

IN MEMORY OF PROF. EMILIA RANGELOVA (1940 – 2021)

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*Do not say with longing, "They are no more,"
But rather say with gratitude, "They have been."*

V. A. Zhukovsky, Reminiscence

I can't believe that Emilia – a close friend, a brilliant teacher, a profound researcher, an outstanding scholar, a bright extraordinary Personality – is no longer with us. It is impossible to write about her in the past tense.

I remember our first meeting as clearly as if it was yesterday, although more than twenty years have passed since then. 1998, International Scientific and Practical Conference in Varna, the Institute for Advanced Training of Teachers. It was hot, stuffy, boring; the participants stole a glance at the clock, eagerly waiting for the end. Everything changed at the moment when a beautiful, elegant woman rose to the podium and began to speak enthusiastically, emotionally, convincingly. Her sincerity, passion fascinates, it was impossible not to fall under her charm, there were no bored faces left in the conference hall. Professor Emilia Rangelova spoke with pain and bitterness about the urgent problems of Bulgarian teachers, but she was optimistic about the future, offering specific solutions to the problems.

Then there were numerous international conferences, forums, joint research projects, topical discussions, meetings in Bulgaria, Russia, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Belarus. Today, it is a usual thing to talk about the low cultural level of students, teachers, and university teachers, and there is some truth in this point of view. However, Professor Rangelova refuted this fashionable trend with her Personality, system of values, interests, and beliefs. She was a person of keen intellect, a brilliantly educated, highly cultured professional. I was struck by how deep her knowledge of literature, painting, poetry, music, and theater was. I was repeatedly convinced not only of her amazing erudition, but also of her sincere love for Russian writers, poets, artists, composers, and musicians. Many times, visiting Yasnaya Polyana, Emilia admired the genius of the writer, worshipped him. She knew and loved the works of Leo Tolstoy, but at the same time critically perceived

his pedagogical articles and the empirical experience of the Yasnaya Polyana school, understood and appreciated the writer's ties with Bulgaria. Poems by Sergei Yesenin and Vladimir Mayakovsky, works by I. S. Turgenev and short stories by A. P. Chekhov, novellas by N. V. Gogol and novels of F. M. Dostoevsky – Emilia was concerned not only with literary creativity, but also with the civic position of the authors: how carefully she listened to the guide, literally “caught” every word. Professor Rangelova was the most grateful listener in museums, theaters, concert and exhibition halls in Russia.

Here is a small picture from life: a tour to the Polenovo estate, the birthplace of a wonderful Russian artist. Emilia was in the museum, at the piano, and they opened the lid for her and asked her to play. She looked at the keyboard, nervous and trepidatious, not daring to start. Sergei Rachmaninoff, Mikhail Glinka, Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky played this instrument. Emilia began to play very carefully, gently touching the keys, she had a stunningly soulful face. She was completely lost in the music, getting up closer with the great names.

Listening to her songs was a rare pleasure: there was so much warmth, sincerity, cordiality, a paradoxical interweaving of sadness and simple human happiness in her singing. With peculiar tenderness, she sang songs about the sea, sailors.

On her fragile shoulders, Emilia heroically took on a burden that an entire university could not lift: long-term International Scientific conferences in Kiten, the Association of Professors of Slavic Countries – this was just a part of the rich heritage of Professor Rangelova, DSc (Pedagogics).

And yet, I am convinced that her most significant achievement is the creation of a new science – preventive pedagogy, a branch that is becoming more and more popular every day in our troubled world. The emergence of preventive pedagogy is the most adequate response to challenges and demands of our time. One of the saddest paradoxes of social reality is that it is children who are the least protected part of society. For many years, Professor E. M. Rangelova lectured at Tula State Lev Tolstoy Pedagogical University. Among the various disciplines, there was also a course of Preventive pedagogy. Her lectures were distinguished by one feature – they were full of specific situations, “pictures from nature” of school and student life. These were not fashionable today “cases”, not exotic, not “cherries on the cake”, but real events that helped future teachers to make sure of the importance of prevention. In today's school and university, the preventive potential of pedagogical activity is almost not realized: the teacher's actions are their reaction to the offense committed by the student, to negative behavior, to the conflict that has arisen. The teacher's pedagogical influence is situational and impulsive, often unjustified, and its consequences cannot be calculated.

Preventive pedagogy is paedocentric: it focuses on the child, their development, upbringing, physical and mental health, and well-being. Implementing preventive activities, the teacher must be ready for targeted self-change, self-correction, on

the one hand, on the other – for a directed change in the pedagogical conditions, for the transformation and directed design of the social and cultural situation. The distinctive features of preventive pedagogy include: a clearly formulated categorical apparatus, a logically interrelated system of scientific concepts, a carefully written genesis, a convincing justification of the methodology and theoretical foundations of prevention, and adequate diagnostic tools. Among the scientific concepts justified by E. M. Rangelova (Professor A.P. Smantser also made a contribution): “prevention”, “preventive position”, “attitude to prevention”, “preventive activity of the teacher”. Preventive pedagogy is a holistic, consistent system of scientific knowledge, well-shaped and elegant, like its author, Professor Rangelova.

Preventive pedagogy like in a drop of water reflects Emilia's personal qualities: optimism and benevolence, sincerity and love of life, her amazing ability to be surprised and admired. The preventive position allows the school teacher, the university teacher to maintain emotional stability, to avoid illusions, pedagogical myths, disappointments, to prevent the destruction of the child's personality, stereotypes, and patterns.

Preventive pedagogy, despite its young age, is a pedagogy of wisdom, life and professional experience. Prevention is humane at its core, it is filled with faith in the potential of every child and teacher. Only a person for whom the humanistic position is natural, obvious, and the only possible one could create such a pedagogy. How many young talented, promising teachers, having experienced the bitterness of the first failures, left the profession forever! How many students have dropped out of school, protesting against humiliation, insults, violence!

In the modern educational and socio-cultural situation, there are many factors that cause moral and psychological deformations of young people, the growth of various deviations in their personal development, in social behavior. The aestheticization of violence distorts the public consciousness, justifies the cruel actions of children and adults. Forms of violent behavior, surrounded by a halo of romanticism, are often perceived by schoolchildren and university students as the norm.

Professor E. M. Rangelova was and would always remain an Honorary Professor of Tula State Lev Tolstoy Pedagogical University, she was able to convey to every student, every teacher a simple idea: prevention is the deep essence of the teacher's activity. An effective teacher is a strategist who works ahead of the curve, for the pedagogical “tomorrow”. A teacher is a person who can see the first signs of future violence, prevent not only the academic failure of a student, but also a suicide attempt, isolation of a student from a migrant family, bullying of a child with special educational needs.

A modern teacher should prevent students' mistakes, but should not correct them, see indicators and markers of a potential problem, a possible “victim” and “aggressor”, solve a difficult situation that has arisen, and prevent the escalation of the conflict. The preventive attitude of the teacher implies their close attention

to the problems of health and well-being of children in the educational process. Preventive pedagogy is a new understanding of the social mission of the Teacher: the teacher designs a safe educational environment in which school violence is impossible, risks and challenges are minimal.

It is important that the science created by Professor Emilia Rangelova – preventive pedagogy – become an effective tool that helps every university graduate to prevent school violence, suicidal behavior, child aggression, deviance, cyberbullying, mobbing, drug, computer and gaming addiction, and protect the rights of young people.

Preventive pedagogy is a developing science that looks to the future. The space of prevention, unfortunately, is constantly expanding, and the number of social, political, and economic challenges that require active prevention is growing like a “snowball.” The distance learning format at universities has brought to life new didactic, educational, axiological and communicative risks, and here the preventive position of the teacher has helped to smooth the situation.

Preventive pedagogy is not a frozen monumental block, it is being developed and enriched today with new content, original techniques, and creative strategies. This is an open system of knowledge, it attracts new supporters to its ranks, infecting them with its optimism, special positive energy, and faith in the talent of every child and teacher.

It will be a long time before the professional community can fully realize: 'What a lamp of reason has gone out! What a heart has stopped beating!' (N.A. Nekrasov).

The bright and long memory of Professor Emilia Rangelova, DSc (Pedagogics), will continue only if the International Community of University Teachers makes everything possible to preserve and multiply the scientific, methodological, pedagogical, educational and methodological heritage of the Outstanding Scholar and Brilliant Teacher.

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