

## IN MEMORIAM

### PROFESSOR DR. SMILJA MUČIBABIĆ (1912-2006)

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061.75

Professor Smilja Mučibabić died quietly in the morning of a warm August day in Sarajevo. With her death, the last petal dropped from what can metaphorically be said to have once been a delicate and rich jasmine flower from the city of Mostar. A good and warm-hearted person, Smilja Mučibabić will be remembered as a pedagog, scientist, environmental activist, fighter for human rights, and unexcelled teacher of more than 40 generations of students and pupils throughout our former country and the whole world.



one of her most important references. For at that time, to be a teacher in this highly respected institution was a matter of great prestige and reflected a high level of professional competence, to say nothing of what it meant to be its Principal.

Although quite successful in her work, a constant thirst for new knowledge took her away to Belgrade, but this time for specialized studies under the famed Professor Siniša Stanković, founder of a widely renowned ecological school. This fearless woman from

Mostar then travelled even farther, all the way to Cambridge University in the UK for doctoral studies in the area of experimental ecology. After unremitting hard work, she completed her doctoral dissertation and defended it even before the end of the regularly allotted period, receiving her Ph.D. degree from Cambridge in 1953. Her dissertation was devoted to research on relations of certain protozoans under experimental conditions, and the results were published in the then most highly regarded scientific journals of Great Britain.

From that time until the end of her active career, Professor Mučibabić worked at institutions of higher learning and research. Together with a small group of other enthusiasts, she founded the Philosophy Faculty's Biology Division upon returning to her homeland. Several years later, the Biology Division became the Department of Biology within the University of Sarajevo's Science Faculty, of which Professor Mučibabić was the first Dean.

She was born in September of 1912 in sunny Mostar, where she received her primary and secondary education. Her desire to acquaint herself with the secrets of nature led her to study biology at the University of Belgrade, from which she received her B.S. degree in 1934.

Immediately after graduation, she was hired to teach in Sremski Karlovci and later in Krapina in the picturesque Zagorje region, where the start of the bad time of the Second World War found her. For her anti-fascist convictions, she was imprisoned by the then ruling authorities.

Although she was an open, broad-minded, and cosmopolitan person with a pronounced talent for communication and adaptation to different social and territorial conditions, she still felt the pull of Herzegovina, the region of her birth. At her own request, she was transferred to her native Bosnia and Herzegovina, where she worked enthusiastically not only as a high school teacher, but also as a tutor engaged in teaching illiterate adults to read and write. As an outstandingly successful instructor, pedagog, organizer, and social activist, this energetic woman was appointed to the position of Principal of Mostar High School, which Professor Mučibabić often stressed was

Professor Mučibabić worked diligently in many capacities until the end of her active scientific career. As already mentioned, she served as Dean of the Science Faculty and was several times Chairman of its Department of

Biology. In addition to this, she supervised graduate studies, organized research, and was herself the chief investigator on many research projects. Although Professor Mučibabić will be especially remembered as a fruitful instructor and pedagog, she was also an exemplary worker in the social sphere and an activist in the area of environment protection. Even after her official retirement, she continued to work with undiminished enthusiasm and energy on the realization of numerous research projects and took part in the training of graduate students and Ph.D. candidates. Under the direct supervision of Professor Mucibabic, many graduate students earned doctoral degrees in the field of zoology (which was the area of her narrow scientific specialization). She served as an editor of the even then indexed scientific journal "Godisnjak Bioloskog instituta Univerziteta u Sarajevu" ("Yearbook of the Biological Institute of Sarajevo University"), the first issue of which appeared in 1948.

Professor Mučibabić conceived and for many years supervised a number of complex limnological investigations on all of the more important watercourses in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Already at that time, she called attention to serious problems and consequences of water pollution for the general state of the environment and pointed out possible problems of industrial development. She will be remembered for a series of television programs within the framework of the "Caravan of Nature", in which she and several colleagues were perhaps the first to warn publicly of the incompatibility between development of society as it then existed and the wellbeing of the environment. In addition to this, she pointed out the damage done by destruction of many valuable habitats in

Bosnia and Herzegovina. Professor Mučibabić continued to work along these lines until the end of her life.

Her activity and intellectual capacity were also manifested as a member of the "Circle of 99" Association of Independent Intellectuals, at whose regular meetings she often called attention to the environmental problems that arise in societies in intensive transition. She fought with special energy for the multi-cultural status of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Professor Mučibabić did not lose hope or abandon her optimism during the strikes on the city of Sarajevo, in a disastrous era when (again for her anti-fascist convictions) she was left without a roof over her head after a mindless bombardment of the quarter of the city in which she lived.

Professor Mučibabić was an extraordinarily good and warm-hearted person. She was forgiving and not vengeful. Even though the victim of many injustices, she never resorted to revenge through ignoble schemes. She took a high view of things until the end of her life and departed with a belief in people, nobility, and philanthropy. She left this world with her native Bosnia in her heart, with concern for every one of her pupils, and with the memory of the happy Mostar of her youth. Her only message for generations to come was: "Fight for the environment, fight for human beings, protect the land of your birth...". Professor Mučibabić will be lastingly remembered as an unexcelled teacher, pedagog, scientist, and fighter for truth and humanity. She is our cherished memory and our great obligation.

Prof. Dr. Sulejman Redžić