

current or past interest in the region are requested to join the Working Group and actively help us work to meet its objectives. Suggestions for the structuring, functioning and activities of the Working Group are also welcomed. Individuals are requested to communicate their addresses, email IDs, experience, areas of interest and list of publications (preferably current CV) by email to ciwsa.nie@gmail.com.

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Obituaries

In Memoriam: Aleksey Ghilarov who died on the 20th of October 2013, aged 70.



Aleksey Merkur'evich Ghilarov was one of the key figures in Russian ecology in general, and aquatic ecology in particular. Many Russian biologists learned ecology by reading his papers and books on, e.g. *Population Ecology* (Ghilarov, 1990), which is a standard text book of biology for students at Russian universities, and *Population Dynamics of Freshwater Planktonic Crustaceans* (Ghilarov, 1987), probably the best review of zooplankton ecology ever written in Russian language. Many will certainly enjoy reading his latest and, sadly, last text, *The Ecology of the Biosphere*, due to appear later this year. He finished this work just a few weeks before his passing. However, perhaps Ghilarov's most important role was to act as a lifelong link between the ecologists in Russia and the international ecology community. That was, we believe, his conscious position, perhaps even his mission in science.

Despite having such internationally acclaimed scientists as G.F.

Gause, V.S. Ivlev and G.G. Winberg, Russia, in the mid-1960s, when Ghilarov started his scientific career, was a country behind the Iron Curtain and the scientists were very isolated from the international science community. As Ghilarov later recalled (Ghilarov, 2013), it was quite painful to get all the state-of-the-art knowledge only from ecological handbooks without live contacts with international colleagues. Fortunately, the Russian libraries were well stocked with ecological literature, and Aleksey Merkur'evich used to spend long hours in the library, looking through the piles of international journals in aquatic ecology and ecology in general. From the time of becoming a Ph.D. student he adopted a habit that he held on to throughout his entire life of writing about the latest developments in the world of ecology for the Russian audience. His scientific output included dozens of reviews, essays, comments, and science news pieces in scientific journals and, more recently, on popular science websites too. Just an example: it was he who wrote in the *Russian Journal of Ecology* about the untimely death of Robert MacArthur in 1972 (Ghilarov 1974). There were few people in Russia who valued the importance of MacArthur's work at that time. This eagerness to teach himself and enlighten others was an integral part of Ghilarov's personality.

A.M. Ghilarov was born on 19 May 1943 into the family of Merkur'evich Ghilarov and Irina Blokhintseva. His father was a professor in soil zoology, fluent in several European languages. On his father's side his family gave Russia five generations of professors in the sciences and humanities during the 19th and 20th centuries. His mother's brother, Professor D.I. Blokhintsev, a physicist, was scientific supervisor of the construction of the world's first nuclear power plant in Obninsk, Russia, which became symbolic for the first peaceful application of nuclear energy. Aleksey Merkur'evich graduated from M.V. Lomonosov Moscow State University in 1965 with an M.Sc. in invertebrate zoology. He received his first academic degree of Candidate of Sciences in Biology (an equivalent of Ph.D.) in 1970,

and second degree of Doctor of Sciences (D.Sc.) in 1984, and became a full professor in 1990. For 25 years he taught a general ecology course at the Biological Faculty of Moscow University, which was very popular among students.

He remained associated with his alma mater throughout his life, his scientific career starting from aquatic ecology with focus on zooplankton. One of his very first papers, describing species composition and size structure of zooplankton communities in small coastal rock pools on the White Sea and Barents Sea islands, was published in English (Ghilarov 1967). This was a very unusual attribute for a Russian Ph.D. student at that time. Gradually his interests shifted to more general issues such as mythological aspects of ecology (Ghilarov, 1992, 1996) and the history of the biosphere concept (Ghilarov, 1995). In the 2000s, while working on *The Ecology of the Biosphere*, he critically examined some ecological methodologies (Ghilarov 2001).

A.M. Ghilarov was not only a versatile scientist but also a connoisseur of poetry and graphic arts, and quite good at drawing himself. He was an enthusiastic canoeist in his younger days and a keen, though quite selective, fan of music in later years. He always had a passionate love of nature and he had the ability to identify a beast by its footprints or dung, or a bird briefly caught sight of as it flew past. He was a great field biologist, after all.

Aleksey Merkur'evich spent most of his life behind the Iron Curtain, with little opportunity to go abroad (one such fortunate trip is described by Maciej Gliwicz below). We remember how he regretted that he visited the art galleries of Florence and Ravenna first time only at the age of 69. Despite this life experience (or perhaps because of it), his motto was "science has no borders". In 2007, he wrote an essay, published on a Russian website (Ghilarov 2007) on parochialism as a major threat to Russian science and was harshly criticized by some colleagues. He tried not to pay much attention to this quibbling and he was optimistic by nature. Indeed, his surname originates from the Latin "hilaris", meaning cheerful, and was given to his ancestors in the 19th century for their cheerful spirit. That is how we will remember Aleksey Merkur'evich friendly, full of enthusiasm, and always ready to encourage and help others.

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An addendum

The gloomy look on the faces of Joanna Pijanowska (left) and Aleksey Ghilarov in the picture above and on my own (on the opposite side of Alosha's camera), was probably due to another row over the relative importance of food limitation and predation in controlling the density of *Daphnia* populations. We enjoyed these illuminating quarrels that were frequently interrupted by the roar of a loud home-made outboard motor. These were the wonderful days of the summer of 1978 at the Hydrobiological Field Station in Mikolajki, Great Mazurian Lakes, north-eastern Poland. Here, the three of us followed the demography of two



Photograph taken in 1978 by Z.M. Gliwicz using A. Ghilarov's camera.

populations of *Daphnia cucullata* to resolve the controversy that food was more important in one lake, but was outweighed by predation in another (Gliwicz, Ghilarov and Pijanowska 1981).

Alosha's stay with us was one of his first steps into the international community of ecologists and limnologists, and was not easy to arrange at this time of the 'iron curtain'. However, it was the right time, when we almost had a 'Polish Pope' in Rome, and the ten-million strong *Solidarity Movement* was growing. Alosha visited us again and again, also after the curtain had fallen. We regret we were not with him in the last weeks of his creative life. He will stay in our memories forever.

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