

In memoriam

Dragutin Skoko, F.C.A.
(24 July 1930 – 6 September 2024)
 (Based on eulogy held by Marijan Herak, F.C.A.,
 at the funeral service, 12 September 2024)



Allow me, on behalf of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts and its Division of Natural Sciences, to bid farewell to academician and professor emeritus of the Department of Geophysics, Faculty of Science, Dragutin Skoko – my professor of seismology, mentor during my undergraduate, master's, and doctoral studies, and the man who instilled in me a love for geophysics and seismology, shaping my career.

In 1977, after two years of studying physics, I had to decide on a specialization for my third year. I considered geophysics – after all, back in elementary school, I had once told a TV reporter I wanted to be a physicist or meteorologist! Encouraged by my father, who told me that ‘...there’s now an excellent young associate professor in Geophysics, named Skoko...’ I unknowingly became a seismologist rather than a meteorologist, even before meeting the professor.

Professor Skoko was born in Karlovac where he attended high school. He graduated in physics-geophysics at the Faculty of Science in Zagreb in 1954 and earned his doctorate in 1969 on the topic of *Contributions to Determining Earthquake Magnitudes*. He spent two extended study periods in Japan (1964/65 and 1971/72). His affiliation with the Geophysical Institute of the Faculty of Science started in 1958 with an assistant position, eventually leading to full professorship in 1980.

He taught most specialized courses in both undergraduate and postgraduate studies, including innovative ones like *Theory of Elasticity with Applications in Geophysics* and *Statistical Methods in Geophysics*. His lectures – starting at 7:00 a.m. – were legendary! From Professor Skoko, I learned not only about seismology, theory of elasticity, and earthquake source physics but also gained invaluable knowledge in spectral analysis, a field I knew nothing about before. I took over the lectures on spectral analysis when he retired, and with my retirement, I left the course to my successors, which is still fundamentally based on the ex-

tensive handwritten notes that the professor handed over to me at that time. Professor Skoko also taught the postgraduate courses at the Faculty of Mining, Geology, and Petroleum Engineering in Zagreb and at the University of Skopje. He mentored several dozen undergraduate theses, ten master's theses, and seven Ph. D. dissertations.

Academician Skoko retired in 2000 and was elected a professor emeritus of the University of Zagreb the following year. He became an associate member of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts in 1975, later an extraordinary member, and finally, a full member in the Department of Natural Sciences in 1991. He chaired the Academy's Scientific Council for Petroleum, and the Scientific Council for Remote Sensing and Photointerpretation, served two terms as president of the Croatian Committee for Geodesy and Geophysics, and represented Croatia in the European Seismological Commission.

Professor Skoko's scientific work was focused on seismology. The results of his research were published in several dozen papers (some of them in leading international journals in the field), ten review articles, and two books. He led numerous seismology research projects in Croatia and was the principal investigator in two highly significant, long-term international projects within the United Nations Development Programme and UNESCO: Survey of the Seismicity of the Balkan Region (1970–1976) and Seismic Risk Reduction of the Balkan Region (1985–1990). These projects fostered international collaboration and advanced seismological research in Croatia, earning him notable international recognition. Even today, the earthquake catalogue and macroseismic map collection from these projects are frequently cited in studies of this region's seismicity. His contributions extended beyond Croatia, as noted by my Macedonian colleague Lazo Pekevski, who wrote: 'His contribution to the founding and development of the Seismological Observatory in Skopje is immeasurable. He was our guiding star, teacher, professor, mentor, and an extraordinary friend.' For his contribution to science, Dragutin Skoko received several awards and recognitions, such as the *Award Nikola Tesla* for scientific achievements in the field of technical and biotechnical sciences (1983) and a Certificate of Appreciation with a plaque from the International Association of Seismology and the Physics of the Earth's Interior in Istanbul (1989).

During his career, Prof. Skoko held many positions – he served twice as the Vice Dean for Finance at the Faculty of Science, and also twice as the Head of the Department of Geophysics. The time when he led the Department is remembered for its pleasant working atmosphere, and by opening the field to cooperation with the industry in order to better fulfil the social role of seismology in seismic risk reduction. D. Skoko was also a distinguished member of the editorial board of *Geofizika* journal ever since its establishment in 1984.

Among his published works, my favourite is his 1983 paper on the depths of the Mohorovičić discontinuity in *Geophysical Journal International*. This work bridged Professor Skoko's scientific interest in continuing where Mohorovičić left

off 73 years earlier, with his dedication to presenting the significance of Mohorovičić's contributions to the public. Together with J. Mokrović, he co-authored a valuable monograph that remains a reference for studying Mohorovičić's contributions to global seismology. At his initiative, a bust of Mohorovičić was placed in the lobby of the Department of Geophysics, and a monument to his discovery was erected in Opatija. In 2005, we, as his successors, arranged and opened the Andrija Mohorovičić Memorial Rooms at the Department of Geophysics, showcasing a rich heritage preserved largely thanks to Professor Skoko's efforts. When he once visited the Department, we led him through the Memorial Rooms. Clearly satisfied that we continued his efforts, he smiled and said, 'You know, when I retired, I feared you'd scatter all of this!'

Academician Skoko guided Croatian seismology at the right time, in the right way, and in the right direction. The right time was an era of significant global advancements in seismology, the advent of computers, and new types of instruments. At a time when acquiring any instrument or computer was a major achievement, the Department had already acquired its first computers and modern seismographs by the early 1980s. This was also a period when seismology transitioned from a Renaissance-like discipline for polymaths to one requiring dedicated scientists and specialized services – a shift Professor Skoko embraced, paving the way for the development of Croatian seismology. During the 1970s and 1980s, he secured about ten permanent positions for seismologists, which was no small feat in those times. His initiative towards construction of the new building of the Department of Geophysics on Horvatovac was realized within the framework of the aforementioned international projects. Furthermore, following his suggestion, the Seismological Service was established in 1985 at the Department of Geophysics, where a number of seismologists grown under his leadership found their future. Professor Skoko also firmly advocated for a shift from descriptive work to research, international collaboration and training, healthy competition, and publishing in globally relevant journals.

Dragutin Skoko raised several generations of seismologists in Croatia and neighbouring countries. He employed numerous young experts at the Department of Geophysics and selflessly championed the development of seismology and geophysics in our country. We will remember him as a colleague with a sharp mind, a brilliant lecturer, and a kind, patient, witty, and honest man.

Marijan Herak