

Einstein Topics here and elsewhere

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The *Einstein Topics* series of books, presenting numerous articles by Soviet and foreign authors on a wide score of topics closely tied to the scientific activities of Albert Einstein (1879–1955), started to appear in the USSR in 1966. The Foreword to the first volume [1] mentioned that the date of publication was more or less timed to correlate with the widely feted tenth anniversary of Einstein’s death, the 60th anniversary of the creation of special relativity, and the 50th anniversary of general relativity. This collection of papers [1] contained twelve articles, of which three were Einstein’s brief notes, five were written by Soviet authors, and four were translations of earlier publications by Western physicists and historians of physics. Fourteen more issues were published in subsequent years, the last of which covered the period of 1986–1990 [2]¹. Unfortunately, the publication of *Einstein Topics* was then discontinued, even though, as far as I can judge, the issues enjoyed popularity with the readers. We all know why this happened: the crisis in the publishing industry that followed the collapse of the USSR. This crisis is now largely a matter of the past (with the exception of the distribution of books, which is still limping).

Anyone who browses through *Einstein Topics* issues for the first time will discover that they contain exceptionally rich and interesting material. They offer both topical reviews and translations of papers that are difficult to find in Russia and which are essential for understanding both physics and the history of physics. It goes without saying that *Physics-Uspekhi* and some other publications keep doing their job and make papers of the type that formerly appeared in *Einstein Topics* available to our physics community. However, the niche previously occupied by these collections is still rather empty and I am convinced that we need — and can — resume this publication. This realization came to me with an unfortunate delay, when I learnt that an analog of *Einstein Topics*, under the title *Einstein Studies*, has been published since 1989 by the international publisher Birkhäuser under the auspices of ‘The Center for Einstein Studies’ of Boston University. To be precise, *Einstein Studies* covers a much narrower range than *Einstein Topics* did, which is understandable because many other Einstein-connected papers are published in the West but are hardly accessible to us here. Ten issues of *Einstein Studies* have been published since 1989; the title of the latest, published in 2002, is *Einstein Studies in*

Russia [3]. This title is fairly self-explanatory, so the issue is devoted to articles written by Russian authors (in fact, some of them are currently working in the USA). In all, the issue contains ten articles, of which eight were published earlier in *Einstein Topics* or were written on the basis of previous contributions to this serial edition.

I hope that *Einstein Topics* series will be revived, and we have plenty of material for it. The editor can use articles from the sources already mentioned [3] and much of what was published in Russia in the last decade. It would be wise to commission reviews specially written by physicists and astrophysicists in this country on, for example, relativistic astrophysics, cosmology, and quantum theory. It must be emphasized that in 1987 Princeton University Press at last started the publication of *The Collected Papers of Albert Einstein* [4] in the USA. Absurd reasons prevented its publication in the West before 1987 but it had been possible in the USSR, which at the time disregarded copyright convention. It was thanks mostly to Ya A Smorodinskii’s efforts that the first four-volume collection of Einstein’s papers was published in the 1960s [5]. I will also allow myself to cite the review [6]; these volumes played a very positive role but can in no way replace the complete works [4]. Alas, the Princeton volumes are practically inaccessible in Russia (first volume [4] was refereed in paper [7]). A succession of materials that appeared in *The Collected Papers of Albert Einstein* could at last become available to us on the pages of a future *Einstein Topics*. I do hope that Fizmatlit Publ. will not procrastinate starting the work of their resurrection.

References

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V L Ginzburg

¹ The eleventh volume *Einstein Topics 1978–1979* (Moscow: Nauka, 1983) contains the Table of Contents of all ten preceding issues (published between 1966–1977). Furthermore, it also contains the bibliography, “On Einstein’s 100th birthday”, of relevant papers published in Russian and other languages (up to and including December 1980).