

## JÁNOS BALOGH, THE ACADEMICIAN

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Actively representing the Hungarian world of science both in Hungary and abroad, providing support for scientific research, organising research work through its members, and assisting the young in developing their researcher's career, well, all this has involved the expressed role of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (HAS) ever since it was founded in 1825.

Since JÁNOS BALOGH was an outstanding representative of his discipline – pedozoology, animal taxonomy, and ecology – well before he became an associate member of the Academy, his becoming an associate of the Academy in 1965, and then a regular member in 1973, just involved two major – and significant event for the entire discipline – milestones of a scientist's career of uninterrupted sweep. It is important to highlight this fact here and now because it is widely known that JÁNOS BALOGH grasped the opportunity of scientific, social, and political forums offered to him for fighting for the cause of his narrower specification, i.e. ecology, animal taxonomy and – last but not least – environmental protection. And by virtue of his academician's capacity he always preferred representing the interests of his beloved area of science to his personal ones. Though he never sought or expected positions as an academician, he always performed the tasks he was entrusted with to the best of his knowledge. As the president of the Biological Section of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences he always sought, and most of the time found, a reasonable compromise for the disparate interests of 3 different disciplines, which would have been inconceivable unless he, as the President of the Section, had fought for the interests of the entire area, i. e. biological sciences in general. So it was just natural that he chaired the discussions of Section meetings and scientific sessions with great patience (which he often needed), and a spirit of fellowship. Whenever it came to important issues regarding either the Section or the science of biology as such, he would display exemplary proficiency throughout his negotiations with leading government or Academy officials. As the President of a Section, and later, too, as the leading personality of Hungarian ecology, he conducted a pragmatic science policy thereby acquiring great esteem both for himself and the Academy. Throughout his extensive international research expeditions he acted as the ambassador of Hungarian science. Though the material he brought home may require long years, or even decades, of processing, he was always very good at informing the general public about the experience he accrued during these missions in a way that was understandable and exciting to all. Whenever he was on the air or appeared on television, he always paid special attention to the environmental "health" of our globe as well as the hazards mankind is exposed to. He set a very rare example: it is quite unusual that a great scientist, who also excels in conveying

his knowledge, should be so good at educating the general public, as well. JÁNOS BALOGH was the man who had the gift of expressing even the most complex scientific issues in an easily understandable way, thereby inspiring people to look into these issues in more detail.

Academician BALOGH would take meticulous care in supporting young people, the new scientific generation, which mentality naturally followed from his entire career. Likewise, he was extremely exacting, and even unrelenting in terms of scientific ethics, thereby setting a good example for present and future generations.

His scientific achievements and successes in science policy were recognised by a great number of awards: Kossuth Prize (1963), Széchenyi Prize (1993) Middle Cross with Star (2000), Corvin Chain (2001). Still, as he admitted, he took the greatest pride in the Academy's Gold Medal he was honoured with in 1995.

Especially in the last years of his life, I had the privilege of my "Uncle JÁNOS" initiating me, by phone or in person, in problems that engaged him with varying intensity. On the occasion of various events, he never stopped emphasising the social significance of his branch – taxonomy, ecology, and environmental biology –, and the necessity of its representation both at the Academy and universities. Also, he would often remind me during our conversations of the negative trends of our national morals, just like the way he did in TV interviews designated for the understanding public. Similarly, he was often engaged in both the further future (when I am no longer amidst you, as he would put it) of his narrower specification, the soil zoology, the prevalent status of the Academy and the Biological Section. Dealing with the above issues naturally followed from JÁNOS BALOGH's personality, his double capacity of a scientist and an academician, and from the fact that he remained committed to the Hungarian people and Hungarian science down to the very last moment of his earthly existence. If the classification system of science were akin to that of certain arts, JÁNOS BALOGH would be one of the life members of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. And really, we have a feeling that JÁNOS BALOGH's spirit and example is still, and will always be, with us as a guiding star that sets a route and hope for the upcoming generations of Hungarian science.