

HOW PROFESSOR B.V. GNEDENKO GOT CAUGHT ON A HOOK IN KHARKOV

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For the first time, I met B.V. Gnedenko in the Fall of 1970 at the USSR conference-school on queueing theory. The conference was organized by the Moscow State University. Boris Vladimirovich Gnedenko was a head of the conference. The conference took place at the fantastic city resort Dilizhan insite the Caucasus mountains in Armenia, in the house of composers. I would have to say that I never attended a more interesting conference in my life. The music was constantly playing from the open windows of the cottages nearby; there was a fascinating harmony of mountains, mathematics and music (additionally, of football- we spent playing football all the free time).

I was inspired by everything I saw, by new ideas, by the people I met, the people who at that time were the face of Soviet school of reliability. There were B.V.Gnedenko, Ya.K. Belyaev, A.D.Soloviev, the authors of a bestseller on the topic of reliability; this book was probably learned word for word by all the attendees of the conference. There were my peers – Igor Ushakov, Vladimir Rykov, Alexander Andronov, Viktor Kashtanov, Illia Gertsbakh, Boyan Dimitrov and many more, who now are the lead professionals in the field of reliability in different countries of the world.

Boris Vladimirovich's hospitality, attention to youth, desire to help solving complicated mathematical problems has been just fascinating.

Later, there were seminars at the Moscow State University that Boris Vladimirovich conducted, the discussions of my articles and my doctoral dissertation followed. The opponents of my dissertation in 1974 were two members of Boris Vladimirovich's team – Alexander Dmitrievich Soloviev and Igor Alekseevich Ushakov.

Now about the hook. During a number of years, I was a head of seminar in Kharkov - Ukraine on the topic of reliability. This seminar took place in the regional Center for Technology, and a number of specialists from the cities of the former USSR presented there. After several years of conducting this event, I got brave enough to invite Boris Vladimirovich to this event. Luckily for me, Boris Vladimirovich happily accepted the invitation: "I am an academican of Ukrainian Academia of Science but in Kharkov, the first capital of Ukraine, was not for quite some time."

Boris Vladimirovich came to Kharkov. Besides the usual participants of the seminar, a lot of mathematicians and engineers came to listen to Boris Vladimirovich. The grand room of the Center of Technology was filled with people. Boris Vladimirovich's presentation was on a topic of how mathematics and the theory of reliability is connected to the use of technical systems and equipment that is being developed and produced in Kharkov. Boris Vladimirovich was extremely well informed about large plants based in Kharkov that produced turbines, tractors, electrical engines and electrical equipment. He even knew that there was one of the largest in USSR tank factory; and this fact at that time was considered top secret. Boris Vladimirovich had almost a unique ability to talk in simple terms about complicated matters, and his presentation that day was a direct evidence of it.

The seminar went for a long time, Boris Vladimirovich was faced with a lot of questions, and he tried to give a full explanation to each. After the seminar, we started to walk slowly to my house, where among all delicious foods, a big pike awaited us.

"I am from Volga river," said Boris Vladimirovich proudly and chose a pike's head. You can only imagine how horrified my wife and my parents were when they realized that there was a hook in pike's head, but by this time Boris Vladimirovich already had this piece of fish with hook

in his mouth. Happily enough, the hook did not get too far. “That is it, now I am hooked by you,” said Boris Vladimirovich. “This hook I am going to take with me as a memory and a proof that you caught me with a hook.”

The next day was dedicated to paintings. “In every city that I visit, I always go to the local museum, and every museum has something interesting to look at,” after Boris Vladimirovich said this, we went to the local museum, but unfortunately, the museum was closed on that day. I have no idea how Boris Vladimirovich has done it, but he managed to persuade museum employees to let us in; we were the only ones in the museum. Afterwards we went to city of Chuguev, a small city near Kharkov, where a famous Russian painter Illia Repin was born, and where a museum in his names is located. Later in the evening I took Boris Vladimirovich to the railway station.

Today, at my house I have a number of books by Boris Vladimirovich signed by him. I look at his books and my book on the a subject of control systems reliability that was published in Moscow in 1982 with the foreword by professor Gnedenko. I think that I got very luck in my life to work with Boris Vladimirovich, and with his followers.