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[Professor Suchodolski's remarks...]

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Artykuł umieszczony jest w kolekcji cyfrowej Bazhum, gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych tworzonej przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego.

Artykuł został zdigitalizowany i opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie ze środków specjalnych MNiSW dzięki Wydziałowi Historycznemu Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego.

Tekst jest udostępniony do wykorzystania w ramach dozwolonego użytku.

In the Institute of History of Science and Technology of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, works have been started in the given direction, and we hope to inform you of the first results at one of the next forums devoted to the history of science and technology.

E. N. Hiebert

Professor Suchodolski's remarks concerning the need for extending the range and perspective of the history of science and technology demand our genuine support. We can broaden our goals so as to include the study of the interaction between the sciences and the humanities; but this must be accomplished without any dilution of the historical analysis itself. The well of available knowledge is deep. Indeed it is bottomless.

In my own area of special interest — the physical sciences since 1800 — we need to realize that in any traditional sense of writing history, the history of science and technology for this period simply cannot be written. The difficulty is predominantly not one of finding the materials but of making wise selections from among the chaos of potentially relevant documents. Wherever we begin we begin arbitrarily. Whatever we do in our historical analysis we do it with a great deal of arbitrariness. Broad may be the goals. Else we search for that pure objective history (a figment of the imagination) which is excruciatingly dry and dull. If our analysis is to be a meaningful one, whatever phase of human activity it may envelop, it must necessarily be a specific one.

The specificity of a focus, although admitted arbitrarily, provides the point of departure to work outwards while mastering whatever documents and tools one needs along the way. The alternate approach is to embrace a broad and general problem and then cut away the fatty deposits in order to expose the vital nerves. That can easily develop into a hopeless task. For to examine everything that is relevant to a problem is beyond the reach of human powers. Even to discuss what is important is impossible.

So I suggest that it is the narrowly focused problem which can be undertaken with efficiency and rewards — at least as the point of departure. But then, of course, the wisdom which enters into making the choice of the focus for the analysis is itself predetermined by the breadth of vision and perspective which Professor Suchodolski has clarified for us so well under the large umbrella which includes both the sciences and the humanities.