



Professor Helmut Schwarz

A personal foreword

I have known Professor Helmut Schwarz for over 30 years. Over that time I have come to appreciate him as an outstanding chemist with a very wide range of interests and a great excitement about science. This excitement is noticeable in his lectures and his audiences get caught up in it. As a result he is a very sought after lecturer and gives every year many lectures all over the world. I have also come to appreciate his openness, honesty and caring for the general good. He is a true intellectual and one can discuss with him practically any topic.

During these 30 years, Helmut and I have become very close friends. Having said that I realized immediately that there are many Israeli chemists who can say the same. There must be an 'Israeli Connection' and I am certain there is. The personal and professional ties between Israeli scientists and Professor Helmut Schwarz are outstanding and unusual. Among his 784 papers (last count), I counted 55 with Israeli coworkers and students. Collaborators include Y. Apeloig, S.E. Biali, J. Blum, M. Chorev, C. Gilon, A. Mandelbaum, M. Michman, D. Milstein, E.E. Nikitin, I. Oref, the late S. Patai, Z. Rappoport, S. Shaik, A. Stanger and of course myself. There were times when I was under the distinct impression that Helmut chooses his research topics so they would overlap with the interests of some Israeli scientist allowing him to collaborate. He has made numerous visits to Israel over the years, some during very difficult times to the country, showing support and lifting our spirits. A recent example is during this latest war against terror that has now lasted nearly 3 years. We have the tradition

to invite foreign scientists to our annual meeting of The Israel Chemical Society. This was done as usual and a whole group of scientists agreed to come but everyone turned us down at the last minute because of the fearful situation. The organizers turned in desperation to Helmut Schwarz and in spite of his very tight schedule he came on a short notice of 2 days. He delivered one of his fantastic fiery lectures following a very moving introduction in which he stressed that rather than stay away, it is during these difficult times to Israel that scientists should come to visit.

Helmut's numerous visits to Israel often include his wife Enga. Their son, Kyril has also been here on several occasions. Kyril spent about a year in one of the Kibbutzim in the Negev working hard in the desert heat before entering university in Germany.

Helmut helped establish and organize the joint conferences of the chemistry departments of The Hebrew University of Jerusalem and The Technical University in Berlin. These take place on a regular basis alternating between Jerusalem and Berlin. The major benefit is the scientific interaction with our German coworkers. In one of those meetings that took place in Berlin, I found it very interesting that my Israeli friends, when forced to stay together, can actually find topics of joint interest and I saw them speak with one another in a very amicable way. This was one interesting additional benefit of these joint meetings.

Throughout his career he has found other ways to connect with chemistry and chemists in Israel. He was Visiting Professor at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem in 1982, Forchheimer Professor at The

Hebrew University of Jerusalem in 1983 and Visiting Professor of the Israel Institute of Technology, Haifa in 1986. Helmut was instrumental in establishing one of the last Minerva Centers in Israel—The Lise Meitner Minerva Center for Computational Quantum Chemistry and is an active member of its Beirat. This is a joint Hebrew University—Technion, Israel Institute of Technology center and was inaugurated in Jerusalem in 1997. Professor Sason Shaik and Professor Yitzhak Apeloig are co-directors. Finally, as vice-president of the German Research Foundation (DFG) Helmut became chairman of the DIP—the German Israeli Program for scientific research.

His many contributions to Israeli science have been recognized. He has received two honorary degrees: Dr. Phil. H.C. from The Hebrew University of Jerusalem in 1992 and Dr. Sc. H.C. from The Israel Institute of Technology, Technion, Haifa in 2000.

One of the most striking characteristics of Helmut is his outgoing warm personality. A visit to Berlin is a true and lasting experience. Visitors are usually treated to either the opera and/or The Berlin Philharmonic. Even when nearly the whole Chemistry Institute was there as visitors in Berlin on one of the joint meetings with The Technical University, Helmut had arranged ahead of time to have tickets for all of us to one of the outstanding concerts of the year. His love of the opera is something you cannot escape if you get a ride in his car. He has some marvelous tapes that are played

to you. Visiting Berlin is also a treat because of Enga, Helmut's wife who is a true 'Berliner'. My late parents and I received a very warm welcome tour of the city some years ago including some of its highlights like the Egyptian Museum and the bust of Queen Nefertiti.

When Helmut and Enga come to Israel they always go for a visit to the Dead Sea. This is of course the lowest place on earth and one of the hottest but Enga likes it—the hotter the better. Another usual visit for the Schwarz family is the Ticho House in Jerusalem that has a restaurant and a special atmosphere given by some of the paintings of the well-known artist Anna Ticho.

I have discussed this Foreword with some of my Israeli friends asking them what it should include. One comment I received that I agree with totally is the following: In spite of his outgoing friendly nature, Helmut is very tough when it comes to science. There is no compromise on scientific level. This attitude is probably at the basis of the scientific success story that is called Helmut Schwarz.

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