

Obituary: Prof. Siegfried Niese 1932 Oct 23–2021 Apr 02

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A few weeks ago, we received the sad news that Prof. Siegfried Niese passed away. The radiochemistry community in Germany, Hungary, and all over the world mourn his death.

Siegfried Niese studied chemistry at the University of Leipzig in German Democratic Republic. In 1959 he was awarded the PhD degree for his thesis on thorium extraction. In 1972, he received the Doctor of Sciences degree for investigations of semiconductor materials with fast neutrons. In 1980 he became a professor of the Academy of Sciences of the German Democratic Republic.

He worked at the Central Research Institute for Nuclear Physics in Rossendorf near Dresden (until 1991 ZfK

Rossendorf, then VKTA Rossendorf) during 1956–97 in various capacities. At the end of 1957 when the research reactor at Rossendorf started its operation, Prof. Niese became involved in neutron activation analysis and dedicated rest of his research career in it. He became the Leader of the Activation Analysis Group in 1960. He published many excellent papers on NAA and gave numerous lectures on this topic. He was an author and/or a co-author of four scientific and three historical books [1–4], and over 100 papers in internationally reputed scientific journals.

Since 1961, Prof. Niese was a member of the Chemical Society. Until 1990, he served as the Chairman of the working group of nuclear analytical chemistry, and was a Member of the Physical and Geological Societies and the Societies of Radiation Safety and Nuclear Technology.

Prof. Niese started the International Conference on Nuclear Analytical Chemistry in Dresden in 1975 and

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continued it until 1991. After the unification of Germany, he continued his work in VKTA Rossendorf. He was involved in many research projects there including further development of the Underground Laboratory Felsenkeller. In 2000, he initiated a new International Workshop in Rossendorf on Radioanalytical Chemistry.

After his retirement, Prof. Niese dedicated himself to the studies on history of radioactivity. Perhaps his most important contribution was the book on the life and work of György Hevesy (Georg de Hevesy), the discoverer of neutron activation analysis. Thanks to Prof. Niese's work, Hevesy was recognized again in Germany; he was posthumously awarded the Order of Outstanding Personalities in Freiburg where he had his former laboratory.

The Hungarian radiochemists are especially grateful to prof. Niese for his profound and comprehensive biography on György Hevesy. The book was translated into Hungarian in 2019, and an English translation is also planned. Prof. Niese did not just write an enjoyable book on the interesting life of the great Hungarian radiochemist, but he also described with great empathy and understanding the complicated historic times of Hevesy's many home countries, namely Hungary, Austria, United Kingdom, Germany, Denmark, and Sweden.

We were fortunate to celebrate together the 50th death anniversary of György Hevesy in 2016 during the first International Conference of Radioanalytical and Nuclear Chemistry (RANC-2016) held in Budapest. We know Prof. Niese as a very active scientist whose cheerful nature will serve as an example for all of us.

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