

Heritage of Ilmar Öpik

Journal *Oil Shale*

One cannot neglect the international scientific-technical journal *Oil Shale* when speaking about scientific achievements and work of Ilmar Öpik. This journal is the only journal in the world which devotes its full attention to oil shale. At the same time it is rated as the most serious scientific journal in Estonia indexed in the Science Citation index and in the following publications of the Institute of Scientific Information (Philadelphia, the USA): SciSearch, ISI Alerting Services, Current Contents/ Engineering, Computing and Technology. *Oil Shale* is approved also by the Estonian System of Scientific Information ETIS.

Back in the 1980s the world suffering from crude oil crisis took an interest in the energy accumulated in oil shale. In the USSR Estonia became the center of oil shale research. In 1983, the members of the Estonian Academy of Sciences got the idea to start with publishing an oil shale journal. The all-Union journal *Goryutchie Slantsy* was founded in 1984. The member of Estonian Academy Anto Raukas was the person who succeeded in Moscow in getting the permission to use English-written subtitle *Oil Shale* and to add English summaries to Russian papers, what at that time was already a good practice of all-Union journals. It was a good start for a future international journal *Oil Shale*.

In 1984 the first number of the joint scientific journal of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR and the Academy of Sciences of the Estonian SSR was published. The first editor-in-chief was member of the Academy Ilmar Öpik, associate editors academicians Agu Aarna and Anto Raukas. The Editorial Board consisted of well-known researchers of the USSR, incl. Estonia. So, we can truly say that Estonia became the top center of oil shale researches in the whole USSR.

Oil Shale is concerned with geology, mining, genesis, composition, methods of processing and combustion, economical aspects and problems of environment protection. Publishing of the journal was financed by the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, administered by the Institute of Chemistry of the Estonian Academy of Sciences. The journal was published at the publishing house *Perioodika* in Tallinn.

In the journal only high-level papers were published. Good cooperation between the Academies of Estonia and Soviet Union ended in 1990, after the rebirth of the Estonian Republic in 1991. The journal was not financed by Moscow anymore, and the Estonian Academy of Sciences refused to do it as well. Editor-in-chief Ilmar Öpik took the responsibility for keeping the journal alive. New members were invited to be the members of the Editorial Board. New Editorial Board decided to continue the publishing of the journal and to reform it into an international English-language journal. The idea was good and interesting but, considering economic crisis of that time, somewhat crazy. Director of the Institute of Chemistry Prof. Jüri Kann decided to share the responsibility with Ilmar Öpik, but there were some troubles to find a new enthusiastic executive editor. Jüri Kann as the director using his position proposed Aili Kogerman, senior researcher of the institute, whether to take this post or to retire. Research work on heat resistant and fireproof polymeric compounds made in cooperation with all-Union institutes was stopped and retirement age reached. I accepted that somewhat ultimate proposal and entered the new

field not knowing how big the problems were. The financing was the main trouble for many years. Owing to the fact that Ilmar Öpik was the person highly respected by specialists in power engineering and he personally took part in reorganization of state's power policy, he always found the solution. Every year we did not know how to continue and can we announce the subscription for the next year. Eight years long we depended on the goodwill of the heads of oil shale enterprises and friends. At the beginning of every year we did not know who pays for our work. I was a pensioner but the others were not.

However we all were inspired by the uniqueness of the Estonian oil-shale industry, high level of Estonian oil-shale researches and the knowledge that the independence of our state is guaranteed by power generated in Narva power plants.

I was a quite inexperienced editor and made no difference between sheets and columns. Mrs. Natalya Vassilyeva-Kareva, editor of the Russian-language *Goryutchie Slantsy* proved to be a priceless help in practical work and she even agreed to read the proof. Other aspects were not so good. Publishing house *Perioodika* refused to do its work. We had to find a typesetter, a layout and even the paper, as the Institute of Chemistry had no paper fund. We had to pay for paper with foreign currency. Oil shale enterprise *Kiviter* paid for paper, a chemist Kaljo Käärik who lived in Sweden gave us 8500 Swedish kroons to incite the people to work. In the middle of the nineties Minister Arvo Niitenberg gave us 85,000 kroons and this donation was used for buying a modern computer. Setting, gluing and drawing by hand became the history. A new level of publishing was reached.

However, scientific papers and English language were the problems which remained very actual. Reorganization of Estonian scientific institutions diminished the share of oil shale topic, the circle of productive authors drew closer by and by and many of them passed away. We have to thank, besides associate editors A. Ots, V. Efimov and A. Raukas, all members of the Editorial Board for writing the papers and offering their academic bonds to the editorial office. Owing to active participation of foreign members of the Editorial Board, our brief case has never been empty.

English technical language has been the problem for a long time. Chemist Helvi Uibopuu joined the editorial office in 1992, Ph D. Peet-Mati Sööt, the president of Northwest Fuel Development Inc. Oregon, the USA, has offered his help by Internet.

The first attempt to register the journal at the international level in 1992 was no success as ISI accepts monthly journals only. We publish four numbers in year. The second attempt in 1994 was more successful. We asked the member of our Editorial Board Dr. C. F. Knutson, the former main geologist of the USA, to support our application. Thanks to his support, *Oil Shale* is indexed in ISI products since 1994. In 1994 we were invited to take part in the annual convention of American geologists and to make the report on the history of Estonian oil shale industry.

We reorganized publishing of the journal *Oil Shale* in conditions of cardinal changes in the world's info systems. Now, when we are in Internet (www.kirj.ee/oilshale), the interest in our journal has grown remarkably. The circle of authors has enlarged: besides Russia and Belarus, the papers come from Hungary, Germany, Spain, Morocco, Israel, Mongolia, Japan, Nigeria, Bulgaria, Jordan, Turkey, China, the USA, Canada, Australia,

Sweden, Finland, the UK, Latvia, and Lithuania. Pupils have discovered our website, and *Oil Shale* is acknowledged by *Studyweb/StudySearch* as one of the best sites.

In 1998, Editor-in-chief *emeritus* Ilmar Öpik asked for the budget financing to guarantee normal conditions for publishing. Estonian Parliament found the money, and since 1999 *Oil Shale* is published by the Estonian Academy Publishers.

Prof. Ilmar Öpik gave up his position as editor-in-chief in 1994, and Prof. Jüri Kann was editor-in-chief from 1995 to 2003. Nevertheless, I. Öpik was interested in our activities until his last days in July 2003. Member of the Academy Anto Raukas is the present editor-in-chief of our journal.

I have to say that it was a great pleasure to work together with Prof. Ilmar Öpik, high-level scientist who was a good leader, who knew how to inspire to work together and who paid no special attention on subordination.

His leadership at planning the future of Estonian power industry added much excitement in our everyday life. He shared with us his knowledge and life experience. He inspired us to collect and publish the memories of oil shale engineers.

Now, when the publishing of Estonian scientific journals is a topic of numerous discussions, is the right time to bring back the history of the journal *Oil Shale* as a part of the lifework of Ilmar Öpik, member of the Estonian Academy of Sciences.

Aili Kogerman

Executive editor of *Oil Shale*