

DR. ȘTEFAN ANDREI SZOBOTKA (1949 - 2013)



On the morning of May 24, 2013, our beloved colleague and friend Istvan (Ștefan), left us forever, after a long and unjust suffering, in 'Sf. Ioan' hospital in Bucharest. Until the last moment, he hoped for alleviation of his suffering and, more, he hoped for full recovery, wishing to put his personal affairs in order and continue his work in the research institute. Unfortunately, it was not to be so, the disease defeating him, eventually.

He was born on October 18, 1949 in the town of Bega in Timisoara, in a family of intellectuals - his father was an architect and a sculptor and his mother was a lyrical artist. Ștefan started elementary school in Bucharest (1963-1967) and went on to the Hungarian high school where he graduated with a baccalaureate degree. A passion for earth sciences led him to pursue his interest by attending the Technical School of Geology (1968-1970), and, after military service, he received his BS in geology from the University of Bucharest, the Department of Geology and Geography (1972-1977).

Upon graduation, he was hired, by government decision, by the Geological prospecting for solid mineral substances (currently, SC "Prospecțiuni" SA). From September 1977 to April 1983, he worked at the Department of geochemical prospecting, as a prospector.

In the fall of 1983, he changed his job and started working for the Institute of Geology and Geophysics (now, the Geological Institute of Romania), as a scientific researcher and as a scientific researcher - rank III, at the Laboratory of Marine geology and sedimentology (LGMS), led by Prof. Nicolae Panin. In 1985, Prof. Panin recommended him for a Soviet oceanographic expedition to study the North Pacific polymetallic nodules in the Clarion Clipperton fracture zone. For five months, he lived intensely aboard "Acad A. Karpinsky"

research vessel and that fulfilled his childhood dream: to see the ocean and explore its mysteries hidden in the depths! This journey crystallized his ideas for his doctoral thesis.

LGMS became a 'research institute of national interest' - at first, the Romanian Centre for Marine Geology and Geoecology (1993-1994), and, afterwards, the National Research and Development Institute for Marine Geology and Geoecology (GeoEcoMar) - research diversified, several national and international projects were implemented and thus, the researcher Ștefan Szobotka showed strong commitment to his work, putting his skills to full use, either as a regular member of the team or as a project - or theme - manager. In both positions, Ștefan proved true managerial skills and he was tactful, friendly, warm and affectionate and had a brilliant sense of humor. Well-educated and refined, Ștefan had lots of expertise and was dexterous - presumably, an inheritance from his paternal grandfather, an armourer in the old Austro-Hungarian army.

He specialized in geochemistry, sedimentology and sedimentary petrography. In the academic year 1986-1987, he taught sedimentary petrology, as an assistant, associated to the Department of Mineralogy/University of Bucharest, and coordinated students' practical work. In 1990, he became a PhD student, passed the preliminary examinations (1992) and the required specialty papers (1994) and, in 1998, he publicly defended his thesis called "Petrological and geochemical studies of abyssal sediments of the Central Pacific, with special attention to polymetallic nodules" ("*Studiul petrologic și geochimic al sedimentelor abisale din zona centrală a Oceanului Pacific, cu privire specială asupra nodurilor polimetaliice*"). Thereon, Ștefan Szobotka became the only qualified Romanian researcher in the field and he made it known, at conferences, at the Geological Institute of Romania, at the

Institute for Geological Prospecting and Exploration/IPEG Miercurea Ciuc, and to students from the Faculty of Geology and Geophysics, at the University of Bucharest .

He was a member of the Geological Society of Romania, a member of the Scientific Council at GeoEcoMar, and the recipient of "Grigore Cobălcescu" Prize of the Romanian Academy.

Ștefan was a man of character , particularly affable, to those close to him and also, to other people around him; he was a man of his word, the perfect teammate, he showed respect for other people's opinion, and, when supporting his own views, he had strong arguments. His undisguised, open way made him loved and respected. Passionate about waters and boats of all kinds, he thoroughly prepared the annual ex-

peditions on the Danube and the Danube Delta , attentive to details and, especially, careful to form a team governed by harmony, understanding and mutual respect. He suffered when he heard about or witnessed unpleasant scenes, not understanding why the pleasant time we spent as a team may be overshadowed by pride and meaningless claims. He would not offend anybody and did not bear grudges, but he developed a system of evaluation , with three points where the persons who accumulated all the three points were blackballed from among those he generously trusted!

Ștefan's disappearance leaves a huge void in our heart . May his blue eyes and his smile be there forever, on endless waterways and roads, surrounded by a halo wreath of white flowers, swaying on the seawaves for eternal remembering.

Titus BRUSTUR

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