

Encyclopedic Dictionary *Biology in St Petersburg. 1703–2008*

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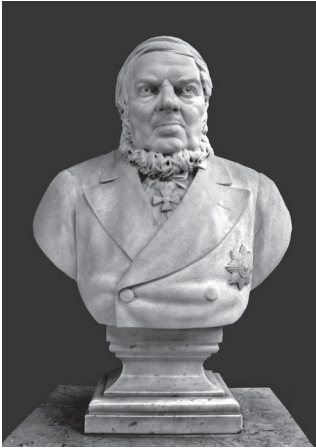
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In 2011, a large team of authors completed work on the encyclopedic dictionary *Biology in St Petersburg. 1703–2008* (*Biologiya v Sankt-Peterburge*, 2011). The dictionary contains more than 1,650 articles, primarily on prominent biologists who had worked in St Petersburg since the beginning of the 18th century and have made a real contribution to the development of Russian and international biology. To this category we assign specialists not just in “pure” biology, but also in applied biology and the related disciplines – soil science, paleontology, geology, medicine, agriculture, forestry, veterinary medicine,

and others. So it would be more accurate to call it the dictionary of ‘Life Sciences in St Petersburg’. The dictionary also contains articles on biological research and educational centers, museums, scientific societies, periodicals, administrative structures, public figures and statesman, and so on – about different kinds of people and institutions who have, directly or indirectly, influenced the life sciences in St Petersburg. The encyclopedia was part of a bigger project, the preliminary results of which were published already in 2007 and 2008 (*Nauchnyi Sankt-Peterburg...*, 2007; *Nauchnyi Sankt-Peterburg...*, 2008).

The dictionary was compiled by a large group of authors – 156 historians and biologists. The editor-in-chief (and the author of many articles) Professor Eduard I. Kolchinski is the head of the St Petersburg Branch of the Institute for the History of Science and Technology. Anastasia A. Fedotova was involved as a co-editor–



*Johann Friedrich von Brandt
(sculpture of Léopold
Bernstamm), 1882 – property
of Zoological Institute.
The author has been identified
by N.V. Slepikova*

compiler. The final academic editing was carried out by Irina Yu. Sumerina, who is very well known among Russian botanists for her editorial experience. The articles were written by biologists and historians from various institutions in St Petersburg,¹ but also in other cities and, on several occasions, from institutions abroad. For some articles, the author has remained unspecified, which means that the articles were written on the basis of a single published source. Of course, most articles are just a compilation of previously published research; for a considerable part of them, however, authors have checked dates and facts working with archive sources, and also there are quite a number of articles that can be considered highly original research.² The authors supplemented their articles with portraits and other illustrations; most of these pictures have never been published.

When discussing the encyclopedic dictionary, I would like to stress several points:

1) The persons and institutions which had been previously excluded from the history of Russian biology became objects of special interest for our collective. Sometimes they had been “forgotten” because of ideological reasons, sometimes just because collective memory is very selective. We tried to trace people via

¹ K.V. Manoilenko, Yu.A. Laius, M.B. Konashev, A.I. Ermolaev, V.A. Polevoi, T.I. Yusupova, N.Ye. Beregoi – S.I. Vavilov St Petersburg Branch of the Institute for the History of Science and Technology, RAS; A.K. Sitin, A.N. Titov, D.V. Geltman, V.I. Vasilevich, R.V. Kamelin – Komarov Botanical Institute, RAS; N.V. Slepikova, A.V. Smirnov, O.N. Pugachev, L.Ya. Borkin – Zoological Institute, RAS; S.V. Retunskaya, M.G. Baturina, G.I. Pankratova, V.P. Leonov – Library of the Russian Academy of Sciences; S.I. Fokin, B.F. Aparin, N.N. Matinyan – St Petersburg State University; Yu.P. Golikov, Yu. A. Mazing – Museum for the History of the Institute for Experimental Medicine; D.A. Zhuravlev, A.A. Boudko – Museum of Military Medicine, V.A. Dragavtsev, I.V. Kotelnikova – All Russian Institute of Plant Breeding; Yu.V. Natchin, V.N. Shipilov – Sechenov Institute of the Evolutionary Physiology and Biochemistry, RAS; V.O. Samoilov – Military Medical Academy; N.P. Kopaneva, I.V. Tunkina – St. Petersburg Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences, and others.

² For example, the article ‘Central’noe buro kraevedei’ (‘Central bureau of regional studies’) by M.V. Loskutova, article on K.M. Zavadski and A.M. Ugolev by E.I. Kolchinski, ‘Ekskursionnye biologicheskie stancii’ (‘Excursion biological stations’) by A.V. Samokish, *Lesnoi zhurnal* (‘Journal of Forestry’) by A.A. Fedotova, ‘Obshchestvo veterinarnikh vrachei’ (‘Veterinarians’ Society’) by N.Ye. Beregoi, etc.

institutions and institutions via people, and it helped us to rediscover a number of researchers and even whole institutions that even specialists have forgotten about: such as, for example, the Institute of Applied Zoology and Phytopathology, the Agricultural Museum, or the Pomological Garden.

We tried to put together information on the victims of political repressions – and we should say that a massive number of scientists was subjected to repressions from the very autumn of 1917. This fact impressed, and depressed, us. But political repressions occurred in Russia also at times other than the Soviet period. A considerable part of scientists was involved in political movements already before the October Revolution – especially students, but also professors – for example, Professor Andrei S. Famintsyn was imprisoned in 1879.



*Georgii D. Karpechenko –
Archive of Institute for the
History of Science and
Technology, St. Petersburg
Branch*

2) The dictionary revealed that the history of science in Russia had been very poorly studied. Historical literature usually describes just the development of a very few scientific institutions: the system of the Academy of Sciences, the Military Medical Academy, the St Petersburg State University, and a few more. But even superficial research on the early history of many institutions which were allegedly established in the Soviet period reveals that many of them had influential predecessors. Most ministries in the Russian Empire established their own scientific committees, bureaus and councils: Medical and Mining Departments, the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Ministry of Public Education, the Agricultural Administration of the Empire, and so on. Without knowledge about these structures it is absolutely impossible to have an objective overview of the development of biological disciplines in St Petersburg and in the Empire. For example, the system of the VASKhNIL, the Lenin All-Union Academy of Agricultural Sciences of the Soviet Union, did not emerge in a vacuum. It had influential predecessors such as the bureaus of the Scientific Council of the Agricultural Administration: the Bureau for Applied Botany, the Bureau for Soil Science, the Bureau for Meteorology, etc.



*Andrey A. Fedorov, 1944 –
private archive of Tatiana
Vel'gorskaya*

3) Writing the dictionary articles as if set off a chain reaction. While working on one article we came to realize the importance of another figure, or another institution, and had to write an article on that. For example, the article on botanist Robert E. Regel prompted K.V. Manoilenko to write an article on his father, Eduard A. Regel, and the latter forced me to write articles on the Pomological Garden (*Pomologicheski Sad*) and on the *Journal of Horticulture* (*Vestnik sadovodstva*).

We found that most of St Petersburg's naturalists had graduated from only a few secondary schools. So we had to write articles about these secondary schools, and also about some influential secondary school teachers. Also, when writing articles about scientific societies we also had to write articles about some students' clubs – for example, the Little Botanists (*Malen'kie botaniki*, A.A. Fedotova) and the Little Zoologists (*Malen'kie zoologi*, S.I. Fokin). Naturalists were connected with only a few publishing houses, and so on. The more articles we wrote, the more gaps we found. So, at one moment we just had to stop writing new articles, put them together, and take the volume to the publishing house.

We hope that our dictionary will be useful not only for historians and biologists in St Petersburg and elsewhere in Russia. Mobility among scientists has always been high, and it would be impossible to imagine life sciences in St Petersburg without Baltic naturalists and Baltic research and educational centers. To name only a few, scholars such as Otto Abich, Nikolai Andrusov, Sergei Anichkov, Nikolai Bush, Alexander von Bunge, Gregor von Helmersen, Nikolai Kuznetsov, Nikolai Pirogov, Ludvig Puusepp, and many others have studied or worked at the University of Tartu (Dorpat, Yuriev).

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