

## SERBIAN GENETIC SOCIETY (1968 – 2018)

All until the end of 1950-ies a battle had been fought at the University of Belgrade – for survival of biologists of the classical Mendelian orientation against “Liszenkists”, who were strongly backed by the party in power at the time. Thanks to the consistent stance of Mendelists of the SASA Institute for Development (Prof Borivoje Milojević, Prof Vladimir Spasojević), and especially in the Biology Group of the Faculty of Natural and Mathematical Sciences (Prof Milutin Radovanović, Prof Pavle Radoman), with a help from several respectable colleagues from abroad (Prof C.D. Darlington), Liszenkism was not only “beaten” but also laughed off in intellectual circles of naturalists in Belgrade. The remaining work was to eliminate the left-overs of this wrong doctrine from many high-school text-books, but also from several university text-books used by the Faculty of Agriculture, which was only completed in the early 1970-ies.

In the meantime, at the end of 1950-ies, young selectionists of the Alois Tavčar’s school, professors Slavko and Katarina Borojević came from Zagreb to Novi Sad and organised a modern Institute for Plant Genetics and Selection, founded on Mendelian principles. Also, in 1960, Dr Dušan Kanazir comes to Belgrade and starts teaching biochemistry at the Faculty of Natural and Mathematical Sciences, while practical teaching of Genetics is being introduced into the Theory of Evolution course. Young teaching assistants Jelena Grozdanović and Dragoslav Marinković implement practicals for students of biology during 1959/60 to give an insight and explanation of the structure of DNA, disclosed by Watson and Crick in 1953 from the Laboratory of Prof. Milislav Demerec.

When D. Marinković returned in autumn of 1967 from his USA post-doctoral research, he met with a young geneticist Dr Janko Dumanović at the INEP institute in Zemun, ready to make a joint contribution to founding a Genetical Society within the Union of Biological Scientific Societies of the country. This initiative was strongly supported by professors S. and K. Borojević of Novi Sad, Prof. A. Tavčar of Zagreb, Prof. Lj. Berberović of Sarajevo, Prof. Ločniškar of Ljubljana, Prof. M. Šopova of Skopje.

By the end of September 1968 in Ljubljana was held a meeting of the delegates of the Union of Biological Scientific Societies of Yugoslavia, at which a request was filed for admission of the Genetical Society into the Union. On behalf of all seven aforementioned centres, the request was filed by assistant professors D. Marinković and J. Dumanović, accompanied by assistant professor Zvonko Damjanović, delegate of the member Society of Plant Physiology and Biophysics, who backed the request for admission. With only one abstained vote by the Society for Soil Protection, the members of the Union voted yes to accept the request of the Genetical Society of Yugoslavia to become a new member of the Union of Biological Scientific Societies of Yugoslavia.

Academician Alojz Tavčar was elected as the president of the Society, and vice-presidents Professors S. Borojević, Lj. Berberović, M. Ločniškar and M. Šopova, and D. Marinković as secretary general, with the decision for the seat to be in Belgrade. Dr Janko Dumanović was proposed to be the future editor of the journal GENETICS, and the journal already started publishing in English the next autumn 1969. The first Yugoslav Symposium on Genetics, organised by the Genetical Society was held in Herceg Novi in May 1971, presided by Academician A. Tavčar. The first Congress of Geneticists of Yugoslavia was held in Dubrovnik, in November 1976, the second one in Vrnjačka Banja in 1981, organised by the Genetical Society of Croatia and Serbia, respectively. A very fruitful activity of the Society was reflected in the fact that almost every year scientific Symposia were organised within the sections of the Society, such as plant genetics and breeding (S. and K. Borojević, V. Trifunović) human genetics (Б. Гарзичић, А. Крстић, В. Диклић), cytogenetics and population genetics (B. Soldatović, M. Anđelković), with at least a hundred participants each, with papers published *in extenso* in special issues of GENETICS.

In the meantime a significant enlargement of the Society branches in the Yugoslav republics, so that, in accordance with the instructions from the Union, around 1984 the Genetical Society became the Association of Genetical Societies

of Yugoslavia, with the first president Prof Slavko Borojević, followed by Prof Dragoslav Marinković in 1986, who presided the Third Congress of Geneticists of Yugoslavia in Ljubljana, June 1987, organised by the Genetical Society of Slovenia. That congress was also the last one before the complete dissolution into separate societies of the republics, by the end of that decade. This led to the complete independence of the activities of the Serbian Genetical Society. The presidents of the Society were then, in succession, Kosana Konstantinov (1994-2004), Vasilije Isajev (2004-2009), Snežana Mladenović Drinić (2009-2014), Branka Vasiljević (2014-)

The activities of the Society have been through series of meetings and lectures within sections, the most comprehensive being the congresses, held every fifth year. The First Congress of Geneticists of Serbia was organised in Vrnjačka Banja in June 1994, the second one in Sokobanja in November 1999, the third in Subotica in December 2004. After that, the fourth on Mt. Tara in June 2009, and the fifth one in Belgrade in October 2014.

Dragoslav Marinković