



## Mikhail N Libenson (1940–2004)

For several years, before he became a member of the International Governing Board of EUROSCIENCE, Misha Libenson was a strong supporter of our association. He held the view that Europe is one family of nations with a common scientific culture and that Russia should play a full part in EUROSCIENCE. He was very active in promoting this view, both in Moscow and in St Petersburg, and will be remembered by all of us for his

warm, friendly and open-minded approach to all the problems faced by the scientists today. Russian science has lost a fine scholar, and we express our sympathy to Mrs Libenson and her family. A number of EUROSCIENCE members are also members of the St Petersburg Association of Scientists and Scholars (SPASS) in which Misha Libenson played a very important role.

**Jean-Patrick Connerade**

*The following tribute is based on a text that was kindly sent to ES News by Nelli Didenko, on behalf of Professor Libenson's friends and colleagues in Russia. A number of us remember with affection our last encounter with Misha in Paris, in early February, where he was attending the recent meeting of the EUROSCIENCE Board. We were shocked and saddened at learning of his sudden death from Nelli Didenko. Ed.*

Professor Mikhail N Libenson, who died suddenly on February 23, 2004 at the age of 64, was born in Leningrad in 1940. He graduated from the Electro-Physical Faculty of the V.I.Ulyanov Electro-Technical Institute, Leningrad, and was subsequently awarded a PhD (1969) in solid-state physics for the research he carried out under the supervision of Yakov Imas. He then began working as an engineer in the Laboratory of Microelectronics, under the supervision of Staros and Berg (prototypes of the characters in a novel, *Escape to Russia*, by the famous Russian writer Daniil Granin), later becoming head of the Laboratory of Microlithography and Laser Technology. In 1990, he became Head of the Laboratory of Surface Photophysics at the S.I. Vavilov State Optical Institute, St Petersburg and in 1991, was appointed Professor at the St Petersburg Institute of Fine Mechanics and Optics, posts he held up to his untimely death.

Early on, Mikhail Libenson made a number of pioneering contributions, particularly to the fields of high-power optics and photo-physics, where he developed basic concepts about laser lithography and the action of lasers on thin films. His fundamental research in the mechanisms of laser-matter interaction became a classic in the field. His scientific input was truly prolific: he was the author of over 200 publications and of three research monographs on

high-power optics and laser technology, and of some 20 patents. In addition, he organised a number of prestigious national and international conferences on laser-matter interactions, including the conference on *Laser Radiation Photophysics* (Los-Angeles, USA, 1993), which he chaired.

But his scientific interests stretched well beyond physics, and he developed new mathematical and synergetic methods for the study of conflict theory. Indeed, he had been due to present a paper on this topic at the recent Workshop on "Scientists, Investigation and Mitigation of Tensions in Society" which took place in St Petersburg (April 17-20 2004). In fact, this meeting has been dedicated to the memory of Professor M Libenson (see <http://www.es-ru-arw.fromru.com>).

Mikhail Libenson will also be remembered for actively promoting the status of science in Russia: for example, as member (since 1993) of the Coordination Council of the St Petersburg Association for Scientists and Scholars (SPASS), and more recently, as Chairman of this association. He was also closely involved in the work of the Committee for Science and Education of the State Duma as Vice-Chairman of its Scientific Council. In addition, he helped to strengthen contacts between scientists both within Russia and around the world as co-founder, and first vice-president (1990-1992) of the Russian Chapter of The International Society for Optical Engineering (SPIE) and of course, as a co-founder (1997) and member of the Governing Board of *EUROSCIENCE*.

We are deeply saddened by the death of Mikhail Libenson, whom we will remember as a highly creative and dynamic person, and as a man of absolute integrity, in our pursuit of the many activities that he initiated.