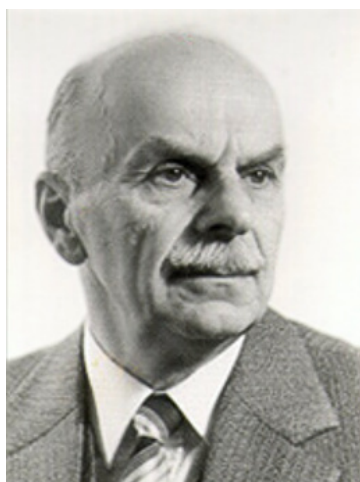


In Memoriam Academician Milan Herak (1917-2015)



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Geologia Croatica



Milan Herak, renowned Croatian geologist, passed away in Zagreb on April 29th, 2015 at the age of 98. He was born on March 5th, 1917, in the small village of Brašljevića, in the midst of the Žumberak karst area. He grew up and was educated within a large family; therefore he acquired work habits at an early age, as well as a sensibility and appropriate feeling for team work, dominated by mutual cooperation and support. That proved to be of a substantial advantage later, as in his professional career he often occupied leading positions, acting variously as head of institute, dean, research team leader, chairman of various commissions, boards and committees, but also as teacher, mentor, and adviser. In performing these functions, he knew how to create, stimulate and maintain an inspiring and positive atmosphere. His education included primary school in Kast (Žumberak), a classical Gymnasium in Zagreb, and a natural science group at the Faculty of Philosophy (now **Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences**) in Zagreb from 1937 to 1941 when he graduated. He then spent six months (1942/43) in Vienna with Julius Pia, exploring fossil sponges and fossil calcareous algae. Due to health problems he returned earlier than planned to Zagreb, and soon afterwards Milan Herak

obtained his doctorate at the Faculty of Philosophy with a thesis on Triassic limestone sponges from the group Sycones. His adviser was Fran Šuklje.

Milan Herak was employed in 1943 in the Geology and Palaeontology Museum in Zagreb, where he worked until 1952. From 1952 to 1958 he was an assistant professor and then associate professor at the Technical Faculty (now the Faculty of Mining, Geology and Petroleum Engineering). In 1958 he transferred to the Faculty of Science at the University of Zagreb, where until 1961 he was an associate professor, and from 1961 until his retirement in 1982, Professor. From 1959 to 1974 he was Head of the Geology and Palaeontology Institute. Moreover from 1964 to 1966 he was Dean of the Faculty of Science.

Milan Herak is a doyen of Croatian geology, as a scientist he was active from 1943 until 2012, when he published his last article in our journal *Geologia Croatica* which in a way, was his synthesis on his thoughts on the Tectogenetic relationships of Dinaric and Alpine orogenies. In his long and fruitful life, Herak developed a mind-blowing scientific activity, not only regarding the sheer number of publications (over 220, see Bibliography), including several books and repeated editions of textbooks, but also, and probably more importantly, regarding the scope and diversity of themes. Let us remember only the main areas of his scientific activity. First, he began with palaeontology, which posed no difficulty for him, for he had graduated as a major in biology. However, he was soon recruited to geology by his teacher, Marijan Salopek (who quickly recognized his talents and capacities). Herak was the first in this country to apply the biometric method and populational approach in palaeontology (which of course to-day we know to be the only correct approach). Regrettably, in this he was not (until quite recently) always followed by younger authors. His favourite fossil group were calcareous dasyclad algae particularly (but not only) from the Triassic. In this he educated a group of younger researchers, so that to-day we can speak with good reason of a Zagreb School of calcareous algae. Adding to his

research on Triassic dasyclad algae, Herak was invited to join the UNESCO international project on the Triassic, whereupon the stratigraphy and palaeogeography of the Triassic became his second main field of activity. Here, among other things, most credit goes to him for the world-wide recognition of the Muć section as a type-stratum for the Tethyan-type (or Alpine) Lower Triassic. Herak's third main area of activity was regional geology and geotectonics. In 1986 (later followed by a series of papers) he presented, already as a mature and experienced researcher, based on his thorough knowledge of the geology of the Dinarides, a new conception of the geotectonics of the Dinarides, culminating in his last extensive (or synthetic) paper in 2012. As distinct from all previous approaches, Herak's conception was based on a mobilistic approach, which is of course to-day the generally accepted geological paradigm. Last but not least – in contrast and perhaps even of prime importance! is the activity in which Herak also gained world-wide recognition (perhaps even the greatest) but for which he also deserved the greatest credit in the Croatian economy, is the geology and hydrogeology of karst. Here, too, we may speak with good reason of the Zagreb karst research school. In contrast to virtually all the previous investigations of karst, that were basically descriptive and limited to geomorphology – and yet pretending to having developed some all-encompassing and generally valid theories – Herak recognized that for successful solution of each particular case first the geological underground (and genesis) should be resolved (or unravelled). For on it depends the distribution and behaviour of both surface and underground water streams, as well as all other karst features (caves, caverns, etc.), including the possibility of storage reservoirs (lakes), the latter being of course of direct economic usefulness. This was of particular significance for the post-Second-world-war developing Croatian economy, so that to-day we have functioning our largest hydroelectric power plants on accumulation lakes: Peruća, Senj, Vinodol, Rječina, Obrovac, as well as in the former Yugoslavia: on Drina (in Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina), Neretva (in Bosnia and Herzegovina), and Tara and Morača (in Montenegro) rivers, as well as a number of smaller ones. These successful solutions – which were, at first, rather sceptically viewed by the world karstologists community – brought to Herak the well-deserved reputation of being the top-level expert for karst hydrogeology. Thus he was engaged by the UN (UNESCO and FAO) to solve the problem of water supply in Egypt, Lebanon, Greece, Turkey and other peri-Mediterranean countries, as well as in Iran and the Caribbean (Jamaica). As early as 1965 the well-known international publishing house Elsevier invited Herak to be the co-editor (with Victor Stringfield) and main contributor of the first monograph on the karst of the northern hemisphere and after a few years, in 1972 the book *Karst, Important karst regions of the Northern Hemisphere*, was published and enthusiastically greeted by the world karstologic community, being, at that time, the first and only book of such a broadly encompassing scope. In a national context, the culmination of his research of the Dinaric Karst was the Basic hydrogeological map of the Dinaric Karst at 1:500,000 (in cooperation with Stjepan

Bahun), published in 1974 and which later served as the base for the hydrogeological map of the former Yugoslavia at the same scale.

In all his fields of activity, which were also pioneering in Croatia, in addition to the geology and hydrogeology of karst in which he acquired the world-wide renowned status, Herak left behind well-trained groups of competent younger researchers who, more or less successfully, continue his work. Moreover, Herak also published papers in the fields of epistemology, the history of geology, bibliographies, and in the very beginning, in museology.

Herak became a corresponding member of the Croatian (then Yugoslav) Academy of Sciences and Arts in 1963, and after ten years (arguably waiting too long), in 1973, was elected to full membership. Soon he became the vice-president of the Academy (1975-1978), which was followed by a series of functions: first deputy secretary and then secretary of the Department of natural sciences, which demonstrates his positive, always constructive character, and willingness to accept a lower-ranking function. Later, he was for many years a member of the Presidency, editor-in-chief of several journals (periodicals), head of the Committee for Karst Research, Committee for Geotectonics, and Institute for Quaternary Palaeontology and Geology. His discussions in the Academy, as well as in all other occasions, will be remembered for his constructive, well-meaning, conciliatory (but not humouring or submissive) tone. He was the corresponding member of the Austrian Academy of Science from 1977 and of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts from 1991. In 1977 he was also elected as a corresponding member of the Serbian academy of Sciences and Arts, but he recinded his membership in 1991. In the Croatian geological society he was, from its onset in 1951, its first secretary, later becoming its president. In addition, he was for many years a member of German, Austrian, Swiss and French geological societies.

Teaching activity of Professor Herak started back in 1949 as a part-time lecturer at the Faculty of Science with two new introduced courses *Palaeobotany* and *Palaeobiology*. At the Faculty of Technics Herak introduced the course *Engineering Geology*. After transfer to the Geology department of the Faculty of Science in 1958. along with the standard courses Herak introduced two new *Karst geology* and *Regional geology with geotectonics*. He was a mentor to a large number of graduates, masters and doctorate students, and thus significantly influenced the development of geology in Croatia. In 1960 postgraduate studies in geology were founded at the Faculty of Science and Herak was the first leader. In addition to the University of Zagreb, Herak taught at postgraduate studies level in colleges of the Universities of Sarajevo and Belgrade.

As a long time university professor Milan Herak wrote number of textbooks, some of which are still used. It is worth emphasizing the textbook of Geology that has seen as many as 5 editions, which was the basic textbook for numerous generations of geologists at the University of Zagreb, as well as on a number of faculties in the former Yugoslavia. The

first edition was in 1960 and fifth in 1990, and in total about 10,000 copies were printed. This textbook actually integrated three textbooks: General (or physical) geology; Stratigraphic (historical) geology; and Regional geology. After his retirement, he was elected in 2001 to the position of Professor Emeritus in recognition of his contributions to the development of the University of Zagreb.

Milan Herak contributed significantly also to the popularization of geology through numerous articles and popular books. Among them it is worth mentioning the *Kora zemljina povijesnica života* (Earth's crust – history of life) booklet published in 1945 as the fifth book in the series „Little scientific library HPD“ and the popular – professional book: *Earth – evolution, structure, dynamics, sources of raw materials* with co-authors Vanda Kochansky-Devide, Velimir Kranjec and Boris Šinkovec, which was printed by the Academy in 1976.

In 2015, the *Croatian Geological Society* and the publishing house *Izvori* printed academician Herak's autobiography titled *My life without signposts*, a manuscript which he finished on his 96th birthday. In it he put forward many important and interesting pieces of information which lit up his life, but also the development of geology and overall science in Croatia in the last seventy years.

Academician Milan Herak was also very socially engaged. Thus, for example in the establishment of the Croatian Geological Society in 1951, he was elected the first secretary, and later became chairman, and since 1976 he was the Society's honorary member.

Herak was a recipient of numerous awards and decorations: the City of Zagreb Memory Medal 1965, Ruđer Bošković Award 1968, Lifetime Achievement Award 1976; Order of Work with golden wreath 1981, Order of merit for people with golden star 1986, and Order of Croatian Morning Star with Stjepan Radić's image 1998. Herak had a rich and meaningful life with extraordinary achievements. His harmonious family were a great support, especially his wife, in the true sense of the word a lifetime companion, Mrs. Ojdana Herak (born Allegretti) whom he met while still as a student.

For all that Professor and Academician Herak gave to Croatian and world's science, may his memory live on!

Ivan Gušić and Mladen Juračić

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