

BOOK REVIEW

Aleksei Alexandrovich Balandin

(Editor V. M. Gryaznov, Coeditors: E. I. Klabunovskii and Yu. I. Solovev),
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The book entitled *Aleksei Alexandrovich Balandin* was published by *Nauka* in the series: *Russian Scientists. Essays, Memoirs and Documents*. This touching book is an extraordinary experience for those who can read and understand Russian.

The book furnishes essays, recollections and documents about the outstanding Russian scientist, the founder of the well known multiplet theory of heterogeneous catalysis, Academician A. A. Balandin. The astounding book devoted to A. A. Balandin's memory has been prepared by A. A. Balandin's colleagues and followers.

The book provides an overall review of Balandin's private life, covers different moments of his scientific carrier, shows him as an excellent teacher, a remarkable organizer, an outstanding theoretician and a brilliant problem solver, who in addition to his theoretical and educational activity has also been involved in the solution of different industrial and practical problems.

A. A. Balandin's scientific activity was strongly related to two institutions: Faculty of Chemistry at the Moscow State University (MGU) and Institute of Organic Chemistry of the Soviet Academy of Sciences in Moscow. His talent was recognized early by the famous organic chemist, Academician Nikolai Dmitrievich Zelinsky, who was the director of that Academic Institute. In 1934 Balandin was appointed as the head of the Laboratory of Organic Catalysis at the Institute of Organic Chemistry of the Soviet Academy of Sciences. In 1940 Balandin founded the Department of Catalysis in Organic Chemistry (Department of Organic Catalysis). Under his supervision hundreds of Russian and foreign students received their diplomas and Candidate's Degrees (equivalent of Ph. D. in the former-Soviet Union) in Organic Catalysis.

From the book one can also learn about his tragic periods during the years of repression. A. A. Balandin was twice arrested and sent to the GULAG. The whole Institute of Organic Chemistry was shocked by his first arrest in 1936 as Balandin was always far away from government or party politics. This arrest ended with his exile to Orenburg. Fortunately, his life was defended by the director of the Institute of Organic Chemistry, Academician, Nikolai Dmitrievich

Zelinsky. Thanks to Zelinsky's intervention in May 1939 Balandin was fully rehabilitated.

In April 1949 he was arrested again and was sent to Norilsk (a Northern industrial city at the North Sea), where he was forced to work at the factory laboratory of the Norilsk Metallurgical Plant. He was rehabilitated only after Stalin's death, in September 1953.

The book consists of six chapters. The first chapter written by B. V. Yerofeev is devoted to Balandin's main scientific achievement, the "multiplet theory of catalysis". The second chapter "Recollections" was written by Balandin's students, followers and colleagues both from Russia and other countries. Balandin's selected papers related to the multiplet theory of catalysis are given in the third chapter. This chapter provides also a list of papers not included into the earlier bibliographic editions as well as a list of Balandin's unpublished papers. Balandin's notes related to his trips abroad are also included into this chapter. From these notes one can learn that in 1929-1930 he visited Universities in Berlin, Dresden, Leipzig, Göttingen and Paris.

References to Balandin's works are summarized in the fourth chapter. Detailed biographical material written by Yu. I Solovov is given in the fifth chapter. The sixth chapter consists of supplements. Supplements 1, 3 and 4 contains letters written by Academician Nikolay Dmitrievich Zelinsky to the Secretary of the Academy of Sciences of USSR, Academician N. P. Gorbunov, to I. V. Stalin and to L. P. Beriya. In these letters Academician N. D. Zelinsky tried to defend Balandin from oppression. It was a very dangerous attempt as writing these letters academician Zelinsky strongly risked his own life. These letters showed that even in these dangerous periods Russian intellectuals, *i.e.* the *Russian intelligentsia* could maintain its own character protecting those who needed a defense. Supplement 2 extracts from case No. 1553 (period July 15, 1936 - January 27, 1937) on accusation of A. A. Balandin as a socially dangerous individual, while Supplement 5 deals with case No 2329 (period April 1, 1949 - October 26, 1950) changing A. A. Balandin with crimes against the soviet system. At the end of the volume the reader can find different notes related to these books.

A summary, the reader should congratulate both the Editor and Coeditors, who did an excellent job collecting this tremendous material which covers both the scientific and private life of a prominent Russian personality, a brilliant scientist and teacher. The extraordinary book *Aleksei Alexandrovich Balandin* is not an easy piece of reading, however, it is a touching and thought-provoking book.

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