

## GEORG PRONIN (1898–1962)

Georg Pronin, a member of the Lepidopterists' Society, died in San Francisco, October 30, 1962, of cancer. He is survived by his wife, a son in Washington, D.C., a brother, and his stepmother, Mrs. Aleksandra Pronin of Beverly Hills, Calif.<sup>1</sup> Georg was a forest engineer by training and a naturalist by avocation, interested in butterflies and moths above all else. Fluent in Russian, Polish, Czech and German, he arrived in the United States in 1951 without a word of English. In less than a year he was writing articles which needed considerable rewording yet were basically lucid.

He was a religious man, one who in honesty prayed for his enemies. They must have seemed legion, for Georg lived through a troubled period of European history. Despite hardships, disappointments, and more than once the loss of virtually all his possessions, he was sustained by his faith that all was ordained, and his belief that tomorrow would be better. His optimism was joined to a fruitful imagination. Indeed in his later years his hopeful castles in the sky kept him cheerful with but a minimum of worldly goods.

Born in Kashin in the Tver (now Kalinin) region of Russia on December 28, 1898, he was, on his mother's side, grandson of a naval officer, hero of the defence of Sebastopol. His father was President of the Kharkov District Court of Imperial Russia, and widely known as a very just man. Georg attended high school in Kharkov, graduating in 1917 with a gold medal. He then entered the Officer Military Academy of Engineers in Petrograd (St. Petersburg).

He fought for the Russian Provisory Government, was captured by the Bolsheviks, put in Petropavlosk fortress prison, and sentenced to be shot. With others he was standing before the firing squad when the lady Peshkova, wife of M. Gorky, came by and glanced at the list of condemned. "Who is Pronin?" Georg answered. "Is it your father who was Assistant Prosecutor in Nizhny Novgorod?" "Yes." "You are free. Give my regards to your father; I always remember him with gratitude." Georg asked that the others be freed; the wish was granted and the shooting cancelled.

After his liberation he entered the Biological College of Kharkov University. In January, 1919 he joined the Voluntary (White) Army of General Denikin, serving during the Russian Civil War in the crew of the armored train "Officer," and suffering a concussion of the brain. He was evacuated to Constantinople in the autumn of 1920. After some

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<sup>1</sup> To the last I am indebted for much of the information in this obituary; and to Peter Rubtsoff for translations from the Russian.

wandering in Turkey, General Kutepov helped him and others to reach Czechoslovakia in 1921. There he attended the College of Forestry of the University of Prague, graduating in 1927 with the degree of Forest Engineer. Between 1925 and 1927 he worked part time in the entomological museum of the Biology Department of Charles University.

In Prague Georg married Zinaida Uspensky, daughter of a doctor from Kharkov, and after his graduation they moved to Poland. He was employed by the Province of Wolhynia, organizing and directing an entomological station near Lutzk, and teaching biology in the high school of that town. During the German occupation of World War II he worked as an entomologist near Lodz. In 1945, with his wife and son, he traveled to the American Zone of Germany, where they were held in a displaced persons camp.

In the United States he came almost directly to San Francisco and for a time worked for the Entomology Department of The California Academy of Sciences, then for Robert Wind at Pacific Grove. Through the generosity of Dr. Ralph Hall he spent the summers of 1951-52 in northern California at the Hat Creek entomological station of the United States Forest Service. During part of 1953 he was employed by the Oregon State Board of Forestry at Salem.

Georg was observant, imaginative and, as he liked to say, a "fanatic" entomologist. In his work in Poland he used two of his own inventions with great success. He built a large trap with glass baffles, baited it with, among other things, fermenting exudate from trees attacked by cossids, and by rope and pulley set it high in the trees. His "Turgorator," for keeping cut branches fresh by the week, even in cages in full sunlight, was described and illustrated in an article in *The Lepidopterists' News*. Working independently he came to an understanding of diapause in Lepidoptera and found out how to break it in many species.

As a result of the above, he was able to obtain in numbers species thought to be very rare; to bring the larvae to maturity in a shorter time than in nature because of hydrostatic pressure maintained in the food by the Turgorator; and to rear several generations of otherwise univoltine species, including species which would mate in cages only if in sunshine. He did not keep a personal collection, but gave reared specimens away or traded them for equipment or ova of interesting species. He was an excellent preparator of Lepidoptera. He had ability as a photographer, and skill in making freehand drawings of insects.

Unfortunately Georg Pronin did not keep a record of his publications in European journals; he is said to have papers in Austrian and German serials. His large manuscript on diapause was sent to a publisher in

Germany about 1959, but was not issued because of a lack of finances.

Non-entomological published writings include a booklet of poetry, and his experiences in the armored train "Officer."

#### RECENT PAPERS BY G. PRONIN

1952. Suggestions for preventing outbreaks of bark beetles in California pine forests. *Pan-Pacific Ent.*, 28(4): 186–188.
1953. The apparent influence of isolation in some species of Geometridae. *Lepid. News*, 6(6–8): 93–94, 1 fig. (Final issue of vol. 6, 1952; published 19 February, 1953.)
1954. The Turgorator, a new device for rearing insects. *Lepid. News*, 8(5): 121–123, figs.
1955. Notes on the life history and methods of rearing the giant tiger swallowtail, *Papilio multicaudatus*. *Lepid. News*, 9(4–5): 137–140.
1964. (Posthumous) The mating time of Lepidoptera. *Jour. Lepid. Soc.*, 18(1): 35–41.

—HUGH B. LEECH, *California Academy of Sciences, San Francisco.*

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#### INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION ON ZOOLOGICAL NOMENCLATURE ANNOUNCEMENT A.(n.s.)76

Required six-months' public notice is given on the possible use of plenary powers by the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature in connection with the following names, listed by Case Number (see *Bull. zool. Nomencl.* 23, pt.5, 20 December 1966):

1761. Type-species for *Patanga* Uvarov, 1923; Neotypes for *Acridium assectator* Fischer von Waldheim, 1833, and *Gryllus succinctus* Linnaeus, 1763 (Insecta, Orthoptera).
1763. Type-species for *Proteinus* Latreille, 1796 (Insecta, Coleoptera).
1764. Suppression of *Musca lateralis* Linnaeus, 1758 (Insecta, Diptera).
1768. Type-species for *Thrix* Doherty, 1891 (Insecta, Lepidoptera)

Comments should be sent in duplicate, citing Case Number, to the Secretary, International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature, c/o British Museum (Natural History), Cromwell Road, London, S.W.7, England. Those received early enough will be published in the *Bulletin of Zoological Nomenclature*.—W. E. CHINA, *Assistant Secretary*.