

In memoriam

JURIS ZĀKIS (1936–2017), A LATVIAN PHYSICIST



On 18 July 2017, Juris Zākis, full member of the Latvian Academy of Sciences since 1990 (corresponding member since 1982), *Dr.habil.phys.*, professor, educator and politician, passed away.

Juris Zākis was born on 4 November 1936 in Ogre, as the second oldest in a family with five children. In 1944, he started attending Ogre Primary School and in 1951 continued education in Ogre Secondary School No. 1. During the school years, he obtained his first working experience, both as an electrician's and photo master's apprentice. In 1955, he finished the Secondary School with a Silver medal. In the autumn of the same year, he entered the Faculty of Physics and Mathematics of the Latvian State University (LSU), and in the summer of 1960 he graduated with a diploma of excellence.

After graduation from LSU, Juris Zākis began to work as a laboratory assistant at the Faculty of Physics and Mathematics of the LSU, but very soon he moved to the newly established Laboratory of Problems of Semiconductor Physics as a junior scientist. In 1964, Juris Zākis began PhD studies. In 1966, he was awarded a Candidate of Sciences degree (analogue of Ph.D. in the former Soviet Union) in Physics from Tartu University, Estonia. In 1968, Juris Zākis was appointed as the Head of the Laboratory of Problems of Semiconductor Physics. Under his supervision the laboratory expanded extensively, and in 1978, it was merged with the Laboratory of Segneto-electrics and Piezo-electrics and reorganised into the Institute of Solid State Physics of the

LSU. Juris Zākis became the first director of the institute, which position he held till 1984.

Already after graduation from the LSU, he started lecturing at the Faculty of Physics and Mathematics. In 1981, he was elected as professor at LSU. From 1984 to 1987, he was the Vice Rector for research at the LSU. In 1987, for the first time in the history of the University, democratic elections for the rector position were held, in which he was elected. In 1992 and 1996, he was re-elected to the rector position of the University, which was then renamed as the University of Latvia (UL). During his position as a rector (till 2000) at the UL, the Faculties of Theology and Medicine were restored, and several institutes, laboratories, departments and study centres were established. In 2004, he became the Rector of the School of Social Technologies.

The first stage of Juris Zākis' scientific activity was related to optical properties of alkali metal halides with various impurities. This phase ended with his defence of the Candidate of Sciences degree in 1966. In 1969–1970, he worked at Cornell, Illinois and Oregon universities in the USA, and in 1973–1974 at the University of Chicago and Massachusetts Institute of Technology. During this time, his interest turned to glass physics, which was the focus of his dissertation for the degree of the Doctor of Science, defended in Latvia, in 1975. Juris Zākis established the scientific school in the field of disordered solid states physics, which is still widely known throughout the world. In 1990, he was the chairman of the first international conference in the field. He was very

active in supporting new research directions in Latvia, in particular, solid state chemistry, which is among the internationally recognised priorities of science in Latvia.

In 1986, Professor Juris Zaķis received the honorary title of Merited Scientist of the Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic and Mstislav Keldysh Award of the Latvian Academy of Sciences. In 1988, he was awarded the Sergey Vavilov medal of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR. In 2004, Juris Zaķis was awarded the Coat of Arms Gold Pin of the University of Latvia for his lifetime contribution to the development of the UL and for scientific achievements in glass physics.

Juris Zaķis wrote several scientific monographs and popular books. He was a member of the Writers' Union of Latvia. Juris Zaķis was also known as an active politician, elected in 1989 as a member of the Congress of People's Deputies of the USSR. He was a member of the 6th Saeima (Parliament of the Republic of Latvia), and since 2005 he was several times elected to the Riga City Council.

Juris Zaķis was buried in the Riga Miķeļa Cemetery. In our memories he will remain as outstanding, widely educated, very active, and at the same time, democratic personality.

Division of Physical and Technical Sciences
of the Latvian Academy of Sciences

JURIS ZAĶIS (1936–2017), FIZIKIS

Šī gada 18. jūlijā mūžibā aizgāja zinātnieks, pedagogs, sabiedriskais darbinieks, politiķis, rakstnieks, LZA akadēmiķis un fizikas profesors Juris Zaķis. Dzimis 1936. g. 4. novembrī Ogrē, mācījies Ogres sākumskolā un 1. vidusskolā, skolu beidzis 1955. g. ar sudraba medaļu. Tālāk mācījies Latvijas Valsts universitātē Fizikas un matemātikas fakultātē (FMF), augstskolu beidzis 1960. g. ar teicamnieka diplomu. No 1960. gada sācis strādāt par laborantu FMF, bet pēc tam Pusvadītāju fizikas problēmu laboratorijā un 1968. g. kļuva par tās vadītāju. 1966. gadā aizstāvējis zinātņu kandidāta disertāciju Tartu universitātes Zinātniskajā padomē, bet 1975. gadā aizstāvējis zinātņu doktora disertāciju LZA zinātniskajā padomē Rīgā. 1978. gadā pie Universitātes tika nodibināts Cietvielu fizikas institūts, un J. Zaķis tika apstiprināts par tā direktoru, šajā amatā viņš bija līdz 1984. g.

J. Zaķis piedalījies ar referātiem daudzās zinātniskās konferencēs un simpozijos dažādās valstīs, pieredzi guvis arī ārzemju komandējumos. Strādājis Kornela, Illinoisas un Oregonas universitātēs ASV, stažējies Čikāgas universitātē un Masačūsetsas Tehnoloģiskajā institūtā.

1981. gadā J. Zaķi Universitātē ievēlēja par profesoru, gadu vēlāk — par LZA korespondētājocekli. 1986. gadā prof. J. Zaķis ieguva LPSR Nopelnīiem bagātā zinātnes darbinieka nosaukumu un LZA M. Keldiša vārdā nosauktu prēmiju. 1988. gadā viņam piešķīra Krievijas Zinātņu akadēmijas S. Vavilova medaļu. 1984. gadā prof. J. Zaķis sāka strādāt par Universitātes prorektoru, 1987. gadā tika ievēlēts par universitātes rektoru. Šajā amatā pēc divkārtējām pārvēlēšanām viņš palika līdz 2000. gadam. Viņa vadībā tika atjaunota Teoloģijas un Medicīnas fakultāte. 1990. gadā prof. J. Zaķis tika ievēlēts par LZA īsteno locekli. 2000. gadā viņam piešķīra Triju Zvaigžņu ordeņa virsnieka pakāpi.

Prof. J. Zaķim 2004. gadā par mūža ieguldījumu Latvijas Universitātes attīstībā un pētījumiem stikla fizikā tika piešķirta LU Ģerboņa Zelta zīme. Tajā pašā gadā viņš kļuva par Sociālo tehnoloģiju augstskolas rektoru.

Juris Zaķis bija pazīstams arī kā aktīvs politiķis. Viņš bija Latvijas Rakstnieku savienības biedrs, vairāku grāmatu autors.