

OBITUARY

Lubomír Nátr

12th January 1934 – 7th July 2013



Professor Lubomír Nátr, a member of the Editorial Board of Photosynthetica, passed away after a long illness on 7th July 2013.

He grew up as a son of a commercial gardener in Jistebník, Silesia. He had got his basic education at the Gymnasium of Bílovec, with specialization in mathematics. Close interest in plant life and severe rationality of mathematical reasoning shaped his career. After receiving his Master's degree in plant physiology at J.E. Purkyně University (currently, Masaryk University) in Brno, he started his career as an assistant and later as a scientist and grew up to the position of a head of department at the State Research Institute of Cereals in Kroměříž. His topic was photosynthetic productivity of cereals that earned him PhD/CSc degree in 1964. Luboš habilitated (associated professor) and the title of habilitation script „The Methods of Measuring the Rate of Photosynthesis“ indicated his further scientific interest. In 1976, he joined the Faculty of Science at Charles University in Prague and led the Department of Plant Physiology, which became his permanent place up to the very end. Ten years later, he received the highest scientific grade (DrSc.) and in 1987, he was appointed a professor of plant physiology at Charles University.

Luboš gained international recognition of plant biologists during his stay in 1967-68 as Maître de Conférence associé at the University of Grenoble, where he gave lectures on plant nutrition and water regime. Later he was a visiting fellow at the University of Aberdeen and spent sojourns at the University of Hamburg and at Rothamsted Experimental Station in Harpenden (England).

Luboš remained credited as a „classical“ plant physiologist ignoring the majority interest in Arabidopsis and stayed focused on cereals, specially on crop productivity through photosynthetic output. He blended his rich field experience with sophisticated methodology and modelling. Luboš belonged to such rare physiologists who dealt with functions at all structural levels from cell to

field. This indicates from his textbooks as well as manuscripts that he wrote for his students and/or for specialists in agrobiolgy (in Czech language). These include „Biological Background of Agriculture“ (1983), „Biological Background of Crop Production“ (1998), and „Mathematical Models in Plant Nutrition“ (1999). With his expertise in photosynthesis, he looked for ideotype in plant morphology, leaf surface, leaf orientation, sink and source strength of ear elements, flag leaf importance, number of shoots, duration of vegetation period, etc. Search for such plants was not only the aim of his experiments but nurtured also his modelling approach.

Step by step he extended his views to problems on the global scale: The man and plant world which is the precondition for his existence; how much nature do we have and how much nature do we use; man's impact on land and soils; food security and climate change; carbon dioxide effects, paying for environmental services and linking ecology and economics; ecological footprint; sustainable world. He blended the cluster of new concepts with ecological ethics spiced by a bit of philosophy. However, Luboš never went astray from his firm stand of the scientist who recognized only calculated facts and ample literature survey including contradictory arguments. His new titles (in Czech) – „Plants, Man and sustainable Life“ (1988), „The World as a Glasshouse. Should we be afraid of CO₂?“ (2005), „The Development permanently nonsustainable“ (2006) and lastly the succus of Luboš's ideas „Man or Nature? Ecosystem Services“ (2011) are really thoughts providing and relevant to current issues. The last extensive work was awarded with a prestigious price of Josef Hlávka (Czech Literary Fund) and that of Chancellor of Charles University for the best publication in life sciences. The message is rather loud; unless we do not change our attitudes, the world would soon occur at the brink of collapse – a well substantiated predictment of Cassandra at the beginning of 21st century.

Apart from scientific and teaching activities, Luboš led the academic community of Czech Plant Biologists. Since 2005, he was a chairman of the Czech Society of Experimental Plant Biology and the editor-in-chief of its Bulletin. Bulletin became not only a source of information but it was transformed into a chronicle of historical events, jubilees and it gained deserved visibility. As a representative of Czech Plant Biologists, he always took care to maintain and strengthen the links with Slovak colleagues. He often visited universities in Bratislava and Nitra to deliver lectures or preside over committees for defence of dissertation theses. The gold medal awarded to him by Faculty of Science of Komenský University in Bratislava is a testimony to this fact.

Luboš will be remembered as an outstanding, charismatic personality, who mixed his seemingly old-fashioned manners of courtesy with keen rationality. No one was better prepared to introduce the scientific or social events of academic community with wit, understanding, and if necessary in nearly all languages prevailing in Europe.

I was privileged to be his friend since he came to Prague. From time to time we used to meet over a cup of red wine and cheese. We contemplated how to change or at least improve the global and local problems. The last encounter failed; the problems remained unchanged and I lost one of my best friends.

On behalf of the community of Czech plant biologists, the staff and editorial board of *Photosynthetica* and on my own behalf I would like to thank you, dear Luboš, for all the good you have done to science in particular and to society in general. We will miss you and never forget.

J. KREKULE (Praha)