Notification to the Readers

The paper "Gravity and absolute space. The works of Niels Bjern (1865–1909)" by D E Burlankov was published in the August, 2004 issue of *Physics – Uspekhi* (Vol. 174, No. 8, p. 899; English translation: Vol. 47, No. 8, p. 833).

The decision to publish the paper had been taken because it contained an interesting historical narration of a meeting between Niels Bjern and the outstanding Norwegian mathematician Sophus Lie and of a discussion of scientific matters between them. After publication, the Editorial Board passed the paper to the Norwegian Embassy in Russia, asking for biographical details pertaining to Bjern and his great-granddaughter Anna Florence, who was also mentioned in the paper. The reply from the Embassy and the University of Oslo was that neither Bjern nor Florence could be found in any official records. Later, in a letter to the editors, Burlankov offered his apologies and admitted that Niels Bjern was a fictional person, and the discussion between him and Sophus Lie (a thought experiment, as Burlankov called it) was only used for clearer demonstration of the author's standpoint regarding general relativity.

The artistic method of describing meetings and conversations of fictional or real persons who had lived in various times is broadly used in literature. However, *Physics – Uspekhi* is a scientific journal, and this absolutely requires that both scientific and historical facts given there must be precise. In any case, the fictional form of delivering authors' ideas requires special discussion and must be unambiguously indicated in the text.

The editors offer their apologies to the readers for the publication of Burlankov's paper.

Physics-Uspekhi Editorial Board