



**Professor Cristofor I. Simionescu
(1920–2007)**

Professor Cristofor I. Simionescu, member of the Roumanian Academy, died on August 6, 2007.

Cristofor I. Simionescu was born on July 17, 1920 in Dumbrăveni, Suceava, as the first child in a family of school masters, Ioan and Lucretia. The family moved to Iași and young Simionescu attended the prestigious “National Lyceum” then graduated the Faculty of Industrial Chemistry (*Magna cum laude*, 1944). In 1948 he was awarded a doctoral degree in Organic Technology from the former Polytechnic Institute of Iași, now the “Gh. Asachi” Technical University. He became associate professor at the Polytechnic Institute of Iași, in 1944, lecturer in 1948, and full professor in 1953. From 1949, with some minor interruptions, he was Head of Department for over 35 years. From 1953 until 1976 Professor Simionescu was the Rector of the Polytechnic Institute of Iași. He retired from the Department in 1995.

The academic career of Professor Simionescu started in 1955, when he was elected as a corresponding member of the Roumanian Academy then, in 1963, full member and President of the Iași Branch of the Roumanian Academy (1963-1974, 1989-2002). In 1977-1980 he served as temporary non-elected President of the Roumanian Academy, and from 1974 to 1990 he was its Vice President.

Professor Cristofor Simionescu was the founder of the school of polymer science in Roumania, introducing in 1948 this domain in Romanian high education curricula and publishing the first

Roumanian contributions on the synthesis of vinyl polymers by radical polymerization. In 1949, he created the Section of Cellulose, Paper and Artificial Yarns at the Faculty of Industrial Chemistry in Iasi and initiated and developed pioneering investigations on wood and lignin chemistry, proteocellulosic fibers, capitalization of the Danube Delta reed, electroinsulating papers, and vegetal cancer. In synthetic polymer science, he and his co-workers developed new research areas in macromolecular chemistry – polymer synthesis/modification through mecanochemical reactions, polymer electrochemistry, plasma induced polymer synthesis/modification, semi-conducting polymers, ultrahigh molecular weight polymers (pleistomers). Important research was initiated and pursued in the field of biopolymers, origins of life (“the cold theory”), controlled synthesis of complex macromolecular architectures, new initiators for the preparation of graft and block copolymers, biomedical polymers. All of these topics are still investigated and many ideas of Professor Simionescu were confirmed in time.

Another very important contribution of Professor Simionescu was the initiation of the Department of Macromolecules and the re-organization of “Petru Poni” Institute of Macromolecular Chemistry being its Director for 30 years (1970-2000). “Petru Poni” Institute is the only research unit in Roumania entirely devoted to the investigation and application of natural and synthetic polymers. Being now an Institute of Excellence of the Roumanian Academy, the

institute is internationally recognized and considered among the main Roumanian actors on the international scientific scene. It is undoubtedly that these achievements are in good part due to the hard work, perseverance, creativity, dedication and leadership of Professor Cristofor I. Simionescu.

During his scientific activity Professor Simionescu published more than 800 scientific papers both in Romania and abroad, coauthored 27 books, supervised more than 100 PhD theses, from which 15 were prepared by foreign students. More than 30 of his former students and close co-workers are now well known professors or scientific personalities in Roumania or in prestigious universities/research centers of the world – USA, Canada, Bulgaria, Egypt, Pakistan, Algeria, Russia, etc. His numerous and important scientific contributions, his involvement in education and science have been recognized and highly appreciated worldwide. Professor Simionescu was a member of several international scientific organizations such as Société Chimique de France (1963) and American Chemical Society (1965). He was elected as Honorary Member of the Société de Chimie Industrielle de Paris (1970) and was a member of the International Society for the Study of the Origin of Life (ISSOL). For many years he has been the national representative of Roumania to the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry (IUPAC), and member of both IUPAC Macromolecular Division and IUPAC Committee for the Teaching of Chemistry. In recognition of the scientific accomplishments, Professor Simionescu was elected a member of several prestigious academic entities: International Academy of Wood Science (1979), Academy of Sciences of the former German Democratic Republic (1982), Hungarian Academy of Science (1986), Academy of Sciences of Moldova (1991), and American Chemical Society (as its centennial in 1976). Professor Simionescu was also *Doctor Honoris Causa* of the Polytechnic School of Sofia, Bulgaria (1986).

Professor Simionescu developed a significant editorial activity. He was the founder and Editor in Chief of the international journal *Cellulose*

Chemistry and Technology (since 1967), Editor in Chief of the *Scientific Memoirs of the Roumanian Academy* (since 1977) and member of the editorial board of the *Revue Roumaine de Chimie*. He was member of the editorial/advisory boards of several well known journals dedicated to the polymer science: *Acta Polymerica*, *European Polymer Journal*, *Journal of Polymer Science – Polymer Chemistry Edition*, *Polymer Bulletin*, and *Polymers for Advanced Technologies*.

The brilliant and strong personality of Professor Simionescu was manifested in teaching and research activity joined with managerial work. In hundred of articles and essays treating important problems of education, science, culture, and social events, Professor Simionescu imposed his profound conviction that school is the key factor in the development of human society. The five volumes of his *Thoughts* summarize his concept of life and give evidence of a less known side of Professor Simionescu: the writer.

Professor Simionescu was a true son of Moldova and Iași, a region and a city he loved and always refused to leave, even being repeatedly asked. He participated actively in the intellectual life and economic development of Iași, being the initiator and promoter of the construction of several important buildings and complexes of this city, including that lodging of the Iași Branch of the Roumanian Academy.

Another less known side of the Professor Simionescu personality was the family man, devoted to his admirable wife Natalia and his sons Bogdan and Tudor, and tender grandfather for his grandchildren.

Cristofor Simionescu was perhaps the last of the great personalities of an illustrious generation of professors, founders of scientific schools, departments, laboratories, research topics. Gone in the world of shadows, he left behind many respectful former students and co-workers who will try to continue his exceptional and complex work.

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