

## AN OBITUARY NOTICE

### Prof. Ing. Jiří Černý, Ph.D.



Prof. Ing. JIŘÍ ČERNÝ, Ph.D., for many years a respected member of the editorial board of our journal, succumbing to a nasty disease on August 18, 2011. He was a respected teacher and geneticist at the Czech University of Life Sciences in Prague (former University of Agriculture), who introduced modern biochemical and molecular methods into investigations of cultivar distinctness and genetics of cereal quality. Scientists, breeders and students appreciated him for his ability and willingness to explain accurately and clearly the issues of genetics and breeding.

Prof. ČERNÝ, after completing his academic education at the University of Kiev in the former Soviet Union, started his career at the state breeding company OSEVA, where he became responsible for corn and fodder crops breeding. In 1963 he joined the Department of Genetics and Plant Breeding at the University of Agriculture in Prague. As a young scientist he investigated theoretical and practical aspects of the use of induced mutations in plant breeding and studied genetic changes in plants exposed chronically to gamma-rays. He contributed significantly to the renaissance of classical genetics against the pressure of the communist ideology. After 1968 he fell in disgrace and his academic career was interrupted from 1974 till the collapse of the communist rule in 1989. After his forced exit from the university he found for 10 years refuge as a cereal breeder at the Plant Breeding Station at Stupice near Prague. He continued at the station his scientific work on the use of protein genetic markers in wheat breeding, especially focused on selection assisted by gluten quality markers, and became co-author of the winter wheat varieties Selekt, Sparta and the spring wheat Saxana. Prof. ČERNÝ later moved to the Seed Department of the Czech Plant Variety Office, where he worked till 1989. During this period he used his knowledge of genetics of cereal storage proteins in the evaluation of cultivar identity and purity. In 1990, after a short stay at the Crops Research Institute in Prague Ruzyně, he was appointed associate professor at the University of Agriculture, the later Czech University of Life Sciences in Prague, where he became from 1991 to 2001 head of the Department of Genetics and Breeding. In 1993 he was appointed professor of genetics and plant breeding.

His experience with plant irradiation led him to measurements of radiation levels on soil surfaces associated with uranium mining in the Czech Republic. He also designed a research project on natural recovery from genetic damage in plants close to the Chernobyl catastrophe.

At the turn of the century Prof. ČERNÝ was a member of the Czech Academy of Agricultural Sciences, engaged in its Commission of Plant Product Quality, and member of scientific councils of several research institutes. He published a number of original scientific and technical papers, several monographs and methodologies. He also translated the popular science book "Why I am similar to daddy?" from Russian to Czech. At the occasion of his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday he was awarded for his scientific merits with the silver medal of the Czech Academy of Agricultural Sciences.

The scientific community is loosing in Prof. Ing. JIŘÍ ČERNÝ, PhD. one of its top plant geneticists. We are grateful for his scientific work in the former Czechoslovakia and the present Czech Republic, for his personal integrity and his friendship.

*Ing. Alena Hanišová, Ing. Jana Bradová, RNDr. Erik Schwarzbach, Dr. agr. habil.*