Dr. Boris Vetlický
1928 – 2008

On August 25th, 2008 died, in consequence of a serious injury, Dr. Boris Vetlický, Assoc. Prof. Emeritus of the University of Pardubice. He was born in the town Moravská Ostrava on October 16th, 1928. He graduated from the Military Academy of Brno, and after graduation in 1953 he started working at the Ministry of Chemical Industry in Prague. After two years, on his own request, he moved to Synthesia Co. Pardubice, Plant Explosia, namely production of smokeless powders. In 1961 he was appointed director of Research Institute of Industrial Chemistry (VÚPCH) and in 1963 he defended his PhD Thesis at the Institute of Chemical Technology Pardubice. Under his direction, VÚPCH became one of the best institutes in Eastern Europe. In those days, i.e. in the period of the cold war, any contacts of Czech experts in energetic materials with leading workplaces of the Western world were impossible. Neither was it possible to publish any specialist article in open literature. That is why, as a significant deed, Boris and his co-workers started organizing international symposia on welding and compacting metals by explosion in cooperation with the Lavrentiev Institute of Hydrodynamics in Novosibirsk. These symposia started in 1970, took place seven times, every third year, and represented a kind of bridge between East and West, which enabled meeting of scientists from the whole world in the Czech Republic. Boris made relatively close contacts with German colleagues from ICT Pfinztal, and very close and friendly contacts with colleagues from scientific workplaces dealing in energetic materials in Moscow, Chernogolovka, Krasnoarmeisk, and Novosibirsk. This is especially true of Prof. Anatoly Dremin from Chernogolovka, with whom Boris was getting on very well.

In the capacity of director of VÚPCH he supported long-term promising lines of R&D, and these endeavours resulted in solution and commercial implementation of a number of original technologies, e.g. the procedure and equipment for manufacturing spherical smokeless powders, screw-type production lines for double base propellants, technology and equipment for production of combustible cartridge cases, a new generation of permissible explosives for mining industry, preparation of oxycellulose for sanitary purposes.

Under the complicated conditions of those days, he managed to ensure necessary funds for long-term conceptual R&D work and to protect his co-workers against negative political pressures, often at his own risk. His rigorous advocacy of scientific and technological truth and lack of willingness to conform himself to power and political pressures were the reasons for which he had to leave the Institute in 1985.

In 1986 he joined the Faculty of Chemical Technology, University of Pardubice, where by the weight of his personality, he restored the Department of Theory and Technology of Explosives (the original Dept. was liquidated on December 31st, 1965). In 1988 he was appointed Assoc. Prof. by the Ministry of Education, and then was a Head of the Dept. until 1990. He retired in 1993, but even after that, he participated in education of students, particularly postgraduates. Also significant was his participation in establishing of OZM Research Co., where he handed over an important know-how for import and implementation of explosion chambers from Novosibirsk. His friendly relationships with Prof. Dremin led to consulting cooperation of this scientist of world importance with the teachers of the Dept. (now the Institute of Energetic Materials), which significantly affected the education in the area of explosion physics at Pardubice. Boris was also dealing with the problems of detection of explosives and the instrumentation used for determination of the presence of explosives, and he contributed to the progress in this area, both in the Czech Republic and on international scale (in the latter case, especially through his cooperation with the company Sibel in Novosibirsk).

The death of Boris Vetlický means a loss of personality, whose expert activities and personal features have left an unforgettable imprint in the history of R&D in the area of energetic materials.

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