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Grădina Botanică “Alexandru Borza”
Cluj-Napoca

IN MEMORIAM



Assoc. Prof. Dr. Maria BECHET
(11.11. 1928 - 13.09.2017)

She left us discreetly and serenely, the last representative of the strong Phytopathology team formed in our university in the 1950s.

Maria Bechet (née Lupean) was born in Ludoș (Sibiu county), where she graduated from primary school. She attended middle school and high school education at the “Domnița Ileana” Girls’ High School in Sibiu, and in the period 1947–1950 was a student in Biology at the Faculty of Sciences of the former “V. Babeș” University in Cluj (currently “Babeș-Bolyai” University Cluj-Napoca).

After graduating from the faculty, she was appointed a teaching assistant at the Department of Botany of this university, in the discipline of Phytopathology; subsequently, she became an instructor (in 1952) and an assistant professor (in 1956), a position from which she retired in 1985. The socio-political situation in Romania did not allow her to reach the top of the university hierarchy, so that a moral repair was attempted only in 1999, when the UBB Senate awarded her the title of “Honorary Associate Professor”, which brought a stream of tears to the eyes of our late colleague when the Rector handed her the diploma of associate professor!

The researcher Maria Bechet can be characterized as an extremely rigorous, tenacious, diligent, cooperative person, committed to her institution. From the very beginning, she approached *microfloristic studies* in various protected areas (Cheile Turzii reserve – which was the subject of her PhD thesis, defended in 1970 at Bucharest University; Crișul Repede Gorge, Suatu and Fânațele Clujului reserves, Retezat National Park, etc.), in various mountain massifs (Zărand Mountains, Făgăraș Mountains, Bihor Mountains, etc.), in agricultural, fruit-growing,

wine-growing areas or ornamental spaces.

In the second half of her active period, Prof. Bechet's studies also focused on the **biology and fight against parasites** and crop pests, on the knowledge of **parasitic and saprophytic fungi in arthropods** (especially insects, where she collaborated with her husband – the entomologist Dr. Ioan Bechet).

Finally, her activity in collecting and depositing “**exsiccatae**” of 186 species in the *Herbarium Mycologicum Romanicum*, *Flora Romaniae Exsiccata* and *Herbarium Phytopathologicum Transsylvanicum* was also meritorious.

Her entire scientific work was realized in two monographs (as a collaborator, of which one was awarded the “E. Teodorescu” Prize of the Romanian Academy), 64 articles published in Romanian journals (*Studia UBB-Biologia*, *Contrib. Bot.*, *Comunicări de Bot.*, *Acta Bot. Horti Bucurestiensis*, etc.), two articles in Romanian volumes, and just one article in a foreign journal (*Feddes Repertorium*). We should not forget that at that time, supporting institutional as well as national journals was mandatory, and indexed journals were not a topical issue!

The main aspects regarding Prof. Bechet's scientific contribution are: **i)** description of 8 micromycete taxa, new to science (e.g. *Plasmopara smirunii*, *Rickia pachyuli*, *Pleospora herbarum* var. *ilicis*); **ii)** revision of the nomenclature of 10 species of the genus *Sphaerella*; **iii)** identification of 250 new hosts (“matrix nova”) for a number of micromycete taxa; **iv)** knowledge of the mycoflora from various regions of Romania, with 584 new taxa reported for the Romanian mycoflora; **v)** evidencing the role of substances or physical factors in the biology of some species (cultured ‘in vitro’) of the *Fusarium*, *Monilia*, *Alternaria*, *Botrytis* genera.

As an **educator** at *Alma Mater Napocensis*, during her 35 years of activity, Dr. Maria Bechet taught six general courses (Phytopathology, General botany, Crop plants, Horticulture, Technique of preservation of biological plant material, etc.) and three special courses (Modern research methods in phytopathology, Biology and the fight against plant parasites, Special phytopathology).

As a her former student, colleague and collaborator, I appreciate that the teacher Maria Bechet loved young people, respected them, and tried to attract them to research work. This explains the fact that 166 students prepared their graduation theses under her supervision and also, she guided 42 teachers to finalize their scientific methodology paper for obtaining the first level teacher certification. Both during courses and laboratory work, Prof. Bechet paid particular attention, in addition to the clarity of the presentation, to the quality of the didactic material used, which was to a great extent developed by her, using her own financial resources.

Also, for students, Prof. M. Bechet elaborated (under the editorial conditions of that time) a number of didactic materials amounting to 1,150 pages: *Îndrumător pentru determinarea ciupercilor fitopatogene (A guide to the determination of phytopathogenic fungi)* I (1954) and II (1956), *Atlas fitopatologic (A phytopathological atlas)* (1956), *Botanică pentru studenții din anul pregătitor (Botany for students in the preparatory year)* (1982, 1990).

As a person, Maria Bechet (“Mary” to colleagues and friends) was generous, honest, correct and extremely refreshing. On 15 September 2017, she was followed to her final resting place, in the Mănăstur cemetery, where we wish her to rest in peace! May our pious homage comfort her soul and bring consolation to the grieving family.

Vasile CRISTEA