Exchange of scientific ideas: recent research on Russian-French relations review of the book:

"Russian-French links in biology and Medicine" (St. Petersburg, 2012)

The relations of the Russian respondents with their French colleagues started due to:
Fellowships (temporary positions) at French labs and universities;
Meetings at conferences;
An initiative from the French side (interest to Russian publications or inventions);
Accidental meetings with French scientists working on similar problems during visits to France. In some cases, personal
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Exchange of Scientific Ideas:
Recent Research on Russian-French Relations
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In this slender, but contentful volume, the experienced editors publish the papers presented at the international conference “Russian-French Links in Biology and Medicine” hosted by the St. Petersburg branch of the S.I. Vavilov Institute for the History of Science and Technology at the Russian Academy of Sciences on September 13-14, 2011.

The book is a rich and lasting harvest from the Year of France in Russia and Russia in France (2010), which stimulated historians of science in both countries to summarize the tradition of exchange — while most regrettably the German organizers of the Year of Germany in Russia and Russia in Germany (2012) refused to consider the historical dimensions.

At the beginning, two renowned scholars give an overview on Russian-French interactions in their fields of research: By the example of catastrophist theories of transformation, E. Kol-chinsky (re-)assesses the significance of French speaking naturalists (Peter Simon Pallas, George Cuvier, Jean-Louis Agassiz and others) in Russian paleontology. Paradoxically, due to the accuracy of their data (originally collected as arguments in favour of the invariability of species), their creationism helped establish the evolutionary idea in biology. Jean-Claude Dupont illustrates the differences between French-Russian and German-Russian relations in neurology by reference to Korsakov’s syndrome. There is no doubt about the importance of German influence, but of course, leading French neurologists, esp. Jean-Marie Charcot, were well-known in Russia. Consequently, it would be more appropriate to consider a French-German-Russian triangle of scientific relations and a circulation of ideas. In contrast to the German-Russian links, the French-Russian collaboration — although wished-for by both sides — always lacked organization and planning.

Following this introduction, six papers give examples of Russian-French links in neurosciences and biomedicine. Liva Pormale lays the ground by outlining development, personalities and research at the Faculty of Medicine in Dorpat / Tartu in the first half of the 19th century. In spite of the German prevalence, French influence can be verified by the adoption of Claude Bernard’s experimental approach to physiology. By the example of automatisms (reflexes, respiration, locomotion), François Clarac follows the mechanistic concept of the body from René Descartes to the neuron theory and the idea of central pattern generators. Jean Massion traces similar materialism in his comparison between Alfred Vul-pian’s lessons (1866) and Ivan Sechenov’s “reflexes of the brain”. This paper is complemented

by Marat Ioffe’s overview on Russian contributions to the clarification of movement automation (Sechenov,
acquaintances have resulted in joint projects under the CNRS-RFBR calls. In others - to “pendulum” migration when Russian scientists have worked for extended periods in French labs and exchanged graduate students. Se Recent Research on Russian-French Relations. Ortrun Riha. Karl Sudhoff Institute for the History of Medicine and Science, Leipzig, Germany From 1950 to 1986 biologists at the Zoological Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences (Leningrad) and French zoologists worked together in important areas: based on archival documents, Nadezhda Slepkova summarizes topics, personalities and institutions and shows that mutual interest in continuing these contacts was stronger than the Iron Curtain. An example of contemporary Russian-French cooperation (Galina Zhouraleva’s account of current research on the regulation of protein synthesis) closes the volume and inspires the reader with confidence in the future of international scientific exchange.

2 The revised and expanded Russian version of the paper was also published. See: Fedotova A.A. Ветеринарная командрировка почвоведа П.А. Костычева // Историко-биологические исследования. 2012. Т. 4. № 3. С. 79-93.
methods Albert Einstein, one of the greatest theoretical physicists, was once asked to explain the way in which a scientist worked. «If you want to know the essence of scientific method, don’t listen to what a scientist may tell you. Watch what he does.»