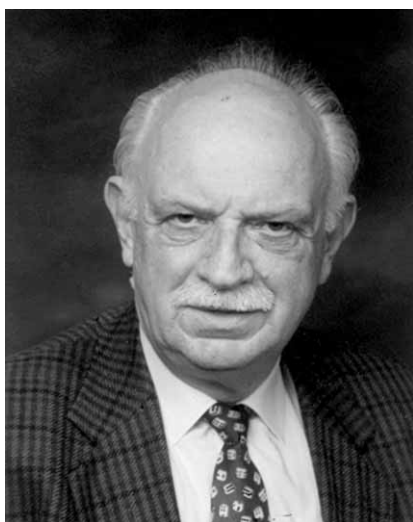


OBITUARY

Petar Strohal (1932–2008)



Dr Petar Strohal, university professor and an outstanding nuclear chemist and radioecologist, and in general an expert in nuclear science, suddenly passed away in Zagreb on February 20, 2008.

Petar Strohal was born in Zagreb, Croatia, on June 17, 1932. After completing elementary and grammar school in his native Zagreb, he enrolled in the Chemical Technology Department of the Technical Faculty, University of Zagreb, from which he graduated in 1956.

In the same year that he graduated, he was employed by the Ruđer Bošković Institute in Zagreb. His professional career started one year after the Institute had become an independent institution for nuclear research and nuclear energy, in the period in which a number of young collaborators began their scientific life. Many of them, including him, became pioneers in new scientific fields, not only at the Institute, but also in Croatia and in former Yugoslavia. As, from its very beginnings, it was the policy of the Ruđer Bošković Institute to conduct multidisciplinary research in natural sciences in general (physics, chemistry, biology), broader than nuclear sciences, this influenced the formation of young Strohal as a scientist and expert to become interested in interdisciplinary research and collaboration with professionals in different fields of science and technology.

In 1958, as one of promising young assistants at the Institute, he was granted an international scholarship at the Carnegie Institute of Technology in Pittsburgh, USA. After specializing in nuclear chemistry and working on his PhD thesis, he returned home and obtained in 1960 a PhD in chemistry from the Faculty of Science, University of Zagreb.

In 1962, he established the Laboratory of Nuclear Chemistry of the Ruđer Bošković Institute, being its first head. In 1969, after the foundation of the Center for Marine Research as a department of the Institute, he extended the scope of the Laboratory activities to radioecology. He headed the Laboratory of Nuclear Chemistry and Radioecology until 1975, when he became the Center's director, leading it until 1977. After a short term serving as Assistant Director of the Ruđer Bošković Institute, he joined the diplomatic service in 1978, but retained an advisory position at the Institute to the end of his life.

Immediately after getting his PhD degree in 1960, he became lecturer in nuclear chemistry at the postgraduate course of studies of the Faculty of Science in Zagreb. From 1966 to 1976, he was professor and head of the Department of Analytical Chemistry at the Faculty of Pharmacy. Among important Strohal's activities was his engagement in the university postgraduate studies from 1966 to 1978 as head of the Postgraduate Studies in Radiation Protection at the University of Zagreb. He also taught the principles of radiation protection and radioecology at the universities of Zagreb, Belgrade and Sarajevo.

Strohal early gained reputation as a leading expert in the field of nuclear energetics and radioecology in former Yugoslavia, consequently serving from 1966 to 1978 as chairman of the Yugoslav Commission for International Cooperation in the Field of Peaceful Application of Nuclear Energy and Ionizing Radiation. In the same period, he started to collaborate actively with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), serving two terms in office as vice-governor on the IAEA Board of Directors. From 1970 to 1976, he was coordinator of the Mediterranean Program for Radiation Monitoring and secretary to the committee of the same name of the International Commission for Scientific Exploration of the Mediterranean (CIESMM).

Broad understanding of nuclear processes and nuclear technology made Strohal a sought-after expert out of his native Zagreb, so he became a highly esteemed advisor to the institutes "Jožef Štefan" in Ljubljana and "Boris Kidrič" in Belgrade.

Strohal was diplomatically engaged from 1978 as a permanent representative of former Yugoslavia to international organizations in Vienna, where his activity in IAEA was of special significance. After finishing his service in the Yugoslav diplomacy in 1983, he transferred to IAEA, where he was head of the IAEA Radiation Protection Service Section from 1984 until his retirement in 1996. There he paid special attention to the application of standards and international criteria in the field of radiological protection.

As an internationally renowned specialist, Strohal served as consultant and/or expert in more than fifty task missions or technical meetings for various international organizations and institutions, such as IAEA, WHO, FAO, UNESCO, UNDP, UNEP, including various international financing institutions. He chaired or co-chaired a large number of international conferences, committees, symposia and task force groups. He was initiator, leader and/or manager of a dozen of international and regional programs and projects, and served as technical officer for over two hundred internationally financed technical assistance projects.

Since the early days of his scientific career, he started to develop interest in ecological aspects of nuclear phenomena, so Strohal's expert opinions became important also for activities and institutions engaged in healthcare and environmental protection. After the establishment of the Central Institute for Tumors and Similar Diseases in Zagreb, Strohal became its adviser in 1968. For the whole

time of his stay in Vienna, first as a diplomat, and later as an IAEA employee, he always found time and motive to help with advice institutions and government bodies in his homeland. Returning after his retirement to Zagreb, he remained to the end of his life active as an esteemed counselor to the Ruđer Bošković Institute, and consultant to the Hazardous Waste Management Agency (APO) in Zagreb. For his merits in the field of radiological protection and application of ionizing radiation, he was elected a regular member of the Academy of Medical Sciences of Croatia.

Strohal published, as author or coauthor, more than seventy scientific papers, and many of them are still quoted in scientific citation indexes. He also published more than two hundred professional papers and reviews, as well as a number of technical analyses. He was popular as an invited expert/speaker in radio broadcasts and newspapers in Croatia.

Collaborators and friends remember him as a communicative and pleasant person, open to dialogue, apt to defend his opinion and expose it to the public, but also prepared to listen attentively to the arguments of others. In Croatian science, he belongs to those prominent persons who gave important contributions to its advancement, keeping a high level of personal scientific work and promoting connections with international scientific circles. As an internationally appreciated expert, he also belongs to the group of Croatian people deserving credit for international recognition of their country. He will remain in our memories as a meritorious scientist and professional – a pioneer of nuclear chemistry and radioecology in our country, but also as a dear friend.

Gjuro Deželić