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“Concerning the Recently Notorious Issue of Rejuvenation”: Geneticist Yuri Filipchenco’s Letter to the Director of the Institute of Experimental Biology, Nikolai Koltsov (August 29, 1923)

Abstract

The publication aims to introduce into scientific use the letter written by Russian geneticist Yuri A. Filipchenco. It was sent to the head of the Institute of Experimental Biology, Nikolai K. Koltsov on 29 August 1923. The published document thematically falls within the field of the

history of science — Soviet biomedicine — in the early Soviet period. One of the documents attached to the letter was the Yu. A. Filipchenco’s response to the *Rejuvenation: Collected papers* published under N. K. Koltsov’s editorship in 1923. The collection included works of leading foreign specialists who had studied aging processes and rejuvenation in the second half of the 19th and early 20th century. The popularity of the idea of rejuvenation increased and scientists attempted to achieve it venturing into methods of biology and medicine. Their efforts contributed to the development of scientific disciplines focusing on the idea. By early 1920s, rejuvenation had become one of the most popular ideas — there were numerous publications in periodicals devoted to biomedical methods for preventing aging processes. The major scientific center was Institute of Experimental Biology founded in 1917. Another document attached to the letter was Yu. A. Filipchenco’s review of the work of American geneticist R. Goldschmidt. By contrast to the *Rejuvenation: Collected papers*, this work directly related to his professional interests, as in collaboration with N. K. Koltsov he took part in institutionalization of genetics and eugenics in the first post-revolutionary years. The unpublished materials deposited in the archives of both scientists are important for history of Soviet science in 1920s. The published document has been found in the Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences (ARAN) in the fond of N. K. Koltsov (fond 450). The letter adds to the history of national genetics and rejuvenation studies in the early Soviet period. It also illustrates some nuances of the scientists’ everyday life, as they are mentioned in the letter. The document is published in compliance with current spelling and punctuation rules. The author’s notes and underlining are preserved. Information on the mentioned persons and works is given in the footnotes. Commentary, preceding the publication of the document, assesses its significance.

Keywords

Historical sources, Yuri Filipchenco, Nikolay Koltsov, Ilya Mechnikov, Thomas Hunt Morgan, Eugen Steinach, Serge Voronoff, Paul Albert Ancel, *Rejuvenation: Collected papers* (1923), Institute of Experimental Biology, experimental studies, rejuvenation, 1920s

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