

Archival research reveals the true date of birth of the father of locust phase theory, Sir Boris Uvarov, FRS

Подлинная дата рождения Бориса Уварова, автора теории фаз саранчи, установленная по архивным источникам

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Abstract. Previously published biographical accounts of Sir Boris Uvarov, FRS (1886 [sic]–1970) were based mostly on personal recollections by his friends and colleagues recorded for the first time in the 1970s or later. Archival research reveals the true date of his birth and allows some other key facts and dates on his early biography to be corrected.

Резюме. Ранее публиковавшиеся биографические очерки о создателе теории фаз саранчи сэре Борисе Уварове, рыцаре-командоре ордена св. Михаила и св. Георгия и члене Лондонского королевского общества (1886 [sic]–1970) были основаны главным образом на личных воспоминаниях его друзей и коллег, записанных в 1970 году или позднее. Архивные исследования обнаруживают подлинную дату его рождения и позволяют уточнить некоторые другие важные факты и даты его ранней биографии.

In an age of universal civil registration, it is highly unlikely for a person to be uncertain about his or her date of birth. This was, however, not the case with Sir Boris Uvarov, K.C.M.G., F.R.S¹, a President of the Royal Entomological Society (1959–1961) and an author of locust phases theory, which provided a rational basis for locust control. The «in memoriam» notice by Dr. P.T. Haskell and his colleagues published shortly after Sir Boris's death by the Anti-Locust Research Centre gave 1888 [Anti-Locust Research Centre, 1970]². Sir Vincent B. Wigglesworth corrected it to 1889 adding in a foot note: «In the passport issued to Uvarov by the Government of the Republic of Georgia, when he was leaving that country for Great Britain in 1920, the date of birth

was given as 5 November 1888. To have tried to correct this error would have caused delay in his departure and might even have prevented it. He was therefore obliged to use this date in all official papers; but he took steps to ensure that the true date of birth might be recorded by the Royal Society» [Wigglesworth, 1971, p.713].

November 5, 1889 was used thereafter in biographical accounts of Sir Boris Uvarov by authors who were aware of Sir Vincent Wigglesworth's memoir [Waloff, Popov, 1990] and until very recently nobody openly questioned it as the true date of his birth. However, in a brief discussion that followed the publication of a letter from Sir Boris Uvarov to his colleague Andrey Semenov-Tian-Shanski (1866–1942) [Kouprianov, Fedotova, 2015], Sergei I. Fokin, a protistologist and historian of zoology, mentioned that he has seen a still different date, 1886, in papers from the St. Petersburg University Archive.

The November 5, 1889, indeed, posed certain problems in the interpretation of some events of Sir Boris Uvarov's biography. It was reported that, before attending St. Petersburg University, Boris Uvarov graduated from a secondary school in 1902 and spent 1904–1906 at the Higher Mining School in Ekaterinoslav (now Dnipro, Ukraine), which gives his age as 13 at graduation from secondary school and 15 at entry to the Mining School, but, both these ages are far too young. The Higher Mining School in Ekaterinoslav (now the National Mining University of Ukraine) was a technical university, analogous to the École Nationale Supérieure

¹ K.C.M.G. stands for «Knight Commander of The Most Distinguished Order of Saint Michael and Saint George», F.R.S. — for «Fellow of the Royal Society».

² Some other authors (some of them relying on this publication as the main source for their biographical accounts of Sir Boris Uvarov) also used 1888 as his date of birth, see, e.g.: Bey-Biyenko, 1970; Kryzhanovskii, 2001; Capinera, 2004.

des Mines de Paris and German Fachhochschulen, aimed at the preparation of engineers for the mining industry. According to the Mining School reports, its students never were younger than 17 (and even 17 year olds were few) [Rubin, 1909, tabl. IX at p. 108].

Given these discrepancies, we decided to settle the question of Sir Boris Uvarov's date of birth using publicly available archival sources. The documents discovered in the Russian State Historical Archive (St. Petersburg)³ reveal the true date: October 22 (November 3), 1886⁴. This date is consistently used in an excerpt from the birth registry book (which is, probably, the best source imaginable), in his university diploma (photocopies of both documents and transcripts of them translated into English are given below), and in other documents.

The newly discovered date of birth straightens up the early stages of Sir Boris's biography. Taking 1886 as a basis of our calculations, we obtain the age 15 for his secondary school graduation and 17 for his entry into the Higher Mining School, which looks more realistic. Another detail to note is that his true birthday fell on November 3, not November 5 according to the Gregorian calendar. November 5 does not correspond to his date of baptism either.

This discovery, however, brings in its train another series of questions: What is the source of the mistake? Did Sir Boris Uvarov deliberately conceal the true date of his birth by changing it to 1889, when he had chance to correct the wrong date given in his passport? Leaving the answers to these questions to the future biographers, we may only add, that, even though this outcome was not intended when we began our archival research, the newly revealed documents make 2016 the year of 130 anniversary of Sir Boris Uvarov's birth catching off guard anyone who would be willing to celebrate it in 2019⁵.

After these encouraging findings, we decided to cross-check some other dates and facts. As most details of Boris Uvarov's early biography were known only from personal recollections recorded in the 1970s or even later, we decided to bring in some independent confirmation from archival evidence. The summary of our findings is given below.

Sir Boris's father, Petr Petrovich Uvarov, was born in 1848 or 1849 (in his formalised CV of 1903, his age is stated 54) [Petr Uvarov's Formalised CV of 1903], studied in Ufa Orthodox Seminary (but never completed the course), and served later at a post office and, from 1876, at a State bank in Ural'sk (now Oral, Kazakhstan). Of his mother, Alexandre Vikulovna (or Vukolovna) Tret'iakova, little is known beyond her name⁶. Biographers state that parents encouraged Boris Uvarov's interest in natural history.

Boris Uvarov was the youngest of three brothers⁷. The eldest brother, Nikolai (December 6, 1874–1920) served as a candidate at the District Court of Ural'sk (1900–1901), then, a justice of the peace at Temir (1902–1903), at stanitsa Kalmykovskaia (now Taipaq, Kazakhstan, 1904–1906), and, finally, at Lbischensk (now Chapaev, Kazakhstan, 1907–1910). From 1912 on, he was a barrister of the Saratov judicial chamber in Ural'sk. [Pamiatnaia knizhka... 1900–1915]. After the Revolutions of 1917 he worked at a court martial. On June 2, 1920, he was arrested by Cheka and, on December 27, 1920, sentenced to death and executed (acquitted and rehabilitated posthumously on December 20, 1999) [Memorial database...]. Nikolai's daughter, Olga Uvarova (1910–2001) was brought to United Kingdom by Boris Uvarov and his wife Anna in 1923 after a year and a half of negotiations with the aid of the Red Cross and Boris Uvarov's colleague, V.F. Boldyrev⁸. Of the second brother, Anatolii Uvarov (November 14, 1881–?) little is known beyond his name and date of birth.

Boris Uvarov received his secondary education at Real School of the Ural'sk Cossack Host (graduated in 1903, after an additional, seventh, year of study, which gave the right to enter the higher technical schools, see fig. 1). He performed well in natural history (5 out of 5), was good in German and French (4), and behaved well [Real School of the Ural'sk Cossack Host attestate...].

Regarding Boris Uvarov's studies in the Higher Mining School in Ekaterinoslav no archival evidence has been discovered so far, and there is little hope for future findings, as the papers of the School were not preserved (according to the regional archive registry). It is reasonable to suppose that he entered the School in the fall of 1903 or 1904. The time was hardly suitable for

³ Russian State Historical Archive (Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Istoricheskii Arkhiv, RGIA hereafter). All further references to documents from the archive are given here in compliance with established academic practice: the name of the archive is followed by collection (fond or f.), inventory (opis' or op.), file (delo or d.), and folio (list or l., ll. in plural form).

⁴ In Russia, the Gregorian Calendar was adopted from February 14, 1918 on. The difference for the 19th century comprises 12 days.

⁵ It should be noted that, towards the end of his life, Sir Boris Uvarov consistently stated that he had been born in 1889. In May of 1969, he wrote to Alexander Liubischev: «this fall I will turn 80 (!), and I can't believe this» (quoted in: Gurkin, 2001, p. 71 in Russian, translation of the quoted text is ours).

⁶ An excerpt from the Registry book published below (see fig. 3 and a translated transcript for an Archival reference) renders her patronymic as Vukolova, while the above-mentioned Petr Petrovich Uvarov's formalised CV of 1903, as Vikulovna.

⁷ Dates of birth of the three brothers as well as the details of Petr Uvarov's biography are based on Petr Uvarov's Formalised CV of 1903.

⁸ See «Letter from Boris Uvarov to Andrey Semenov Tian-Shanski of September 25, 1923». More details on the biography of Olga Uvarov, D.B.E., F.R.C.V.S., can be found in her obituary [Dame Olga Uvarov, 2001].

systematic study. In February 1904, a students-organised protest caused a month long break in classes. On January 20, 1905, student riots accompanying the First Russian Revolution caused a much longer break, which lasted for more than a year. Even though the entrance exams in the School were held in 1905, classes were resumed only in the fall of 1906 [Rubin, 1909, p.78–79].

No later than in the summer of 1906, however, Boris Uvarov had moved to St. Petersburg and, from August of 1906, became a «volnoslushatel'» (external student) at St. Petersburg University. On May 5, 1907, he had passed exams in Latin and, shortly afterwards, applied for the status of student (fig. 2)⁹. While at the University, he attended lectures in physics by I.I. Borgman, chemistry by A.A. Yakovkin, botany by Chr. Ya. Gobi, plant anatomy and plant physiology by V.I. Palladin, introductory biology, vertebrate and invertebrate zoology by V.M. Szymkiewicz, cytology and histology by V.A. Dogiel, human anatomy by N.M. Maliev, organic chemistry by A.E. Favorskii, analytic chemistry by V.E. Tishchenko, entomology and zoogeography by N.M. Rimskii-Korsakov, animal physiology by N.E. Vvedenskii, comparative anatomy of invertebrates and comparative embryology of invertebrates by W.T. Scheviakoff, meteorology and physical geography by A.I. Woeikow [Transcript of Boris Uvarov, a student...]. He specialised in entomology, especially in Orthoptera in a broad sense.

Shortly before graduation, on August 20, 1909, Boris Uvarov applied for a permission to marry Anna Fedorovna Fedorova (Prodaniuk) (students were allowed to marry only with rector's permission), which permission was obtained on August 24, 1909 [Application of Boris Uvarov for a permission...]¹⁰. In 1910, their son, Evgenii (Eugene) was born (d. 1993).

There is some evidence that Boris Uvarov was regarded by his fellow students and his elder colleagues as a serious researcher with academic prospects, however, due to financial problems, he had to choose service in the growing field of applied entomology. He was in such a haste that he had departed from St. Petersburg before his graduation papers were ready¹¹. At the end of May 1910 (supposedly, on May 29, for he complained that there were no available tickets for earlier dates, as everyone was moving to the resorts and estates in the Caucasus), he moved to the Murgab Imperial Estate, a model cotton farm in Bayramaly (now in Turkmenistan), which belonged to the Ministry of the



Fig. 1. Boris Uvarov in 1903, the year he graduated from the Real School (picture taken on June or July 10, date damaged). Archival reference: «Photo of a [former] student of 7th year, Boris Uvarov» (TsGIA, F.14, Op.3, D.50126, L.4).

Рис. 1: «Бывший» ученик 7 класса Борис Уваров». Надпись на обороте частично испорчена, фото сделано 10 июня или 10 июля 1903 г. (ЦГИА. Ф.14. Д.50126. Л.4).

Imperial Court [Letter from Boris Uvarov to Konstantin Demokidov of May 23, 1910].

Hiring Boris Uvarov was a part of a broader scheme for the organisation of Entomological station, which had been envisaged by Imperial family estates entomologist Konstantin Demokidov since 1906. Boris Uvarov's

⁹ During the period under study the right to enter the universities was granted only to those who graduated from «Classical» Gymnasia, where Latin and Ancient Greek were studied. Graduates of «Real» schools, which offered more hours in modern languages, Natural History, and Technology at the expense of classics, were allowed to enter the universities only after passing additional exams in Latin [Examination certificate of May 5, 1907...; Application of Boris Uvarov, an external student...].

¹⁰ Ibid., Ll. 32–33. Biographers render Anna's lastname as Prodaniuk, while the archival documents, Fedorova. The reasons for this discrepancy are unknown. In his application to the rector, Boris Uvarov indicated her as maiden Anna Fiodorovna Fiodorova. No more documents, except for few letters from Anna Uvarova to Boris Uvarov's colleagues and friends, have been discovered so far.

¹¹ In his letter of May 10, 1909, he stated that «all accounts with the University are settled» and he was free to move, while his diploma (see below, fig. 4) is dated October 8, 1910 [Letter from Boris Uvarov to Konstantin Demokidov of May 10, 1910].



Fig. 2. Boris Uvarov's University Transcript title page. Handwritten remarks reveal his immatriculation as an external student in 1906 and change of his status to that of a student in 1907. Archival reference: TsGIA, F.14, Op.3, D.50126. Ll.16 back side — 17.

Рис. 2. Титульная страница «Записи студента имп. Санкт-Петербургского университета физико-математического факультета естественного отделения по 6-й группе (биология) Бориса Уварова» (аналог зачетной книжки). Рукописные исправления показывают, что Уваров первоначально поступил в университет вольнослушателем, а весной 1907 г. стал действительным студентом (ЦГИА. Ф.14. Д.50126. Лл.16об — 17).

duties at the farm included disinsection of storehouses and studying local pests (locusts were not the top priority, and his observations concerned mostly *Aphis gossypii*, *Caradrina exigua*, and *Heliothis armigera*, to use contemporary insect names)¹². Privately, he continued to study Orthoptera summarising works of his student years in a paper published in the Proceedings of the Russian Entomological Society [Uvarov, 1910]¹³ and working on the materials from the collection of the Zoological Museum of the Academy of Sciences [Uvarov, 1911b]. In his letters to his superior, Konstantin Demokidov, Boris Uvarov complained about the atmosphere at the farm (which, as compared to contem-

porary academe, was a far less egalitarian institution with strict subordination and due respect to ranking), tensions with its director, and his miserable salary. Financial issues and stable career prospects were perhaps most pressing for a young man already burdened with his own family. While seeking better employment, Boris Uvarov still pondered the possibility of staying at the farm if his salary was risen and if he was offered a stable position in the state service [Letter from Boris Uvarov to Konstantin Demokidov of October 31, 1910]. He actively sought a more suitable position connected with the applied entomology, to which Boris Uvarov now felt a sort of personal attachment (it seems that he

¹² See, e.g. his polemics with his predecessor at the Murgab entomological station in Bayramaly, N. Simonov, on pests in cotton [Uvarov, 1911a]. Boris Uvarov specifically stated that *Acridium aegyptium* listed by Simonov among the pests in cotton was no real threat.

¹³ It should be noted that Orthoptera were understood in a broad sense, including Mantodea and Phasmatodea, as well as the present-day Orthoptera s.str. Two other «orthopteran» groups (Forficulodea and Blattodea) were ceded to Andrey Semenov-Tian-Shanski and Nikolai Adelung (1857–1917) respectively.



Fig. 3. Excerpt from the registry book. Archival reference: RGIA, F.398, Op.71, D.26020, L.2.
 Рис. 3. Выписка из метрической книги (РГИА. Ф.398. Оп.71. Д.26020. Л.2).

liked studying insects' life histories both in the field and in the lab) [Letter from Boris Uvarov to Andrey Semenov-Tian-Shanski of November 23, 1910, L. 5]. In his letters, he mentioned his plans to become a staff entomologist in Astrakhan (supposedly, at the Entomological station of the Astrakhan society for horticulture and agriculture) [Ibid. Ll. 5–6], but, eventually, in 1911 (his first letters from Stavropol' were dated April 1911), he settled in Stavropol' province as an «acting specialist in Applied Entomology» under the auspices of the Department of Agriculture.

This position gave him his first formal rank in the civil service, that of Collegiate secretary (with the term of service counting from March 1, 1911), a salary of 1500 Rubles per year (which was comparable to a salary of Privatdozent¹⁴ at a metropolitan university and seemed reasonable in the provincial Stavropol'), a state owned apartment leased to him for free, and a prospect

to receive pension upon retirement [On Boris Uvarov's enlistment in the service, 1911, ll. 1, 7, 8]. While in Bayramaly, Boris Uvarov experienced tensions with his superiors, in Stavropol', he managed to reach some understanding with the local Gouvernor, Bronislav Yanushevich. An invasion of migratory locust devastating Stavropol' province created an appropriate background for co-operation. Bronislav Yanushevich was an ardent supporter of rational agriculture and chemical insecticides. With his support, Boris Uvarov organised an Entomological station, supervised the work of mobile anti-locust squads [Uvarov, 1913], and began his systematic research on locusts, which, a decade later, resulted in his phase theory.

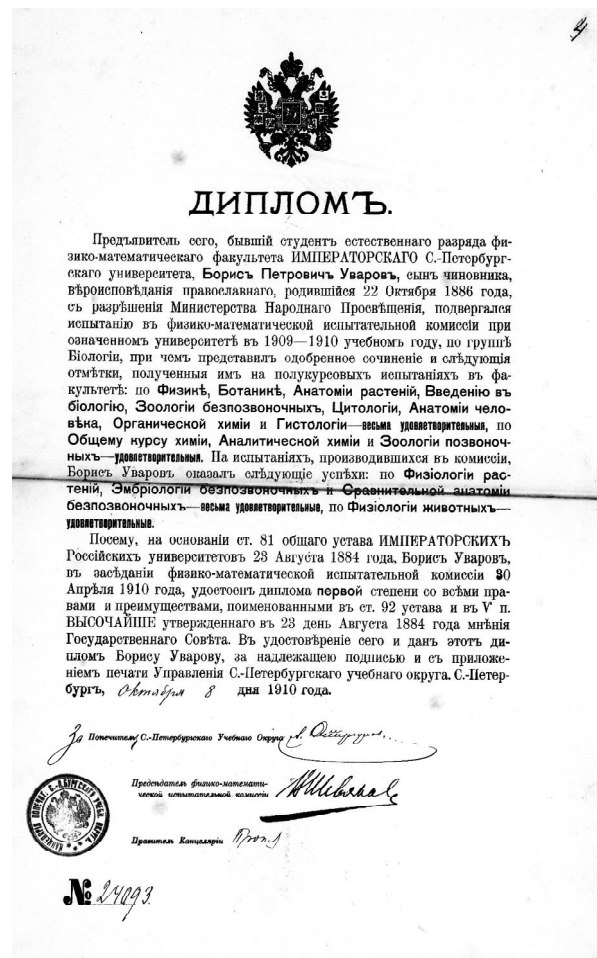


Fig. 4. Diploma of the St. Petersburg University. Archival reference: RGIA, F.398, Op.71, D.26020, L.4.
 Рис. 4. Диплом Санкт-Петербургского университета (РГИА. Ф.398. Оп.71. Д.26020. Л.4)

¹⁴ Privatdozenten were allowed to teach at the Universities and received moderate salaries supplied from the tuition fees but were not represented in the University Council.

Conclusions

A closer look at the primary sources allows us to correct the established version of Sir Boris's early career. Besides the entirely new date of birth October 22/November 3, 1886 instead of November 5, 1889), many key dates and facts need correction. He graduated from the Real School not in 1902, but in 1903, he moved to Stavropol' not in 1912 (this is the year Stavropol' entomological bureau was created), but early in 1911¹⁵. He entered St. Petersburg University first as an external student, and became (formally) a student only in the spring of 1907. He married not in 1910, but in 1909. Finally, he had not been a practical expert in locust control by the time he moved to Stavropol',¹⁶ because he had had no chance to experience a migratory locust invasion before, and his move was caused not so much by the (supposedly governmental) desire to put an experienced anti-locust fighter to service as by the discomfort and the uncertainty Boris Uvarov suffered in the Murgab station.

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Document transcripts

Excerpt from Registry book

Archival reference: RGIA, F. 398 (Department of Agriculture), Op. 71, D. 26020, L. 2; (fig. 3).

Both in excerpt from the Registry book and in the Diploma, the handwritten or printed additions to the standard printed form are *italicized*.

Certificate

According to His Imperial Majesty's decree, as a consequence of a request by *Court Counsellor Petr Petrovich Uvarov* and in fulfillment of a ruling by the Spiritual Consistory of Orenburg, the present certificate is given, that, in the civil registry book of *the Ural'sk Alexander Nevskii Orthodox Church* kept in the archive of the Consistory, within the year 1886, in its first part «on the births», in the chapter No. 203 of the male sex, by *Titular Counsellor Petr Petrov Uvarov and his lawful wife Alexandra Vukolova, both Orthodox, their son Boris* is registered born on the *twenty second (22) day of October, eighteen hundred eighty six (1886)*, and baptised on the *second (2) day of November of the same year*.

The City of Orenburg. *October 11, 1895.*
[Seal of the Spiritual Consistory of Orenburg]
 Consistory member: *[unreadable]*
 Secretary: *[unreadable]*
 Acting Archivist: *Chertykovtsev*

University Diploma

Archival reference: RGIA, F. 398 (Department of Agriculture), Op. 71, D. 26020, L. 4; (fig. 4).

Diploma

The bearer of this, a former student of natural sciences order of the Physics and Mathematics Faculty of the Imperial St. Petersburg University, *Boris Petrovich Uvarov*, a son of a state official, Orthodox, born on October 22, 1886, with the permission of the Ministry of Education, was subjected to a test in the Physics and Mathematics Examination Committee at the said university in the academic year 1909–1910, in the Biology group, and submitted an approved essay and the following grades, acquired at the examinations at the Faculty: *Physics, Botany, Plant Anatomy, Introduction into Biology, Invertebrate Zoology, Cytology, Human Anatomy, Organic Chemistry, and Histology: highly satisfactory; General Chemistry, Analytic Chemistry, Vertebrate Zoology: satisfactory.* During the tests, carried out by the Committee, Boris Uvarov has shown the following results: *Plant Physiology, Embriology of Invertebrates, and Comparative anatomy of Invertebrates: highly satisfactory; Animal Physiology: satisfactory.*

Therefore, according to the Art. 81 of the General Statute of the Imperial Russian Universities of August 23, 1884, Boris Uvarov, in a session of the Physics and Mathematics Examination Committee of April 30, 1910 was awarded a *first degree Diploma* with all rights and privileges listed in the Art. 92 of the Statute and in the Paragraph V of the Opinion of the State Council Highly Approved on August 23, 1884. To certify this, the present Diploma is given with due signatures and an apposition of the seal of the St. Petersburg School District Board. St. Petersburg, *the 8th day of October, 1910.*

[Seal of the Office of the Curator of the St. Petersburg School District]

[Standing for] the Curator of the St. Petersburg School District:

A. Ostroumov

President of the Physics and Mathematics Examination Committee:

W. Schewiakoff

Office manager: *[unreadable]*

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¹⁵ These three shifted dates were given by both Wigglesworth (1971) and Waloff, Popov (1990).

¹⁶ This suggestion was made by S.I. Fokin: «Shortly after that [work at Murgab station — A.F. and A.K.] Uvarov, as an expert (*spetsialist*) in locust control, was transferred to Stavropol, where he organised Stavropol Entomological Bureau (1912)» [Fokin, 2005, p. 245; in Russian, translation of the quoted text is ours].

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