



EDITORS' DEDICATORY NOTE

Alexander I. Zaicev (1926–2000), a celebrated Hellenist, Professor of Ancient Greek at St Petersburg University, a teacher of many classicists in Russia (St. Petersburg, Moscow, Saratov, etc.) and Europe was a scholar of singularly diverse interests which, in the field of Classics alone, ranged from Homeric poems, folklore, mythology and metrics to Indo-European studies, and further beyond these lavished in the reaches of Sanskrit, Hebrew, Egyptian, Hittite and Akkadian languages and higher mathematics, a pastime which he did not forgo until his last day.

Zaicev was born in Leningrad into a family of a Soviet functionary father who was arrested in 1937 and executed in early 1938 and a dentist mother, who was shortly afterwards sentenced to 8 years of labour camps. Since his early school years — as Zaicev reminisces in his *Autobiography* — he was outspoken in his disapproval of the Communist regime and of Stalin himself (later Zaicev would call him “cannibal Dzhugashvili”). In the course of time, his views only became stronger. While mapping out plans for the future, he hesitated between mathematics and Classical studies, and eventually decided on the latter. Thus, in 1946, he enrolled for a course at the Department of Classics of the Faculty of Philology in Leningrad. His academic skills arrested everybody's attention, but instead, in 1947, Zaicev himself was arrested, pronounced insane and for seven years was on compulsory treatment in a KGB mental institution in Kazan (this prison term could have been much longer since the sentence was not specified). In 1954, a year after Stalin's death, Zaicev was released, but the rehabilitation came decades later — only in 1991. After discharge, Zaicev made a secret journey to Lithuania to become a Roman Catholic.

Zaicev returned to Leningrad in the same year, and due to untiring efforts of his senior colleagues (of Jakov M. Borovski, his teacher and then Department chair, in the first place), was reinstated as a student at the university. In 1956, aged thirty, Zaicev graduated with honours defending a thesis on a recently published fragment of Προμηθεὺς πυρκαεὺς (POxy XX, 2245), a satyr play by Aeschylus. In 1959 Zaicev received a teaching position at the Department of Classics in Leningrad and was its permanent member until the end of 1999. His doctoral dissertation of 1969 was dedicated to Alcman's Hymn to the Dioscouroi, then recent papyrus discovery, and its epic sources. The resulting research cannot be reduced to a mere reconstruction of the hymn, based on fragments and secondary sources, nor can it be viewed as an amassment of the material available; instead, it exhaustively and concisely considers the key episodes of the Dioscourean tradition. This text, together with that of his master's, was published in full by his pupils in 2006 as part

of his posthumous *Collected works* edition (currently a four volume collection, to be enlarged by further valuable additions from his archive).

The most abiding trait that distinguished Zaicev was his unremitting devotion to learning and teaching. Among his favourite sayings was the following: “One should never save on brainwork!” He practised this never grudging his time helping his students and colleagues and answering their questions. Never quite satisfied with this, Zaicev adopted his teachers’ tradition of extracurricular seminars for reading and translating ancient texts. These seminars welcomed everybody with some reading knowledge of Ancient Greek, but the hard-core consisted of seasoned graduate students and teaching staff of the Departments of Classics and Ancient Greek and Roman History. The weekly Saturday meetings began in 1963 and were held until the end of 1999. The progress with Greek texts — in Zaicev’s distinctive way — was made at an unhurried pace: it took almost twenty years to read and discuss Plato’s *Laws*; these were followed by Aristotle’s *Politics* and finally by Pindar’s *Odes*. In 1979, at students’ request, it was decided to add a Russian-Latin translation seminar. In the course of years, the circle of participants varied, but some regulars attended the Saturdays for decades.

His *opus magnum* *The Cultural Revolution in Ancient Greece between the Eighth and the Fifth Centuries B. C.* was first published in Russian in 1985 (the German translation *Das griechische Wunder: Die Entstehung der griechischen Zivilisation* followed in 1993, the Japanese *Kodai Girisha-no bunka kakumei* in 2010). Zaicev’s second monograph *Formation of the Greek Hexameter* (1994) came as a result of his research into the history of Indo-European and Ancient Greek metrics. His numerous articles and smaller pieces on the topics that were essential for him — such as Homer’s epic and the history of Ancient Greek religion and mythology — are no less rich, stimulating and sobering. Zaicev was fluent in several languages, but generally wrote and published in Russian, so, according to a sad axiom *Rossica non leguntur*, his works are lesser known in the West than they really deserve.

At the end of 1980s, Zaicev together with his younger colleagues was eagerly promoting the creation of the first Classical Grammar School in Russia (the *Gymnasium Classicum Petropolitanum* was opened in 1989). He never had a chance to get what he called a “regular education” at a pre-revolutionary gymnasium himself, but he passionately participated in discussions of the new school’s syllabus: he insisted, for example, on the two “pillars” of the curriculum — Classical languages and mathematics. He suggested the use of German textbooks for Latin and Ancient Greek, which were translated into Russian and are still in use at the gymnasium. When the school was founded, Zaicev became a member of its advisory board; he also gave lectures for teachers and pupils and always participated in the meetings of the school’s research group “Classica.”

It is hard to overestimate the importance of his figure for Classics in this country, both through his extensive, orderly and accurate knowledge and through the impact his strong personality made. The sharpness, intensity and liveliness of his thought and argument, consistency and validity of conclusions come to the fore every time one meets him, be it in his lectures, seminars, articles or monographs. His spoken word, often in form of a witty apophthegm, engrafted itself onto everybody who knew him, taking to the marrow and often becoming a living principle (see A. K. Gavrilov’s article in the present collection).

This year Alexander I. Zaicev would have turned ninety, and this volume is a contribution from his colleagues, pupils and pupils of his pupils to his fond memory.