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The Independent Student Newspaper of Royal Holloway, University of London

Volume 9, Issue 2

October 2014

Alexey Yakovlevich Chervonenkis 7 September 1938 - 22 September 2014

BY FLORENTYNA DALLOZ
NEWS EDITOR

In the 23rd of September Royal Holloway Emeritus Professor and renowned mathematician Alexey Chervonenkis was found dead in Moscow's Losiny Ostrov national park.

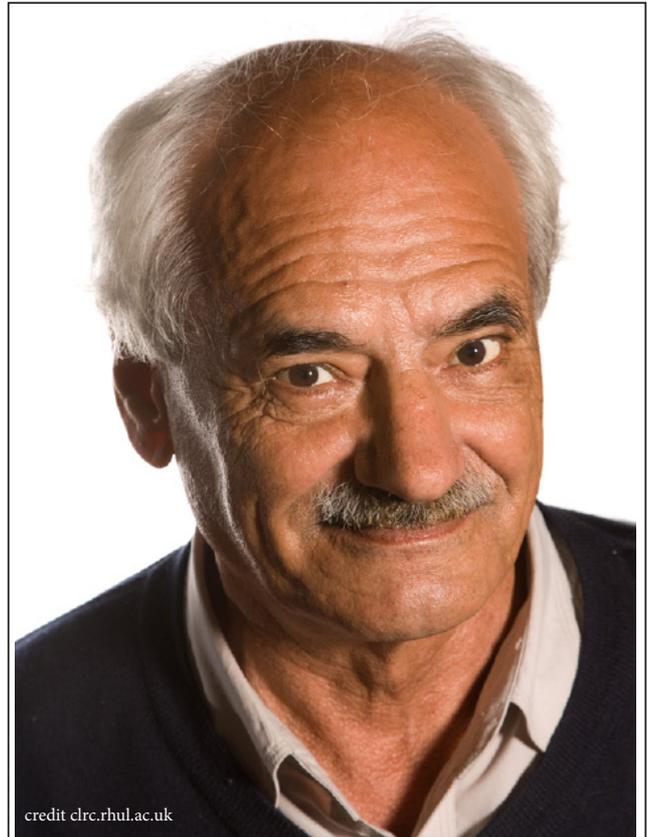
He lost his way whilst walking on the 21st of September and died of hypothermia before a search party could reach him. Dr Chervonenkis, of the Computer Science department, was a leading expert and established authority in his field who divided his time between the Research Institute of Control Problems at the Russian Academy of Science in Moscow, and the Computer Learning Research Centre at Royal Holloway. Throughout his career he was awarded numerous prizes for his research and made outstanding contributions to both the areas of pattern recognition and computational learning.

As an avid walker 76-year-old Chervonenkis would often cover 15-20km a day and was thought to have known how to navigate in Losiny Ostrov national park. The park, which literally means "Moose Island", covers 116,000-sq-km and is predominately made up of forest and swampland. At around 8.20pm on Sunday 21st of September Chervonenkis telephoned his wife to explain that he had got lost in a swamp and was attempting to make his way out but that he was already tired. Around midnight a second phone call was made to his wife to tell her that he was now very tired and his body was shaking. Shortly after this call his phone was turned off. A search party was organized immediately despite Chervonenkis insisting to his wife that they would be unable

to find him. The search party comprised of 182 volunteers made up of colleagues, students and friends as well as the authorities. An American Professor who had come to Moscow to meet Chervonenkis chose to join the party. After an extensive search the party were unable to locate Chervonenkis on foot and it was not until Tuesday 23rd of September that his body was spotted by helicopter. On the night of his disappearance the temperature in the park dropped to below freezing which caused Chervonenkis's hypothermia. In 2013 it was reported that 149 people had lost their way whilst walking in the forest of Moscow. Of this number 13 were later found dead and 20 still remain missing.

Following the announcement of his death Royal Holloway's Computer Learning Research Centre paid tribute to Alexey Chervonenkis as both a colleague and friend. "Alexey was a leading figure in machine learning, a field of computer science studying ways in which computers can learn new skills, and is widely regarded as a founding father of the field. He and his colleague Vladimir Vapnik started their work on pattern recognition in the early 1960s in Moscow creating the first general theory of machine learning, which to this day remains the dominant paradigm. This theory is sometimes referred to as VC theory after the names of its creators (according to the Cyrillic alphabetic order)."

They further took the opportunity to pay homage on their website to "a great teacher and friend" who will be deeply missed.



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