Memorial of Nikolai Vasil’evich Belov
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I first became acquainted with the name of N. V. Belov when I was fifteen years old. At that time, I had developed a love of minerals and used to thumb through the “Mineral Chemistry” section in Chemical Abstracts, edited by Michael Fleischer. Frequently scattered in that section were abstracts including N. V. Belov’s name and the crystal chemistries of most strange and marvelous species. Within two years, I had a certain wish to visit the fabled occurrences of these species—Mt. Kurnasart; the Lovozero, Khibine massifs; in fact, the entire Kola Peninsula.

Academician Nikolai Vasil’evich Belov, dean of Soviet crystallography, was born in IJanov in Lublin Province, Poland, later the Zhitomir Province of the Russian empire and now of the Ukrainian Republic of the Soviet Union. His father was a district doctor, and in 1900 the family moved to Ovруч in the nearby province of Volynia, which N. V. Belov considered his native town.

Belov’s upbringing was Russian, and he attended a Russian gymnasium in Warsaw. This distinguished school produced a succession of famous pupils, including V. I. Vernadsky. N. V. Belov was a brilliant student and received the coveted gold medal upon his graduation. His higher education commenced at the Metallurgical Department of the St. Petersburg Polytechnic Institute, where he specialized in electrochemistry, while maintaining an interest in all of the natural sciences as well as the humanities. A. F. Ioffe had great influence on N. V. Belov here, although he was not his thesis supervisor. In addition, the great mineralogist-petrographer, A. E. Fersman, played a key role, and for years portraits of both A. E. Fersman and A. F. Ioffe decorated N. V. Belov’s office. While a student, N. V. Belov supplemented his income by giving a “dance” in thesis projects. In addition, he was an “extra” in the theater; but the main reason for doing this was to hear the famous singer, Feodor Chaliapin. During this period, he met his future wife, Alexandra Grigieva.

After the 1917 Revolution, N. V. Belov moved back to Ovруч with his wife, where he became a designer and builder of bridges and other structures. Since materials were scarce, he also gathered wood for the Red Army, travelling distances of up to 50 km a day. In 1921, he returned to Petrograd (as St. Petersburg was called after 1917), where V. A. Kistiakovskii became his adviser and his thesis “Thermal Coefficients of Galvanic Cells” was completed. Following another hiatus in Ovруч, he settled in Petrograd—now Leningrad—and became Associate of the Central Chemical Laboratory of the Leningrad Leather Foundation where he was soon in charge of the laboratory. During this period, N. V. Belov expanded his understanding of physics and chemistry largely on his own, and in 1929 became chief of the Institute for the study of the North (Institute of the Arctic and Antarctic). His craving for greater involvement led to his appointment as Associate Editor of the Soviet journal Priroda (Nature) where, between 1928-1932, he placed about seventy scientific-popular articles on subjects in physics and chemistry (his mentor, A. E. Fersman, was Editor of this journal).

At the same time, A. E. Fersman introduced N. V. Belov to the Lomonosov Institute of the Academy of Sciences. [It may not be generally appreciated that M. V.
NIKOLAI VASIL'EVICH BELOV

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