

STATE LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD – PROFESSOR ŠIME SPAVENTI

On July 2, 2002, President of the Croatian Parliament Zlatko Tomčić presented Šime Spaventi with the State Lifetime Achievement Award in the area of biomedical sciences.

Šime Spaventi, Professor *Emeritus* and retired Head of the Department of Oncology and Nuclear Medicine at Sestre milosrdnice University Hospital and full member of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, gave a significant contribution in professional and scientific work as well as in teaching in the areas of oncology and nuclear medicine. He was founder of the Department of Oncology and Nuclear Medicine at Sestre milosrdnice University Hospital and served as head of the Department for many years. He was also founder of the Department of Oncology at the School of Dental Medicine, University of Zagreb. This was the first independent department of oncology at the University of Zagreb. Professor Spaventi was the first to introduce the interdisciplinary approach in a department of oncology where, in addition to the utilization of nuclear medicine in oncology, oncologic immunology, tumor genetics, specification of tumor markers and tumor receptors were developed. Professor Spaventi has raised

generations of specialists and established intensive cooperation with highly esteemed institutions in the world where most of the specialists were trained. In this way, Professor Spaventi founded the institution that has reached the level of other world renowned centers in many areas of professional and scientific work and teaching.

He was one of the founders of the Central Institute for Tumors and Allied Diseases in Zagreb, where he served as consultant for many years. He was also a long-time Research Associate with the Ruđer Bošković Institute.

He was quoted 262 times in 276 publications of international scientific literature. He published results of significant research in nuclear medicine and oncology, and especially in radiotherapy. He is the author of a number of reference books and coauthor of a number of scientific books, encyclopedic editions, and textbooks. Together with Professor Padovan he was the first in our country to apply the radiotherapeutic method of radiohypophysectomy. He was also the first in the world to implement the new diagnostic method of scintigraphic selective lymph drainage of testicles. He was the leader of the interdisciplinary group of scientists at the Ruđer Bošković Institute,



Central Institute for Tumors and Allied Diseases, and Department of Oncology and Nuclear Medicine, who succeeded in producing radioactive gallium (^{67}Ga) and carrying out one of the first clinical researches. For this contribution he was awarded the Nikola Tesla Republic Award for Scientific Work. He also received a number of highest honors and awards for science. Furthermore, Šime Spaventi led the work on the production and application of research of lung ventilation with $^{81\text{m}}\text{Kr}$. This was the first production and clinical application of radioactive krypton in Europe and fourth in the world. He was the leading research scientist on many research projects including two international projects with the USA, which had original results in the diagnosis and therapy of thyroid gland disease with radionuclides.

He is member of a number of highly esteemed local and international scientific and professional associations.

Professor Spaventi is President of the Committee for Oncogenes and Factors of Growth of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, and principal investigator in two research projects of the Academy and Ministry of Science and Technology in the field of oncology. He actively participates in all forms of research and professional work.

At the award ceremony, Šime Spaventi expressed his own appreciation and gratitude of all awarded recipients with the following words:

Allow me to express my gratitude and to thank you all for your selection on behalf of all the recipients of this high honor. The State Award for Science has a special meaning and importance among the numerous awards in the Republic of Croatia because it is awarded for areas of work whose criteria of value have an explicitly global character.

I believe that I speak for all of us when I express the hope that this selection takes place in a year which should mark the beginning of a different understanding of the importance of high education and science in Croatia as well as of the role of these connected segments of society in a strategy for Croatia's future.

In spite of its small population and its turbulent past, Croatian science and Croatian scientists have left a proportionally significant mark in the recent and remote history of mankind. We owe this to the fact that for a long time there was a relatively large number of people in this region open to new ideas and concepts. As a result of

the fact that throughout history, regardless of whether they were foreign or Croatian, the government, Church, well-to-do individuals and companies recognized the importance of knowledge for the overall progress of society, and talented individuals or groups frequently found an 'open door', thus creating the so-called critical mass that constantly enabled Croatia to stay in touch with the developed world.

Today, when we think about the way to position Croatia in order to integrate it on equal terms into the developed world, we encounter a dilemma which should not exist at all. We can be recognized as a country that offers to the world or sell its natural resources (regardless of whether it means forests, the coast or human potential that are at stake), or we can be recognized as a partner that exchanges knowledge, ideas and technologies with the world. Since Croatia is abundant with all forms of natural wealth, this option seems attractive in the short term. However, the problem is that these natural resources have limited duration and at the moment when we become incapable of offering values that we have today, when our coast is no longer crystal clean or when most of the talented individuals have left the country, the world will turn to others and we will be forgotten.

In today's world, and especially in the world of the future, the knowledge and innovation will be the key factors for the separation of those who are successful from those who are not. We do not have to search for long to find clear examples such as Ireland, Taiwan, South Korea or Finland, which recognized this fact in time, and in only a decade or two raised themselves from being underdeveloped to being unavoidable technological forces. Croatia was in a better position 10-15 years ago than these states had been at the time when they reached strategic decisions about their future. Unfortunately, for a number of reasons, a downward trend has led us into the dangerous zone of total uncompetitiveness. It is certain that there are sources of excellence in Croatia which are capable of being equal with the developed world. Finally, the achievements of today's recipients provide evidence to this statement. The only question is if we are talking about 'the last of the Mohicans' from some past times or an indication of a better future.

I believe that I speak on behalf of all of us present here that investing in the knowledge and science has no alternative, and I want to believe that the creators of the strategy for the development of Croatia are aware that investing in these areas of human activity is the only guarantee that Croatia will hold the key to its destiny in its own hands. Any other option would turn us into a modern colony completely dependent on others, who are sometimes worse than we are.

Zvonko Kusić