

In Memoriam Professor Georg Zundel

Georg Zundel, a founding member and generous supporter of INES, died on March 11, 2007 in Salzburg/Austria at the age of 76 years.

We will remember him as an attentive observer of the environment and society, as well as of himself. Through various initiatives and personal engagement he contributed to a more humane society and a more peaceful co-existence of countries. Quite early on he was aware of the enormous danger for our planet posed by the nuclear threat and the environmental and resource crisis.

Georg Zundel studied physics and in 1967 he became Professor of Physical Chemistry at the University of Munich. He dedicated his scientific work mainly to research on the hydrogen bond, mainly using infrared spectroscopy. He discovered the cation $H_5O_2^+$ and its electrochemical relevance as well as the "Zundel Continuum", a strong absorption feature in the infrared. Today the cation $H_5O_2^+$ is known as the "Zundel ion" in the scientific literature.

As many other citizens the young Georg Zundel opposed the nuclear armament of Germany as it was being pursued by the government of the day. Zundel decisively rejected nuclear weapons for political and ethical reasons. The US bombings on Hiroshima and Nagasaki were a dire warning for him. The "Göttinger Erklärung" (Göttingen Declaration) of April 12, 1957, an appeal of 18 well-known German nuclear physicists - including a commitment to not engage in developing nuclear weapons - was a guiding motivation for his own actions against nuclear mass destruction weapons. Georg Zundel became part of the peace movement of the fifties - distributing flyers at the university, participating and organizing protest actions and demonstrations.

All his life he remained convinced that a peaceful world has to be a world without nuclear weapons and that scientists carry a responsibility to inform the public about the dangers of weapons of mass destruction. In the first half of the 1990's he actively contributed to the foundation of the International Network of Engineers and Scientists for Global Responsibility (INES). Through the Berghof Foundation (see below) he generously supported INES throughout its first years.

From the beginning of the early seventies he passionately participated in societal discussions. He supported peace initiatives on national and international levels and conflict resolution projects in various countries in the world.

He dedicated a great part of his power to the Berghof Foundation for Conflict Research whose founder he was in 1971. The foundation developed into a corner-stone of peace research in Germany. With his whole heart he was engaged in sustaining and protecting the environment. An ecological consciousness marked his personal and public activities.

The responsibility of the scientist might have been the essential motivation for his work, the support of whistleblowing and whistleblowers a central challenge. Influenced by the founder and initiator, the Berghof Foundation mainly promotes interdisciplinary, practically oriented projects for constructive conflict resolution as well as projects on key questions of science and ethics. The Berghof Research Center (www.berghof-center.org) was founded in 1993. It is supported by the Foundation and pursues activities in the area of conflict work.

Georg Zundel was awarded the Grand Cross of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany in the year 2003 honouring his life's work.

With him we lose a selfless and always supportive, a courageous and fighting spirit for a peaceful world.

By Reiner Braun, member of the INES Council and Claus Montonen, Chair of the INES Executive Committee