

## Obituary

### Boris Semeonoff 1910-1998

**B**ORIS Semeonoff was born in St Petersburg. His mother happened to take him on holiday to Scotland in 1914 and, when war was declared, she decided to stay on and was able to make a living teaching Russian. Her textbook has been much used by students over the years. Boris was sent to George Watson's School and then went on to Edinburgh University where he studied English language and literature.

He first joined the teaching staff of Edinburgh's Department of Psychology in 1933 under its then chairman, James Drever *primus*. His career was interrupted after war broke out when he went to work for the War Office Selection Board, whose especial concern was to select women to infiltrate occupied Europe. After the war, Boris returned to Edinburgh, where the department was by now run by James Drever *secundus*, who had served in the navy.

Boris became well known in The British Psychological Society. He and his wife, Catherine, were to be seen at every annual conference. He was President for the year 1968/69, and in July 1969 gave his Presidential Address 'Changing horizons: An essay in autobiography' (*Bulletin of the The British Psychological Society*, July 1969).

He was for some years Editor of the *British Journal of Psychology* and also served as President of the Psychology



Section of the British Association for the Advancement of Science. His most notable publications were *Diagnostic Performance Tests* (1958), *Personality Assessment: Selected Readings* (1966/1970) and *Projective Techniques* (1976). He also contributed the article on projective techniques in Richard Gregory's *The Oxford Companion to The Mind*. But it is as a teacher, rather than as an author, that he will best be remembered by generations of students who graduated in psychology at the University of Edinburgh.

I came to know Boris well only after I joined the department at Edinburgh in 1963. Later he moved to the same street where Halla Beloff and I live, so we became neighbours as well as colleagues.

Besides being eminent in psychology,

Boris was widely known in musical circles as an opera-lover who had a unique collection of gramophone records. Indeed, in 1951, he published his *Record Collecting: A Guide for Beginners*.

Like everyone who knew Boris, I was fond of him — there was that gentleness and affability in his character that could not help but endear one to him.

He is survived by his wife and their two sons and two daughters. His elder daughter, Irina, graduated in psychology from the University of Aberdeen. Had Boris lived just a year longer, he and Catherine would have celebrated their diamond wedding.

*Dr John Beloff was formerly with the Department of Psychology at the University of Edinburgh.*