



NIKOLAI ADRIANOVICH TALITSKIKH (On the hundredth anniversary of his birth)†



Nikolai Adrianovich Talitskikh, who helped to establish the journal *Applied Mathematics and Mechanics*, was born in St Petersburg on 9 November, 1898. On leaving the First Moscow Real School in 1914, after a brief time at the front during the World War I, he entered the shipbuilding division of the Emperor Nicholas I Naval Engineering Academy in the autumn of 1915. The academy, which was situated in Kronshtadt, was distinguished by its high level of teaching and training.

However the normal life of a marine guard, with its concerns and youthful diversions, was cut short by the revolutionary events which altered the fate of Russia. Talitskikh lost a leg in the war, but graduated as a naval engineer from the Naval Engineering Institute in 1919 and served in the Red Fleet as part of the Dnieper Military Flotilla. The complex events of the Civil War brought him into territory occupied by Ukrainian nationalists, and later he left his home country.

In 1920 Talitskikh began studying at the Sorbonne, but then worked as a draughtsman in London and New York. Between 1921 and 1922 he worked at the Railway Mission of the Russian Federation in Germany as a naval technician, supervising the repair of ships and the despatch of equipment to Soviet Russia. It was here, apparently, that he first met Academician A. N. Krylov, who was directing that work at the time. At the end of 1922 he returned voluntarily to his home country, where he was sent for trial, but, in an amnesty given to those who had been abroad and had returned voluntarily only a suspended sentence was passed at the end of 1923 without formal disfranchisement.

In order to be able to support his family, Talitskikh opened a mechanical workshop in Moscow. In 1924, whilst still working as a “single-handed craftsman”, he entered the Physics and Mathematics Faculty of Moscow State University, where he attended a full university course in 1931. Owing to difficulties

†*Prikl. Mat. Mekh.* Vol. 62, No. 6, pp. 1061–1063, 1998.

associated with his character and background, he was not awarded a diploma. However, he stayed on to teach mathematics at the Chemistry Faculty of Moscow State University. While there, he became close friends of two future presidents of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR: Academicians A. N. Nesemyanov and M. V. Keldysh, to whom he would turn for help at especially difficult times in his life.

In 1936 the USSR Academy of Sciences was transferred from Leningrad to Moscow, and Galerkin and Krylov asked Talitskikh to set up a new series of the journal *Applied Mathematics and Mechanics* in Moscow. Publishing a periodical of this kind at that time was a far from simple matter. Its predecessors, the Leningrad *Mechanics and Applied Mathematics News* (1929–1931) and *Applied Mathematics and Mechanics* (1933–1936), were of high quality but had been unable to appear regularly. It was the aim of the new series to secure both these conditions. To a considerable extent it was due to Talitskikh's energy and enthusiasm that it succeeded. Talitskikh had finally found somewhere he could use his knowledge and talents. He became one of the founders of the journal and for many years was its editor; the first editorial meeting took place in his living room in a communal flat in a building on Krivoarbatskii Street.

In 1939 *Applied Mathematics and Mechanics* became one of the subscription journals of the Academy of Sciences, and the subtitle "New Series" was removed from it in 1941. The journal rapidly acquired an international reputation, due to the high level of research of the papers published and its underlying publishing principles. It became the major journal of mechanics, publishing most of the original and fundamental results of Soviet academics. Talitskikh himself made a considerable contribution to the establishment of *Applied Mathematics and Mechanics*, since apart from having exceptional organizational, editorial and publishing skills, he was especially aware of new trends in mechanics and talented young researchers.

Talitskikh played a no less important role in organizing a number of other research publications of the USSR Academy of Sciences. The whole of his career, over 35 years, is essentially the history of the specialist mechanics periodicals in this country. In 1940 he established the publication of the "Engineering Collection" series. Twenty-four volumes of the series appeared during the 16 years of his editorship. In 1958 it was to become *The Engineering Journal* of the Institute of Mechanics of the USSR Academy of Sciences.

In 1954 he was invited to become scientific editor of *Transactions of the Department of Technical Sciences (Izvestiya Otdeleniya Tekhnicheskikh Nauk)* of the USSR Academy of Sciences. The journal, which had been published since 1937, was threatened by closure because of the length of time it took to appear. Talitskikh managed to stabilize its position by the end of the year. In 1959, on his initiative, it was decided to split *Izvestiya* up into three separate series: *Mechanics and Machine Construction*, *Metallurgy and Fuel*, and *Energy and Automation*. While retaining the editorship of *Mechanics and Machine Construction*, he prepared the first three issues and organized the editorship of the two other series. In 1966 the three series of *Izvestiya* were amalgamated into two new ones: *Fluid Mechanics and Mechanics of Solids*. Talitskikh participated as scientific editor of these two journals. In 1953 he was asked to organize the review journal *Mechanics*, which he helped to edit for six years. In 1960 he also joined the editorial board of the *Journal of Applied Mechanics and Technical Physics*, published by the Siberian Section of the USSR Academy of Sciences, while in 1958, on the suggestion of the Academy of Construction and Architecture, he edited two issues of the series *Constructional Mechanics and Building Design*. It should also be mentioned that it was on Talitskikh's initiative at the end of 1948 that he periodic collection of translations *Mechanics*, which was subsequently transferred to the Foreign Languages Publishing House (Izdatel'stvo Inostranoi Literatury), started at the Institute of Mechanics of the USSR Academy of Sciences.

Thus, all Soviet journals on mechanics at that time were organized and published with his direct participation. He also edited many monographs, the proceedings of various conferences, and collections of articles by several prominent Russian academics in mechanics.

Talitskikh's editorial and publishing career is amazing, and its scale might surprise someone who did not know him personally. He wanted Soviet mechanics to be the most advanced in the world and considered it his duty to devote all his energy to achieving this goal. This generated an enormous amount of work and demanded personal and public risks. His concern to nurture a new generation of scientists made him relate especially well to young research workers. Many of the eminent scientists with whom he would chat for hours when they were young largely owed their professional standing to him. Thirty years ago, it was scarcely possible to find an academic in the area of mechanics in the USSR who had not encountered Talitskikh as author, reviewer or editor.

Talitskikh also took an active part in the organization and research of the USSR Academy of Sciences and, in particular, in the activity of the Institute of Mechanics and the Institute of Problems of Mechanics (which replaced it in 1965). He made an enormous contribution to the organization of the latter, as chairman of the research information department.

Although selflessly dedicated to his work, Talitskikh was no recluse. He possessed great personal charm, enormous knowledge, was very capable, and had a huge circle of friends within and outside scientific circles. He suffered a great deal, losing a leg in his youth, and losing his young son. Nevertheless, he was always full of energy, was never depressed, was attractive to women, was a passionate hunter and sportsman, a car enthusiast who would take considerable risks, and a keen tourist.

He was very ill during his final years. Unable to tear himself away from his work, not long before he died he left hospital to take part in a meeting of the editorial board of *Applied Mathematics and Mechanics*, his last. He died in Moscow on May 3, 1971 and is buried in Novodevichii Cemetery.

In marking the hundredth anniversary of Talitskikh's birth, we would like, above all, to draw the attention of readers to the main driving force of his multifaceted career—his passionate love for his country and constant striving to maintain its prestige at a high level.

Translated by R.L.