

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTICE

Assoc. Prof. Ing. JAROSLAV POLÁK, DrSc. – septuagenarian



At the end of January we celebrated the seventieth birthday of one of the Czech leading research scientists in plant pathology – virologist Assoc. Prof. Ing. JAROSLAV POLÁK, DrSc., Crop Research Institute (CRI) in Prague-Ruzyně. Dr. POLÁK is known as an energetic man with full of enthusiasm, excellent investigator and prominent scientist with international reputation. It is hard to believe that he is already seventy and has been serving agriculture science for almost five decades since his joining CRI 46 years ago.

He was born on 25th January 1942 at Hořice v Podkrkonoší. He studied at the Agricultural University in Prague with honours and graduated after the defence of his diploma thesis “Occurrence of virus diseases in fruit tree nurseries

of Jičín district”. After his university studies he became an agronomist. In 1966 he joined CRI and started to work at the Department of Virology. From 1969 to 1971 he passed his external post-graduate study at the Institute of Experimental Botany of Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences and defended successfully his Ph.D. thesis “Biological and serological differentiation of five strains of *Beet yellows virus* occurring in the territory of the Czechoslovakia”.

He acquired more scientific knowledge and technical experience in the diagnostics of plant viruses during his stay at the Phytopathological Institute in Aschersleben, Germany, in 1974. At that time his experimental activities were focused on the serological detection of *Cucumber mosaic virus* in vegetables and spread of *Sugar beet yellows viruses*, purification procedures of viruses of potato, sugar beet, legumes, vegetables, and flowers. Based on the obtained results, new serological methods were introduced into the diagnostics of economically important viruses not only at CRI but also at Potato Research Institute, Sugar Beet Research Institute and other specialised institutions in this country. He and his colleague L. ALBRECHTOVÁ were the first to start working with immunoenzymatic determination (ELISA) of plant viruses in the Czechoslovakia in the late seventies. Later he initiated the production of diagnostic antisera against economically important viruses.

In 1983 he obtained a scholarship from the British Council to work at the Vegetable Research Institute at Wellesbourne, Great Britain. Later, in 1988, the Netherlands government granted him a one-year stay at the Research Institute of Plant Protection (IPO) in Wageningen, where he solved the problems of diagnosis of *Strawberry mottle virus*. In 1990 based on his doctoral thesis “Purification of plant viruses, preparation of antisera and usage of antibodies in plant virology and plant protection” he received a scientific degree “Doctor of Agricultural and Forestry Sciences” from Mendel University of Agriculture and Forestry in Brno. Since the nineties he has been working with *Plum pox virus*. Results of this extensive and productive work appeared in many scientific contributions both in national and international journals and were presented at international scientific meetings and symposia. In 1999 he became a university lecturer and afterwards he was appointed associate professor. The title of his habilitation thesis was “Occurrence, spread and diagnostics of *Plum pox virus*, determination of resistance of apricots and peaches to the sharka disease”. By the end of the nineties he initiated and contributed to the obligatory certification of health condition of planting materials of fruit trees, grapevine, and hop. Under his leadership three technical isolators for primary sources and basic material were constructed at the Research and Breeding Institute of Fruit Growing

at Holovousy, at the Faculty of Horticulture at Lednice, at the Hop Institute at Žatec, and at the CRI in Prague-Ruzyně.

Due to his hard working nature and scientific renown Dr. J. POLÁK established himself as an internationally recognised scientist with the affiliations of several scientific societies and working groups. He is a member of international scientific organisations (ISHS, EFPP), a member of several working groups of ISHS (fruit viruses, *Plum pox virus*, vegetable and legume viruses, phytoplasmas), a scientific advisor of the International Foundation for Science (IFS) and the chief organiser of many scientific meetings, conferences and workshops. Together with Prof. V. TÁBORSKÝ, he organised the 6th Conference of the European Foundation for Plant Pathology in Prague in 2002 and he was Vice-President of EFPP in the period 2002–2004. He delivered lectures on *Plum pox virus* at universities, research institutes, and Plant Protection Services of South and North Carolina, USA, in the nineties. J. POLÁK was an invited speaker of the conference of U.S. and Canadian specialists in Santa Catharina, Canada, in 2002, after the presence of PPV was recognised in Pennsylvania, USA, in 1999, and in Ontario and Nova Scotia, Canada, in 2001. He has been engaged in research on the resistance of genetically modified plum clone C5 to PPV, PDV, and ACLSV since 2002. He is a member of U.S. International Research Team for plum cv. HoneySweet (clone C5) and also coordinates the preparation of a proposal for deregulation of this transgenic cultivar in Europe.

Assoc. Prof. J. POLÁK is one of the leading founders of the National Programme of Protection of the Genetic Resources of Economically Important Microorganisms and Small Animals in the Czech Republic. He was the programme leader from 1993 to 2009. He was Head of the Department of Virology from 1979 to 2007, and Director of the Division of Plant Health from 1993 to 2007. He is engaged in specialised committees and scientific advisory boards of the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of the Environment of the Czech Republic, scientific secretary of the Czech Phytopathological Society, and deputy head of the Czech Horticultural Society. For a long time he has been a member of the Editorial Board of the scientific journal Plant Protection Science. He cooperates with the Czech Union of Fruit Growers (CUFG) and with the State Phytosanitary Administration (SPA). He was also involved as a lecturer in postgraduate studies and other education courses. His cooperation with the Faculty of Horticulture at Lednice and Research and Breeding Institute for Fruit Growing at Holovousy in joint projects concerning studies of the sharka disease is very commendable. He has been leading a number of research projects including international research projects of the 6th and 7th Framework Programmes of the EU (RESISTVIR, SHARCO, INTEREST). He has published more than two hundred twenty original scientific papers and many contributions in professional journals and newspapers.

Finally, it is also necessary to remind and appreciate Dr. POLÁK's outstanding human qualities and emphasise his diligence and assiduity. He is precise in his work, punctual in the duties and collaborative to scientific communities. He is well known as an open-hearted, optimistic and leading personality among friends, colleagues, and within community life. Due to the above-mentioned fact Dr. POLÁK is favoured and respected among the colleagues far beyond the frontier of the Czech Republic. We wish him good health and lots of success both in professional and personal life. The credo of his life is the old Latin saying – *per aspera ad astra*.

JIBAN KUMAR KUNDU, Jiří CHOD (Prague)