

OBITUARY

Dr. Lajos Ferenczy (1930-2004)

Prof. Dr. Lajos Ferenczy, one of the most foremost microbiologists in Hungary and a member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, died on 19 March 2004 following a short illness. As Head of the Department of Microbiology and later the Microbiology Research Group of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences at the University of Szeged, he established an excellent scientific school. As a scientist, he conducted pioneering research on fungal protoplast fusion, a revolutionary technique in biotechnology. He was a famous and highly-regarded scientist on an international scale.

He was born on 25 October 1930 in Kisújszállás. He attended the Faculty of Sciences at the University of Szeged in 1949. During the period of his undergraduate studies, he won a Fellowship from the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and wrote 3 award-winning papers. One of them was later published in *Nature* (Ferenczy L (1956) Antibacterial substances in seeds. *Nature* 178: 639-640). In 1953, he graduated in biology and chemistry at the University of Szeged, where, in the same year, he obtained a position at the Department of Plant Physiology. In 1958, he was awarded his university doctorate at the University of Szeged and in 1960 he received a C.Sc. (corresponding today to a Ph.D.) from the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. In 1980, he received his D.Sc. from Hungarian Academy of Sciences for his thesis entitled "Gene Transfer via Protoplast Fusion in Fungi".

He was a respected teacher at the University of Szeged from the very first steps of his career until his death. From 1953 to 1954, he worked as Teaching Assistant, from 1954 to 1962 as Research Assistant, from 1962 to 1964 as Assistant Professor, and from 1964 to 1981 as Associate Professor. He became a Professor in 1981. The Department of Microbiology at the University of Szeged became an independent department mainly as a result of his enthusiastic work. He was Head of this Department from 1972 to 1997.

In 1969 and 1970 he was a Visiting Associate Professor at the Department of Plant Pathology at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, USA, working together with Prof. David Gottlieb. From 1987 to 1989, he was a Visiting Professor at the Institute of Microbiology, Federal Institute of Technology, in Zürich, Switzerland.

Between 1998 and 2000, he was Head of the Microbiology Research Group of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences at the University of Szeged. From 2000 until his death, he was Research Professor of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

At the University of Szeged he pursued different social activities. From 1972 up to his death, he was a member of the



Biology Committee and of the Habilitation Committee of the Faculty Council. He was active in the Senate of the University and as President of the Ph.D. Committee for Molecular Biology and Biotechnology. From 2000, he was a member of the Science Committee of the Faculty of Sciences. For his outstanding education at Hungarian Academy of Sciences and workshop funding activity, he was honoured by various organizations.

In 1987, Lajos Ferenczy was elected a Corresponding Member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. From 1995, he was an Ordinary Member. He took an active part in shaping the science policy as vice president of the Biology Section of Hungarian Academy of Sciences, chairman of the General Microbiology Committee, president of the Organizing Committee for Life Sciences and a member of the Hungarian EMBO Committee and Qualification Committee.

In recognition of his rich scientific achievements, Lajos Ferenczy was granted numerous high awards by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, the Hungarian Microbiological Society, the Hungarian Ministry of Education, the Hungarian Minister of Health and the Hungarian Government. He received the Purkyne Medal at the University of Brno in 1981. He was elected a member of various foreign scientific societies, the most outstanding among them being the Academia Europaea (Cambridge, England), the American Academy of Microbiology and the US National Academy of Sciences.

During his last 35 years, Professor Ferenczy was highly active in many international training courses, symposia and

conferences as organizer, keynote speaker, demonstrator, chairman and editor of symposium proceedings in the fields of protoplast fusion, fungal gene transfer, somatic hybridization and genetic engineering. He was the main organizer and president of the First Hungarian Mycological Conference at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in Budapest in 1999. Generations of mycologists grew up under his mentorship. His death is a tremendous loss for the mycological world. We shall remember him with our greatest respect.

From among Lajos Ferenczy's major communications

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