GLEB KROTKOV, 1901-1968

The scientific world was saddened to learn of the death of Gleb Krotkov, R. Samuel McLaughlin Research Professor of Biology at Queen's University, Kingston, on Monday, January 29. We have lost a great plant physiologist, an inspiring teacher, a champion of science, a leader in Canadian and International scientific affairs, a warm friend, and an exuberant story-teller. His intense vitality and vast good humor, the devotion of all his interest and energies to his science and his friends, and his insatiable curiosity about everything he met made him what he was: a man of the twentieth century in every sense—modern, forward looking, completely unbound by convention or traditions, yet respectful of the wisdom of experience. We shall sorely miss him.

Dr. Krotkov's life story reads like a Russian Grand Opera: tales of youthful escapades and desperado full of the zestful determination that was characteristic of the man. He was born in Moscow, and went with his family to live in Southern Russia after the revolution. After finishing high school he joined the White Russian Navy, where his naturally experimental nature and contempt of conformity led him often into hot water. After the defeat of the White Forces in 1920, he went to Tunis, smuggled himself to Marseille, and headed by train for Czechoslovakia where he hoped to continue his education. Arriving at the border and having no passport he jumped off the train, picked up a burl of wood, and disguised by his rough work clothes walked unnoticed across the border. Later he re-boarded the train and got safely to Prague. He completed his undergraduate education there with distinction, then emigrated to Canada, where he worked for nearly 2 years as a farm laborer before enrolling for graduate study at the University of Toronto. Graduating with his Ph.D. in 1934, he joined the faculty of Queen's University, where he remained until his death. He achieved the distinction of a Research Professorship in 1954, and served as Head of the Department 1958-63.

Professor Krotkov was a prolific research scientist, publishing over 75 papers on various aspects of plant physiology. He established the first radio-isotope laboratory for biological work in Canada at Queen's in 1948, and pioneered in the use of isotopes to study intermediary metabolism in plants. His influence on biology is strongly felt through his many graduate and post-doctoral students who have spread throughout the world. His contributions have been recognized by his election to the Royal Society of Canada in 1950, and in 1964 by the award of the Society's Flavelle Medal. He was one of Canada's chief scientific statesmen, and was serving a second term on the Advisory Council of the National Research Council of Canada at the time of his death. In the past few years he has provided leadership in committees and councils affecting nearly every aspect of Canadian Science. He was the first foreign scientist to serve on the editorial board of Plant Physiology.

Gleb Krotkov was mentor of not a few, a warm friend of many, and an inquisitor of nearly everyone he met. No one who knew him will forget him. Truly, he deserves to be remembered.

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