

This article was downloaded by:[Bochkarev, N.]  
On: 18 December 2007  
Access Details: [subscription number 788631019]  
Publisher: Taylor & Francis  
Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954  
Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



## Astronomical & Astrophysical Transactions

### The Journal of the Eurasian Astronomical Society

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:  
<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t713453505>

#### Yura-George's world line

I. L. Gamov<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Economic Adviser to Moldovan Parliament Speaker, Kishinev, Republic of Moldova

Online Publication Date: 01 June 1996

To cite this Article: Gamov, I. L. (1996) 'Yura-George's world line', *Astronomical & Astrophysical Transactions*, 10:1, 5 - 7

To link to this article: DOI: 10.1080/10556799608203239

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10556799608203239>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Full terms and conditions of use: <http://www.informaworld.com/terms-and-conditions-of-access.pdf>

This article maybe used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The accuracy of any instructions, formulae and drug doses should be independently verified with primary sources. The publisher shall not be liable for any loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

## YURA-GEORGE'S WORLD LINE

I. L. GAMOV

*Economic Adviser to Moldovan Parliament Speaker, Kishinev,  
Republic of Moldova*

*(Received December 20, 1994)*

It is quite interesting and flattering for an economist to publish a paper in such a prominent astronomical journal. And taking into account the fact that the author is a relative of the great cosmologist of the 20th century does not diminish but, vice versa, increases the piquancy of the appearance of this article. You may agree, dear readers, that it is fairly difficult to avoid a temptation of addressing you on behalf of numerous admirers of George Gamow's talent, as well as of supporters of the Gamow Foundation of Moldova. Frankly speaking, I cannot get rid of a feeling that George Gamow himself, through some genetic "channels" known to him alone, is pushing me to tell about him, for he was famous for all kinds of tricks.

His tricks and jokes, called "hohma's" in the Odessa slang, are still a legend today. But one of them, considered to be the best known, is that there would never be George Gamow as a scientist had he not been born in Odessa.

Odessa citizens are very special, unique people. They are fanatically devoted to their history and, naturally, could not help organizing, this past September, an international conference dedicated to the memory of George Gamow and to the 20th anniversary of their city.

Just at that very conference, an idea was born to shoot a film about the man whose genetic code, "multiplied" by his Odessa environment, led to the "Great Explosion". And one cannot help agreeing with the idea.

George Gamow was a descendant from two kinds, and a representative of one of them (father branch), a military officer, fought against freedom-loving Cossacks. In a battle, he killed (as the family legend goes) another ancestor of the mother branch, a priest, though it is hard to prove it now. However, one can state with a fair confidence that this is the ancient-most Gamow's hohma.

The boy was named George not by his father, Anton, but by my grandfather, Ivan Gamow, and thus, he was George's Godfather. When the White Army was retreating from Odessa, the Bolsheviks promised to save life to everyone who would refuse to emigrate. For the 18-year-old Yura (as young George used to be tenderly called in the family) it was a terrible shock to learn that his Godfather, who had believed in the bolshevist promise, received the notorious "nine grammes of lead",

a bullet, instead. And that "gift" was no hohma already, for it was given to some 10 thousand Russian officers, not to mention soldiers.

That episode was Gamow's first acquaintance with the "red regime", which grew stronger after the historic discovery by Bolsheviks that the world science was subdivided into two antagonistic directions: the bolshevist science, and the capitalist science. And, no doubt, the first one could be developed only by revolutionaries and their descendants, and the second one - by "noblemen and other exploiters". Alas, George Gamow was unlucky with his origin: his parents were the "wrong" people, for they belonged to the noble.

However, one should pay tribute to his Odessa optimism. A man of extraordinary ideas and decisions in science, he remained the same in life. His successes in science were so brilliant that the bolshevist regime could not keep him at home always, and had to give occasional permissions to break through the "iron curtain" and to take part in various symposia in the West. Once he had decided not to return home . . .

The name of George Gamow, who became a Corresponding Member of the Soviet Academy of Sciences at the age of 28, for long decades was not just declared an anathema on. It was in the oblivion. His excellent books were published in dozens of languages, except Russian. Only relatives and very close friends dared to whisper his name. His father, Anton Gamow, a very ill and poor man, could not bear the atmosphere of official hatred around his son, and committed a suicide. Soon after his death, several items of jewelry of extraordinary value were found. Only closest relatives knew that the precious things were bequeathed to George by his mother. The father always dreamed to fulfil her will. He refused to renounce his son, as was urged by the authorities. And he failed to give the heritage to him. He was late to . . .

Gamow's "betrayal of the Motherland" brought sufferings upon his friends, the physicists he worked with. The future Nobel Prize winner, Leo Landau, spent several years in prison in Moscow. Dmitry Ivanov, a talented scientist, was exiled to Siberia. "Abbatik" Bronstein was simply shot.

However, in spite of a tough censorship, Gamow's name was always alive in Russia. It was mentioned at scientific seminars and in private conversations. The bravest scientists dared and managed to have correspondence with him, and even to meet him in the U. S. A.

I cannot help telling you about a funny episode that happened with me during an entrance examination to the university. I have always had strained relations with chemistry. However, Professor Klimenko, at hearing my name, asked me cautiously what I knew about the works of George Gamow. My position became much easier after I told everything I knew about the life of the great scientist. My respect to the professor grew by far after he had given an excellent mark to me, which opened a way for me to the university and, later on, to science. May I request the esteemed journal and its readers to pay tribute to Professor Klimenko for his personal courage.

Fortunately, we are having quite different times now. Gamow's name is deservedly returning to us, Russians. At last, his books "Mister Thornkins in a Won-

der Land" and autobiographical "My World Line" have been published in Russian. The young generation of students are studying astronomy, physics, genetics using the ideas of their talented compatriot. Gamow's 90th birthday was recently marked by opening a memorial board on the main building of the Odessa State University. His world line is becoming a guide for many young people who decided to devote themselves to science. This line has no capitalist or communist directions, or state borders. It is free in the Universe, as was always free George Gamow of Odessa, who left his ideas to the mankind.

I am grateful to his friends and admirers for the good memory of him.

I am grateful to the readers for their attention to this article.

As for Odessa, it has one more reason to be grateful to the world: now the city has not only the beautiful Black Sea, but also the Gamow Sea – on the reverse side of the Moon. The latter sea faces the mysterious depths of the Universe that will always produce the world lines of Men.