

Graduate in mineralogy, petrography and crystallography at the Universities of Kiel and Freiburg (Germany) in the 50s; received a promotion magna cum laude in 1959 with the theme, "About the coherence between crystal structure and floatability"; Joined the Federal Institute for Geoscience and Natural Resources (BGR) in 1959 and became responsible for all engineering geological and geotechnical activities of the BGR in Germany and abroad, with particular emphasis on the construction of tunnels and caverns, the disposal of radioactive and chemical/toxic waste, engineering seismology and landslides mitigation, until his retirement in 1998; lecturer at the University of Kiel from 1969; treasurer and then president of the IAEG; deputy chairman of the rock mechanics section of the German Geotechnical Society; chairman of the salt mechanics working group of the German Geotechnical Society; chairman of the IAEG's waste disposal commission; chairman of the "International Relations of the IAEG" coordinating committee; expert for the German research community in the field of geoscience and waste disposal; member of the German committee for the construction and design of underground structures (DAUB). Chevalier dans l'ordre des Palmes Académiques (France) in 1982; IAEG Hans Cloos Medal in 1992.

I was elected president of the IAEG in New Delhi (India), at the time of the 4th international congress in 1982, and succeeded Evgeny M Sergeev. At that time, I was already very much aware of the executive committee's duties and responsibilities, as well as the problems of the IAEG, as I had previously been the Association's treasurer from 1972 to 1982, with my German colleague Richard Wolters at my side, acting as secretary general. My commitment to the Association was explained in my "President's letter" published in newsletter No. 11 dated December 1984. My intention was to strengthen the role and status of both engineering geology in general and individual engineering geologists within the community of geological and engineering scientists. I understood that, at that time, the most important task was to promote the future advancement of the IAEG in accordance with the aims of the Association described in the statutes, and as stated in an official declaration (initiated by honorary president Marcel Arnould) of the IAEG general assembly in Paris (France) in 1980 (see newsletter No. 9): It is essential to, "draw the attention of all specialists in engineering geology and related sciences to the necessity of taking into account, during the design and construction of all projects, not only of their reliability and efficiency, but also, and to an equal extent, of the problems of protection and rational use of the environment".

Consequently, I tried to intensify the work of the IAEG commissions and I insisted that they publish their work in the IAEG bulletins and/or at IAEG international symposia. During the term of my presidency, this aim was excellently fulfilled by the organizers of the following IAEG-sponsored symposia (at some of them I gave a welcome address on behalf of the IAEG):

- "Soil and rock investigations by in-situ testing", Paris (France) in 1983, organized by André Peter;
- "Engineering geology and underground construction", Lisbon (Portugal) in 1983, organized by Ricardo Oliveira;
- "Symposium on aggregates», Nice (France) in 1984, organized by Louis Primel;
- "Management of hazardous chemical waste sites", Winston-Salem (USA) in 1985, organised together with the AEG by the IAEG US national group (George Kiersch);
- "Engineering geological problems in seismic areas", Bari (Italy) in 1986, organized by George Manfredini and Vincenzo Cotecchia;
- Colloquium, "Engineering geology related to nuclear waste disposal projects" (Michael Langer / Pedro Stipanovic) and colloquium, "Engineering geology in geothermal engineering projects" (Andrea Merla / Ricardo Mon) in Buenos Aires (Argentina) in 1986; both colloquia within the 5th IAEG congress organized by Horacio V. Rimoldi and CA Di Salvo.

At the 27th international geological congress in Moscow (Russia) in 1984, engineering geology was represented by Marcel Arnould, Evgeny Sergeev and me. There were two intersectional symposia:

- Application of the airborne and satellite methods in engineering geological and hydrogeological mapping;
- Engineering geological and hydrogeological studies related to the economic development of permafrost regions.

The good work of our commissions ensured us a good reputation in international scientific fields such as site investigation (David Price), mapping (Milan Matula, Arno Pahl), landslides (John Hutchinson) and waste disposal (Carl-Olof Morfeldt and Michael Langer). Also, the UNESCO book "Landslide Zonation", which was coordinated by vice president David Varnes together with the landslide commission, gained the attention of a widespread audience, not only of engineering geologists. Without question, it was due to these facts that I was invited by UNESCO to participate in a preparatory meeting for a proposed International Geoscience Programme (IGCP) project, "Regional crustal stability and geological hazards". This meeting took place in Beijing (China) in 1985. Approved by UNESCO, this important international project was carried out later in cooperation with the Chinese IGCP national group (represented by the Institute of Geomechanics of the Academy of Geological Sciences) and the IAEG. In newsletter No. 12, I informed the IAEG national groups about the main contents of this sizeable project, which provided an opportunity for engineering geologists to cooperate to minimize the risks and damages that arise from natural and man-made hazards.

At the time of my presidency the cooperation between the IAEG and our sister geotechnical societies, the ISSMFE and the ISRM, was very good. I maintained

these good relationships not only through attending the permanent coordinating secretariat of the societies, but also through my personal, friendly relationships with the other presidents; for instance, I attended a meeting with Victor de Mello, president of the ISSMFE, and Ted Brown, president of the ISRM, at Ricardo Oliveira's home in Lisbon (Portugal) in 1983.

Highlights of my presidency were the presentations of the Hans Cloos Medal to Leopold Müller in 1984 and to Evgeny Sergeev in 1986. Müller was unable to be present in Moscow to receive the medal, therefore I visited him in Salzburg together with Louis Primel and André Peter on the occasion of the 33rd geomechanics colloquium organised by the Austrian Society for Geomechanics in 1984. The medal was awarded to Müller during a special and very emotional ceremony at the beginning of a concert offered to all the participants of the colloquium.

Evgeny Sergeev was also unable to attend the IAEG congress in Buenos Aires (Argentina). Therefore, following an invitation of the Russian Academy of Science to give a lecture on radioactive waste disposal, I visited Sergeev in Moscow and presented him with the medal in a small ceremony at the University of Moscow followed by a typical Russian party in the evening. The following week I visited two old IAEG friends since my time as treasurer of the IAEG: Iosif Buachidze in Tbilisi and George Ter-Stepanian in Erivan. Valentina Shibakova accompanied me for the whole trip as a competent guide and translator.

I also remember very well my trips to Arab countries. In 1983, the second Arab seminar on underground storage of oil and gas was held in Amman (Jordan). This seminar had been organised, among others, by the Union of Jordanian Geologists in cooperation with the Hagconsult of Sweden (represented by Carl-Olof Morfeldt, chairman of the IAEG commission on "Underground waste disposal") with the aim of developing and exchanging technology between the countries. I gave an opening address about the responsibility of engineering geologists in the field of underground storage and I remember a very impressive trip to Petra, the old city of Nabataeans. This seminar followed the first meeting in Baghdad (Iraq) in 1978.

All these scientific events, technical meetings and travels during my term as treasurer, president and then past president, resulted in long lasting friendships with many colleagues around the world, for which I am deeply thankful. In particular, I may mention my colleagues from the French national group Marcel Arnould, Louis Primel and André Peter, from the Russian national group Victor Osipov and Valentina Shibakova, my president colleagues Owen White (with whom I share the hobby of stamp collecting), Ricardo Oliveira, Paul Marinos and also Carl-Olof Morfeldt and his son Daniel. Some of them attended a scientific colloquium in Hanover in 1994 on the occasion of the celebration of my 60th birthday and honoured me by an oral presentation.

I passed on the presidency of the IAEG at the general assembly in Buenos Aires (Argentina) in 1986 to Owen White. I hope that, due to my activities in the IAEG, I have contributed to the promotion of engineering geology worldwide. Thank you for giving me this chance.

Michael Langer