



Prof. REZSŐ BOGNÁR

Obituary

An extremely rich and comprehensive life career was ended on February 4th, 1990, when REZSŐ BOGNÁR former Head of the Antibiotic Research Group of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Professor Emeritus and former Director of the Institute of Organic Chemistry of Debrecen University passed away at the age of 77. We have lost an outstanding expert in antibiotics and natural compounds, in whose personality harmoniously were united the educator affectionately carrying for his disciples, the researcher keen on everything new and the highly efficient managing director. As a man, he was European in the true sense of the word, tolerant to others and respectful to others' views and convictions. He did considerable service to the Journal of Antibiotics, as member of the Editorial Board, since the publication of the first international issue in 1968.

REZSŐ BOGNÁR was born on 7th March, 1913 in the town of Hódmezővásárhely (Hungary). He started his university studies in Szeged, then moved to Budapest where he attended the University of Technology, and graduated in 1936 as a chemical engineer. In 1941 he was granted the Ph. D. degree. In 1946 he was qualified as "privat-docent" appointed associate professor in 1949. This was followed by professorship in 1950, when he became Head of the Institute of Organic Chemistry of University of Debrecen, which post he retained until his retirement. During his career at the university he was elected Rector of the University twice (1951 and 1956), served a term as Secretary General of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (1955~1956). He was Chairman of the Debrecen Committee of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences from 1976 to 1990, *i.e.* until his death. He worked for years, as the Hungarian Representative in the European and International Committee for Carbohydrate Chemistry.

REZSŐ BOGNÁR started his scientific career in the laboratory of the renowned Hungarian carbohydrate chemist, GÉZA ZEMPLÉN, who had learned organic chemistry directly from EMIL FISCHER. Prof. BOGNÁR first started work on natural compounds of plant origin (alkaloids, flavonoids, steroid-glycosides, *etc.*), later in the 50-ies his attention turned to antibiotics. He recognized the common link in the chemistry of these natural compounds, *i.e.* carbohydrate research, which field was always his main interest.

In 1960 he established, at the University of Debrecen, the Antibiotic Research Group of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, and found good partnership in this field with the BIOGAL Pharmaceutical Factory. His flavonoid chemical research, begun in the early stage of his career, was continued with the synthesis of chloro-flavonin and the production of a great number of novobiocin analogues. He reached outstanding results in the isolation and structure determination of the first Hungarian antibiotics produced in Debrecen (desertomycin, flavofungin). By assigning structure to flavofungin, he called attention to a newer subgroup of antifungal pentaen-macrolide antibiotics. REZSŐ BOGNÁR and his co-workers achieved important results in elaborating the structure elucidation methods of the glycopeptide (actinoidin-A and -B, ristocetin-A and -B) antibiotics. The elaboration of the methods of structure determination and synthesis of the newly isolated carbohydrates greatly contributed to the renaissance of the chemistry of aminodeoxy sugars. The 3-amino-2,3,6-trideoxyhexoses produced by his team were favourably applied in the synthesis of the analogues of the anthracycline (carminomycin, daunomycin) and of the building elements (nebrosamine) of aminoglycoside antibiotics. Professor BOGNÁR always paid attention to the right proportion of theoretical and practical research. This tendency was clearly manifested in the study of the cycloaddition reactions of the cephalosporins and in the production of new semi-synthetic derivatives.

Professor BOGNÁR's contribution to the scientific literature is seven hundred publications, among them a number of monographs. In his most active years he worked as visiting professor at the universities of Dublin (Ire) and Kiev (USSR). He was conferred upon a great deal of honour both at home and abroad. He was awarded the Kossuth Prize twice (1948, 1964), as well as honorary titles and medals, as the J. Kabay- (1956), J. E. Purkeyne- (Czechoslovakia, 1964), Cyrill and Method (Bulgaria, 1970) medals, the gold medal of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (1982) and the G. Zemplén medal (1985). He was member of scientific academies: ordinary member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (1953), elected member of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and the Academia Leopoldina of Halle. Honorary doctor's degree was conferred upon him by the Universities of Kiev (1967) and Debrecen (1988).

In Professor REZSŐ BOGNÁR's person the international scientific community has lost a researcher of European horizon, who had many friends both in the western and eastern hemispheres. On behalf of the colleagues and the disciples we extend our deepest sympathy to his family.

(FERENC SZTARICKAI)