

IVAN TH. ROSENQVIST 1916–1994



Professor Ivan Th. Rosenqvist passed away in October 1994, 78 years old. With his demise we have lost one of our most pronounced and important scientists in natural sciences. He took his masters degree (under Ellen Gleditsch and V.M. Goldschmidt) in mineralogy and petrography in January 1940 before he participated in the Finnish-Russian winter war as a skiing teacher. He returned to Norway just before the German occupation. He was a sergeant in the Engineer Corps during the battles in South Eastern and Northern Norway and made significant achievements in the military intelligence service before he was arrested in May 1942. His doctoral thesis was finished while he was in prison under sentence of death. After a reprieve in 1943 he was sent to Sachsenhausen, where he spent two years in a concentration camp.

Before the war he worked in an eminent research group with Professor V.M. Goldschmidt. Shortly after the war he continued his research at the Norwegian Road Laboratory and it was here, and later at the Norwegian Geotechnical Institute, that he developed his theories about the formation of quick clays. He was a pioneer in this research which is of great practical value.

The study of clays and clay minerals was central in Ivan Rosenqvist's research from his early days at the Norwegian Road Laboratory and Norwegian Geotechnical Institute, and he established himself as a leading figure in the international clay science community. He was president of the CIPEA (Comité International pour l'Etude des Argiles) under the International Union of Geological Sciences from 1960 to 1966. At the 1964 International Geological Congress in New Delhi, he personally initiated the transition from CIPEA to AIPEA (Association International pour l'Etude des Argiles),

which was officially established in 1966 in Jerusalem. As past president he also continued on the council of AIPEA for the first period. Ivan Th. Rosenqvist fully realized the need for international friendships and scientific cooperation across borders and political systems. He was active in the Swedish Society for Clay Research all through his professional life and was also instrumental in widening the society into the Nordic Society for Clay Research, where all Nordic countries are represented. The first International Clay Conference in Stockholm in 1963 was hosted by the Swedish Society and chaired by Ivan Th. Rosenqvist and Poul Graff-Pedersen. Rosenqvist was also chairman for the third Meeting of the European Clay Groups in 1977 in Oslo.

He had a strong belief in the importance of basic research for solving practical problems and he showed this in his own works which were based upon solid knowledge of chemistry and geology. This applied to his studies of corrosion of steel piles in soil, as well as the repair of clamping cables in the Grieg Hall, weathering processes, soil formation and the effect of acid rain on soil, forest and water.

He was an original and creative scientist of great importance for Norwegian geology. Much time was spent on administration and teaching at Oslo University, where he guided many students through their master and PhD studies.

For a number of years he gathered students and colleagues to seminars at the Tømte farm in Hurdalen where many young researchers presented their first results to Norwegian and foreign scientists. Rosenqvist was always responsible for cooking there, and many remember with joy his culinary achievements.

His life was marked by his will to take responsibility and clearly express it when anything went in the wrong direction, whether it was in science or politics. He was without compromise in his search for what he believed was true from a scientific point of view. He would often, with his originality and his style of expression, provoke his opponents. Many will remember his strong involvement in the discussions about acid precipitation. He strongly resisted politically directed research projects where he found that the conclusions had been ordered in advance. Even if there is still some discussion among scientists, his contribution to this research is highly regarded by many Norwegian and international scientists.

He was, already as a student, deeply involved in national as well as international resource policies, and much effort was put into the public report 'Norway's resource situation in a global connection'. He saw no reason to paint the future black, and he strongly disliked the 'Day of Judgement' prophecies based upon poor knowledge about our natural resources. Rosenqvist also devoted much of his time to international peace work and he was a Norwegian representative in the PUGWASH organization.

Throughout his life, Rosenqvist was strongly involved in politics and social questions, but he would never have

become a politician. For this he was too undiplomatic and without compromise.

Even if he now and then could appear brusque, he had a real, warm engagement and care for his friends, colleagues and not least for his students. Consequently, he was not only recognized for his comprehensive scientific contributions, but also liked in the scientific community.

Ivan Thoralf Koss Rosenqvist was a member of the Norwegian Science Academy and the Norwegian Technical Science Academy. In 1970 he received the Fridtjof Nansen prize for his scientific work. He was an honorary member of the Hungarian Geological Society, and an honorary doctor at Prague University.

It is an important scientist who has passed away. He will be missed by friends and colleagues, but mostly by his highly regarded wife, Annemor, and their children and grandchildren.

On behalf of colleagues and former students:

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