

REMEMBERING BORIS Z. KANTOR

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1. Boris Z. Kantor.

Getting older, I more and more often look back in search of the brightest moments of time on the pathway of my life. I am pleased to recollect and relive them again and again. Almost all of them are related in one way or another to minerals: minerals as my own finds and as presents, results of mineral researches, and people who were also related to minerals. One of the very frequent visitors to my recollections is Boris Z. Kantor (B.Z.), with whom we were friends for 55 years. I am used to pick up some of his presents, read dedications in his books, and turn over their pages in search of photos I love so much. I am particularly thrilled when looking at the inscription written by his trembling hand in the book *Mineral Collecting* on February 25, 2021.

Acquaintance. In 1968, Viktor I. Stepanov told me about an amazing mineral collector and proposed to get him to my place (I lived then in Moscow). Stepanov then asked me to gift some mineral specimens to this man. I was glad to get acquainted with such a mineral amateur, asked him to bring along a backpack with him, and promised to give him as many specimens as he is able to carry away on his back. Mineral specimens at my place in Moscow were then stored in boxes for fruits, which were staked on top of one another, ten to dozen boxes in a column. A dozen of boxes contained duplicates and mineral specimens from Bulgaria "intended for gifts". My guest had chosen presents for himself, and when he was saying goodbye, his backpack was of fairly impressive size. My guest was Boris Zinovievich Kantor. I has never a chance to accompany him in his trips in search of minerals because shortly afterwards I defended my dissertation and came back to Bulgaria. Viktor Ivanovich <Stepanov> then dreamed not about Golutvin but about a newly found mysterious and wonderful locality where chalcedony pseudostalactites had been found in the Moscow region, but he was reluctant to disclose information on it.

In 1970, I came to Moscow to my wife, Jenny Zaharieva, a pianist, who then finished her graduate degree at the Moscow Conservatory, supervised by Tatiana P. Nikolaeva. One evening, I begged to be allowed to leave my family nest for a few hours to meet Boris and see his collection. I was amazed by the wealth of his collection and by its systematic ordering, accurately handwritten labels, and boxes with mineral specimens. I still remember a beautiful goethite specimen from Volodarsk-Volynskiy, Ukraine: I had never before seen such wonderful specimens. I then received several gifts: a few separate chalcedony pseudostalactites from Staraya Sitnya (that was exactly the place Stepanov had not told me about); an apatite crystal from Dashkesan, Azerbaijan; and a wonderful phenakite spherulite (4 cm in diameter) on

Specimens and photo: Boris Z. Kantor, from his articles published in *Mineralogical Almanac* if other is not specified.



2. **Fluorite**, antiskeletal crystal. Diameter 1.5 cm. Dalnegorsk, Primorskiy Krai, Russia. Specimen: Victor V. Ponomarenko.

3. **Celestine**, split crystal. 4.5 cm. Shurab, Isfara district, Sughd region, Tajikistan.



a rock matrix. Boris told me that the phenakite from the Ermakovskoe "top-secret" deposit in Buryatia in central Siberia, I must never mention the name of this deposit to anybody. We pored over his collection for a few hours until late in the evening, when the urban traffic had already stopped. He came out with me to help me find transportation to better get home – he managed to stop a police patrol vehicle instead of a taxi cab, and begged the policemen to bring me to my wife place in Gruzinskaya street. I was driven in the police car, happy with the unique phenakite spherulite, which is now proudly housed at the *Earth and Man* Museum in Sofia.

When I came to Moscow in later years to participate in various conferences and attend to celebratory events, I also always visited B.Z. and was always granted with minerals and new books written by him. B.Z. relished making presents, and always smiled when opening a drawer with specimens and offered: "Now choose!". I do not remember a single instance that I asked Boris for any particular present. Instead, he selected a specimen by himself, asked whether I liked it, and then put it aside for me to take it. Once he generously offered me a small machine-tool for sawing stones, but it was too big to carry it in my hand luggage to Bulgaria. He also gifted a beautiful specimen of garnet-epidote skarn from Dashkesan for our museum.

Our sessions of examining his mineral specimens were interrupted by breaks for tea with traditional meat-stuffed pancakes and discussions of various topics. I was then strongly interested in issues related to sustainable development and worshipped Acad. Valentin A. Koptuyug, who was then the President of the Siberian Branch of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR. Boris and his wife Irina named me "a fighter for humanism". Boris and Irina's home was filled with a specific cozy atmosphere, and I was always very comfortable there and reluctant to leave. In the dramatic 1990s, Boris once offered to walk with me to the bus stop and explained that it was not safe to be outside during dark time, and that in Moscow people sometimes can "disappear."

Boris was a person gifted in many respects and ways. He always complete everything he had started to do. Having a close look at the various aspects of his mineral collecting, starting with the fieldwork and finishing with the showcase and chest of drawers with mineral specimens, even the most squeamish observer could not find a fault in anything. The same fully applies to beautiful but strictly scientific photos of minerals taken by Boris. Most of geologists love to take photos, and many mineralogists prefer to photo-document their study subjects by themselves. B.Z. has developed his talent as photographer to the level of Russia's best mineral photographers, such as Mikhail A. Bogomolov and Michael B. Leybov.

I would like to particularly stress B.Z.'s efforts to popularize the ontogeny of minerals. In his publications, Boris invited the reader to be his "coworker" to cooperate in a dialog when analyzing ancient evidence provided by the Earth. His engineering education deeply imprinted his style of scientific thinking, and he was, so to say, an engineer ontogenist. He was not satisfied with the purely empirical approach sugar-coated with modern ontogenic terms and concepts but instead searched for explanations of the observed phenomena, which had been often scrutinized and thought over to the level of a *scientific fact*, on the basis of the laws, principles, and approaches of theoretical science. He loved most of all the principles of *reducto ad absurdum*