

The scientific biography of Professor V.N. Klimenko (1868–1941) – bacteriologist, infectious disease and internal medicine specialist

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Abstract

This paper examines key points in the life story and work of V.N. Klimenko. It establishes that his mentor at the clinic of internal medicine was Yu.T. Chudnovsky – a member of the S.P. Botkin school of internal medicine. It describes how V.N. Klimenko established himself as a bacteriologist while working under V.V. Podvysotsky. The scientific legacy of V.N. Klimenko consists of two basic layers – bacteriology and infectiology. As a doctor and scientist, V.N. Klimenko established himself in Russia but trained abroad (Zurich, Paris, Bern). Upon his return, he worked at one of the country's most respected medical research institutions – the Institute of Experimental Medicine – from 1905. From 1908, he also taught at the Imperial Military Medical Academy as a bacteriology privatdozent. From 1919 to 1921, he headed two departments – medical bacteriology and infectious diseases – at Samara University. Following the ascendance of the Bolsheviks, Professor V.N. Klimenko, a seasoned academic, moved to Latvia, where a new centre of higher education – the University of Latvia – had been established in Riga. At the university's medical faculty, he set up and headed one of the departments of internal medicine, as well as the Department of Medical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases. V.N. Klimenko founded one of Latvia's medical schools. The paper concludes that V.N. Klimenko contributed significantly to the development of Russian and Latvian medicine.

Keywords

scientific biography, N. V. Klimenko, clinic of internal diseases, infectious diseases, medical school, bacteriology

The government of the Republic of Latvia opened the University of Latvia in 1919.¹ The new sovereign country on Europe's political map needed a centre of higher education but faced a lack of highly-skilled teaching personnel. The country had Russian academics who had been success-

fully working there between the two world wars. The most qualified among them worked at the University of Latvia. According to T.D. Feygmane, during this period, between 11 and 21 Russian teachers worked at the university across all its faculties in different years (Feygmane 2000, p. 308–337). Among them were medical professionals: professor and paediatrician E.E. Gartier (1872–1959), professor and anatomist A.V. Star-

¹ Officially the Higher School of Latvia before 1923.

kov (1874–1927) (Vasiljevs 1999), privatdozent, surgeon V.K. Trofimov (1872–1944) (Vasiljevs and Viksna 2007), prosector at the Department of Physiology, Doctor of Medicine at the University of Latvia S.A. Komarov (1892–1964).² On 24 August 1920, Petrograd-based Professor G.Yu. Yaveyn (1863–1920) was assigned to one of the departments of internal medicine of the University of Latvia. However, he never made it to Riga as he died in the same year.³ Vasily Nikolaevich Klimenko was also a professor at the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Latvia.

Information about Professor V.N. Klimenko's life was published in commemorative publications of the University of Latvia.⁴ During the Soviet era in Latvia, his biography was included in an encyclopaedic collection of biographies of prominent Latvian doctors,⁵ and the first – albeit brief – article about him was published (Vasylijev and Efremenko 1964).

In post-Soviet Latvia, V.N. Klimenko was profiled in the commemorative book of the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Latvia (Viksna 2011, p. 395). An essay about his life also featured in a book about the Pokrov cemetery in Riga (Vidyakina 2004). His biography also appeared in the Moscow reference “Russian Scientific Abroad” (Sorokina 2010, p. 112–113) and the Encyclopaedia of Ukraine.⁶ Also, information about V.N. Klimenko is contained in the reference book of autobiographies and bio-bibliographic documents from the S.A. Vengerov⁷

collection and in the book “Unforgotten Graves: Russian Abroad”.⁸

These publications contain valuable biographical material. However, the vast majority of them are compilations and profiles and not research. Furthermore, not all published and archival sources (including his student file kept in the Russian State Military Historical Archives, which, among other documents, also contains his father's record of service⁹) were employed when writing V.N. Klimenko's biographies, leading to omissions and misstatements.

Therefore, despite the fairly large number of various articles in reference books published in Latvia, Russia and Ukraine, no work fully investigates the life and work of the academic and doctor, V.N. Klimenko. This article seeks to fill that gap.

Vasily Nikolaevich Klimenko was born in Odessa on 4 (16) April 1868. This date under the Julian calendar is stated on his birth certificate kept in his student file. His passport issued in Latvia (in 1927) has a different date – 17 April 1868.¹⁰ This discrepancy is due to the difference between the Julian and Gregorian calendars. In the 19th century, that difference was 12 days and not 13 days as in the 20th century. This led to an error in the Latvian passport when switching from the Julian calendar to the Gregorian calendar.

His father, Nikolai Vasilyevich Klimenko (? – 1899), who was from nobility, was a railway engineer and held the rank of captain (engineer captain) at the time of his son's birth. He studied at the Nikolaev Engineering School and the Nikolaev Academy of the General Staff. His mother, Alexandra Sergeevna Klimenko (née Maruchina), was the lady-in-waiting of Empress Maria Alexandrovna, the wife of Emperor Alexander II.

The Klimenko family had seven children: Alexander (1866), Vasily (1868), Maria (1869), Elizaveta (1870), Evdokia (1871), Mikhail (1872), Alexandra (1873). There may have been more, however. At that time, mortality was relatively

² K.K. Vasylijev. Komarov Semen Andreevich. In *Encyclopedia of Modern Ukraine*. Vol. 14. Kyiv, 2014. P. 166. (In Ukr.)

³ Vasylijev K.K. From the history of organization of higher medical school in Latvia: professor Georgy Yu. Yaveyn (1863–1920). In *Abstracts and programme of the 23rd International Baltic Conference on the History of Science*. Riga, 9–10 October, 2008. Riga, 2008. P. 64.

⁴ *Latvijas Universitāte: 1919–1929*. Rīgā, 1929. Lpp. 463–464. See also: *Latvijas Universitāte divdesmit gados: 1919–1939*. Rīgā, 1939. Lpp. 416. (In Latv.)

⁵ *Populārā medicīnas enciklopēdija*. Rīgā, 1985. Lpp. 591. (In Latv.)

⁶ Vasylijev K.K. Klimenko Vasil Mykolayovych. In *Encyclopedia of Modern Ukraine*. Vol. 13. Kyiv, 2013. P. 297. (In Ukr.)

⁷ *Russian intelligentsia: Autobiographies and bio-bibliographic documents from the S.A. Vengerov Collection*. Annotated Reference. Vol. 1. Saint Petersburg, 2001. P. 498. (In Russ.)

⁸ *Unforgotten Graves: Russian Abroad: Necrology 1917–1997*. Vol. 3. Moscow, 2001. P. 306. (In Russ.)

⁹ Russian State Military Historical Archives. F. 316. Op. 65. D. 440. Personal student file of V.N. Klimenko. L. 1–28.

¹⁰ V.N. Klimenko's passport, issued on 16 February 1927, is kept in the personal archive of S.A. Vidyakina (Riga), to whom we are profoundly grateful for the information provided.

high among children, particularly infants (i.e., children aged under one year). His Majesty Emperor Alexander Nikolaevich was the godfather of the family's firstborn, while Empress Maria Alexandrovna was Maria's godmother.

Vasily was baptised in the Saints Peter and Paul Church in Odessa, and his godparents were Active Privy Councillor Nikolai Alexandrovich Novoselsky and Roxandra (Alexandra) Nikolaevna Lishina, a colonel's wife. N.A. Novoselsky (1818–1898) was the mayor of Odessa and had a street named after him. R.N. Lishina (née Rosetti-Roznovan, 1844–1897) was the wife of K.A. Lishin (1833–1906), who rose to the rank of major general and became the governor of Lublin.

The construction of a railway line from Odessa to Balta,¹¹ where engineer N.V. Klimenko worked, commenced in May 1863. It was commissioned in 1865. By September 1866, most of the unfinished work on the line had been completed. The Odessa-Balta railway line was handed over to the Ministry of Railways, and its administration was created.

N.V. Klimenko was appointed administrator, who, as claimed at the time, “knew the route with his feet”, having travelled it many times.¹² Sergei Yurievich Witte (1849–1915) worked under him, and he mentions his leader in Odessa in his memoirs. When Witte became Minister of Finance, N.V. Klimenko, who already had the rank of active state councillor by then, served under him as an official for special assignments.

V.N. Klimenko received his secondary education at the Third Saint Petersburg Gymnasium (enrolled in 1878, graduated in 1888). After obtaining his school certificate, he enrolled at the Imperial Military Medical Academy in Saint Petersburg the same year. In those years, the academy's Department of Medical Diagnostics and General Therapy with a Clinic was headed by Yuri Trofimovich Chudnovsky (1843–1896), a protégé of S.P. Botkin (1832–1889), the founder of a major school of internal medicine. V.N. Klimenko began studying under Professor Chudnovsky, and he completed his first research paper in the laboratory of the professor's department. That paper

was published in the Saint Petersburg newspaper “Vrach” (Klimenko 1892).

Faced with the issue of service, V.N. Klimenko decided to become a military doctor. In 1893, he was appointed junior doctor in the 3rd Finnish Rifle Regiment, and in April of the following year, he was assigned to the Helsingfors¹³ Local Hospital. While in the Grand Duchy of Finland, V.N. Klimenko sought to continue his research work. At the advice of his teacher, Professor Chudnovsky, he was among the first to study the prevalence of parasitic worms in Finland. He intended to present the results of his research in the form of a doctoral thesis. However, he had to pass examinations for his medical degree first, which he did in the 1893/1894 academic year. He defended his thesis in 1895 at the Imperial Military Medical Academy. According to the rules at that time, the thesis was published in the form of a monograph (Klimenko 1895). V.N. Klimenko was the first to determine the prevalence of *Diphyllobothrium latum* (broad tapeworm) not only among the inhabitants of the Grand Duchy of Finland but also among service members there. He demonstrated that *Diphyllobothrium latum* was one of the primary aetiological factors of malignant anaemia among inhabitants of this region.

V.N. Klimenko continued serving at the Helsingfors Local Hospital and later at the reinforced hospital of the Finnish Life Guards Regiment, which was stationed in the imperial capital.

In 1900, V.N. Klimenko became a full member of the Saint Petersburg Medical Society and was now heavily involved in the society's work. In 1900, he reported the secretion of the causative agent of typhoid fever by the kidneys (Klimenko 1901a) and a case of diabetes insipidus (Klimenko 1901b) and in 1906 – antisyphilitic serum (Klimenko 1907).

V.N. Klimenko retired from service in 1900. The following year, went abroad for further training. Initially, he worked in the laboratory of the Institute of Pathology of the University of Zurich under Professor P. Ernst (1859–1937). There, at the professor's suggestion, he conducted a study to review Feinberg's¹⁴ work. Feinberg had claimed to

¹¹ Baltsky Uyezd of Podolia Governorate, now the regional centre of Odessa Oblast.

¹² Novorossiysky Calendar for 1868. Odessa, 1867. P. 123 (2nd pagination). (In Russ.)

¹³ Helsingfors – now Helsinki, the Republic of Finland.

¹⁴ Feinberg. Zur Lehre des Gewebes und der Ursache der Krebsgeschwülste. Deutsche Medizinische Wochenschrift. 1902; 28 (11): 185–189.

have discovered a cancer-causing microorganism (“cancer parasite”). V.N. Klimenko’s study refuted the claim that inclusions in “cancer tissue” are causative agents of malignant neoplasms (Klimenko 1903). From 1902 to 1903, he undertook bacteriology courses at the Institut Pasteur in Paris. And from 1903 to 1904, he worked at the Institute of Bacteriology of the University of Bern.

V.N. Klimenko returned to Saint Petersburg in 1904. By now, he was no longer single. On 23 October 1902 (Julian calendar), in the Church of Saint Nicholas the Wonderworker at the Imperial Russian Mission in Stuttgart, he married the widow of a “native of Riga” Maria Apollonovna Meyer (1869–1937), née Dmitrieva, who was Orthodox and had five children from her first marriage (Vidyakina 2004).

In Saint Petersburg, V.N. Klimenko began working at the Imperial Institute of Experimental Medicine. However, the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905) disrupted his academic work. He headed the Department of Internal Medicine at the 2nd Kiev Red Cross Hospital deployed in Chita.

After the war, V.N. Klimenko returned to the capital, where from October 1905, he worked as an assistant to the head of the Department of General Pathology at the Imperial Institute of Experimental Medicine.¹⁵ Vladimir Valerianovich Podvysotsky (1857–1913) was the head of this department and also the director of the institute. The department of general pathology had only two staff members – the head and his assistant. However, every year the department employed interns (“non-permanent staff”): fourteen people in 1905, ten in 1906, seven in 1907, seven in 1908, fifteen in 1909, eleven in 1910, six in 1911, five in 1912, four in 1913, four in 1914, and three in 1915.¹⁶

In early 1913, Professor V.V. Podvysotsky died, and V.N. Klimenko took over as the head of the Department of General Pathology. Like the institute as a whole, the department was focused on dealing with scientific problems. V.N. Klimenko’s efforts during those years were concentrated on the study of paratyphoid fever, scarlet fever and whooping cough. The department also carried out practical work (studying commercial hematogen for the content of microbes, investigating the presence of *Vibrio cholerae* in water samples sent to the institute, examination of fermented milk and bacterial preparations intended for import into Russia, etc.).

Also, in 1908, the Department of General Pathology organised courses in cholera epidemiology and bacteriology for doctors assigned by the Office of the Chief Health Inspector. Each series of courses lasted two weeks, and more than 200 people undertook the theoretical and practical course. In 1909 and 1910, the same courses were taken by 150 and 50 people, respectively. The courses were taught by V.V. Podvysotsky, S.K. Dzerzhgovsky, D.K. Zabolotny and V.N. Klimenko.

V.N. Klimenko personally taught two practical courses on cholera epidemiology and bacteriology for veterinarians in the veterinary laboratory of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (in 1909 and in 1910).

In September 1914, following the outbreak of World War I, V.N. Klimenko was sent to Grodno to serve at the Russian Red Cross Society for 25 days training disinfectors. The following year, he was sent to Muravyev and Krechevitsy barracks (Novgorod Province) for bacteriological water analysis.

From 1917 to 1918, V.N. Klimenko headed the vaccination department at the Institute of Experimental Medicine.¹⁷ However, he was no longer listed among the institute’s staff from 1919.¹⁸

From 1909, V.N. Klimenko simultaneously worked at the Institute of Experimental Medi-

¹⁵ Report on the research activities of the Imperial Institute of Experimental Medicine for 1905. *Arkhiv biologicheskikh nauk* [Archives of Biological Sciences]. 1906; 12 (4–5): 287–298. (In Russ.)

¹⁶ Report on the research activities of the Imperial Institute of Experimental Medicine for 1905–1915. See: *Arkhiv biologicheskikh nauk* [Archives of Biological Sciences]. 1906, 12 (4–5): 287–298; 1908, 13 (4–5): 333–345; 1908, 14 (3–4): 353–368; 1909, 15 (1): 57–64; 1910, 16 (2): 105–122; 1911, 17 (2): 107–122; 1912, 17 (4): 405–424; 1914, 18 (3–4): 262–281; 1915, 18 (5): 469–488; 1918, 21 (1–2): 55–72; 1918, 21 (1–2): 73–82. (In Russ.)

¹⁷ Report on the academic and research activities of the Institute of Experimental Medicine for 1918. *Arkhiv biologicheskikh nauk* [Archives of Biological Sciences]. 1922; 21 (3–5): 211–218. (In Russ.)

¹⁸ Report on the academic and research activities of the Institute of Experimental Medicine for 1919. *Arkhiv biologicheskikh nauk* [Archives of Biological Sciences]. 1922; 21 (3–5): 219–225. (In Russ.)

cine and headed the infectious diseases department at the Nikolaev Children's Hospital of the Office of the Institutions of Empress Maria. Based on observations at this hospital, he published papers on pertussis immune serum and its effect (Klimenko 1911a) and the results of bacteriological blood tests for scarlet fever (Klimenko 1911b). V.N. Klimenko proposed using anti-pertussis therapeutic serum, which eased the course of the disease, shortened its duration, and prevented complications. During bacteriological tests, he established that streptococci are rare in the blood of scarlet fever patients. They do not enter the bloodstream at the early stage of the disease, and their presence in the blood of such patients worsens the prognosis. V.N. Klimenko also showed that lower monkeys are not suitable for obtaining experimental scarlet fever. On the other hand, higher monkeys are susceptible to scarlet fever but can only be used under special conditions (Klimenko 1912). He also proved that intravenous administration of diphtheria serum¹⁹ is dangerous, and its introduction into the spinal canal is contraindicated owing to the development of anaphylaxis (Klimenko 1913).

In his other works, V.N. Klimenko was the first to experimentally reproduce (in monkeys and puppies) whooping cough and serologically prove the pertussal nature of the disease (Klimenko 1908, 1910a, 1910b). Therefore, he was the first to comprehensively study the causative agent of whooping cough discovered by J. Bordet (1870–1961) and O. Gengou (1875–1957), significantly adding to the results obtained by the Belgian scientists.

In 1908, he became a privatdozent at the Imperial Military Medical Academy, where he taught a course in bacteriological techniques.

At that time, infectiology was not yet a speciality separate from internal medicine: an internal medicine specialist also treated patients with infectious diseases. Causative agents of infectious diseases were being discovered, and the investigation of the aetiology of diseases drove the emergence of new microbiological diagnostic techniques and specific treatment methods (sera). Owing to the rapid development of clinical microbiology, some internal medicine special-

ists became interested in bacteriology and took up this speciality (this was one of the distinctive features of the development of internal medicine clinical practice between the late 19th century and the early 20th century). And internist V.N. Klimenko was among them.

Like the families of many other intellectuals, the Klimenko family left Petrograd in late 1918 or 1919. They ended up in Samara, where members of the Constituent Assembly established the anti-Bolshevik government of *Komuch* (Committee of Members of the All-Russian Constituent Assembly, 1919–1921). On 10 August 1918, an order was given to open Samara State University. The Faculty of Natural Sciences and Medicine opened in January 1919. In December of that year, it was split into the Faculty of Medicine and the Faculty of Physics and Mathematics. At Samara State University, V.N. Klimenko headed the Department of Medical Bacteriology in 1919 and the Department of Infectious Diseases from 1920 to 1921.

On 11 August 1920, a peace treaty was signed between the RSFSR and the Republic of Latvia in Riga. Through his wife's family ties and at the invitation of the University of Latvia, Professor V.N. Klimenko arrived in Latvia in autumn 1921.

At the beginning of the 1921/1922 academic year, medical students enrolled in 1919 were starting their third year, which was the right time to start teaching them medical diagnostics. At the University of Latvia, V.N. Klimenko set up the Department of Medical Diagnostics of Internal Diseases with a Propaedeutic Clinic and headed it for 17 years (from November 1921 until his retirement in 1938). Like other clinical departments, Professor V.N. Klimenko's department was based at the 1st Riga City Hospital.²⁰ In March 1922, he was given a 28-bed barrack to set up the propaedeutic clinic, and in 1928 the clinic was handed over to the 2nd Riga Hospital,²¹ where conditions were much better.

As mentioned earlier, Latvia faced a dearth of teaching staff in those years. V.N. Klimenko had taught a course in bacteriological techniques during his time as a privatdozent at the Imperial

¹⁹ Heterogeneous serum was used at that time.

²⁰ Now Riga 1st Hospital (Rīgas 1. Slimnīca).

²¹ Now the Pauls Stradiņš Clinical University Hospital (P. Stradiņa kliniskā universitātes slimnīca).

Military Medical Academy in 1908. While an internal medicine specialist, he also specialised in infectiology. In light of this, the following year, V.N. Klimenko agreed to take over the Department of Medical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases, which was based at the 1st Riga City hospital, while remaining head of the Department of Medical Diagnostics of Internal Diseases. He headed this department for six years (until 1928). In 1924, a student named Nikolajs Stoligvo (1900–1976) became sub-assistant to Professor Klimenko at this department. After obtaining his medical degree in 1926, he continued serving in the infectious diseases department of the 1st Riga City Hospital, later becoming a professor in Soviet Latvia. Therefore, Professor V.N. Klimenko was one of N. Stoligvo's first teachers.

Jānis Miķelsons (1888–1952) took over as assistant at Professor V.N. Klimenko's Department of Medical Diagnostics of Internal Diseases in 1921. The son of a Latvian peasant, he graduated from the Faculty of Medicine of the Imperial University of Yuryev²² in 1917 and was drafted into the army. From 1919 to 1921, he worked at the Department of Inpatient Internal Medicine of Tomsk University under Professor N.I. Leporsky (1877–1952) and conducted his first research under the professor's guidance. Upon returning to Latvia, J. Miķelsons became an assistant at Professor V.N. Klimenko's department. Under the professor's guidance, he wrote the thesis for his Doctor of Medicine degree ("Par dažām tuberkulozes serodiagnostikas metodēm" – "On some methods for serodiagnosis of tuberculosis"). This study was very relevant given the prevalence of tuberculosis and related high mortality at the time. Also, V.N. Klimenko was not only an internist but also a specialist in medical microbiology (unlike N.I. Leporsky, who was a proponent of clinical, physiological and experimental research). He successfully defended his thesis at the University of Latvia in 1925. Soon after, in the same year, J. Miķelsons became a senior assistant and privatdozent, and in 1929, he was elected head of the department of hospital therapy. During the Soviet era, Professor Miķelsons became a corresponding member of the Academy of Sciences of the Latvian SSR.

I.R. Lazovskis identified two focal areas for Latvia's schools of internal medicine, which saw progress from the early years of the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Latvia.²³ They were distinguished by their approaches not only to internal medicine but also to medical research. The first approach was analytical, and this school can be called a primarily analytical school of internal medicine. Its founders in Latvia were V.N. Klimenko and his student J. Miķelsons. The second school was founded by Professor M. Sīle (1863–1945). It was characterised by a predominantly generalising approach and can be called a synthetical school of internal medicine. According to Riga professor and internal medicine specialist I.R. Lazovskis, these two areas of internal medicine were still largely in place in Latvia in the late 20th century.

Not all professors and lecturers of the University of Latvia could teach in Latvian. Therefore, in the 1920s, the university allowed the use of German and Russian – which was used by Russian-speaking teachers – alongside Latvian. However, after Ulmanis' Coup on 15 May 1934, the university nationalised the educational process, and Russian and German vanished from the classes. This put Russian-speaking lecturers, particularly of advanced age, who would find it harder to learn new languages, in a difficult position. Professor Klimenko had already turned 66 by then. However, he spent four more years at the university and retired on 1 July 1938.

V.N. Klimenko's medical work was not limited to the university. Like other professors/clinicians, he had an extensive private practice, which ensured his family's good financial wellbeing.

In Latvia, V.N. Klimenko was actively involved in local medical societies. The Association of Russian Doctors, whose charter was adopted back in 1888, continued to operate in Riga in the 1920s. The salient feature of this association was that its meetings were held in Russian, uniting not only ethnic Russian doctors but all Russian-speaking doctors. The association also included members of other ethnicities such as Latvian Pro-

²² Now the University of Tartu (Republic of Estonia).

²³ I.R. Lazovskis. Focal Areas of Schools of Internal Medicine in Latvia. In *Establishment of Science and Research Teams in the Baltic States. Abstracts of the 14th Baltic Conference on the History of Science*. Riga, 1985. P. 236–237. (In Russ.)

essor P. Stradiņš (1896–1958). V.N. Klimenko was a member of the association, and he presented a report on chlorosis at one of its meetings in the 1924/1925 academic year.

The Association of Latvian Doctors (Latvijas Ārstu Biedrība) was established in Riga as late as 1909, given that only two Latvian doctors were working in the city in 1892. It started to play a prominent role in independent Latvia. Professor V.N. Klimenko gave a presentation on influenza at its meetings in 1927. The Association of Latvian Doctors was involved in preparing and holding the Congresses of Latvian Doctors and Dentists (Latvijas ārstu un zobārstu kongress). The first congress was held in 1925, and the next one in 1928. V.N. Klimenko also participated in these fora. His presentation in 1925 dealt with anaemia (Klimenko 1926), and in 1928 – the aetiology of influenza (although it was never published among the Congress' documents).

Professor V.N. Klimenko was also a member of the Latvian branch of the Paris Biology Society (Société de Biologie) and presented a report on pneumonia accompanying whooping cough at its meeting in 1923.

In Riga, V.N. Klimenko lived with his family. His wife, Maria Apollonovna Klimenko, graduated from the Mariinsky Women's Institute in Saint Petersburg in 1886. She collaborated with liberal publications and penned numerous poems.²⁴ In Riga, she wrote a book containing her plays titled "With the Blood of the Heart" (1929). According to her obituary, everything she wrote was "steeped in idealism, imbued with the pure light of lofty hopes, and faith in the triumph of truth".²⁵

M.A. Klimenko possessed a lively, clear intellect, faithfulness of perceptions and an energetic, persistent character. In her last years in Latvia, she was bedridden most of the time, which is why she stepped away from public life.

The Klimenkos lived with Vera Meyer (born 1898), M.A. Klimenko's daughter from her first marriage. In 1903, the family had a son, Vasily, who moved to Riga with his parents. He later moved to Paris, where he played at the Russian Theatre (1927) and the Russian Intimate

Theatre (1927–1929). He also performed at the M.A. Chekhov non-repertory theatre and was an artist at the Riga Russian Drama Theatre from 1935.²⁶ In 1936, Vasily Klimenko was married to the poet, prose writer and drama actress Tatiana Daniilovna Ratgauz (Aseeva in her first marriage, 1909–1993), the daughter of poet D.M. Ratgauz (1868–1937). From 1923, the Ratgauzes lived in Prague, where Tatiana was a member of the Prague literary circle, the "Skete of Poets". In 1935, she moved to Riga and became an actress at the Riga Russian Drama Theatre. In 1940, Vasily and Tatiana Klimenko had a daughter named Kira. T.D. Klimenko-Ratgauz wrote the book "All My Life" (Riga, 1987), which contains her poems and memoirs of her father, D.M. Ratgauz.

V.N. Klimenko died on 19 October 1941 in Riga. He was buried next to his wife two days later at the Orthodox Pokrov cemetery (sector L, no. 18). Two damaged marble tombstones remain on the site to this day: "Prof. DMSc. Vasily Nikolaeovich Klimenko. 14.IV.1868–19.X.1941" and "Sergei Romanovich Meyer. 9.VI.1886–8.III.1936; Maria Appolonovna Klimenko. 21.I.1869 – 23.XII.1937". There is an obvious error in the professor's date of birth. He was also not a Doctor of Medical Sciences – this degree was only introduced in the Soviet Union. Imperial Russia and the Republic of Latvia had the "Doctor of Medicine" degree.

V.N. Klimenko's scholarly works show that bacteriology and infectiology were the focal areas of his work. As a clinician, he had to treat patients with an array of infectious diseases prevalent at the time. Clinical practice also considerably influenced the range of his research interests – whooping cough, diphtheria, scarlet fever, etc. V.N. Klimenko employed bacteriological techniques when studying these diseases. He began his medical career as an internal medicine specialist. He specialised in infectious diseases and worked as a clinician and microbiologist. He was also a member of the Botkin School of Internal Medicine. For many years, V.N. Klimenko worked under V.V. Podvysotsky and developed as a bacteriologist under his tutelage.

V.N. Klimenko developed as a doctor and scientist at home and underwent further trai-

²⁴ M.A. Klimenko Dies. *Segodnya* [Today] (Riga). 24 December 1937, No. 353. P. 5. (In Russ.)

²⁵ P. Pilsky. In memory of M.A. Klimenko. *Segodnya* [Today] (Riga). 27 December 1937, No. 355. P. 2. (In Russ.)

²⁶ Russian Abroad in France. 1919–2000. Biographical Dictionary. Vol. 3. Moscow, 2008. P. 693–694. (In Russ.)

ning abroad (the University of Zurich, the Institut Pasteur in Paris, Institute of Bacteriology of the University of Bern). Upon returning, he worked at one of the country's most respected medical research institutions – the Institute of Experimental Medicine. He concurrently taught bacteriology as a privatdozent at the Imperial Military Medical Academy (from 1908). From 1919 to 1921, he headed various departments at Samara University.

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