

## Tadeus Reichstein (1897–1996) – An obituary

Tadeus Reichstein, Nobel Laureate and Foreign Fellow of the Indian Academy of Sciences, passed away on August 1, 1996 at the age of 99 years.

T. Reichstein was born on July 20, 1897 at Wloclawek, Poland. Due to unsettled conditions in Eastern Europe, he emigrated initially to Berlin and later to Zurich where he was granted the Swiss citizenship in 1914. Reichstein studied at the Zurich Technical University, graduating with a degree in Chemical Engineering in 1920. For his work on the odiferous constituents of coffee under the supervision of Hermann Staudinger, he was awarded the doctorate degree. This work formed the basis for the production of powdered coffee.

Reichstein joined the Zurich Technical University as a lecturer in 1930 in the new research specialty of physiological chemistry. He was promoted to assistant professor in 1934 and associate professor in 1937. During this period he worked on the structure and synthesis of carbohydrates, a field which he pioneered, especially in the crystallization of carbohydrates. During these years, his work on the synthesis of vitamin C involving an oxidation

process is noteworthy and several thousand tons of this vitamin are manufactured worldwide using his process. In



1938, he moved to Basel University as the head of the pharmacy department where he did the pioneering work on the isolation, structure, partial synthesis and biological effects of the adrenal cortex hormones and also cardiac

glycosides. Several corticosteroids were named after him. In 1950, he shared the Nobel prize for Physiology and Medicine for this work along with P. S. Hench and E. C. Kendall.

In 1950, Reichstein became the first director of the world renowned Institute of Organic Chemistry at Basel and retired in 1967. During the last 25 years, Reichstein became interested in chemotaxonomy and was responsible for the classification of ferns.

Reichstein received many honours and awards, the most important being the Royal Society's Copley Medal (1968) besides the Nobel Prize for Physiology and Medicine. The Swiss Society of Pharmaceutical Sciences created the Reichstein Medal for excellence in pharmaceutical sciences in honour of Reichstein.

Reichstein had many Indian collaborators, most notably S. Rangaswami. Tadeus Reichstein married Lousie von Ufford in 1927, and is survived by a daughter.

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