

The French Language in Russia

The second half of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth

On the occasion of the bicentenary of the war of 1812

An international interdisciplinary conference

University of Bristol, Wednesday 12-Friday 14 September 2012

The bicentenary of Russia's war against Napoleon provides an opportunity to explore various aspects of the history of the French language in Russia.

The war drew the attention of Russian society to the use of French in Russia. Disapproval of *francophonie* had already been expressed in the second half of the eighteenth century but at the beginning of the nineteenth century the practice became a target for certain groups of Russian intellectuals, and the growth of a national self-consciousness in Russia was thus revealed. Russian writers had stressed the importance of learning and mastering the native language well before 1812, to be sure, but it was the war against Napoleon that made it possible for the attitudes of different social strata and groups towards the *francophonie* of Russian high society to be clarified.

The conference aims to examine various cultural practices and ideological positions that were associated with the use of French in Russia both before and after the Napoleonic Wars. The chronological extent of the period to be studied is very broad, from the reign of Elizabeth to the age of Nicholas I, so that it should be possible to trace the appearance of *francophonie* in Russia, its flowering and the beginning of its decline.

The conference will address questions such as the following: the way French was learnt, cultural practices associated with its use (correspondence, keeping a diary, reading and composition of works of literature, translation, literary circles and salons, and so forth), the social groups which used it, and reservations about and hostility towards its

use among the nobility. However, this list of questions is not exhaustive. Other matters may also be addressed, such as the linguistic situation in Russia during the period in question, the use of other foreign languages there and similar phenomena in other European countries.

The conference is being organised within the framework of a three-year project in the University of Bristol on the history of the French language in Russia from the eighteenth century to the early twentieth century. The project is led by Professor Derek Offord and funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. This is the first European project which aims to study the history of *francophonie* in one of the countries that was most affected by it. A number of international events will be organised as part of the project and it is envisaged that their proceedings will be published.

The conference will take place in Clifton Hill House, one of the University's most attractive halls of residence. It will begin at lunchtime on 12 September and end around 4.00 on 14th.

Conference organisers

School of Modern Languages, University of Bristol; Derek Offord, project leader; Vladislav Rjéoutski and Sarah Turner, post-doctoral research assistants.

Proposals for papers should be sent to one of the following addresses by 31 January 2012:

By post:

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