

CHRONICLE

György Lovász (1931–2016)

A prominent representative of Hungarian physical geography, one of the last of his generation, passed away on 3 October 2016. Professor György Lovász was born on 23 May 1931 in Budapest. He studied geography and history at the Budapest University, where he gathered rich experience in fieldwork under the guidance of Professor Sándor LÁNG. While he worked as a teacher in a vocational school of Nagykanizsa and in a primary school of Gyál, Professor Béla BULLA encouraged him to start with scientific research.

In 1956 his first academic paper appeared in print on the origin of the ‘meridional valleys’ of the Zala Hills, an issue which is still a subject of heated debates among Hungarian geomorphologists. He himself also returned to this topic and summarised his opinion in a paper published in 1970.

The thesis written for obtaining the university doctorate in 1959 was concerned with the evolution of the Lenti Basin. He also studied the evolution of the Drava floodplain and concluded that the basin, originally thought to be uniform was dissected into subbasins during the Holocene. The focus of his research remained hydrogeography and its physico-geographical implications. In 1967 he successfully defended his dissertation on “Water regime and runoff in the Drava-Mura water system”, which was also published by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in the book series Geographical Monographs. For his study on the drainage system of the Danube he was awarded the “Doctor of Sciences in Geography” title in 1977. His hydrogeographical works are closely related to water management issues, including flood control and risk assessment. He contributed to a series of monographs with geomorphological and hydrogeographical chapters (e.g. Geology and surface evolution of Southeastern Transdanubia, 1974; The Physical Geography of Baranya County, 1977; Southern Transdanubia in the series Landscape Geography of Hungary 1981).

His hydrogeographical research focused on the quantification of the physical, topographic, climatic and pedological factors affecting runoff and the water balance of the individual subcatchments (Földrajzi Értesítő, 1972). Some of his publications discuss the temporal changes of the water temperature and ice cover conditions of the rivers Danube and Tisza. György Lovász also analyzed the changes of the longitudinal profile of the Danube, Tisza and Drava rivers, and his findings confirmed the role of

channel erosional processes, triggered by river regulation works. He also pointed out the impact of recent tectonics on riverbed incision and subsidence of the aforementioned three rivers (published in the Journal of Hydrology and Hydromechanics in 2007).



Working in the Transdanubian Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in Pécs, his favourite topics encompassed the geomorphological issues of the Mecsek Mountains, such as the planated surfaces, the evolution of the Pécs Basin and the karst and loess landscapes of Baranya. His research systematically explored the major planation surfaces of the Mecsek Mountains, primarily developed by tectonic activities (“Surfaces of planation in the Mecsek-mountains” – in: Studies in Geography in Hungary Vol. 8., 1971). He also conducted hydrologic monitoring in the Abaliget Cave System (Földrajzi Értesítő, 1971). He explained the fluctuating water discharge rates in the system, primarily generated by clogging of flow channels by sediment deposition. With geomorphological analyses, he also verified the intermittent and multiple-step subsidence of the Pécs Basin over the Pleistocene.

On leaving Pécs, he became scientific advisor of the Geographical Research Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. He participated in various projects: engineering geomorphological mapping of Hungary, inventory of mass movements. He elaborated the development methodology of several thematic maps, including relative relief, slope categories and exposure, loss of sunshine duration, hydrogeographical maps (published in the Földrajzi Értesítő, 1965, 1985 and 1989). Professor Lovász initiated the survey of recent geomorphological processes and guided the research group which compiled the legend of such maps. Some of his research topics are closely associated with human geography: the methodology of settlement density mapping is also linked

to his name, similarly to the analysis of the mutual interconnection between landscape types and settlement density (published in the journal of *Geodézia és Kartográfia* in 1977 and the *Földrajzi Közlemények* in 1979).

Altogether, he wrote and compiled more than 100 Hungarian and international scientific publications, articles, books and book chapters, as well as several university textbooks.

In 1989 he became involved in university level geography teaching at Janus Pannonius University of Pécs, the legal predecessor of the current University of Pécs. Together with Professor József Tóth he organised the education of geography teachers and then of geography researchers at B.Sc., M.Sc. and doctoral levels. For eight years he was the head of Department of Physical Geography and also worked as deputy rector of the University. He taught various classes in his fields of research, including Physical Geography of Hungary, Hydrogeography and Geomorphology. He supported teaching by publishing university textbooks under the title *General Physical Geography* volumes I to III, *General Hydrogeography* and *Physical Geography of Hungary*.

He was awarded a plethora of international fellowships and internships in several countries of Central Europe and visited research centres and institutions across Central and Eastern Europe (e.g.: Federal

Republic of Germany, Germany Democratic Republic, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Romania, Bulgaria, Soviet Union and Yugoslavia).

György Lovász was member of multiple Hungarian and international committees, for instance participated in the activities of the International Geographical Union, Advisory Board of the Geomorphologic Subcommittee and various committees of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. He was also member of the Hungarian Meteorological, Geological and Hydrological Societies. He was active in the life of the Hungarian Geographical Society as member of Board and secretary of the South-Transdanubian Regional Division. He also owned several state and regional level awards and several honours were given to him from various scientific societies.

Although in the past two decades as a Professor Emeritus he only lectured and participated at special university events occasionally, nevertheless, he regularly published his new scientific results and enjoyed his hobbies that included gardening, bird watching, hiking and travelling. We miss his kind personality, sense of humour, eternal optimism and unlimited helpfulness and keep him in good memory.

DÉNES LÓCZY, SZABOLCS CZIGÁNY and
PÉTER GYENIZSE