — *adj. & adv. several, some, a few, somewhat*  
 net — *neg. adv. & prtcl. no*  
 nim — *pers. prn. by, with him (instr.)*  
 novyi — *adj. n. new; = /oi (neut. acc.)*  
 obed — *n. dinner, lunch; = /a (gen.)*  
 obestsvechivan/ye — *n.neut. decoloration; = /iyu (instr.)*  
 Oblonsk/ii — *proper name (m.s.); = /ikh (gen. pl.)*  
 ob'yavi/t' — *v. to state, declare, announce; = /la (past)*  
 obychnyi — *adj. usual, ordinary*  
 ochered' — *n.f. line; turn; queue*  
 odnako — *conj. but*  
 odnom — *num. & prn. one (prep.)*

## Chast Pervaya

Vse schastlivye semi pokhozhi drug na druga, kazhdaya neschastlivaya semya neschastлива po-svoemu.

Vse smeshalos v dome Oblonskikh. Zhena uznala, chto muzh byl v svyazi s byvsheyu v ikh dome frantsuzhenkoyu-gubernantkoi, i obyavila muzhu, chto ne mozhet zhit s nim v odnom dome. Polozhenie eto prodolzhalos uzhe tretii den i muchitelno chuvstvovalos i samimi suprugami, i vsemi chlen-

oni — *pers. prn. they*  
 operatsi/ya — *n.f. operation; =/yu (acc.)*  
 opredelya/t' — *v. to define, determine, form; =/etsya becomes, is defined, etc. (pres.)*  
 otmschenie *n.neut. arch. vengeance*  
 perv/yi — *adj. first =/aya (f.s.nom.)*  
 pirokatekhin — *n.m. pyrocatechol; =/om (instr.)*  
 po — *prep. on, along, about, etc.*  
 pokhozhi — *adj. alike, resembling (pl.)*  
 polozhenie — *n.neut. position, situation*  
 polucha/t' — *v. to get, turn out, arrive; =/etsya (pres.); =/lis (past)*  
 poluchen/ie — *n.neut. receipt, preparation; =/iya (gen.)*  
 poluchi/t' — *v. to receive, get obtain; =/li (past)*  
 por — *n.g.pl. of pora; do sikh por — till now, hitherto*  
 posle — *prep. after*  
 possori/tsya — *v. to argue; =/las' (past)*  
 postoyal/yi — *n.m. inn; =/om (prep.)*  
 po-svoemu — *adv. (in) one's own way*  
 poteryannye — *adj. pl. lost, 'gone wild'*  
 povar — *n.m. chef, cook*  
 predlaga/t' — *v. to propose; =/emomu (pres. partic. dat.) proposed*  
 predstavlya/t' — *v. to present =/alo (past)*  
 pri — *prep. near, attached to, in presence of*  
 prigotovlya/t'sya — *v. to get prepared, =/lsya (past)*  
 priiskat' — *v. to find, look for*

priyatel'nit/sya — *n.f. girlfriend; =/se (prep.)*  
 prodolzha/t'sya — *v. to continue; =/les' (past)*  
 produkt — *n.m. product; =/om (instr.)*  
 proizvodn/ye — *n. derivative*  
 prosit'/t' — *v. to ask; =/li (past)*  
 prosnu/t'sya — *v. to awake; =/lsya (past)*  
 prostoi — *adj. simple*  
 prosya — *f.gen. of prosit'; asking*  
 provoditsya — *v. to lead, carry out (here: pres.)*  
 putem — *adv. by means of*  
 pyl' — *n.f. dust; =/yu (instr.)*  
 raschet — *n.m. pay, addition, calculation =/a (gen.)*  
 rastvor — *n.m. solution; =/e (prep.)*  
 razbavl/yat' — *v. to dilute; =/ennom (pass. partic. instr.)*  
 razrabota/t' — *v. to work on, develop; =/nnoi (partic.)*  
 reaktsionn/yi — *adj. capable of reaction, reactive; =/oi (f.s.instr.)*  
 s — *prep. with*  
 samimi — *prn. themselves*  
 schastliv/yi — *adj. happy, fortunate, lucky; =/ye (pl.)*  
 sem'/ya — *n.f. family; =/i (pl.)*  
 Serebryanyi — *proper name*  
 sernist/yi — *adj. sulfurous, sulfite; =/ym (instr.)*  
 sikh — *dem. prn. gen. pl. of those, of these*  
 sluchaino — *adv. by chance*  
 smesha/t'sya — *v. to mix (with); =/los' (past)*

ami semi, i domochadtsami. Vse chleny semi i domochadtsy chuvstvovali, chto net smysla v ikh sozhitelstve i chto na kazhdom postoyalom dvore sluchaino soshedshiesya lyudi bolee svyazany mezhdou soboi, chem oni, chleny semi i domochadtsy Oblonskikh. Zhena ne vykhodila iz svoikh komnat, muzha tretii den ne bylo doma. Deti begali po vsemu domu, kak poteryannye; anglichanka possorilas s ekonomkoi i napisala zapisku priyatelnitse, prosya priiskat ei novoe mesto; povar ushel eshche vchera so dvora, vo vremya obeda; chernaya kukharka i kucher prosili rascheta.

Na tretii den posle ssory knyaz Stepan Arkadich Oblonskii — Stiva, kak ego zvali v svete, — v obychnyi chas, to est v vosem chasov utra, prosnulsya ne v spalne zheny.....

**smes/'** — *n.f.* mixture; = /i (gen.)

**smysl** — *n.m.* sense, meaning; = /a (gen.)

**so** — *prep.* from

**soboi** — *refl. prn.* by, in, of oneself, itself

**soshedshiesya** — *partic.* come together, in common

**sozhitel'stv/o** — *n.neut.* living together; = /e (prep.)

**spal'n/ya** — *n.f.* bedroom; = /e (prep.)

**sposob** — *n.m.* way, method, mode; = /u (dat.)

**spirtov/oi** — *adj.* alcoholic; = /om (instr.)

**ssor/a** — *n.f.* quarrel; = /y (gen.)

**Stepan** — *proper noun*, Stephen

**Stiva** — *proper noun*, 'Steffie'

**suprug** — *n.m.* husband; = /a wife; = /ami (pl. instr.) husband and wife, married couple

**svet** — *n.m.* society; = /e (prep.)

**svoikh** — *refl. adj. & prn. (gen. pl.)* his, hers, theirs, its, etc.

**svoyu** — *refl. adj. & prn. (f.s.)* hers, its, of hers, of its

**svyaz/'** — *n.f.* tie, bond, liaison, affair; = /i (gen.)

**svyazan/nyi** — *adj.* constrained, combined; = /y (pl. short form)

**to est** — that is

**tretii** — *adj.* third

**tsinkov/yi** — *adj.* zinc; = /oi (instr.)

**udobn/o** — *adj.* convenient, comfortable; = /uyu (f. acc.)

**uglekislot/a** — *n.* carbon dioxide; = /y (gen.)

**uksusn/yi** — *adj.* acetic; = /ogo (gen.), = /oi (instr.)

**ushel** — *v. irr.* had left, gone off

**usovershenstvovav/t'** — *v.* to perfect, improve; = /li (past)

**utr/o** — *n.neut.* morning; = /a (gen.)

**uzhe** — *adv.* already

**uzna/t'** — *v.* find out, discover; = /la (past)

**v** — *prep.* in, into

**vchera** — *adv.* yesterday

**vo** — *prep.* in, into, at

**vosem'** — *num.* eight

**vosstanovlenie** — *n.neut.* restoration, renewal, reduction, recovery; = /iya (gen.)

**vozda/t'** — *v. arch.* requite; = /m I shall requite, repay

**vremya** — *n.neut.* time

**vse** — *adj. & prn.* all, every, everything

**vsemi** — *adj. & prn.* all, every (pl. instr.)

**vsemu** — *adj. & prn.* all, every, whole (dat.)

**vykhodi/t'** — *v.* to go out, leave; = /la (past)

**vykhod** — *n.m.* yield = /om (instr.)

**yavlya/tsya** — *v.* to appear, show, be; = /etsya (pres.)

**zapisk/a** — *n.f.* note, report = /u (acc.)

**zhen/a** — *n.f.* wife; = /u (acc.); = /y (gen.)

**zhit'** — *v.* to live

**zva/t'** — *v.* to call, call upon; = /li (past)