

## IN MEMORIAM

## Prof. Dr. Gerhard Lang (1924–2016)

Prof. Gerhard Lang passed away on June 19<sup>th</sup> 2016 in Biberach, Germany. He was one of the most eminent European Quaternary paleoecologists and botanists of the second half of the last century. During his long and fruitful scientific career he made important contributions to our understanding of the Late Quaternary vegetation and climate history, particularly for the Alpine region. In the period 1975–1990 he was director of the Botanical Institute with Botanical Garden at the University of Bern, Switzerland. Under his leadership, and with the application of various paleoecological techniques for investigation of lake and peat deposits, the institute staff established as one of the leading centres of Quaternary studies in Europe. Since 1951 he authored or co-authored a number of high quality papers. The culmination of his research activities and profound knowledge was the publication of the fundamental monograph *Quartäre Vegetationsgeschichte Europas. Methoden und Ergebnisse* (Lang 1994). The author's main task was to present to palynologists, paleoecologists and botanists a synthesis of the floral and vegetational changes throughout the Quaternary era.

Prof. Gerhard Lang became a great friend of the Bulgarian palynologists and botanists. He visited our country on two occasions. In the autumn of 1985 he was among the few western scientists who responded to the invitation to attend the regional symposium *Palaeoecology and Palaeohydrology of the Balkan Peninsula and Adjacent Areas* held in Varna. The meeting was organized by the Bulgari-



A field trip to the Rila Mountains in October 1985. From left to right: Plamen Stefanov, Prof. Gerhard Lang (Switzerland), Prof. Elissaveta Bozilova, Prof. Brigitta Ammann (Switzerland) and Prof. Hans-Jürgen Beug (Germany).



an working group as part of the international activities within the IGCP Project 158B Palaeohydrological Changes in the Temperate Zone During the Last 15000 Years: Lake and Mire Environments. His active participation in the discussions during the symposium and in the subsequent field trips along the Black Sea coast, and in the Rila Mountains, encouraged the future investigations of the Bulgarian palynologists in different parts of the country. In the following years he also used every opportunity to popularize and support the research of his Bulgarian colleagues. The second visit was in May 1996 when he was invited as one of the plenary speakers at the 5<sup>th</sup> National Botanical Conference in Sofia, organized by the former Institute of Botany at the Bulgarian Academy of Science. His talk entitled *Plant distribution in Europe from the point of view of the Quaternary climate changes* was accepted with great interest by the botanical audience.

In the last years Prof. Gerhard Lang continued to follow the progress of the paleoecological studies in Bulgaria, which were particularly focused on intensive investigations of lakes and peat bogs in the Rila, Pirin and Rhodopes mountains, thus providing a basis for comparison with the postglacial vegetation and climate history of the Alps and the Carpathian mountains. He published upon invitation an excellent review paper on the history of *Tilia* in Europe during the Lateglacial and the Holocene (Lang 2003), based on a selection of reliable dated pollen diagrams and macrofossil finds, including also relevant information from Bulgarian sites like he did earlier in his monograph.

Above all, besides being an outstanding scholar, he was a generous man, a nice smiling companion, always ready to help and share his knowledge and rich experience. Prof. Gerhard Lang was deeply devoted to friends, colleagues, family members, and the European paleoecological community will deeply miss him.

## References:

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- Lang, G. 2003. Immigration and expansion of *Tilia* in Europe since the last Glacial. – In: Tonkov, S. (ed.), *Aspects of Palynology and Palaeoecology*, pp. 21–41. PENSOFT Publishers, Sofia-Moscow.

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