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**In Memoriam, Professor Viorel SORAN, Ph.D.**

(19 May 1928 - 9 January 2014)

Early 2014 made the Romanian biology mourn, especially the botanists and ecologists of Cluj-Napoca, Oradea, Sibiu and Arad, because of the death of the researcher and Professor Viorel Soran, the man of wide culture of nature, inclined to meditation, philosophy of the sciences, who found "... *passion to enthusiasm in man and his problems*" (S.-M. Ivaneș, 2014).

Born in Certeze locality (Satu Mare County), the son of a priest, Viorel Soran attended the courses of the Faculty of Natural Sciences of the University "V. Babeș" of Cluj (from which he graduated in 1952) and he obtained his Ph.D. title in 1961, based on the thesis presented in 1958 (*Studies on the development of absorbing regions (from seed imbibition to the stage of plantlet with a mature root system)*), under the scientific direction of Acad. Emil Pop.

After an internship in the pre-university education system, V. Soran worked as a researcher at the newly founded Center for Biological Researches in Cluj (în 1958), and then, within the Man & Biosphere Program (MAB). He had a training scholarship at the York University (1971-1972) in the field of electron microscopy and of the action of some herbicides on chloroplasts, and he also visited (in 1977) the National Science Foundation – USA, in order to develop the scientific collaboration between the two countries.

The fact that his father was a priest, in those times, was an obstacle for his accession to the higher education, which happened officially only in 1993, when he held the position of Professor at the University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Cluj-Napoca. Further, although retired, he worked as Professor at the University of Oradea, "Lucian Blaga" University of Sibiu and "Vasile Goldiș" University of Arad.

The recognition of his scientific merits took place in 1962 (when he was awarded the "E. Racoviță" prize of the Romanian Academy) and in 1995, when he was elected member of the

Hungarian Academy. Although in 1990 he was proposed to be a corresponding member of the Romanian Academy, the proposal was rejected by the Presidium of this institution, as the number of competence areas (18!) listed in the request formulated by V. Soran was considered to be exaggerated. Thus, because of a bureaucratic aspect, biology in our academic citadel lost a supporter that was so necessary in the long post-revolution transition period!

Professor Viorel Soran was enthusiastic, a very curious researcher and open-minded to the news, a man constantly willing to collaborate and debate philosophically (an aspect that justifies his election in the Romanian Committee for History and Philosophy of Science, attached to the Romanian Academy). These qualities are shown in his pluri-, multi- and transdisciplinary work, being hard to define in which of the approached areas he excelled. Thus, his works deal with issues of plant cytophysiology, dendrochronology, floristry and phytosociology, plant physiology, ecology and metaecology, agroecology, exobiology, zoology, bioeconomy, etc. Besides the Romanian journals where he published, a number of articles may be found in international journals such as *Die Naturwissenschaften*, *Physiologia plantarum*, *Protoplasma*, *Biodiversity* and *Conservation*, etc.

Among the published volumes, in our opinion, the following represent reference works *Omul și Biosfera* [*Man and Biosphere*] (1985, with M. Borcea); *Mediul rural și problema energiei* [*Rural Environment and Energy Problem*] (1986 – coord. with I. Puia et al.), *Agroecologie, ecologism și ecologizare* [*Agroecology, Ecologism and Ecologization*] (1998, with I. Puia and I. Rotar), and also his first monographic work on the weeds in the Apuseni Mountains (1962).

He published 7 articles in our journal *Contribuții Botanice* [*Botanical Contributions*], 4 of which in the field of plant physiology and 3 on vegetation, palynology, respectively history of botany.

Finally, as it was much discussed at the universities where he taught, V. Soran did not receive the right to coordinate Ph.D. thesis, personally I feel compelled to mention here the real reason (for posterity, as we discussed this topic five years ago and he understood that it was not ill will). According to our legislation, a doctoral study could be organized only in the specializations accredited at that university, but he, along with two other professors (the legal requirement is a minimum of three leaders in a field) requested the coordination in Biology (all applicants meeting the scientific conditions required by law), but there was no such specialization at "L. Blaga" University of Sibiu, where he had tenure. When he came back with the request to coordinate in the field of Ecology and environmental protection, the specialty committee found that only one (V. Soran) of the three people had publications in this field. *Quod erat demonstrandum!*

On our behalf and on behalf of those who benefited from his support, cooperation and advice, we pay our last respect. Rest in peace!

Vasile CRISTEA