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Obituary

Professor Zvonimir Devidé (1921–2011)

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Professor Emeritus of Zagreb University, Fellow of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, distinguished biologist and botanist Zvonimir Devidé passed away on September 10, 2011. Born in the small town of St. Lenart in Slovenia, he finished high school in Maribor. In his youth he first wanted to become a machine engineer, but after reading an article that described how the human organism had been shown to be the most complex thing in the universe, he discovered a passion for natural sciences. Despite his father's recommendation to study medicine, he undertook studies in natural sciences and graduated in biology, physics and chemistry in 1944 from Vienna University. He specialised in cytology under the guidance of the outstanding Austrian Professor Lothar Geitler. In 1948 he obtained an assistant position at the Botanical Institute and Garden in Zagreb. His supervisor was the distinguished Croatian botanist Vale Vouk. In 1953 Devidé won a British Council scholarship to carry out specialised studies under the guidance of Professor C. D. Darlington in the cytology department of the John Innes Horticultural Institute in Bayfordbury, England. He earned his Ph.D. in botany in 1954. After his habilitation in 1960, Z. Devidé was immediately promoted to the rank of associate professor. Ten years later, he was promoted to full professor. In 1973 he became an extraordinary member of the former Yugoslav Academy of Sciences and Arts and, since 1991 he was a full fellow of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts. In 1976 he received the Ruđer Bošković Award for his scientific achievements and he was decorated with the Order of Work with Gold Wreath. Professor Devidé was also a member of the New York Academy of Sciences. In 1988 he was awarded a State Prize for his life's work.

As a scientist and naturalist, Professor Devidé had a wide range of interests. He performed karyological studies in ciliates that contributed significantly to the understanding of the structure of the macronucleus and the role of endomitosis in its formation. He investigated the cellular structure and metabolism of Leucothiobacteria. As an outstanding specialist in microscopy, Professor Devidé was a founder of the laboratory for electron microscopy at the Ruđer Bošković Institute. He introduced techniques for preparation and analysis of biological samples, and he improved them with help from his assistants. His main research topic was the ultrastructure of plant cells, with a focus on plastid morphology, physiology and transformation. Another of Professor Devidé's scientific interests was plant developmental biology. In

the Biology Department of the Faculty of Science at the University of Zagreb, he initiated studies on growth, differentiation and tumour transformation of plant cells in *in vitro* culture. The interests of Professor Devidé extended beyond cell biology, karyology and physiology into plant biochemistry and photoregulation of flowering in duckweed. More detailed information on Z. Devidé's scientific achievements was published in Acta Botanica Croatica on the occasion of his 65th and 80th birthdays (Papeš and Jelaska 1986, Regula 2001).

Professor Devidé was an outstanding teacher who educated many generations of undergraduate and postgraduate students. His lectures and practical courses attracted not only biologists, but also students from other natural sciences and medicine. Many of his students still remember how he emphasised that a researcher should never draw conclusions from the results of only one method. The real investigator should not be limited by his hypotheses and should always strive to discover the truth. Professor Devidé contributed substantially to the improvement and modernisation of biology studies. He introduced new undergraduate courses (Cell Biology, Microscopy, Methods and Tools in Scientific Research, Practical Courses in Plant Physiology) and modernised existing ones (Plant Physiology). He also introduced several courses for postgraduate students, including Biomembranes, Principles and Methods in Microscopy and specific courses on the structure and function of chloroplasts and cell ultrastructures. Many diploma, master's and doctoral theses were completed under his guidance.

As a naturalist and biologist, Professor Devidé examined modern society with a critical eye, especially what he perceived to be the irresponsible squandering of energy and natural resources, as well as the devastation of our biogeochemical environment. He criticised the scientific community for a generalised lack of modesty, leading many scientists to forget that a great deal of what they have done or discovered is only a small piece of knowledge that will become even smaller with the passage of time.

Professor Devidé was a gifted musician and educated violinist. He played violin and viola da more in the Society Orchestra of the Croatian Musical Institute, taking part in about 300 concerts.

Until the last moment of his life, Professor Devidé remained a passionate botanist. Shortly before his death, to improve botanical research in Croatia, he mobilised forces to establish a Botanical Committee at the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts. The mission of the Committee is to better harmonise all research in plant biology at the national level.

Professor Devidé has left this world, but the ideas with which he has strongly influenced his students and collaborators will endure in their minds for a long time.