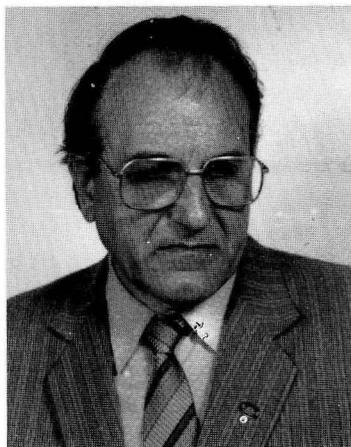


Minčo Ančev

Prof. Dr Stefan I. Kožuharov (1933-1997)



On 24th August 1997, Prof. Stefan Kožuharov passed away. The hope that such a strong man, distinguished by an incredible creative energy, a great working capacity, and an enormous will for life would overcome disease did not come true, and a life dedicated to the Bulgarian botanical science ended.

A few days before the fatal day, I was with Prof. Kožuharov. He did not try to conceal his despair, for he was losing strength at that very moment.

Many of his plans remained unaccomplished, scientific papers waited to be finished: a monograph on Bulgarian grasses; a university text-book, the result of a lifetimes teaching, and the last two volumes of the Flora of Bulgaria for which he was editor in chief.

At the end of my visit Professor Kožuharov's last words to me were: «Let this not be the last time», and I replied: «It will not be, the rich flora of Konjavaska mountain waits to be explored».

A month before this visit, he had asked me, and I had promised him, that I would collect his beloved grasses together with a younger colleague of ours on this mountain and he would identify the critical specimens since travelling had already become difficult for him.

Stefan Ivanov Kožuharov was born on 4th January 1933 in Plovdiv. Subsequently, his family moved to Sofia. He entered Sofia University in 1950, and five years later graduated with a diploma thesis in the field of geobotany.

Kožuharov came to the Institute of Botany after successfully passing a competition in 1959. There already existed an ambitious group of young scientists and Ph.D. students at the Institute. That was the time when new methods for biosystematic studies were introduced to the European botanical scene. Among them cytotaxonomic studies developed the most rapid. The scientific interests of Kožuharov concentrated on the floristics and taxonomy of higher plants - one of the fields of study of Academician Daki Jordanov, particularly honoured by Kožuharov. That interest was inspired by the project

for a complete Flora of Bulgaria then being discussed at the Institute of Botany. Kožuharov actively took part in those debates. Later, he became one of the major authors of that project, co-editor of volumes IV and X, editor of volume VIII, and editor-in-chief of volumes X and XI.

Professor Kožuharov researched intensely in the fields of taxonomy and biosystematics of higher plants revealing the variation and evolutionary mechanisms operating in the Bulgarian vascular flora. He was also a pioneer of the biomonitoring approach to the study of anthropogenic impact on the natural environment.

The scientific heritage left by Kožuharov comprises over 160 papers well-cited in theses, international journals, and monographs.

The greatest part of his taxonomic and biosystematic studies were dedicated to the Bulgarian grasses. In 1985 he summarized in a doctoral thesis on the Bulgarian *Poaceae* the results of over 20 years of investigation. That thesis, together with his taxonomic contributions to the family itself, contained important suggestions for the conservation of rare and endangered grasses and an analysis of the forage resources of the country and their proper exploitation. Kožuharov described independently or together with his colleagues: *Alopecurus thracicus* Penev & Kož., 1968; *Poa aitosiensis* Kož. & Stoeva, 1983; *Poa jordanovii* Kož. & Stoeva, 1983; *Bromus parilicus* Petrova, Kož. & Ehrend., 1997; *Luzula deflexa* Kož., 1964.

Kožuharov also worked very intensely on the *Fabaceae*, which together with the grasses, constitute the major component of the herbaceous cover of Bulgaria. In volume VI of Flora RP Bulgaria Kožuharov wrote the accounts of eight genera, among which were: *Onobrychis*, *Medicago*, *Trifolium*, *Lathyrus* and *Hedysarum*. He described *Trifolium pannonicum* subsp. *jurkovskii* Kož. (1976), *Hedysarum grandiflorum* subsp. *bulgaricum* Kož. (1976), *Medicago bondevii* Kož. (1965).

Kožuharov participated also in the production of *Flora Europaea* and was the author of *Alkanna*, *Echinops* and *Jurinea*. Subsequently, he described from Bulgaria: *Alkanna graeca* subsp. *slavjankae* Kož. (1989), *A. jordanovii* Kož. (1989), *A. stojanovii* Kož. (1989), *A. sibirnyi* subsp. *intermedia* Kož.

Generations of Bulgarian botanists referred to the "Identification key of Bulgarian Weeds" (Kožuharov & Kuzmanov 1967), other papers and studies among which are: "On the endemism in the Bulgarian flora" (Kožuharov 1975), "Speciation centres and endemism in Bulgarian flora and the conservation of their gene fund" (Kožuharov 1977) and "Synopsis of the higher plants in Bulgaria" (Kožuharov, Andreev, Peev 1980). The paper "Karyotypes of four Bulgarian Compositae" (Kuzmanov & Kožuharov 1967) is a methodological contribution to the investigation of the karyotype symmetry of plants and became one of the most widely cited works in the field of Bulgarian cytotaxonomy.

Kožuharov was one of the initiators and the editor of the "Field Guide to the Higher Plants in Bulgaria", for which he was honoured by an OPTIMA silver medal indicating the esteem of his achievements internationally.

Professor Kožuharov brought Bulgarian botanical science to a new, higher level through his scientific work and organizational gifts, his methodological contributions to cytotaxonomy, plant biosystematics, and studies of natural plant resources and their exploitation, his unexhaustable energy and scientific erudition and his international

activities. He taught generations of students botanical knowledge on a European scale. His lectures on the problems in the Bulgarian flora, and especially on the taxonomy and evolution of higher plants, provided the basis for a modern approach to Bulgarian botanical investigations.

Kožuharov was among the founders of OPTIMA and a Member of its International Board (1993-1998). He was a Member of the Committee for Mapping of the Flora of Europe, a Member of IUBS Interdisciplinary Commission on Bioindicators, Vice-President of the National Committee of IUBS, Vice-President of the National Committee of MAB. He was among the initiators of the First Balkan Flora and Vegetation Conference (Varna, 1973), the Conference for Mapping of the Balkan Flora (Sofia, 1976) and the 7th OPTIMA Meeting (Borovec, 1993). These international activities were a prerequisite for fruitful international contacts, scientific discussions, and opened the way to many young people dedicating their lives to science.

Kožuharov was for many years the Secretary of the Bulgarian Botanical Society, subsequently becoming its President. He was a member and the Vice-President of the General Assembly of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences where, in conformity with the new democratic and political changes in Eastern Europe, he worked persistently and energetically for the reorganization of biological sciences in Bulgaria.

The untimely death of Kožuharov took away from us a great scientist, an erudite colleague and an understanding friend. He left to us Bulgarian botanists his credo: Man must work always with such energy as if he has only one more day to live, but to plan his work and his life as if he has centuries in front of him.