

## Is that possible that Ing. RNDr. Oskar Markovič, DrSc. is seventy?



To all who know Dr. *Markovič* of the Institute of Chemistry it sounds outrageous that he is going to celebrate his seventieth birthday. It cannot be true! He just recently returned from his one-year stay at the Cornell University in the USA and soon after his return he was invited to do additional experimental work in Sweden. No surprise, because the seventy-year-old Dr. Markovič still remains professionally very young, active researcher and skilful experimenter, and he does not have any fear of travelling and changing his working and living environment. Dr. Markovič is still a welcome guest at reputable laboratories abroad. He is also an outstanding sociable partner, a great source of humour and wisdom. His love for fine arts, talent for music and writing, and the unusual courage, are the features of his rare personality.

His last travelling demonstrates that he fully grabbed the positive aspects of the political changes that took place in 1989, although they arrived for him really very late. Dr. Markovič belongs to those Slovak scientists that were seriously affected by political repression of the fifties.

He was born in a teacher's family on January 14, 1927 in Veľké Ripňany, region Topoľčany. He graduated from the Faculty of Chemical Technology of the Slovak Technical University in 1950. During the next four years, as an employee of the Pharmaceutical Research Institute in Bratislava, he accomplished his study at the Faculty of Pharmacy of the Comenius University in Bratislava. As a graduate from two Universities he started enthusiastically his doctorate studies at the Institute of Chemistry, Slovak Academy of Sciences. His thesis, dedicated to isolation and characterization of bee venom components, which he partially accomplished at the Institute of Chemistry and Biochemistry of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences in Prague, was not allowed to be defended in time. The work was successfully defended in 1964, after dramatic events in the author's life in the meantime. In 1958 Dr. Markovič was forced to leave the staff of the Institute of Chemistry, they said, for a conspiracy against the state of his father-in-law and his father more than twenty years ago. Most of the years out of the Institute of Chemistry he spent at the Research Institute for Rheumatic Diseases in Piešťany where he joined investigations of the pathophysiology of the synovial fluid and became a coauthor of the work which was awarded a price from the CIBA company in Switzerland. Dr. Markovič returned to the Institute of Chemistry in 1966 and was appointed the head of the laboratory investigating plant and microbial pectolytic enzymes. His main achievements are concerned with the elucidation of the mechanism of action of pectinesterases and polygalacturonase, characterization of amino acids in active sites of the pectolytic enzymes and development of methods for monitoring their activities. For this work he was awarded in 1986 the degree DrSc. in chemistry by the Presidium of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences in Prague. However, he has gained his reputation in the area of pectolytic enzymes mainly by the first comprehensive review of the pectolytic enzymes which he wrote together with the late Dr. *L. Rexová-Benková* and published in *Advances of Carbohydrate Chemistry and Biochemistry*, and by the amino acid sequence of tomato pectinesterase, a first sequence in the family of pectolytic enzymes, which he published together with Professor *H. Jörnwall* from the Karolinska Institutet in Stockholm. Sweden actually became for him a country for which he had a special affection. This relationship dated to 1970 when Dr. Markovič started his first long-term foreign stay at the Biochemical Nobel Institute directly in the group of the Nobel Prize Awardee Professor *H. Theorell*. He always performed well so the door to Sweden remained open for him up to now. His personality gained him also an international recognition in areas other than science. In 1992 he was elected member of the European Academy of Sciences and Arts in Salzburg, Austria and in 1996 he was appointed the President of the Bratislava branch of the influential international humanistic organization, the Rotary Club.

Our jubilarian published 82 original papers, coauthored 7 patents and has collected 470 citations. Several undergraduate and postgraduate students passed successfully through his laboratory. The publication activity of Dr. Markovič continues because he never stops asking questions of the mother Nature.

On behalf of all your colleagues and friends, allow me, Oskar, to wish you to the years to come an outstanding health, young spirit, many happy times with your family in Bratislava and Jarabá, much joy with your beloved Oskarky, the granddaughters, and also a firm hand over your pipette, computer and piano keyboards, and tennis racket.

*P. Biely*