

IN MEMORIAM
LAJOS TIMÁR (1918-1956)

"If a broken twig falls down from an old tree in the forest whoever notices it...?", says LAJOS BÍRÓ, the outstanding natural scientist. The old tree grows its descendants, the new shoots...

From the Szeged family tree of researchers of flora and fauna quite a few twigs have come down before their time. Here we are referring to IMRE VELLAY, the excellent entomologist, BÉLA LÁNYI from the botanists, and the most painful loss: LAJOS TIMÁR. They all were teachers as well as hard working cultivators of their work. They were carried away by death from us before the culmination of their promising career.

I first met LAJOS TIMÁR in 1946 in the institution of REZSŐ SOÓ in Debrecen. He came to the University of Debrecen to finish the last bits of his Ph.D. thesis, and recommended to him to spend the night in my room on the uppermost floor of the institution, which served as a temporary accommodation. For the first time our talk lasted through half of the night, and my friend, LAJOS outlined his life. The main string of his story was that finishing with his miserable youth, he wanted to be able to look after himself aiming at a "safe, financially comfortable" life - for his family, as well, - attained with his work. - But which enthusiastic young man, just starting his career, does not have same desire?

LAJOS TIMÁR lived the first half of his short life in Szolnok, and the second half mostly in Szeged. This town appreciated him during his life by helping with his work, and also in his death by granting him an honorary grave in the Szeged Central Cemetery.

LAJOS TIMÁR was born on the 25th January 1918 in Zagreb. He was the twelfth son of a MÁV (Hungarian State Railways) worker. His family escaped to Szolnok after the First World War. Here LAJOS spent his childhood and youth in Iskola street. He went to school in this town and was a pupil of the Verseggy Ferenc Secondary Grammar School. When he was a little schoolboy he was very interested in plants and insects, he made nice collections of them walking long miles up and down on the bank of the river Tisza. The narrow means of the family could not afford to pay for the further studies of the talented boy but his elder brothers took up this task. According to the commemoration of KÁZMÉR SZÁSZ, the headmaster of the school, the little boy was only interested in botany, zoology and hygienics, under the guidance of his beloved teacher, BÉLA BALOGH. He was very sorry that LAJOS could not be present at the meeting 25 years after the GCE exams. After leaving secondary school, he worked in the Town Library of Szolnok for two years as an intellectual relief worker.

In 1938 he was at the University of Debrecen, from where he went to Szeged as a teacher trainee of natural history and geography following his professor, ISTVÁN FERENCZI. He got his degree in 1943. Then for two years, he served as a soldier at the

Szolnok sappers. During the war he went to Bararia with his team, and he came back and was discharged as an honorary sergeant.

In 1945 LAJOS taught natural history at the Baross Gábor (late Móra Ferenc, and now Vedres István) General Secondary Grammar School, where he had been a teacher trainee under the direction of KÁLMÁN CZÓGLER. At that time he got into touch with BÁLINT ZÓLYOMI, a former disciple of REZSŐ SOÓ, who turned the attention of the young teacher towards plant ecology (plant sociology at that time).

When I stayed in Debrecen between 1946 and 1948 LAJOS and I still kept in touch with each other. I was interested in his life, as he worked in my old "alma mater" with my former teacher, CZÓGLER.

LAJOS TIMÁR soon left this grammar school, and for a short time, he was in charge of a course for pharmacy students in the Institute of Botany (headed by PÁL GREGUSS) of the Szeged University. In 1950 he made the soil-geological map of Szeged and its surroundings on behalf of the Hungarian Geological Institution. Previously, he took his doctor's degree in the Institute of Botany, Debrecen. The title of his dissertation was the following: Plant associations of the Tisza flood-plain between Szolnok and Szeged.

In the autumn of 1952 he worked in the Institute of Climatology at the Szeged University as a research worker with professor RICHÁRD WAGNER. In 1954 he qualified for a candidate's degree in biological studies. Most of his papers in connection with this were only published after his death.

In 1948 he married ERZSÉBET MAKLÁR, a linguist in the Italian Institute and a secondary school teacher. A son and a daughter were born from their happy marriage. Then he worked more and more - for his family, as well - this over-exertion was very harmful for his health. I read it in professor SOÓ's necrology that he had troubles with his spleen that remained from his military service. He was operated on in 1955, and short after this he died of a bad cirrhosis of the liver.

He was buried in Szeged on 18th September 1956. At his funeral, ÁDÁM BOROS delivered a speech in the name of botanists, and so did ISTVÁN SZALAI, who was a colleague of his, as LAJOS TIMÁR was the secretary of the Szeged Group of the Hungarian Biological Society.

I saw him for the last time when I visited SÁNDOR BÁLINT in the same room of the hospital lying not far from LAJOS TIMÁR. It was a special tragedy for LAJOS that he could not live to see the First Tisza-Research Expedition, which left Szeged in a month's time after his death. Thus he could not work on the monograph of his beloved river Tisza, which could have been the main opus of his life...

I will never forget our whole-day "surveys of the field" in the beginning of 1950s. We would leave Szeged on our bicycles, as usually there were no other vehicles for researchers at that time. We arrived at Levelény via Pusztaszer, where the Tisza still had one of its backwaters remained. Now there are agricultural lands there. I remember looking at the rich reed-grass in the water (it would have fitted into a novel by JÓKAI very well) from a little bridge over the river. At that time we could see some stands of *Menyanthes trifoliata*, *Stratiotes aloides* and *Nymphaea alba* in their

reality, and other plants delighting the eyes of the botanist from which several are lost now from the flora of Csongrád county.

I can still recall it, when LAJOS and I got off our bicycles not far from Tápé on a miserable and tiresome journey after bends of the endless river Tisza. LAJOS said, "I will elaborate the Tisza from Szolnok to Szeged. "You might drink it up, as well, LAJOS...", I answered him joyfully.

Our last cooperation was the organization of a large-scale exhibition about "The life of lake Fehértó" in the Szeged Museum, when I was planning the script of the exhibition, and I asked him to arrange the plant associations of the lake.

LAJOS TIMÁR was mainly a cenologist, he was not a "herbarist" in the common sense of the word. He would put his collected plants "in situ" onto the same page together with its associates thus giving an immediate basis for the cenological evaluation. He also collected other plant groups like mushrooms, lichens and mosses.

His colleagues, GYÖRGY BODROGKÖZY, LÁSZLÓ GALLÉ senior, ISTVÁN PRÉCSÉNYI, SZANISZLÓ PRISZTER, GÁBOR UBRIZSY and many others remembered him as an amiable personality, who did never talk too much. All of his words reflected love and honour towards Nature and its sciences.

Let his self-sacrificing, noble character be a model for the future generations of researchers. He would be 75 years old now...

In this paper I used the necrology by REZSŐ SOÓ (Botanikai Közlemények 49: 175-179, 1962) and the commemoration of GYULA KOVÁCS my late colleague from Szolnok (Jászokunóság 19: 139-140, 1960).

GY. CSONGOR