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Reminiscence of Prof. J.F.K. Huber

The aim of this reminiscence is not to list the data of the scientific carrier of Prof. Huber but to share some personal memories.

I came across the name of Prof. J.F.K. Huber for the first time when he had been a young coworker of one of the early pioneer in gas-chromatography – of Prof. Erika Cremer. Erika, who was interested in adsorption and catalysis led her students to solve problems which were connected with adsorption phenomena. A part of this research was the study of the connection between adsorption isotherms and chromatographic behavior of the compounds. Young Josef took part in this scientific program in her lab in Innsbruck.

The second contact with the name of Prof. Huber was connected with the research group at the TH Eindhoven, where Josef worked on a similar subject and published with Prof. A.I.M. Keulemans a paper entitled “Nonlinear ideal chromatography and the potentialities of linear gas-chromatography” (1962).

Personally, I met Josef Huber for the first time in 1968 when he worked at the University at Amsterdam. This meeting became the first step for our long-term friendship. That was based not only on mutual scientific interests but also on the cordial contacts with his charming, cultural and social wife Sepha.

Time went on and Josef was one of the personalities who were invited by the Austrian authorities to come back to Austria and to take over leading positions. Josef had returned and became the Head of the Department of Analytical Chemistry at the University of Vienna and started to develop a well-known chromatographic center. When I visited him (in 1969) he had already built an impressive lab

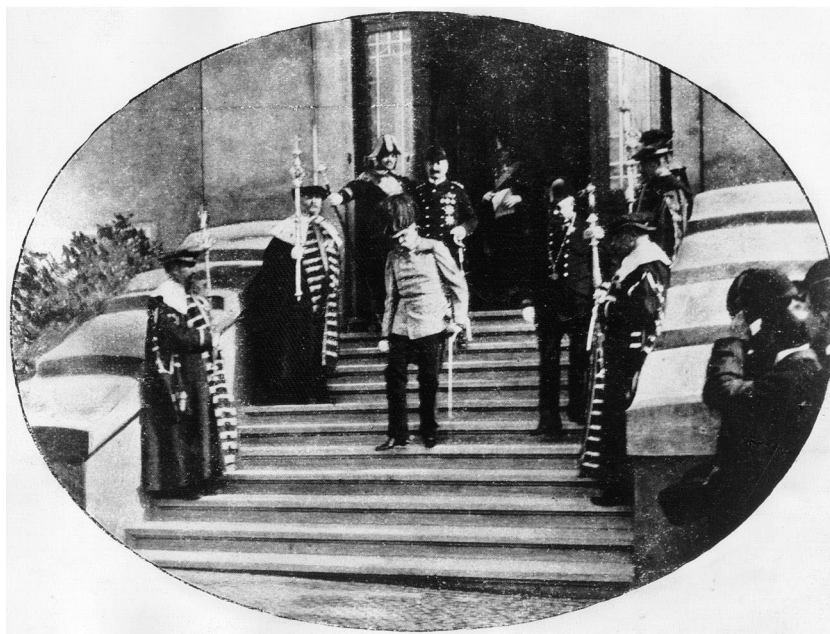
where HPLC was the main method for studies of various analytical problems. At that time the analytical practical training lab was not in the best shape, (better to say – the rusty electric installation was hanging from the ceiling . . .) but it did not take much time and the large lab of the student’s practicum was as impressive as the chromatographic one.

As I have already mentioned, it is not my intention to introduce and evaluate the amount of work which Prof. Huber succeeded to realize during his active life at the University of Vienna. Anyway, even if looking from outside I could follow the great progress during which the Institute became one of the leading laboratories in the chromatographic world. He was able to find financial support from various sources – for example he took over the doping control during the Olympic games held in Austria.

For several years I was able to follow, in more detail, his activities in the foundation called Scientific Exchange Agreement (SEA). In the year 1968 Prof. Keulemans, thanks to the financial generosity of Clark Hamilton, built this foundation which enabled contacts among leading laboratories of middle and eastern Europe. One of the members of the Scientific Committee was also Sepha Huber, who took over, after Keulemans and George Guiochon, the main work. A part of these activities was also the cooperation between Josef’s institute and our lab at the Department of Analytical Chemistry, Charles University, Prague. In the frame of this cooperation he was often a lecturer of our postgraduate courses and seminars organized together with the Czechoslovak Chemical Society. There is a nice picture (see Figs. 1a,b) of Josef and Sepha, both standing on the stairs in front of our building of chemistry. Approx.



(a)



(b)

Fig. 1. (a) Prof. Josef Frans Huber with his wife Sepha (right) (and the author of this article) in front of the Institute of Chemistry, Charles University, Prague. (b) Emperor Frans Josef visited the new building of the Institute of Chemistry (1905).

80 years earlier stood on the same staircase the emperor Frans Josef when he came from Vienna and visited our institute.

There were many other meetings in Prague, in Vienna as well as in other parts of the world. I will never forget the nice time that we spent together not

only in scientific discussions but also during private visits. The scientific interests were very closely combined with private life and led to a warm friendship. I am sure that the same impression have many colleagues from the whole world.

No doubt, that Josef belongs to the most important persons in the history of chromatography.

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