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IN MEMORIAM

**Academician Constantin TOMA (1935-2020):
a true lord of contemporary Romanian biology**



“I have always believed and sustained that a university professor must be in the first place a good researcher, so that his/her lectures can provide results and examples from his/her own scientific activity and that of the team he/she has trained and leads. At the same time, he/she must have a calling for teaching, love his/her students and make them love him/her. He/she must be demanding on himself/herself in the first place: through the knowledge acquired, by fairly evaluating his/her students and collaborators, through punctuality, carefully chosen language, manner of speech and attire” (C. Toma, *In Ivănescu and Zamfirache-eds*, 2010, p.14). And because Acad. Constantin Toma respected and applied in his work and life all these principles mentioned in his Autobiography, we have called him “a true lord of contemporary Romanian biology”.

Born on 19 November 1935 (in Gugești village, Vaslui county), Constantin Toma attended the Faculty of Natural Sciences of Al. I. Cuza University in Iași (in the period 1953-1958). Distinguishing himself by his training and scientific papers, he was appointed as a teaching assistant at the Plant Morphology and Anatomy discipline. There he went through all the steps of the didactic career: instructor – 1959, assistant professor – 1966, associate professor – 1972, professor – 1978, professor emeritus – 2006.

In 1962, he applied for a doctorate at the University of Bucharest, on the topic of Morpho-anatomical study of *Coronilla*, *Onobrychis* and *Trifolium* species in the Romanian flora, under the supervision of Prof. I. T. Tarnavschi, and publicly defended his doctoral thesis in 1969.

His didactic activity comprised lectures, supervision of practical work, graduation theses and dissertations, field practice, particularly in the disciplines Plant morphology and anatomy,

Structure and ultrastructure of plant tissues, Cytology. In 1988, he became a doctoral supervisor in the field of Botany (Biology after the post-revolutionary changes), supervising 30 doctoral students.

Although in his scientific activity he addressed several areas (floristics, chorology, phytosociology, phytoteratology, history of biology, evolutionism), the late professor excelled in the field of plant anatomy and histology, directions that were considered comparatively, ontogenetically, ecologically and experimentally. Without any fear of mistake, we can state that due to his efforts and those of the team he had trained, plant histology in Iași ranks first in Romania. The 15 treatises and monographs, elaborated as a single author or in collaboration, as well as the over 400 original articles published in journals (of which 48 abroad) or in collective volumes demonstrate the special professional performance of the late Acad. C. Toma.

In addition to his teaching and research work, Prof. C. Toma was deeply involved in the organization and management of the Faculty (scientific secretary of the Professors' Council – 1973-1975, Pro-Dean – 1975-1977, Dean – 1989-1990, 1996-2001) and of the University (general chancellor – 1990-1992), of the “A. Fătu” Botanical Garden (director – 1970-1974), of the Biological Research Institute in Iași (director – 1986-1990), as well as of various central national bodies (CNEEA – 1994-2006, CNATDCU – 1995-2006).

For his collaborators, Professor C. Toma was “*a true model and symbol*”, “*a talented and relentless researcher, a fine observer of nature and a careful interpreter of its evolution*” (M. M. Zamfirache, *idem*, p. 350).

According to his faculty colleagues, Professor C. Toma “*spreads so much light and warmth that he gives charm and joy not only to his existence, but also to his peers and even to the places where he still performs his work like a beginner*” (G. Mustață, *idem*, p. 353).

For us, those of the Cluj-Napoca Academic Citadel, “*... Professor Constantin Toma appears like a peak higher than the Ceahlău in Moldavia, which stands out clearly, elegant and proud ... , showing us the way to knowledge, understanding and action*” (V. Cristea, *idem*, p. 345).

The 3 awards granted by the Romanian Academy (1978, 2000, 2002), the 4 titles of *Doctor Honoris Causa* (awarded by the Universities of Oradea, Arad, Bacău and Apollonia University in Iași), his appointment as a corresponding member (1991) and subsequently, as a titular member of the Romanian Academy (2012), as well as the *Order of Merit for Education in the rank of knight* and other distinctions and diplomas demonstrate his recognition by the Romanian academic community.

He passed away (in Iași), after heavy suffering, on 8 September 2020, a great Christian feast day (the Nativity of Mary), which is a sign that he was also embraced by Divinity.

Let him be remembered for ever, and let his life be a model for all those who wish to become good, well appreciated, esteemed and loved educators and researchers!

Bibliography

Ivănescu, L., Zamfirache, M.M., (eds.), 2010, *In Honorem. Profesorul Constantin Toma la a 75-a aniversare*. Ed. GRAPHYS, Iași.

Vasile CRISTEA, Gheorghe COLDEA