

Joint Institute for Nuclear Research

MODERN PROBLEMS
OF RADIOBIOLOGY, RADIOECOLOGY
AND EVOLUTION

*Proceedings of the International Conference
dedicated to the Centenary of the Birth
of N. W. Fimofeeff-Ressovsky*

Dubna, 6–9 September 2000

Объединенный институт ядерных исследований



СОВРЕМЕННЫЕ ПРОБЛЕМЫ
РАДИОБИОЛОГИИ, РАДИОЭКОЛОГИИ
И ЭВОЛЮЦИИ

*Труды Международной конференции,
посвященной 100-летию со дня рождения
Н. В. Тимофеева-Ресовского*

Дубна, 6–9 сентября 2000 г.

УДК 577.391(042+091)
ББК 28.071.2я434+28.081.28я434
С56

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Title page design by *Yu. A. Tumanov*

Современные проблемы радиобиологии, радиоэкологии и эволюции: Тр.
С56 Междунар. конф., посвященной 100-летию со дня рождения Н. В. Тимофеева-Ресовского / Под общ. ред. В. И. Корогодина; Сост.: В. Л. Корогодина, Н. И. Дубровина. — Дубна: ОИЯИ, 2001. — 493 с.; 23 с. фото.

ISBN 5-85165-673-5

Сборник включает статьи и доклады, представленные на международной конференции «Современные проблемы радиобиологии, радиоэкологии и эволюции», посвященной 100-летию юбилею русского ученого Н. В. Тимофеева-Ресовского (Дубна, 6–9 сентября 2000 г.). Помимо оригинальных научных статей по генетике, радиобиологии, радиоэкологии, самоорганизации материи и эволюции, в книгу вошли воспоминания коллег, учеников, друзей Н. В. Тимофеева-Ресовского, а также документы, публикуемые впервые.

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Издание представляет интерес для широкого круга читателей.

УДК 577.391(042+091)
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ISBN 5-85165-673-5

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**SPEECH COMMITTED TO THE CENTENARY OF THE BIRTH OF
N.W. TIMOFEEFF-RESSOVSKY**

U. Gräbener

UNESCO

Dear Mr. Chairman, dear members of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is a privilege to me to take part in this conference “Modern Problems of Radiobiology, Radioecology and Evolution”, dedicated to the centenary of Nikolai W. Timofeeff-Ressovsky. I wish to transmit most cordial greetings of Director-General of UNESCO Koichiro Matsuura and of UNESCO’s Assistant Director-General for Natural Science Gisbert Glaser. As the life of N.W. Timofeeff-Ressovsky seems to be of special importance for the goals of UNESCO, please allow me some personal statements.

Let me introduce myself, I am the newly appointed specialist for Science and Ecology in the UNESCO Moscow Office. As a German Biologist with a background in radioecology, now living in Russia, I feel even more committed to this highly recognized person, who would have his 100th Birthday today.

As you are all aware, the main objective of UNESCO is to contribute to peace and security in the world by promoting collaboration among the nations in the fields of Culture, Education, Communication, Natural Science and Social Science. It is the belief of UNESCO that science cannot be separated from society, nor should science be an instrument of the political interests of any country. It is part of the goals of UNESCO to establish and support an international scientific community which is not limited by borders or languages. Moreover, it is a goal of UNESCO to establish and support a scientific community that is totally independent of national political goals, but serves to raise the standard of life of the peoples of the world, without distinction of race, sex, language or religion.

The life of N.W. Timofeeff-Ressovsky reflects in several ways the objectives of UNESCO. He was a scientist with high moral values. His aim was to contribute to basic science. He never interfered into politics, but always acted in accordance to the principles of honor, which he and his family members were brought up with. Even though he was at the

mercy of the political forces of his time, he never became an instrument of them. Thus, he symbolizes the freedom of science and the freedom of mind.

In the times when Nazi Germany used Genetics to justify their theory of the supreme Arian race and to legalize the Genocide, he, being already a well-known geneticist, did not take part in any of these attempts nor in the sadistic genetic experiences with people being used like guinea-pigs. Moreover, during the time of mad Nazi racism and intolerance, he kept up an island of the freedom of mind and of intellectual activity in the small satellite village of Berlin, Buch.

After being deported back to Russia, it was due to the Soviet “Bomb” project that he was saved from the GULAG and got the possibility to go on with his research activities. But neither did he contribute to this project directly, nor did he carry out experiments on the Soviet bombing test sites. His research was independent of the political interests of the Soviet Union. Instead, he searched for ways to clean environment after radioactive contamination. Mainly, his research objects were *Drosophila spec.* and plants; his working place was his laboratory in a small village in the Ural, which was open to everybody; his goal was to contribute to basic science and to the knowledge on Genetics worldwide.

As was already mentioned, Timofeeff-Ressovsky as a civilian was a patriot, but as a scientist he was an internationalist. His contacts to the scientific community were not at all restricted by any borders. He had friends and close colleagues not only in Russia, but in most western countries. He had close contacts to Nils Bohr, Thomas Morgan, Max Delbrück, to name some of them. He was fluent not only in Russian and German, but also in English and French. His scientific contributions were available in most University libraries.

N.W. Timofeeff-Ressovsky was a scientist with a classic education. Within biology he covered the fields of hydro-biology, biophysics, genetics, microbiology, radiobiology, ecology, and evolution. But he was also well educated in physics, chemistry and math, furthermore a great admirer of art and literature. He was famous for being an excellent bass and loved to sing. He represented the type of interdisciplinary scientist, who is more and more rare in a time of high specialization but would be needed to solve today’s very complex and interrelated problems.

N.W. Timofeeff-Ressovsky was a great personality, a real authority, not only as a scientist, but also as a person. He can be seen as an example for UNESCO as well as for the Russian Academy of Sciences. Hence, UNESCO has included the centenary of N.W.

Timofeeff-Ressovsky in the list of dates celebrated in 2000–2001, thereby recognizing the worldwide importance of this eminent Russian scientist.

Let me now say some words of the activities of UNESCO in the field of life science. The objectives of UNESCO in life science are to promote international cooperation in the fields of Molecular and Cell Biology, Biotechnologies and to fight against AIDS, to bridge the scientific and technological differences existing between developed and developing countries. UNESCO also provides the least developed countries with tools for enhancing the quality of science research.

To achieve these objectives in life science, UNESCO has set up special networks of centers of excellency that organize training activities, workshops and research projects on a collaborative basis. This is the case with

- the International Biosciences Network (IBN),
- the Global Molecular and Cell Biology Network (MCBN),
- the UNESCO Biotechnology Action Council (BAC),
- the global network of Microbial Resources Centers (MIRCENS). Furthermore, UNESCO closely cooperates with NGOs in the field of Cell Biology and Neuroscience (in cooperation with ICRO, IBRO),
- Bioinformatics (with the International Center for Cooperation in Bioinformatics), as well as within
- the UNESCO Human Genome Program (together with Third World Academy of Sciences).

Additionally, training and capacity building especially for the developing countries is achieved through programs of short-term fellowships, professorships and the establishment of UNESCO Chairs.

Please let me repeat that UNESCO is not a scientific research organization. UNESCO tries to promote and foster science throughout the world. Our goal is to establish a scientific understanding and scientific values according to the bright example of Nikolai W. Timofeeff-Ressovsky.

Ladies and Gentlemen. thank you for your attention!