

From the Editorial Board

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VITALY LAZAREVICH GINZBURG
(04.10.1916 – 08.11.2009)

A great physicist and an outstanding citizen Vitaly Lazarevich Ginzburg has departed our world forever a year ago, on November 8, 2009.

Vitaly Lazarevich left an indelible mark not only on science but also on our society and in the memory of many people who were fortunate to meet him. One was struck most by his breadth of scope in science as a whole and by how emotional his attitude was with regard to science. He was interested and immersed in so many fields that his students now work in virtually every department of modern physics from quantum field theory to cosmology, crystal optics and semiconductor physics.

VL never taught anyone what to do in science or how to do it. It would be impossible to copy his style, which was unique, inimitable and grew entirely out of his amazing physical intuition and his ability to find unusual, innovative approaches and solutions. What one could learn from him was his love of physics, his awe and admiration of the world of physical phenomena and ideas which excited him and which he wished to impart to his students, readers, and listeners.

On top of his personal creative interests, V L Ginzburg possessed an insatiable thirst for scientific information, the thirst by no means limited to acquiring the information — he also sought to disseminate it, he wished to bring it to as many people as possible. One had the impression this was the need coming from his inner self.

His nature was that of a tribune and an educator. Many of us remember what brilliant and emotional orator he could be when he tried to make people accept the truth of what he knew and believed. There was something in him that resembled the enlightened educators of the epoch of Enlightenment who believed in the great unbounded power of human intelligence and that sooner or later the life can be and ought to be rebuilt in accordance with this intelligence. Naive he was not; rather, he was a non-indifferent human being. Not indifferent towards anything that he regarded as important or what deserved his attention.

The weekly seminar to which he paid utmost attention and much effort, and chaired for nearly half a century, plus the *Usp. Fiz. Nauk (Physics–Uspekhi)* journal were undoubtedly effective channels of his influence on our community. He never let the seminar drift out of his focus; when he was talking with someone and heard something really new, he would always produce his standard formula: “You must talk about this at the seminar”. And if there was an element of something more general, it would be: “You should definitely write about it for the *Usp. Fiz. Nauk*”.

Owing to the broad span of his creative interests and the broad range of topics in the *Usp. Fiz. Nauk (Physics–Uspekhi)* journal to which he devoted nearly 70 years of his life, V L Ginzburg has indeed become a symbol — perhaps, one of the last symbols — of the unity of physics; it possibly symbolizes the hope that physics, in spite of its huge progress in the 20th century, may remain yet as a science united. Now this symbol is unfortunately no more...

Be as it may, we shall strive to keep his fire burning. The November and December issues of the *Usp. Fiz. Nauk (Physics–Uspekhi)* journal are dedicated to the warm memory of V L Ginzburg.