**Kapitsa's Maxims**

Pyotr (Peter) Kapitsa (1894–84) was a Russian physicist, awarded the 1978 Nobel Prize in Physics. He worked under E. Rutherford at Cambridge in 1921–34 and became a Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge. In 1934 he was not allowed to return to England by the Soviet government and became instead the director of the Institute of Physical Problems created specifically for his work. In 1945 fell out of favour and was dismissed because of his refusal to work on the atomic bomb, but reinstated in 1956. He was an illustrious personality, popular with students and academics. A part of his legacy is a collection of maxims spread across his writings and sayings which address many important issues of life, work and politics. Some of them (which I particularly like) follow.

There are two ways of restricting men's freedom: by force and by cultivating appropriate reflexes. (1976)

The skill in restricting freedom in a country is a question of good manners of the government. (No date)

The whole history of mankind consists of errors. However, every government considers itself flawless. This is a law of nature, and one has to obey it. (1935)

In research work one should not loose the momentum. This is like an airplane: if it looses speed it falls. (1938)

Excessive modesty is a deficiency worse than excessive self-confidence. (1946)

The main sign of a talent is that a man knows what he wants. (1965)

It is better to be a hungry lion than a fed sheep. (Years of disfavour)

Only the scientific community can properly assess a researcher. They are like fans in sport. (1963)

In the core of creativity there is always a feeling of protest and discontent. Only when a scientist is unhappy with a theory or an engineer with a machine will they search for new possibilities. Perhaps this is the reason for the fact that many creative minds have so-called 'difficult characters'. In living nature, it is not possible to unite a lion and a sheep in a single animal. (1949)

I feel more and more alone here, and it won't be surprising if I will be torn apart and pecked to death. But I still can't change my attitude. It turns out that I can't be easily scared. I am afraid of one thing only. It's tickling, and until they start tickling me I'll not surrender my positions. (1935)

When a scientific discipline does not allow opposite views it is on the way to the churchyard, to its own funeral. (1967)