

EDITORIAL

Chemistry, Jews and... Christians?

In the spring of 2013, the Journal of Thermal Analysis and Calorimetry (JTAC) has published an article dedicated to the Academician Eugen Segal, in which, its main author – Dr. Petru Budrugaec – starts with the following question: “Is Professor Eugen Segal really 80 years old?” [1]. Unfortunately on the 9th of October, despite his “infectious enthusiasm” – if I quote Dr. Budrugaec (to whom I am indebt for the information provided for this editorial), Professor Segal proved he was 80 years old and passed away.

But who was Eugen Segal?

Professor Segal was primarily known as the Head of the Romanian school of ‘Non-isothermal kinetics’ created and developed by him in the Faculty of Chemistry – University of Bucharest. He was author or co-author of more than 530 scientific articles (which exhibit more than 2200 citations), 12 patents and 10 books. Eugen Segal was also editor or reviewer of many important scientific journals.

His fundamental selfless service and contributions to the field of Physical chemistry, especially in the domains of Thermal analysis and Chemical kinetics, were recognized by numerous national and international awards. Professor Segal has presented invited lectures in: Paris, South University (1993); Ben-Gurion University, Ber Sheva, Israel (1997 and 1998); Tokio University, Japan (1998); Institute of Materials Science, Sevilla, Spain (1999); Nanjing Young University and Yangzhon University, China (2010). His biography was included in WHO’S WHO in Science in Europe, Francis Hodgson, 1972; WHO’S WHO in the World, 1996, 1997, 1998 and 1999; WHO’S WHO in Romania, 2002 and WHO’S WHO in Thermal Analysis and Calorimetry, Akademiai Kiado, Budapest, 2004.

Above all these, Eugen Segal was a devoted professor and friend to all his students and co-workers from Romania and abroad, and his disappearance deeply touched the academic community. As an example for my words I quote Judit Simon, the Editor-in-Chief of JTAC: “I owe you many thanks for your friendly gestures and amazing personal kindness during our common, long scientific life” [1].

But what is the link between Professor Segal and the field of Science & Theology? Simple. Without him, European Journal of Science and Theology wouldn’t exist!

I firstly met him when I participated at my first international conference abroad, in Balatonfüred, Hungary. He already knew me from my articles and from my professors. Apart from the scientific discussion at the conference we

had plenty of time to speak and know each other in train, on the way back to Budapest, when the locomotive engine failed and we had to wait its fixing between railway stations. I found out that he was also born Iasi, he studied at the oldest high school in the city (a continuous rival of my high school) but right after WWII, due to the turmoil of the period and also being a Romanian Jew, he had to go with his parents to Bucharest. After this first encounter we kept in touch, and he invited me, from his position in the Romanian Academy, to several scientific events in Bucharest. All that period I learned from him how to deal with the editorial work at a scientific journal, how to reach and keep your position among the mainstream journals.

About one year later, I asked him a recommendation letter in order to get a postdoctoral position. He told me to come in Bucharest. At that time, I used to have an old and tired car... It was at the end of the winter. Despite this, I decided to go to Bucharest with my wife and my elder daughter, which was about five years old at that time. He was very happy to see me when I arrived at him and he gave me the recommendation letter. We had a talk and at the end, with his inborn elegance told me: "Take this money because you came to visit me". It was like a third of my salary at that time. Despite the fact I had no money but those for the petrol back I replied: "There is no need Professor, it was my interest to come here". He insisted, almost forcing me: "You'll need them on your way back home". At that moment I felt him not as professor, neither as a friend but as a father to me.

The weather was sunny when we left Bucharest but after one hundred kilometres a terrible blizzard started. It was so dense that we were not able to see the front of our car. I was so tense and afraid that my old and tired car will stop and we'll remain in snow between localities. And furthermore, suddenly my daughter said with a trembling voice: "Daddy, look, it snows in the car!" Indeed, from the car's ceiling, very thin flakes started to fall. In a moment I remembered Andersen's story *The Little Match Girl*. God's will we succeeded to arrive in a small town where the police has blocked the traffic for that night due to safety reasons. And thanks to Eugen's money we were able to find a small motel where to spend the night, instead of sleeping in the car...

A few years latter, when I launched *European Journal of Science & Theology*, I was afraid that he will say that I'm loosing myself in a minor and possibly dangerous direction for my scientific career. It was not like this. He encouraged and supported me in all my effort.

And now I come to the Christians from the editorial's title. Another few years latter, during the period I was persecuted so hard and considered by so many such a dangerous and unwanted person (see my editorials since 2010), he and his lovely wife invited me at home for lunch together with my family. During the meal I was complaining about my situation and almost crying I told him: "No offense Professor, but I am a Christian and you are Jews. Why you, as Jews, always helped me, and all those calling themselves Christians are hurting me so much?" He answered in a voice with his wife: "BECAUSE WE HAVE THE SAME GOD!"

When I go in a Church to pray for a certain reason I usually receive an answer. Last summer, I was to a church in Bucharest in order to pray for a certain person. I received no answer to my specific prayer at that time but I remembered all the friends who made similar gestures, as Eugen did for me, together with the fragment from Matthew's Gospel (25.34-36) which is read in the Orthodox Church on the Sunday one week prior to the beginning of Easter Lent – the Sunday of the Awesome Judgement:

“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the Kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’”

There are no other words I must to say about Eugen Segal... just THANK YOU and I'll miss you Professor...

Dr. Iulian Rusu

References

- [1] P. Budrugaec and J. Simon, *J. Therm. Anal. Calorim.*, **112** (2013) 537–538.