

OLEG VASILIEVICH KONONOV

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1. Oleg Vasilievich Kononov
(15.03.1932 – 19.10.2021).

Sometimes a person is very lucky to have mentors in life, and I was among such lucky people. Among those outstanding people, whom I consider it an honor to call a mentor in the professional field, Oleg Vasilievich Kononov occupies a very special place. He was my mentor in my student years, my real first teacher, the very person who not only introduced me, as well as many other students, into the world of great mineralogy, but also showed by personal example that science can and must become the most important thing in your life, if you have chosen such a path. Oleg V. passed away on the 19th of October 2021, having lived a long and bright life, and we would like to pay tribute to the memory of this incredibly talented scientist and teacher, this wonderful person, and selfless enthusiast of his work.

Oleg Vasilievich Kononov was born on the 15th of March 1932 in Moscow. His parents, Vasily Nikolaevich Kononov and Anna Fyodorovna Apollonova, natives of the Pyashnitsa village, Belozersk District, Vologda Oblast', moved to the capital in 1927, when Vasily Nikolaevich was transferred to the Workers' Faculty by the Komsomol. In 1930, Vasily Kononov became a student at the newly established Moscow Institute of Non-Ferrous Metals and Gold. After graduating from the institute in 1935, he was sent as a young aluminium specialist to Gor'kiy city, where he became head of the metal coating shop at the Gor'kiy Automobile Plant. In Gor'kiy, Oleg went to school. In 1941 they were evacuated to the Kirov Oblast', then returned back to Gor'kiy, and in 1944, his father was transferred to Armenia to build the Kanaker Aluminium Plant. Here, Oleg first encountered with minerals, and one event initiated his deep interest in archaeology.

Here is Oleg Vasilievich's own story about it: *At the end of the Great Patriotic War (1941–45), my family worked in Armenia. There, I, a twelve-year-old boy, was led by curiosity to the Geological Museum on Abovyan Street, near Lenin Square and his giant monument. A colorless and shiny diamond-like crystal, as I would describe it now, of pseudo-octahedral habitus, anglesite, struck my imagination. It was my first introduction to crystallography, mineralogy, and the word 'geology'. We had to manage summer time on our own and climbed all nearby mountains. Once we decided to climb the Great Ararat Mt., which was only 36 km away, but across the Arax River in Turkey. There were three of us – Robert Ghambaryan, Seryozha Sarkisyan and myself – studying together at the Russian Dzerzhinsky School. The route was along the left rocky bank of the Zanga River valley, which started from Lake Sevan. And here, at the exit of the*



2. Vasily Nikolaevich Kononov with his son Oleg. Gorky city, 1936.

3. Oleg Kononov with his mother Anna Fedorovna, Hungary, 1948.

4. Tenth-grader Oleg Kononov. Photo from the Board of Honour of men's secondary school 1, Ust-Kamenogorsk, 1950.

narrow gorge to the flat Ararat Valley we came across a red hill (Karmir Blur; as we learned later, it was a fortress of the ancient city of Erebuni, the predecessor of modern Yerevan in the State of Urartu). Its slopes were strewn with fragments of burnt bricks and pottery. On top of the hill, we saw the excavations of an ancient fortress with ruined walls and huge jugs buried in the ground. We spent the whole day digging in search of something unknown. As a result, the journey ended there and we returned with fragments of jugs and a diamond-shaped bead of 'blue basalt', as I called it then. That's how I was introduced to archaeology. These two events remained in my memory and, as it turned out later, shaped my whole life. I became a professional geologist, a specialist in mineralogy and crystallography, while history and archaeology remained my hobby.

In 1947, the family moved to Budapest, Hungary, with my father now assigned to build an aluminium plant in Almashfüzito. In the apartment where the Kononovs lived, there were items abandoned by the Nazis during a hasty retreat. Oleg found a collection of Hungarian postage stamps among them and was so captivated by them that he secretly took to Moscow what he considered the most valuable, as many as he could hide under his clothes. This was the beginning of another Oleg's hobby.

In February 1949, Vasily Nikolaevich was transferred to Ust-Kamenogorsk in eastern Kazakhstan. At local Lenin's Boy High School No.1 was the *Globus* Geographical Society headed by geography teacher AG Lukyanov. Its geological section was headed by senior pupil Oleg Kononov. He planned and carried out hikes, individually and in groups, to the pegmatite deposits of Kalba and Gromotukha, aiming to collect minerals. In 1950, Oleg graduated from school with a silver medal, but he could not decide for a long, until the last moment, whether to be an

archaeologist or a geologist. However, geology won, and in the summer of 1950, Oleg Kononov and his lifelong school friend Vladimir Vydrin entered the Geology Faculty of Lomonosov Moscow State University.

Classes for geology students in those years were held in the old building of Moscow State University on Mokhovaya Street, and non-Moscovite students lived in a dormitory on Stromynka. Since the first year, Oleg Kononov actively joined the part of student life that was directly related to science, especially keen on mineralogy and geochemistry. His fellow student and close friend Vladimir Bakakin, who is now a crystallochemist scientist of world renown, recalls: From the first days in the university, Oleg was different from the majority of his classmates in his initial subject erudition, lively interest in the world of minerals, and purposefulness. Here is a typical example. To the dormitory environment, surviving, as a rule, on modest scholarship money, Oleg quickly got used to, learned – together with a friendly team – to eat sparingly. At the end of the semester, he received a remittance from his parents for 1,000 rubles (the equivalent of three and a half monthly scholarships!). At the same time, the "*Mineralogy*" by AG Betekhtin, a thick volume priced at 980 rubles, was on sale. For specialists, of course, it was an event, but Oleg was a green freshman, preparing to take exams in zoology and botany... However, he was happy to buy this book, which started his future solid library.

Oleg Kononov chose the Department of Mineralogy. Already in the first year, he was one of the main organizers of student mineralogical expedition to Rudnyi Altai (Zyrianovsk polymetallic deposit) and Kalba. It took place in the summer of 1951 after educational field training course and lasted two months. Oleg recalled that during preparation for this expedition he became



11. Students of Mineralogy Department graduated from Lomonosov Moscow State University in 1955 (upper row, from left to right) Valentin Grigor'ev, Oleg V. Kononov, Rostislav V. Getling; (middle row, from left to right) Tatyana Malysheva, Irina V. Ostrovskaya, Vladimir I. Kuzmin; (lower row, from left to right) Tatyana Saprykina, Tatyana B. Zdorik, Irina Guseva, Valentina S. Chesnovitskaya, Valentina S. Gaidukova.



5. First individual geological and mineralogical routes to granitic pegmatites of Kalba, 1950 r. Oleg Kononov on the right, Vladimir Vydrin in the center.

6. Oleg Kononov, first-year student of Geological Faculty. Old building of Moscow State University in Mokhovaya Street, 1951.

7. Geology students of Moscow State University in Moscow region academic practice. 1951.

8. Diploma, awarded to O.V. Kononov, student of Moscow State University, for successful research work "Cesium in nature." 1954.

9. Preparation of diploma thesis on mineralogy of Sherlova Gora in Transbaikial Region. Spring, 1955.

10. Teachers of Oleg Kononov in the Department of Mineralogy, Lomonosov Moscow State University (from left to right): Georgy Alekseevich Krutov, Liya Konstantinovna Yakhontova, and Nikolai Alekseevich Smol'yaninov. Early 1950s.



acquainted with Anatoly Ilyich Ginzburg, an outstanding specialist in mineralogy of granite pegmatites, who worked in the Mineralogical Museum of the USSR Academy of Sciences. He also met a senior student of his department Victor Ivanovich Stepanov, then already a deep expert on minerals. Their advice was very helpful in organizing the expedition, the main goal of which was to collect mineral specimens for the future Museum of Earth History in the new building of Lomonosov Moscow State University on Leninskie Gory. These and many other exhibits, donated by Oleg Vasilievich, can still be seen today in the Earth Science Museum at Lomonosov Moscow State University, with which he cooperated for many years. Going forward, the exposition "*Luminescence of minerals*" was created by Oleg Kononov here in 1966, probably the first full museum exposition of such kind in our country.

The student acquaintance with Ginzburg quickly grew into joint scientific work. The objects of the study were pollucite, spodumene and their mineral associations, primarily from the Kalba rare-metal granitic pegmatites, a favourite of Oleg since his school days of hiking. In 1953, as a third-year student, he published together with Ginzburg an article in the Doklady Akademii Nauk SSSR (Proceedings of the USSR Academy of Sciences), which showed that the so-called cesium spodumene and diaspodumene are in fact microgrowths of spodumene, partially replaced by pollucite and quartz¹. This was Kononov's first printed work, which officially marked the beginning of almost seventy years of scientific activity. Cesium aluminosilicate pol-

lucite became his favourite mineral for a long time. In the family archive still keep the diploma, signed by the Deputy Minister of Higher Education of the USSR, dated September 10, 1954, which was awarded to Oleg Kononov, a student of the Lomonosov Moscow State University, for successful research work "*Cesium in Nature*."

In 1953, the Geology Faculty moved into the new building of Moscow State University on Leninskiye Gory. Professor Georgiy P. Barsanov became head of the Mineralogy Department. In the summer of 1954, he sent Oleg Kononov as his under-graduate student to Eastern Transbaikalia, to the famous gemstone greisen deposits of Sherlova Gora and Adun-Cholon granite pegmatites. His supervisor in the field was Marianna B. Chistyakova, then a post-graduate student of Barsanov. In 1955, as a result of these works, Kononov prepared his brilliant diploma thesis "*The Mineralogy of Sherlova Gora*." Oleg Vasilievich was keenly interested in this remarkable deposit for many years, and he returned to its detailed study in half a century, of course, at a new level...

The reviewer of the diploma work was Nikolai A. Smol'yaninov, one of the most authoritative Soviet mineralogists, who until 1950 headed the Department of Mineralogy at Moscow University and then was a professor there. After Oleg Kononov was awarded his diploma in geochemistry (specialization in mineralogy), Smol'yaninov invited him to join his post-graduate school. Oleg Vasilievich recalled that upon graduation from the university he planned to work at the tin deposits in the

¹ Ginzburg A.I., Kononov O.V. On cesium spodumene // Doklady AN SSSR, 1953, 91(5), p. 1203–1207. In Russian.