

IN MEMORIAM

**Professor Marijan Laćan**

(1919—1981)



Marijan Laćan, professor of Organic Chemistry at the Faculty of Biotechnology of the University of Zagreb, died on November 20, 1981. His intensive organizational, educational, and scientific work was strongly connected with the recent development of chemistry in Croatia.

I met Marijan Laćan for the first time in 1940 in his sophomore year in Prelog's laboratory at the Technical Faculty in Zagreb and I remember him as an ambitious and diligent student of organic chemistry. The Nazi occupation of our country forced him to discontinue his chemical studies in April 1941 and as early as in June 1941 he became member of a Partisan group which organized the very first armed resistance against the invaders in Yugoslavia in a forest 50 kilometres to the south of Zagreb, near his home town Sisak (šuma Abez). He afterwards spent four long years in the Partisan Army and after the war, despite his very extensive political engagement, resumed his chemical studies in Zagreb, graduating in 1954 from the Technical Faculty. In 1955, with his enormous energy, he was able to switch over entirely to hard, honest, and successful experimental work in the organic chemical

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laboratory of the Faculty of Science, at that time in its golden years. He there took his doctorate and very soon, in 1958, was appointed lecturer and head of the organic chemical laboratory at the newly founded Faculty of Biotechnology. After a few years and with several efficient coworkers, his laboratory was able to catch up with both older Zagreb chemical faculties (Science and Technology), at that time at European level. His main scientific interest has been organic synthesis: Polyoxo compounds, ferrocenes, heterocyclic compounds, and use of electrochemical methods in organic synthesis, the consequence being a great number of scientific publications.

With his partisan charisma and personal vigour he later engaged himself in many organizational activities, some of them arousing controversial attitudes. Among the results of these activities was also the founding of departments of Chemical and Food Technology in Sisak, Banja Luka, Osijek, and Split, always with himself as first lecturer in Organic Chemistry in all these centres. However, his achievement of the greatest and most lasting value was the erection of a new building for chemical laboratories with all facilities for experimental work (1962). This was the first such building constructed for the University of Zagreb after 50 years and the second one in this century after the pioneer efforts of Gustav Janeček (chemical laboratory buildings in 1881 and 1914).

We will remember Marijan Lačan as a promotor and devoted servant of our science. The absence of his optimism and readiness for constructive action will be deeply felt in our chemical community.

KREŠIMIR BALENOVIC