



Professor Dalibor Povolný
13 November 1924 – 6th of November 2004

Professor Dr. Ing. Dalibor Povolný, Dr. Sc., Dr. h.c., our good friend and colleague, acknowledged lepidopterist and dipterist world-wide, lost his struggle against a grave disease on the 6th of November 2004, only a week before his 80th birthday.

Dalibor Povolný was born on 13 November 1924 in Třebíč, a small town in western Moravia, in the family of a teacher. Ever since his boyhood he was taught to love Nature. He was strongly influenced in that direction by his father and by Antonín Růžička, entomologist and Dalibor's schoolmaster. Immediately after the end of World War II, Dalibor Povolný enrolled at the Faculty of Agronomy of the University of Agriculture in Brno. Already during his university studies he worked as an assistant at the Institute of Applied Entomology under the leadership of Professor Miller. At the same time, his other love – singing – brought him to the study of operatic singing at the Brno conservatory, and he had close contacts with the cultural activities in Brno. Dalibor Povolný started to work at the Entomological Laboratory of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences after having finished his military service in 1953. Shortly

thereafter he entered the newly established Parasitological Institute in which, together with Dr. Rozsypal and Dr. Gregor, he founded a working team that concentrated on the study of synanthropic flies, gadflies, and pupiparous Diptera. In 1961, Dalibor Povolný qualified as a university lecturer in zoology at the University of Agriculture in Brno, and in 1968 he was appointed professor of zoology at that University. In 1962 he became the head of the Institute of Zoology of the Faculty of Agronomy. In 1965–1969 he also lectured in parasitology at the Nangrahar University in Afghanistan, at the same time developing intense research on insects and mammals. In 1971, for political reasons, he was stripped of all his academic functions, was forbidden to lecture and publish, and was moved to a detached workplace at Lednice in southern Moravia. There he devoted all his time to continued extensive investigations. Unfortunately, it was not until 1989 that he could present his results in their full extent to the scientific public. In 1990 and 1991 he was vice-chancellor of the University of Agriculture in Brno. In 1991 he was pensioned, but this brought no change to his life habits. He continued to work in the Institute of Zoology and Apiculture at the Mendel University of Agriculture and Silviculture, and his working activity seemed to grow, as if he tried to catch up with all that he had missed.

The scope of Professor Povolný's scientific knowledge was considerable, but the study of Lepidoptera and Diptera was always the centre of his interests. He and František Gregor, his lifelong friend, were among the first in the Czech Republic to engage in serious scientific studies on Microlepidoptera. Their joint efforts yielded a number of papers on mining species, especially of the genus *Phyllonorycter*, and a comprehensive paper on Moravian burnet moths. In the early 1950s, Povolný started to specialise himself in the study of moths of the family Gelechiidae, and very soon he became a foremost specialist of this insect group. For example, he worked on a voluminous material of South American gelechiids and studied the Californian species of this group. The scientific results obtained by Professor Povolný are admirable. Let us just mention the mere fact that he described over 250 taxons as new to science.

At the turn of the 1950s, Dalibor Povolný was charged with the task of studying synanthropic and parasitic Diptera. Although being rather compelled to do it, Povolný took to the job with his characteristic enthusiasm and he soon assumed the leadership of a productive team. Among other involvements, the team was invited to co-operate in the monumental work on "Flies and Disease", edited by Professor Greenberg and published in the USA in 1971. In 1997, Povolný's many years' study of the central European flesh flies yielded an extensive monograph published in Munich, Germany, that is widely used throughout Europe. Povolný worked on flesh flies intensively, particularly during the past decade. Every year he travelled to various parts of central Europe and the Mediterranean region to study them. His last trip in June 2004 was to his beloved Sicily. Already suffering from considerable health problems and pains, he still worked hard in the field. He was fully aware of his impaired health, yet he never ceased persuading himself that it might yet improve so that he would be able to complete his unfinished projects.

Povolný's interest did not concentrate only on flies, butterflies, and moths. He also devoted much of his time to a number of theoretical as well as practical problems in ecology, domestication, evolution, and forensic entomology, to name a few. He was an enthusiastic popularizer of zoology and entomology in the broadcasting media and popular magazines, and he gave many lectures to the general public and to scientific audiences both at home and abroad. He was regularly invited to give lectures several times each year and he always tried to oblige. He participated in a large number of international congresses and symposiums, some of them organised by himself. He was a member of numerous national and international scientific societies. His publishing activity was incredible. He is the author of some 350 original scientific papers, a number of comprehensive monographs, and hundreds of other articles and communications. His work in this field was highly appreciated.

Professor Povolný was an ardent scientist and, like most scientists, he did dislike being disturbed when working. Nevertheless, he was always very obliging and ready to help in any way possible. To save time, he would run rather than walk along the University's corridors. His memory was excellent, and his ability to clearly and rapidly formulate his ideas in a discussion was amazing. However, he often stuck to his opinions without compromise, which got him involved in a number of problems. Sometimes it was difficult, or even impossible to convince him that he was mistaken.

Povolný was not one of those tedious scientists. His sense of humour was known to everybody. He never ruined the good mood of a party, he was an excellent storyteller, and he never spoilt a joke. That is why he was often the centre of attention, even at scientific meetings, and at times a discussion on a serious scientific topic would often take quite a different direction... Professor Povolný could perfectly mimic the voices of his friends and, above all, those of the colleagues with whom he disagreed in ideology or expert opinions. And in matters he considered important he could fight like a Kilkenny cat.

Dalibor loved art and, above all, music. He was an excellent operatic tenor, and he could not forget about it even during his scientific work. He would sing when examining specimens in his lab and during field work. His sonorous voice would resound at considerable distances so that one would first hear an aria and then only glimpse a man sweeping his entomological net. Loaded with an incredible amount of energy, Dalibor was an unforgettable personality that seemed to be indestructible...

ZDENĚK LAŠTŮVKA

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Zoologisch-Botanische Datenbank/Zoological-Botanical Database

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