

ANNIVERSARIES AND DATES



JANIS STRADINS

Dedicated to his 70th birthday

On December 10 Janis Stradins – prominent scientist, scientific administrator and public figure, member of the editorial team of this journal and for ten years former editor in chief – celebrates his 70th birthday.

Janis Stradins was born in 1933 in Riga into a family of doctors. In 1956 he graduated from the Chemical Faculty of Latvian State University. Among his immediate tutors were Academicians of the Academy of Sciences of the Latvian SSR L. K. Liepina, G. Vanags, and S. A. Hiller.

In 1960 at M. V. Lomonosov Moscow State University he defended a candidate's thesis on "The polarographic study of several organic nitro compounds" and in 1968 in Riga, on the Joint Council of the Division of Chemical and Biological Sciences of the Academy of Sciences of the Latvian SSR, a doctoral thesis on "Polarography and electronic structure of nitro and carbonyl compounds of the aromatic and heteroaromatic series." (In 1991 the degree of USSR doctor of chemical sciences was equated to the degree of "habilitated" doctor of chemistry of the Latvian Republic.)

The range of interests and activities of Prof. Stradins are extraordinarily broad: The molecular electrochemistry of organic compounds; the history of science (chemistry, pharmacy, medicine, the scientific research centers of the Baltic States); the history of Riga and the Baltics; international cultural links; Latvia and

the Latvians in the world; Baltic intellectual collaboration. In all these areas he made a substantial and important contribution, displaying himself as an inquisitive and indefatigable investigator, a person of unusual erudition and enormous love for work. It is necessary to mention also his exceptional communicability, genuine interest in people, his cordiality and lack of prejudice. It is not surprising that many years of friendship and close collaboration have linked him with hundreds of the most diverse people in many nations of the world.

From 1957 Stradins worked at the Institute of Organic Synthesis, Academy of Sciences of the Latvian SSR (now the Latvian Institute of Organic Synthesis) as research associate and from 1961 as head of the Laboratory of Physical Organic Chemistry.

At the institute Stradins developed procedures for the polarographic determination of organic substances, promoted the creation of original medicinals (Furagin, Solafur, Methindione, etc.). In collaboration with coworkers he published more than 300 scientific papers on molecular electrochemistry: the mechanisms of electrochemical reduction and oxidation of various types of organic compounds (nitrofurans, aromatic nitro compounds, carbonyl compounds, including cyclic β -diketones, quinonoid compounds, dihydropyridines, dihydropyrimidines, cyclic organosilicon amines, phenols, thiophenols, etc.) and also on the electrochemical generation of organic free radicals and their study by means of ESR spectrometry. (For example, nitrofuran radical-anions were first produced as short-lived intermediate products in the reduction of biologically active compounds.)

His students, now doctors of science, work not only in Latvia, but many of them have become leading specialists in other countries.

Stradins' pen has produced books on the polarography of organic nitro compounds (Riga, 1961), on the analytical determination of 5-nitrofuran derivatives (in coauthorship with V. Egerts, M. Shimanskaya, English edition, Ann Arbor, London, 1970), on polarography in organic chemistry (Leningrad, 1975, coauthors S. G. Mairanovskii and V. D. Bezuglyi), on the structure and tautomeric transformations of cyclic β -diketones (Riga, 1977, coauthor); he published the book "Polarography – Problems and Prospects" (Riga, 1977). A large part of his scientific papers have been published in the leading journals of the world. Stradins has been plenary lecturer at many international and All-Union conferences in Riga, Moscow, Prague, Liblice, Jena, Tokyo, Rostock, Bucharest, Kishinev, Alma-Ata, Tbilisi, Dnepropetrovsk, Rostov, Frunze (Bishkek), and others. He has lectured in Warsaw, Berlin, Uppsala, Lund, Brno, Leipzig, Münster, Montreal, Kharkov, Baku, Krasnodar, Leningrad, etc.

J. Stradins is one of the most cited chemists of Latvia in the last 20 years and is one of the 10 most cited scientists of Latvia in the field of natural science over the last 20 years (including only data on natural sciences).

In 1968 Stradins was elected Corresponding Member and in 1973 Full Member of the Academy of Sciences of the Latvian SSR in the speciality of *physical organic chemistry*.

In 1972-1976 Stradins was Professor of Physical Chemistry at the Latvian State University. He was appointed professor in the physical chemistry in 1974 and honorary doctor of chemistry (*Dr. chem. h. c.*) of Latvian University from 1989. Professor Stradins is a member of the International Society of Electrochemistry (from 1972, cochairman of the Commission of Molecular Electrochemistry, 1988-1990) and member of the International Society of ESR (from 1990). He was the national representative of the USSR in the Commission on Electroanalytical Chemistry of the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry (IUPAC), 1964-1970.

Stradins' other field of activity is the history of science, especially the history of natural science in the Baltics. This was clearly influenced by his father Paul (Pavel Ivanovich) Stradins, professor of medicine, well-known surgeon and oncologist, science historian, and founder of the Museum of the History of Medicine in Riga. From childhood he helped his father in the work of the museum, and throughout his life Janis Stradins has retained a love for this region of science. His first scientific publications, published in 1957, were indeed devoted to the history of medicine, two of them in coauthorship with his father. Since 1955 Stradins has systematically studied the development of higher education and researches centers in the Baltics (mainly in

Latvia), the history of scientific links between the Baltics and other regions, the role of the Baltics as a mediator between Russia and the West, the scientific contribution of local scientists to world science, and the history of chemistry in Latvia. Prof. Stradins wrote a book on Theodore Grothuss (Moscow, 1966), Paul Walden (Moscow, 1988, in conjunction with Yu. I. Solov'ev), and many biographies (W. F. Ostwald, G. F. Parrot, R. H. Swinne, D. H. Grindel, R. Udris, J. Auskaps, L. Liepina, V. Altberg, M. J. Borch, P. Walden, W. M. Fischer, F. A. Tsander, A. A. Lozinski, P. R. Bagration, et al.).

He has published books on his father P. Stradins (Riga, 1961, 1963, 1965, 1967, in Latvian and Russian) and also on other Latvian scientists (S. A. Hiller, G. Vanags, A. Kesans, A. Ievins, P. Lejins, et al.). He wrote a collection of essays on great physical chemists (*Men, Experiments, Ideas*, Riga, 1965, 2nd edition, in Latvian), on the contacts between the classics of world science with Latvia (*The Great World of Science and Us*, Riga, 1980, in Latvian), on M. V. Lomonosov (*Lomonosov and Latvia*, Riga, 1988, in Latvian), books on the history of science in Latvia (*Studies of Past Science in Latvia*, Riga, 1982, in Latvian), on the Academia Petrina in Mitau (Jelgava) (in conjunction with H. Strods, Riga, 1975, in Latvian). In 1998 he published the first part (711 pages) of his fundamental work on the Latvian Academy of Sciences, its origins, history, and formation.

Stradins has edited the periodical collections *From the History of Natural Science and Technology in the Baltics* (*Acta Historiae Scientiarum Baltica*, Vol. 1-9, Riga, 1968-1992, in Russian and Latvian), in which he published many of his own articles on the history of science; other articles of this profile were published in *Problems of the History of Natural Sciences and Technology* (Moscow), *From the History of Medicine* (Riga), *Kwartalnik historii Nauki i Techniki* (Warsaw), *Latvijas Zinatnu Akademijas Vestis* (*Proceedings of the Latvian Academy of Science*), *Latvijas Vestures Instituta zurnals*, *Chymia* (Philadelphia), and others.

From 1990 J. Stradins was chief scientific associate at the Institute of the History of Latvia, and from 1992 he is Honorary Doctor of Historical Sciences (Dr. hist. h. c.). He is one of the founders (in 1958) of the Latvian Union of Natural Science and Technology Historians (now the Latvian Association of the History of Science), was its Secretary, Vice Chairman, and President (from 1987); he was also the first president of the Association of the History and Philosophy of Science of the Baltic States (1990-1991). Janis Stradins was organizer and participant in all 21 Baltic conferences on the history of science (Riga, Tartu, Vilnius, Tallin, Kaunas, Jelgava, Jurmala, 1958-2003) and actively participated in the development of the P. Stradins Museum of the History of Medicine in Riga. From 1991 he has been the main research associate of the Institute of the History of Medicine at the Latvian Academy of Medicine (Riga Stradins University).

Altogether Academician Janis Stradins has published 22 books and more than 500 scientific papers on various aspects of chemistry, the history of science, and culture. Many of his scientific works were executed jointly and published in coauthorship with colleagues from Baku, Berlin, Bratislava, Warsaw, Vilnius, Dnepropetrovsk, Ekaterinburg (Sverdlovsk), Jena, Jerusalem, Irkutsk, Kazan, Kishinev, L'vov, Moscow, Nizhnii Novgorod (Gorki), Poltava, Prague, St. Petersburg, Tallin, Tartu, Tol'yatti, Kharkov, Yaroslavl, and others, with whom Stradins has maintained close scientific contacts over the decades.

In 1987-1991 Stradins participated actively in the reestablishment of the national symbols and historical place names of Latvia. He wrote many essays on the history of Latvian culture, in 1988 he introduced the subsequently widely used term *the third awakening* (*tresā atmoda*), published a series of books on the history of Latvian culture, and wrote articles on the role of the Baltic Germans and Jews in the development of local culture. In the period of restoration of Latvian independence his ideas obtained recognition both among the intelligentsia and in the wider circles of the people (the book *The Third Awakening*, Riga, in Latvian). He was a member of the Union of Soviet Writers (1984-1991) and is presently member of the Union of Writers of Latvia.

From 1992 to 1998 Stradins was Vice President of the Latvian Academy of Sciences and was extremely active in the transformation of the old Soviet-style academy into an academy of the Western type. Since 1998 he is President of the Latvian Academy of Sciences. He was elected member of the European Academy of Sciences and Arts in Salzburg (1991), Corresponding Member of the Saxony Academy of Sciences in Leipzig (1993), Corresponding Member of the Baltic Historical Commission (Göttingen, 1991), and member of the German Academy of Naturalists *Leopoldina* (1994). Janis Stradins is a foreign member of the Academies of Sciences of

Estonia, Lithuania, and Georgia, member of the New York Academy of Sciences, the European Academy of Information, member of the Presidium of the International Academic Quality Rating *Zolota Fortuna* (Golden Fortune) (Ukraine), and a member of the Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies *AABS* (USA, from 1991), from 1997 member of the International Society of the History of Medicine, since 1999 member of the European Association of the History of Medicine and Public Health, and since 2000 Honorary President of the Latvian Association of the History of Medicine.

In 1989-1996 Stradins has been president of the scientific association *Latvia and Latvians in the World*, and also honorary president of the *Latvia-Israel society*. He was a member of the board of the Latvian Culture Fund (chairman of its commission on historical local names, 1987-1992, one of the coordinators of the program of jubilee activities of the 800th anniversary of Riga); chairman of the board of the European-Latvian Institute of Cultural and Scientific Exchange EUROLAT (from 1991 till 1998).

Janis Stradins was the chief editor of the scientific journal *Chemistry of Heterocyclic Compounds* (1975-1985) and is currently member of the editorial board of this journal as well as of several other scientific journals. Since 1993 Stradins has been a member of the advisory board of the international journal *Russian Journal of Electrochemistry* (Moscow). He is a member of the Latvian Council of Science (since 1990) and two of its expert commissions (on chemistry and on history), head of a series of research projects on electrochemistry and structural chemistry of organic compounds and on the history of the culture and science in Latvia. A member of the Mendeleev Society of Chemists (1958-1990), one of the founders and member of the Council of the Latvian Chemical Society (from 1990), and since 1989 honorary member of the Latvian Pharmaceutical Society (founded in 1803). In 1986 he was awarded the title of Merited Scientist of the Latvian SSR.

Janis Stradins was awarded the State Prize of the Latvian SSR for research in the field of organic electrochemistry (1980) and also the prize of the D. I. Mendeleev All-Union Chemical Society (1961, 1974), the first prize of the All-Union Pharmaceutical Society (1988), and the bronze and silver medals of the Exhibition of Achievements of the National Economy in Moscow (1978, 1981).

The J. E. Purkinje silver medal (Brno, Czechoslovakia, 1977), the honorary diploma of the Soviet National Union of Historians of Natural Science and Technology (Moscow, 1970), the P. Stradins award (1983), the P. Walden medal and award (1988), the M. V. Lomonosov, L. Pasteur, E. Rutherford, N. Kopernik, S. Hiller, A. Kirchensteins, T. Grothuss, D. H. Grindel, and L. Liepina memorial medals, the grand medal of the Latvian Academy of Sciences (1993), the Order of Three Stars (1995), the G. Soros Social Harmony award (1995), and the Latvian Cabinet of Ministers prize (2001) constitute a partial list of the awards and signs of distinction of Janis Stradins.

In the perestroika years Janis Stradins became one of the most popular people of Latvia.

With all our heart we wish our colleague a brilliant and marvellous future, continuation of his earlier tenacity, new successes and achievements, the realization of all his dreams, the constant support of his friends and comrades, robust health, happiness, and well-being to him and his closest. We hope that our collaboration will continue for many long years.