

Preface

My husband Yuri Timofeevich Struchkov

My husband meant more to me than the whole world. I watched him working eagerly for almost forty years from a very close distance that often tends to belittle the successes of a remarkable person but I remain amazed at what he accomplished.

Fascinated from early childhood by the romance of the Great Geographical Discoveries, even to his very last days he never lost the ability to be genuinely delighted by the beauty and diversity of the Universe. In his own particular way he did, indeed, realize his childish dream to become a traveller and a discoverer. His accomplishments go far beyond any single branch of science or what one would normally expect from the work of one scientific school. They are a rare example of how the efforts of a relatively small group of scientists can have a major and widespread influence in that they provided a powerful impetus for development of many X-ray structural centres and organometallic and organic chemistry laboratories both in the Soviet Union and far beyond its borders.

Yuri never practised the method used by the teams of old Russian icon-painters, who often subdivided a task, one drawing the face and another the clothes. He never subdivided science into physics and chemistry and very quickly became an expert in each new field to which he turned. He had a wonderful gift for instantly grasping interesting and novel points that often passed unnoticed by other specialists, sometimes even those having more experience in the field. It was this ability that made him a real generator of ideas for further synthesis research. Only a person with enormous scientific erudition and breadth of mind, as well as an inexhaustible passion for obtaining new results, could work fruitfully with equal success in such different fields as structural organic, organoelement, and coordination chemistry, and even structural aspects of solid state polymerization. The structure of liquid and gaseous compounds, disordered crystals, intermediates in chemical reactions, liquid crystal precursors, determination of absolute configuration, studies of electron density distribution: these are

just some of the many new research topics that were developed in his X-Ray Structural Centre earlier than in any other place in the Soviet Union. But organometallic chemistry, with its unpredictability, diversity and the beauty of its molecular structures, was undoubtedly the passion of his life.

He was certainly the pioneer in many fields of crystallography in our country, and many people came to him for instruction, for advice, for help. His studies were often considered as setting a standard, examples of jobs excellently done.

In Yuri's office there was a map of the Soviet Union that showed the scientific links of his X-Ray Structural Centre. Nearly the whole territory of the former Soviet Union was covered by a thick net of lines. In addition there were several dozen places, distributed over about 20 countries around the world, where scientists maintained fruitful cooperation with the X-Ray Centre.

I was especially pleased to be able to contribute a paper to this special issue because, to my great regret, although we always discussed our ideas, novel results, papers and reports with each other, we never had the opportunity to publish even one joint paper, our scientific interests having no points of intersection. Nevertheless, I am sure that his personality is present in each of my publications. He encouraged me to seek something new in apparently fully developed traditional fields. He always taught me to respect, but not to idolize, the established authorities, and was pleased by my success much more than by his own. And I learned from him to continue working without being affected by successes or failures.

The rules of common sense compel me to write about Yuri in the past tense, but for me he will forever remain in the present, and will belong to it as long as present time exists for me.

Irena Akhrem