Vitali Kaftanov 1931–2006

Vitali Kaftanov died on 14 September at the age of 74. He was an outstanding Russian physicist, professor and former deputy-director of the Institute of Theoretical and Experimental Physics (ITEP) in Moscow. He was born on 3 December 1931 in Moscow to the family of well known Soviet scientist, Sergey Kaftanov. In 1954 he graduated with honours from Moscow State University, where he specialized in nuclear physics.

In the mid-1950s international contacts began to develop between Soviet scientists and their foreign colleagues. Fluent in English, the young physicist Kaftanov was included in a Soviet government delegation, which participated in international conferences on the peaceful use of atomic energy taking place in Geneva under the auspices of the UN. It was here that Kaftanov met colleagues from the recently founded CERN. He had by then become a scientific researcher at ITEP, where he was working on similar issues to his CERN colleagues.

In 1960 the directorate of CERN made a proposal to the Soviet Academy of Sciences that Soviet scientists could participate in international experiments, and Kaftanov became the first candidate for this role. From then on he had close relations with CERN, spending most of his life in Geneva.

He was also involved in developing scientific technology and cultural collaboration between Russia and Switzerland. For a long time he was head of the neutrino research programme of ITEP, which involved accelerators at CERN, the Institute for High Energy Physics at Protvino and Fermilab.

For the past 15 years Kaftanov was a member of the CMS project at CERN and was one of the founders of the Russia and Dubna Member States (RDMS) CMS Collaboration. As a founding member of the magnet technical board, he was involved in designing and building the CMS magnet. He was also the RDMS technical coordinator for a long time and was key in assembling and commissioning the CMS detector.

Kaftanov’s collaborative attitude and devotion to his work won him high regard and the admiration of all who knew him. He will be sorely missed. His colleagues and friends at the CMS collaboration.