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## Academician Witold Stefański (1891 — 1973)

Parasitologists will be grieved to learn of the death on July 18th, 1973 in Warsaw of Professor Witold Stefański, Active Member of the Polish Academy of Sciences, a distinguished parasitologist and biologist, who was recognized by scientists throughout the world for his great contribution to science and organization of scientific work and life.

He was born on 25th July, 1891 at Kielce. In 1909, he emigrated to Switzerland. He graduated at the Faculty of Natural Sciences of the University of Geneva and received there his 'docteur-ès-sciences' degree after presenting a thesis entitled 'Recherches sur la faune des Nématodes libres du Bassin du Léman', in 1914. Between 1913 and 1917, Professor Stefański was an assistant lecturer and then he lectured (from 1916) as associate professor at the Chair of Zoology of the Geneva University. In 1917, he returned to Poland. During the next three years he worked as an assistant at the Chair of Zoology, Warsaw University. It is of interest that while he held this post, the Professor of Zoology was Constantin Janicki, an outstanding zoologist and parasitologist. There Professor Stefański got his associate professor degree in zoology, in 1920. At that time he was still interested in his primary scientific field — the free-living nematodes, and in the next seven years he published a number of papers dealing with the nematode fauna of Poland and Rumania. However, it was not long before he worked up an interest in parasitology, and so it came about that this fact connoted a turning point in his research work and scientific career. This also resulted in that Professor Stefański founded the Polish school of veterinary parasitology. In 1925, he became associate professor (in 1935 — professor) and was appointed Head of the Chair of Zoology and Parasitology, Veterinary Faculty of the Warsaw University (after the second



world war the Faculty was transferred to the Warsaw Central School of Agriculture). At that time, in parallel to his research work he took up training of specialists of a high standard in veterinary parasitology. The method of solving practical problems of economical importance, in which also a large set of problems in general biology is taken into account, became a particularly characteristic feature of Professor Stefański's scientific production and organizing activities.

In 1926, he was invited by the Ministry of Agriculture of Rumania to participate in an expedition to the Danube Delta. He took this opportunity to work out fish parasites of that interesting region. Nine years later he carried

out a study on marine fish parasites at the Maritime Research Station at Arcachon, France.

During an early period of the second world war and the Nazi occupation, Professor Stefański was deprived of tools and the field of his scientific activity. At first he worked as a stoker at municipal schools. In 1941, he was appointed Head of Parasitology Section of the Veterinary Department, Scientific Institute of Agriculture, Pulawy. It was possible, though within a limited scope to continue research work there. At that time, he prepared a wide programme of the control of parasitic diseases of farm animals. Such a programme was particularly useful for the future, i.e., for the time after the war, as a violent development of those diseases was to be expected in the country harried by the war and occupation. From then on Professor Stefański was connected with the State Veterinary Institute at Pulawy for a long time, acting as Director of the Department of Parasitology and Parasitic Diseases, and then as President of the Institute's Scientific Council. Shortly after the end of the war, he also joined the Staff of the M. Skłodowska-Curie University in Lublin as soon as it was opened, and then of the Warsaw University, being appointed Head of the Chair of Zoology and Parasitology. At that time, he took up together with his pupils a giant action aiming at the control of epizootics of parasitic diseases which spread throughout the country. It was he, who greatly contributed to eradication, e.g., of mange in cattle and horses, dourine in horses, and cattle hypodermatosis, in Poland. Those years were highly productive, and the Polish school of veterinary parasitology flourished under favourable conditions. At that time, many pupils of Professor Stefański were appointed heads of parasitology chairs of new agricultural schools.

During many years Professor Stefański held the office of the Dean of the Veterinary Faculty, Warsaw University and then he was also Vicepresident of the Warsaw Central School of Agriculture (in 1952, the Faculty was moved to that School). At the same time he developed the first Chair of Parasitology and Parasitic Diseases and established a durable basis and training programme in veterinary parasitology in agricultural schools. He was also very active in organizing the Polish Academy of Sciences. Professor Stefański founded the Institute of Parasitology of the Academy, which he headed for many years. In 1961, he retired from the Institute and the Chair of the Faculty. He was also

a very active Member of the Biology Division of the Polish Academy of Sciences, being its Scientific Secretary (1957—1960) and then Vicepresident of the Academy (1962—1965). For many years he was President of the Parasitology Committee of the Polish Academy of Sciences. In fact, Professor Stefański guided the whole of fundamental questions in parasitology in the country. In 1962, he inspired creation of the European Federation of Parasitologists, being its President for many years. At the General Assembly of the Federation in Rennes, France, in 1972, Professor Stefański was elected Honorary President of this body.

Professor Stefański was a member of many professional and scientific societies and academies. He was Corresponding Member of the Académie Nationale Veterinaire d'Alfort, France, Member of the Academy of Zoology, Agra, India; of the Yugoslav Academy of Sciences and Arts, Corresponding Member of the Institut de France, but also Honorary Member of the All-Union Helminthological Society, USSR, the Parasitologische Gesellschaft der DDR, the World Association for the Advancement of Veterinary Parasitology, and many Polish societies. He was also holder of many Polish and foreign prizes and orders.

After his retirement, at a time of life when most people cease publication, he published many papers and his fundamental two-volume textbook 'Veterinary Parasitology'. He also prepared and published a second edition of this work. At this time, Professor Stefański developed a new trend in parasitological research. He studied ecological relationships between intestinal parasites and the accompanying bacterial flora in animals. In a series of papers, of which he was sole or joint author, Professor Stefański denied the generally accepted but wrong opinion that parasites always 'throw open the gateways' to penetration of pathogenic bacteria. He demonstrated the whole complexity of phenomena which may occur under certain definite conditions of host-parasite relations.

Professor Stefański left behind a great and diversiform contribution to science, and many pupils who occupy responsible posts in various research centres. Moreover, there is something more, something uncommon and unusually precious that remains for ever. This is an image of a True Man and Scientist.

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