

V.P. TSESSEVICH - PROMINENT RESEARCHER OF VARIABLE STARS

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"I talk it to you as variabler about Variabler."

"Who is variabler?" - the nescient will ask, having heard this word on astronomic jargon. It is a researcher of variable stars, if to talk in normal language. But here is some fineness in understanding, a certain tint. Even in the "Department of researches of variable stars", that was organized by V.P. Tsessevich, being director of the Astronomical observatory of Odessa State University, and which he headed a few decades, he considered not all of employees (staff researchers, research fellows, research assistants) as variablers. Only those, who themselves observed variable stars in a telescope by eye or using an equipment (electrophotometer, spectrograph or photocamera), who saw with the eye in the eyepiece of telescope or guide as a star changed the brightness, who knew its position on the sky in relation to other brighter stars, and could quickly point a telescope at a star. In fact quick changing of the brightness of short-period star, for example, RR Lyrae or delta Scuti type, will not wait for observer. A good time resolution needs for careful research of variable star, construction of its light curve and determination of some their specific features in its variations. Especially, as an observer can follow after a few, and even tens of variable stars one after another, as more frequent as possible pointing a telescope on each of them. And life of observer is not easy! It is often necessary to observe in stuffy summer night, sometimes in an uncomfortable pose, suffering the bites of mosquitoes, and in winter at 20 degrees of frost, such that observer stick to the telescope.

V.P. Tsessevich himself, as the saying goes, felt a star, knew that it "had gone" from a minimum of brightness to a maximum one or vice versa. He was in earnest about observations and their subsequent reduction as to the sainted action; had phenomenal memory and could very quickly find in the sky any of hundreds observed him variable stars, sometimes after a long time-break (even in tens of years) in observations of this star. It was sui generis art which many observers delighted in. V.P. Tsessevich remembered photometric and physical properties of many stars investigated by

him. Possessing enormous erudition and diligence, he summarized the results of these long-term researches in a few monographs on different types of variable stars: RR Lyrae, RV Taurus, eclipsing variables et cetera. In these works V.P. Tsessevich proved as prominent systematizer of knowledge about variable stars. Some his books were translated into English and other languages and published in different countries of the world. He was an outstanding expert in the world on RR Lyrae type stars and eclipsing variables.

V.P. Tsessevich possessed good mathematical skills, holding two jobs in different years he was a professor and even manager by the department of higher mathematics in some institutes of Leningrad and Odessa. He improved the methods of mathematical reduction of eclipsing variables stars, calculated by hand (computers were absent at that time) the detailed tables for determination of elements of orbits of these stars from the analysis of their photometric light curves. However for fun, he named mathematical statistics, applied at reduction of observations, by the third type of lie. V.P. Tsessevich delivered some difficult theoretical lectures for students: "Relativistic astrophysics", "Celestial mechanics", "Theory of internal structure of stars" et cetera. But he admitted to us, the students and young employees then, that his "brain is arranged somehow not in theory". We thought then, looking at the top of his position and authority: "were evrybody had such brains!" He translated from English into Russian the future Nobel Prize Laureate S. Chandrasekar's fundamental theoretical book "Introduction into the studies of the structure of stars". But it is true, V.P. Tsessevich had no such purely theoretical works. Thirty years ago V.P. Tsessevich admitted to the author of this article: "P.P. Parenago had ideas in science, B.V. Kukarkin had ideas, P.N. Kholopov (which was not a person of the same age as V.P. Tsessevich, but fifteen years younger than him - remark by author) had ideas, too. But Tsessevich did not have ideas!" After this he struck his hand on the table. Certainly, he had in view great ideas, leaving substantial contribution in science. I tried to object something,

feeling that he was in a bad temper. V.P. Tsessevich only waved his hand on that. And another time, when we rode by microbus from the university, V.P. Tsessevich said (being in bad temper after a talk with the authorities): "How they dare to answer me so! I am the son of People's artist and honoured worker myself!" (V.P. Tsessevich's father - Platon Ivanovich was a prominent opera singer, People's artist of Russia, sang on the French stage together with F.I. Shalyapin; V.P. Tsessevich was a Corresponding Member of Academy of Sciences and Honoured worker of science of Ukraine).

Vladimir Platonovich had a good English, and not only read and translated the articles and books in English, but also spoke fluently. After a half-year stay in 60-th in Harvard observatory (USA), he was invited to give a lecture in English at the faculty of foreign languages of Odessa State University. Organizers appreciated his spoken language.

V.P. Tsessevich was the charming teller of different life's histories and anecdotes, he remembered enormous amount of them. He was acquainted with many famous people of the time. I remember how we, charmed students, listened to the professor's recital about his congratulation (Symposium of IAU in 1963) of living classic of science Eynar Herzsprung concerning his 90 years anniversary. V.P. Tsessevich presented to person whose anniversary was celebrated crystal wineglass. I remember other case, when we four together (V.P. Tsessevich, Yu.A. Medvedev, V.V. Dragomireckiy and me) made a business trip to Moldavia (Kodry), to help moldavian colleagues to arrange the recently organized observatory. Telescope in a dome was put in order for two or three days; then my colleagues left, and I stayed for a month to share experience of observations of variable stars and their reduction. Having arrived to Kodry, we sat in the small hours, speaking on different (not only astronomic) themes. With the great pleasure

we listened to the stories which V.P. Tsessevich told including his witty anecdotes. There I tried to vie with him in the telling of anecdotes, on what V.P. Tsessevich answered that he would bequeath to me his two notebooks with anecdotes. But because there were political anecdotes too, he promised me these notebooks only after his death. (V.P. Tsessevich was very afraid of KGB - not for nothing!) Unfortunately, these notebooks from his archive disappeared somewhere. What a pity! There was a lot of historical and witty things.

And it must be said especially that V.P. Tsessevich possessed another remarkable talent - it was his activity as popularizer of science. He did much for propaganda of astronomic knowledge, delivering lectures for different audiences, including radio and television. And his popular scientific books on astronomy, such as "What and how to observe in the sky?", "Leading lights of the Universe" and "Variable stars and methods of their researches" were the table-books of astronomers-amateurs in the USSR. Due to them many enthusiasts fell in love with astronomy and devoted their lives to it, becoming astronomers - professionals.

The name of V.P. Tsessevich forever added a glorious page to history of astronomy. One of asteroids of the Solar system is named in his honour. And after 30 years many researchers cite his works on variable stars. Every five years the international anniversary scientific conferences of astronomers are held in Odessa in his honour. There were little such enthusiasts - researchers of variables stars as V.P. Tsessevich and another prominent German astronomer Kuno Hofmeister. They investigated enormous amount of variable stars and carried out hundreds and thousand observations! It is titanic labour of high artists - science devotees!

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