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THE TEACHER

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Abstract

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Now that two years separate us from the mournful date of the decease of Nikolay Nikolaevich Bogoliubov, the sensation has become more acute of the grievous loss of the wonderful scientist and man. For those who were once fortunate to get his wise advice and encouragement this loss is an everyday pain.

It was our destiny to become his contemporaries, and we feel devoutly grateful and proud when we think of Nikolay Nikolaevich. The word "we" stands for the numerous direct and collateral disciples of his, who work in various fields of mathematics, physics and mechanics in many cities of the world. He was my Teacher since the time of my university studies and later, after I graduated from Moscow State University, almost 25 years of common work at the Joint Institute for Nuclear Research in Dubna were a kind of bond between us.

Being his younger-generation disciples, we found ourselves in the orbit of N. N. Bogoliubov at the time when he was already a world-famous scientist; his charisma of merited recognition instilled a feeling that he was inaccessible.

But his "inaccessibility" was rather an illusion. Deeply preoccupied with daily strenuous mental work (Nikolay Nikolaevich worked without cease and, literally, until his last breath), he was usually reserved with a colleague; he was a considerate listener and more often kept silent; but his attitude changed completely when an idea expressed to him seemed interesting and worth encouraging. He never said: "It is bad, wrong, not interesting"; nevertheless, everyone who worked with him knew too well what his silence meant... However, if we succeeded in surprising N.N. (the name the disciples fondly called him), he amazed us with impetuous perception into the essence of the matter; he found striking analogies and saw the answer just the moment when the task seemed only to be postulated.

His reaction of this type was the highest mark for the idea; as a rule it was a vigorous stimulus to solve the task. N. N. would bring a pile of notes the next day filled with his neat, distinct writing in small hand. He affectionately called those note "embroidery". "And now look what you will get..." - he used to say in a soft voice and with a ghost of smile took a long drag on one more redolent cigarette.

Not only interesting scientific ideas but hardships of people never left him unmoved. It was not necessary to beseech him to take trouble to help even a stranger who needed medical treatment, or to relieve

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the distressed... But time and again Nikolay Nikolaevich was very sad after visit on a private matter as even he - charitable strong man endowed with the authority of a Director, an Academician and a Member of the Parliament - was unfortunately not able to relieve all hardships of those who came to him.

Indeed, N. N. was kind and tolerant with people, but he could lose his patience if you were late or failed to keep your promise. Concerning his own affairs, he was very strict. I feel very ashamed when I think of it, but once I was 15 minutes late for my appointment with him. Though I had an excuse (the way to Moscow from Dubna in the winter weather turned out to be longer than I had planned) I failed to talk to N. N. He did not want to listen to any excuse, was annoyed and said he had never expected I could bring such a "lush-house" about. "Lush-house" was a rare but strongest word of his. I remember this lesson all my life...

Nikolay Nikolaevich did not like declarations and moral teaching. He had a special influence on people with his kindness, truly Christian tolerance, giving an example of titanic industry, sincere modesty and, sometimes, a mot just said exactly in time. This generous power of his influence can still be felt in Dubna, together with Steklovka (Steklov Institute of Mathematics), Feofaniya (a district in Kiev where the Institute of Theoretical Physics of Ukrainian Academy of Sciences is situated; now it is named after N. N. Bogoliubov) and other places where his benevolent heart is with us, as before.

He had a unique intuition for words. N. N. liked playing word-games adroitly following the word tense transformations from one language into another one. He knew a dozen of languages. If he hadn't been keen on mathematics in his youth he would have probably become a gifted linguist.

"Great personalities are seldom talented one way; their gift shows in everything". I heard this saying very long time ago, but only the example of Nikolay Nikolaevich made it vivid to me. Turning the pages of my memories, I discovered that N. N. could often amaze people around him with a really unexpected and talented vision into the field of knowledge unusual to him...

Let me give an example. It is by no means the brightest though very exceptional. We were guests of a famous scientist and it was a party at his country house. Most of us were Caucasian. After the

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hard day we were all sitting at the table full of Oriental delicious rich food. After one of the cheerful pledges the host came to the middle of the living room to the sounds of music inviting N. N. to a Caucasian dance. I think none of us could imagine that seventy-year old Bogoliubov, who was not brilliant at sports, tired and poor dancer, took a dare. But the sudden change was marvelous: Nikolay Nikolaevich rose on tiptoes, stood upright, his arms flew in movements of the Caucasian dance, and he artistically approached the partner in the rhythm of the hot music. It was natural, beautiful and amazing. All the guests were lost in astonishment while N. N. skillfully played a dagger dance and, when the obvious weariness hinted him that it was time to calm the joyful partner, he raised the imaginary dagger over the "enemy" and with a victorious gesture finished the dance... I could have imagined wonderful manifestations of the talent of Nikolay Nikolaevich in any field before that moment but dancing; nevertheless... "great personalities are seldom talented one way - their gift shows in everything".

Works, discoveries and deeds of Nikolay Nikolaevich remain with us in our lives. His name belongs to the best pages of the History of Russian Intellectuals. But his characteristic features, his smile and voice, his clever and sad eyes are kept only deep down in our memory.

It is both easy and difficult to write these lines about our Teacher. It is difficult because we still feel the pain of the inevitable and, over and over again, think how he could consider it all. N. N. strongly disapproved of articles and speeches about him... It is easy because it is hope that warms our souls. Probably our children and grandchildren will read these pages and the cherished memory of the wonderful man will enter their hearts.