In Memoriam

Dr. O. I. MAYSTRENKO

Olga Ivanovna Maystrenko, a wheat geneticist, a member of the Editorial Board of the journal "Cereal Research Communications" passed away on July 1, 1999 after a long illness.

She was born in Orsk on July 5, 1923 in a family of Ukrainian farmers, who moved to the Urals in the beginning of the XX century. She finished school in Samarkand (Uzbekistan) and was a 1947 graduate of the Timiryazev Agricultural Academy in breeding and seed multiplication. Upon graduation, she was appointed a spring and winter barley breeder at a breeding station in Kirgiziya. The records that date back to those years prove her reputation of an accurate and sensible researcher, qualities later to become essential for successful scientific work.

In 1950 she took a post-graduate course at the All-Union Institute of Plant Breeding, Leningrad, and in 1954 earned a philosophy degree for a winter barley breeding study in Kirgizia. At that time she began to work with wheat, first in Kirgiziya and later in

Sverdlovsk (Middle Urals), where she was appointed Head of Cereal Laboratory in the local affiliation of the All-Union Institute of Plant Breeding (1951-1960). Field tests of Russian and foreign wheats, based on her excellent knowledge of the morphology, physiology and pedigrees of many cultivars, were her responsibility.

After the foundation of the Siberian Division of the USSR Academy of Sciences in Novosibirsk in 1960, she joined the Institute of Cytology and Genetics. The early 1960s were by far not the best years for genetics in the USSR, but Novosibirsk had the advantage that it was a long way from Moscow and thus provided room and freedom for scientific thought. She learned about Dr. E. Sears and became the first Soviet scientist to develop cytogenetic collections of wheat. She continued to work on two cultivars at a time, contrasting in their traits, in Novosibirsk and Tashkent (Uzbekistan). Collections of monosomic, ditelosomic and monotelosomic lines had been created by the middle of the 1970s for the cultivars Diamant and Saratovskaya 29. In 1968, she joined the organisation of the European Wheat Aneuploid Union and worked successfully together with other scientists having novel common wheat genetic material.

Then it came to the development of sets of intervarietal and alien substitution lines of wheat, now more than 100. As the work was in progress, essential scientific results were obtained and presented in the monograph "Aneuploids of Common Wheat" (1973). The newly created genetic material was immediately subjected to studies of traits of economic value, such as productivity, drought and cold resistance, tolerance to mineral deficiency, grain quality and protein content. In the 1990s she directed research into the chromosomal localisation of 20 genes for morphological and physiological characters of common wheat.

For 30 years was she in charge of the Laboratory of Wheat Genetics of the Institute of Cytology and Genetics, SB RAS. She was known for her membership in various non-profit organisations, the Presidium of the Siberian Branch of the All-Union Society of Geneticists and Breeders, the Task Force of Genetics and Breeding at the USSR Academy of Sciences, the organising committees of many symposia and conferences. She is survived by many pupils in the FSU countries Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaydzhan.

She was a responsible, honest and open-minded colleague. It is our humane duty to preserve all her scientific heritage and continue wheat genetics research.

Tatyana Pshenichnikova