

To commemorate the seventieth birthday of Jan Nečásek

PETR PIKÁLEK

Last year the famous Czech geneticist and mycologist Jan Nečásek celebrated his seventieth birthday. He was born on 12 May 1925 in Prague. Graduated from Charles University, at its Faculty of Science, in 1948, he took an essential part in the development of Czechoslovak biology, especially in the field of genetics and mycology, in the second half of the twentieth century.

He started as assistant professor at the Institute of Genetics at Charles University, Faculty of Science. As the successor of prof. Karel Hrubý, the founder of the Czechoslovak Genetics School after the Second War, he focused his interest on genetic studies of the individual variability of higher Fungi (e.g. studies of variability in the spore length of *Coprinus fimetarius*). After a relatively short period of two years he changed the domain of his activity and went to the research group of Biogena, Roztoky near Prague (later the name of this institution changed to the Research Institute of Antibiotics and Biotransformations). He worked here for ten years, in the field of applied microbial genetics and mycology, as the Head of its Department of Microbiology. He focussed his interest here on genetic studies of the production of antibiotics and other microbial products by fermentation. Having reached some important successful results in this sphere he was awarded the Medal of Honour of the Czechoslovak Ministry of Health in the year 1955. Amongst important scientific publications by Jan Nečásek from that period his participation on the monograph "Antibiotika" (Herold, Vondráček, Nečásek & Doskočil, Nakl. ČSAV, Prague 1957) is worth mentioning.

In the year 1961 Jan Nečásek returned to Charles University, Department of Microbiology & Genetics. He came back as a mature and experienced scientist. He continued the same important and fruitful activity of his life as a university teacher here. After the tragical death of the Head of the Department, prof. Karel Hrubý, in 1962, Jan Nečásek became the leading geneticist not only at the Faculty of Science, but also, gradually, in the whole Czechoslovakia. In those years he focused his scientific interest mainly on the problems of experimental mutagenesis in Bacteria and Fungi. However, not only these questions stood in the centre of



his scientific interest. Besides other problems he was studied, for example, the genetic aspects of fruit-body production in *Coprinus sterquilinus*, the genetic base of the origin of mutants with reduced mycelial growth rate in *Coprinus cinereus* (his habilitation thesis), and quantitative genetic aspects of the resistance of *Schizophyllum commune* to the proteosynthetic inhibitor cycloheximide.

Czech mycologists consider Jan Nečásek a mycologist. He himself, however, consider himself first of all a geneticist, working in the genetic sphere of experimental mycology. The importance of Jan Nečásek for Czech genetics may be illustrated by another book of his, the famous university text-book "General Genetics" (Nečásek, Cetyl et al., SPN, Prague 1979), which – already from the second edition – has become the main text-book for genetics teaching in Czech Republic till now.

In the year 1980 Jan Nečásek left Charles University and became the leading research worker at the South-Bohemian branch of the Institute of Experimental Botany of the Czechoslovak Academy of Science in České Budějovice (lately transformed into the independent Institute of Plant Molecular Biology of the Czechoslovak Academy of Science). He studied questions of genetic engineering of plants there. It must be said that his mycological activities were strongly reduced in that period. He has actively worked there up to the year 1995.

Not only the scientific and/or pedagogical activities of Jan Nečásek are remarkable, but also his "social" and organizational activities were extraordinarily extensive. In the years 1969–1978 he was the Head of the Department of Genetics, Microbiology & Biophysics at the Faculty of Science, Charles University (besides he also held the function of Vice-Dean of the Faculty from 1971 to 1974). He was the founder of the origin of the Section for General Genetics of the Czechoslovak Biological Society, and for a long time he was its first chairman. He also acted as the first president of the Czechoslovak Gregor Mendel Genetic Society, in which this Section was later transformed. He is the honorary president of this Society up to the present. Moreover, Jan Nečásek is a very active member of the Czechoslovak Microbiological Society. Mycologists, however, know Jan Nečásek as the extraordinarily active member of the Czech Scientific Society for Mycology – he took a part in its central committee until 1982. In the past he also participated in the activities of the editorial boards of the journals *Česká mykologie* and *Biologické listy*. He is the holder of the Golden Medal of Johann Gregor Mendel of the Czechoslovak Academy of Science, of the Memorial Medal of Johann Gregor Mendel, which is awarded by the Moravian Museum in Brno, and of the Golden Medal of the Faculty of Science of Charles University in Prague.

Jan Nečásek is the author of more than a hundred publications, including scientific papers, books and text-books, lectures, referative papers, semi-scientific articles and others. His scientific and pedagogical activities, including his publications, are appreciated not only in the Czech Republic, but abroad as well.

It is a pleasure for me, as for the one from his past close co-workers, to have the chance to wish Jan Nečásek good physical health and mental vigour for the long time to come – on behalf of all his 3-F (fans, friends and followers).

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(a complete bibliography is available from the man honoured)

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