

OPENING A NEW DECADE

On December 2, 2003, the Board of the Estonian Academy of Sciences approved a new editorial board of the journal *OIL SHALE*. The undersigned was confirmed as its editor-in-chief. A new advisory board that includes distinguished oil-shale researchers from many countries was also formed. We appreciate the great work the members of the previous editorial and



advisory boards have done during the course of years in maintaining the high scientific level of the journal and its place in the list of the CC journals.

However, there is still much to be done. The circulation of the journal should be expanded and the circle of authors widened and diversified. This is important since we are far from having subscribers and authors from all the countries where oil shale is found.

In many respects, the year 2004 is special for oil shale researchers. Eighty years ago foundation was laid to the shale oil industry in Estonia. The Oil Shale Research Institute at Kohtla-Järve will celebrate its 45th anniversary. Twenty years have passed since the time the first issue of our international scientific-technical journal *OIL SHALE* was launched. To mark these events, an exhibition "Estonian Oil Shale: Science And Industry Through Ages" was organised and held open during a month at the Academic Library in Tallinn.

Although, in many European countries, the beginning of the oil-shale-based chemical industry goes back to the 19th century the greatest success still relates to Estonia. In 1919–1925, several facilities that elsewhere in the world had been used for the retorting of coal and brown coal, partly also oil shale, were tested in producing oil from Estonian oil shale. As the specific properties of Estonian kukersite oil shale called for a specific approach, a special shale oil laboratory was established at the State Oil Shale Industry in Kohtla-Järve. Paul Kogerman – father of the Estonian oil shale chemistry – founded in 1925 a laboratory for oil shale exploration at Tartu University. Later it was transferred to Tallinn. Since 1927, the Estonian oil shale processing products came to be exported in ever growing amounts to several countries (Germany, Sweden, Norway, Belgium, Finland, Latvia, etc.).

The price of the petrol produced from local oil shale proved 30–50% lower than that of imported one.

Germany who was actively preparing for war took a keen interest in the Estonian oil shale industry. During the years of German occupation, oil shale mining and processing were controlled by the company *Baltische Ölgesellschaft in Estland* with its headquarters in Berlin. The following Soviet occupation brought about a real oil shale boom. The world's largest oil shale mines, oil-shale-based thermal power plants and processing factories were founded in Estonia. Oil shale mining was subordinated to the USSR Ministry of Coal Industry and thermal processing to the USSR Ministry of Oil Chemical Industry. At the same time, scientific research also gained in momentum, particularly in the institutes of the Academy of Sciences of the Estonian SSR. Oil shale became, is and will evidently remain for a long time the backbone of the Estonian power industry. The high level of oil shale research in Estonia deserved international recognition.

In 1968, a UN symposium on mining and exploitation of oil shale with participants from 29 countries was held in Tallinn. Estonia became a reference area for oil shale research. This served as a prerequisite for launching the oil shale journal in 1984. A representative international symposium on oil shales took place in 2003. The basic papers presented at that symposium were published in a special volume of our journal.

Twenty years have passed since the foundation of the journal *OIL SHALE*. From the initially Russian-language publication it has turned into an international English-language scientific-technical journal whose authors include leading scientists from many countries: the USA, Japan, China, Russia, Belarus, Israel, Jordan, Turkey, etc. I have stood at the cradle of the journal and been a member of its editorial board since the very beginning. I have to admit that the journal has seen better days. The number of oil shale researchers in Estonia has sharply decreased. The situation is alarming because the oil shale-based power industry in Estonia employs 15% (together with secondary employment up to 20%) of inhabitants in eastern Estonia. Mining and processing of oil shale has resulted in serious environmental pollution. In 2002, 91% (more than a billion cu m) of the water consumed in Estonia was used in the power industry. About 97% of air pollution, 86% of total waste and 23% of water pollution in Estonia come from the power industry. All this shows the importance of oil shale studies and need for such a journal as *OIL SHALE* both in Estonia and in the world.

I wish much strength and energy to the new Editorial Board, to the members of the Advisory Board, to our old and new authors.



Anto RAUKAS
Editor-in-Chief