

## Arie Jacobus Johannes Ooms

Jack Ooms, a founding member of the Advisory Board of the Harvard Sussex Program, died at his home in Spain on 6 September 1999. He was 74.

Both as a public servant and as a private citizen after 23 years at the head of Dutch chemical defence research, he worked for the eradication of chemical warfare, which he believed could best be achieved by a combination of good antichemical protection and international chemical arms control. The existence today of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons is testimony to his efforts, within the Netherlands, within NATO, in Geneva and finally in The Hague.

In 1942 Ooms entered the University of Utrecht to study chemistry. In 1943 he refused to sign the Nazi loyalty declaration and made his way to England by way of Spain and Portugal, much of it on foot. He joined the US Army and, in August 1944, returned to mainland Europe with the Allied landings in southern France. It was not until 1948 that he obtained his MSc degree at Utrecht, whereupon he was drafted into the Netherlands Army for his three years of national service. This took him to the newly created Chemical Laboratory of the National Defence Research Organization, where he finished his studies in 1952 and of which, in 1965, he was made director. The scientific research for which he became best known was done during those years, its first public manifestation being his doctoral dissertation for the University of Leiden in 1961, *The Reactivity of Organic Phosphorus Compounds towards Certain Esterases*. When the Chemical Laboratory was merged with the nearby Technological Laboratory RVO-TNO in 1978 to become the TNO Prins Maurits Laboratory, Ooms was made director of the new establishment and remained so until his retirement in 1988.

From 1969 onwards, Ooms served as technical adviser to the Netherlands delegation at the Geneva disarmament conference, a function which, uniquely among all the delegations, he continued until negotiation of the Chemical Weapons Convention was complete, more than 20 years later. He served a complementary function thereafter for his country's delegation to the OPCW Preparatory Commission.

In 1991 he was appointed to the UN Special Commission then being established to oversee Iraq's renunciation of weapons of mass destruction. Both in New York and in Iraq, he brought to this work too his customary wisdom, skills, energy and forthrightness. The work was continuing to engage him in the months immediately prior to his death.

Jack is greatly missed by his many friends and by those who knew and were inspired by his work against chemical weapons. He is survived by his beloved wife Marjan.