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Professor Dr Joachim Walter Schultze

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After a long illness Walter Schultze, one of the world's leading electrochemists, passed away on March 11, 2005, in his adopted home town of Düsseldorf. Born in 1937 in East Germany, he soon moved to West-Berlin where he studied Chemistry at the Free University. After his diploma he joined Klaus Vetter's group and it was in the Vetter laboratory, in the Fritz-Haber-Institut of the Max-Planck-Society, that we met for the first time.

The main research in Vetter's laboratory was concerned with questions of electrochemical kinetics. Walter Schultze was studying the kinetics of formation of platinum oxide films and with a thesis on this subject he was awarded his PhD in 1966. When Vetter was nominated for professorship of physical chemistry at the Free University Walter Schultze moved to the newly founded Institute of Physical Chemistry. He took a position as assistant and, after habilitation, a position as professor of this institute. The staff of the institute were brought together by seminars and one topic of these seminars was partial charge transfer. Walter Schultze, with his practical flair, summarized experimental aspects of this concept with the term "electrosorption valence" a term now generally accepted for this phenomenon.

Beside the seminars, the usual festivals on occasions of master or PhD examinations were other highlights of the Vetter group. Walter Schultze gave these events his special touch by declamation of classical German literature in his Thuringian dialect.

In his research Walter Schultze soon developed his own style and attracted increasing numbers young students to his group. The research basis broadened, and in 1980 he left Berlin after being offered a chair at the Heinrich-Heine-University of Düsseldorf.

It was the beginning of the Düsseldorf school of electrochemistry which has been growing for 25 years and is now internationally renowned and accepted. This was demonstrated in 1993 when he was elected President of the International Society of Electrochemistry, a position which he held from 1995 until 1996. During the time of his presidency he initiated and intensively worked on transforming the society into a global competitive organization.

In Düsseldorf Walter Schultze founded a special new research structure, the AGEF, a cooperation of local electrochemical institutions with a semi-commercial institute at Düsseldorf University. His research moved increasingly from macroscopic objects to micro- and nano-scale dimensions. The series of international symposia on electrochemical micro- and nano-system technology, abbreviated EMT, was started by this activity. After he was made Emeritus Professor for his service to the university we all expected that as director of the AGEF institute he would continue his research and his professional activities. He left us before he could really start his second career. We will deeply miss our colleague, this outstanding person of electrochemistry.

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