

Anna Kyuregyan*

Scientific Antivivisectionism on the Way to Russia

For more than one third of my life I've been taking part in the work of Vita Animal Rights Center. I consider it great honor to carry new humanitarian thought to my motherland. This mission becomes even more honorable and responsible if we take into consideration the fact that my native country occupies one sixth of earth, is inhabited by over 140 million people, and I am a translator into the Russian language of truly ground-breaking books by Hans Ruesch and other scientists showing the invalidity of animal experiments from the scientific point of view.

Just beginning to work on the book *1000 Doctors (and many more) Against Vivisection*, right on its first pages I read that as it turned out in the enormous Soviet Union – that was the name of our country until 1991, and its territory was much greater then – less animal experiments had been held than in tiny Switzerland. This fact amazed me – first, in any case it is nearly impossible to imagine such a ratio, second, we know the situation with animal protection in our country from inside and know the specifics of Russian mentality. And the latter bears a great imprint of hard and at times even tragic Russian history when people had to struggle in order not to die from hunger in strict sense. And the motherland of great humanitarians Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky at the same time remains one of few countries where there is no law for protection of animals against cruelty, and where vets sometimes have either to cancel the operation or operate without narcosis because in case of using anesthesia imprisonment for keeping narcotics threatens them.

Such are the inconsistent conditions in which we have to work. On the one hand, explaining Russians that through protecting animals we also help people as well happens to be very difficult, on the other hand influence of industrial interests is much less in our country, so in some respect carrying out work in our country may be easier than in Western Europe and the USA.

Vita Animal Rights Center has always been paying great attention to the problem of animal experiments and scientific arguments against vivisection. We have been dealing with the problem of animal experiments since 1994, when we had no legal status yet and were just beginning to unite biological, medical and veterinary students opposing animal labs. In priority the issue of vivisection is the second (after the propaganda of vegetarianism) sphere of Vita's work. And unfortunately Vita is so far the only organization that deals with this problem in Russia on a global level. Vita makes an emphasis on strategic, global projects and constantly cooperates with Russian celebrities, VIPs – people who form standards of ethical behavior in our society. Vita focuses its attention on educating people about the problem, lobbying legislation and introducing humane alternatives to animal experiments in different spheres.

During this time we have published lots of articles, taken part in manifold radio and TV programs devoted to the issue of animal experimentation; among them were two high rating talk shows on the First Channel. We have held over ten round tables and press conferences on the topic of vivisection and also have organized lots of demos in different Russian cities.

One of the greatest victories of Russian antivivisection movement is cancellation of animal labs in 12 Russian institutions of higher education. In Saint Petersburg State Academy of Veterinary Medicine a computer class was opened, and both students and professors are greatly satisfied with results. In Agricultural Academy of Velikie Luki a vivarium was replaced by a veterinary clinic.

However in spite of all our efforts the contraposition “animal protectors versus scientists” is still alive. That is why several years ago an idea came to us to collect several dozens of antivivisection quotes belonging to doctors and scientists from different countries of the world. And this task turned out to be much easier than we had originally thought: torturing Google with the query “doctors against animal experimentation”, I found the book by Hans Ruesch *1000 Doctors (and many more) Against Vivisection*.

* Translator into Russian of *Slaughter of the Innocent, The Naked Empress, 1000 Doctors (and many more) Against Vivisection, Vivisection or Science* – Vita Animal Rights Center.

Our joy was beyond all measure. When replacing animal labs in universities we understood quite well that the word “alternatives” is not correct, because clinical practice, humanely received cadavers, computer programs etc. are not alternatives but the only possible way of organizing an educational process which is disrupted with silly and cruel animal experiments. But after getting to know Hans Ruesch’s book we were amazed by the number and the level of doctors who objected to vivisection because of scientific reasons.

After *1000 Doctors* I translated *Slaughter of the Innocent*. And in it Hans Ruesch proved on the example of Claude Bernard the idea which we felt by intuition, suspected through our observations: vivisection prevails in science through laziness and at the same time ambitiousness of some accidental people in medicine. It was what happened in the situation with Claude Bernard.

As for the book *Naked Empress*, up to the last moment I had doubts about translating it, because cheating of modern medicine can’t be called a new topic for our country. But when reading it I understood that it differs fundamentally from all the literature on related topics available in Russia. All the existing books just state and prove on specific examples that for example vaccination as well as lots of medicines can be dangerous, but none of them analyses the issue how a situation when medicine turned into the main reason of diseases became possible. In his book *Naked Empress* Hans Ruesch gives an answer to this question.

Looking through *Naked Empress* for the first time and catching a glimpse of criticisms addressed to some animal welfare organizations, I felt some irritation, despite my respect for Hans Ruesch: what’s this, arguing with like-minded people, moreover, on pages of a book. But on reading it I remembered how such “like-minded people” had tried to get into our organization. They shared our views on everything except 5 percent of animal experiments that “can’t be replaced right now”. They were ready to work hard and even advised our neophytes who had moved to veganism not long before and expressed some uncertainties about their food how to balance their diet and where to buy high-quality soya products. They were so sweet, so polite and explained very convincingly why maintenance of some animal experiments is only in the interest of animals: their continuation would help to finish off with cruelty for ever. Fortunately, among Vita members there are people with natural science education and it wasn’t difficult to understand the true intentions of our “new supporters”, but at that time their appearing seemed just one episode. It wasn’t “just one episode”, it was a naturally determined episode which is as inevitable as checking a passport in an airport.

And now I am working on the book by Pietro Croce *Vivisection or science* which reveals us new aspects of scientific antivivisectionism. I had got to know its author in the process of translating *1000 Doctors* and was amazed with the courage of this person – to face the truth and recognize the scientific invalidity of vivisection in spite of practicing it for a big part of his life.

Vivisection or science? When will this question sound from the lips of our Russian scientists? We are sure that some people are already asking it, but to themselves, being afraid to say it aloud: Russian academic community is famous for its conservativeness. There are honest and hard-working scientists, those thanks to whom science advances, despite the efforts of omnipresent Claudes Bernards. One of projects we are planning is to unite such genuine scientists. To unite them through contests of scientific researches where animals haven’t been used, through establishing an organization of doctors and scientists against vivisection. And of course through such proved method as maximal distribution of books by Hans Ruesch, Pietro Croce and other antivivisectionists in our country.

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Fondazione Hans Ruesch per una Medicina senza Vivisezione
www.hansruesch.net

