

VLADIMIR PLATONOVICH TSESSEVICH (1907-1983): THE EMINENT SCIENTIST, ORGANIZER AND POPULARIZATOR

I.L. Andronov

Department of Astronomy, Odessa National University
T.G.Shevchenko Park, Odessa 65014 Ukraine, *il-a@mail.odessa.ua*

ABSTRACT. Reminiscences on Prof. Vladimir Platonovich Tsessevich (11.10.1907-28.10.1983), the famous scientist, lecturer and organizer of science are presented.

Key words: Personalialia: V.P.Tsessevich.

Twenty years has passed, as Vladimir Platonovich Tsessevich (11.10.1907-28.10.1983) died. He was the outstanding scientist, the talented teacher, the active writer of popular books and articles and the organizer of a science. He was born in Kiev in family of the known opera singer. The famous poet Maxim Rylsky had written on his father: "The terrible bass of Platon Tsessevich Sounded there..."). Having become interested in astronomy, at the age slightly less than 15 years, he become a student of the Petersburg University. During a study, he was engaged actively in observations of variable stars and has succeeded to publish unsurpassed number of works. At that time, a whole "galaxy" of young enthusiasts came to astronomy, later on having made a significant contribution to our beautiful science. Almost simultaneously with Vladimir Platonovich, have begun the researches of variable stars M.S.Zverev, B.V.Kukarkin, D.J.Martinov, P.P.Parenago, N.F.Florja. These names are now known to each astronomer.

But Petersburg is in the north, and "white nights" prevent carrying out observations. In addition, there are a lot of stars in the equatorial belt, so for their observations, it is needed to go to the south as far as possible. In 20th years of the XX century, V.P.Tsessevich had come to Odessa few times for observation of variable stars. But closer to equator there is Dushanbe. He argues for necessity of creation of an observatory for photometric researches. He is one of founders of the Stalinabad Observatory and had become its director at the age of 26-years. There he continued numerous observation of variable stars.

In 1937 he comes back to Leningrad, in 1942 he is evacuated to Stalinabad. In 1944 he comes to Odessa, where becomes a head of the Department of Astronomy and soon a director of the Astronomical Observatory

of the Odessa State (nowadays National) University (OSU). In 1948-50, his talent of organizer and the director had been shown in management of the Main Astronomical observatory of the Academy of sciences of Ukraine. In 1948, he was elected to the Corresponding Member of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences.

The Astronomical observatory of ONU started its history in 1871, despite the decision about its foundation was accepted still in 1863. Under V.P.Tsessevich's management, the research directions have been considerably extended, and not only the main topic of variable star research, but also the observation of meteors, and in due course artificial satellites of the Earth, and spectroscopic studies of stars had begun. In 1956, the observatory had been supported with two observational stations - in the villages Mayaki and Kryzhanovka near Odessa. The meteor patrol and the "7-camera Sky Patrol" had started. The Odessa collection of patrol observations of stellar fields consists of nearly 100,000 negatives in pg and pv photometric systems. According to the number of images, this collection star takes the third place in the world after Harward (USA) and Sonneberg (Germany).

In due course in an observatory had begun the building of astronomical instruments. The telescopes, which were much cheaper, than the devices of the known German firm "Karl Zeiss Jena" started to be created. They had got a playful name "Zeiss-sevich" (taking into account that in German language he was Zessevitch instead of Tsessevich). He also becomes the initiator of creation in the village Mayaki of the radiotelescope "URAN- 4", which belongs to the Radio-astronomical institute of the Academy of Sciences of Ukraine.

In our memory have left a deep trace the huge energy and enthusiasm of V.P.Tsessevicha, which was not only the outstanding scientist and the organizer of a science, and also the brilliant lecturer and the writer in popular astronomy. He was the author of 653 publications, including more than ten monographies. Only one of them has been translated into English - "The RR Lyrae-type stars", which foreign colleagues remember till now. The number of observations of variable



stars of different types made by him exceeds 400 thousand that makes an absolute record. The important part of observation has been made during his trip to Cambridge. The American astronomer William Liller recently made reminiscences of Vladimir Platonovich, his energy, work capacity and sense of humour.

The popular book "What and How to Observe in the Sky" has been issued six times, and at once became a bibliographic rarity. Let not all readers of several generations become astronomers, but people remember this book, and his talented and emotional professional and public lectures. This book had initiated passion to astronomy of many scientists, who now represent the base of our majestic science.

I have got acquainted with Vladimir Platonovich personally at school. In the Planetarium, he lectured for young astronomers and has then invited us, schoolboys, to the observatory. On all my life I remember, as he, the outstanding scientist, the author of the book "What and How to Observe in the Sky", behaves to "youngsters", as to advanced persons, as to colleagues. In the meantime we even allowed to touch some devices during the observations. He told us very clear and expansively about a magic science of astronomy. We have met him once again in the evening. He had shown us the Cook's telescope which till now is used for observations. The first, that we had seen, were the rings of Saturn. Certainly, it is possible to see much larger and beautiful images at the computer. But the direct "dialogue with the sky" is not forgotten. Now, re-reading his interview to the newspaper, occurs an apparent feeling, that this ring of Saturn was his talisman, which he wanted to forward to the following generations. In due course there was also a transit of Mercury over the solar disk, and again I have met him. In two years, I became the student of the Department of Astronomy of the Faculty of Physics, and was rather proud that Vladimir Platonovich has taken

me-student at first, and then a post-graduate student - under his supervision. As appeared, the last in his life. In general, under his supervision had prepared and defended their dissertations about 40 candidates of sciences (PhD).

In the review "Astronomy in Ukraine", the president of the Ukrainian Astronomical Association academician Prof. Ya.S.Yatskiv has noted achievements of the Odessa astronomers, having underlined the scientific school of variable star researchers created by V.P.Tsesevich, which nowadays is continued by his former pupils.

His lectures were bewitching. He excitedly read difficult mathematical courses, in particular, "Additional Chapters of Mathematical Physics" and two semesters of "Relativistic astrophysics". And it was so exciting, like he had read a poem. Bell sounds between lectures did not exist for him - he deduced numerous formulas without any conspects - and consequently stopped when difficult transition of few pages length came to the end. Thus, he showed process of creativity and accustomed to not be afraid of challenges. But, exacting to himself, he also was exacting to others. He succeeded to find time to follow numerous news in astronomy. And, as soon as polarization of the star AM Herculis was discovered, which has been interpreted by unprecedented influence of a magnetic field onto accretion, he has organized its regular observations. He himself had re-measured images received by others.

To the question "what for is to carry out regular observation if this star, which has been already observed at big telescopes?" he replied perfectly: "If the stone falls behind a window, and we photograph it, then it is possible to be surprised: what is the force which supports it in the air?! But, if we compare some consecutive pictures, we see the dynamics of process, and hardly probable we shall draw an erroneous conclusion. Let it be only this star in the program of observations at this telescope!" The further researches have shown, as deeply he was right. But this another history.

A series of scientific conferences on various problems of astronomy, to which he has brought the essential contribution, have been devoted to the memory of V.P.Tsesevich. This year the international conference on "Interacting Binary Stars" has been organized. To 90-th anniversary of his birthday, the first volume of "The History of Astronomy in Odessa" has been published (editor Prof. V.G.Karetnikov). A series of memoirs has been published in the Ukrainian popular scientific magazine "Nashe Nebo" ("Our Sky").

Vladimir Platonovich Tsesevich was multi-talented, "very various", as well as stars, which he investigated. From the capital letter - the meticulous Scientist and brilliant Lecturer, the careful Author and the talented Popular writer, the persevering Organizer and the cheerful humorist - the true Professor and the Teacher.