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**”ALL BIGGER THINGS ARE
CLEARER FROM A DISTANCE”:
SOME RESULTS OF COOPERATION
BETWEEN PHILOLOGISTS
FROM THE IMMANUEL KANT
BAL TIC FEDERAL UNIVERSITY
AND THE UNIVERSITY
OF WARMIA AND MAZURY**



The author analyses cooperation of slavists from the Immanuel Kant Baltic Federal University and University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn. This cooperation began in 1980 when an agreement of cooperation between the two universities was signed. The paper focuses on the main areas of cooperation and assesses its results. The author gives credit to the leading scholars who made an invaluable contribution to the development of this cooperation.

Key words: cooperation, philology, Slavic Studies, Russian studies, Polish studies, cooperation in research and education, Slavic unity.

Interuniversity contacts are recognised as one of the most important components of the activity of any university. And it is certainly the case for the Immanuel Kant Baltic Federal University (BFU) (before 2005, Kaliningrad State University; before 2011, Immanuel Kant State University of Russia (IKSUR)), which developed a comprehensive system of effective connections with various Russian and international universities. An excellent example is the cooperation with the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn (the Higher School of Pedagogy before 2000).

The idea of systemic academic and research contacts between the neighbouring universities emerged as early as the late 1970s and came true when the administration of Kaliningrad State University and the Higher School of Pedagogy in Olsztyn signed an agreement on long-term multi-aspect cooperation in 1980. The agreement covered the interaction of different faculties but, in effect, it was most consistently implemented between slavists. The author of the article was a direct participant of those now distant events, which made a good start to the development of our partnership. Thus, I feel at liberty to tell about the beginning, development and most impressive results of this cooperation.

Speaking of the beginning of the cooperation, one cannot but mention the name of Professor Walenty Piłat — the then dean of the Faculty of Humanities of the Higher School of Pedagogy (HSP). He did not only take a most active part in the development of the main areas of cooperation between the Faculty of Philology of Kaliningrad State University and the Department of Russian Philology of the Higher School of Pedagogy, but also, what turned out to be of utmost importance, engaged in the programme Professor Albert Bartoszewicz, a world-famous Russianist keenly interested in the development of Russian-Polish academic and research con-

tacts. It was not long until the beginning of consistent implementation of what was designed and planned.

First of all, a lot was done within the academic and pedagogical part of the cooperation programme. The leading professors and teachers of the Higher School of Pedagogy delivered lectures for the Kaliningrad students on regular basis: many graduates of the Faculty of Philology and Journalism keep the memory of the lectures on the history of the Russian language expertly presented by Prof. Albert Bartoszewicz, the logically structured and rich in expressive dynamics lectures by Prof. Bazyli Białokozowicz dedicated to the topical issues of the interaction of Slavic literatures, the most interesting lectures by Prof. W. Piłat on the modern Russian drama, the brilliant lectures on cultural linguistics by Prof. Joanna Korzeniewska-Berczyńska, the profound lectures on the works of contemporary Russian writers by Prof. Irena Rudzewicz, and, of course, the highly professional creative practical classes in Polish held by A. Starostiak-Bartoszewicz. In their turn, the full professors and leading associate professors of the Faculty of Philology of BFU — R. V. Alimpiyeva, S. S. Vaulina, A. Z. Dmitrovsky, L. N. Daryalova, V. I. Greshnykh — successfully delivered lectures and special courses on the topical problems of the history of the Russian language and literature to Polish students. This systemic academic cooperation provided a good basis for the introduction of a specialisation in Polish Language and later a specialisation in Polish Language and Literature within the Philology field of study.

An important component of training Polish students in the field of Russian language and literature and Russian students studying the Polish language at BFU was the organisation of non-profit language summer schools held in Olsztyn and Kaliningrad respectively. The summer school programme was thoroughly developed and included a series of practical classes in the Russian language, lectures on Russian literature, history of Russia and Russian studies for the Polish students, and a similar series of classes in the Polish language, lectures on Polish literature, history of Poland, and Polish studies for the Russian students. It is noteworthy that only full professors and leading associate professors were commissioned to deliver lectures, while practical classes were given by highly professional teachers competent in modern methodology of teaching Russian and Polish as foreign languages. An integral component of language practice was a social programme, which included visiting cultural attractions of the Kaliningrad region and Olsztyn voivodeship as well as excursions to Russian and Polish cultural centres.

One should mention that both formal and informal communication between the Russian and Polish students and teachers during classes and internships gave them an opportunity to grasp the profundity of the Russian and Polish languages, penetrate the mysteries of the great national literatures and cultures of Russia and Poland and, for many students, shaped their future academic career. So, some graduates of the Faculty of Philology of Kaliningrad State University, who had chosen the Polish Language specialisa-

tion, joined the PhD programme, defended PhD theses in the field of Russian-Polish studies and are successfully employed at BFU and other Russian and international universities. Among them are L. Kolobkova, who is the head of the Department of Slavic and Baltic Languages at BFU, L. Maltsev, who works as an Associate Professor at the Department of International Philology, S. Babulevich, who holds the position of an Associate Professor at the Department of the History of the Russian Language and Comparative Linguistics and also performs the duties of the leading educational programme manager, I. Kiselyova and N. Usankova, who successfully teach the Russian and Polish languages at international universities.

As to Polish students of the Russian language field of study who, at different times, completed internships at BFU, one can proudly say that many of them, after graduating from the University of Warmia and Mazury, successfully work at Polish schools and universities. Some of the graduates work at the university as teachers. Among them are J. Nawacka, M. Piotrowska-Mazurowska and J. Strycharski, who successfully defended PhD theses on topical problems of the Russian language and are working at the moment on post-doctoral theses; I. Siemianowska, I. Chowańska and J. Olechno-Wasiluk, who successfully combine their work as teachers at the Institute of Eastern Slave Studies with PhD studies.

Another important part of the programme drawn up in the framework of the agreement on cooperation between philologists from BFU and HSP (UWM) in Olsztyn was research partnership, which developed a multi-faceted and regular character.

Its crucial component is active participation of the researchers from the partner universities in international research conferences organised at the universities. Particularly noteworthy are the conferences that have been regularly (once in two years) held at HSP and later UWM since 1980. The contribution of the participation of Kaliningrad philologists in these conferences is difficult to overestimate. These conferences, dedicated to the topical issues of the interaction of Slavic languages and literatures, have always been well organised under the supervision of Prof. A. Bartoszewicz and, later, Prof. W. Piłat. Attracting a wide range of participants, the conferences have provided an opportunity for the full and associate professors of BFU to get acquainted with famous scientists from not only Polish but also Russian and international universities and effectively communicate with them in both formal and informal ways. In their turn, the Polish professors and teachers — W. Piłat, J. Korzeniewska-Berczyńska, I. Rudzewicz, L. Mironiuk, W. Bielousowa, A. Starostiak-Bartoszewicz and others — actively participate in international conferences held at BFU presenting interesting reports on the topical problems of Russian and Slavic philology. And of course, an important and exciting event for our university was the participation of the world-famous Slavists — Prof. A. Bartoszewicz and Prof. B. Białokozowicz. Their presentations were marked by vast erudition and comprehensive argumentation.

The cooperation agreement gave the philologists from BFU and UWM in Olsztyn an ample opportunity for the exchange of research publications. Over the years of cooperation, more than 15 papers by Professors R. V. Alimpiyeva, S. S. Vaulina and A. Z. Dmitrovsky have appeared in the publications of the HSP and later UWM. The papers by Prof. V. I. Greshnykh, Associate Professors N. G. Babenko, N. Ye. Likhina, I. Yu. Kuksa, S. N. Babulevich and I. V. Ostroverkhova were also published more than once. The regular participation of the researchers from BFU as authors in the prestigious *Acta polono-ruthenica* academic journal edited by Prof. W. Piłat is also worth mentioning. In their turn, our Polish colleagues have actively contributed their works to the philological publications of BFU.

An important role in the research cooperation between Kaliningrad and Olsztyn philologists is played by research management. So, Prof. W. Piłat is a member of the editorial boards of the academic journals — *Vestnik, Baltiisky filologichesky kuryer* — and several collections of papers presented at international research conferences held at BFU. At the same time, Prof. S. S. Vaulina is on the editorial boards of the *Acta polono-ruthenica* academic journal, while Prof. V. I. Greshnykh is a member of the editorial board of the *Acta-neophologica* academic journal. Professors W. Piłat, V. I. Greshnykh, I. Rudziewicz, A. Z. Dmitrovsky and S. S. Vaulina on regular basis review monographs, teaching aides and research papers published at BFU, the University of Warmia and Mazury as well as other Russian and international publishing houses.

And, finally, an integral part of the research cooperation is teaching staff mobility. At different times, Professors R. V. Alimpiyeva, S. S. Vaulina, Associate Professors L. V. Kolobkova, S. N. Babulevich and L. A. Maltsev participated in the mobility programme at UWM, while Professors A. Bartoszewicz, W. Piłat, J. Korzeniewska-Berczyńska and I. Rudziewicz as well as A. Starostiak-Bartoszewicz and young researchers — the PhD students, who were consulted by BFU professors on the topics of their theses — paid visits to BFU.

Of importance is that the cooperation (which goes beyond the framework of the formal clauses of the agreement) has revealed new sides of the talent of certain teachers of the partner universities. For example, Prof. R. V. Alimpiyeva who possesses a remarkable poetic gift, mesmerised by Polish poetry, got seriously involved in the translation of the poems of Polish poets. She published several books of translations into Russian, which obtained wide recognition both in Russia and abroad. Our Polish colleagues consider Prof. Alimpiyeva one of the best translators even of such an outstanding Polish poet as A. Mickiewicz. "The Russian reader", W. Piłat writes in his review of her book of translations of A. Mickiewicz, "is introduced to perhaps the perfect translation of the poetry of the great Polish poet of the Romantic Era" [2, p. 15]. Another remarkable fact is that once, having read the poems of W. Piłat, which he had written without any intention to have them published, R. V. Alimpiyeva realised it was true poetry and translated them into Rus-

sian. Later, Prof. V. I. Greshnykh eagerly published these translations in the *Baltiisky filologichesky kuryer* and Prof. A. Z. Dmitrovsky with equal enthusiasm facilitated their appearance in *Literaturnaya sranitsa*, a popular academic periodical, which, over many years, has been regularly published as an appendix to the BFU newspaper, on the initiative of and edited by the professor. Moreover, A. Z. Dmitrovsky himself, being an author of a series of most interesting articles on Polish literature and Russian-Polish cultural connections, displayed impressively wide knowledge in the fields of philology and humanities as well as rare civic enthusiasm of a Slavic patriot.

Looking through the years of the long-standing cooperation of BFU and UWM in Olsztyn, one cannot but mention that the deep interest of the partner universities' administrations in the development of the cooperation has been persistent over the years. A good example is numerous personal meetings between the rectors of the universities and official acknowledgements of the accomplishments of the initiators and leaders of the cooperation. So, in 1997, according to the decision of the Academic Senate of KGU, Albert Bartoszewicz was awarded an honorary degree of Kaliningrad State University for a great contribution to the development of cooperation in Slavic philology and strengthening the academic potential of the university; in 2008, an honorary degree of BFU was awarded to Professor Walenty Pilat.

In its turn, in 1998, the administration of the Higher School of Pedagogy awarded the author of this article — Prof. S. S. Vaulina — a medal of the Senate of the Higher School of Pedagogy in Olsztyn.

"All bigger things are clearer from a distance". The profundity and truthfulness of these poetic lines by Sergey Yesenin is mostly evident today when, looking back from a significant in some respects date — the 30th anniversary of the cooperation — we zealously and thoroughly analyse its beginning and development. Indeed, a lot has been done. And one article can hardly cover it all. Of course, due to both objective and subjective reasons, many things have changed in our cooperation. The partner connections of BFU extended to other Polish universities, and our Polish studies students have an opportunity to undertake an internship not only at the University of Warmia and Mazury. The financial factor affected the traditionally high spiritual level of our partnership limiting the teaching staff mobility. It is a huge sadness that the generators of scientific ideas as well as the ideas of Slavic unity, our colleagues and faithful friends — Professors A. Bartoszewicz and B. Białokozowicz are not with us anymore.

However, our cooperation is developing. Polish students, supervised by a bright Russianist and teacher, a great and selfless devotee of our academic cooperation, A. Starostiak-Bartoszewicz, successfully completed a Russian language practice at BFU, whose excellent organisation owes to the highly qualified teachers of the Department of General and Russian Linguistics headed by Prof. N. G. Babenko. Research contacts are developing and getting deeper. The mature university professors are joined by the talented youths who have adopted the best traditions of our cooperation.

One of the articles of Prof. A. Z. Dmitrovsky dedicated to the issue of inter-Slavic relations contains an interesting statement, which may be debateable in terms of content but is captivating in terms of the true enthusiasm and profundity of the idea of Slavic philological unity. "Slavic philological fellowship", he writes, "does not have a direct political leverage but is itself a model of healthy politics in the fields of culture, economy and personal relations. Therefore, our tasks are as follows: we, philologists, should be worthy of our common Slavic mission, while politicians should be sensitive to philology and become imbued with the spirit of the Slavic Word" [1, p. 28].

I will take the liberty to suppose that the long-standing cooperation between the philologists of BFU and UWM in Olsztyn based on true love to the Slavic word and Slavic culture, strengthened by the cordiality of friendship and deep empathy can, to a certain extent, serve as a mini-model of Slavic philological fellowship, which also opens new prospects of cooperation between our universities.

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