

Письмо Хелен Джулиетт Мёллер, посвящённое памяти Ю.Н. Вавилова

В ноябре 2017 года в Россию приезжала дочь известного американского учёного, «отца радиационной генетики», лауреата Нобелевской премии Германа Джозефа Мёллера. Её приезд был обусловлен поисками информации для книги, которую она пишет о своём отце, и, несомненно, знакомство с Юрием Николаевичем Вавиловым было важным событием в этом путешествии. Дружба и совместная работа двух великих генетиков — Н.И. Вавилова и Г.Д. Мёллера — стала одним из важнейших сюжетов в истории биологической науки, а Ю.Н. Вавилов, как хранитель памяти своего отца — олицетворением всего прошлого отечественной науки, о чем Хелен Мёллер и написала в своем письме, обращённом не только к родственникам, друзьям Юрия Николаевича, но и всем тем, для кого имя Н.И. Вавилова является значимым, а трагедия советской генетики — не просто страницей истории науки.

С разрешения автора письма, мы публикуем его в журнале без изменений.

April 19, 2018

To the family and friends of Yuri N. Vavilov gathered here today.

It is with profound sadness that I write this “farewell greeting” for Yuri Nicolai Vavilov. In the last year, Yuri and I came to find one another through mutual friends. It was a joyous discovery for both of us. We developed a wonderful correspondence that I shall cherish the rest of my life. We felt that we had found each other as long lost brother and sister at last. This is because our fathers — Nicolai Ivanovich Vavilov and Hermann Joseph Muller were very close friends and colleagues because of their mutual interest in genetics and the improvement of humankind.

Our fathers met almost a hundred years ago in the USA and Nicolai invited my father to be chief geneticist in Russia in the 1930s. My father accepted the invitation and worked with many Russian scientists to improve Russian genetics. Yuri and his brother were children then and got to know my brother David when my father’s family was in Leningrad and Moscow.

My father would cry when he told me stories about what happened to his cherished colleague Nicolai during the purges and his subsequent death. And it was Nicolai who saved my father’s life by making him leave Russia when the pseudo scientist Lysenko began to dominate Russian genetics.

In our letters, Yuri and I relived some of this history and he told me how he and his mother survived during those difficult times. I was in St. Petersburg just last November at the IV International Conference in Celebration of Nicolai Vavilov’s 130th birthday. There I spoke of our father’s close friendship and admiration for one another. And I dedicated my talk to our fathers and to Yuri who was too ill to attend the conference. Yuri is a symbol to all of us of Russian scientists in the past. He dedicated his life to preserving the memories and collections of his famous father and in so doing established himself as an important figure in history.

We hold hope for the future that Russian and American scientists and people can come together and collaborate and have cherished friendships once again. I will honor and hold Yuri in my heart forever. With all due respect,

Helen Juliette Muller

Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA.