

IN MEMORIAM

PROFESSOR MIHÁLY MIKES
(1926 – 2010)

UDC 59:929 Mikes M.

Professor Dr. Mihály Mikes died suddenly in Novi Sad on 10 March 2010. He was a Full Professor at the Institute for Biology, Faculty of Natural Sciences, University of Novi Sad, and founder and director of the Regional Institute of Nature Protection of Vojvodina in Novi Sad. He was of the generation of students who, in the first years following the Second World War, and under very difficult conditions, enrolled at the University of Belgrade. Throughout his life he was dedicated to ecological field research and to assisting his younger colleagues in their ecological and faunistic field studies. To the end he was an ardent champion of, and participant in, the many activities related to the protection of nature and the environment, at home and abroad. At the same time, he was editor and reviewer of numerous works from the fields of zoology and nature protection, and some of his current works unfortunately remain unfinished on his desk.

Mihály Mikes was born on 24 August 1926 in Senta where he completed his primary and secondary education (1946). In 1950 he graduated from the Natural Sciences Faculty of the University



of Belgrade. Whilst studying (1947 – 1950), he worked as a laboratory technician at the Natural Museum in Belgrade. Upon graduating he was taken on as an assistant lecturer at the Institute of Ecology and Biogeography SAN in Belgrade (now known as the Institute for Biological Research “Siniša Stanković”) which was founded and directed by the academician Siniša Stanković. He worked in the Institute for two years and then, from 1952 – 1960, he worked as a teacher and

headmaster in secondary schools in Senta and Sremski Karlovci. At the same time he was collaborating with the Nature Department of the Vojvodina Museum in Novi Sad. From 1960 – 1968 he worked in this Department, the Agricultural Archives and then the Regional Institute for Nature Protection of Vojvodina in Novi Sad. On joining the Vojvodina Museum in 1960 he founded and edited the first Mammalian Anthology of the nature department.

In 1965 Dr. Mikes obtained a PhD from the Biology Department of the Natural Sciences Faculty of the University of Belgrade with his thesis titled “Ecological Investigations into the Mound-Building

Mouse (*Mus musculus hortulanus* Nord.) in Vojvodina" (published in 1971). At almost the same time, in an article titled "The problems of nature protection in Vojvodina" (Nature Protection, 1964), Dr. Mikes pointed out the need for urgent measures to be taken for the protection of this region. As Curator of the Nature Department and one of the pioneers of nature conservation in Vojvodina (crucial for the safe-guarding and protection of rare and endangered plant and animal species and habitats in the region), Mihály Mikes instigated the founding of the Regional Institute for Nature Protection of Vojvodina. This came about in 1966 with Dr. Mikes at its head. As founder and first director of the newly formed Petrovaradin Fort Authority, he and his colleagues set up the permanent nature presentation with models of the characteristic biotopes of Vojvodina. At the time, his original models were a novelty in museum displays in the former Yugoslavia and they were of enormous educational importance. They attracted large numbers of visitors and excursions of school children from all over the country. At the same time, in collaboration with M. Marčetić, the manual "Taxidermy of Birds, Fish, Mammals and Other Animals" (Novi Sad, 1968), which was unique in the country, was published.

In 1968 Dr. Mikes moved to the biology section of the then Philosophy Faculty (now the Natural Sciences Faculty) of the University of Novi Sad as a senior lecturer. In 1973 he became an associate professor and in 1978 he was promoted to full professorship in the newly-formed Institute for Biology of the Natural Sciences Faculty. He held a number of important posts at the Faculty: vice-dean (1971 – 1973), president of the Scientific Curriculum Council and Head of the Biology Institute. He was also in charge of the Department of Zoology and Animal Physiology (1971 – 1973). At the Natural Sciences Faculty of the University of Novi Sad Dr. Mikes was lectured in the subjects: Ecology of Animals, Comparative Anatomy and Chordate Systematics, Zoogeography, Ecology of Terrestrial Eco-systems, Environmental Protection, and for a number of years, Zoology. He focused the research of his department on the study of the population

ecology of small mammals and the ecological and faunistic aspects of parasites, in particular the interaction in the infestation of four-legged vertebrates by endoparasitic helminths. A considerable number of graduate and masters' theses and doctoral dissertations were defended under his guidance and mentorship and over the years he was frequently a member of doctoral and magisterial defense boards at the Natural Sciences Faculty of the University of Belgrade in the subjects of ecology, zoogeography, comparative anatomy and chordate systematics. Dr. Mikes was employed at the Natural Sciences Faculty of the University of Novi Sad until pensioned in 1991.

Dr. Mikes' departure from the Institute of Nature Protection and the Faculty didn't bring about the end of his cooperation with these institutions he had founded and led. On the contrary, he was an active participant in all events related to the protection of the environment and work of the museums till the end of his life. In addition to the permanent natural displays at the Petrovaradin Fort he had set up, he applied his rich experience to the creation of exhibitions in the new building of the Institute at 20, Radnička Street in Novi Sad. A great deal of his expertise was dedicated to the problems of the integral protection of vital or endangered ecosystems and regions in Vojvodina (Deleblatska Peščara, Fruška Gora, Obedska Bara, Carska Bara, etc.), and he initiated the legal protection of many of these areas. Many will remember his ardent promotion and support at the Third Ecological Congress of Yugoslavia in Sarajevo in 1984, of the initiative of three scientific societies in Serbia for the preservation of the Tara canyon and river and parts of the Drina and Morača rivers from predicted degradation and the construction of a hydroelectric plant in the region. To the end of his life he was an associate of the Kiskunság National Park near Kecskemét in Hungary, and he actively participated in the work of the Ecological Movement of Novi Sad. He regularly visited the Institute and was always ready to assist in solving the problems that arose in the effort to preserve and protect the environment. His support was often decisive in the overcoming of difficulties and problems in finding the best solutions. His last visit to the Institute was on 2 February 2010 when the

International Day of Wetlands (Ramsar Convention) was held.

Although he left the Institute for Ecology and Biogeography SAN in Belgrade in 1951, Dr. Mikes maintained close cooperation with the Institute (now known as the Institute for Biological Research "Siniša Stanković") in the following decades. In association with other followers of Professor Siniša Stanković, he continued in the intensive development of the basic concept of his "Belgrade School of Ecology". In a period of over twenty years he was part of the realization of many ecological macro-projects at the Institute for Biological Research "Siniša Stanković" financed by the Serbian Ministry of Science. Due to the specificity of the subject, much of this research was long-term, and thereby involved significantly more time and intensive field work to ensure the best scientific results. For example, taking into account the natural breeding cycles of small mammals (2 to 3 years), following the dynamics of populations of Micromammalia in the forest ecosystems of Fruška Gora (using the capture-mark-release method) required at least four years' of intensive field work, and for the dynamics of small mammal populations in the agro-biocenoses of Vojvodina a full eight years of field work was needed.

In the course of his working life Professor Mikes had many rich and varied international affiliations. In the sphere of medical and ecological parasitology, besides his fruitful collaboration with institutions such as the Parasitology Institute of the Military Medical Academy and the Institute for Biological Research in Belgrade, he regularly worked with academicians Bohumil Rosický and his colleagues from the Parasitology Institute of the Czechoslovakian Academy of Science in the Prague. In a joint project investigating ectoparasites in mammals in the Balkans they collected and analyzed material from Yugoslavia and neighboring Balkan countries. In the field of nature protection he had a long and rewarding association with colleagues from the national parks in Hungary (Kiskunság National Park in Kecskemét, protected areas around the Tisa river, etc.), and he was invited

to participate in the work of the First Congress of Hungarian Ecologists in Budapest (1988). Over the years, as a member of the German Mammal Society, he presented scientific papers on the ecology of mammals at the annual meetings of the Society, and he also took part in the first three International Theriological Congresses (1974 – 1982).

The primary fields of Dr. Mikes' research were the population ecology of small mammals in agro-biocenoses and forest ecosystems, with special reference to their population dynamics, secondary productivity and the ecological aspects of the interaction between parasite and host; the burrowing activity of fossorial mammals (in particular those from the Spalacinae family), and the ecological, faunistic and medical aspects of infestations of four-legged vertebrates by ectoparasitic and endoparasitic helminths. A number of his works were dedicated to the problems of the idioecology, zoogeography and faunistics of mammals, as well as the protection of ecologically important and endangered ecosystems and regions in our country.

In the course of his productive research, teaching and conservation work, Dr. Mikes published many text books, manuals, scientific works and papers for scientific congresses at home and abroad. His bibliography has more than 130 entries. He organized or presided over a large number of national scientific gatherings (e.g. all five of the ecology congresses of Yugoslavia, 1973 – 1996). He was also a member of the editorial board of the Encyclopedia of Vojvodina. He wrote editorials and edited a number of important works in the fields of biology and animal protection, such as *The Big Encyclopedia of Animals* (Novi Sad, 2003) and the new edition of *Brehm's Life of Animals* (Belgrade, 2004).

Throughout his working life Dr. Mikes held a series of important professional and social positions; he was the president of the Regional Branch of Serbian Biological Societies, general secretary of the Society of Ecologists of Yugoslavia, a member of the UNESCO commission "Man and the Biosphere", member of the Matica Srpska and

its Committee in the Department of Natural Sciences, a member of the Environmental Protection Committee of Vojvodina, as well as being a member of many local and international scientific societies and belonging to the editorial boards of a number of scientific journals (Archives of Biological Sciences, Ecology, Contemporary Biology, Dialectics, Spona and the Hungarian journal, Tiscia). On the 50th anniversary of the Institute of Nature Protection Dr. Mikes was awarded a Life's Work Certificate for the Protection of Nature in Serbia for his many years of work and contributions to museums and conservation. He also received many other awards such as a Diploma from the Serbian Biological Society, Diploma of the Matica Srpska, Charter of the Association of Conservationist Societies of Yugoslavia, Letter of Thanks from the Regional Institute of Nature Protection of Vojvodina, Gold Medal of the Gorani Movement, etc.

Dr. Mikes was unique in his human and personal qualities. Tireless and full of inexhaustible

energy and élan, systematic and methodical, he was a constant and steadfast support to his colleagues at work and a rare example to all his younger associates. With his extensive biological education and exceptional organizational competence, ideas and enthusiasm, he was always ready to offer his full support and assistance at work. He was an excellent teacher and with his suggestions and consultations he offered invaluable expertise to all his graduate and post-graduate students. His optimism, charm and generosity gained him many friends and he was much loved in all fields. Although he was not always in agreement with others, his professional good intentions meant that he had no personal enemies. He was an exemplary *pater familias* to his children and grand-children and was always a sure and strong support to his whole family. As a man, expert and unique human being he will remain in our memories and thoughts. It was an honor and rare privilege to all of us to have had such a colleague, parent and friend.

Professor Ivo R. Savić