

## Werk

**Titel:** Nikolaj Aleksandrovič Baskakov (22.03.1905-26.08.1996)

**Autor:** Jarring, Gunnar

**Ort:** Wiesbaden

**Jahr:** 1998

**PURL:** [https://resolver.sub.uni-goettingen.de/purl?666048797\\_0002](https://resolver.sub.uni-goettingen.de/purl?666048797_0002) | LOG\_0023

## Kontakt/Contact

[Digizeitschriften e.V.](#)  
SUB Göttingen  
Platz der Göttinger Sieben 1  
37073 Göttingen

✉ [info@digizeitschriften.de](mailto:info@digizeitschriften.de)



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(22.03.1905–26.08.1996)**

**Gunnar Jarring**

Jarring, Gunnar 1998. Nikolaj Aleksandrovič Baskakov (22.03.1905–26.08.1996). *Turkic Languages* 2, 161-162.

*Gunnar Jarring, Pontus Ols väg 7, 26040 Viken, Sweden.*

When in 1964 I took up my post as Sweden's ambassador to the Soviet Union, I looked forward to meeting Soviet scholars of Turcology. I knew them by name and reputation and had corresponded with some of them, but I also knew how delicate their position was with regard to personal contacts with foreigners. This was at the height of the Cold War and the ensuing political suspicion against all foreigners. Among them, ambassadors were considered to be a more exquisite and often

malevolent variety, although less so in my case, as I was from a small, neutral country. So I bided my time.

But one day I was asked to pay a visit to the Chief of Protocol of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He told me that the Soviet Turcologists residing in Moscow wanted to invite me to a colloquium on such and such a date. Would I accept?

This was the beginning, with official blessing, of my acquaintance with Nikolaj Aleksandrovič Baskakov. It resulted in a personal friendship which continued after I left Moscow in 1973 and lasted as long as he lived. By and by my meetings with the Soviet Turcologists became more frequent. I responded by inviting them to my embassy for a luncheon or dinner. It was always Baskakov who was the leader of the group that came. The others represented different Turkic peoples and were all active researchers in their respective fields. For me, these meetings were precious moments which highlighted my otherwise quite dull diplomatic life.

Nikolaj Aleksandrovič Baskakov was an outstanding Turcologist with a deep knowledge of all the Turkic peoples and tribes of the Soviet Union. The list of his innumerable published works brings to light a gold mine of linguistic erudition ranging from Karakalpak to Altay Turkic, including profound investigations into philological problems within the Turkic world. In addition, Baskakov had wide interests outside his appointed academic field. He was a collector of everything relating to the life of the unhappy Russian emperor Paul I. He loved classical music, including church music. It should not be forgotten that he was a composer in his own right. He composed a hymn dedicated to the PIAC meeting in Oslo in 1989. All his leisure time was spent in Zvenigorod, a place that was like music to him.

A great Turcologist has left us, a man of much wisdom and a true humanist.