

Obituary
Dr. Milan Hájek
1941-2020



Dr. Milan Hájek, leading research scientist of the Institute of Chemical Process Fundamentals of the Czech Academy of Sciences, died on Monday, June 15, 2020, after a fatal heart attack at the age of 78.

We are very saddened by the departure of this highly remarkable chemist, excellent scientist, and enthusiast of microwave technologies. He was the true father and mentor of the Microwave Chemistry in the Czech Republic.

Milan Hájek was born on August 25, 1941, in Trpisov, Czechoslovakia. He obtained a diploma in chemistry from the Technology University of Pardubice in 1963. In 1968, he gained a Ph.D. in chemistry in the field of heterogeneous catalysis from the Institute of Chemical Process Fundamentals (ICPF) of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences. After two positions of Visiting Professor with the University of Caen, France (1969) and Central University of Venezuela, Caracas, Venezuela (1970-1972) he returned to Czechoslovakia. At the ICPF he set up a research group (1972-1992) working on the development of new catalytic technologies, such as the production of cinnamic acid from styrene and the synthesis of pyrethroids. Under a European Community grant (TEMPUS, 1991-1992), he taught homogeneous catalysis courses at six European universities (Montpellier, Toulouse, Giessen, Barcelona, London, Swansea). In 1992, he founded the Microwave Laboratory at ICPF and became a promoter of microwave energy in chemistry, especially in catalysis. His main scientific interests have become the microwave activation of chemical reactions, the study of microwave effects, and new industrial processes. His first industrial application

of microwaves in 2000 led to the formation of the company Microwave Glass Technology (MWGT) Co. Ltd. in Liberec, where he worked as a technical director. A great success in applied research was the microwave technology of glass melting, basalt melting for the subsequent production of fibers, drying of books after floods, and total recycling of PET bottles for terephthalic acid. These results have been protected by several Czech and International patents.

The Microwave Community mostly remembers Dr. Milan Hájek from the "1st International Conference on Microwave Chemistry", which he organized in Prague, 6-11 September 1998. The conference was attended by 140 delegates from 32 countries and attracted 7 exhibitors. According to the responses, this meeting was a great success, both scientifically and socially. Most foreign participants met in Prague for the first time. Its peculiarity was the Open Day, when lectures and the exhibition could be seen by all those interested.

The inability to "abandon the idea" was the driving force behind the organization of the "3rd International Conference on Microwave Chemistry" on 3-7 September 2006 in Brno, Czech Republic. The conference took place to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the first experiments in microwave organic synthesis performed in 1986, which heralded the new scientific discipline of Microwave Chemistry. The conference was organized by Masaryk University in Brno (Prof. Milan Potáček) in collaboration with ICPF (Dr. Milan Hájek) and endorsed by AMPERE. There were 75 attendees, mostly young chemists and PhDs from 22 countries

and included 3 exhibitors. The conference was again a great success and all participants were satisfied; Dr. Milan Hájek as well - a job very well done.

Dr. Milan Hájek was included in the Encyclopedia 2000 Outstanding People of the 20th century. He has been awarded several times during his life, e.g., Golden Crystal 1999 for a New Glass Melting Technology (Silicium Bohemica 99), Honorable mention for the Microwave Glass Furnace (Innovation 99), Glass prize 2001 for the application of microwave heating in glass melting (Czech Glass Society). In 2016, he received the Frantisek Krizik Honorary Medal for contributions in the field of technical sciences and for the implementation of the results of scientific research.

Dr. Milan Hajek's studies contributed to substantial progress in the use of microwave chemistry and technology in material and chemical processing. He wrote more than 80 journal papers, over 90 Czech and International patents, and had over 100 contributions at international conferences.

Dr. Milan Hájek was a member of the Czech Chemical Society (1978), New York Academy of Sciences (1994), AMPERE - Association for Microwave Power, Education and Research in Europe (1994), Licensing Executives Society International (1996) and National Geographic Society (1996).

Colleagues from the microwave community said (alphabetically):

- Prof. Darek Bogdal (Cracow University of Technology, Poland) "It is very sad news, I liked Milan and his attitude to people. We are very sorry."
- Prof. Cristina Leonelli (University of Modena & Reggio Emilia, Italy) "Those who had met Milan will never forget him, his humanity and knowing him was a great experience."
- Prof. Frank Marken (University of Bath, UK) "The news is very sad and I am sure Milan will be missed by his family and his colleagues alike."
- Dr. Marilena Radoiu (Microwave Technologies Consulting, Lyon, France) "Milan was a great human being and he will be sorely missed... Milan was such a kind mentor and I will always remember him for his smile and his tireless

energy - nothing ever seemed to slow him down! Let us all send our prayers to Milan's family and friends to find the peace and strength that comes in knowing that a loved one has gone to their eternal rest."

- Dr Ricky Metaxas (St John's College, University of Cambridge, UK). "Milan was always very kind to me and his participation in the biennial AMPERE conferences benefited most of the membership. All in the AMPERE community will be sad to hear of his untimely death. Personally, I will always remember the few days I spent in Prague in 1997 to discuss his pending international conference on microwave chemistry. He and Katerina had arranged an overnight stay at their country house where Margaret and I enjoyed a pit barbecue in the delightful grounds. Quite a memorable occasion."
- Dr. Edward Reszke (Ertec-Poland) "I will remember Dr. Hajek as a real patron of microwave technologies and I am glad to put my back into his research from which I have also benefit. Let his life be remembered well!"
- Dr. Chris Strauss (Australia) "He was a great friend and role model to all of us, as well as a staunch, hard-working and dedicated advocate for all of us, since the very early days of microwave chemistry. He was a gracious and generous host and he died too young."
- Prof. Didier Stuerger (University of Burgundy, Dijon, France) "There is hardly anyone left trying to understand microwave chemistry!"
- Dr. Rajender Varma (Environmental Protection Agency, USA) "I am really shocked and sad to hear this dreadful news."

Dr. Milan Hájek leaves behind his wife, Katerina, his son Alan, his daughter Katerina, and his two grandchildren.

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