

ARMENAK LEVONOVICH MNDZHONYAN (1904-1970)



The outstanding organic chemist, Academician of the Academy of Sciences of the Armenian SSR Armenak Levonovich Mndzhoyan, died on February 21, 1970.

The name of A. L. Mndzhoyan is associated with systematic and purposeful investigations of the relationship between the structure of organic compounds and their biological action which have led to the synthesis and introduction into medical practice of a series of highly effective agents. A. L. Mndzhoyan was a brilliant experimenter, a talented scientist and organizer, and the director of a scientific school.

A. L. Mndzhoyan was born in 1904 in the village of Sarykamys, Kara region. In 1933 he graduated from the medical department of Erevan State University and then obtained chemical and pharmaceutical training in Moscow. While heading the departments of organic chemistry of the Erevan Medical Institute and the Erevan State University, A. L. Mndzhoyan organized the production of a series of drugs from local raw materials at the Pharmaceutical Board of the People's Commissariat of Health of the Armenian SSR. In the years of World War II he found a laboratory the object of which was the creation and bringing into production of medicaments for military health purposes. The result of the broad and fruitful activity of this laboratory and the increase in the number of scientific workers was its reorganization in 1955 into the Institute of Fine Organic Chemistry of the Academy of Sciences of the Armenian SSR of which A. L. Mndzhoyan was the permanent director and scientific head until the last day of his life.

A. L. Mndzhoyan was simultaneously a chemist and a doctor, which predetermined the direction of his scientific activity. His early investigations were devoted to the plant and mineral raw material of Armenia with the aim of its utilization for the preparation of medicinal agents. In 1937 he defended his candidate's dissertation on the subject: "The combustible shales of Armenia and their use in the production of medicinal preparations," and in 1944 he presented his doctoral dissertation on "The synthesis of new local anesthetics."

In the institute that he had created, A. L. Mndzhoyan turned to broad investigations on the synthesis of organic compounds and the testing of their biological properties. His systematic studies led not only to the synthesis of new medicinal agents but also to a revision of some theoretical ideas sanctioned in science. A. L. Mndzhoyan's wide range of investigations comprised various class of organic compounds. Part of his work which is of value for preparative organic synthesis appeared in the eight issues of the series publication "Syntheses of Heterocyclic Compounds" founded by him and produced under his editorship.

In 1950, A. L. Mndzhoyan was elected corresponding member and in 1953 effective member of the Academy of Sciences of the Armenian SSR.

About 250 scientific papers came from the pen of A. L. Mndzhoyan. He edited the collection "Biological Properties of Chemical Compounds" and a series of collections devoted to the results of clinical tests of the preparations ditiline, gangleron, arpenal, and quateron synthesized in the Institute.

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In addition to his research activity, A. L. Mndzhoyan performed a large amount of public scientific organization work. For many years he was editor of the journal "Izvestiya Akademii Nauk Armyanskoi SSR" (Seriya Khimicheskikh Nauk) ["Proceedings of the Academy of Sciences of the Armenian SSR" (Chemical Sciences Series)]. From 1965, A. L. Mndzhoyan had been a member of the editorial board of the journal "Khimiya Geterotsiklicheskikh Soedinenii" [Chemistry of Heterocyclic Compounds"]. From 1945 to 1949 he headed the Institute of Organic Chemistry; from 1953 to 1960 he was vice president of the Academy of Sciences of the Armenian SSR and was then academic secretary of the Division of Chemical Sciences. A. L. Mndzhoyan always found time for lectures and addresses and was an active popularizer and propagandist of chemistry. He trained a whole pleiad of qualified organic chemists.

A. L. Mndzhoyan carried out an enormous amount of work on the creation of a scientific basis for the development of fine organic chemistry in the Armenian SSR and built up the new institute as a whole complex of sectors, divisions, and laboratories designed to solve great theoretical and practical problems.

For his great service to the motherland, the party and the government granted A. L. Mndzhoyan the title of Hero of Socialist Labor and Honored Scientific Worker of the Armenian SSR and awarded him the Orders of Lenin, of the Red Star, and of the Red Banner of Labor, and other medals. The editorial board of the journal "Khimiya Geterotsiklicheskikh Soedinenii" grieve deeply over this heavy loss and express their sincere condolences to the family, colleagues, and pupils of Armenak Levonovich Mndzhoyan.

The bright image of A. L. Mndzhoyan will always be preserved in the hearts of those who had the good fortune to work and be associated with him.