In Memoriam: Bernhard Dorsch

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Professor Dr.-Ing. Bernhard Dorsch from Darmstadt, Germany passed away on July 2nd, 2004 after a long and severe illness. He started his career at the German Aerospace Research (Deutsche Forschungs- und Versuchanstalt für Luft- und Raumfahrt) also known as DFVLR and later DLR in Oberpfaffenhofen. During his time at DLR he held visiting positions at the NASA Ames Research Center and at the Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, Maryland. His advanced concatenated error-correcting scheme flew on the Mars-Mariner spacecraft in 1971 and is documented in his paper “Error control coding using a concatenated code”. His widely cited paper about soft decoding of block codes “A decoding algorithm for binary block codes and J-ary output channels”, which appeared in the May 1974 issue of the IEEE Transactions on Information Theory attacked a subject which is still interesting today.

In 1982 Bernhard Dorsch was appointed to a chaired professorship at the Technical University Darmstadt where he was engaged in teaching courses on the fundamentals of electrical engineering, coding and information theory. His research resulted in some twenty-five doctoral dissertations. His institute was always open to visitors, especially for Soviet and Russian scientists at a time when such contacts were not so easy. He and his wife Renate were perfect hosts for those guests at their beautiful home in Landsberg, Bavaria. Professor Dorsch was one of the first researchers in the seventies in Germany to be active in the areas of coding and information theory. As the cochair of the 1997 International Symposium on Information Theory in Ulm he once again provided leadership to this field in his home country and worldwide. Bernhard will be missed by his family, friends, colleagues and students.